

## “Once Upon a Time”

### Fairytales and the Translation of Mindfulness

in *Wherever You Go, There You Are*

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In recent decades, the meditative practice known as “mindfulness” has become a widely disseminated cure in both Western mainstream culture and academic medicine and psychology (Wilson 2014; Williams & Kabat-Zinn 2011).<sup>1</sup> In a study of the reception of mindfulness in the US, religious studies scholar Jeff Wilson has observed that mindfulness and its proponents can shift between “religious, spiritual, therapeutic, or secular” modes of authorization (Wilson 2014:194).

One of the leading figures in the mindfulness movement is the North American scientist, writer, and meditation teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn. This article explores a folkloric mode of authorization in a text by Kabat-Zinn. More precisely, we will investigate how Kabat-Zinn deploys both notions of fairytales as a genre, and concrete specimens of European fairytales as a vehicle for translating the Buddhist technique into the therapeutic practice of mindfulness. Citing the work of Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs on the historical construction of vernacular culture as an object of scholarly inquiry (2003; cf. Briggs 1993), we will demonstrate how a particular image of the fairytale genre and the fairytale as a scholarly object forged in the nineteenth century is instrumental in this translation process.

Kabat-Zinn started his work on mindfulness as a therapeutic practice in the *Stress Reduction Clinic* at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in the 1970s. Here, he developed a series of course programmes for relieving pain and anxiety illnesses that became known as *Mindfulness-based stress reduction* (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn 2011b:8).<sup>2</sup> In 1994, he published *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday*

*Life*, which is our main object of inquiry here. This book has been translated into more than twenty languages, and it has been republished several times (Kabat-Zinn 2005:271). Kabat-Zinn states that the aim of the book is to make “the path of mindfulness accessible to mainstream Americans so that it would not feel Buddhist or mystical so much as sensible” (Kabat-Zinn 1994:xvii). Moreover, he adds that he intends “to provide brief and easy access to the essence of mindfulness meditation” (Kabat-Zinn 1994:xix) for people who do not want to take part in structured programmes.

Mindfulness has been articulated with a range of new scientific and epistemic fields such as cognitive psychology and evidence-based medicine (EBM) (Cho 2012). An essential mode of authorization, however, is still the technique’s roots in Buddhism. Practices categorized under the name of *sati* or *smṛti* – Pali and Sanskrit terms regularly translated as “mindfulness” – form a crucial part of the “noble eightfold path” of Buddhism (e.g. Gethin 1998). As a part of this larger whole, *sati* and *smṛti* aim at ending *dukkha*, suffering, a universal condition, and at achieving compassion with all living beings – not at healing individual diseases, suffering, and stress, the conditions mostly targeted by mindfulness in its Western accommodations.

Many previous studies of the Western appropriation of mindfulness have commented on the linguistic and conceptual aspects of the translation of Pali and Sanskrit terminology. Generally, these studies have been concerned with whether Western languages have rendered the Buddhist terms adequately, and to what degree the conceptual and cosmological meanings of ancient

source text have been "lost in translation".<sup>3</sup> In addition to studies of conceptual and semantic change in the move from the "original" source text in the Buddhist canon, scholars have also examined the long history of Western translations of Buddhism on a more civilizational level. In particular, it has been observed that Buddhism has been construed as an analogy to Western *natural science* and/or *psychology*, not as a religion, and the wisdom and insights of the Buddha as a harbinger of knowledge that science later has discovered. "The Core of Buddhism is Psychology", it has been claimed. As such, the "core" is also a place for "pure" scientific and psychological insights free from religious "superstition" (Cho 2012; Lopez 2008; Helderman 2020).

In contrast to the concern with linguistic translation and civilizational analogies, we will focus on what we call the folkloric grid in Kabat-Zinn's translation of mindfulness. We shall examine a sample of textual details where the folkloric grid is used to present mindfulness to a popular Western audience. We will show that the association of the fairytale with timeless and archaic tradition, and with fiction without any "reality effect" (Barthes), paves the way for Kabat-Zinn's equivalence between the fairytale and mindfulness: The temporality of the fairytale expressed by the phrases "once upon a time" and "happily ever after" becomes a symbol of the timelessness of mindfulness. Our study also demonstrates the extraordinarily effective history of the early folkloristic project. As we shall see, the idea that folktales were archaic vestiges, and as such, sources for the national self and primitive humanity, was taken for granted – as a cultural fact – by

psychoanalytical interpreters in the twentieth century. This is still the point of departure for Kabat-Zinn.

### "Once Upon a time": Textual Grids and Metadiscursive Regimes

As stated, we will examine a level of translation between the linguistic and the civilizational. This shift of scale, and the focus on a specific *cultural* level of translation, is indebted to the translation studies scholar André Lefevere (1), and to Baumann and Briggs's work on the history of metadiscursive regimes in anthropology and folkloristics (2).

#### 1. Textual Grids

Lefevere (1999) maintained that questions of translatability have more to do with "discrepancies" in what he called "conceptual and textual grids" than with "discrepancies in languages" (like what *sati* really means) (cf. Ødemark & Engebretsen 2018). At stake here is thus "the supposedly primary or fundamental role played by *linguistic* codes in the operation known as translating". On the contrary, Lefevere adds, translators

think in terms of what I would like to call *two grids*. I do not want to speculate on the primacy of one grid over the other; rather, I would suggest that we think of them as intertwined. One is what I would like to call a '*conceptual grid*', the other a '*textual grid*' (Lefevere 1999:75 and 76–77, our emphasis).

These grids are the results of socialization, and are therefore culture-specific:

An educated member of any culture in the West, for instance [...], will know that certain texts are supposed to contain certain markers designed to elicit reactions on the reader's part, and that the success

of communication depends on both the writer and reader of the text agreeing to play their assigned parts in connection with these markers. The writer is supposed to put them in, the reader is supposed to recognize them. *Texts that start with 'Once upon a time', for instance, will elicit quite different expectations in the reader than texts that start with 'Leave Barcelona 8:15 a.m.; Arrive Amsterdam 11.30 a.m.'* (Lefevere 1999:76, our emphasis).

For instance, interpreting and translating the sentence "*es war einmal*" into "once upon a time" requires discursive and cultural competence; it activates a textual grid (a genre, the fairytale), a conceptual scheme, and an ontological commitment ("this is a fairytale"). The crucial point is that there is *no way that a mere linguistic analysis* (cf. "linguistic codes" above) of the sentence will tell you that the sentence marks the entrance to the land of fairytales. Thus, as we will discuss in more detail below, even "pure" linguistic translation must account for metadiscursive practices for producing, classifying, and interpreting genres (cf. Briggs 1993).

Citing Lefevere, we will examine how the genre of the fairytale and its assumed attributes is used as a textual grid in one particular translation of mindfulness. However, we will also show that the grid in question is a historical product of the work of early folkloristics.

## 2. Metadiscursive Practices

Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs have traced the place of folklore in the construction of modernity (2003). Referencing Bruno Latour's construal of modernity in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), they draw attention to the fact that "modernity" and "the scientific revolution" needed more than the "working" separation of

the domains "nature" and "culture". For Latour, the modern is based upon a separation of the domains of nature and culture. Characteristic of modernity is, moreover, the continuous processes of translation that link nature with society, which in turn are balanced by processes of purification that restore the divide (ibid.).

Bauman and Briggs note that Latour's model "left out two of the key constructs that make modernity work and make it precarious [...] language and tradition" (2003:5). A third domain was indispensable, namely, language. This domain differs from the other two because it was understood more as an instrument to be used, or alternatively, an obstacle to be removed, than as a scientific object in its own right. Nevertheless, this domain played, and still plays, an essential role in constructing the other two. It is linguistic signs and discursive codes, not things or actions per se, that make it possible to locate phenomena as belonging to one or the other domain (Bauman & Briggs 2003:4–10). These discursive practices for locating words, sentences, or texts as belonging to a particular kind of discourse, Bauman and Briggs call "metadiscursive practices" (ibid.; cf. Briggs 1993:388).

The metadiscursive practices of the Brothers Grimm are a particularly seminal example of the simultaneous construction of a "folk" genre – and an object of scholarly inquiry. As is well known in folklore studies, certain stylistic traits of fairytales, such as the rule of three, the extensive use of quoted direct speech and of proverbs were added by the Brothers Grimm to the informants' tales. Most important in our context are the framing devices of the new genre, namely, formulaic phrases such as

"once upon a time" ("Es war einmal") and "they lived happily ever after" ("Und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind, dann leben sie noch heute"). Such emblematic phrases have come to identify the genre, and now, as in Lefevere's example, they *serve as tokens of a literary type*. These genre characteristics, however, should be understood as products of the textual work and metadiscursive practices of the Grimms – not the perennial traits of some sort of ideal and timeless "folktale" fully formed in an archaic period. The metadiscursive practices of the Grimms renders the speech of the "folk" in a purported purified state that makes it eligible for citation and circulation in scholarly papers as typified fairytales. Hence, we could say, producing the folkloristic research object and the genre of fairytales, through the imposition of textual grids, in one fell swoop (Bauman & Briggs 2003:214–215).

It is important that the idea here is not to debunk the work of the brothers, but to underscore its necessarily constructed nature, and through this, deconstruct the binaries governing the scholarly debate about the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* and its "faithfulness" to the "folk". Both opponents and defenders of the brothers assume "the image of intertextual fidelity", i.e. the idea that written text can render oral tales in an authentic and faithful manner:

According to this image, texts created through transcription, translation, and editing should bear a direct and intrinsic connection to their sources [...]. Both champions and critics of the Grimms share the brothers' powerful modernist assumptions about texts, that is, that there is a natural and authentic mode of transmission associated with traditional knowledge, that printed collections can mirror this process in some fashion, and that the authenticity

and legitimacy of published narratives can be assessed in this way. [...] the quality of collections is to be assessed in terms of the degree to which obvious gaps between the two sets of texts are rendered *invisible* (Bauman & Briggs 2003:212–213).

Bauman and Briggs cite the comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell on the opinion that the Grimms' work "let the speech of the people break directly into print" while the folklorist Allan Dundes criticized them for constructing "fakelore" (Bauman & Briggs 2003:212–214).

Mediated by Campbell, the "image of intertextual fidelity" will govern Kabatzinn's use of fairytales to translate mindfulness. Dundes, moreover, scolded Campbell for radically misconstruing the genres of folklore: "Campbell does not really understand what a myth is, and he does not really distinguish it from folktale and legend" (Dundes 2005:394). Dundes points to the fact that Campbell – in line with Jung – uses fairytales, for example versions of Little Red Riding Hood, as a source for basic elements of the universal myth of the hero, as archetypes.

On the one hand, Dundes distinguishes the genre of fairytales from myth and legend. On the other, we have Campbell, understanding the fairytales as the vestige of an original and panhuman oral tale, and as such *containing* universal traits of human thoughts expressive of a transcultural human psychology. Dundes traces this idea to nineteenth-century folkloristics, and in particular, to Adolf Bastian's theory of *Elementargedanke* (ibid.:396). Bastian argued that at the origin of culture there were certain primitive and foundational ideas and conceptions, a psychological framework shared by all men. These had at a later stage diversified into what he called

*Völkergedanken*, which in time turned into the local traditions of different peoples.

Bastian was one of the originators of the ethnopsychological position of German mythology research in the late nineteenth century, a position that in turn had inspired Jung<sup>4</sup> (Nordberg 2013:143–153; see also Dorson 1955 and Oring 1975:40–43). We will come back to Campbell and Jung in the context of mindfulness below, but it should be noticed here that Bastian and the ethnopsychologists redefined the subject matter of folkloristics. While this had initially been defined as the speech and linguistic expressions of the “people”, Bastian and the ethnopsychologists were concerned with the workings of the mind and forms of thought of the people. Jung is indebted to this definition in his studies of myths as expressions of the collective unconscious (cf. Leeming 2001). Kabat-Zinn, moreover, sees fairytales through the mythic grid of this psychological tradition.

### **Mindfulness as a Transcultural Tool of Psychological Development**

Kabat-Zinn turns to fairytales in a chapter entitled “Meditation Develops Full Human Beings”, in the first part of *Wherever You Go, There You Are*. The main message of this chapter is – precisely – that mindfulness meditation is a way to achieve personal growth; it is a “guide to human development [...], to that of a fully developed adult” (Kabat-Zinn 1994:85). As we shall see, this notion of human development and the conceptual metaphors he uses to describe it (such as “Life is a journey”) pave the way for the use of fairytales to expound meditation.

Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness, its ancient origin and its contemporary relevance in the following way:

Mindfulness is an *ancient* Buddhist practice which has profound relevance for *our present-day lives*. This relevance has nothing to do with Buddhism per se or with becoming a Buddhist, but it has everything to do with waking up and living in harmony with oneself and with the world (Kabat-Zinn 1994:3, our emphasis).

Mindfulness is seen as a cross-cultural tool for integrating body and mind, and the relation to Buddhism here almost appears accidental. In several passages, Kabat-Zinn states that the goal of meditation, as of life itself, is to develop a harmonious relationship between mind and body. Achieving this, human beings can become whole. The concept “full human beings” refers to such an integration of body and mind.<sup>5</sup> The ambitious aim of mindfulness is thus a reconciliation between body and mind as well as nature and culture. These are oppositions regularly conceived as the fundament (and the founding error) of modern Western ontology, i.e., a general and cultural malaise characterizing certain epochs and societies with potential to cause disease and sickness in individual bodies (Harrington 2008; Kristeva et al. 2018; Latour 1993).

In the opening of the chapter, we move back to ancient India (Kabat-Zinn 1994:81). In Pali, which Kabat-Zinn claims was “the original language of the Buddha”, there is no single word with the same meaning as the English word “meditation”. However, one of the words used is *bhavana*. In Kabat-Zinn’s translation, *bhavana* signifies “development through mental training” (ibid.).

The lack of an equivalent of the key term “meditation” first seems to imply a problem of inter-lingual and cross-cultural translation. However, the lack in question actually contributes to a particular notion

of meditation as a universal form of and for human development. By introducing the Pali word, Kabat-Zinn establishes both the *foreignness* of mindfulness and its ancient cultural and linguistic difference. However, the cultural and temporal localization established by the reference to *bhavana* is immediately transcended by the translation of the term as "*development through mental training*". The development in question turns out to be the realization of a transcultural psychological potential. In Lefevere's terms, the disciplinary and conceptual grid used to translate *bhavana* here is psychology. This gridding, however, is immediately linked to a set of conceptual metaphors that will prepare the reader for a journey to the land and language of fairytales:

1. Human development is a natural form of growth
2. Life is a journey

The author uses these conceptual metaphors to argue for the universal applicability of *bhavana* = "*development through mental training*" as both a natural and a cross-cultural process.

1. Human development is a natural form of growth
- Firstly, then, we have a metaphor of growth:

meditation really is about human development. It is a natural extension of cutting teeth, growing an adult-sized body, working and making things happen in the world, raising a family [...] and realizing that you too will grow old and die (Kabat-Zinn 1994:81).

Thus, Kabat-Zinn begins, organically, with physical growth, next passes through biosocial maturity (becoming a parent; creating

new biological life), and ends with death. By being inserted in this chain of growth, meditation is naturalized as an organic and continuous addition to biosocial life.

## 2. Life is a journey

Secondly, Kabat-Zinn relates meditation to what he calls the "journey metaphor". This "is used in all cultures to describe life and the quest for meaning" (ibid.:87). Thus, the notion of life as a journey is elevated to the status of a transcultural metaphor. This also turns mindfulness into an integral or natural part of human development, not a culturally or religiously restricted practice. Moreover, it adds a certain movement and nomadism to the first conceptual metaphor; it takes "growth" and "development" on the road – on a journey into an external world.

As part of his exploration of this transcultural metaphor Kabat-Zinn cites iconic cultural texts, like the incipit of Dante's *Divine Comedy*:

In the middle of this road we call our life  
I found myself in a dark wood.

With no clear path through.

Dante, *The Divine Comedy* (cited in Kabat-Zinn 1994:87).

In a very deft construction of intertextual webs and metaphorical coherence across cultural times and places – citing both Western and Eastern key texts (Dante, the Buddhist corpus) – Kabat-Zinn *transforms the fairytale into a transcultural path to development, out of the "dark wood"* (perhaps also alluding to the place and time of the Buddha's awakening). Fairytales offer narrative guidance on how to develop into full human beings.

### Fairytales as Maps for Development

We have to quote extensively, to show how Kabat-Zinn turns fairytales into universally valid psychological maps:

The old fairytales, we are told by their modern interpreters, Bruno Bettelheim, Robert Bly, Joseph Campbell, and Clarissa Pinkola Estés, are ancient maps, offering their own guidance for the development of full human beings. The wisdom of these tales comes down to our day from a time before writing, having been told in twilight and darkness around fires for thousands of years. While they are entertaining and engaging stories in their own right, they are so in large part because they are emblematic of the dramas we encounter as we seek wholeness, happiness, and peace. The kings and queens, princes and princesses, dwarfs and witches, are not merely personages "out there." We know them intuitively as aspects of our own psyches, strands of our own being, groping toward fulfillment. We house the ogre and the witch, and they have to be faced and honored or they will consume us (eat us up). Fairy tales are ancient guidance, containing a wisdom, distilled through millennia of telling, for our instinctual survival, growth and integration in the face of inner and outer demons and dragons, dark woods and wastelands. These stories remind us that it is worth seeking the altar where our own fragmented and isolated being-strands can find each other and marry, bringing new levels of harmony and understanding to our lives, to the point where we might actually live happily ever after, which really means in the timeless here and now. These stories are wise, ancient, surprisingly sophisticated blueprints for our full development as human beings (Kabat-Zinn 1994:81–82).

In this quotation, "[m]odern interpreters of fairy tales" are called upon to testify that fairytales are extremely old, *and* that they offer guidance on how to develop into full human beings. The cited authors had all seen fairytales as archetypes and psychological roadmaps.<sup>6</sup> As we showed above,

such a psychological framing presupposes a particular textual grid. In turn, this particular gridding is made possible by conflating different kinds of tales and genres, seeing all oral tales as myths or fragments of myths originating in an archaic time (cf. above, Briggs 1993; Bauman and Briggs 2003; Dundes 2005).

The psychological and transcultural framing of the folktale that influences Kabat-Zinn is dependent upon a spatio-temporal structure that we can refer to as a *chronotope*. This *chronotope* furnishes the *background* against which objects can be "timed" or given historical "value" in a narrative (Bakhtin 1981; Puckett 2016:157). Associating fairytales with fires, twilight, and darkness establishes a spatial dimension for the fairytales (just as India did for meditation). On the one hand, fairytales belong to an archaic period, before historical time. On the other, those who Kabat-Zinn refers to as the "modern interpreters" of the fairytale also all agree that the oral tales in question have been "*distilled* thorough millennia of telling" (Kabat-Zinn 1994:82, our emphasis). Hence, history is also a space for development – the gradual "distillation" of narrative beauty and wisdom of the tales, which parallels the possibilities for human development introduced by mindfulness.

In the paragraph quoted above, we also find the standardized fairytale coda "live happily ever after":

These stories remind us that it is worth seeking the altar where our own fragmented and isolated being-strands can find each other and marry, bringing new levels of harmony and understanding to our lives, to the point where we might actually live happily ever after, which really means in the timeless here and now (Kabat-Zinn 1994:81–82).

Kabat-Zinn articulates the time of the fairytale with "the timeless here and now", which mindfulness meditation aims to achieve. Thus, the narrative *ending* of the fairytale is made into a symbol of mindfulness – and of what the meditator seeks for. The core idea of the whole book is expressed through this fusion of the folkloric grid and the atemporality of mindfulness, namely, the importance of *living attentively in the eternal present of the here and now*.

Moreover, Kabat-Zinn's articulation of mindfulness and fairytales creates a dual conception of time. On the one hand as a linear time of non-harmony, and on the other as a state of harmonic non-time found in the achieved mindfulness state that also gives meaning to the fairytale trope "live happily ever after". Throughout his book, this state of atemporality is presented as the goal (of mindfulness, the "wisdom" of Buddhism, and fairytales). In the afterword of the book, Kabat-Zinn says that mindfulness meditation

is a door into the timeless, it operates beyond time, underneath time, inside of time, and so allows for transformation [...] (2005:273).

The chronotope opened up by this move, however, is an interior space where the content and characters of Buddhist cosmologies as well as the supernatural beings populating many oral tales are turned into symbols of psychological forces.

### **Demythologization as Psychologization**

According to Kabat-Zinn, then, the main characters in fairytales are obviously aspects of *our own* psyches. This is actually so obvious that the reader already knows

and recognizes these characters intuitively. David McMahan (2008) has described the entangled demythologization and psychologization of mindfulness. Elements that are incompatible with secular modern knowledge and are reframed and relocated to the symbolic genre of "myth". Given such a textual grid, the tales can also be rendered as symbolic messages. Buddhist deities, for instance, are not really gods, but representations of different states of mind and psychological conditions and forces.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of this psychoanalytic transmutation of the deities to the modernization of Buddhism [...]. Buddhism's cultural capital as it moved into Tibet in the seventh century lay in its adherents' superior ability to control unseen beings. Its admittance into western modernity similarly depended on its demonstrating control over these beings – this time exorcising them from the world of molecules and atoms and confining them to the psyche. Here they could continue to exist as "representations," "symbols," or "energies" resident in all human beings. The wrathful deities came to be construed as ingenious images of inner realities discovered by intrepid explorers of the psyche rather than diabolical demons or primitive superstitions. This internalization of the gods was the passkey that granted Tibetan Buddhism entry into the modern West, whose monotheism and modernity could not abide a gaggle of gods inhabiting the real world (McMahan 2008:53).

As we have seen, Kabat-Zinn places Tibetan deities and fairytale characters in the same chronotope. By equating the Jungian idea of archetypes and myth, the fairytales, the journey that is "life" and the work of mindful meditation, it becomes possible to *figure all these sources and characters as a transcendental map leading towards the state of harmony*. A case in point from Kabat-Zinn is the following psychologization of the gods:



The form of Buddhism that took root and flowered in Tibet from the eighth century until our day developed perhaps the most refined artistic expression of these terrifying aspects of the human psyche. Many Tibetan statues and paintings are of grotesque demonic beings, all respected members of the pantheon of honored deities. Keep in mind that these deities are not gods in the usual sense. Rather, they represent different mind states, each with its own kind of divine energy which has to be faced, honored, and worked with if we are to grow and develop our true potential as full human beings, whether men or women. These wrathful creatures are not seen as bad, even though their appearance is frightening and repulsive, with their necklaces of skulls and grotesque grimaces (Kabat-Zinn 1994:83–84).

The text underscores that the artistic expressions do not represent gods external to human beings, it is all about aspects of the human psyche. The Tibetan statues and paintings actually portray the same wisdom as the wisdom of fairytales. On the path to becoming full human beings, it appears that all people – everywhere and always – will encounter the same type of internal psychological dramas. Fairytale characters as well as the supernatural entities in Tibetan cosmology “really” represent such dramas. Unless we converse with the different aspects of our psyches, we will not achieve fulfilment.

### Fairytales as Inner Work

The wisdom contained in fairytales, Jungian psychology, and Tibetan Buddhism all tells us that we must *work* to develop into a full human being. Such work is exemplified by Kabat-Zinn’s use of Robert Bly’s book on fairytales and masculine identity. More precisely, Kabat-Zinn delves into Bly’s interpretation of the so-called *golden ball* from the Grimm fairytale “Iron John” and

transforms this into a model for working with the self. “The golden ball” is supposed to be a recurrent motif in fairytales:

One recurrent theme in the fairy stories is that of a young child, usually a prince or a princess, who loses his or her golden ball. [...]. And we still carry that golden radiance, or can recover it, if we take care not to let our development arrest (Kabat-Zinn 1994:82).

Kabat-Zinn goes on to say that we all at some point have “radiated with the golden innocence and infinite promise carried by youth” (ibid.). The golden ball seems to be a symbol of the possibilities we all carry in our interior.<sup>7</sup>

Kabat-Zinn finds a motivation for meditation in Bly’s presentation of Iron John, and he uses the “golden ball” as an argument for the potential for psychological development. With the “golden ball” Kabat-Zinn gives the reader a psychological story of the origin of the divided human being, relating “once upon a time” to the developmental psychology of children. Before it will be possible to get hold of the golden ball again, it is said that a “bargain” has to be made with our “suppressed shadow energies”. Here they are not symbolized by Tibetan demons and deities but by the dramatic personae of the Grimm tale:

Before that bargain can be made, you have to know that these creatures are there, *prince and princess, frog, wild man or wild woman*. Conversing with those aspects of our psyches that we instinctively turn away from into unconsciousness is a prerequisite (Kabat-Zinn 1994:83).

To make such a “bargain”, then, you have to realize that you house all the kinds of creatures mentioned in the fairytales: a

frog, a wild man or woman, a prince or princess, and so on. You have to meet elements from your unconsciousness to get in touch with your potential, your golden ball. In line with analytical psychology, the creatures from the fairytales are here symbols of archetypes common in our psyches.

### Concluding Remarks

Our examination of Kabat-Zinn's translation demonstrates how deeply sedimented ideas of the genre of fairytales are mobilized as a textual and conceptual grid when Kabat-Zinn's science-based MBSR programme is reintroduced for the general public in *Wherever You Go, There You Are*.

Moreover, our study demonstrates the effective history of the early folkloric project. Psychoanalytical interpreters in the twentieth century took for a fact the idea that folktales were archaic vestiges, and as such, sources for primitive humanity. Moreover, psychological interpreters later took the image of intertextual fidelity for granted.

The resulting interpretation of fairytales as transculturally valid symbols and myths further prepares the fairytales for comparison with Buddhist and Tibetan texts – all read in the same way, with reference to the same generic grid; as symbolic statements about the human psyche; about all humans, everywhere, at any time. This notion still furnishes the premise for Kabat-Zinn's approach to fairytales, and his use of fairytales to construct a place for mindfulness in the Western imagination.

The construal of fairytales as narrative examples of the workings and development of the (archaic) mind transforms the narratives into psychological roadmap. Hence, the fairytale does not only become a map

for developing the meditation technique, it is also a model for living.

Kabat-Zinn's fairytale is transformed into a universal anthropological myth where "life", materially and psychologically speaking, is a development process, aiming at integrating the diffracted parts of human existence, mind and body, nature and culture. In this translation, however, the content and characters of Buddhist cosmologies as well as the supernatural beings populating many oral tales are turned into symbols of the soul. By placing Tibetan demons and the characters of fairytales in a transcultural psychological space, Kabat-Zinn also assigns these beings to a new ontological position. Figures from fairytales and Tibetan demonology all become "aspects of *our* psyche", domesticated as a natural part of humanity and as symbols pertaining to the domain of the human sciences (not demonology or comparative theology).

The idea of fairytales at work in Kabat-Zinn, then, is indebted both to the ideology of fairytales developed in the nineteenth century, and to the metadiscursive construction of the "oral tale" as a literary and scholarly object. This construction is taken for granted – as a natural fact about oral and authentic folk culture – by the commentators in the psychological tradition. In the terminology of Bauman and Briggs, the notion of "intertextual fidelity" – assuming the non-productivity of textual translations and the "treason of the translator" – is still a basic assumption – in psychology, but also among folklorists who want to come as close as possible to the authentic voice of the "native informant".

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**Notes**

- 1 Mindfulness can refer both to a specific state of mind and to a meditation technique aiming to achieve this state of mind, both an end and the means to achieve the end (e.g. Williams & Kabat-Zinn 2011).
- 2 This work is also the basis for his bestselling book *Full Catastrophe Living*, first published in 1990. Moreover, Kabat-Zinn has published widely in different genres aimed at different audiences – both in scientific journals and in books written for the lay public. He has devised mindfulness-based interventions targeted at people suffering from health-related disorders, practices for coping with everyday life, as

well as leadership-development programmes, and educational programmes for children and various professions (Kabat-Zinn 2011b:8–9).

- 3 It has been pointed out that the notion of “non-judgemental” attention in modern, Western mindfulness differs widely in implications from the Buddhist source texts, which after all posit a quite specific judgement about universal suffering as their ontological premise. Moreover, it has been observed that the notion of “memory” present in the Pali and Sanskrit term is lost in the translation of *sati* and *smṛti* into mindfulness (Gethin 2011).
- 4 In addition to Jung, E. B. Tylor, and through him, J. G. Frazer, were inspired by Bastian.
- 5 This is the pivotal point for the mind/body approach in medicine, later associated with so-called “integrative medicine” (cf. Kabat-Zinn 2011b:10).
- 6 Bruno Bettelheim was an Austrian psychologist who actively used fairytales in the treatment of children. Among his best-known works is the Freudian analyses of fairytales in *The Uses of Enchantment* from 1976. Greatly inspired by Jungian psychology, Robert Bly used the Grimm fairytale *Iron John* as a “map” for what was called “Men’s mythopoetic movement” or “Men’s spirituality movement”, which tried to redefine men’s gender roles in the US in the 1970s (Bly 1990; Salomonsen, 1991:115–130). A related project also underpinned by Jungian theory was Clarissa Pinkola Estés’s use of fairytales in *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype* (1992). Joseph Campbell was an American mythologist, most famous for his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), which discusses the archetypal hero in world mythologies, popularized in the 1988 PBS documentary *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth*.
- 7 According to Bly, people lose their golden ball around the age of eight, and it might take ages to discover the loss.

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