

Modernity in Question
Studies in Philosophy and History of Ideas 15

Jan Kajfosz

Magic in Popular Narratives



PETER LANG

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The book deals with manifestations and relics of magical thinking in the narrative folklore of Cieszyn Silesia (Teschen Silesia, Těšín Silesia). The point of departure is a phenomenological and social constructivist approach to human cognition. The author follows the cognitive dimensions of pre-modern folklore and popular texts in general. They are conventional in the sense that they are repeated in many variants inside one communicative group. Habituation based on more or less accurate reproduction of stereotypes (and corresponding experiences), motives, action scenarios, rationalizations, and motivations, is the source of relatively stable world image. The key concept developed in the book is redefined categorization understood as the simplification and stabilization of too complex and changing reality through shared narratives.

The Author

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UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA
IN KATOWICE

Magic in Popular Narratives

MODERNITY IN QUESTION
STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF IDEAS

Edited by Małgorzata Kowalska

VOLUME 15



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Translated by Jan Pytalski



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Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available online at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

The Publication is funded by Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland as a part of the “National Programme for the Development of the Humanities” (years 2018–2021).

Grant number 21H 17 0246 85. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Ministry cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

The research grant was carried out at the University of Silesia in Katowice.



NATIONAL PROGRAMME
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITIES



UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA
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Cover illustration: Courtesy of Benjamin Ben Chaim.

ISSN 2193-3421 · ISBN 978-3-631-84035-1 (Print)

E-ISBN 978-3-631 84050-4 (EPDF) · E-ISBN 978-3-631-84095-5 (EPUB)

E-ISBN 978-3-631-84096-2 (MOBI) · DOI 10.3726/b17806

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Peter Lang – Berlin · Bern · Bruxelles · New York · Oxford · Warszawa · Wien

This publication has been peer reviewed.

www.peterlang.com

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Foreword

The book in reader's hands looks at manifestations of magical thinking in everyday lives of denizens of Cieszyn Silesia (Teschen Silesia, Těšín Silesia) in the premodern era. In the book, I recreate the magical dimension of routine and habitual ways of perceiving and thinking about reality, and therefore of the magical dimension of conceptualizing and ordering reality during the premodern era by means of works of narrative folklore collected by local folklorists between the 1950s and the 1980s of the twentieth century. The book, which was published by the University of Silesia in 2008, is an attempt to recreate the magical image of the world shared by the broadest social strata of Cieszyn Silesia. It is also an attempt at finding an answer to the question of the role that magical thinking played in social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1989) in the premodern era.

When presenting a book dedicated to the English-speaking reader, we should first explain why in an anthropological study looking at magical thinking as part of social construction of reality, we choose to refer to relatively obscure region of Cieszyn Silesia, one of Silesian provinces, which constituted part of Habsburg's monarchy since 1918. The Duchy of Teschen territory mentioned in contemporary anthropological, sociological and linguistic literature in English is known most commonly as the borderland. Works dedicated to Cieszyn Silesia typically focus on the study of processes that shape collective identities and processes of linguistic change, and the study and demonstration of the influence of national borders on these processes (Hannan 1996). The previous Duchy of Teschen was divided between two states in 1920: Poland and Czechoslovakia. During the years of the border crossing the area (lasting, with one break, from 1938 to 1945), the Cieszyn Silesia used to be a multi-language and multi-ethnic territory, which was a common phenomenon across the regions of Eastern Europe at that time. The territory was dominated by the population, which identified with the Polish language aside populations that identified with German or Czech and a population that identified with two or more languages simultaneously. The Czechoslovakian Poles who inhabited the Czech part of the former Duchy of Teschen are one of the luckier ethnic minorities of Central-Eastern Europe that managed to survive the Second World War on its territory and the following mass displacements of entire populations. The Polish minority exists in the Czech part of the Cieszyn Silesia to this day, even if due to assimilation, its numbers have dwindled.

Ethnic conflicts in that territory, which from the end of the Second World War took on a character of a competition between the Polish and Czech ethnicity (after eliminating and relatively marginalizing the German language), are the reason for the wealth of folklore materials collected between the 50s and the 80s that is almost unmatched. The motive behind these long term and intense ethnographic field studies conducted by the Polish Cultural and Educational Association in Czechoslovakia (PZKO) was an attempt to collect proof for the ethnically Polish character of the municipalities which, at the time of being inducted into Czechoslovakia, were mostly inhabited by populations speaking in Silesian-Polish dialect and identified with the standard Polish language. Under the guise of the official friendship between the communist governments of Poland and Czechoslovakia an unofficial Czech-Polish *kulturkampf* continued. It focused, among other issues, on winning domination over the narrative regarding the linguistic and cultural past of the area. One of the main tools of that struggle over the image of the past wielded by the local Poles was folklore studies focused on recording and documenting oral folklore of different genres. Thanks to that effort, today, we have very precise samples of the local, historical folklore at our disposal, which are representative enough to use them for reconstructing with great detail local models of life-worlds. For a long time, in ethnographic discourses of Central-Eastern Europe, texts of the oral folklore have been looked at from the perspective of aesthetics or the question of collective identities, but they could be treated as a relevant source for reconstruction of the magical image of the world of the premodern era, regardless of the fact that similar texts across Europe and including metropolitan cultures, were collected at the turn of an epoch that we call postmodernism.

Due to the fact that the folklorists living in the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia inhabited by the Polish minority – the so-called *Zaolzie* – focused on folklore narratives of the oldest generation of people living in the least urbanized areas, we may suspect that the materials they collected constitutes at least a partial representation of the premodern world, even if the storytellers themselves lived in an already modern, heavily industrialized, and urbanized country of the Eastern Block. The switch from premodern to modern world initiated by the industrial revolution did not happen simultaneously in all parts of Europe and did not encompass all social strata and all spheres of everyday life at the same time. Even if we were to connect the beginning of modernism with the industrial revolution, the change from the premodern to modern epoch had a form of a multi-dimensional evolution that, with varying speeds, took over different aspects of social practices. In the Cieszyn Silesia area, the premodern templates of culture held for the longest among the plebeian strata, mostly in respect to everyday life,

and mostly those that did not require a lot of reflection, or verification. Cieszyn Silesia's folklorists managed to collect an interesting material during times when the remains of magical thinking in its premodern form functioned at least among some of the members of the oldest generation of farmers and laborers as a natural way of spontaneous perception and interpretation of the world, while in other circles they have been already recognized as an element of ancestral tradition that is worth recording. Magical thinking as such has an obvious universal dimension (Sørensen 2007) that pertains to the modern and postmodern world, however, there are no more characters of the socially reproduced system of ordering of the world.

At this point, we must ask how it is possible for mutually exclusive paradigms that condition the perception and interpretation of the world to exist next to each other and do not lead to cognitive dissonances and conflicts. The answer could lie in the phenomenological theory of everyday knowledge proposed by Alfred Schütz (Schütz 1944). Everyday knowledge differs from scientific knowledge by not having the prerequisite of being consistent. It also does not have to eliminate contradictory views and attitudes. Not all its elements activate simultaneously, but rather interchangeably follow the changing circumstances, which repeatedly decide about the hierarchy of importance of the objects of our interest. On the plane of the everyday, the way of perceiving the world that fits one set of circumstances could be replaced by a different way in a different situation without the need for any revisions. The consistency of attitudes and beliefs does not constitute a necessity in this case, while interpretations, which within a reflexive overview would be mutually exclusive can, instead, complement one another within the sphere of spontaneously adopted worldviews. As an example, let us take a theater play, in which an actor playing the main protagonist is killed with a dagger and dies, while remaining alive to give another performance and, once again, "die." In the spontaneous experience of the audience member, one does not exclude the other and even within the framework of reflective view a similar contradiction does not have to be noticed and does not have to constitute an epistemological problem. Within the sphere of everyday life, the magical order of the world can exist besides the positivistic one, or any other order, as long as each of them finds use in specific circumstances. The magical order of cognition takes on the form of unobserved, tacit routine when new information corresponds with reference framework (or: background knowledge) to a point where there is no longer a need for a blunt legitimization.

In this book, we work with the notion of folklore as proposed by Peter G. Bogatyrev and Roman Jakobson (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980). As understood by these authors, the verbal folklore is a poetic text that exhibits a repeatable

meaning structure that corresponds with aesthetic and cognitive habits (reference frameworks) of the members of the communication community understood as a more or less broad social environment. In that sense, folklore is a relative phenomenon, due to diversity of social environments and changeability of historical circumstances that are tied to patterns of fictionalization and perception, including evaluation and ordering of the world. In that sense, we could speak of historical folklore of a given territory, or a social environment and contemporary folklore, shaped by, among others, currently employed communication technologies.

As a source for reconstruction of the magical image of the world from the premodern epoch, we used only those texts of historical folklore that have been recorded on tape and after minimal editorial treatment published in magazines native to the researched area and placed in local press. We use narratives, which from the perspective of their “senders” take the form of memories about past, important events and not memories about how their ancestors interpreted the world. One problem related to use of these sources was the fact that we are dealing exclusively with narratives recorded by local folklorists, most often without any information about the social context or circumstances surrounding the recreation of those narratives. However, the relative lack of context for the used texts does not constitute any major, methodological problem, due to our stated goal, that is a reconstruction of premodern mechanisms of cognitive ordering of the world, which are independent from any concrete situation, because they operate both within the framework of spontaneous perception of phenomena and within the boundaries of their secondary interpretation and reflection.

Inspired by the classics of anthropology like James G. Frazer, Marcel Mauss, Edgar E. Evans-Pritchard and others, we refer to the concept of magic only to alleged dependencies and processes that, according to testimonies of witnesses, work independently from whether they are being registered by human consciousness. The object of our interest is the implicit, direct performativity of phenomena, different from performativity that is mediated by the human consciousness. In that sense, we have excluded from our field of interest any situations, in which the sign has an impact on the world in a verifiable way, because the observer does not differentiate it from the reality which it represents. We can study only that which is made available by the folklore material we work with. We are not primarily focused on rhetoric, speech acts, or reification, nor circumstances, in which that what people perceive as real becomes such in its consequences (Thomas and Thomas 1928), like in the case of divination (representing sign) becomes fulfilled, because people have identified it with a future state of affairs.

This book is an attempt to reconstruct the premodern, cognitive habitus that is employed in routine situations of everyday life and which in the light of intensifying domination of modernist templates of culture has gradually become noticeable, transformed into an object of reflection, gaining a status of something suspicious, doubtful, amazing, or even amusing, a status of an object of ethnographic interest. We are undertaking the reconstruction of patterns of seeing and interpreting the world used independently from a situation and relevance of phenomena that are of interest to a man. We are looking at patterns, which are the rule within the framework of a spontaneous perception, fictionalization, and reflective thinking.

Chapter One deals with defining the category of “colloquial.” It is an attempt at answering the question of what is the difference between colloquial and all the other texts. What is the relationship between a colloquial text and narrative folklore?

Chapter Two touches upon the question of categorization that constitutes the center of the argumentation in the book. I attempt to show that we could also employ the theory of categorization – within which the cognitive linguistic studies has been related to the lexical plane of language – as means of delineating broader units of language – whether it is an opinion (proposition), or narrative itself. A narrative could be understood as an ordering of fragments of the experienced reality through the plot in the process of transforming experienced contents into “chains” of events that are ordered by cause-and-effect relationships. Similar process based on selective forgetting, which in the field of semiotics is described as semiosis, could be considered an example of categorization, making the world available to a man, thanks to a relative simplification and immobilization of that very world. If we were to understand categorization in that way, we should consider the social memory as its unique form, along the representations of experienced reality in the form of common and colloquial narrative. A form of categorization understood as a process of ordering – simplification and solidifying – of reality is finally magical thinking that does not recognize coincidences itself. It is the primary thesis of this work.

The fact that the world represented in any narrative is never an exact reflection of the experienced world, but always its more or less successful representation, suggests a fundamental question about collectively determined, or solidified mechanisms of creating these very representations. The key code or system of operation, symptoms of which constitute the object of this book, is magic understood as action and cognitive system, along with an established interpretation of the world. It provides men with – often misleading – conviction that they can explain almost everything and fully control their present and future.

Chapter Three focuses on analyzing units of different levels of linguistic construction of the world, which are characterized by a shared correspondence. More specifically, we are talking about correspondence between images that accompany notions of natural language (connotations), routine propositions, and narratives. In that context we could speak of three planes of a linguistic system: stereotype as a repetitive and simplified image of reality on the level of word's connotation, routine judgment, and common narrative. A stereotype was shown here as an unquestionable condition for any kind of spontaneous cognition and communication, which is simultaneously a condition for and a result of categorization. Repetitive character of judgments, propositions, and texts constituting the effect of categorization as is nothing else than a symptom of a systemic character of language and culture, understood as a condition for the existence of the experienced cosmos, a sphere of cognitive comfort and safety.

Chapter Four looks at the relationship between the narrative and social memory. Its most important proposition is a thesis that social memory constitutes a specific form of categorization. Colloquial and common narratives about the past may function as the basic medium of socialization, social communication as a basic tool of realizing the social or environmental consensus and of identity building – all that due to collectively conditioned forgetting. It is based on employing relatively common systems of meaning, or systems of constructing sense. Conclusions in Chapter Four allow us to recognize that categorization is gradable. Although linguistic-cultural clues participate in the process of noticing “facts,” they can always be verified, which means that their domination is limited – to a lesser, or greater extent – by sensually perceived reality. The less of direct contact with the sensual reality there is – since it is available to a varying degree (distant in time and space) – the more pronounced the domination of linguistic-cultural clues for recreating that reality.

A man lives in a world that appears to him as tested by others, including his ancestors, relatives, and friends who are person's authority figures. Therefore, an individual is also forced to rely on narratives by anonymous witnesses and information passed on by multiple intermediaries. A constructive (world-shaping) dimension of language and culture is the least visible, although present, within the sphere of directly experienced reality. It is more noticeable within the sphere of authentic experiences recreated in a narrative by a witness, and even more so within a sphere of an alleged experience of unknown individuals and their recreated narratives that have gone through a collective “filter” of sender-receiver chain of participants.

Chapter Five constitutes a practical development of the thesis formulated in Chapter Two about the life-world having a multi-layered, complicated,

heterogenic and sometimes internally contradictory character. The conclusion of Chapter Five takes on the form of a warning against creation of too systematic and generalized models of life-worlds, excluding “cracks” and “crevices,” paradoxes and inconsequentialities present within them. The bulk of materials that have been analyzed in this chapter are folklore and ethnographic materials collected in Cieszyn Silesia territory.

Chapter Six presents magic as a cognitive and action/empirical paradigm that influences the processes of categorization that take place within its boundaries. As the core of the reader’s introduction into the questions of magical thinking we have used works by Mircea Eliade and Aron Y. Gurevich, whose works are not primarily connected to the theory of magic, and such classics as James G. Frazer, Marcel Mauss, Bronisław Malinowski, and others.

Chapter Seven is an example of practical use of texts of narrative folklore, understood by its senders as memory narratives, as a source of knowledge about figures of their life-world. On the basis of the analysis of similar texts of historical folklore from Cieszyn Silesia, I analyze the elements and sediments (relics) of magical thinking as a socially conditioned tool for perception and understanding of the world. The analysis of texts is preceded by a short discussion of the area from which the source material comes from, and methodological rules for interpretation of particular texts. Particularities of Cieszyn Silesia has no direct impact on arguments presented in the book, if we were to assume that the object of our deliberations is a phenomenon that, at least in the context of Central-Eastern Europe, transgresses ethnic and linguistic boundaries. The value of the chosen area lies in the wealth of materials collected by folklorists who researched it and systematically provided a rich, original, and representative cache of materials for anyone interested. To illustrate the virility of analyzed strategies used for ordering the world, I have also used texts of narrative folklore gathered during fairly recent ethnographic studies.

Conclusion, which is a summary of the research, confirms the thesis that magical thinking is not only a system of meanings that defines routine (habitual) directions of categorizations that guide the sphere of the everyday life, but could be also considered as an example of the very tendency to create cosmos understood as a sphere of predictability, easily understood sense and relative safety. We should mention in that context that a similar tendency does not pertain to an individual functioning within a premodern culture alone. It pertains, to a greater or lesser extent, to a man as such.

I have a pleasant obligation to thank Karol Daniel Kadłubiec and Jerzy Bartmiński for advice and inspiration, and critical commentary on the draft versions. I would also like to thank my book’s reviewers, Piotr Kowalski, who has

since passed away, Michał Buchowski, Wojciech Burszta and František Vrhel. Words of gratitude are also to Lukáš Horák for all the help and to my other friends, critical readers of the Polish version of the book, especially my friends from the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Silesia.

Chapter One Narrative Folklore as a Colloquial Text and Its Cognitive Dimension

If we were to assume that colloquial narratives, which will be the subject of the following analyses due to the elements of magic they contain, constitute a case of a folklore text, we should define that term at the very beginning. I understand the term “folklore” as a particular case of a colloquial text that cannot be sufficiently defined by establishing its object or subject, but rather through means of its operating. In other words, folklore is difficult to define because of its object, or its thematic range, since those can change with time. Folklore’s text can refer to any sphere of reality and to whatever fragment of that reality – it can pertain to past events (narratives about “how it used to be in the olden days”), contemporary, and future (prophecies regarding the “end of the world”); it can refer to the personal sphere (family sagas), and public one (hoaxes, conspiracy theories, which can become politically weaponized as part of a campaign); magic and demonology, and science and related sensational technologies,¹ or quasi-sciences (ufology, parapsychology).

Folklore fails to be identified by means of establishing its subject, or its carrier.² The category of the *folks*, which delineated the range of folklore within the romantic paradigm (Krawczyk-Wasilewska 1986: 10), is no longer valid today,

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- 1 In this context, is sufficient to mention popular conspiracy theories concerning e.g. CIA archives and laboratories storing UFOs or even the remains of extraterrestrial crewmembers of those ships that supposedly crashed in the United States of America. These are theories employed – and effectively sustained in the public circulation – by the film and TV productions (*The X Files* series by C. Carter, *Independence Day* by R. Emmerich, etc.) According to other common narratives, CIA laboratories were supposed to be a breeding ground for the AIDS virus created as a biological weapon (Czubala 1993: 85). If we were to assume that popular TV production are extensions of common knowledge and popular fantasies, we might as well mention “laboratory zombies” or the dead reanimated to a half-life, either through a Frankensteinian transplantology or using trioxin, a gas supposedly created for military use (*The Return of the Living Dead* by D. O’Bannon), or a whole host of other chemicals invented in those laboratories (*Re-Animator* by S. Gordon and others).
 - 2 “We should once and for all reject the rural sociological discriminant as secondary within the general, theoretical defining of folklore” (Kowalski 1990: 111).

especially since the most vibrant genres of the narrative folklore today – urban legends and conspiracy theories – do not recognize any social boundaries that would mark the range of their transmissions (Janeček 2006: 324). To varying degrees, each man is a carrier of folklore, within the pre-modern, modern, and the post-modern culture. Each man is a carrier of folklore in a sense of being a carrier of commonly shared communication and cognitive habits, stereotypes (simplified concepts of reality), simplifying judgments (for example, sayings and proverbs), or narratives.

Defining folklore by means of its “genres” seems to be falling short as well. First, its genres might be undergoing transformations and second, only a number of folklore genres display an objective character in the sense of its carriers being able to recognize it. As shown by J. Kryżanowski in his polemic with S. Thompson, the same narrative can be considered a fairy tale, or a folk tale, if its carrier approaches its represented world as questionable, or openly fictional, or treats the account of “objective” reality as true, authentic, and casting no shadow of a doubt. In the narrative of the second type, a folklorist can, at best, recognize the genre of folklore, but certainly not its carrier. (Kryżanowski 1980a: 237–238) Narrative, which in the mind of its sender or consumer, reveals the truth, is not folklore for him. Whenever we encounter realistic fiction (Kadłubiec 1999: 63–69) or an instance where the information is passed from “mouth to mouth,” (or “from a mouth to the media and from the media to a mouth,” or “interface to interface,” etc.) during the transmission is considered objective in a sense that the text is of “faith” character – we are dealing with an unconscious folklore text that is capable of taking a form of different genres and not exclusively in the era of convergent media.

We do not consider a narrative that, in our assessment, represents a true, or plausible, state of affairs, as well as a true, or plausible sequence of events as folklore. Let us repeat, genres of folklore that are characterized by a realistic fiction are invisible for the carrier of said folklore. J. H. Brunvand (as cited by P. Janeček) highlights the fact that we are aware of our own folklore as vaguely as we are of the grammatical rules of our native language (Janeček 2006: 324). A man, when forgetting about the language and its rules (and the culture and its rules), points his attention to the “facts” and not the form, in which they present themselves to him or her. Following Gadamer, we could call this phenomenon a *self-concealment of language* (Gadamer 1993: 146–154). “Self-discovery of language” is nothing other than a linguistic realism, also referred to as the *myth of the museum*, where one’s attention is being pointed to “objective phenomena” with simultaneous disregard of the issue of social construction of these phenomena. In other words, man assigns word-labels to phenomena not realizing that they

are dependent from language, culture, and social needs (Weisgerber 1971a: 33–39, see Kajfosz 2001: 12–14).

The genres of folklore could be compared to letters in a newspaper: an ordinary reader, despite reading, does not notice particular letters. His eyes glide over the paragraphs and he points his attention to “facts” that he or she finds interesting. However, metaphorically understood, folklorist is an editor, who is required to limit his interest in “facts” and his fascination in the represented world and focus his attention on particular genres of narratives understood as “letters.” They distinguish themselves through their particular style and composition that project on the presented “facts.” The style – next to credibility of the sender and context of the message – constitutes one of the most important rhetorical tools. They shape the modality of every message that, along with our *common knowledge*, decide whether a given message is perceived as true, plausible, implausible or fictional.

The cognitive distance created by redirecting one’s focus from the content of a message to its form is referred to in phenomenology as *phenomenological reduction*. In this case it consists of taking the “facts,” which are fascinating in a way they draw attention of men (cf. Sokol 2002: 90, Vaňková 2007: 29) out of the equation. Like an editor who is in awe of (and, in this case, blinded by) the content of the text and might miss a typo, a folklorist might sometimes fail to recognize sensational information as a folklore text. What is more, before recognizing the genre of that information, folklorists themselves might participate in its transmission (Janeček 2006: 323). It might be a proof of the fact that a pre-theoretical attitude toward phenomena (understood as assuming spontaneous positions) is always something primal, while critical questioning of one’s own experience – something derivative.

I have mentioned before that a single, clear criterion that allows one to define the phenomenon of folklore, and therefore distinguish between a folklore text from the rest of the texts is a way in which folklore functions. The question about the contents of texts is not key to assigning their genres. The key question is whether – and to what degree – these contents correspond to perspectives, convictions, and strategies common among members of a particular linguistic-cultural community (or among the members of a particular environment), in which a given text appears. The basic criterion of establishing a text’s belonging to folklore is reduced to a question to what extent the contents of said text are anchored in the consciousness of the members of a particular community and to what extent they are shared and recreated? In this case, we can safely refer to the work of Bogatyrev and Jakobson *Folklore as a Special Form of Creation*. According to the authors, a text can be recognized as a folklore text exclusively

if it was “adopted by a given community” (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980: 5) and constitutes its part; a text that the community has accepted. While focusing their attention exclusively on the aesthetic dimension of the folklore text, Bogatyrev and Jakobson omitted its cognitive aspect. However, the folklore creation process they have identified is simultaneously a world creation process – it constitutes an expression of social construction of *life-world* (*Lebenswelt*).

Anchoring of a text in a consciousness may be defined as its more or less precise reproduction or “repetition” of specific forms or structures of meaning (Bartmiński 2012, cf. Kowalski 1990: 119, Krawczyk-Wasilewska 1986: 65–66),³ which translates to its conventional and relatively systematic character in the sense of its orientation toward the sphere of *langue*. Texts, themes or meaning structures that replicate in that manner shape the collective *background knowledge*, or a system of assumptions, or a sphere of knowledge that is considered obvious and conditions the understanding of all other texts and understanding of the world as such. That is why the key indicator – or *definiendum* – of folklore is its fidelity toward defined patterns of text (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2007: 43–105, Sulima 1976: 11–12), which are rarely objectivized and noticed by the carriers of folklore. S. Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska explains the term *pattern* as

conceptual text scheme, toward which both the broadcaster in the process of telling of the text, as well as the listener during his lip-memory reception are ‘oriented.’ It’s a scheme that becomes a norm for communicating users of language – broadcasters and consumers – and serves as a pointer, orienting both sides of the social communication (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2007: 104).

According to Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, vividness of those themes is:

in direct proportion to the level of stabilization of a text in the process of social transmission (that is, in the process of its ‘folklorization.’ Only texts with strong patterns – defined as clichéd or stereotypical – have a chance of surviving in the social memory and social circulation (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2007: 105, Sulima 1980: 98–99, 113, 122).

On the margin of the concept of the paradigm as the key indicator of folklore and the colloquial text, it is worth noticing that folklore should be understood as a phenomenon that undergoes changes in the same sense as human mentality understood as the “structure of long lasting” (Kowalski 2000a: 18, Le Goff 1996). Examples of that could include already mentioned transformation of themes

3 The repetition of entire sequences of text is called formulaicity, while the repetition of structures of meaning of the text, understood as simplified representations of reality, is considered stereotyping.

and genres of folklore, such as the demythologization in the form of transformation of the myth (a believed legend that reveals the truth and legitimizes socially constructed order as something natural and necessary) into a fairytale understood as a fiction genre (Sirovátka 2002: 54). Another example could be the transformation of a tale into a fairytale (Krzyżanowski 1980a: 237–238) and taking over of the tale's function to inform of surprising – although real – events through other genres of the text, such as urban legend for example.

Folklore text is similar to prose or poetry due to its ability to evoke an aesthetic sensation. It differs from it, however, by possessing a systemic character – it cannot be cognitively too original, because it is a creation of a collective – a social network – and not an individual. Folklore, due to its replicating of internal meaning structures, displays characteristics of *langue*, or a code, created through usage, or a habitual collective practice, that functions as a prism and a tool of understanding: It is emphasized that folklore is oriented specifically toward *langue* and literature, toward *parole* (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980: 2).⁴ Because of the fact that the reproduction of a text can be more or less accurate, we are able to talk about its variant character, with the caveat that the basis of each variation of folklore is always a defined, hypothetical invariant, or something that is being repeated (Krawczyk-Wasilewska 1986: 29). The variant character understood as “incomplete repeatability” can be simultaneously recognized as an expression of human creativity, a poetic spirit conditioned by the commonly shared linguistic-cultural system. A statement that a folklore text is – compared to literary or scientific texts – repetitive and commonly understood could be replaced by saying that it has a “stereotypical character” (Ługowska 1981: 16) or a “ clichéd character” (Bartmiński 2012, Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2007: 104). That, however, does not contradict an assumption about the creative approach toward the style and composition of a text within the works of folklore. It is dependent exclusively on individual talents of the broadcaster. However, the creative approach applies exclusively to the range allowed by the system in charge of the particular genre and forms of its emergence in specific contexts of everyday life and festive contexts. In other words: a folklore text is a recreation of a particular scheme,

4 Literary texts also display the systemic character. Precisely because of the systemic character of a literary text, we can speak of it belonging to a particular epoch that is denoted by a specific vision of the world that dominates in a specific environment of a specific time. The systemic character of folklore is – in comparison to literary texts – easier to recognize and more pronounced in a sense that the collectivity, reduced to the social conditionings of the sender, dominates in folklore over the creative individuality (which is more pronounced in literary texts).

but a recreation, however, which allows for a degree of originality, proven by different variants appearing in folklore. The definition of folklore should include the fact that outside of fulfilling a particular scheme, an equally important marker of folklore is its aesthetic dimension. Therefore, I propose to understand the term “folklore” as a *colloquial (repeatable in different variants) text*⁵ that fulfills a certain aesthetic function and is a tool of social construction of reality (cf. Berger and Luckmann 1989).

The conclusion seems to be that there is no way of talking about folklore without referencing a concrete community, functioning in concrete historical circumstances. A text that is considered an example of folklore in one place and time does not have to be that in another. Similarly, a text that constitutes folklore in a particular social environment – within a particular social network – does not have to be that in a different social environment or a different social network. It all depends on the level of social reproduction of the text and the system of assumptions that allows it to be understood in the same – or at least similar – way. This is why it is necessary to differentiate between a folklore text and its representation.

If we were to try to define more specifically the process of introducing a text into the social circulation it could be assumed that the presence of a text in a social circulation equals the ease of its apprehension. If a given text is “commonly understood” within a smaller or larger community (in exact same, or fairly similar way), it means that it constitutes a direct expression of the community’s linguistic-cultural code understood not only as a linguistic competence, but also as a related system of notions and social practices used to reproduce these notions. Hence, folklore is a vessel for the ideology as it legitimizes socially constructed order of the world and, respectively, fulfills a function of social integration as understood by É. Durkheim. Repeatability and common understanding of folklore text have a correlative character and condition one another: only an understood text – in a more or less altered form – can be repeated within a particular communicational community. And it is understood precisely thanks to its own reproduction and the related distribution. Contents of folklore become solidified

5 The notion of a *text* could be understood in this context either in a strictly linguistic sense or in a broader, semiotic sense, as a sequence of signs, which would allow including musical folklore within its boundaries as well. In semiotics, the concept of text has two meanings: a narrower one, in which a text is a *sequence of linguistic signs* and a broader one, in which a text is understood as a *sequence of signs* as such and not exclusively linguistic ones.

in man's consciousness constituting a particular communicational community, even if limited to a very specific one, for example – a professional community.

In this context, a folklore text should be recognized as a direct actualization of socially conditioned aesthetic and cognitive habitus:

In folklore the relationship between the work of art on the one hand, and its objectivization – i.e., the so-called variants of this work as performed by different individuals – on the other, is completely analogous to the relationship between *langue* and *parole*. Like *langue*, the folkloric work⁶ is extrapersonal and leads only a potential existence; it is only a complex of particular norms and impulses, a canvas of actual tradition, to which the performers impart life through the embellishments of their individual creativity, just as the producers of *parole* do with respect to *langue*. To the extent that these individual innovations in speech (or folklore) conform to the exigencies of the community and anticipate the regular evolution of *langue* (or folklore) they become socialized and form the constituent elements of *langue* (or the elements of a folklore work) (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980: 9).

According to J. Ługowska “the affiliation of a folklore text to an abstract system of language existing potentially in the consciousness of the speakers, and not the order of speech, is listed as the *differentia specifica* of that text; just as in the case of literary texts” (Ługowska 2002: 303). W. Krawczyk-Wasilewska expressed the idea differently, stating that the performer

always takes into the account – sometimes unconsciously⁷ – knowledge of the group, its attachment to authority, symbols, rituals, traditions, social norms and collective world-view in that community. In that case, the individual creative act (often in the form of reproduction, but always as an executive act) is combined with views and emotions of a community and expresses its collective ideology (Krawczyk-Wasilewska 1986: 27).

As a part of a recreation or actualizing the system by means of sent and received texts, the chance of being remembered and then subsequent recreation belongs exclusively to a text that is understood, or one that is not too far removed from the notions of reality that compose the system, which in turn is used to read said text by the recipient. That situation takes place when a text has too few points of contact with a thought system of a particular community. In the case of a “bad” understanding – in the case of an understanding that is not in line with the intentions of the sender – the given text, which dies on its own within the

6 Or: text of folklore.

7 One could even conclude that the performer subordinates himself to the knowledge of a group almost entirely unconsciously, since as its member, he is typically unaware of the totality of social conditionings of a system to which he belongs and to which all the texts he reproduces belong as well.

social circulation, might become a foundation for a birth of a new text more or less related to the original that has a chance of entering into the system, or even attempt transforming it:

And, again, everything rejected by the environment simply does not exist as a fact of folklore; it falls from use and dies out. . . . In short, in folklore only those forms are retained which hold a functional value for the given community. In this way one function of a form may clearly be replaced by another. But as soon as a form becomes non-functional it dies out in folklore, . . . From the above discussion it clearly follows that the existence of a work of folklore requires a group to accept and sanction it for its continuation. In folklore research the preventive censure of the community must be kept in mind constantly as a fundamental principle (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980: 5–7).

In that context, we are looking at a censorship function that is often performed unconsciously, while its proper executor is the community of man guided by the habitual, aesthetic, and cognitive preferences.

Certainty about a particular text constituting an actualization of a currently functioning linguistic-cultural system and a realization of a system that does not diverge from the rest of its realization could be achieved only in reference to an “ephemeral” (unsustainable) text (Sulima 1976: 7, cf. Łysiak 1990: 182) that rests on the mercy of the current needs of the community. Let us repeat: a folklore text must be reproduced on a larger scale, while preserving its meaning, which will allow it to represent actual, collectively shared, notions, positions, actions, norms, and values.

The conventionality of a text is not permanent. It often possesses a temporal, opportunistic character. As it has been observed, a text that has been a folklore text yesterday does not have to constitute one today. If a given text were to lose its popular, common, or systemic, character it shall become a “representation of an earlier status of the folklore body of work”

If we were to agree that culture, like everything else in human life, undergoes the continuous changes, we would have to assume that folklore – as its element – undergoes similar changes as well.⁸ Each epoch has its favorite themes that grab the attention of people living through it, and which might be rejected or forgotten in the epochs that will follow. They can also make a comeback in an altered form: “in reality, each generation has at its disposal a repertoire that is matched to its time” (Czubala 2005: 29). From that perspective, the linguistic-cultural system undergoes constant transformation, and if folklore constitutes its

8 “Human world is a historically, culturally and socially changing reality, which is precisely the cultural phenomenon” (Kowalski 1990: 8).

integral part, it will also be characterized by progression, or built up of layers of epochs and their corresponding ways of interpreting and ordering of things we could call epistemes (Foucault 2002). The changing orders of cognition must characterize folklore as well; orders that organize knowledge and which do not have an objectified character among their carriers are not recognized by them (Kowalski 2000a: 11–18). Even folklore texts that refer to the past have a current character, because they speak about the past through the prism of current human needs, current values, cognitive habits, interpretations and everything that dominates in the present moment. Current categories are being projected into the past, which is re-actualized within the story. These categories constitute a representation of a paradigm within which said re-actualization takes place.⁹ One could state that the past, which from the divine perspective is one and objective, from man's perspective is subjective in the sense that it "has its own history." Representatives of each epoch looked at themselves and on the epochs past slightly differently (Le Goff 1966). The history of mentality, which became somewhat notorious when looked at from that perspective in the second half of the twentieth century, overlaps with the history of folklore. In order for that overlap to take place we have to assume, following P. Kowalski, that the commonality is a form, in which standard, mediocrity, and cultural norm reflect, and that it is the norm, in which the mentality realizes itself (Kowalski 2000a: 32).

The ephemeral character of the oral text of folklore, or even an electronic text (if it is designated for a single time use – for reading on Facebook, after which it is difficult to retrace it – results in its dependence on the collective memory, which allows it to continuously adapt to the changing, aesthetic preferences, communication technologies' capabilities and varying social needs, reacting to changes in the world, and changes in lives of man in the world.

Sometimes a text that escapes conventions becomes broadly distributed under favorable circumstances and attains a systemic character, evoking a defined change within the sphere of communication habituses, and within notions attached to them. However, "with the usual changes for linguistic change in effect we can speak of the 'birth' of a language innovation only from that moment when it constitutes a social fact, that is, when the community of speakers has adopted it as its own" (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980: 4). On the contrary to Bogatyrev and Jakobson's claim that "the absolute supremacy of 'preventive censure,'

9 Even the scientific cognition cannot fully escape at least partial projection of the actual concept of the world into the past and failing to observe within the relicts of the past that which their creator has seen in them. (Kowalski 2000a: 21)

which renders any conflict with the censure fruitless,” (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980: 11), we need to assert that the authority of the preventive censorship is not total, at least in the sense that it allows for the system to undergo – typically gradual, or subliminal (hence invisible) even – changes, which in time could lead to changes in mentality. (Kowalski 2000a: 9–18) The ephemeral (unstable) folklore texts repeat themselves within a given communicational community in different versions, while their source becomes hazy and disappears in the process of transmission. It becomes either irrelevant or fictional in a sense that it is defined differently, according to the needs of their carriers. In that context it has a situational character.

For the next marker of folklore, we should use its “anonymity.” Under the umbrella of anonymity, we could place the fact that the “original” author of the text becomes irrelevant in the process of the text moving from its performer to another performer (the transmitted text itself is alive among the participants of a particular linguistic and cultural order, independent from its original author and sometimes even against his will). Second, establishing the authorship becomes impossible in the context of a folklore text due to, often parallel, broadcaster-consumer chains, which keep the text alive. Third, more than one individual can claim the authorship of any given text, or the text could be assigned multiple authors. The anonymity remains closely related to the previously mentioned characteristics of folklore: “anonymity – so strongly stressed in numerous definitions – boils down to typicality, repeatability and text variants, which are in turn assigned to the ‘scripts of the everyday’” (Kowalski 1990: 119).

The final, key marker of the folklore text, which – along with the already listed ones – allows us to differentiate it from other texts, is an aesthetic function (a poetic function). It is an ability of a text to catch attention to its form, which in other circumstances would have a “transparent,” unnoticeable character (Jakobson 1989: 86–87). The poetic function could be assigned to different planes of meaning of a text and could transpire with varying strength (Jakobson 1989: 86). The question of a poetic function of a folklore text could be summarized in this context as a question of a degree and measure. The poetic function is more visible in a folk song, which due to its clearly fictional status of the represented world constitutes a recognizable genre among its performers. It becomes less defined in an authentic (understood as: authentically faith-based way) fable, urban legend, conspiracy theory, or a rumor that appear to one as “objective” information about the world, or texts that are the most faithful reflection of events themselves. The source of the aesthetic experience could be assigned to hyperbole as an open, or hidden, metaphor being a stylistic and

world-creating tool, working through exaggeration, or a strictly poetic shaping of the represented world.

The folkloric work, marked by the amount of creativity in the sense of the poetics of its lyrics, especially in terms of creating different variants, constitutes a realization of identical templates in the cognitive sense. It constitutes a performative (a realization) of that same, in essence, vision of the world. It could be presented on the example of a metaphor, which in the case of folklore is relatively imperceptible in a sense that it rarely realizes cognitive goals related to the shift of meaning based on a non-traditional comparison (Głowiński and Okopień-Sławińska and Sławiński 1986: 447–448). Folklore is more of a means for building of a *cosmos* in this context than of undermining it, or “deconstructing,” as it happens in high poetry that rips the words out of their established contexts and grants them new meanings, in effect operating at the borderline of coherence (Barthes 1991).

In summary, we may talk about folklore text as being characterized by:

1. **general understanding** among the entire linguistic community, or within a specific environment (e.g. social network, subculture), resulting from the conventional character of the text;
2. **ephemerality** (unsustainability) and the related susceptibility to change;
3. **repeatability**, which is a condition of any kind of variability;
4. **anonymity** understood as lack of original points of view;
5. **aesthetic function** (poetic function) understood as form, which evokes emotional sensations, which makes the accompanying content more appealing (same as in the case of infotainment).

The first four characteristics are typical of a colloquial text. If we were to detect all five characteristics in a text, we are working with a folklore text understood as a particular kind of a colloquial text.

In that context, we should not overlook the fact that the same features could to some degree characterize other popular texts appearing in the commercial mass media. If we were to pay attention to popular text in the media, one could conclude that, also in this particular case, the consumer – as an element of a collective of listeners, readers, onlookers, or internet users in general, or as a part of a specific target group – influences their condition, even if he or she does not change directly into a direct broadcaster or performer of the text. Only a multiplied, mass consumer can provide sufficient revenues from commercials to the media. In other words, revenues from ads are dependent on the number of consumers, or on a consumer, who dominates in an environment toward which a given media text is directed. It means that a large group of consumers (in general,

or in a sufficiently large target group) decides about the form and content of popular media texts, while preventive censorship, in this case, takes the form of viewership, or readership, under the condition that the deciding factor is the number of viewers, listeners, and readers. This creates a possibility for selecting the most popular, colloquial, repeatable characteristic from the entirety of media texts and, at least on that plane, equates them with a classic, verbal folklore. It creates a foundation for speaking about newspaper or journalistic folklore (Krawczyk-Wasilewska 1986: 45–46), or even “media folklore.” *Zeitungssage* (Janeček 2006: 325, 330), highlighted in the German folklore studies, could be recognized as one of its genres.

At the same time, however, we must conclude that the number of consumers is never the sole criterion of form and content of its communications in the context of media folklore. They often constitute an expression of the public relations sphere that could be reduced to all kinds of social engineering (Barański 2001). Speaking of social engineering, it is worthwhile mentioning the use of rumors and hearsays as “psychological warfare” during the Cold War (Czubala 1993: 10), or about the “mercantile legend,” or “fiscal,” or “market legend” used in business for purposes of fighting the competition, e.g. the theme of dead mouse found in a Coca-Cola bottle (Czubala 1993: 78–79). The phenomenon of instrumentalizing folklore for the purposes of economic and political needs has become stronger, particularly in the context of Facebook and other social media users. The above listed examples are a proof that the colloquial discourse (understood as system delineating boundaries of language and knowledge that it expresses) can be a subject of attempts to instrumentalize it by different agents and for a whole host of reasons. A colloquial discourse – as folklore’s sphere of operating – is never free from economic determinations and power, whether in the form of commonly accepted authorities, or in a form of hegemony based on intentional creation of a particular vision of the world, which could pass in the eyes of its consumers as a sphere of necessity and obviousness (Baldwin and McCracken 1999).

If we were to take into consideration a shared “grammar of the text” in the form of repeating topics, themes and images that the contemporary folklore shares with popular media texts, and their mutual codependence (Kowalski 2006: 7–45), we would have to conclude that the concept of media folklore has its justification. First, a popular media text is typically dependent on needs habitualized by the everyday, by expectations and preferences of the mass consumer (generally, or in a particular social circle), similarly to the classic folklore. Second, due to the reasons listed above, the media folklore is characterized by the same systemic character and an orientation toward *langue*, as it is by its colloquial verbal creativity. A text that is distinguished by a particular systemic character is,

for example, a news item in a tabloid newspaper. Besides broadcaster's interests, the universal benchmark is constituted not so much by a multi-faceted reality that the text is supposed to represent but a colloquial mentality and aesthetic tastes of the consumers who are supposed to receive the text, in order for it to be easily digestible and attractive.

If the articles published in the tabloids are supposed to answer the needs and expectations of a mass reader, they cannot be marked by cognitive schemes that would significantly diverge from the cognitive schemes ruling the consciousness of the largest share of potential readers. *Cognitive schemes* we are speaking of are only one of the key linguistic-cultural spheres of *langue*.¹⁰ The mechanisms of ordering the world, on the basis of which the perceived worlds become transformed into represented worlds from popular media texts – in the sense of revealing of the particular “facts” and the cause-and-effect relationships between them – have to, at least partially, correspond to cognitive strategies typical to a potential mass reader on the plane of his colloquial, every-day reality. The mass of consumers is in that sense a performer of a particular mastery of a style, composition, and represented worlds of its own verbal work. Hence, it is one of significant factors – although certainly not the only one – shaping discourses of the contemporary popular culture. A relative, ephemeral character also marks popular media texts and press articles (Sulima 2005). Contrary to a book, a newspaper is not designed to be archived. A sensational article appears in it and vanishes, similarly to a rumor or hearsay.

In relation to attempts at defining folklore, it is worth recalling that P. Bogatyrev and J. Jakobson assumed the existence of intermediary, passing spheres between verbal folklore (as a collective form) and the rest of texts (as individual creations). On the one hand, they assume that between folklore and literature that is close to folklore, due to its clear poetic function, there exist many cases in between. On the other hand, however, they noticed that it cannot lead toward undermining of the validity of differentiating between folklore and the rest of the texts: “Between any two neighboring domains of culture we may wish to choose there are always borders and transitional zones. Yet this circumstance does not allow us to deny either the existence of two distinct types, or the

10 “Firstly, we can single out maximum scenarios, or prefabricates of plots. An example would be standard templates of crime novel series, or collections of fables, in which the same functions (in Propp's understanding) are always repeated in the same order. These scenarios used to constitute guidelines of the genre – similar to those that provide a ‘proper’ organization of a varété spectacle on TV, which must include certain elements in particular order” (Eco 1993: 117).

usefulness of keeping them separate” (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980: 21). The colloquial character of a text in the sense of its repeatability and conventionality (its systemic character) is, of course, a *matter of degree and measure*, similarly to that text’s poetic function. It does not mean, however, that there is no way of formulating definitions of folklore in a form of a list of its important (necessary and sufficient), or at least a bundle, of its prototypical characteristics.

It seems that in the light of continuing discussions over the range of meaning of the concept of folklore, it could be helpful to approach it as a, at least to a degree, natural category that is capable of foreseeing, first and foremost, the gradation and vagueness of its own meaning contours, and secondly – a bundle of characteristic features, which mark its most representative cases. If, for example, one were to assume within the theory of literature that some of the texts constitute more or less typical examples of a defined literary genre, we could speak in the same way about, more or less, typical examples (specimens) of folklore texts, depending on the criteria and to what degree those said texts manage to fulfill.

Every text can, with the passage of time, lose its colloquial, conventional character. It means that the status of a folklore text needs to be granted to texts anew, depending on their actual functioning in the world – their actual place among the rest of the texts. *They cannot be granted that status once and for all.* We should talk about folklore exclusively in the connection to a particular communicational community that lives in a particular time and space. That is because a formally identical text could be a folklore text in one temporal and spatial context, and a folklorism in another, a mere relic representing a former, already non-existent folklore, or texts that used to be commonly and widely known and reproduced in a number of variants (repeated) within a given communicational community. It all depends on the degree, to which a given text manages to retain its systemic character and to what degree it remains an expression of a particular mentality. The same folk ballad could be a folklore text within the boundaries of one environment, while folklorism within another one (a representation of an earlier folklore).

Folklore as a Non-Text

According to the Russian semioticians, A. Piatigorsky and Y. Lotman (1993: 113), the texts of a language could be generally divided between texts that are more in a common circulation and conventional (more often recreated and well known) and texts, which have a lesser circulation and are less conventional (less frequently recreated and less known). At the same time, we should recall that a boundary between the first and the second category of texts is fluid and not very

distinct and has a relational character, since it depends on an actual comparison of a given text to another text. A similar typology could be considered a direct expression of theory of human perception employed with the issues of a text. All the states experienced by man take a form of one of two types of phenomena: a *known* phenomenon (typical, obvious, understood, predictable, not requiring an interpretation) and an *unknown* phenomenon (not typical, not obvious, incomprehensible, unpredictable, difficult to interpret). Texts belonging to the first type of phenomena are unnoticeable to man. That is because, even though they constantly accompany men in their everyday conversations, as genres, they are not an object of their theoretical interests and do not undergo a theoretical objectification. The second type of phenomena, on the other hand, is noticed. Man directs his attention toward them, ascribing them important meaning, because they constitute a particular “breach” in the surrounding reality, to which he or she is accustomed. Piatigorsky and Lotman call texts of the first type “non-texts” and the second type “texts” (Piatigorski and Lotman 1993: 100–113).

Differentiating between “non-text” and “text” has a relational character; the same as differentiating between what is known and unknown. The same phenomenon could be one or the other, depending on the context, in which it is observed and to what it is being compared (Kajfosz 2003: 67–72). A “text” would be a written text as opposed to a spoken one; impossible to understand, as opposed to one easily understandable; scientific (ennobled) as opposed to unscientific (not ennobled); religious (sacred) as opposed to non-religious (profane); sporadic as opposed to repeatable; exceptional as opposed to common, etc. A “text” for a contemporary user of the Polish language (in the sense of something that’s not obvious, hence worth of attention not exclusively for the message it conveys) would be an exotic folk song, as opposed to an urban legend, or a rumor. That folk song would pass as an example of folklore, even though in reality it would constitute a representation of an older folklore. On the other hand, the contemporary narrative representing an event that have been witnessed by a friend of a friend, e.g. about a rodent’s tail found in a loaf of bread, or in a Coca-Cola bottle, would create a sensation, pointing consumers’ attention to the “objective” event that it represent. However, it would not, most likely, attract attention to itself as a genre and would not be recognized as folklore.

Therefore, if we were to focus on a problem of differentiating between folklore texts from the rest, we could conclude that the folklore texts tend to *escape the attention of their carriers* in the sense of being “non-texts” when compared to scientific “texts” of the high culture, or “texts” belonging to some alien folklore. In the case of a rumor, the actual weight of it is carried by its contents, not the rumor itself – as a genre that could be analyzed theoretically. People do not

typically display tendencies to recognize their own folklore. They much rather have tendencies to concentrate their own theoretical attention on what is not folklore, or permanent texts (as opposed to non-permanent ones), written (as opposed to spoken), scientific (as opposed to non-scientific), sacred (as opposed to profane), etc. Folklore becomes a “text” for a particular linguistic-cultural community very often when it constitutes an “exotic” folklore in the spatial sense (a folklore of a community that is linguistically, or culturally different), or in a temporal sense (folklore of previous generations that is interesting to the contemporary generations because it differs from our current standards of being and perceiving).

A difference between a “text” and “non-text,” besides having a relational character, always resulting from actual comparison, can change over time. Over time, earlier “texts” can turn into “non-texts” and vice versa. Following these statements, we would have to interpret the birth of folkloric studies as an emergence of a new paradigm in science. As a result, folklore – which compared to literature was up to this point a “non-text” – has been noticed, collected, and transformed itself into a “text.” The history of European folkloric studies proves that the “visibility” of folklore as folklore (as a “text”) is directly proportional to its distinctness from our own standards of thematizing the world. In other words: the more a folklore text is alien – “exotic” – the easier it is for it to be noticed, evoking a need to record and write it down (cf. Todorov 1984).

It is no surprise that in the beginnings of European folkloric studies, described by Cocchiara (Cocchiara 1981), the first folkloric studies scholars found texts that were spatially (folklore from outside Europe) and temporally (folklore of the ancestors, such as *The Works of Ossian*) remote, and also remote in terms of social stratification (folklore of rural folks) as worthy of study and description. Only later researchers started focusing on folklore texts embedded in their own system of common knowledge. It was the folklore, in which the researcher himself is immersed, hence an obvious element of his everyday reality, and in that sense difficult to observe. Bogatyrev and Jakobson accurately observed that

another notable error in the Romantic characterization of folklore, along with the assumption of its originality, was the thesis that only a folk not stratified into classes – a sort of collective personality with a single soul and a single worldview; a community which does not acknowledge individual expressions of human activity – could create folklore and be the agent of communal creation . . . Nor is communal creativity by any means foreign even to a culture which is permeated by individualism. We need look no further for examples than the widespread anecdotes, legend-like rumors and gossip, superstitions and myth-structures, and accepted customs and modes of thought in present-day educated circles (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980: 15–16).

We should repeat after Bogatyrev and Jakobson that the difference between folklore and non-folklore does not translate directly into a difference between the *common folks* and the elites. We should rather assume that it is related to a difference between pre-reflexive (pre-theoretical) perceptions of reality, which man can allow for only in certain circumstances. Every man – regardless of the environment, or his social circumstances – functions simultaneously on two planes: the plane of colloquialism, reflected by receiving and creating texts of a particular type, and the plane of reflexivity, which is also corresponded to by receiving and creating texts of a particular type. Following these statements, the difference between folklore and non-folklore is a difference between a colloquial or repeatable text that is generally understood, stereotypical, and one that does not require any major cognitive effort, and one that does not disturb a system of concepts about the world (the common worldview) and a text that cannot be considered as colloquial, because it is not characterized by repeatability, general understanding, and conventionality of meanings, which means that it requires a more significant cognitive effort and disturbs, to a varying degree, the established worldview.

In summary, folklore is a medium of human existence in a world on the plane of colloquialism and that is why its primary characteristic is the invisibility of its typical genres, as opposed to phenomena that folklore is concerned with, and which draw the attention of its carriers. Paradoxically, whenever a folklore text becomes noticed and transforms from a “non-text” into a “text” for a given community in which it operates, it loses its original character. Potential interest in folklore among the broad population of a particular communicational community should be recognized as a phenomenon that accompanies a transformation of folklore into folklorism that is a representation of an earlier iteration of folklore. Texts objectified as “folklore” are either already stripped of their common character in the community where the objectification takes place, or lose it as a result of their solidification: “There, where the role of the community consists only of preserving a corpus of poetic works elevated to the status of inviolable canon, creative censure, improvisation, and collective creation cease to exist” (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980: 20).

The Status of the Represented World of Folklore as the Genre Marker

If we were to direct our focus at the cognitive dimension of folklore, it would seem important to differentiate between its two basic categories according to the criterion of the ontological status of the represented world. This status dictates

the visibility of the text as a text of folklore. After Carl von Sydow, we could refer to the first group, genres noticed and visible to the carrier as *fabulate*, while the second group: *memorate* (Kadłubiec 1999, Röhrich 1996: 3–9, Simonides 1981). Fabulates are genres that the carrier can notice because their represented world is not recognized as realistic in the sense of reflecting (representing) reality. That, in turn, makes it possible for them to “resurface” in the sense of being differentiated from other texts. If it is relatively easy to recognize a fable or a joke as a genre of folklore that, as fabulates, are considered artistic fiction among their carriers, it is much harder to recognize the memorate, or a text that, in the eyes of its performer/broadcaster and consumer informs about the “objective reality” and in that sense reflects it, as a genre of folklore in its natural operating environment. That type of situation pertains to an authentic fable, an urban legend or a common rumor or hearsay – a common rumor in a sense that it has undergone the process of folklorization (Sulima 1980: 98–99, 113, 122). These are genres that – from the perspective of the performer/broadcaster and the consumer – are used for communicating “facts,” or that which really happened, or is happening right now. Hence, we are talking about texts that are perceived as objective information about reality, texts that are true, because they have been verified by a supposed eyewitness, usually a person almost personally known by the performer (friend of a friend, etc.).

More specifically, the “true” information about the world, as understood by the person that transmits it cannot be folklore. (Röhrich 1996: 3–9). We must assume that fundamentally, the difference between fabulates and memorates is not an objective difference, but rather subjective, or inter-subjective, existing for the human general consciousness, constituting a potential result of negotiations. Carriers of folklore – who we all are – recognize some things as fictional, while other as true. From that perspective, a given difference is defined phenomenologically. Its key criterion is not so much reality itself as a human consciousness and intentionality understood as a form of object’s presence – in our case a defined text – in the consciousness of the subject (Husserl 1922). In this context, we could repeat after P. Kowalski: “genealogy should be . . . assigned to the consciousness of the consumers of texts, placed in a system of culture that is being explored. That requires, however, exploration of mentality, ‘worldview’ of the carriers of folklore” (Kowalski 1990: 18). Even though the represented worlds of memorates have no less fictional character than in the case of the first group of texts, any fiction is here – following K. D. Kadłubiec – realistic (Kadłubiec 1999: 63–69), which means that similar texts will not be recognized by the carriers as genres of folklore, but as *news*. A man, forgetting about language and its rules (and about culture and its rules) typically focuses on “facts” and not

form, in which they are presented to him. Following H.–G. Gadamer, we called that “forgetfulness of language.” (Gadamer 1993: 146–154).

If we were to illustrate that on the example of a fable, the condition of its recognition as a fable would be a transformation of the status of its realness within the boundaries of the communication community, in which it functions, in the form of its represented world ceasing to be perceived as real. It begins to be perceived as fictional, or at least as improbable. Only after a fable stops being a true fable (*fabula credibilis*) it very often can be recognized by a carrier as a *fable*. Additionally, if the relationship between the event with a particular place and particular time will loosen up significantly and the formulaic “long, long time ago,” or “far, far away” would be employed, then it could be recognized as a *fairytale* (*fabula incredibilis*). Let us repeat: a text will become noticed as a genre of folklore only after its contents will cease to be recognized as reality in the sense of representing authentic events. (Krzyżanowski 1980a: 237–238, Röhrich 1996: 3–9) Linguistic convention that a folkloric scholar encounters in the field could be a proof of that: the formulas of *Let me tell you a story. . . or I’ll tell you what happened. . .* are very common in this case, while formula like *Let me tell you a hearsay. . .* is never used, but *Let me tell you a rumor. . .* is used only in the form of marking a distance in reference to the information that is attractive, but not important.

Therefore, emergence of the folklore genre is in direct proportion to the questioning by the consciousness of directly received and remembered content. Hence, we should suspect that a myth, or an enchanted fable used to be a silent, or unobserved genre of the folklore in a sense that they considered tales of “authentic” events, relating to the very real reality. The same process, which in the culture of the West led to the emergence of categories such as myth, fairy tale, or a fable remains alive in connection to the urban legend or a rumor – genres that at least partially at least are still considered as texts that narrate reality, similarly to the TV news or reportage, although the number of people recognizing it as folklore seems to be growing.

If we were to be consistent, we would have to conclude that defining *memorate* through the contrast with the message being conveyed in the media is not well suited either, since any message – just like folklore – does not fully convey the reality that it is supposed to reflect.

Each event recounted (in a newspaper, on TV, on the radio) is to a larger or lesser extent “produced.” *Fabulate*, *memorate*, and media message could be equalized with one another through a fact that none of them reflect the world in the sense of its absolute representation, which would exclude detailing any of the discursively conditioned rules for constructing meanings and rules of

terminological treatment of reality. All types of texts are a form of cognitive control over the variability and diversity of phenomena in the world. All are a form of immobilizing and simplifying of the World (Maćkiewicz 1999a: 52–53), according to established, linguistically and culturally determined keys.

It is worth noticing that it was through the distance of the events “told” through the medium of the TV cameras that the J. Baudrillard’s famous concept of *simulacrum* – a media reality that is more convincing than the world experienced directly – was born (Baudrillard 1994). It is so, because through being its derivative representation it can meet the cognitive habits, expectations, and preferences of the consumer without reservations. For the contemporary folklorist the conclusion is that the sources of any kind of information that can be found in the general circulation should be looked for equally in the external reality (the World), and in common consciousness and mechanisms, through which that consciousness orders the external reality. Reproducing the direct representation of the world through narration is always tainted by selectiveness based on omission, exaggeration, or even researching facts and their diverse semantic aspects. That process is never accidental, ruled always by a particular code, or a discursively conditioned, rather common and habitual (meaning relatively lasting), rules of building and image of the world.

Every communicational community is characterized by a diversity of attitudes toward the faith texts or urban legends. Sensational or blood-chilling information – vetted personally by a friend of a friend – may be accepted by one individual (or in a particular set of circumstances) with unquestioning fascination, while another individual (or in a different set of circumstances) would approach it with an indulging smile, revealing suspicion. What somebody should recognize as an authentic event, somebody else will treat as a result of man’s creative intervention (Kajfosz 2005: 97). Differences in admitting or taking away the realness from the represented world of a particular text cannot be narrowed down to individual, cognitive predispositions of an individual. We should assume that they are – at least to a certain degree – an expression of a particular cultural or cognitive paradigm. In one word: of everything that in cognitive anthropology is labeled as *background*. Taking away the status of realness from, for example, the Silesian *utopiec* (*wasermón*) could be interpreted through the categories of the cultural paradigm shift. The time will answer the question if a similar fate awaits the mysterious *hitchhiker*, who vanishes without a trace from a moving car (Czubala 1993: 36–47), or Chinese cooks, who, motivated by greed, or simply maliciousness, serve the unsuspecting consumers meat of cats and dogs (Janeček 2006: 106–108).

A text on the subject of “objective facts” could be recognized as a sub-type of folklore only based on even partial questioning of the reality of its represented world and subsequently comparing it with similar texts. Using that mode, we could identify, for example, the urban legend as a genre ruled by a particular poetic, certain mechanisms for constructing the plot, or mechanisms for constructing the claimed objective reality that is being described. If the experience, as a primal representation of the world, is limited to a certain degree in the consciousness and dependent on the linguistic-cultural system, then the derivative representation of the world in the form of experience transmitted through the text has to be affected twofold. Compared to the experience itself, representation of the experience in the text is not only simplified along the path of selecting its meanings, idealized or “bent” to conform to the stereotype (Barthes 1991), but sometimes can be fully imagined.

Folklore and the Critique of Cognition

Not every man and not every situation fall under the power of collective ideas, or hints of their own language to the same degree. *Habitus* does not have the absolute power over the man. It is impossible to contradict, however, that everyone spends at least part of his life in a somewhat passive or “unconscious” form of existence, where the collective “*Man-selbst*,” speaks through him or her, following M. Heidegger’s thought (Heidegger 1962).¹¹ Every man sometimes finds himself in a situation, where they are not the ones speaking, but rather become a “medium” through which their own language, or a particular collective *langue* as a collective subject speaks. Heidegger makes that claim through his famous statement that “the language speaks” – *die Sprache spricht* (Heidegger 1982). H.–G. Gadamer, on the other hand, claims that in some situations the subject (man) not so much *speaks* the language, but *is spoken* by the language, so that a conversation is more of *something that takes place*, rather than something we are having (Frank 1989). In other words: sometimes a man can exercise more “control” over his own language (more or less successfully resisting the conventional meanings embedded in its system), while in other circumstances he or she finds

11 As far as narrative folklore itself is concerned, proof could be found in phrases such as “we say that,” “we used to say,” “people used to say,” which reveal the somewhat “impersonal” origin of the distributed content. We do not know who – what subject – is truly speaking, which guarantees the ontological status of the passed content. The phrases point to the above-individual subjectivity in the Heideggerian sense, designated by the noun “people.”

oneself under the power of one's own language. That means that sometimes the images of things – stereotypes, conventionalized connotations, formulas – convince him or her more than phenomena he or she encounters in different situations. Colloquially put, nobody is capable of reflecting – and perform the related semantic analysis of his own language – all day. In the face of everyday reality man often becomes a link in an uncontrollable chain of unchecked judgments and narratives, including unidentified folklore texts. “Characteristic field for the symptoms of a common folklore is the spoken language code, because it is in the course of a spoken communication that we get accustomed to the conversational habits, which are considered obvious, while employing – unconsciously – particular linguistic stereotypes and folklore genres” (Krawczyk-Wasilewska 1986: 43–44).

Therefore, we could speak of the difference between a more passive attitude of a carrier toward his language when a man is displaying a tendency to give in to one's own linguistic system and a more active attitude toward language in the case of a an individual, trying to establish relative control over his own language, over a linguistic-cultural system that is manifested through an ability to, more or less, resist it while preserving a critical, or analytical distance toward perceived meanings. We must assume, however, that succumbing to “suggestions” of one's own language and culture is always a question of degree and measure. The element of persuasion embedded in the linguistic system has become a subject of research of the Anglo-Saxon philosophy of language inspired by the movement of combating the “enchantment” of one's mind by language (Wittgenstein 1997).

If we were to refer this observation to the question of folklore understood as a fundamental medium of human experience of the world, we could conclude that folklore speaks more through men than men through folklore. In that situation man becomes a “conduit” in a sense, or at least a “semi-conduit,” being in the process of transmitting folklore texts and, as a result, being in the process of distributing elements of a somewhat mutual (shared) image of the world. As we have observed, folklore possesses a dimension of *creative individuality*. This individuality is, however, connected more to its poetic, or artistic dimensions than to its cognitive or world making dimension. Therefore, we could accept an assumption that every man is, to a different extent, a carrier of folklore. Each man is a carrier of the natural language, each man functions on the plane of commonality and the plane of the everyday, which does not always, and not fully, undergo reflection. In summary, let us repeat that contrary to the romantic definition of folklore, in which *the people* constitute its fundamental indicator – *the people* as its collective subject and carrier (Thoms 1975) – a *differentia specifica* definition of folklore we proposed here earlier is connected not to distinguishing a class of

its carriers, but a difference between active and passive employment of language understood as a cognitive tool.

If we were to follow this trail a little farther, it would be worth concluding that folklore as a form of a colloquial text could be made into an object of a particular “epistemology of commonality.” The question of *what can I know?* would be replaced by a question of *what can I know when majority of my life passes in a pre-reflexive attitude toward the world?* This question pertains to the boundaries of cognition, as proven by an observation that a man in most life situations depends, or even is forced to depend, on a commonsense knowledge that is being offered by his common language, followed by folklore and culture as such. It is all about a question of what is accessible to the human cognition if we were to assume that man cannot save himself from ways of seeing and interpreting the world that are tied to popular texts that, for him or her, always constitute a source of information. The question at hand becomes of key importance because the knowledge of a man is, to a large degree, based on a stereotype (Bartmiński 2007: 53–71, 106–111) or a myth understood as condensation of associations that accompanies a word (or another sign) and ingests, devours and steals it (Barthes 1991). Knowledge of man has its source in information vetted, often only allegedly, by others. It is partially based on narratives about alleged phenomena that were experienced by friends of friends, following the formula of “a friend of a friend said that,” or “I read in a newspaper that.”¹² This formula points to a fundamental impossibility to fact check the information, which genuineness can be either believed, or not.

Knowledge of a man about the world does not come exclusively from his own experience, but primarily from experience, or alleged experience, of other people. A man, as a social creature, is compelled to use knowledge of others, equally the knowledge of his forefathers that has been accumulated on different levels of language (Weisgerber 1929: 86–87, 98–99), as well as of his contemporaries, or the rest of members of a given communicational community. And the process of socialization or enculturation, based on the knowledge of others, oftentimes ends only at the moment of one’s death.

Arendt’s thoughts on the relationship of thinking and cognition provide an interesting inspiration for contemplating the nature of a colloquial text

12 As a side note, let us observe that one of the influential folklore magazines is entitled *Foaftale News*, which stands for “friend of a friend tale.” Similarly to *foaftale*, the term *rip* has been created to stand in for the phrase “I read in a paper” (Czubala 1993: 15, 74–75).

and folklore understood as its specific form. Arendt points out that, while the cognition is a key for constituting of the world, or building of a coherent and transparent *cosmos*, thinking is not an operation of building sense, but on the contrary – on its “deconstruction” in the sense that it compels a man to perceive the same things in a changed way.

The beginning of a thought process is a sensation of surprise or puzzlement evoked by something that has been considered as obvious up to that point. The fact that the states of affair previously considered to be obvious begin to cause a man to pose questions is a result of a change of the attitude. Man begins to perceive objects in a different light, to see them anew (Arendt 1978). In that sense, thinking becomes reduced to a distance between what has been considered a *cosmos* up to that point by discovering its boundaries, lacks, or accidental conditions of its creation. Thinking is, therefore, aimed at the sphere of the obvious – at the sphere of habitualized and repetitive narratives, judgments (views), notions that constitute colloquial, common texts. In that interpretation they could be identified with an ongoing revision of one’s suspicions and beliefs, within which no outcome can be considered final. It is “self-destructive” in that sense, because if it is supposed to remain alive it needs to constantly undermine its own results. Arendt points out that thinking is similar to Penelope’s burial shroud: every morning it undoes what has been weaved the previous night. The goal of thinking is “multiplication,” return to the state of “fluidity” – or to *chaos* understood in a particular way – of everything that language as its medium has solidified into relatively permanent structures in the form of notions, judgments (opinions, definitions), or narratives (Arendt 1978).¹³ Each act of thinking is always preceded by a pre-reflexive being in the world, functioning in a colloquially built *cosmos*, in a cosmos built by a common sense (Patočka 1998, Vaňková 2007: 21–29).

When thinking, a man attempts, often with mixed results, to become a somewhat autonomous subject of his own statements, which is possible only to a certain extent. Thinking that is based on questioning of the terms, judgments and narratives – questioning of the texts of one’s own language – could be considered an instance of discovery of what we would call, following L. Wittgenstein,

13 Barthes appreciates poetry in that sense. Due to its ambiguous use of terms, it can move the petrified layer of connotations, in which the terms of natural language are entangled. It can also loosen the conventionalized meanings in which terms of natural language are also included (Barthes 1991: 132–134). The same could be said of works of art that contradict cognitive conventions and provide an impulse for seeking new ways of seeing and interpreting, whose boundaries make these works understandable.

“enchantment” of one’s own mind by language (Wittgenstein 1997). It is all about an attempt to define more closely the power of a linguistic-cultural system has over the man, constantly suggesting unchecked cognitive assumptions, facts, solutions, and advice.

The human everyday is characterized by an unconscious employment of suggestions coming from the natural language, use of conventions. Routine, or clichés, compose what the source literature calls *colloquial thinking*, or *thinking with stereotypes*.¹⁴ Referring to that which is tested out and obvious, using conventional, standard means of speaking and acting that provide a man with protection from reality, means which safeguard him from complicated and changing facts (Kowalski 1990: 101–103). If men were constantly forced to attach meaning to events and analyze them, they would quickly become exhausted. It is impossible to constantly question the entire *cosmos* within which one lives (Arendt 1978). For functioning of a colloquial text that could mean that even those, who never suspected they could become carriers of texts that transmit the unchecked knowledge of the world that, however, raises no suspicions, could become those unconscious carriers after all. P. Janeček’s statement that most of the urban legends have been collected among people, who fiercely defend themselves against the accusation of accepting untrue information without any sign of doubt and then spreading it further could be used as a perfect example. These are representatives of the middle class with higher education: engineers, lawyers, and doctors (Janeček 2006: 324, Krawczyk-Wasilewska 1986: 44).

The alternation of ways of being in the world conditioned by the changing character of the situations, in which a man either allows himself a critical distance toward the sphere of any habitualities (habits of perception and of action) or succumbs to them, concerns every individual. It pertains to both the members of the traditional rural community and all the other people, because everyone – to a varying degree – lives on a plane of colloquialism and surrenders to language and culture conventions. Referring to convention and using the unchecked

14 “Human cognitive apparatus absorbs the surrounding reality in the form of ready schemes (‘narratives’), and stereotypes are just that type of a scheme: they provide a generalized image of reality, they are repetitive and oppose change, they are not always aligned with reality, and they assign value. They are a creation of a community and serve the purpose of bonding that community together. They are the community’s defense mechanism. Operating schemes, employing them in the act of communication, ‘being oriented’ toward the pattern while speaking and ‘searching, awaiting’ for the pattern during the reception is a natural characteristic of the human mind” (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2007: 47).

knowledge is – statistically speaking – the most important factor determining everyday life. The lack of potential for verification and critical analysis of the transmitted narratives, judgments or presumptions is tied to the suddenness of human affairs. Man does not have an unlimited time and cannot allow himself for constant, critical deliberations over the entirety of his knowledge (Arendt 1978). In other words, every man, more or less often, finds himself in a situation where he or she does not observe a need to question his *cosmos*, understood as linguistically and culturally constructed sphere of obviousness. Every man, despite it all, can critically distance himself from the *cosmos* he or she inhabits, from the sphere of sense that surrounds the individual (Arendt 1978).

If we were to refer to M. Fleischer's proposal, we could conclude that it is not just the individual, or a particular situation, that constitutes a marker of a potential for questioning of one's own language. Language and culture systems themselves can vary in terms of the range of their domination over the man. Some cultural systems are characterized by a more vivid tendency to dominate over consciousness of their carriers, while others have that tendency muted. M. Fleischer differentiates the paradigmatic (more "dominating") and relational (less "dominating") types of cultures (Fleischer 1991: 137–159; Helbig-Mischewski 2000: 229–246). More specifically, Fleischer differentiates between the more petrified and more elastic types of culture, taking the degree of notion structure's resistance of its participants as the criteria. He also looks at the degree of durability of their relationship with specific patterns of action, the degree of susceptibility of those notional structures, and their corresponding patterns of action toward changes that accompany shifting situations (Fleischer 1991: 137–159, Helbig-Mischewski 2000: 229–246). One could assume that there are both individual and social factors (a particular linguistic-cultural system), and situational factors (a particular situation that either makes a reflection easier or harder) that constitute man's tendency to succumb to language, and to culturally determined, "ready" scenarios,¹⁵ patterns of behavior, ideas, and convictions to a varying degree.

Folklore as a Form of Natural Language

The most common texts of communication between people are the colloquial texts. They are called colloquial precisely because of their overwhelming

15 "Scenarios referred to as 'common' are derived by the reader from his encyclopedic competence that is shared with majority of his cultural community. These are primarily rules of practical behavior" (Eco 1993: 119–120).

presence. Therefore, the earliest and most frequent form of communication that has accompanied man is a colloquial, conventionalized text repeated in multiple different versions. When a similar text has an artistic dimension on top of it, hence fulfilling a poetic function as well, we can speak of folklore. In that sense, folklore is a form of the natural language that dominates man's everyday reality: "Folklore texts are related to fulfilling the 'scenarios of everyday,' they are a resultant of repetitive, socially rationed existential situations" (Kowalski 1990: 119). These "scenarios of everyday" provide a man with the proper templates of behavior, engage assessment systems, which, in turn, motivate taking action and perform the initial work of the recognizable reality. That is how our ideas of the world are protected through the process of socialization (Kowalski 1990: 118).

Man learns his own language as a result of constant practice or unconscious "memorization" of phrases, arguments and texts as such, thanks to which he or she can be more skilled in navigating the socially formed network of attitudes and beliefs in a collectively created meaning structure (Gadamer 1977: 87–88). Folklore must play a special role in a similar process, if we were to assume that we are concerned with a form of language, with which a man comes into contact very early on (conventionalized questions and answers, fairytales, folk songs, etc.) and very often. Through the use of a *conventionalized text* (Sulima 1976: 16) the environment constantly teaches a man how to perceive the world. We could go as far as to conclude, following P. Kowalski, that we are concerned here with:

a type of "conformity" that is necessary for getting around in the world and finding support within a group. An individual is being compelled to use language that categorizes cognition, but he or she is also demonstrated everything that is considered the observed reality, which is aided by the ontological character of obviousness. In the end, the social boundaries of cognition and perceptibility of the world are set (Kowalski 1990: 114).

In order to spread, or to find its place in the linguistic-cultural system of a particular community, a scientific text also typically takes on a form of a colloquial text, one adjusted to commonly shared code. A given text must take on such a form in order to, at least to a certain degree, correspond with widespread images of reality (ideas, convictions, attitudes). The process of promulgating a scientific text can be equaled to a process of its adjustment to cognitive habits of a wide group of potential receivers or carriers of a particular linguistic-cultural system. A similar process has another dimension as well: cognitive habits of a given linguistic-cultural community adjust themselves to the spreading texts and change under their influence.

The natural language, by which we understand colloquial, conventionalized, commonly understood texts that add up to a particular system of meanings,

becomes an important subject for the philosophy of language in the mid-twentieth century. Due to Wittgenstein and his *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1997), the semantic analysis of language begins to concentrate on the colloquial language, a language that is partially metaphoric, and notions of which can never be fully defined because their meaning depends partially on the context. The attention of not only the linguistic studies, but also of philosophy of language has concentrated on the colloquial language, on conventionalized (common-place) manners of speaking about the world, manners which have their habitual character in a sense that they are, within a certain linguistic-cultural community and often unconsciously, recognized and shared. By means of language an individual “embeds” into the world, learning the rules of the language (and cultural) game, by learning to function in a world created by a specific culture (Gadamer 1977: 87–88). In this sense, language is recognized as a medium of enculturation. It seems safe to assume that the recognition refers particularly to its most “common” form, hence to the folklore. If the cognitive function of language is the object of interest of the cultural anthropology, linguistics, philosophy and other branches of humanities that must mean that the key field of penetration could, or maybe should, be the verbal folklore, particularly because it represents the most conventionalized part of the language.

Verbal folklore, treated as a specific form of language, could be analyzed due to its *world creation role*, which could be reduced to a function of granting access to the world to a man – its carrier. Therefore, it is interesting because of its mediation between the man and reality, which constitutes a general rule of language and culture understood as systems of meaning (as semiotic systems). Folklore texts could be understood in at least two ways: first, as one of the elements of the world next to other recognizable (objectivized) forms of culture, like a literary text, or a work of art; second, as a *world constituent* that transforms infinitely diverse (multi-aspect) and changing (fleeting) reality into the world – into a reality that is somewhat stable (unchanging) and simple (possible to grasp, “fragmentized,” enclosed in a limited number of its particular elements) (Sulima 1976: 16).

The cognitive function of verbal folklore integrates reality into a single, relatively simplified, and immobilized order (into *cosmos*), giving a man – often very illusory – sensation of absolute order of all phenomena and good orientation in the world. Sayings often evoke an internal conviction in an individual that he or she “knows what the world is about” and thanks to a prophecy he or she knows what waits ahead. An urban legend, or a myth, provides information about which places (*in the forest, by the river*) and what time of day (*at midnight*) they might be dangerous. Thanks to other texts an individual knows what new happened in

Hollywood, in the pantheon of the modern pop culture. Folklore should be recognized as the most basic form of categorizing or systemizing of reality. Folklore simplifies and immobilizes reality, understood as infinitely changing diversity, which makes it accessible for a man (cf. Maćkiewicz 1999a: 52–53).

As it has been marked, a folklore text is ephemeral, which allows it to transform, following the changing world and evolving ways of perceiving (including the transforming culture and mentality). If such text manages to spread – being repeated in multiple versions – it means that a linguistic-cultural code of a given community (or a given environment) manifests itself directly in it. It is a code made up of a system of ideas (images of reality) and its related ways of action. Such a code has three, mutually penetrating, although not necessarily fully identical, planes: vocabulary plane (knowledge of terms and their mutual meaning relationships), encyclopedic (knowledge of the world) and pragmatic (knowledge of ways of functioning in the world). Due to a folklore text having an ephemeral character, and its existence or non-existence being decided by its reproduction, we can assume that it represents, within a community functioning in particular time and space, a common, or generally shared, ways of perceiving, thinking and acting, and norms and values. The entire human reality permeates the folklore that is being characterized by repeatability of notion patterns in the text meaning constructs, or patterns of behavior, clearly corresponding with the social reality of carriers of a given text. Even if the represented world within particular folklore is built according to its own rules, hence differing from the directly experienced world – like in the case of a fairytale – the represented worlds of folklore could be considered reflections of reality, in which a man lives, or used to live. Hence, folklore plays a role of the key medium for enculturation within the communities of its carriers: it teaches people about reality and how to handle and navigate it.

Chapter Two Categorization as a Tool for Ordering the World

When analyzing the image of the world from certain angles, it has a systematic (ordered) and unsystematic (unordered) character. It is related to the fact that it is always a synthesis of that which is concrete and that which is abstract (notional) or that which is natural and that which is cultural. Hence, it cannot be reduced to “pure” reality that would exist in and out of itself, nor to language and all other semiotic systems that mediate men’s perception of reality.

The semiotic dimension of the world’s image is based on a relatively permanent system of signs at its foundation. Under strictly linguistic understanding, we could speak about a system of concepts and entire texts (sequences of signs), whose systemic character is linked to their repeatability and conventionality (Maćkiewicz 1999b: 195). A similar system grants the perceived reality a fairly durable and simple (transparent) structure, although reality, under closer examination, appears as a radical multifariousness. It is in that *generalization, or reduction and immobilization – through forgetting the diversity and variability of the being – where the world-creation power of language is located*. It is simultaneously a power over man’s consciousness: “We have few names and few definitions for an infinity of single things. Therefore recourse to the universal is not strength of thought but *weakness of discourse*. The problem is that man always talks in general while things are singular. Language names by blurring the irrepressible proof of the existing individual” (Eco 2000: 23).

The language, due to a limited number of concepts, diminishes, or completely hides certain differences within being, while highlighting, or discovering others. Delimitation of reality with infinite number of variables – its “coalescing” with concepts and texts of language – takes place by systemically (or: discursively, paradigmatically) conditioned discoveries of limited, and therefore transparent, number of relatively general and durable differences and similarities in an observed being, with some aspects of the being becoming clear and reliable, while others ignored and forgotten (Weisgerber 1964: 204, cf. Lakoff, Johnson 1980). Therefore, means of similar “conceptual processing” (Weisgerber 1929: 18) of reality could differ to a certain degree, depending on which aspects are highlighted and which are forgotten. In that sense the images of the world that are a result of a similar delimitation have, at least partially, a relative character.

The process of a similar conceptual processing of reality, during which its infinitely varied and changing aspects are assigned to a limited number of

concepts is called *categorization*. If we were to use a colloquial language we could say it is “pigeonholing” based on different phenomena being placed within a limited number of concepts, using a rather arbitrary and changing criteria. These concepts could be metaphorically described as the above-mentioned “pigeonholes,” or containers, which makes them difficult to notice in their diversity. A man who defines reality through concepts thinks of those “pigeonholes,” not their contents, first. Categorization understood that way is based on segregation, immobilization, and, most of all, simplification of that which is infinitely diverse and changing in such a way that a man can orientate himself well in the world (Mackiewicz 1999a: 52–53).

Categorization has, to a large degree, an unrealized character: dividing the world into its elements is intentional only in a limited number of cases. Thanks to categorization, the image of the world appears as a realm of easy obviousness, about which one could say that the more a man is used to it (in the sense of not being surprised by it) the less he or she ponders it. Categorization that is based on overrating simple and durable concepts, and generalizing texts and *forgetting* (not appreciating, or even negating) the being itself in its radical diversity, multidimensionality and changeability is bound to a human tendency for escaping the *chaos* (opaqueness and unpredictability) into *cosmos* or reality that can be conceptually understood and predicted and, therefore, reigned in. Overestimating that which is general (homogenous and lasting), and underestimating that which is particular (diverse and changing) and what Umberto Eco called the *weakness of discourse* has a simple phenomenological explanation: it results from the fear of that which is opaque, complicated, unpredictable, or that which cognitively escapes man.

Categorization could be also defined as systematization (or: taxonomization, typologization, classification) of reality, performed by a man defined as an observing subject. Categorization means highlighting and grouping elements of being according to their particular characteristics, which decide about belonging of a particular individual to a particular group or a defined type of phenomena. The simplest way to illustrate it would be to use an example of categorization of plants and animals according to *species*, which are composed of *genus*, or the groups of higher order, which then compose groups of even higher order (*family, order, class*), etc. Similar systematization contains a hierarchical character, since plants and animals are being grouped from the highest orders and the most general names (*a plant, an animal*), to the lowest, most specific (*race, variety*) and all the way to a singular being, like a single flower observed in a garden or a dog named Rex running past that flower.

Categorization understood as an intended systematization constitutes also a fundamental mechanism of science. Differentiation and generalization based on it (hierarchical division of phenomena into increasingly general, properly labeled groups) are not only a necessary condition for science, but for cognition in general. The fundamental insight into the nature of categorization is made possible by the classical definition of definition, which states that: “*definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam (or: differentias specificas)*” (Eisler 1927: 247, Krąpiec 1985: 194–195). Loosely translated it means: an object can be defined by providing the closest category to which it belongs and by providing a difference that makes that object stand out from the totality of objects belonging to that same category.¹⁶ Hence, we arrive at the conclusion that the systematization (typology) and act of defining constitute two aspects of the same process: in science, the differences, which highlight a particular category (a group of phenomena) from among other categories have their verbalized form in the sense that they construct definitions, which then allow these very categories to exist in the first place. Another conclusion is that the foundation of cognition as such is constituted by the *difference* and *similarity*: Keeshond named Rex is not the same being as other Keeshonds, even though it is similar to them, belonging to the same category of Keeshonds. A Keeshond is what the other dogs are not, even though it is similar to them, belonging to the category of dogs. Dog is what the other animals are not, even though it is similar, belonging to the category of animals, etc. Differentiations people use when performing a planned systematization (segregation) of phenomena, or the characteristics, which one recognizes as necessary, and simultaneously sufficient reason to qualify a specimen to a particular group of phenomena, are called in the theory of categorization a substantive features (Maćkiewicz 1999a: 50).

If we were to take into consideration the history of European sciences from Aristotle, the precursor of the systematization of nature, to Carl Linnaeus, who gave it the form in which it is being taught today, it is not hard to notice that the ways of grouping nature have been constantly tweaked, changed and supplemented. Each division is conducted according to a specific criteria and their selection in different eras of science or culture. The variety of categorization

16 If we were to define the category through a metaphor of a *container* (“pigeonhole”), we could conclude that the definition is somewhat like pointing to the smallest container, to which the defined object belongs, but also to the difference between the given object and other objects that are in the same container. As a “macro-infinity,” being in this sense is the largest container, containing a defined number of smaller containers, which in turn contain a number of smaller containers, and into “micro-infinity.”

criteria relates not only to their changeability in time, but also in space: during the same historical period two different cultures can categorize a specific element of being differently, because each is based on different criteria. Hence, following C. Lévi-Strauss, within the boundaries of a single, more or less similar world of nature, one culture could differentiate between 200 plants, while another between 2000 (Lévi-Strauss 1966).

Relatively arbitrary (incidental) character of categorization is related to the fact that it is based on searching for similarities and differences between two, comparable phenomena, where the similarities tend to be exaggerated or even discovered, while differences minimized, or ignored (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, Maćkiewicz 1999a: 48).

A fundamental problem emerges because of the categorization and it requires a broader understanding of the term. Each categorization, understood as a systematization of reality, conducted on the basis of a theoretical overview and its related definition, is preceded by an “earlier” categorization in the sense that it is always based on previously existing categories-notions that a researcher, who attempted to systematize (separate) a particular fragment of reality over which he had no influence: “science comes into being in the form of observation, which – before it can become and be granted acceptance – has to constantly reference the original, primal thought connections and divisions, which found their expression and consolidation in the language and its general concepts” (Cassirer 1955: 20).¹⁷ In other words: all systematizations of reality undertaken by man are based on their previous divisions accomplished by concepts from the natural language, which results from a thesis discussed in the previous chapter: a man does not perceive phenomena as extraordinary and unique, but as contained by a single concept. That original division could be revised and changed, for example, a *whale*, or a *giant fish*, could be categorized as a *mammal* instead. However, each similar division is secondary in respect to the “silent” division that precedes it and escapes man’s control. In this sense, we could speak of an *a priori* character of language and culture understood as a system of signs (Patočka 1998). As a proof of reflexively unconscious character of the “initial” (or: natural) categorization we could consider a fact that only at the end of the twentieth century

17 The issue is more complicated because categories developed by science through habitualization could influence the realm of pre-theoretical categories. As an example, we could use the metaphor of MIND AS A MACHINE (Lakoff, Johnson 1980), which is an element of contemporary natural language, and its related common thinking that has its source in positivistic science: scientism.

did it assume a form of a scientific problem on a broad scale. Man does not have a full, reflexive awareness of all “silent” meanings that precede and assume his knowledge. The phenomenologist Jan Patočka says that creating sense in our lives is extremely complicated, it takes place on several tracks, with intertwining plotlines, habitualities, sediments of past experiences. To see everything *in concreto* is an almost endless task (Patočka 1998). Man cannot recreate the process of formation of concepts of his own language in relation to all the details and circumstances (Weisgerber 1929: 29).

To a large degree the categorization has an unintended and reflexively unconscious character. Dividing the world into its particular elements is an intended activity only in a limited number of cases (Weisgerber 1929: 29–30, cf. Lakoff 1987). Following L. Weisberger, the issue of unconsciously categorizing approach toward phenomena could be explained on the following example: when we see a running dog and we begin to wonder whether it is a cocker spaniel or a dachshund (or whether a dog is an even-toed ungulate or not) *the act of categorization has happened long before* that, because we have recognized a *dog* within the phenomenon. We had to observe that *something is moving* in a distance, that it is most likely *an animal* that is *running* (and not *crawling* or *jumping*), finally recognizing it as a *dog* (Weisgerber 1929: 29, 51–52, cf. Apel 1991: 82). In all of the observed reality, or in everything observed, seen, heard, or otherwise experienced state of affairs, even if it was the most “objective,” the concepts of the natural language are involved from the very beginning (Eco 2000: 76–98, Heintel 1991: 175, Roesler 2000: 117–118). Although we can see the particular (single) dog, through the mediation of the same term an entire host of other phenomena – other dogs – is being revealed in front of us. Similarly, due to the concept of *running* an entire chain of other events is triggered: a different running dog, or a runner completing a marathon, etc.¹⁸ Concepts that co-participate in human perception are something general (abstract) always present in the particular (concrete). From the very beginning, a running dog observed by a man constitutes a synthesis of the general and particular: “Behavior of a man in command of a language, as well as the way in which he uses it to name, is based on the fact that he cannot see phenomena in single installments, but understands them through categories as phenomena that underwent partial conceptual processing” (Weisgerber 1929: 18, cf. Heintel 1991: 175). The concepts of his language are involved from the very beginning in everything that a man could recognize as

18 Even a difference between an object and an event could be notionally conditioned (Whorf 1956).

“objective” reason for what he perceives. Starting with a dog and ending on the sensation of pain, recognition of it and localizing it in a tooth, or a broken arm (spatial location) is a form of categorization based on reasoning.

If we were to come back to the thesis that a foundation of each intended categorization is constituted by a previously categorized reality, it would mean – on the one hand – that a man does not know anything about specimens (instances of any given category) without the involvement of categories with which he can recognize them in the first place. On the other hand, however, a man cannot know anything about the categories without the specimens, which allow the creation of categories through their generalization. In other words: the categorization must be framed as a process, the “beginning” of which contains both the phenomena of the world thanks to the segregation of which concepts emerge and concepts without which the phenomena would not be noticed. The alternative that would force placement on one or the other at the “beginning” is heuristically as barren as debates between radical nominalism and radical realism in the middle ages.¹⁹ It is about two radical – and discussion excluding – possibilities: either the cognitive structures determine the shape of the experience completely and, in that sense, “create” it (the absolutization of the pre-perceptive structures of cognition), or all the concepts are secondary in relation to experiences, generalization of which made their existence possible (absolutization of the pre-conceptual perceptions data). As I noted in the previous chapters, the disturbance of balance between a concept (category) and an object (a specimen) in the theory of cognition leads to absurd, ontological consequences: the conviction that language and culture “create” our reality in the sense that there exists nothing beyond them, or to a conclusion that the role of language in the process of cognition is limited exclusively to labeling “objective” elements of the world, which would be an example of the previously mentioned linguistic realism (Weisgerber 1971a: 33–39). It would be a misunderstanding to perceive categories, either as an exclusive effect of “objective” similarities between the specimens, or as something that precedes and conditions any human perception, while not being in any way dependent from it: “it seems that it would be a mistake to speak simultaneously about full non-arbitrariness, naturalness and full arbitrariness and syntheticity of categories” (Mackiewicz 1999a: 49).

19 The realism of the middle ages is an expression of conviction about the real existence of concepts (about the existence of concepts beyond man’s consciousness), not about a real – “objective” – pre-linguistic and pre-cultural existence of objects, as in the case of linguistic realism.

The indivisibility of categories and specimens should be understood as a dialectic of one and the other: categories condition the process of categorization (make recognition and comparison of the specimens possible), while constituting its results (constituting the results of comparison of the recognized specimens).²⁰ Categories that influence the character of man's experience, themselves being under its influence, constantly change. They must be recognized as both conditions and the result of an experiment (Schwarz 1992: 84–88). It is not enough to frame the categorization exclusively as a comparison of specimens in the world, forgetting about the fact that these very specimens are recognized through the medium of the categories.

From the fact that reality is already categorized (segregates with the help of concepts), before a man undertakes the effort of systematizing it, stems a need to differentiate between categorization understood as an activity that is a realization of a particular intention, or unplanned categorization. In the case where dividing reality into particular phenomena that accompanies its simple observation (recognition) is a standalone activity, of which a man is not aware, we are dealing with the second type of categorization. The division of categorizations into two, separate types fits the previously evoked differentiation between pre-theoretical and theoretical perception of reality, or perception and observation based on the objectification of the phenomenon. In other words: reality undergoes the “conceptual processing” not only during its theoretical overview, but also during its simple observation. It results in a particular kind of inconsistency, or a multi-plane image of the world that does not necessarily has to reach a form of explicit discrepancies or conflicts (Husserl 1952). *The whale* is theoretically a *mammal* (similar in that sense to, for example, a *cow*), although commonly – and very likely also among the zoologists – it is perceived as a *giant fish* similar to, for example, a *carp*. A proof for that could not only be a reflexive analysis of the whale's experience, but also the very linguistic design of that concept, in which a similar experience has been established before. Another example: *the moon*, which reflects the sunlight, is commonly considered as a light in the sky that *shines at night*, as opposed to the sun, which shines during the day. This is how we perceive the “shining” of the moon and that is how we talk about it, similarly to us talking about the *sun rising and setting* and not about our side of the Earth turning toward or away from the sun (Bartmiński 2012). A prominent example of the anthropocentric – and in that sense true – vision of the world

20 Dialectics of categories and specimen translates directly into the previously discussed dialectic of language and the world (or a JOS and the world dialectic).

is the narrative about the creation of the world from the *Genesis*, in which the Earth has been shown as a shapely land emerging from an amorphous water. The sky is the dome hanging above the Earth (understood as a flat surface and not a giant sphere), and the sun and the moon are the lights suspended under that dome. The sun is not a round star that is immobile in the relation to the Earth, as today's astronomers claim it to be, nor is it a deity, as the ancient Babylonians have believed. Rather, it is a giant "lamp" that fills the function it was assigned by the Creator (Sokol 1993: 17–18). Because science defines objects of the empirically experienced world, often against the popular ideas, there are proposals to create dictionary definitions based not on the scientific framing of reality (often characteristic for a very narrow circle of scientists) but based on the popular (hence much more common) understanding of reality (Bartmiński 2012).

As it was observed, the ways of categorizing reality differ to a certain degree, depending on which aspects of reality one recognizes as the deciding ones, and which as irrelevant. From that perspective, we may talk about a relative character of images of the world created along the way of different categorizing actions (Weisgerber 1964: 200–204). As a result, we should assume that the existence of different images of the world built according to different linguistic and cultural conditions, both in the sense of spatial placement (images of the world that function parallel to one another) and temporal placement (sequencing of images understood as historical circumstances and related cognitive paradigms).

Logical and Natural Categorization

We could risk stating that the beginning of scientific cognition (theoretical consideration) constitutes a taxonomic conflict stemming from the fact that the experience tells a person something other than the language. A troublesome situation a famous traveler Marco Polo found himself in could be used here as an example. During one of his travels, Marco Polo stumbled on rhinoceros, which caused him a cognitive disorientation. Because Marco Polo had never seen a creature like that before the problem of proper categorization soon emerged to the foreground. The only concept to which he was able to link the animal was a *unicorn*, a mythical four-legged creature with a horn in the middle of its head. The contradiction that he had to solve was the fact that a *black* unicorn appeared to him as an impure animal, while – according to his own linguistic-cultural code – he considered a unicorn as an apex of perfection, believing that the animal should be *white*. The incompatibility of the specimen (observed rhinoceros) and the category (unicorn) could have been resolved in one of two ways: either by recognizing the rhinoceros as a separate animal and giving it a

new name (expand one's vocabulary), or identify it as a unicorn and, therefore, change the meaning of the term (Eco 2000: 57–60). He completed the intended categorization based on the theoretical overview. The example shows that the categorization has its intended character only in the face of a particular taxonomic “problem” – when a man notices that the phenomenon he is observing does not fit any of his previous experiences and attempts to harmonize them. In other words: only when faced by the necessity of confronting a phenomenon that forces him to *interpret, define*, or place it in a bounding manner within the recognized meaning order and its related experience does the categorization acquire an explicit character.

Linnaeus's typology, which could be used as a model example of logical categorization, used to represent it in the field of epistemology and logic (and simultaneously in the formalistic linguistics) for a very long time. It is related to the fact that the differences between the pre-theoretical orientation of man in the world that is characterized by a spontaneous categorization and theoretical orientation, basis of which is a logical categorization, have been appreciated fairly late. Logical category with a source in the Aristotelian convention and translated directly into the theory of sets is based on the concept of a category with a definition that lists all the characteristics that must be present in its specimens. These are the substantive and sufficient features in the sense that, if a particular specimen does not possess them, it does not belong to a given category, and vice versa. The set of characteristics allows for deciding definitively about affiliation of a given specimen to a category – there are no undecided cases. Therefore, the logical category has sharp, distinct boundaries that do not undergo changes, unless its definition undergoes a change, or if its characteristics would not be defined (enumerated) anew (Maćkiewicz 1999a: 49–52).

The fact that *understood meaning is not, by any means, a defined meaning* reveals itself in the phenomenology of E. Husserl, who states that reality (meaning the world of phenomena perceived and understood by man) is always richer than that which manages to be defined (observed, affirmed, described). Hence, Husserl talks of a “surplus of reality” (*Realitätsüberschuss*) (Husserl 1952).

A category functions even before it is objectified or defined.²¹ A pre-definition of a category realizes as a concept (or image) of the most characteristic example of a given category. In this sense, a natural category is based on experience and not its explication or on what is *of image*. We know what a *bird* is, not necessarily

21 We cannot forget about the potential differences between a category functioning in one's consciousness and its reflexive definition.

because we can define it perfectly, but because we can imagine something behind that concept. If we consider the propositions of psychologist Eleanor Rosch, in our cultural and linguistic circle the most typical image related to the notion of a *bird* is a common finch and that is why we say a *finch* is a prototype (the most typical example) of a *bird* (Lakoff 1987, Kalisz 1994: 67–69, Kardela 1999: 28–29). Hence, the prototype could be defined as a mental image which, being characterized by the highest concentration of characteristics of a given category, constituting a relatively permanent point of reference (comparison) in situations when one has to decide whether a given specimen belongs to a particular category or not.²² An *ostrich* is only partially related to a *finch*, the most typical representative of *birds*, because, due to its *running* (which replaces *flying* – a characteristic form of bird travel) it becomes a bird “to a lesser extent.” The same applies to penguins that *swim*, which tends to characterize fish, rather than birds. In this sense, belonging to a category can be gradated. Natural categories also have blurry boundaries, which means, among other things, that assigning a specimen to a particular category could be conditioned on a changing, situational context: physically identical vessel could be recognized one second as a bowl and as a vase the next, depending whether we have mashed potatoes or flowers inside of it. The relationship between a word (a statement) and an object (the world) depends on the entirety of the meaning’s context. It is composed, first, of man’s experiences up to that point, his habits, convictions and beliefs – the entirety of his formulated (explicated) and unformulated knowledge and second, of the pragmatic dimension of speaking, or recognizing, the actual state of reality, or the situation in the world, in which a man finds himself (Kronenfeld and Armstrong and Wilmoth 1993: 189–212).

Therefore, the natural category is not defined by essential characteristics (necessary and sufficient), which must be observed by all its representatives, but a bundle of characteristics of its most representative specimens. The bundle does not have a defining but a conceptual (image) character – it is about something *palpable* and not necessarily always verbally defined.

1. The meaning of categorization allows taking control over the infinite differentiation of reality and its changing character and dynamicity. Thanks to categorization, reality becomes relatively *simple* (transparently divided on different levels of abstraction) and *stable* (immobilized thanks to concepts, meanings of which change much slower than reality itself (Maćkiewicz 1999a: 52–53).

22 Hence, a *prototype* could be understood as an image of the most typical representative of a notion.

2. Categorization is always an *interpretation*, because it rests on inference that, in turn, rests on culturally established criteria (codes) that can differ to a certain degree. In this sense, the category connects with an *element of choice*: accepting one criterion for segregating reality is equaled with omitting other potential criteria for its segregation (Weisgerber 1964: 204, cf. Krąpiec 1985: 33, Lakoff, Johnson 1980).
3. The *axiological division of the world* is inseparably related to categorization. Categorized phenomena are not axiologically indifferent objects in the world that later, based on the theoretical divagations, could be joined by potential axiological content. Evaluation appears and disappears along with the observing and understanding man (Cassirer 1944, Husserl 1952).²³
4. Categorization has a *contextual character* – particular categories are related to one another through meaning and remain in relationships based on differences, similarities and associations, composing a linguistic-cultural system that is characterized by a particular coherence. Moreover, it is a circumstance that decides about specific specimen's belonging to a particular category: for example, something physically "identical" could be recognized as a *vase*, or as a *bowl*, depending on its contents.
5. Categorization is characterized by an internal dynamic consisting of different kinds of restructurations of the very experienced reality (image of the world), and linguistic and cultural system. Changes can evoke other changes. Categorization has a character of *constantly revisited process* and is characterized by constant re-categorization and re-contextualization (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, cf. Kwaśnica 1991: 48). Even the reflexive defining of its own categories (semantic analysis of words from a given language) can result in changes to those categories, which then could be reflected upon, etc. (Heintel 1991: 26).

23 Kołakowski expressed his support for the phenomenological concept of the pre-theoretical, experienced value and its related motivation: "there are no reasons to claim that within actual perception (as opposed to imagined perception that the behaviorists speak of) the differentiation between the 'actual' content and content that is 'evaluative' ever emerges. Whenever I see an evil deed, I see an evil deed, not movements that I later interpret in a separate, evaluative judgment" (Kołakowski 1991: 59).

Chapter Three Myth as a Sign and a Text

As it's been already observed, categorization could be understood as processing of reality in a narrower sense and in a broader sense as a linguistic-cultural processing of reality or processing through texts as such. Hence, texts that a man encounters (among which the individual happens to live) model his image of the world. Categorization does not pertain to the act of naming itself, or to the plane of particular notions. Conventionalized judgments (opinions) about the world could be recognized as its expression. Narratives, in which reality is ordered by the plot, or reduced to a chain of events ordered by a chain of cause-and-effect relationships could also be seen as its symptom.²⁴ The plot, which highlights particular relations, while sidelining others, has identically selective, reductive and in many cases also solidifying – because repetitive and stereotypical – character (Ługowska 1981: 16). Therefore, we could assume that on all mentioned levels, a transformation of indefinitely diverse and changing reality (*chaos*) into a rather simple and stable world (*cosmos*) takes place. Similar systematization is always related, to a degree, with a measure of illusion. Reality itself never constitutes a complete consequence and coherence, even though it is perceived as such.

Let us repeat, the categorization is not a domain of *notions* alone but also of *judgments* (generalizing statements about the world, for example maxims, proverbs, meteorological forecasts) and *narratives* (fables, tales, urban legends, etc.). All three levels of language, naming, judgment, and telling, participate in the building process of simplified (transparent and predictable), and permanent (immobilized) *cosmos*.

All three levels of meaning very often translate onto themselves in folklore, which means that one level of meaning is simultaneously a “condition” and a “result” of the remaining two. The stereotype of a witch as a person that, using magic, causes harm to others, “stealing” profit off their land etc., translates into popular judgments on witches, as well as narratives relating to their harmful activities. It is also a condition of creating the so-called cognitive definitions of notions through examination of popular, or formulaic texts and situations,

24 “For the human mind the cause-and-effect relationships and narratives are characteristic: it represents events, even the banal ones, in terms of a history dominated by causal relationships, representing them as chains of causes and their effects” (Bužeková 2005: 98).

in which these words appear the most often. Semantics overlaps that way with pragmatics and linguistics with anthropology (Bartmiński 2012).

The stereotype understood that way could be translated into a formulaic (repeatable, conventional) tale (Kowalski 1990: 116–117). In this case, we could talk about a mutual translatability of a *stereotype*, popular *judgment* (evaluating), and a popular *narrative*. It is easy to prove by reaching for the contemporary urban legends: the image of a Chinese persons consuming dogs and cats that still functions in Europe – as a stereotype or a repetitive, simplified image of reality – manifests first in popular judgments like “they eat dogs in China,” or “they eat cats in China,” and second, as narratives about how a customer at a Chinese restaurant found a cat’s claw in his meal or spotted a chef portioning a dog or a cat in the back (Janeček 2006: 106–108). Similar narratives constitute the case of formulaic stories, which are socio-historically defined realizations of basic templates of behavior, needs, etc. Formulaic stories function as a schematic and value-creating base within different, concrete texts that can be found in the general circulation. We find in them solutions to the problems every individual could potentially face, answers to fundamental life challenges of a man, which pertain to a set of rudimentary, existential, and psycho-social tasks of an individual. Each cultural-linguistic community has at its disposal a universal – to some extent – set of notions and formulas actualized in narratives that compose defined “mythologies.” These mythologies in turn, through their workings, guarantee to an individual a “cognitive” and “axiological” comfort of being oriented in shifting circumstances, in which he or she might have to participate (Kowalski 1990: 117, cf. Cawelti 1976). Hence, if we were to include the fact that the formulaic character understood through that prism translates into “cognitive comfort” (Kowalski 1990: 115) or that it possesses its cognitive dimension in that sense that it is a simplification and immobilization of a diverse and changing world it could be recognized as a case of categorization.

We could assume, following Umberto Eco, that a defined, although certainly not as clearly outlined as in the case of folklore, congruence between a word, judgment and the narrative pertains to the text as such:

within the semantics oriented toward text’s actualizations it must appear as a virtual text and text is nothing else than a developed sememe (in reality it is a result of developing many sememes, but for theoretical purposes it is wise to assume that a text could be reduced to just one, developed sememe: a tale of a fisherman does nothing original, other than develop on what any encyclopedia could tell us about the fisherman (Eco 1993: 37–38).

Building the Cosmos Through Excess Meaning

Each notion – and judgment and narrative – always means “more” than that which is in the definition, explanation or synopsis of a text. Definition can grasp only a part of the meaning, while the rest “slips away” remaining unnoticed. According to classical dictionaries, a “frog” is an amphibian belonging to the family of the same name with front legs shorter than the hind legs. Classical dictionaries do not include the fact, however, that the frog is typically associated with the French cuisine and the French people, similarly to an owl being associated (currently) with wisdom, magic (and Harry Potter). For each term from the natural language, a characteristic “surplus” of meaning is recognized. It can never be fully contained or expressed in a definition. The word “surplus” is imperfect in this particular situation, because it could suggest that the accompanying meanings, or the meanings omitted in definitions – in linguistics called *connotations* – are less important for the construction of the image of the world, or the ordered human life space, than meanings delineated in the definition, or the concept.²⁵ Similar reasoning would be wrong because the role of accompanying meanings, associations based on habitualized indexicalities, metaphors, and metonymies (or metaphonymies) is for the coherence of the image of the world no less important than the role of definitional meanings (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). In many cases, it is also difficult to decide, which meanings should be considered fundamental and which the accompanying ones, if we were to assume that the boundary between these two categories has a partially relative character, since every attempt at defining is based on situation and set assumptions (cultural paradigms) that can change in time. In different epochs and different cultural systems, different characteristics of the phenomenon acquire a “substantive” (or *definitional*) character: within one paradigm *the Sun* is a deity, while within another one its “merely” a source of light hanging from the blue dome, while in yet another – it is a star in space.

In the theory of the natural language, it is assumed that the differentiation between the definitional (denotational) and non-definitional (connotational) meanings is difficult and, at least to a certain degree, arbitrary: “Boundaries between identity characteristics of an object and its relational features are not sharp; these notions have ‘blurred edges’ and that is the reason why every attempt

25 The definitional meaning that guarantees the identity of a phenomenon with itself is called denotation, while connotation is meaning that was omitted in the definition (Krzeszowski 1994: 95).

to distinguish between them causes so much difficulty to researchers” (Korzyk 1999: 248).

Due to unavoidable *a priori* character of language (its limited definability) and due to the intentional and axiological character of the human experience, it is difficult to set the difference between denotation and connotation. Denotation has an experiential character, which forces it to be performed from a particular point of view every time, which in turn makes it selective by nature (Bartmiński 2012). It is also always related to connotations or different kinds of accompanying meanings. Connotations could be also transformed into basic meanings (denotations) and vice versa. For example, a *brute*, due to its accompanying meanings (and related assigning of judgment) has been designated in the Polish language exclusively as an insult (as opposed to its primary meaning, denoting an animal with horns). Hence, the word went through a transformation of meaning motivated by its connotations, while a *head of cattle* has occupied its original spot. Based on the same mechanism the place of a *pig* has been taken by *pork*. The boundary between basic and accompanying meanings is not very sharp and rather fluid, which means, among other things, that all meanings – regardless of whether they are parts of the definition or not – add to the coherence of the perceived reality. In the case of the problems with strict differentiation between the definitional and accompanying characteristics there are proposals to simply remove the boundary between connotation and denotation (Krzyszowski 1994: 94, Tokarski 1999: 65–72), or assume that the difference between connotational and denotational characteristics is simply a matter of measurement (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

Connotation could either be a result of a more individual invention or have a more pronounced collective dimension (or: systemic) in a sense that it is, to a certain degree, repeatable conventionalized, or consolidated in a language and culture system (while being an element of well established metaphors, idiomatic expressions, repeated images) (Grzegorzczkowska 1999: 41). In an individual case of experiencing reality a dog could become friends with a cat, while according to the order of language and culture the relationship between a dog and a cat takes the form of a *war*, hence the Polish proverb *to love each other like cats and dogs*. A connotation that has “solidified” in a cultural-linguistic system could be identified as a *stereotype* understood as a simplified, typically repeatable and resistant to change image of reality²⁶ and related to a word or another sign that is

26 Walter Lippmann was the first to use the word *stereotype* in his book entitled *Public Opinion* (1922), meaning “an image in one’s mind” (Bartmiński 2007: 54).

accompanied by an unambiguous axiological content. Since a connotation that is consolidated in a cultural and linguistic system is a necessary “supplement” of each denotation then a stereotype that is its equal (understood as per the cited definition) should be considered an element of each notion and sign as such: each word that means something must be related to some stereotype (Bartmiński 2007: 69). In that sense the stereotype is a place, in which the language and culture overlap. The fact that in the natural language there are no concepts that would exist beyond the network – or a system – of connotations translates into a fact that there are no concepts (understood as language signs) beyond the order of culture. Each concept participates both in the order of language and culture (Kalaga 2001: 184–187). Man lives in a defined – and co-created by language and culture – *cosmos*, understood as a realm of reality that surrounds him. This sphere is as obvious as it is orderly, transparent, predictable, and safe. All these attributes are added to the cosmos by a stereotype.

A brilliant analyst of common mentality, Roland Barthes, spoke of a stereotype as a *myth*, understanding it as a collectively conditioned “excess of meaning,” which accompanies not only a concept, but also a sign as such, or even the entire text. Similar excesses of meaning “devour” signs in a sense that they cloak its potential meanings, as well as the shifting character of its meaning itself. In other words: representations of phenomena in the world that comprise the linguistic-cultural *langue*, on the level of general perception (basic level of perception) not only substitute these phenomena, but overshadow them, making them invisible. In other words, maps make territories unnoticeable. The mechanism looks as follows: a word, which constitutes indivisible unity of form and denotative content (*signifier*₁ + *signified*₁) becomes a form (*signifier*₂) that is consumed by the connotation (*signified*₂) within the order of the myth (Barthes 1991, Kalaga 2001: 185–186). That way the represented phenomenon loses its independence because the sign being the carrier of the excess of meaning recedes into the background, while the connotative excesses of meaning coming along with the signs, and taking forms of associations, images and thoughts, “devour” the signs. Other associations could very well accompany signs. According to Barthes, a myth understood as a nebula of connotations consolidated in the linguistic system – and by extension in consciousness – “steals” the language, as well as the reality that the language is supposed to represent.

Barthes calls the type of myth he identified a derivative semiological system (Barthes 1991). According to Barthes, the connotation is a system of accompanying meanings “superimposed” over the system of denotational meanings (Bartmiński 2012). If we were to take the phenomenology of perception as our point of reference, we could conclude that it is the myth that is the primary system,

while the sphere of basic meanings, or meanings “cleansed” of the accompanying ones, constitutes the derivative system. Man does not commence his experience with individual signs – signs “free” from associations or accompanying images.

Man is capable to, in a sense, to additionally rediscover the fact that concepts and perceived signs could be accompanied by other associations and images only based on the experienced interference of the harmony between the notion and its accompanying, simplified image of reality. More generally speaking, the starting point of cognition is not the sense of doubt, but affirmation of something, which could be later undermined and “deconstruct.” Hence, the recognition is a movement from the myth (from experienced obviousness that does not require explanation) to the logos (toward reflection, thinking).

The process of “enslaving” the signs by accompanying meanings is a simple display of categorization, or a process of linguistic-cultural formation of the image of the world as a sphere of somewhat unambiguous sense. Also, the thesis that a myth transforms history into nature, or that a myth is created through depriving objects of their historicity: objects lose within it the memory of their conception should be interpreted in the light of this statement. Man perceives “obvious” senses, without asking where they come from. Thanks to simplified images of reality, which accompany concepts and signs “from the beginning,” these concepts and signs appear as necessary and forever in existence, belonging to the order of nature. A European who sees roses, sees “passionate” roses (Barthes 1991). He usually does not realize the connotation that has been accompanying the flowers from the beginning, because it is obvious and considered always existing, as if everywhere and from the beginning of the world roses were accompanied exclusively by the context of romantic circumstances. Only a secondarily contemporary carrier of the Western culture will conclude that the “passionate” character of a rose bouquet could have a historical and cultural, so at least partially arbitrary, character. It is a similar case with China, which in the 1950s automatically brought to mind the image of a rickshaw, bells, street markets with spices, or tiny teacups, as if Chinese did not know any other beverage. An idealized, postcolonial image of China cloaked the “proper” country (Barthes 1991). Skyscrapers that could nowadays very well be a symbol of contemporary China are in our cultural area reserved for New York City. A myth taking the form of appropriating connotation does not negate the sign and merely disfigures it due to its peculiar improvement. Similar improvement is based on generalization, which leads to simplification (Barthes 1991) and immobilization. A tendency of individual, hence collective consciousness, to construct a simple and a-historical (unchanging) reality with the help of connotational excess of meaning should

be considered a display of categorization being a key mechanism of the human cognition.

The myth as a tool of categorization removes reality understood as a realm of diversity, change, and at least partial arbitrariness (happenstance), replacing it with that which is simple, lasting, omnipresent, and existing in an unchanged form from the beginning of the world: Roland Barthes says that moving from history to nature, the myth creates savings: it removes the complexity of human actions and grants them with simplicity of essence, removes any dialectic, any transgressions beyond direct visibility and creates the world without contradictions, since it is deprived of any depth – a world exposed; a myth establishes a cheerful clarity: objects seem to have meaning by virtue of existing (Barthes 1991: 143). Barthes is concerned with the “imprisonment” of words in the sphere of non-definable meanings. According to Barthes, health of a language manifests through the arbitrariness of the sign, which means that appropriation of signs by rather simple and unchanging, hence unnoticed and impervious to criticism, images should be considered a “sickness” of language. It is difficult, however, to agree with a similar attitude, especially since without a similar “disease” any socially (collectively) conditioned order seems unimaginable, or any natural language and its related image of the world, or a socially constructed sphere of everything that is.

Building a Cosmos Through Judgment and the Situational Logic

An individual needs the certainty that he or she is well oriented in the surrounding world: that he is capable of properly interpret its fragments and foresee as many events as possible – that he or she has control over the world because of knowledge of successful influencing the chain of events. That, most likely universally human, motivation has been laid as the foundation of a belief that it is possible to operate a limited number of simple judgments (one-time rules), which constitute a reliable means of successful functioning in the world. These rules could very well be judgments based on connotations (*Chinese drink tea, Americans eat hamburgers, etc.*), but also meteorological forecasts or proverbs.

If we were to concentrate on the proverb that could be considered a specific case of a judgment call that stands out by being a part of the language code (meaning it is permanently in the language system and belongs to the *langue* realm), we could observe that we are concerned with a general expression that justifies something concrete and actual, like a move, an attitude, or a belief. A proverb, which justifies something, does not need justification itself. If it does

not fit to a particular situation and is of no use – it does not reach the form of a text (*parole*) – means it does not “exist.” However, if it fits a particular circumstance, it becomes utilized becoming a true text. The perfection of a proverb used in a situation, which finds in it a confirmation does not allow for the question about its truth. If there is no question, then there is no doubt in the reality of the proverb. The truth of the proverb is not doubted, because the proverb as a simple rule describing the workings of the world appears in the relationship to the situation demanding a decision and action always only *post factum*: clarity of a proverb, similarly to the clarity of a myth does not come from an explanation, but from an ascertainment of a fact.

A proverb that justifies something does not need to be justified itself, because as something that is general it only supports and upholds something else, something concrete – a stand taken, a decision made, or a presented belief. In the case of an attitude supported with a proverb, the attitude will be questioned or changed, while the proverb will move from the actuality into potentiality, losing status of a text (*parole*) and as contents of a code (*langue*) will wait for its next “opportunity” to be used and support somebody’s attitude. Only a concrete person can be mistaken, but not a proverb as a general truth. The more zealous is a man in his belief in unquestionable truth of a given proverb the more seamlessly he or she transfers into another one – often contradictory – depending on the circumstances (cf. Schuetz 1944, Arendt 1978). The alternation of proverbs, which are revealed as contradictory when confronted with each other, could be considered a display of a particular kind of situational logic that is characteristic to common thinking.²⁷ It operates by bringing back dogmas in the form of proverbs from memory’s recess, which are forgotten again after they’re used. One could conclude that a similar *ad hoc attitude*, characteristic of common thinking, pertains not only to employing proverbs, but also the common attitude toward the world. The situational logic deprives the common image of the world of all its paradoxes, making it well turned out immediately. As Hołówka highlights, “if something could confuse one about the common sense, it is . . . ease with which it moves from formula to formula, without paying any attention to the fact that when treated literally – as categorical, general judgments – they contradict one

27 “Balance, which is the goal of experiencing the world, does not exclude logical contradictions, incoherence of opinions, or mutually exclusive solutions to concrete issues on the level of common mentality. ‘Systemic’ character of common thinking reveals the nature of that particular coherence of the vision of the world, which also on the individual level is assured by defense mechanisms of psychology” (Kowalski 2000a: 27).

another. Common interpretation objects and events is always interim and short sighted” (Hołówka 1986: 137).

The mechanism of creating proverbs or maxims seems simple enough. A proverb is created when a critical judgment (statement) of a situation in the world is released from the context of its creation, hence gaining a particular kind of universality. This mechanism is based on a given statement being freed from its historicity, from its concrete place in space and time. It loses its connection to concrete circumstances of its creation, while being complemented by the excess of meaning (*signified*₂), which could be for the time being referred to as “proverbial.” It starts to be accompanied by connotational meanings related to proper axiological (evaluative) tinge, such as *important without exception*, *grand*, *wise*, or *common knowledge*,²⁸ *ancestral knowledge*, or *ancient knowledge* connecting a proverb with the mythical “beginning,” from which it derives its justification. A given statement transforms into a complete and universal truth, which eliminates the need for its current justification.

A man who turns to a proverb is satisfied with the fact that he or she participates in a transmission of a universal truth, and the fact that he or she “is right,” that the experience of his mythical ancestors speaks through him and that situations, which in other circumstances could be ambiguous seem to be transparent. The excess of meaning, which joins the statement and changes it into a general, absolute truth, could be identified with Barthes’ myth that organizes the world without any contradictions, granting reality the simplicity of essence, making any movement of thoughts and transgression beyond direct visibility hard, and unnecessary (Barthes 1991). It is worth mentioning that myth, which eliminates reality in its diversity, ambiguity and transiency is a fundamental expression of categorization, or a conceptual treatment of reality, which – for human orientation in the world – is inevitable.

Proverbs that are considered an essence of truth, taking the form of rules, which create an illusion of a systematized collection are, in fact, full of contradictions. That is the privilege of categorizations; privilege to ignore the contradictions within phenomena. In other words, that is the privilege of human cognition – standing by that which is general (standing by the image of a proverb as the perfect, always valid, truth and systematized wisdom of the ancestors) and omitting that which is concrete and simultaneously contradictory in many ways (omitting the unsystematic character of proverbs). If we were to analyze the

28 See *Proverbs are the wisdom of nations* or the German *Sprichwörter sind die Weisheit auf der Gasse*.

popular wisdom on the example of particular proverbs, we could conclude that proverbs contradict one another (Krzyżanowski 1980b: 44, 93–94, 133).

The image of the world contained in proverbs has a relatively eclectic and incoherent character, which is tied to the fact that proverbs are an aftermath of very different, culturally and historically conditioned mentalities and their related worldviews (Hołówka 1986: 136–137). Proverbs that to this day are considered the highest form systematized, or unquestionable truths²⁹ are full of hidden contradictions. One can find within proverbs traces of magical-fatalistic vision of the world transpiring through the recognition of the “fate’s” power over the world. One can also find traces of enlightenment rationality, biblical allegories, etc.

A Polish speaker can support the fatalistic attitude related to a conviction that nothing can be changed in the world with proverbs such as “you can’t bust through a wall with your head, what’s supposed to happen will happen – there’s no winning with your fate,” or “hope is the mother of all fools.” Belief in one’s ability to consciously an actively mold one’s fate can be found in “man is the master of his destiny,” “where there’s a will, there’s a way,” “faint heart never won fair lady,” “anything is possible,” “faith can move mountains,” etc. One can fall back on the proverbs by stating old love never dies, but if someone wants to posit a contradictory thesis, he or she would say: “new love spoils the old one.” Similarly, on the one hand, “one likes what one has,” but also “the grass is always greener on the other side.” Proverbs can say “he who treats his enemy kindly wins over himself and the enemy,” but also “kindness to the enemy invites death,” etc. We could keep listing examples of contradictions among proverbs and confirm that it is hard to discover the motif, for which the vision of the world created through those proverbs would be consistent (Hołówka 1986: 132). Proverbs can support radically contradictory attitudes and change them according to the needs of a moment: support one belief, while forgetting the earlier one. Thanks to that “it’s impossible to imagine circumstances, in which common sense were to announce cognitive capitulation without having a fitting proverb at hand” (Hołówka 1986: 137).

Using proverbs could be considered an attempt to dodge the power of judgment, or the constant mediation between that which is particular and that which is general. It is not about anything other than human tendency to categorize, a tendency to build an unambiguous, coherent, transparent, predictable and unchanging *cosmos*. The situational logic that is based on absolutization of the

29 See *Przysłowie prawdę ci powie; Sprichwort, Wahrwort*.

judgment as a result of “forgetting” about earlier judgments (or notions and narratives) is based on eliminating relationships between *before* and *after*, on eliminating variability, which means on eliminating time. The situational logics could be considered from that vantage as a specific case of categorization, or a tendency to consolidate and immobilize the world. It could also be treated as a form of escape from time, if we were to assume that time is *a priori* of any observable change. In other words, the situational logic is a symptom of tendency to simplify the world through, among other means, eliminating time and its related variability. A common paradigm, as a result of which we escape the objectification of the consequences of attitudes and beliefs, is a paradigm of escape from time in that sense. The sphere of common thinking could be defined as a sphere of domination of the actual *now*, resulting from the need of the moment and passing into oblivion the second another *now* emerges, one which will acquire a status of eternally existing sense for the time being.

Building the Cosmos Through the Narrative

It has been established before that besides the sign and its accompanying connotations (excesses of meaning) the world-creating function is also performed by text – a text in the form of an expressed judgment, or narrative. The notion of myth functioned as a *sacred narrative legitimizing the actual form of socially created world*;³⁰ before Barthes used it in its modified meaning of *world creating nebulae of connotations*. Both the myth-text and myth-sign mean constructs thanks to which reality appears to men not as *chaos*, but as *cosmos*, or order, a sphere of transparency, predictability, and obviousness. In both those understandings, a myth constitutes a display of categorization. It removes the potential – because possible to notice – ambiguity and variability of reality. In the order of the myth, reality explains itself. It is fully, or even inordinately justified in a sense that makes posing questions impossible. It makes the question unnecessary from the outset. Due to the myth, the collectively acknowledged image of the world has the status of a natural and obvious order of things – a status of something unchanging and eternally existing, derived from the sacral “beginning” (*illud tempus*), *God’s will*, or *nature*.³¹ Asking questions about the only possible – because existing

30 “The word *myth* from the Greek *mythos* means ‘a tale.’ It is derived from the verb *mytheuein*, ‘to tell.’ Myth is considered every story that precedes any potential ‘why’” (Kratochvíl 1996: 17).

31 For example, the narrative about Wanda, who would rather drown in the Vistula River than marry a German, can function as a confirmation of allegedly unchanging,

from the world's dawn – solutions appears senseless, while in a situation of the excess of obviousness even impossible. The mythical reality is a reality, in which “the excess of answers” does not allow a question to form. The myth is a “silent” (so obvious as to become unnoticeable) answer, which predates all questions, making it impossible to ask them in the first place (Kratochvíl 1996: 16–17). It is not accidental that the birth of philosophy is interpreted as the birth of a question in the face of discrepancies of mythical narratives.

The myth – regardless of whether it takes on the form of a sign (a word), or a text (judgment and narrative) – is characterized by the *fullness of meaning*. There is no “absence” in the myth, and it does not result in a cognitive dissatisfaction; on the contrary, it disables that feeling. Barthes' statement that the myth is a meaning designed to deliver immediate results (Barthes 1991) could be also referenced to the myth understood as narrative. The myth does not require interpretation in the sense of tedious search for meanings. The reading of it has a habitual character due to omnipresent convention, which outlines rather clearly what should be understood and in which way.

The basic condition for myth's emergence as the fantastical narrative was its *difference* from competitive narratives that function within any given linguistic-cultural community and are considered to be “true.” At this point, we could evoke a discovery (controversial at the time) by F. Lyotard, who stated that also the modern order of the world is conditioned by a system of conventional (repeating under different guises), common narratives, which are so obvious that they do not require checking (Lyotard 2004). The myth-narrative, regardless of in which linguistic-cultural community it appears, constitutes a form of legitimization of the reigning *cosmos* (Szacka 2006: 92–95). Conventional narratives allow to piece together the observed fragments of the world into one, reasonable whole. Systemicity coming from the repetitive character of a narrative (in its different variants) equals the internal logic of reality recognized by a particular community. That systemicity could be labeled as mentality understood as a structure of long lasting. The myth as a narrative, being a symptom of particular mentality, legitimizes human practices by providing precedents, or examples of the original actions that are worth imitating (Kowalski 2000a: 9–49, 107–120).

inter-ethnic relationships in the order of myth, in the sense that it represents a timeless precedent to be used as a model for all the future events. It fulfills the function of a myth in a situation where it implies the lasting character of a given state of the world, omitting the fact that the relationships around the world could, in fact, change.

Regardless of whether a particular narrative is called a myth or not, we have to conclude that a myth-text is in greater danger of potential verification than a myth-sign. The text of language is always a verbalized meaning, or a graspable and, at least partially, objectified one, which means it can be checked and questioned. A myth in the form of a text is easier to falsify (or verify), while the myth in a form of the excess of meaning undergoes critical analysis with difficulty. That is because it is characterized by a unique “transparency” stemming from a non-definitional, hence ungraspable, character of the connotation. A myth in the form of connotational excess of meaning does not exist originally as a graspable object and does not exist as an expressed meaning, which could be checked. In this sense, it constitutes a more perfect myth, a more “commanding” one, because difficult to identify.³² You can hardly debate what is implicit – what is not said. In other words: something that has not been expressed cannot evoke opposition. A myth in the form a text is relatively easy to verify because it is verbalized. That is the reason for its weakness.

Reality undergoes categorization in a narrative (it becomes simplified and immobilized) in a sense that the form of a plot, or a chain of cause-and-effect events where one event stems from another in relation to a particular ordering system is imposed on a not necessarily coherent reality. It takes place because of simplification, elimination, or minimization of others. All is perfectly explained and unambiguous. Representing reality through the medium of a plot has a *selective character*, because the employed compositional norms omit other choices, making certain aspects of reality included, while others omitted within the narrative. We could talk here about a collective promotion of particular motivations understood as conditionings of protagonists’ lives and which reflect a particular worldview (Głowiński, Okopień-Sławińska, and Sławiński 1986: 242–243).

Each narrative has its unique composition. It boils down to the rules guiding the construction of the represented world, which grant it its cohesive character. The composition not only organizes the represented world into a meaningful whole, but also interprets it, for example by introducing a hierarchy of values into it. The composition fulfills an interpretative function, which means the represented world of folkloric narratives (but also literary, or any other,

32 “In actual fact, the knowledge contained in a mythical concept is confused, made of yielding, shapeless associations. One must firmly stress this open character of the concept; it is not at all an abstract, purified essence; it is a formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function” (Barthes 1991: 118).

even *strictly* scientific) is never a “clean” reflection of the experienced world, but – at least partially – constitutes its interpretation (Głowiński, Okopień-Sławińska, and Sławiński 1986: 234, 237). As far as the cognitive dimension of the composition is concerned, we have to conclude that it always reveals some kind of a worldview, which is rarely explicated and objectified. That is why we can call it the image of the world – because it is a “silent” cognitive assumption and not a declaration. That is how we can differentiate folklore from literary fiction. While in literary fiction the compositional norms are sometimes used in a more conscious manner, based on the well-established poetics and programs of certain creative movements, or entire literary epochs, the carrier of folklore uses those norms unconsciously. The interests of the sender-receiver of a folklore message are focused on the same content and not on the way it is created or constructed. Compositional norms of the folklore texts exist in the social consciousness as a set of rules for constituting sense, which operate most of the time “hidden,” in the sense that they are rarely formulated, or objectivized.

Realization of the fact that a text has a certain composition is relatively hard because, first, the stylistic and compositional place can be isolated from one another only in theory. Second, while it is relatively easy to determine compositional specifics of an avant-garde literary text that is characterized by ambiguity of structure of the represented world, it is much harder to accomplish the same in the case of a folklore text (especially a memorate) currently functioning in the common oral tradition. That is precisely because of the represented world being often recognized as the very perceived reality, or a direct reflection of experience, which makes the analysis that much harder. Compositional norms, just like all other planes of meaning of a text, undergo conventionalization. That which in literary theory is sometimes branded as calcification of a compositional norm as a result of its repetition within the boundaries of different texts, in theory of folklore must be recognized as a form of building a rather stable image of the world.

If we were to assume that categorization is a way for a man to take control over infinitely varied and constantly shifting reality, we could say the same about the narrative as one of its characters. Telling stories about reality is not so much coverage of reality, but taking control over it through simplification, immobilization, and therefore the understanding is always accomplished from a particular point of view and some cognitive (ideological) perspective (Bartmiński 2012). This also translates into the pragmatic dimension of the linguistic being in the world: *telling tales provides templates of behavior* that provide instructions on how to operate in the world and what are the

consequences for different actions (what is punished and what is rewarded). The fact that a tale mirrors certain social order can be observed on the example of a fable that invites the listener into the sphere of often already non-existent social structures, such as social divisions (aristocracy – peasants), inherited rule, acts of cruelty (public decapitations).

If we were to concentrate on the universal character of the myth we could – according to Ricoeur’s proposal – understand it as a *symbol developed into a narrative* (Ricoeur 1993: 162, cf. Hušek 2003: 13). If we were to conclude that a symbol is a relatively universal type of sign (at least in the frame of a specific cultural or social milieu), we could also talk about a myth as a somewhat universal sign that was developed to the form of a narrative in the sense that it takes the shape of a plot, or a chain (or chains) of events related to one another by cause and effect, being a foundation of more or less developed represented world.

Among the examples of symbols developed into narratives, we could count different narratives about the beginning of the world, which are a development of one meaning structure, particularly a transformation of a fundamental *chaos* into *cosmos*. In this sense, a simple act of establishing a country or a city resembles building the world through “quartering” (segregating) the body of the Tiamat *monster* that is an embodiment of *chaos*³³ by the divine Marduk (Eliade 1978, cf. Libera 1997: 39–44). It can also be told in yet another way – as the killing of a *dragon*, which was accomplished by St. George, or as taming of the *devil* by St. Procopius. The symbolism of the transformation of *chaos* into *cosmos* is visible in the narrative of separation of earth and heaven, emergence of the solid ground from the amorphous waters and creation of different species of plants and animals that become differentiated, as told by the *Book of Genesis*. We could even risk stating that the “astronomical” narrative about the creation of the world as a result of the so-called Big Bang is also an embodiment of a transformation of something undifferentiated by means of a limited (countable) number of relatively permanent differences.

Another example could be the structural similarity between water as a phenomenon that symbolizes *chaos* and a tale about the *utopiec (wasermón)* – the amphibian “waterman” – who drags people to the bottom of a river, or a lake,

33 The monster becomes a monster when it disrupts the rules of taxonomy (in the Czech language, *patvar*, etymologically close to the Polish *potwór*, “monster,” is a distortion). A dragon as the case of a monster can be three-headed or have even more heads. From the head of the mythical medusa, a terrifying monster defeated by Perseus, grew snakes – not hair.

becoming in that way an agent of *chaos*. That tale could be replaced by many other narratives, for example with the one about a *siren* living at the bottom of the Aegean Sea, whose chaotic dimension manifested through her form – part woman and part fish (which disturbs the taxonomy, or the order of the world). Sirens are also destructive, by leading sailors with their singing toward rocks and, once the ship crashes, ripping apart the survivors who are in the water.

Chapter Four Categorization, Memory, and Narrative Folklore

The problem of categorization – or simplification of the world – is directly related to the question of mutual relations between the individual consciousness and a collective, social consciousness. This chapter is dedicated to showing that categorization – or semiosis (Uspieski 1998: 23–24) – could be considered not only as experiencing the world, but also remembering and recalling of one’s own experiences, and transmitting them to others in the form of common narratives where that which is more or less universal (archetypical) and systemic can overshadow the individual and incidental.

When dealing with the question of cognitive dimensions of folklore, the difference between empirical reality and narrative reality (whether from a near past, or from “ages ago”) recreated in one’s memory appears important. Empirical reality cannot be transmitted in all its details through a narrative. There is always a difference between an experience and its reflection in a narrative. If we were to use a metaphor, we could say that the memory is a mischievous archivist, who hands a man something that he was not meant to archive in the first place. What is more, the archival file is more or less transformed (usually simplified), while the person still believes he or she is getting back something that was actually meant for archiving. What is more, memory is a type of archive, in which the criteria for selection of information to be stored, cataloguing methods, playback methods are often transformed in various ways. Depending on that criteria, the content itself gets “distorted.” We should highlight once more that it is only an alleged archive, since a text that gets in either fails to come back – or comes back altered.

To illustrate the fact that any experienced reality never really comes back to an individual from his memory we could use a metaphor of Funes the Memorious, a protagonist from J. L. Borges’s short story bearing that same title (Borges 1962: 107–115). Due to a horse-riding accident, Funes acquired an ability to perceive reality in all its details and gained a total recall. The ability to have a divine cognition possessed by Funes turns out to be a curse. The new power sentences him to live out his life under the *weight of infinity* of all elements of the world and the endless stream of their changes. The narrator observes that Funes paid with the loss of ability to think for his new gift. Thinking, however, is equal to forgetting about the details, or a possibility of simplifying, of abstraction. If we were to frame the question of Funes the Memorious in cognitive terms we

could conclude that his consciousness has released itself to a maximum degree from the necessity of categorizing individual phenomena on the plane of their direct observation, and on the plane of their remembrance and recall from the memory. Funes' memory transformed into a "gigantic landfill."

I adopt a belief that the theory of memory is easiest to grasp as a particular case of the theory of categorization, meaning systematization based on "sifting" and "sorting" (Ricoeur 2006), directed toward a specific fragment of the being. Through the mediation of a limited number of terms, language diminishes or hides certain differences within the being, while highlighting or unearthing others. Delimitation of reality with an infinite number of changing aspects – its "melding" into one with notions and texts of language – takes place through a systemically conditioned (or: discursively, paradigmatically) search for limited, and therefore transparent number of relatively general differences and similarities in the perceived being. It takes place by ways of certain aspects of the being becoming clear and reliable, while others are ignored and forgotten (Krapiec 1985: 33, Maćkiewicz 1999a: 48, Weisgerber 1971a: 44–45). Categorization is based – as we have mentioned before – on "dismemberment," immobilization, and most importantly simplification of that which is infinitely diverse and changing, in a way that allows a man to orient himself well in the world. Thanks to categorization, the image of the world appears as a sphere of easy reality that does not need to undergo any reflection the more a man is used to it (meaning, he or she is not surprised by it).

Remembering any of the contents and recalling them is based – as we have mentioned – on omitting or downplaying some of the aspects of reality and highlighting or fabricating others. Experienced reality – when compared to the postulated pre-experienced reality – is always simplified (ordered) and immobilized to a degree. Even greater degree of simplification and immobilization characterizes reality reproduced from memory, which – among other things – means that the reconstruction of the past can be accomplished only as an approximation (Halbwachs 1992). If we cannot recreate the present in all its details, its multi-dimensionality, variability and even its contradictoriness, how would it ever be possible to recreate the past in all its details? Especially a distant past that reaches man through historical narrative, or stories of ancient events. Learning of the past does not mean its realization in all its aspects. Understanding the past is related to navigating certain planes of generalization, which takes the form of granting the past a certain structure of sense or ordering of the past according to contemporary keys that shift along the shifting paradigms of cognition, or ways of ordering objects that guide not only the interpretation of phenomena, but also their "objective" perception (Assmann 2011,

Ricoeur 2006). Any narrative pertaining to the past must be selective. Narrative performs a “selective function” in that sense (Ricoeur 2006, Szacka 2006: 24, 44). Hence, remembering something is equally an act of remembering (noticing and highlighting) and forgetting (omitting and dismissing). Following Ricoeur, we could say that forgetting can be so closely related to memory that it could be considered as one of its conditions (Ricoeur 2006).

Each epoch has its favorite subjects that draw the attention of its contemporaries. In the following epochs they can be forgotten, or rejected nonetheless, just to return in time (sometimes in a different form). The linguistic-cultural system undergoes constant transformations, while understanding of the past contained in the written and oral historical narratives – folklore – transforms as well. We are looking at a sequence (or overlap) of epochs and respective ways of categorizing, or ordering of the past, and changes to the memories following the transformation of similar “memory frames” (Halbwachs 1992). A text of folklore that refers to the past is temporary in character because it constitutes an expression of a particular historical circumstance related to contemporary needs of men, with the system of beliefs he or she currently subscribes to, cognitive customs, points of view and everything that dominates at that given moment (Halbwachs 1992, cf. Assmann 2011, Le Goff 1996). According to Uspienski, “past events are selected and assigned sense from the vantage of the present as much as the memory of them is still alive in the collective consciousness. Past is organized as a text read through the prism of the present” (Uspienski 1998: 27). It results in strategies for remembering and recalling of the past that are characterized by variability, which translates into a more or less subjective character of “remembered” past that wants to pass for “objective” representation of past events.

The past, which from the divine perspective is one and objective, from the human perspective is at least partially subjective, in the sense that it “has its own history” – each epoch and society looked at the past in a slightly different way. “Historical experience is not something absolutely and objectively given, it changes in time and appears in essence as a derivative of our reality. Following events can take place later and they will define the *new reading* of the historical experience, its *reinterpretation*. Therefore, the past can be read anew from the perspective of changing reality (Uspienski 1998: 27). In that sense, we can speak of a chain of “derivative reworking” of historical narratives (Ricoeur 2006).

We could recognize as false the assumption that a narrative recounting the past recreates it in a form, in which its narrator, or a person that initiated its transmission, experienced it. Each recreation of the past takes the form of a narrative, which means that the function of ordering the past is fulfilled here by the plot, which recreates it as coherent, free of paradoxes and axiologically

one-dimensional. (Uspienski 1998: 26–27) No plot is ever “neutral” toward what in the ways of constructing meanings (or: constructed chain of events connected by cause-and-effect relationships) is either included or dismissed. Even if in the case of particular narrative, we were to assume that the represented world is the most faithful representation of the real world (real events) it can never identify with it. The recalled phenomenon, therefore, is primarily a represented world built according to specific stylistic and compositional norms, which are a symptom of a particular order of cognition. A past that is recreated in a narrative has a selective character in that respect, just like everything that has undergone the process of categorization related to forgetting about nonsensical details and domination of general structures that provide the recreated reality the proper sense. As soon as each historical figure and fact make their way into social memory, they transform into a kind of a lesson, a notion, or a symbol and attain certain sense, becoming an element of the system of the idea of a society. Therefore, *we are not the only authors of our own memories*, because we are social beings and society thinks in structures, connecting concepts to one another and grouping them into more complex representations of individuals and events that, in turn, are a part of even more complex concepts (Halbwachs 1992).

Ways of categorizing reality in a narrative, or ways of building a represented world, may be also defined as compositional norms having – similarly to categorization as such – to a degree a conventional, or accidental, character. Compositional norms are detectable also in the represented world of narratives. Also the image of the world as such is constructed according to the defined norms of creating sense. On the one hand, we must differentiate between compositional norms of the represented world, or “narrated reality” and the rules for building an image of the world, or all perceived reality even before it would be told. On the other hand, we should note that the sensual perception alone takes a form of recognizing meaning relationships, particularly of causes and effects, which is structurally similar to a narrative. The fundamental thesis of contemporary theories of narration claims that the experience is organized according to the same mechanism that the foundation of creating a plot (Turner 1999, cf. Owczarek 2005: 173–186). Folklore texts, or texts that during their transmission continuously pass through a “filter” of collective (common) consciousness, display an agreement between rules of constructing the image of the world and compositional norms. Motivations for actions and attitudes of protagonists in folklore stories reveal not only the laws ruling the represented world of narratives but often also the laws guiding the image of the world of the “sender,” especially in the case of memorate or a text perceived as a direct account of reality.

The question of cognitive dimension of the narrative folklore can boil down to a question about the degree to which reality recreated from memory reflects the previously experienced reality rather than rules guiding human consciousness. In other words, the key question of the research on relationships between the closer and more distant past (past experienced world) and the world represented through a narrative about the past is to what degree the narrative about the past manages to account for the past itself and to what degree it reflects the laws ruling human thought and imagination that have not only an individual, but also a collective, or systemic, dimension (Uspienski 1998: 22). The essence of a relationship between individual and collective consciousness is best explained by referring to the concept of preventive censorship that has been popularized in the theory of folklore by Bogatyrev and Jakobson. According to scholars, the individual experiences of an event become socially significant facts only if during their transmission they should adjust to the requirements of the collective (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980: 1–21).

Due to preventive censorship, a text gradually loses its relationship to the individual experience that has been at its forefront and makes it attain universal features thanks to progressing adjustment to collective conventions. Not only does society every once in a while force people to recreate events from their past in thought, but also to correct it, edit, and complete it, so that in the end – still convinced that memories are precise – we ascribe them meanings we did not think the current reality had at the time (Halbwachs 1992). On the one hand, proper “language” – common *langue* – can bind a community and enable similar reactions by its members to what happens around them. On the other hand, it brings order to information as such, determining the selection of meaningful facts and establishing relationships among them. That which will not be described in that “language” will not be “received” by the societal addressee. It will disappear from his line of sight (Uspienski 1998: 22).

In that sense, preventive censorship understood in this way plays the role of collective consciousness. The process of adjusting of an individual text to a collective code while it is transmitted could be simplified with the metaphor of Chinese whispers. Several people sitting next to each other take part in this collective game. The first person whispers a phrase to the next; the second in line passes it to the third and so on. The last person must pronounce the phrase out loud. Then it is compared to the original version. Differences between the original and the final versions, stemming from difficulties during the transmission from mouth to mouth, becomes a source of collective laughter. It is somewhat similar in the case of folklore texts, except the distortions allow for a replacement of an individually experienced sense with a sense that is somewhat universal,

or mythical. If we were to focus on a historical narrative we could repeat, following Eliade, that the experienced (hence contemporary) events become articulated and interpreted over time according to the timeless model of a heroic myth (Eliade 1959).

Actions of collective consciousness, which transforms the infinitely diverse and varying aspects of reality into somewhat simple and lasting, and primarily identical (or similar) notions by “filtering” it through the preventive censorship could be recognized as a specific case of categorization. The reason for it would be the collective consciousness, which transforms that which is accidental and varying into that which is *systematic and stable* and therefore *archetypal*, by means of mechanisms of collective forgetting and recalling, which rule the process of transmission of folklore texts. In this sense, the collective consciousness discretely adjusts different aspects of a being to a rather universal archetype or at least to socially shared models. It places that which has more or less paradoxical and varying character in the sphere of stability and unambiguity. The main form of a narrative entering the collective circulation, which – like any truly existing person – displays certain ambivalence at the beginning, begins to take shape either of a unambiguously positive, or negative protagonist during the transmission. He never operates in contradictory fashion and his actions remain the same: “Historical protagonists and events are devoid of ambivalence and turned into one-dimensional symbols of values important in the life of groups, while an impassioned account of them is replaced by a story saturated with emotions” (Szacka 2006: 24).

The protagonist of a folkloric narrative transforms into an essence, or a specific *ideal type* in a sense that it is usually identical and if it does change, it is usually in the same way. (Sulima 1976: 17)³⁴ According to V. Krawczyk-Wasilewska, he is gifted with “constant, distinctive features” (Krawczyk-Wasilewska 1986: 65). Similar protagonists always act in the same way, always fulfilling one and the same function. *The witch, the warlock* (for example *Koshchey* in Russian magical fairytale), or a *dragon* as the quintessential “pest” cannot change their attitudes or actions. They have to play out their antagonistic roles to the very bitter end – annihilation brought about by the hero. If the fairytale as a genre of the narrative

34 If, for instance, a prince as a protagonist of a fable undergoes certain transformations during his fight against “evil,” even those changes have an essential (preplanned and, in that sense, necessary) character. A similar protagonist, while overcoming different obstacles and fulfilling specific tasks, gradually perfects himself, becomes “wiser.” These types of narratives always hide the same structure of initiation within them, the process of overcoming challenges that allows entry into adulthood (Gennep van 1960).

folklore would constitute a form of a cognitive control over the world and the form of building the *cosmos*, not the *chaos* (understood as taxonomic havoc), it could not take place any other way. If it were, W. Propp could never find mutual morphology within the fairytales in the form of a closed collection of static functions performed by the characters (Propp 1968). The durability of the features of characters translates into the durability of fairytale's structure. It is that durability that constitutes the result of categorization processes.

Under the influence of folkloric transmission any vagueness is removed from texts constituting a similar genre. Diversity and changeability of experiences of individuals transforms into a monolith-like of the collective experience within the folkloric transmission. Similar uniformity and removal of any vagueness takes place also through a gradual "polishing" or "filtering" through a preventive censorship, which is an unconscious, collective mechanism of members of the folkloric transmission. That is how the social consciousness removes any *chaos* for the sake of simple unambiguity, order and repetitiveness, or *cosmos*. Unfortunately, it is mostly to the disadvantage of "objectivity" of the folkloric message: narrative that undergoes the process of folklorization (stabilization and profiling of text in the social circulation) will reflect not so much the objective event or actual state of affairs in the world, but a state of collective consciousness or generally recognized symbols and generally accepted paradigms of perception and action.

The historical form is "liquidated" after entering the collective memory, while its biography is composed anew and according to the mythical norms (Eliade 1959). Actions of a hero lose their rather accidental character and become isomorphic in relation to other actions by similar characters. We could use the isomorphism (structural similarity) of characters such as Ondraszek (Ondráš), Janosik (Jánošík), Ilya Muromets as examples. What is interesting, the historicity, or authentic features of characters from the past, does not resist the corrosive influence of the process of mythologization for long. Historical event as such, regardless of their meaning, "does not remain in the folk memory, nor does its recollection kindle the poetic imagination save insofar as the particular historical event closely approaches a mythical model" (Eliade 1959: 42). The transformation of a unique individual into repetitive (universal) hero is a symptom of a tendency to simplify the world, among other things through *eliminating time* and changeability that accompanies it. Actions of a living man are not only diverse or even contradictory but undergo transformations and regression. Actions of a fairytale hero that is an example of the most categorized folklore are always the same, coherent, easy to categorize, and unchanging.

M. Eliade repeats after M. Chadwick that myth is not the original (in the temporal sense), but the final stage of the hero's development ("Myth is the last – not the first – stage in the development of a hero.") (Eliade 1959: 43). The represented world of the myth, understood as the authentic folklore, as a commonly appearing, repeatable in many different variants narrative, reflects not so much the objective reality in the sense of ancient, although factual actions of a real, historical figure, but rather an actual, common consciousness of those, who constitute the communication collective, within which a given myth can function. That consciousness has a collective, or communal, dimension in the sense of participation in the same linguistic-cultural order, taking place right here and now and is shaped by currently professed values, commonly accepted cognitive and action strategies, etc. (Assmann 2011, Halbwachs 1992, cf. Uspienski 1998: 27) Sources of the mythical hero should be looked for not so much at the "beginning" or in the external reality that is distant in time but in the internal reality or mechanisms that rule human cognition. The same statement refers to any incidents of magic, animism, or anthropocentrism: we may understand them as remnants of archaic cultures, but primarily we should notice the effect of cognitive processes within them that are understood to be mechanisms of ordering the world that guide human consciousness. These processes also constitute the answer to the question of how is it possible for the remembered contents to change over time.

"The memory of historical events is modified, after two or three centuries, in such a way that it can enter into the mold of the archaic mentality, which cannot accept what is individual and preserves only what is exemplary" (Eliade 1959: 44). If we were to refer to the folk culture of Cieszyn Silesia we could find evidence for existence of similar mechanisms in the legend *Jako Pón Krystus przijimol Žida za apostola* [How the Lord Christ admitted a Jew among the Apostles] (Kađubiec 1973: 124–127). It tells a story of a *Jew* asking the Christ to include him among the apostles, so he could make a profit. As one can deduct, the *Jew* did not pass any of the trials, which meant Christ had to abandon the candidate. The need for taxonomy, meaning the unequivocal differentiation between *us*, in this case the apostles and Jesus Christ, and *them*, embodied in this particular legend by a single *Jew*, deprived the Christ and his apostles of their supposed original identity (they were all Jewish), or *changed their identity*. Hence, we can see that the simplification of the complex reality, resulting from introduction of ordering differences, took place at the price of losing some of its aspects. The legend shows that socially shared patterns can, through habitualization (or accustoming their carriers to barely noticeable changes) transform that which is fully *alien* in some respects into something eternal and completely *belonging to them* (and vice versa). Categorization processes could, therefore, lead to *man beginning to*

“remember” something that never was – especially when the only arbiter, who weighs on what is the truth is memory (Lotman 1994: 19–30).

If we were to continue with the theme of the *Jew* from the religious folktale we could use the attempt of identifying him – as an image of the *alien* – with a demon³⁵ as an example of clear mythopoeticism. It can be confirmed by texts, which could serve as an expansion of the symbol of the *alien* (bloodthirsty demon) into the form of a narrative:³⁶

The Disappearance of the Beggar

The beggar visited the Inn. Every day she would go around the village to beg. Whatever she collected she would spend on drinking at the Inn. Whenever she had enough and slumped under the table, the Innkeeper would take her out and put her to sleep in a barn, where she slept on the hay and in the morning she'd be on her way. One day, the Innkeeper opened the doors to the barn, but the beggar was not there and since then nobody heard of her again. When my uncle started to turn his wooden cottage into a brick house he first turned half of the cottage and then the other. When he was removing clay from the second half he found a hiding place in the ground. At first he thought it would be a mouse nest, so he called his dog. The dog sniffed it and run away. “The hell,” he thought, “the dog run, so it can't be a mice.” He dug in with a shovel and pulled out a human skull. He stood there frozen and didn't know what to do. Finally he decided he needed to report it to the police. As he stood there he went to the station. Police from Cieszyn came over and started to dig out the skeleton, putting each bone in a separate box. The family was broken down because all remembered the beggar and the uncle liked to drink a lot. Their imagination run wild and they thought he must've gotten drunk, raped the beggar and then killed her. They waited six months for the results of the autopsy. The papers came back claiming the bones must've been there for over fifty years. The entire family sighed the sigh of relief because if the uncle were to be

35 “There has existed a belief that blood is the necessary food for some types of demons. Particularly those characters that are of a hybrid character (for various reasons, they never managed to achieve an unequivocal status, that is find a place in a proper part of the universe; e.g. stillborn babies, suicide victims, victims of drowning) or those who possessed two souls while being still alive. Vampires and lamias belong to the broadly believed categories of night creatures that suck blood of their victims. According to still popular opinions, these demons feast on blood to regain some of their vital powers” (Kowalski 1998: 253).

36 The examples of texts I use in my work – except for narratives that have been republished from other sources – have been collected during field research around different towns of Cieszyn Silesia by faculty and students of the General and Applied Folklore Studies Department in Cieszyn between 2002 and 2005 under the direction of Karol Daniel Kadłubiec. Narrators of the presented stories – none of whom was over fifty years old – were provided full anonymity, which in the majority of cases was a condition necessary for the interview to take place.

the killer they would be there only thirty years, not fifty. The family started thinking, who could've buried the body there? They concluded that before grandma bought the house it used to belong to a Jewish family. And because the Jews would catch young girls and drain their blood, they figured it was the ghost of the dead girl that haunted them. They built a little shrine, but it didn't help, so they sold the house.

(Zebrzydowice, 2002)

About Letting the Blood

When I worked as the household help for the Jewish family everything was nice and well, but once I woke up in the middle of the night, where I slept in a little recess, on a mattress in a bathtub. I wake up and the Jew was standing above. "Don't worry," he told me, "I'm just washing my hands." I woke up again later that night and found the Jewish wife standing over me. I jumped up and she said "Don't worry, I'm just making some tea for my husband because he fell ill." And my hands had red marks, as if somebody took a wire brush to them, and they itched incredibly. I went to town in the morning and met my dad. I told him the story and he said: "They're letting your blood." They must've been the Jews who bake those pancakes with a Catholic blood in them.

(Zebrzydowice, 2002)

Murderous Tool (1)

A girl in Cieszyn went to buy a wedding dress. Here, at the turn on Głęboka street, she saw a store. Her mother told her: "Go, take a look." So she went and the mother and her fiancé started thinking she's been gone for very long. So the fiancé went in and asked where she was. "She wasn't here, she wasn't here," the Jewish shopkeeper told him. "How come," asked the man, "she walked right in here," and he started calling the police. The way the store was, there was a hole to the basement hidden in a barrel. And she was found in the basement, hanging by the legs and drained all the blood so there was no help. That's how the Jews were!

(Zebrzydowice, 2002)

Murderous Tool (2)

There was a story about a young couple that went to buy a wedding dress from the Jewish store. The girl walked in and the boy waited outside. He waited, but the girl wouldn't come out. So he went in and asked the Jewish shopkeeper where she was. The Jew told him there was nobody there. So he called the police and they found her dead. When she walked in, she fell right into a hole and there they hung her by the legs and drained her blood. The Jews needed blood from virgins to bake some pancakes, but I don't remember anything else.

(Zebrzydowice, 2002)

Murderous Tool (3)

They found a tool at the Jewish store and it was a barrel, or a chest, and the lid was studded with nails, a whole lot of them. And when it closed the blood would drain through the holes.

(Zebrzydowice, 2002)

Folklorization processes based on a transformation of phenomena that are invented, particular, changing and non-homogenous into general, lasting and homogenous phenomena should be recognized as cases of categorization. The same could be said about the transformation of a man into a mythical hero. Specific historical circumstances, which – at least partially – are a result of a *coincidence (chaos)*, are inscribed into a stable and non-contingent (necessary) matrix, a specified, socially shared pattern. The archaic consciousness despises coincidences, because it is afraid of unpredictability, uncontrollable change, or *chaos*. Similarly, deeds of a man, who, in a collective memory, takes on a form of a hero, or an ancestor, are deprived of contingency (accidentality) with the passing of time. As a result, they become necessary and isomorphic with the deeds of other heroes (Eliade 1959).

In summary, the process of mythologization of historical figures, or the process of progressing corrosion of their individual characteristics and their replacement with some universal features as a result of preventive censorship is a form of categorization that transforms non-ordered (diverse) and changing concretes into an ordered (homogenous) and lasting abstracts, or the experienced *chaos* being transformed into *cosmos* recalled from the memory. If we were to remind ourselves that the categorization means elimination of specific aspects of reality and highlighting, or even discovering others, we should also conclude that folklore is a form of remembering, while simultaneously *a form of forgetting about the past*. The idealization of the hero in folklore, taking form of generalization, is possible only through forgetting the details. That is the only reason why reality of folklore could be clear, transparent (predictable), simple and immovable, or – it can represent *cosmos* in comparison to a chaotic reality inhabited by people. Therefore, we look at a collectively conditioned tendency to categorize or a tendency to simplify and immobilize that is displayed through matching random and often incompatible *paroles* to a collective *langue* that could be understood as a sphere of relatively universal – because collective – archetypes.

As was proven by research on the transformation of a historical hero into a folk hero, the merging of an empirical experience with an archetype could take place very fast, sometimes even within one generation (Eliade 1959). This is why we have to agree with the conclusion that by leaning on the narratives, the memory of the past tends to be short and inaccurate. What is more, as we

have observed already, a man cannot fully trust his own memories, because they too bear the mark of notional processing, undergoing constant reinterpretations. Human experience, once remembered, goes through “processing” in the sense that it has been inscribed into the order of language and culture signs and cannot be a faithful reflection of the experience that started it in the first place. We are not concerned here exclusively with a radical skepticism toward the possibility of reaching the past by means of social memories. If the past cannot be recreated faithfully in any narrative, it does not mean that we cannot differentiate its more successful representations from the less successful ones. The representation of the past in the form of recollections, or fiction created on its basis, however generalizing and dependent on the subjective factors (e.g. mental state of its narrators that gradually changes) does not have to be a pure construct.

The represented world of folklore is characterized by the *overabundance of categorization* in comparison to the empirical world. Everything is relatively transparent, predictable axiologically unambiguous and preemptively equipped with an obvious sense as opposed to the actual events (events taking place in the empirical world), which could bear the marks of accidentality, or even absurd. It is shown through the process of transforming the actual event into a truth of folklore described by M. Eliade. The event was an absurd death of a young man who due to an unfortunate accident fell off a cliff. The event, recorded by Constantin Brăiloiu, that became an object of a folk narrative (ballad) was filtered through preventive censorship to the point of being fully cleansed of its ambiguity and attained “logical” sense. After a short while, people began to sing about the man being thrown off the cliff by a jealous mountain fairy, punishing him for wanting to marry another woman. Hence, the tragic death loses marks of accidentality and absurdity (Eliade 1959: 44–45). A *narrative categorization* of reality took place within the order of the myth by ambiguity of the real event suddenly transformed into equivalence through creative reconstruction (Le Goff 1996), thereby acquiring new sense. The gaps in the world represented by a memorate were filled with new meanings, until the recreated reality took a form of an understandable *cosmos*. The reality that was no longer there has been overbuilt, co-created by the imagination that, despite being an expression of human invention, is always based in a particular cultural order. Imperfections of memory made it possible to change the coincidence into a necessity, a change of experienced *chaos* into the narrative *cosmos*.

Categorization processes that guide memory allowed, through gradual (unconscious, or subliminal) transformations, to change the accident into a necessity. The tragic outcomes stemming from human error have been transformed into a relatively “tamed” or understood, tragedy according to the rules of the

fatalistic-metaphysical motivations. Its causes were identified in the form of a pest-ghost: *rusalka*. Memorata has been transformed into fabulate, subjectively remaining a memorata still or a narrative about the authentic event. As a result, it paradoxically became more believable in the sense it began to speak the truth about what happened *long ago*, while turning the true story about recent accident into a lie (Eliade 1959: 46).

The collective consciousness adjusts different aspects of life to a rather universal or, at least, socially shared templates. It places that which has a temporal – therefore changing – character outside time and in the sphere of lasting. The escape from time has yet another dimension. Folklore places the historical events on the plane of ancient past. As a result of a categorizational processes, the past is deprived of any diachrony. It becomes achronic, *compressed in one point* in a sense that it is no longer characterized by time or the related change. *Ago (earlier)* is like a single point placed *in illo tempore* (“at the beginning of time”). Mythical thinking does not differentiate between more and less recent past: *ago (earlier)* is only one and constitutes an opposition to *now*. We are concerned here with a universal unity that is without a temporal structure. The category of *ago (earlier)* within the framework of folkloric narrative and the commonsensical thinking as such is nothing else than a *past now* or the eternal (unchanging) and devoid of multi-dimensionality and dialectic “beginning.” In other words, the *time of the beginning* (or the supposed beginning of history) and achronicity from the phenomenological point of view – from the point of view of the human experience – are one and the same: “Time of the collective memory is not a linear, historical time, but a mythical non-time. The past is situated prior to the present, but that “prior” constitutes a *one big yesterday*, a back when, ordered according to rules other than chronology” (Szacka 2006: 92; cf. Gurevich 1985). That fact reveals itself especially in memoirs where, due to a selective character of a memory, the past ordered by the plot is recreated as a coherent, devoid of paradox and axiologically one-dimensional (Uspienski 1998: 26–27). The category of *ago (earlier)* is commonly considered as a homogenous and synchronic “beginning” (*illud tempus*), regardless of the fact that the past is equally non-homogenous and diachronic (changing) as the present: *ago* of ten years is different than *ago* of a hundred years.

Gradational Character of Categorizing the Past

The phenomenological analysis applied to folklore texts that constitute a display of common consciousness allows us to simply explain the sources of axiological opposition of *now-worse vs. ago-better*, characteristic of common thinking and

Romanticism. It is easier to grasp cognitively and, therefore, that which is not there physically but what exists only as an element of the represented world is fully explainable, simple, and obvious. The longing for the paradise lost of the past could be interpreted as a longing for *cosmos*, for the general, abstract, devoid of ambiguity that stems from actual existence. The represented world of folklore that existed *long, long ago*, or in the mythical *ago*, is in the cognitive sense “more attractive” than the real empirical reality bearing marks of *chaos*, ambiguity, and unpredictability. Let us compare:

[**NOW**] – [UNIQUE/IMPERFECT] – [CHANGING/UNSTABLE] – [A-CATEGORICAL/CATEGORICALLY PROBLEMATIC] – [DIFFICULT TO INTERPRET/INCOHERENT] – [AMBIGUOUS/NON-TRANSPARENT/UNPREDICTABLE] – [COMPLICATED] – [CHAOS] – [**WORSE**]

versus

[**EARLIER/AGO**] – [GENERAL/PERFECT] – [LASTING] – [CATEGORICALLY UNPROBLEMATIC] – [NOT REQUIRING INTERPRETATION/UNDERSTANDABLE] – [UNAMBIGUOUS/TRANSPARENT/PREDICTABLE] – [SIMPLE] – [COSMOS] – [**BETTER**]

Wherever there is no more empirical reality because time managed to swallow it, the folklore can gain complete domination over it. The world undermines the hegemony of the narrative about the world and, therefore, the narrative is the most convincing when access to the world represented through that narrative is impossible because, for example, something happened *long, long ago* (temporal distance), or *beyond seven mountains and seven forests* (spatial distance). Let us repeat, the “real world” in which we live, whenever compared to the represented world of the narrative folklore always appears as *chaos*.

If the perceived reality is shaped by categories of language and culture, then the shaping must be pronounced to a greater degree during the process of recalling and transferring through a narrative. As we mentioned above, the condition for particular idealization of the phenomenon, for example, of a transformation of a man into a mythical hero, is his *absence*. Empirical experience of a specific reality interferes with its mythologization, which could be understood as an advanced categorizational “processing.” The real, ambivalent multi-dimensional and changing world always moves beyond the order of myth. This is why the condition of internalizing the world through the myth is the presence of that world, and – in turn – the lack of possibility for comparison between the idea, judgment, or the narrative with the object (a situation that can be experienced through senses). In other words, the past could be perfect only in a situation where it is not disturbed

by being, imperfect and cognitively difficult to grasp due to its multi-aspectual, multi-dimensional, changing, and often internally contradictory character.

In the cognitive sense, the *better* for man is that which is (already) gone because the absence of being makes differences and contradictions absent as well. The *worse*, on the other hand, is that which is, because the present being – following Eco's reasoning – is always resistant (Eco 2000: 50–52). Understood as a connection between the form (signifier – an acoustic image) and content (signified – represented image) revealing itself in a notion, the word is more perfect than the object in a sense that it is characterized by coherence and unambiguity. After all, it represents a perfect image or a prototype with the strongest concentration of characteristic features.

In cases when the term was used regarding an object during its presence, particular notion helps *co-shape* (co-determines) the object, while in the case when an object is already absent from view of communicating individuals, it becomes *replaced* by a notion. Whenever we use a specific term regarding an object during that object's presence, the difference between the object and the term (prototype) can always be spotted. However, when the term is used regarding the object during its absence, the difference between the two is impossible to notice due to the lack of comparison. In those circumstances the object is identical with the notion that has fully replaced it. The same applies to the judgment call, which could be either compared to a particular state of affairs and undergo meaning corrections or not because the current state of affairs is no more, which is equal to the absolute rule of the judgment over the state of affairs. The same pertains to the narrative. The narrative that relates events that can be checked in the present has a limited power resulting from the possibility of reconstructing a given event. If the possibility of recreating a given event grows weaker, the narrative becomes more powerful in the sense that it *asserts more power over the given event*. The power of a notion, or an idea, is constantly undermined by the changing, multi-dimensional, and sometimes internally contradictory reality, assuming that reality is still available to the experience. That which is concrete always upsets the hegemony of that which is abstract. World perceived through senses undermines the rule of ideas (Eco 2000: 50).

According to that distinction we could speak of the original categorization (that co-shapes reality as something perceived through senses) and secondary categorization (that replaces reality). Secondary categorization is far-reaching in a sense that it is not "bothered" by perceived-through-senses reality simply because it is no longer present. If we were to define the problem more specifically, we would have to speak about the gradual character of categorization, meaning that a categorized phenomenon (event) could be more or less present

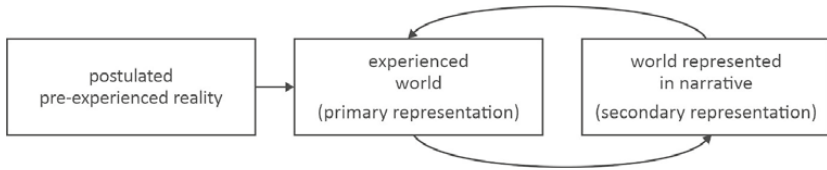


Diagram 1: the dialectical relationship between experience and narrative

throughout the process. This means the phenomenon’s influence on the said process will vary accordingly. There is a difference between the reality experienced recently, still fresh in one’s memory, and the reality coming from a farther removed period or even one never experienced, known merely from stories. Recently remembered experience is typically categorized to a lesser degree than the experience remembered earlier. Progressing folklorization (among others, the previously mentioned idealization of the protagonist in folklore) is equal to the progressing disappearance of changeability and multi-dimensionality (inaccuracies, ambivalence, contradictions). In general, it stands for the disappearance of temporal and spatial differences. The higher the degree of idealization (or categorization), the higher the degree of synthesis, coherence, systematicity, and axiological unambiguity within the remembered reality. The dialectics between the experienced world (original representation) and the represented world of the memorate (secondary representation) is represented on Diagram 1:

Similar dialectics consists in the following interdependence: the experienced world functions as the primary representation of the postulated pre-experience reality, and it is a starting point for creating memory narratives. Their contents must be recognized as the secondary representation of the postulated pre-experience reality. The contents of said narratives – related to the experienced world – form a *representation of representation*. On the other hand, the world represented in memory narratives that is considered an “objective” report on past events influences how its carrier (sender-receiver) will perceive reality. It also influences what he or she will notice and omit, and through what prism will he or she perceive the surrounding world. Thus, we may speak here of dialectical interdependence between the experienced world and the world represented in narrative.

We can single out three degrees of categorization, while keeping in mind that we are talking about idealized models; hence, we should assume existence of many transitional scenarios. Here are the categories:

1. Empirical reality: a synthesis of a phenomenon as something concrete (individual) and word or text as something abstract (general). The general is from the very beginning of perception present in the specific. The experienced reality can, however, be verified based on confrontation with other experiences.
2. Reality recalled from memory: the reality recalled from memory that cannot be compared with a singular being anymore. It can be verified only based on confrontation with other remembered fragments of the past reality and based on confrontation with the represented worlds of overheard memory narratives.
3. Never experienced reality: a reality that a man encounters only through a narrative. It can be verified exclusively based on confrontation with the represented world of other memory narratives.

Folklore narrative could be considered one of the most perfect forms of categorization. The idealization of reality reaches its pinnacle in the fairy tale, in which events and characters are reduced to an archetype understood as the most idealized invariant of meaning, boasting a dimension of a somewhat universal symbol (cf. Jacobi 1996: 60–75). We should remember that the process happens through a gradual simplification, elimination or sidetracking of accidental and changing aspects of reality, and through highlighting – or even invention – of other that are fairly universal and unchanging, or archetypal. The debate between relativism and cultural universalism could be omitted at this point, since for the arguments presented here, it is of no relevance to what degree these idealized invariants of meaning are truly universally human and resistant to the cultural paradigm changes. The only important fact is that the folklorization of a text through the course of its transmission consists in gradual and, usually, unconscious construction of specific meaning essences, or idealized – hence easily decoded – types, which could be recognized as a specific case of categorization, a case of linguistic construction of a rather simple (or transparent and predictable), and relatively sustainable (immobilized) *cosmos*. It is so due to the contents that are in line with collectively recognized symbolic order filling the gaps in memory. Imperfections of memory could be considered in this case as one of the conditions for the presence of magical motivation in a myth. In other words, we are concerned with a possible, objective transformation of the memorate into a fabulate as far as the gradual ordering of the life of protagonists to the magical conditions is concerned, while subjectively (from the perspective of their carrier, or the individual remembering) that particular narrative retains the status of an

authentic memorate or a text considered to be a faithful representation of actual events.

We should also note that the problem of filling the gaps in memory with contents that represent the experienced phenomena (and not necessarily faithfully) could be realized by narrators themselves or even be directly included in a passed-along text, as is the case of the following urban legend. In this case, the narrator clearly distances herself from its contents:

They lifted the bride [on a chair during the wedding reception] and there was a rope running close to the ceiling. I don't know what it was. They were lifting her, and she got snagged. She got caught when they were bringing her down. So, I don't know if she died there and then or later. And the groom, and I don't know if that's true, when he learned that his wife is dead, ran behind the barn – **and how much truth is in that part I don't know** – and hung himself. His father, when he saw that his son is dead hung himself as well but how much truth is in that, I don't know. **One says one thing, another will change something in the story and it's already something else.**

(Kończyce Wielkie 2007)

Chapter Five Relational and Multi-Plane Character of the Image of the World

The task of the following chapter is to highlight the fact that the image of the world constitutes certain system, characterized by a taxonomical order thanks to which a given world is a world, or *cosmos*. At the same time, however, it has a multi-layered, heterogenic, and often internally contradictory character (Hołówka 1986: 136–137). We may recognize *taxonomy* – understood as dismembering and ordering of the world via verbalized and non-verbalized categories and general scenarios – as one of the fundamental markers of the image of the world, which is part a work of language and culture and part of a work of an individual categorizing reality. Categories that are not always verbal in character – their meaning cannot always be expressed through simple language labels – could be framed using a specified schematization.

Categorization that constitutes “the first step on the path of transforming the experienced chaos into notional cosmos” (Maćkiewicz 1999a: 52) is considered to be a fundamental marker of opposition, in which we would like to fit the image of the world emerging from folklore texts collected in Cieszyn Silesia, and which we propose to consider as a relatively universal structure; at least in the context of premodern cultures or their modern residues or new equivalents. In this context, *chaos* should not be understood as something pre-conceptual (avoiding notional treatment) or pre-linguistic. Everything that is truly experienced by one as surprising, interpretationally difficult, extraordinary, ambiguous, unpredictable, and therefore dangerous – we understand to be the experiential *chaos*. Referring to the presented distinction, the difference between a postulated pre-experiential reality, experienced reality, and its narrative representation, we propose to differentiate between the postulated – since it is never experienced – pre-perception *chaos*₁ (constituting a theme of some of epistemological theories), empirical *chaos*₂ (constituting part of the experienced world, part of the *Lebenswelt*) and *chaos*₃ (constituting an experience petrified in everyday notions, shared judgments, and popular narratives). Because we do not ask philosophical questions, we will focus merely on index ₂ and ₃. In other words, we are interested in *chaos* in the phenomenological (₂) and linguistic-cultural sense (₃), meaning chaos that is the object of human experience that impresses itself (or not) and not on the structure of language and culture. As a carrier of the image of the

world, everyone sometimes finds oneself in situations, in which one must cope with a phenomenon one has not encountered before (a phenomenon that is difficult to grasp notionally, interpret, or categorize against the background of previous experiences) – index $_2$ – which could be preserved in the linguistic image of the world or that part of the image, which emerges in linguistic data (Maćkiewicz 1999b: 194), therefore, achieving a more lasting and general character – index $_3$.

Chaos understood as *interference of the taxonomic order of the world* experienced by man, whenever he or she encounters something radically different from everything experienced up to that point could be also labeled as *a-categorical*. More precisely, under the label of a-categoriality, we understand the more or less severe unfitnes of a specimen to a category, which in a sense disturbs the habitualized order of things in the world, causing an existential uncertainty in men. For example, the platypus appeared to its European discoverers at first as a-cateogrial (he appeared as an unlikely hybrid of a duck, fish, and mole), which does not mean it was not perceived and interpreted with the help of the already amassed experience – including that embedded in language – by those who discovered it (Eco 2000: 58–59, 89, 241–244). That concept of a-categoriality does not contradict the assumption that the perception of reality by an individual is mediated by notions or that an individual experiences reality through categories (Schwarz 1992: 84–88). In summary, analogously to the previously introduced division into *chaos*₁, *chaos*₂, and *chaos*₃, we want to differentiate between *a-categoriality*₁ (perception outside categories, being a more or less successful theory-cognitive construct), *a-categoriality*₂ (discrepancy between perceived phenomenon and habitual order of things), and *a-categoriality*₃ (a-categoriality petrified in language and culture).

The same pertains to *cosmos*. First, we focus our attention on *cosmos*₂, which designates everything that constitutes an opposition to *chaos*₂ or everything that composes a habitualized order of things in the world, the background of human experience that is so obvious that it does not usually constitute an object of interest of man. We would like to define the sphere of obviousness with that term, the sphere of taxonomic unambiguity, clarity, every-day, home grown quality – the sphere of profane banality. Second, we are interested in *cosmos*₃ or everything that language and culture identify as broadly understood order (for example, *one's own*).

We intend to recreate the systematization of the image of the world by inscribing all its elements into the cognitive structure based on the opposition between a-categoriality and *chaos* on the one hand and categoriality and *cosmos* on the other. Because in premodern cultures the sphere of the *sacred* resists the sphere of the *profane*, therefore we would like to include these two opposing

categories in the structure we are recreating here in a way of identifying the *sacred* with the first node of the opposition and the *profane* with the second one. The *sacred* is composed of phenomena shocking a man with their oddity, evoking intense interest, and provoking unusual reactions or strong emotions (negative, positive, or both). The *profane*, on the other hand, is identified with a sphere, in which a man managed to settle so well that it often escapes his attention (Otto 1923, cf. Eliade 1958, Staszczak 1987: 324–325). Let us compare:

[A-CATEGORIALLY/CATEGORIALLY PROBLEMATIC] – [NOT DISMEMBERED/
NOT PART OF THE ORDER OF THE WORLD] – [(AMAZING/ALARMING/
FASCINATING/SCARY) – (MYSTERIOUS) – (UNUSUAL/UNNATURAL/
PARANORMAL) – (OTHERWORLDLY) – (UNUSUAL) – (EXTRAORDINARY) –
(PHENOMENAL) – (NON-SYSTEMIC/DIVERGENT/UNUSUAL) – (SPORADIC) –
(DIFFICULT TO INTERPRET) – ('ONTOLOGICALLY' AMBIGUOUS)] – [OTHER,
ALIEN] – [CHAOS] – [SACRED] – [AMBIVALENT]

Versus

[CATEGORIALLY NOT PROBLEMATIC] – [DISMEMBERED/PART OF
THE ORDER OF THE WORLD] – [(UNNOTICEABLE) – (APPARENT) –
(TYPICAL/NATURAL) – (SECULAR) – (OBVIOUS) – (USUAL) – (BANAL) –
(SYSTEMIC) – (OMNIPRESENT/COMMON/EVERYDAY) – (NO NEED FOR
INTERPRETATION) – ('ONTOLOGICALLY' UNAMBIVALENT)] – [THE SAME/
ONE'S OWN] – [COSMOS] – [PROFANE] – [INDIFFERENT]

Where is the *Sacred*? Where is the *Profane*?

The *sacred*–*profane* opposition that seems to constitute a universal structure of the image of the premodern world – at least within cultures of the traditional type – has a strictly relational character, which means that it manifests itself in a rather unstable way. Trouble with assigning different phenomena to spheres of the *sacred* and *profane* stem from the fact that the same phenomenon could be an example of the *sacred* at certain time and not the other. All depends on what it is compared to at a given moment. In one situation, something regarded as *alien* appears as *sacred*, in another – as *our own*, depending on what currently seems to be standard or normal (what we accept as the background). The *sacred* is separated from us (something completely different, something “*ganz anderes*” Otto 1923) and will appear to a person dreaming about leaving for his “promised land.” However, whenever he or she finds themselves there, the *sacred* could appear in the abandoned homeland. Passing time that allows people to get accustomed to the actual place of residence sacralizes their previous place of residence, transforming it into a mythical space. From that perspective, time – the

basis of all habitualization – transforms the *profane* into the *sacred* and vice versa. Here is another example proving the relational character of the *sacred* and *profane*. From the perspective of a nomadic tribe, for which the crossed space, or *chaos*, is omnipresent, standard (therefore obvious, normal, profane), the newly established village (*cosmos*) will constitute a phenomenon, something extraordinary and will become a sacred space (Eliade 1959). The same way in myths the newly created world (*cosmos*) constitutes something unique (or extraordinary and sacred), something that emerged from all-encompassing (or banal and profane) *chaos* (Toporow 1975a: 140–141). However, in the cultures of societies settled on a given territory, that which is concerned as profane and obvious is the “one’s own” village, town, or country (one’s own *cosmos*, taxonomically ordered space of everyday life and the passing time), as opposed to “alien” space (*chaos* spreading beyond the boundaries of that which is “one’s own”), identified with the unpredictable and therefore dangerous and exciting *sacred* (Gennep van 1960, cf. Kowalski 1998: 310; Stomma 1986: 35). Hence, we see that *cosmos* (“one’s own”) is sometimes identified as the *sacred* and *chaos* (“alien”) with the *profane*, and sometimes vice versa. It all depends on the situation, in which one segment of the opposition constitutes something standard (the background), while the other something divergent from the standard and therefore something unique and unusual (something emerging against certain background). Taking an inspiration from the cognitivist terminology we could talk about differences between the standard of comparison and the goal of comparison. It is important to note that what is the goal of comparison in one case could become the standard in another. If within a phenomenological order included in the creation myth (and other isomorphic myths), the standard of comparison was *chaos* (“alien”) with a unique *cosmos* (“one’s own”) emerging in its background, then within the phenomenological order of a man living every day on the same territory, *cosmos* (“one’s own”) will become the standard of comparison, while the goal of comparison will be the *chaotic* space beyond the borders of what is known (“alien”). Therefore, the conclusion is that the *sacred* has no substantial character but is something relational instead, similarly to a linguistic unit in de Saussure’s theory (Saussure de 1959, cf. Culler 1976, Descombes 2001). Hence, the *sacred* cannot identify with anything permanently, because depending on circumstances that decide about the arrangement of differences between the *sacred* and the *profane*, differences that grant identity to one and the other, the *sacred* could appear in different places.

Perceiving the world by man, even though it happens through the mediation of categories formed within language and culture, is always individual and unique in character. In order to have random anything become solidified in the social

consciousness as *sacred* and therefore be properly sanctioned it must appear to somebody as *sacred* in the first place, it needs to fascinate him or her, surprise or shock them. About that which appears as normal and banal and what appears entirely different or sacral decides the experience of everyone, remaining under the influence of language and culture of which the individual is a carrier. The state of the affairs experienced by an individual could, in specific circumstances, become inscribed into a taxonomic order of reality³⁷ or remain unnoticed by the social consciousness and disappear without a trace. What emerges is the need to differentiate between two parallel functioning oppositions, the first one being the opposition of the *sacred*₂ (everything appearing as sacred, or defiled, incredible and hard to interpret) and the *profane*₂ (everything appearing as banal, typical and not requiring an interpretation). Another opposition would be the *sacred*₃ (everything that is established in language and culture as sacred, or defiled, incredible and hard to interpret) and the *profane*₃ (everything that is established in language and culture as banal, typical and not requiring an interpretation). The difference between opposition marked by the index number ₂ and ₃ is a difference between that which is *individual* (currently experienced state of affairs) and that which is *collective* (experienced state of affairs that is inscribed into the taxonomic order of reality). The sacred painting remains “sacred” in the linguistic-cultural sense, regardless of the fact whether it evokes a sensation of holiness or not. Following our line of reasoning, the painting constitutes *sacred*₃. It would constitute *sacred*₂ only after evoking the sensation of holiness in somebody (or the feeling of profanity, defilement). Similarly, linguistically and culturally sacralized angel and devil (in both cases the *sacred*₃) – as carnival characters for example – do not have to evoke sensations of fear, or fascination, meaning they do not need to have a lot in common with the *sacred*₂.³⁸ The situation could also be reversed: when the phenomenon that is considered the most ordinary and profane (the *profane*₃) within a given image of the world becomes a subject of contemplation for one of its carriers, provoking his fascination, or an experience of something “completely different,” it will become the *sacred*₂ in respect to that individual.

37 In this sense, the linguistic image of the world or the experience of a man “petrified” in language co-creates his other experience or experiences of other people, since it is its condition (Schwarz 1992: 84–88).

38 We should consider it a sign of disenchanting the culture where the sign (a man dressed as an angel or a devil) lost its material relationship to its designate, as a result stopping to evoke its presence (a faux-angel is rarely identified as a real one these days, similarly with a faux-devil, unless we are dealing with children).

Situation is analogous in respect to the opposition of *cosmos* and *chaos*. Taxonomy according to which the Gypsy is an element of the “alien” order has been – and to a certain extent still is – a display of premodern Cieszyn Silesia ethno-culture. It is an example of *chaos*₃ petrified in language and culture. But the Gypsy encountered by the carrier of that specific ethno-culture on a day-to-day basis (as his neighbor, for example) constitutes for the carrier part of *cosmos*₂. Hence, if the “alien,” unknown Gypsy were to constitute an element of both *chaos*₃ and *chaos*₂ than “one’s own” Gypsy living next to us would constitute an element of *chaos*₃ and *cosmos*₂ simultaneously. We can see then that between that which is experienced (index₂) and that which is solidified in language and culture (index₃) differences occur that account for the multilayered character of the perceived reality. *Similar multilayered character does not have to take the form of obvious contradiction, or a problem in individual’s consciousness.* A carrier of a given image of the world – depending on the needs of the moment – can either include a particular Gypsy into a circle of “his own,” or recognize an “alien.” This means that the same Gypsy could be perceived through the prism of images and categorizations related to the category of a “neighbor” and the category of a “Gypsy.” In other words, the same Gypsy could be an embodiment of neighborly help in one situation and the embodiment of unpredictability, danger or fascination in the next. In that sense, as I have signaled above – common interpretation of objects and events often lacks consistency. It is often shortsighted and ad hoc, while people display a tendency to notice order (or: *cosmos*) in everything that under closer scrutiny turns out to be a clear contradiction (Hołówka 1986: 136–137).

What Is Good and What Is Bad?

Including the sphere of assigning value, we should differentiate between several parallel functioning values where one dominates over another depending on the moment. We are specifically interested in differentiating between *value*_{2A} that we understand as resulting from a situation that positions a man in the face of making value-assigning decisions, *value*_{2B} understood as currently assigned to anything (more or less consciously, meaning that the *value*_{2B} itself could contain internal contradictions), and *value*₃ as inscribed into the taxonomy or codified in language as a semiotic system.

Let us highlight that distinction with the example of *value*_{2A} is linked to the existential uncertainty of man evoked by his contact with an angel or devil, *value*_{2B} is linked to an angel or devil and its current activity, while *value*₃ is linked to the concepts of an “angel” and “devil” or, in other words, to the stereotype of an

angel or devil. Sometimes, there are significant contradictions between the three highlighted types of values, at other times they are free of them. Discrepancies between the types of values could – to a certain extent – combine into axiological paradoxes, which Eliade calls the ambivalence of the *sacred* (Eliade 1958). Let us observe that both positively evaluated *angel* and negatively evaluated *devil* (*value*_{2B} and *value*₃ in both cases) could be considered negative characters in the context of *value*_{2A}, since they evoke existential uncertainty. The biblical angel that brings news of Jesus's birth evokes fear, surprise, and anxiety with his mere appearance; he evokes something unwanted and “evil.” The fact that biblical stories containing angels appearing to men are tied to the phrase “do not be afraid!” (Luke 1:30, 2:10) constitute best proof that – as far as the *values*_{2A} are concerned – there is no difference between an angel and devil because both are something “alien” *par excellence*, something coming from the other side of the world, beings belonging to the *sacred* world that stems from fear-evoking *chaos* (*chaos* that emerges with the *cosmos* in the background). Hence the taxonomic ambiguity of an angel who is “good,” compared to a devil or a sinner. However, as a creature coming from the untamed other world, the angel does not stand a chance in competition with “one's own,” other people who men find to be similar.

Similarly, due to it being inscribed into the taxonomical *value*₃, “one's own” (as *orbis interior*) is usually “good,” while the “alien” (as the *orbis exterior*) is usually “evil.” Categorically fixed *value*₃ (or: value related to the stereotype) is to a certain degree secondary in relation to *value*_{2A}. It is secondary in the face of the fact that the confrontation with “one's own” is not related to existential uncertainty a man experiences during a confrontation with difficult for interpretation, chaotic “alien,” or that it releases him or her from a tedious effort of categorizing, or systematizing that which is a-categorical. If the “alien” is “evil” and “one's own” is “good” due to *value*_{2A} and *value*₃, then it could be reversed according to *value*_{2B}: the “alien” landscape – because of its otherness – could intrigue or even fascinate a man against the background of his “own” landscape that might appear as boring or uninteresting in the context of that relationship. In other words, in the context of *values*_{2B}, the “alien” could be better than “one's own,” a conclusion that is usually disputed by ethnocentric cultures and their related linguistic (and cultural) images of the world (Lotman 1994: 13). Hence, due to the culturally and linguistically fixed *value*₃, the “alien” in traditional cultures is usually worse than “one's own,” or it is at least axiologically ambivalent.

When entering the world of the premodern ethno-culture of Cieszyn Silesian area, we will attempt to axiologically compare a witch (a neighbor that steals milk from our cows) with a fairy that lives in an unfamiliar land (a woman that knows “secret” ways to defeat the witch), and we should notice that we operate

on at least two planes of assigning value that remain in potential contradiction with one another. First, as far as *value*_{2A} is concerned – or due to the differences between those who are predictable and identical to us and those who are unpredictable and different “aliens” – we find our neighbor (who deprives us of milk through the use of magic) to be better than the fairy because the former is “one of us.” The fairy that lives in a foreign land is worse from our neighbor because of her affiliation with an opaque, difficult to understand, or even demonic (in any case: dangerous) world of aliens. The “alien” fairy that a housewife visits for help with “her own” witch, can paradoxically help because she comes from *chaos*, from the unpredictable “non-world,” where “everything is possible, where life and death, people and demons blend together” (Stomma 1986: 35). Considering *value*_{2A}, the fairy is “evil” and unwanted (she is, after all, one of the “aliens”) but turns out to be “good” and needed when viewed from the perspective of *values*_{2B} and *values*₃. On the other hand, the witch who was supposed to be “good” as “our own” (*values*_{2A}) turns out to be “evil” because she engages in witchcraft against us (*values*_{2B} and *values*₃). Following the principle of magical reasoning that identifies two similar phenomena – which we will discuss in following chapters – the witch is at least partially identified with *chaos* (hell) and “evil.” When the housewife from Cieszyn Silesia, while attempting to fend off the witch, asks for help from the fairy living in the Żywiec region, beyond the border³⁹ or in the netherworld, the housewife causes a conflict between two entities of *chaos* equipped in secret powers. One entity fights on the side of “good” (*sacred+*), while the other on the side of “evil” (*sacred-*). A proof of an ad hoc and situational character of human perception in this case could be the fact that the housewife from Cieszyn Silesia (who still sought help from fairies in the first half of the twentieth century in the Lesser Poland, part of the Żywiec region) could see a fairy armed with arcane powers and respect her or approach her without trust and with hostility, just like she would toward any “alien,” depending on circumstances. In other words, when considered in the context of a danger posed by the witch (a neighbor), the fairy (a woman from the Lesser Poland seen through the eyes of a woman from Silesia) assumes the role of a positively regarded ally, while when circumstances shift and the need comes to the forefront for establishing one’s

39 A state border ran between Cieszyn Silesia (Teschen Silesia, Těšín Silesia) and the Polish Kingdom territory from 1526 to 1918. After Austria took Galician territory, the border retained merely an administrative character, but there are proofs that the local populations still considered it significant, and it remains rudimentarily present even today (Kajfosz 2001: 97–99; Kajfosz 2004: 286).

own identity through a distance between oneself and the “alien,” she assumes the role of a negatively valued enemy endangering that which is “one’s own.”

The same rule applies to the Gypsy, who is an almost prototypical case of an “alien” in this ethno-culture. Due to his look, language, and behavior (nomadic life style, for example), the Gypsy did not fit the criteria of a regular man (meaning a man as such),⁴⁰ was “evil” according to the set of *value*_{2A} because he constituted an ontologically problematic figure, a difficult to interpret being belonging to the sphere of the *sacred*, which through its existence and puzzling behavior caused disorder among the taxonomic rules guiding the world.⁴¹ It does not mean, however, that the Gypsy was always unwelcome (*value*_{2B}) in the area under scrutiny. He was useful, among other things, because he knew how to predict future, which is a recognized privilege of demonic “aliens.” The Gypsy – who at least until the end of the twentieth century was allowed to throw misbehaving children into a bag to “take them away,” who (similarly to a Jew) was demonically cunning, knew how to steal, cast spells and hexes – was also useful because he would tell stories about what was beyond the “borders” or in the “foreign” land and in the space that many of the locals would never experience (or experienced in a very limited fashion) and about which they could merely speculate. In summary, the axiology of an “alien” could be described as ambivalent because men fear him, on the one hand, while on the other hand, they are fascinated by the “alien,” they are attracted by his mysteriousness.

Where Is the Center of the World and Where Are the Peripheries?

I signaled earlier that human perception of the world has an individual-collective character in the sense that an individual performs it, but using categories formed within socially shared notion system. Following that conclusion, I differentiated the concepts with index ₂, ones that stand for the *individual* (what appears to man as such at a specific moment) from ones with index ₃ that stand for the *collective* (established in language and culture). From that vantage point, we

40 “In the familial community self-naming is usually identical with the concept of a man, while the ‘alien’ is its opposition as a ‘non-man’ – a dangerous, supernatural being” (Lotman, Uspienski 1993: 66).

41 “Being alien is a relational category: alien is the one who does not fulfill standard definitions of familiarity, who does not possess an unambiguously determined status in an ordered world of a given community, and who (what) cannot be placed on taxonomic grids that define human reality” (Kowalski 1998: 361).

should differentiate the more subjective opposition of *center*₂-*periphery*₂ (or “here”-“there” in the sense of the current viewpoint) from the more objective opposition of *center*₃-*periphery*₃ (in the sense of linguistically and culturally established and socially executed dismemberment of the world). The nature of the first opposition is decided by the fact that “perception always happens . . . from a central point, marked by the onlooker who marks the circular horizon with his sight” (Kowalski 1998: 45). The fringes of the circular horizon that surrounds a man are phenomenologically understood boundaries of the world, which could be indicated in folklore or folklore-like texts. Here is an example of a sentence written down at the end of eighteenth century by Jerzy Gajdzica, a peasant from Cieszyn: “And then the disease spread during winter, so a lot of folks froze to death, everywhere around the World” (Gajdzica 1968: 7). Under the aspect of current perception, *center*₂ is always where we find ourselves, while *periphery*₂ is always where we are not or where we can barely see or not see at all. Culturally constituted opposition of *center*₃-*periphery*₃ sometimes overlaps with the phenomenological opposition of *center*₂-*periphery*₂, but not always, which could evoke the sense of contradiction in men but does not necessarily have to.

The essence of the difference between oppositions highlighted here could be described differently: the opposition *center*₂-*periphery*₂ is subjective in character in that it depends on the position of a particular man in space; in a way, that position shifts together with the shifting individual. The opposition *center*₃-*periphery*₃, on the other hand, is of intersubjective character in the sense that it is independent from the position of any individual in space. It remains constant in respect to that individual, petrified in a socially shared taxonomic order of the world, lasting independently from the place that the man currently holds. (The opposition *center*₃-*periphery*₃ is mobile only to the extent to which the linguistic and cultural image of the world remains mobile as such. It is known, however, that the passage of time is required before the delimitation of space established in symbolic system could undergo any kind of transformation). The relationship *center*-*periphery* experienced by people could have either a more empirical (become a derivative of a singular experience to a larger degree) or a more categorial character (become a derivative of an experience established in culture and language). World experienced by humans (*Lebenswelt*, *life-world*) is always characterized by a more or less successful synthesis of both oppositions, which means that it could be of heterogenic character in that regard, while being a place of “silent” or more explicit moment of conflict and transgression between the two oppositions.

The complexity of delimitations of space in the horizontal framework could be presented by employing two models: the first one would display the

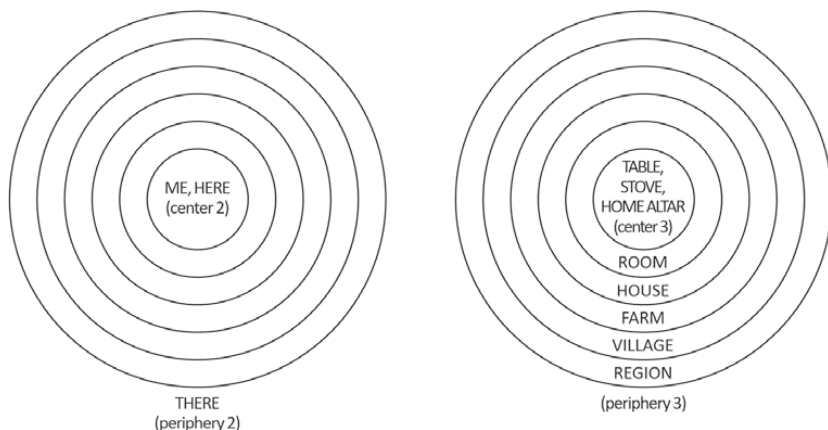


Diagram 2: Delimitation of space in terms of phenomenology and a symbolic system

dismemberment of space as a plane due to the opposition of $center_2$ - $periphery_2$ (from the vantage point of phenomenological perception), while the second one due to the opposition of $center_3$ - $periphery_3$ (from the vantage point of linguistic and cultural image of the world); see Diagram 2.

The moment in which these models start overlapping could be considered a standard. It means that $center_2$ overlaps with $center_3$, while $periphery_2$ with $periphery_3$. Similar situation happens when a man finds himself surrounded by “his own” people, in his own village, on his own farm, in his own house, in his own room (constituting a space of his everyday life). In other words, both oppositions overlap when “one’s own” is “here” and “alien” is “there.” If a man, having departed on a journey, were to find himself in an unknown territory, the situation would suddenly flip: his place of stay would be simultaneously $center_2$ and $periphery_3$, while “one’s own” territory, still in $center_3$, would transform into $periphery_2$. Hence, both oppositions enter contradictions when “one’s own” is “there,” while “alien” is “here.” Similar situation could last until a man manages to become accustomed to his new place of stay enough to identify it as “his own,” in which case both oppositions overlap with each other again. Taxonomically understood, the opposition of $center_3$ - $periphery_3$ has a habitual character in the sense that it is created out of a habit and is the result of habituation. Following the conclusions from the previous chapter, the opposition of $center_3$ - $periphery_3$ as an experience established in language and culture is a sediment of sorts that remained in language and in culture (understood as a semiotic system) after

previous experiences, thoughts, and actions, which were a starting point for any farther experiences, thoughts, and actions (Weisgerber 1929: 86–87, 98–99).

The delimitation of space within the horizontal configuration has a relational character in one more way: the same place can be identified with “one’s own” (*orbis interior*) at certain moments in time and with the “alien” (*orbis exterior*) at other. That depends on what it is being currently compared with: if we were to compare the territory of our village with the territory of a neighboring village, our own would turn out to be “one’s own.” However, if we were to compare our farm with the rest of our village’s territory, then the farm would be “one’s own,” while all the rest would be alien. Moreover, our own farm (even though “one’s own,” as opposed to other farms) could become an “alien” and dangerous territory when compared to the space of “one’s own” home, in which a man feels safer than outside. The same pertains to a house that could be one or the other. When in relation to the space outside, the house will constitute a relatively safe territory of “one’s own,” while when it comes to comparing the living quarters and the rest of it (especially the attic and the basement), they will constitute an “alien” territory, a dangerous *orbis exterior*. In that sense, the relational character of “one’s own” and “alien” is guided by a general rule saying that the former is always closer to *center*₃ than the latter. We can demonstrate it with the example below.

Living quarters in Cieszyn Silesia region constitute a space that is most well-known, a space that is relatively predictable and safe. They would offer protection to a yet unbaptized child from an outside demon (Kajfosz 2001: 130–131). A contradiction to the living quarters (phenomenologically and culturally understood *cosmos* – a space that is ordered and predictable) would be a dark, opaque space of the attic or cellar (phenomenologically and culturally understood *chaos* – a space that is disorganized and unpredictable, especially in the case of children), a space designed for storage of objects that are not used every day, including ones difficult to recognize (or categorize) and junk. The attic and the cellar became a boundary space, a dangerous *orbis exterior*. A proof for that categorization could be that fact that both spaces were – at least in the eyes of children – a place where *Babay* and other boogeyman-like creatures lived. It was a similar or even worse case with the barn that was even farther removed from the *center*₃ (identified as the living quarters). However, even the darkest corners of a house or barn would turn out to be a safe haven when running away from *nocznica*, a half-demon that appears on roads, barks, and swamps and is forbidden from going under one’s roof. Hence, we can see that what is “alien” and dangerous in some ways turns out to be “one’s own” under different circumstances, saving a man from the evil that lurks outside.

The delimitation of space in vertical configuration, meaning its segmentation regarding the three basic spheres (earth, heaven, and hell) is less complicated than the delimitation of space in the horizontal configuration, which makes it easier for semiotic description. This is the result of the fact that a man who can freely traverse space in the horizontal configuration remains in one and the same place in the vertical configuration, if we were to disregard the fact that some places are “closer to heaven” (e.g. mountains), while others are “closer to hell” (e.g. dark caves). Another factor is the fact that following the rule of identifying similar with similar, the “alien” could become synonymous with hell. It has been observed earlier that in the horizontal configuration designated by the center and spreading outwards from it in four directions, the “one’s own” could become “alien” in time and vice versa. At least until recently,⁴² a man within the vertical configuration could not change his position, thus leaving heaven always “on top” and hell “on the bottom.” Compared to a relatively dynamic horizontal configuration, the vertical configuration is static. Hence the opposition of “one’s own” (world) and “alien” (heaven and hell) is always identified with the opposition of *sacred–profane*, while within the horizontal segmentation of space the *sacred* could be considered both as “one’s own” and “alien,” depending on the perspective. In this sense, the vertical configuration is not characterized by taxonomic relationality that belongs to the horizontal configuration. A man of premodern cultures lives always on Earth and under the Heaven (and above Hell).⁴³ In opposition to heaven and hell, the earth on which a man stands constitutes something that is “one’s own,” something well recognized and connected. A man directly knows the earth (that is “here”), touches it with his own feet, while heaven and hell (which are “there,” and which can be reached only after one’s death) can only be speculated about. Those are the places that are unknown, hence categorically difficult to define.

I have already mentioned that it is possible to speak about the center assuming at least two perspectives: first, from a perspective of individual perception, meaning in a more subjective sense (*center*₂), second, from a perspective of

42 A man who does not spend a lot of time on Earth but on a space station could not consider himself concerned with our discussions here. In the future, we could anticipate works focused on the phenomenology of everyday life of a man in space (if there are none out there yet), which could – at least to a degree – shake the image of that which we call the *human condition* (*conditio humana*).

43 M. Heidegger described that human condition in quite poetic terms, claiming that man is always on earth, under the sky, among mortals, and in front of divinities (Heidegger 1971).

language and culture, hence through a more objective lens (*center*₃). In the first case, we are concerned with a place where every observing person is currently in: a man participating in a ritual or another sacred activity. In the second case, the said place could be anywhere that has been assigned a function of revealing the *sacred* by the socially shared symbolic system. The *center* as the place of intersecting qualitatively different spaces constitutes a boundary space, a place of “ontological break” where earth meets heaven and hell (Eliade 1959). For that reason, mediating with the other side of the world, for example, cannot be held anywhere else other than in the *center* of the world (or its periphery that have a similarly borderline character to the *center*). Mediating with the other side of the world is an activity based on disrupting boundaries between this and “that other world,” meaning establishing communications between ontologically different spheres of being. It does not mean, however, that mediations could be conducted exclusively in spaces that were culturally assigned those roles (e.g. churches, altars, home altars, family tables). What it means is that each place where mediations with the other side of the world currently takes place turns into a *center*, even though culture predisposes certain places to fulfill similar functions more than others. For example, a mass or worship service could be held in church and in a meadow, even though churches are the designated places for holding masses, not meadows. The culture under consideration – similarly to cultures on peripheries – has many sanctioned places that serve as spaces for mediating with the other side of the world. It does not mean, however, that similar activities cannot take place somewhere else.

If we were to try to express this more precisely, we could say that sometimes *center*₂ (a place where the mediation currently takes place) overlaps with the linguistic-cultural *center*₃ (a place culturally sanctioned as a mediation spot) and sometimes it does not. Among other things, it means that the center as a place of contact between earth and heaven constitutes a subjective-objective category, since it contains both experiential and linguistic-cultural character. Sometimes the place of contact between heaven and earth has purely experiential character and sometimes strictly linguistic-cultural one. The regular place where mediation currently happens and where it is not simultaneously culturally sanctioned as a space designated for similar activities is *center*₂ (e.g. accidental place of prayer, mass, death). A space designated for mediation but currently not employed for that purpose is *center*₃ (e.g. an empty church, a table without people sitting around it). When mediation occurs at a culturally sanctioned space designated for mediations, *center*₂ overlaps with *center*₃ (e.g. a church during a worship service, a family table during Christmas dinner). It often happens that a coincidence may decide about which place will be selected from a regular space

and culturally sanctioned as a mediation space (e.g. the scene of a crime where a shrine is erected, the scene of a tragic car accident with candles lit or a cross).

The empirical world has a potentially infinite number of “means” at its disposal, which contradicts positivistic understanding of the definition of *center* that can always be singular in respect to a single object. How is it possible that the *center* of space could be simultaneously considered to be our home, somewhere different than a church, and a removed capitol, or even farther removed Rome (in case of Silesian Protestants it could be Wittenberg, or Wartburg castle, or both), Holy Land with its pilgrimages, Brussels, or New York? The answer to a similar question could be based on a fact already highlighted in different context stating that the *center* – as all human reality – has an experiential character. Among other things, it means that the *center* is wherever a man currently sees it. Despite that, the center has a cultural character (like any human experience), which means that certain places are culturally more predisposed to fulfill the function of the *center* than others. That is from where stems the unique ambiguity of that category that could be identified with almost every place saturated with meaning. *Center* is each and every place where something important is happening or has happened or will happen in the future. Eliade notes that the unique stretchability of the category of the *center* is related to ethno- and anthropocentrism, meaning a desire to be at the heart of reality, in the Middle of the World, where it is possible to establish communications with Heaven (Eliade 1959: 95).

Examples or at least sediments of magical thinking – about which I will write in the coming chapters – enrich the heterogenic character of the studied image of the world. However, for the purposes of this argumentation, it suffices to notice that within the framework of magical thinking everything that displays any kind of similarity or indexicality could be identified with each other. In that sense, magical thinking transforms the isomorphism of hell and alien territory (*orbis exterior*) as examples of *chaos* and its related a-categoriality into the identity of both. In other words, magical thinking could identify the “netherworld” in a horizontal configuration with those of the vertical one. In turn, that leads to a paradox in which the difference between the vertical and horizontal delimitation of space continues to exist in a certain sense, while becoming suspended in other ways. In that case, hell (the “netherworld” of the vertical configuration) simultaneously is and is not identical with “alien” territory (the “netherworld” of the horizontal configuration). Similar situation may be encountered during the analysis of oral folklore texts and songs of the examined area. Although, according to its inhabitants, hell – in cases when it is being situated in a phenomenologically understood space – is found “at the bottom,” while heaven

“on the top,” there still were texts circulating not so long ago that suggested one could reach hell by moving away from the *center* toward the periphery, meaning through leaving “one’s own” and moving toward the “alien.” A fairy tale recorded by Józef Ondrusz in Łąki nad Olzą (Louky nad Olší) from the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia, entitled “Ło chłopie, co szel do piekła z jelitami” (About a Man Who Carried Blood Sausages to Hell; Ondrusz 1963: 19–23), tells the story of a man who decided to lift himself and his family out of poverty by making blood sausages from a pig he raised and selling it to the devils in hell. The man reaches his destination by taking a road that leads from his family house (*center*₃) to the “alien” territory (*periphery*₃). Similar structure appears in a story recorded in Koszarzyska (Košařiska), entitled “Ło Madejowi (About Madeja; Kadłubiec 1973: 289–291) or the ballad “Do kościoła zwołani” (Bells Rang in the Church; Kadłubiec 1986: 28) recorded in Orłowa (Orlová) and telling a story about a devil dressed up as a knight who takes a loose woman to hell on his horse. He takes her from home (*center*₃) and to hell, hence “away” in the direction of the “alien” (*periphery*₃ is identified here as the netherworld). All these examples indicate the fact that the road to hell could be more than just a vertical line going “down” (into the abyss), it could also be a horizontal line toward the “alien.” That is a result – let us repeat – of the magical identification of spaces that are isomorphic toward each other: hell and “alien” territory. Both constitute an *orbis exterior*, both are representations of *chaos* juxtaposed with our *cosmos*. Finally, both are places removed from the *center* or the place of greatest order, understanding, and sense.

The image of the world as the *presence of sense* is conditioned by a system of relatively lasting and universal signs that grant a relatively durable and rather simple (hence easy to comprehend) structure to reality that – under closer scrutiny – appears to the observer as diversity par excellence. Even the most ambivalent and ambiguous experiences can acquire the character of something systematized, unambiguous, and inscribed into the order of the world thanks to notional treatment. That notional treatment of reality has been named categorization and is based on assigning the infinitely diverse and ever-changing aspects of said reality to a limited number of relatively durable signs (notions among them). It is a process of “fragmentation,” immobilization, and primarily, simplification of that which is infinitely diverse and ever-changing in a way that allows a man to orient himself within the world (Maćkiewicz 1999a: 52–53). Similar differentiation of infinitely diverse reality that is based on assigning it to a limited number of signs, constitutes its simplification. However, it is not synonymous with introducing unquestionable coherence. Man’s attitude toward perceived phenomena is relatively fluid in the sense

that the phenomena are being treated rather ad hoc, at least in place of the everyday. Earlier, I have written about situational logic in that context based on momentary forgetting that allows for leap changes in the attitude toward the world, depending on the current demand, while simultaneously sustaining the coherence of experienced sense.

Chapter Six Categorization within the Magical Image of the World

Divagations concerning the laws of magic – which, according to some common, though not universal beliefs, are supposed to guide the processes that take place in the world – should begin with a formulation of laws that guide human condition. Therefore, the key to understanding the laws of magic should be searched for within basic mechanism that support human knowledge and which can be reduced to such fundamental categories as difference and similarity, and adjacency understood not only as direct adjacency but also as proximity. The cognitive character of these named categories manifests itself in the theory of language by F. de Saussure, for whom the difference related to *proximity* constitutes the foundation of any linguistic system. According to this paradigm, the meaning of the word (in the *valeur* sense) results exclusively from the difference between the words which come closest in meanings (Saussure de 1959). According to the syntagmatic order, the meaning is, in turn, defined by a relatively established (or, conventional) connection, an “associational proximity” between two words (Saussure de 1959, cf. Miceli 1991: 166). The same is exposed by the field theory (*Wortfeldtheorie*) in the German grammar of content (Porzig 1950: 71–73, Trier 1934, Weisgerber 1971b: 96–101). This fact can be demonstrated with the example of a problem of differences in colors: the meaning of *red* is formed within a difference between the meanings that bear the closest resemblance to each other (e.g. *orange*, *pink*, *violet*). The relationship between the color red to a completely separate *green* in European languages has no impact on the question concerning the element in the spectrum of colors to which the word *red* is referring. The semantic value of a given term is conditioned by a well established association (or a habitual indexicality) with other terms – for instance, with *blood*.

The cognitive dimension of similarity and adjacency becomes equally apparent in the major part of Ch. S. Peirce’s semiotics, which concerns the relationship between the sign and its object, or a slice of the experienced world, to which the sign refers and which it helps apprehend. Peirce distinguishes three types of signs: *the icon*, characterized by its similarity to the object that it represents (e.g. a photograph recalling the photographed object);⁴⁴ *the index*, which represents the object based on correlational – or even causal – co-existence or adjacency

44 First, it is worth noting that the similarity between a sign and its object could be visual, acoustic or other; second, it undergoes gradation: a photograph of a particular

propelling the semiosis (e.g. a smoke pointing to the presence of fire) that is expressed by a conventionalized association between the sign and the object; the third type is *the symbol*⁴⁵ which is more or less arbitrary and recalls the object based on an accidental connection, to which the carrier of a particular system of signs was able to get used to (Sebeok 2000: 90–109). If we were to focus our attention just on iconic and indexical signs, we could conclude that the former constitute themselves based on similarity, while the latter do so based on adjacency (co-existence, connectivity, proximity). Still, the iconic and the indexical sometimes cooperate so closely that it is difficult to differentiate between them. For instance, the iconic (onomatopoeic) *hau-hau* is not merely an acoustic image (recognizable sound articulated by a man) that represents dog's bark in the Polish language. In the beginnings of child's ascendancy into a system of language that acoustic image could represent not only dog's barking, but also the dog itself. In such a case, the foundation of establishing a relationship between a given acoustic image and a notion of a dog is a relationship that is both iconic and indexical.

The cognitive dimension of similarity and adjacency is even more apparent in the theory of *metaphor* and *metonymy*. The first type of shift in the meaning is based on similarity, the second one on adjacency (Guiraud 1976: 36); metaphonymy, in turn, is achieved through their cooperation. Within the cognitive theory, metaphor and metonymy are considered to be the basic mechanisms

individual is usually more precise than a drawing; third, similarity of an icon to its object is always partially relative, because conditioned by a linguistic-cultural system, within which it functions: one community mimics sounds that a dog makes in the form of *hau-hau* (the Polish case), another *haf-haf* and yet another one *wau-wau*, or *woof-woof* and each of them believes that their "equivalent" is the most faithful one, which is an expression of the previously mentioned linguistic realism. Another proof of conditioning of a recognized similarity through a linguistic-cultural system that is composed of cognitive conventions could be an example of the African woman, who did not recognize herself in a black and white picture taken by her son, because she did not have a code necessary to assign meaning to brighter and darker "spots" in the picture (Herskovits 1959).

45 The term *symbol* in Ch. S. Peirce's semiotics (and logic) does not have much in common with Jung's or M. Eliade's *symbol* – besides the fact that it is also a kind of sign. It is a homonomic trap. The concept of symbol, as understood by the cultural studies, religion studies or psychology, is strongly motivated and constitutes a contradiction to a purely arbitrary sign, which in the Peirce's semiotics is described with the same word. The equivalent of Jung's symbol in Peirce's terminology is not the *symbol*, but the *icon* or *index*. Symbolic-archetypical relationships are based on similarities and adjacency.

of human knowledge, that is to say, the key mechanisms of categorization (Lakoff 1987). In that sense, they form semiotic systems that constitute an integral element of human consciousness.

It is never by accident that people establish a particular image of the world. Indeed, the process is always guided by a specific code, or discursive conditioning – rather common and almost routine (or relatively lasting) rules of building this image. Magic can be considered as a similar code. The rules of ordering reality within that code – taken together with their performative plane or a plane of text – could be called a “magical image of the world” (Pawluczuk 1991: 18). In other words, through the term *magical image of the world* we understand both the realm of *langue*, or the realm of order, within which knowledge and all experienced reality are organized, and the realm that order’s realization (*parole*), or the knowledge and experience themselves, together with the texts in which they are revealed. The magical image of the world is not only a collection of specific phenomena in that understanding but also a space of their emergence and ordering. It is a space where all questions and answers arise and where certain elements appear as fundamental, while others as less important, or even negligible. It is a space where one phenomenon is connected to another as either a cause or an effect (Foucault 2002).

At this stage, we should point out that the magical image of the world has its different iterations and its own history. It results from the necessity of differentiation between its earlier and later incarnations. More specifically, only some aspects of the earlier incarnations of the magical-mythical worldview are continued in contemporary ideas and practices (Engelking 1991a: 158).

If we were to move to the question of fundamental mechanisms for building the magical image of the world, we could conclude that they can be reduced to the named metaphorical and metonymic relationships (conversely: iconic and indexical), though with the caveat that within the framework of magical thinking similarity and adjacency do not have merely the epistemological dimension. For they also have the ontological dimension in a sense that they guide the world and everything which happens within it.

J. Piaget’s developmental psychology demonstrated that one may search for the source of magical thinking in the cognitive conditioning of consciousness which participates in the constitution of the image of the world. Piaget concluded that *every* human being, at least at an early stage of his or her development, engages in magical thinking. According to Piaget, a realism that reduces words to their adjacent objects (alternatively, identifies the represented world from a narrative with real events) is characteristic for the so-called pre-operative stage of child’s thinking (Piaget and Inhelder 2000). Hence the conclusion that

magical thinking is initially conditioned by cognitive (psychological) factors, and only secondarily by cultural ones. An example of children's magic could be the identification of similar objects, or phenomena, even things like movement of a living being (a human) with a movement of an object, which could be a source of children's animism, or anthropomorphism, or a conviction that everything that moves lives, because through its movement it is similar to a human. Another example is artificialism that could be reduced to the absence of a concept of probability and to a conviction that everything must have been caused by somebody, similarly to culturally conditioned tragic thinking that could be expressed through a belief that a cow's illness has been caused by somebody's curse. Yet another example offered by Piaget is that of magical actions which can be observed during infancy. They hinge on the identity of actions that are similar to one another. In this example, a child could blink its eyes in front of a light switch in order to turn the lights off or emulate a similar activity. Another example of that could be the carrier of a cargo cult, who carved some "navigation equipment" in wood and mimicked the actions of air traffic controllers at the airport, convinced that he could summon airplanes bringing precious cargo that way (Piaget and Inhelder 2000).

In nineteenth-century anthropology, fundamental rules of ordering reality within the magical worldview framework have been reduced to two laws formulated and described by J.G. Frazer, M. Mauss, and many others.⁴⁶ The first law says that similar objects are identical (at least in some aspects), which could mean, among other things, that one phenomenon (an object, or a process) results in another phenomenon that is similar to it, which happens on the basis of a hidden identity between the two. The second law says that objects, which have directly or indirectly come into contact with each other or have been adjacent even for a short period of time, are identical (at least in some aspects); and everything that happens to one of them would happen to the other, too, even after all contact has ceased (Frazer 2004, Mauss 1973: 4–5). The law of similarity could be considered a particular case of a metaphorical relationship, the law of adjacency, in turn, as a particular case of a metonymic relationship (Jakobson 1989: 77–124, cf. Buchowski 1986: 101–102, Buchowski 1993: 58–60, Burszta 1991: 93–104). As opposed to the classical concepts of metaphor and metonymy, similarity and

46 Questioning the evolutionism represented by the described researchers does not mean moving away from the laws of magic already formulated in them that still appear to be the easiest and the most direct way of presenting magic in the scientific discourse.

adjacency (contact) are not only rules guiding the transformation of words and other signs but also transformations of the state of the world itself.

What is upheld in the world dominated by magic understood as an ordering system, a constant communication between everything that is adjacent and everything that is, in different ways, similar. Here, the comparative part comes along with the whole (*pars pro toto*) and that is why everything that happens to a part happens simultaneously to the whole (Mauss 1973: 82). Archaic cultures provide countless examples of the functioning of adjacency and similarity, in which, for instance, it is possible to hurt or destroy an individual by stomping or piercing his or her shadow. A shadow always follows the human being (remains adjacent) and reproduces his or her silhouette (is similar). In a magical sense, it constitutes a unity with the individual: anyone can be hurt or killed by “damaging” his or her shadow. The same applies to an object made in the likeness of the individual, such as a photograph or sculpture (Cassirer 1955, Frazer 2004).

The two laws of magic overlap in the voodoo magic: a doll that serves to destroy a particular individual bears resemblance to him or her in the sense that it constitutes his or her miniaturized representation. It also contains a piece of cloth that the victim used to wear, or has some of the victims’ hair weaved into it. What is employed in this case are both the similarities and physical contact between a given doll and the man whom it represents and with whom it is undeniably related by virtue of the materials of which it is made. It is precisely in this way that the voodoo doll creates a mechanism which allows a sorcerer to inflict pain – or even death – on the victim. By pricking the doll with needles, or burning it, he imposes similar damage on the victim.

It is precisely the law of adjacency that informs the logic according to which those who leave scraps of their food unattended invite danger. Due to an inseparable relationship between the food that was consumed and the food that was left, which constitute an ontological whole even after they are broken apart, anything that happens to the scraps would happen to the food already inside of the man and therefore to the man himself. The food that rest inside one’s stomach – as his or her “part” – becomes synonymous with the individual. Hence, a man who would not destroy (burry or burn) remains of everything that is part of his body (for example, scraps of food), or that which used to be its part (like clipped hair or nails), exposes himself to the danger from a hostile warlock, who, if he were to find anything that was (or still is) part of the man in question, would gain considerable power over that man and would be able to destroy him at any time (bring about a disease, bad luck, and death) precisely by destroying the thing he found (Cassirer 1955, Mauss 1973: 82–83).

Another potential example is the passing of gifts in archaic communities. Exchange of gifts establishes an irremovable bond between the giving and the gifted (the law of adjacency). Giving a gift to somebody means connecting with the individual forever by passing on part of oneself (Mauss 2002). The mechanism which enables the *alien* (who is gifted) to become *one's own* is still apparent in the folk culture of the medieval times, where a gift would establish bonds of unshakable kinship (Gurevich 1985).

Many examples of actions motivated by the laws of magic can be found in the history of European folk cultures. According to J. Bartmiński, *strigon* was destroyed, at least in some parts of Poland, by putting a piece of paper with *Jesus* written on it under a tongue of a deceased suspected of potentially turning into a demon (Bartmiński 2012). The logic of a similar ritual could be easily explained by means of the laws of magic: the name that has attached itself to its carrier is synonymous with him or her, which means that placing the name into his mouth would provide a direct bond with Jesus for both the body and soul, making it forever impossible for the demonic afterlife in the form of *strigon*. The demon becomes forever disarmed, potentially even redeemed and saved. In different places across Europe, including Catholic parts of Silesia, a custom of burying the dead with pictures of the saints (particularly of Mary) was common (Simonides 1988: 137–138). One can infer that the initial motivation for such customs was the willingness to provide – or at least help with finding – a path to heaven and closeness to the saints. If a picture based on the iconic connection is synonymous with the saint it represents (the law of similarity), then the adjacency to the picture during a rite of passage in the form of a burial, and right after the burial, translates into an eternal connection with the saint whom it represents.

That assumption is confirmed indirectly by other examples of practices present in Silesia and other parts of Central and Eastern Europe. In Istebna village in Cieszyn Silesia, a tradition of placing a rosary under a pillow of a newborn child that was not yet baptized is still remembered.⁴⁷ Due to that custom the explanation emerged, claiming that adjacency of a child to the rosary would grant

47 Cieszyn Silesian Protestants secured the weak and sickly children from damnation in case of death with an early baptism that could have been performed by anyone who was confirmed in the church. We should not, however, conclude on the basis of that fact that actions, which could be classified as magical, did not appear among the Protestants. They would be less frequent, but still present. Even the baptism itself as an interaction between the child and the holy water and the sign of the cross, hence with Jesus himself, and understood as a reproduction of the unprecedented baptism in the waters of River Jordan (similarity to the Christ being baptized that translates into

its salvation in case it departed before the proper baptism (Kajfosz 2001: 132). Hence, we could surmise that similar motivation might have been resting at the foundation of burying people with the pictures of the saints and that it simply phased out over time. Magical conditions imposed by the causal powers of a picture could be demonstrated on the example of the so-called pictures to swallow that functioned in eighteenth-century Slovakia. These were miniature pictures of the saints that were administered to the sick (Vanovičová 2005: 80). By swallowing a picture of a saint, a connection was established between the sick and the saint in question, which would result in healing. A picture not only represented the saint as an icon but also became – according to the law of similarity – synonymous with the saint. Indeed, it served to establish an unbreakable bond with the saint (including his healing powers). According to the law of adjacency, similar pictures protected soldiers from bullets during the First World War (they carried these pictures in their hats).

If we were to dive deep into the European cultural history, we would have to point our attention to the medieval and renaissance texts on necromancy, or foretelling the future with the help of the soul of a deceased that could be summoned and coerced into submission by obtaining remains of the dead, or a sample of his blood (Bruno 1998, Lombardi 2004: 42–46). The law of adjacency tells us that the soul, which was once attached to the body, constitutes a whole with it – also after death. This means that the power over the remains (or part of them) translates into the power over one's soul that used to animate the individual (according to the *pars pro toto* principle).⁴⁸ A relic of similar concepts today could be a spiritualistic element of urban legends or narratives pertaining to summoning ghosts by using their real names (cf. Janeček 2006: 275). If we were to assume that according to the magical order of things, the word that is adjacent to its designate (the law of adjacency) has a causal power in the sense that it makes this designate real, or can summon it (Malinowski 2002, cf. Engelking 2000: 52–53), then we could conclude that the summoning of a spirit or a ghost by using its name is an expression of a magical thinking; a relic, which – at least in folklore and popular culture – managed to survive to this day.

contact) reveals – from a purely phenomenological perspective – the same mechanism that is at the basis of putting a rosary under a newborn's pillow.

48 We could assume that the essence of a sacred relic (remains of a saint or an object he or she touched while alive) is based on similar rules: obtaining a part of a body of a saint translates into acquiring his intercession or other form of help.

When talking about displays and relics of magic in folk cultures, we have to conclude that the notions and magical actions are recognized as *magical* only on rare occasions. Similar objectification (recognition and naming) happens most often to phenomena that we could label for the time being as *black magic*, understood as practices directed at a specific individual and his wealth, undertaken in order to harm and profit from that harm or to destroy. The awareness of those mechanisms, on which the functioning of magic was supposed hinge, is usually vague or non-existent.⁴⁹ The fact that the theory (composed of explanations) described as *metamagic* was encountered on the plane of common reasoning – especially in the past – could be very rarely explained by magical actions, particularly in the folk culture informed by customs (“silent” traditions) that rarely requires explanation of its mechanisms or has a need for theory (Buchowski 1985: 105, 83–84, Burszta 1986: 69–70, Lombardi 2004: 18–19, 130). Even though in a culture of traditional type magical thinking does not determine everything, we can relate, at least partially, to a thesis pertaining to primal magical cultures: “We should assume that, in a magical culture, the effects of particular actions, e.g. rituals, did not require any previous formulation, let alone theoretical thematization. The magical thought embedded in action was not a subject to the established thought monopolies meant to regulate secondary actions” (Kowalski 1999: 16). Ideas (rules, doctrines) that have been abstracted from the every-day experience and from which human actions could be derived are first encountered in cultures that are more or less “demagiced” – or disenchanting, to use the broader term coined by Max Weber. It does not mean, however, that the forms of pre-theoretical (pre-reflexive) experience were replaced by theoretical and reflexive experience after the departure of the primitive forms of magical cultures. They were merely supplemented. In this sense, we could speak of “gradual character of magical thinking” from forms of full magic in archaic cultures to its rudimentary forms in contemporary European cultures.

The first cases of transformations of pieces of magical vision of the world (knowledge-recipe) into descriptive knowledge appear alongside the transformation of a syncretic magical culture into a symbolic culture, where – as a result of the development of abstract thinking related to using signs that refer to something other than themselves (hence are not synonymous with the represented

49 Agreeing with a thesis that magic rarely amounts to the form of a theory, we should point out the renaissance attempts to create such a theory. One can find in them thesis, which are more or less similar to the laws formulated by J. G Frazer and M. Mauss (cf. Bruno 1998).

phenomena, as is the case with magic) – there has been a gradual violation of the coherent, syncretic *Lebenswelt*, accompanied by the birth of “social demand for worldview argumentation” (Kowalski 1999: 33). As the world moved away from being a clay in man’s hands that was free from reflection and began to take shape of an object that brings sense into man’s actions, becoming a “problem” that required explanation, the magical vision of the world began to translate into different kinds of interpretations. It has reached the peak of objectification only within scientific discourse of the second half of the nineteenth century, when J.G. Frazer and M. Mauss transformed magical thinking into a coherent theory. Specific attempts at objectifying magic are typical of many religious and philosophical systems, including pre-Descartes nature studies and medicine (Bruno 1998, Foucault 2002). Reincarnation, too, could be considered as a particular form of objectification of magic. Resisting a temptation to employ reductionist “explanations,” we could consider magical-isomorphic likening of human life to the solar and lunar cycles as its potential source. Understood that way, its foundation could be the synonymous character of the human being and the universe dominated by cycles that constitute its integral part. Human life is in that sense isomorphic (structurally similar) to the lunar, solar or star cycles.⁵⁰ Potentially, one of the key motives of that concept could be an assumption that all parts of the universe are adjacent, mutually reflecting each other and creating a unity that is guided by the same laws (Eliade 1959, Gurevich 1985).

The Myth of Eternal Return

The magical image of the world has undergone various changes over time, which is why we can analyze it in the context of issues pertaining to linguistic-cultural relativism. The phenomenon of the magical image of the world could be analyzed and partly reconstructed not only on the basis of classical works of the theory of magic but also on the basis of the concepts of archaic visions of the world proposed by M. Eliade (Eliade 1959). Hence, it is worth reading Eliade’s anthropology – even against his own intentions – as a theory of the magical image of the world that takes different forms and displays, having varying degrees of integrity, depending on specific cultures and environments (specific people). I would like to understand often criticized Eliade’s universalism based

50 Archaic cosmologies often consist of symmetry between life and death, birth and passing, between cosmologies, “embriologies,” and eschatology (Libera 1997: 33).

on a comparison of phenomena taken from different and hardly comparable cultural contexts, as the universalism of human cognitive conditionings.

I have earlier remarked that the ways of categorizing phenomena could, at least to a certain degree, differ depending on which aspects appear to be significant and which are diminished or even omitted. If the image of the world is a result (and simultaneously a condition) of categorizing phenomena, then we should assume that also the images of the world have relative character to a certain degree, since they respond to different ways of categorizing reality. Images of the world differ from one another depending on spatial relations (they function parallel to one another), and because of temporal relations, they follow in progression of one another or overlap like layers).⁵¹ The progression of the images of the world is a progression of orders according to which the knowledge is organized, while the orders usually do not have the objectified character in the sense that they usually are not an object of reflections of their carriers and participants.

In order to understand the entire spectrum of phenomena that is part of the *magical image of the world*, we must recognize the importance of the fact that the laws of magic do not transpire exclusively through direct actions of man, but also through a pre-theoretical, every day understanding of the world, and its interpretations. This is the case not only within the archaic cultures, but also in the folk culture of Europe. One of the key categories of the magical paradigm is the *cyclical time*. It is worth stressing that the archaic longing for a periodical return to a mythical time of the beginning that translates into an opposition toward a linear (historic) time has a cognitive motivations, which – in turn – translate into magical thinking. We could say that the escape from a linear time, hence an escape from change, is a one of the fundamental symptoms of both categorization, and magical thinking. If we were to assume that time is an *a priori* of any observed change, then the escape from time translates into *an escape from change* or an escape from the impermanence of being. Subjective (and ritual among other things) cancelation of time makes the world stable by removing accidental and irreversible transformations. In this sense, it gives an individual a sense of control over reality and a sense of security.

An archaic escape from time, or the ontology of an eternal return constitutes, first, one of the primal displays of a *tendency for categorization*, which as we have

51 Different layers of the image of the world could be discussed at least in the sense of differences relating to social stratification. Not all men in the enlightenment era were marked by the rationality of the period, just like not all men during positivism were supportive of positivistic rationality.

pointed out earlier, is based on a simplification (generalization) and solidification (elimination of change). Second, it is one of the most important displays of *magical thinking*. In the world dominated by similarity, recreation or eternal repetition, all events have a status of merely seeming changes, because they can be always reduced to a universal – hence unchanging – cosmological cycle, an everlasting, transcendental matrix that constitutes an “essence” of a changing and complicated, and paradoxical, immanent being. In that sense, a being becomes fully understood and fully accessible in cognitive terms. Any accidentality is removed from history in that way, which means that history as such does not exist and everything that happens is merely a one of infinite recreations of the supernatural original or an archetype (Eliade 1959). Eliminating the uncontrollable happenstance related to the linear time is synonymous with a domination of all-encompassing and lasting order of things. The tendency to categorize that is based on removing the linear time appears also in the form of archaic man’s drive to faithfully imitate actions of his gods and heroic (divine) ancestors – to imitate blueprint gestures that were performed at the beginning of time (*in illo tempore*), hence outside time, in a distant and unchanging *ever* (Eliade 1959: 24).

But not only an archaic man is characterized by the longing for doing that which has been *always done*, what has been done *since the dawn of memory*, or a phenomenologically (experientially) understood beginning of time. Still, following Eliade’s reasoning, we can conclude that the tendency was the most pronounced with the archaic man, who was dominated by the need for order the most: “In the particulars of his conscious behavior, the ‘primitive,’ the archaic man, acknowledges no act which has not been previously posited and lived by someone else, some other being who was not a man” (Eliade 1959: 5).

Therefore, the tendency to avoid change could be considered a symptom of an archaic tendency to categorize that was based on magical thinking (in other words: categorization that happens within the framework of a magical paradigm). Moreover, as presented by M. Eliade, through mediation of the ritual destruction of the linear time all changes that took place in the world since its creation – or the time it existed in its perfect, mythical form – are destroyed. The world returns to a condition of full taxonomy that is based on a radical isomorphism. As *radical isomorphism* I define a situation, in which all elements (contents) of the world are mutually adjacent – each fragment of the world constitutes a part of *one* universe, which is where the common identity of the cosmos stems from. All fragments of the world mutually recreate each other, while being a recreation of the entire universe, which, in turn, translates into an identity of every part of the world with all its other parts, and the world as such.

According to both laws of magic, a man is not only a recreation of the world⁵² but also a continuation of the world in the sense that, as its integral part (part that is identical with the universe), he does not find clearly marked boundaries between his own body and the rest of it. Following that path, we can understand medieval man's attachment to the soil on which he was born. We can identify a trace of a materialized, metonymic relationship and the law of adjacency in the fact that he sensed a strong connection to the space that was his and his ancestors motherland (Gurevich 1985). If we were to use the vocabulary taken from the history of philosophy, we should say that, within the framework of radical isomorphism, the world and all its elements (for example, the countries existing in the world, cities existing within the countries, homes within the cities, people inhabiting those homes, etc.) are, to some extent, Leibniz's monads that are built of even smaller monads, while all of them recreate one another and each constitutes *imago mundi* – a recreation of the world as a whole (Leibniz 1898). Hence, we could speak of a magical image of the world in its original form as a *perfect sympathy*, or a reality, in which *everything is connected to everything else and mutually recreates each other* (Mauss 1973: 95–96). The archaic taxonomy was based on finding the hidden isomorphisms, or recreations (similarities), or adjacencies (contacts) in the world, thereby confirming its unity.

Referring to the *law of similarity*, we could conclude that that which is similar is the identical–integral and belonging to the same order of reality. Therefore, the lack of similarity is an exclusively chaotic breach in an isomorphic order of things. Referring to the *law of adjacency*, in turn, leads to a conclusion that any kind of contact with an element of chaos is dangerous in that it poses a threat of turning the object in question chaotic. That is where the fear of new ideas without precedence in the past of a carrier of the magical worldview might be stemming from. Indeed, this is also the source of fears of time understood as an irreversible transformation of objects into a form that did not hold before.

Laws of magic guarantee the identity of every individuals and things that come into contact with, or are similar to, each other. In this way, the laws also guarantee the identity of acts that recreate the primal (done in the *beginning*), original template, the only true – because universal and unchanging – act.

52 “Man and his body are parallel or isomorphic in relation to the surrounding reality. In that context the body appears as a ‘translation of meaning’ of certain elements of society and the world. Each element of the human body, each part of society, each object of nature has a dual sense. The knowledge about man and his body framed within an anthropomorphic code is extrapolated onto the entire universe. As a result, the same pool of concepts is used to describe man and nature” (Libera 1997: 32, 45–46).

Every human activity in the magical order of things gains the effectiveness after precisely repeating actions performed by a god, a hero or an ancestor at the beginning. All relevant acts of everyday life were revealed *ab origine* by the gods or ancestors perceived as heroes. Men who want to identify with them must repeat template and paradigmatic gestures (Eliade 1959). In this sense, we could speak about repeating as an action designed to uphold the integrity of the cosmos. Thanks to a repetition of the primal act, a man is capable of upholding the unity of the cosmos precisely because he intensifies the creation by bringing about objects according to their templates and mimicking gestures of the gods and ancestors, *upholding the synonymity between those gestures and him*. If, according to the laws of magic, the similarity (mapping) is synonymous with identity, then a man who imitates the primal gesture becomes a subject of that primal gesture and its performer: “A man told me that when he went fish shooting (with bow and arrow) he pretended to be Kivavia himself. He did not implore Kivavia’s favor and help; he identified himself with the mythical hero” (Eliade 1959: 33).

A tendency to eliminate change and uphold similarities on the principle of imitation of template, on foundational gestures that have been performed *sometime* by deities and divine heroes is synonymous with a tendency to uphold isomorphisms and, ultimately, a tendency to uphold the integrity of the cosmos, to defend the harmony of cosmos against the chaotic phenomena that do not have their template, hence cannot be integral elements of the world. In any case, even if the carrier of the archaic forms of the magical image of the world did not mimic, according to himself, acts of his gods and idealized (divine) ancestors, if he were to do *something else* he would exclude himself from the entire order of the universe. He would cease to be synonymous with his own ancestors and the cosmos as such, becoming an element of chaos that is worthy of being removed. Wherever there is no similarity, there is no identity. Only imitation is capable of providing an integral unity between the archaic man and his mythical ancestors and gods, and the universe as such. Following that trace, we could speculate that, within the framework of the image of the world, dominated by magical thinking, people established a connection between themselves and their mythical ancestor also by means of the law of adjacency, echoes of which could be the eagerness of the medieval men for creating genealogical trees. The prestige earned by a heroic ancestor that was placed at the very “beginning” would translate – according to the law of adjacency – into the prestige of those who considered themselves to be his descendants. In summary, an answer to the question: “Who am I?” was included in the answer to the question: “Who were your ancestors?” (Gurevich 1985, Le Goff 1996).

Going back to the attempt of extracting the archaic isomorphism out of magic, we could quote Eliade who stated that “all the Babylonian cities had their archetypes in the constellations: Sippara in Cancer, Nineveh in Ursa Major, Assur in Arcturus, etc.” (Eliade 1959: 7–8). “We find the same theory in India: all the Indian royal cities, even the modern ones, are built after the mythical model of the celestial city where, in the age of gold (*in illo tempore*), the Universal Sovereign dwelt” (Eliade 1959: 9). Still in Medieval era the church was a reflection of the entire cosmos (Gurevich 1985). That pertains to not only the material culture, of course, but also to the spiritual one, e.g. the law, which – within the framework of the magical image of the world – is not something that could be changed at will (arbitrarily decided through voting). The only acceptable law in the magical order of things is the customary law, which comes from mythical ancestors and through their mediation, but which has its roots even farther back, following the eternal – and hence immutable – laws guiding the cosmos. We are looking at a law that legitimizes and executes that which was *always* done. Changes in the codex were not reduced to novelties in the strict sense; rather, they concerned a more precise recreation of the original (Eliade 1959, Gurevich 1985). Also wars had their template in the wars between the deities (e.g. in Egypt between groups representing the Osiris and Set) according to the magical order of things, which is sufficient to legitimize them (Eliade 1959: 29). Everything that happens in the world has to be a recreation of a transcendental and eternally lasting model. It is transcendental due to the time and place: the recreated model is radically removed in space (celestial bodies, which find their reflections in nature and terrestrial artifacts) and in time (old precedents recreated, hence recalled into the present). That which does not have its template model, or prototype (like the desert lands inhabited by monsters, unknown seas), is “deprived of sense” and constitutes an element of chaos (Eliade 1959: 9). Chaos is understood here in phenomenological terms: it is something that has no past nor template, and therefore remains incomprehensible because it is not known from earlier experience.

The magic of similarity is always complemented by the magic of adjacency: between the terrestrial and celestial objects (between objects that are immanent and those that are transcendental), we observe not only isomorphism (the relationship of similarity and mutual recreation) but also the mediation of the axis mundi (or the middle). It is not hard to see that both these realms are interconnected, ultimately creating a cosmic whole. Axis mundi, even in the form of the Mount Olympus, is an axis connecting heaven and earth with the underground, a place of transcendence and the absolute middle that is identified with everything that makes sense. The axis mundi is therefore not only an intersection

of worlds but also an absolute center (the navel of the world), where the creation took place (Eliade 1959: 12). It provides a link connecting heaven and hell and establishes their ontological identity or an unbreakable bond between terrestrial and extraterrestrial events (e.g. the connection between human life and movements of celestial bodies). Therefore, according to the magical order, we could speak of a paradoxical unity (identity) of the world, regarding the *place*, because everything that is “important” – following the law of adjacency – had contact (and continues to identify) with the center from which springs all the creation. Similarly, we could speak of the unity of creation regarding the *time*, since the activity, which imitates the “original” process of creation melds with it – in accordance with the law of similarity – into one. Let us repeat: everything is identical with everything else, because, first, any object in the world that carries sense is a recreation of the world (it constitutes the *imago mundi*, similar to the universe), and second – everything is adjacent to everything else, because it was adjacent at the beginning in the form of the original place of creation.

The mechanism of canceling the linear time could be explained by the law of similarity, according to which a deed that imitates the original precedent is identical to it: a time during which a ritual repetition takes place (or: the act of mimicking) is identified with the instance of the beginning, or constitutes the instance of the beginning *eo ipso* (and the archaic man does not know anything else). Man participates in the cosmology and anthropogony in that way, because the ritual transports him into the mythical epoch of the beginning. Every human activity acquires effectiveness under a condition of being an exact repetition of the action performed by a god, a hero, or an ancestor at the beginning of time. The archaic man repeats – *in his view* – gestures of somebody else and, as a result, he lives continuously in the present that is without time (Eliade 1959). The linear time is canceled out that way. The archaic man thereby defeats the process of irreversible change or even the time itself.

In summary, the identity of the world is guaranteed in two ways: first, by *reducing it to one place* of origin, a “navel,” or a place of the original adjacency, and second, by *reducing it to a single moment* at the beginning of time, or outside of time. The world of the moment of creation constitutes an “integral wholeness” (Eliade 1959: 16), and due to mimicking the act of creation, the archaic man can return to that wholeness: “Through the paradox of rite, every consecrated space coincides with the center of the world, just as the time of any ritual coincides with the mythical time of the ‘beginning’” (Eliade 1959: 20).

In the archaic image of the world, there is no room for anything like history (a progression of new, irreversible, and dissimilar events with an autonomous value) or objectified evolution in the sense of some Hegelian (post)

enlightenment project. Moreover, it is not only the archaic mentality but sometimes also the contemporary, commonplace mentality that has a strong tendency to categorize or cognitively control reality, which – according to the subjective understanding – *has always been there*. This kind of mentality is inclined to believe that what is *archaic* is both real and desirable. The conviction, according to which a departure from the original state (cognitively tamed thanks to, among others, a mythical narrative) is never a better, but always a worse solution, could have cognitive motives.

Referring back to Eliade's conclusions, we could ascertain that the first culture that displays marks of a defined "disenchantment" is the ancient Jewish culture or at least its part represented by its prophets. The banning of creating reproductions (manufacturing images of other creations)⁵³ could be interpreted as a form of counteracting the magic based on the law of similarity, because in the community where it is not allowed to create iconic signs, it is impossible to identify a similar (recreating artifact) with another similar (a recreated element of nature), nor is it possible to magically influence the originals represented by these iconic signs. What is more, the words directed at Abram: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you"⁵⁴ could be interpreted as an order to break off the magical-metonymical relationship (or contact) between the man and the environment, with ancestors, or even as an order to break with the archetype. Eliade mentions another dimension of a similar "disenchantment," which is a valorization of the historical or linear time: a place of revelation (theophany) in the Old Testament narratives is not the beginning of time, but a concrete, historical moment. The valorization of duration is complemented by the valorization of change. Hence, the Old Testament image of the world presents the first form of evolutionary ontology (Eliade 1959: 108–110, cf. Gurevich 1985).

According to the archaic vision of the world, the past or "the beginning" has a status of the absolute category. It is the only thing that exists and there is no autonomous present, because it is not desired. The present exists only when it constitutes a repetition of the past. As it has been observed, within the archaic image of the world the activity imitating the archetype "fixes" the world (restores the original *cosmos*). Every activity that does not recreate the original, foundational activity would be an action toward chaos and disintegration of the unity of the world. It means that the dead (the ancestors) as the

53 Cf. Deuteronomy 4:15–18, 4:23.

54 Genesis 12:1.

executors of the archetypical activities are always more important in this case than the living. As A. Gurevich observed, in the magical order of things it is the dead, not the living, who are the proper authors of the present (Gurevich 1985). This conclusion, however, is imprecise because the ancestors, whose precedent actions are being repeated in a ritual way, are at least partially created by the categorizing mechanisms of collective memory that can relatively quickly and stealthily (especially within illiterate cultures, or ones without archival “proofs”) model those ancestors according to the current needs (cf. Ong 1982). In other words, the living, through a mythical narrative, often “design” their ancestors, telling them to perform certain activities and then ritualistically repeating them (Szacki 1971: 148–150). Due to that categorizing function of collective memory, these novelties attain a form of relics from an ancient past, therefore, becoming legitimized.

The progressing decay of the magical image of the world translated into a progressing fall of the unquestioned authority of the ancestor in the sense that the legitimization of human acts through non-human model (including sacred ancestors) become less and less required along with the progressing dissolution of magical systems: “the crucial difference between the man of the archaic civilizations and modern, historical man lies in the increasing value the latter gives to historical events, that is, to the ‘novelties’ that, for traditional man, represented either meaningless conjunctures or infractions of norms (hence ‘faults,’ ‘sins,’ and so on) and that, as such, required to be expelled (abolished) periodically” (Eliade 1959: 154). The progressing disintegration of the magical image of the world understood as an integral action and cognitive paradigm equals the transformations of the system of meaning that guides categorization. The modern man’s tendency to categorize is so prevalent that it is capable of cancelling everything that does not fit within its eternal blueprint.

The archaic paradigm of the eternal comeback is a formula of solidification and simplification of the opaque and changing world based on the laws of magic. The *cosmos* is always an initial state of creation, a state of the highest ordering, understanding, and sense. The linear (passing) time, understood as an uncontrollable changeability, turns it into *chaos*. The time – understood in terms of uncontrollable changeability governed by accident – has an a-categorial, chaotic character. Therefore, canceling the linear time is tantamount to categorizing that which is a-categorial or changing and hence – ungraspable. This process is equal to a transformation of *chaos* into *cosmos*. The cancellation of time understood in terms of uncontrollable change is therefore a *form of the original categorization*, or building, simplifying, and solidifying the cosmos. The paradigm of eternal return is a paradigm of cyclical return of infinitely varied and changing reality to

the *original wholeness*, which, from the cognitive perspective, could be seen as an effect of a tendency to categorize.

The embodiment, or an objectification of the magical paradigm, could take the form of different concepts of being based on observations of cycles that are isomorphic toward each other, such as an annual cycle (from summer to winter solstice), monthly (from new to full moon), or daily cycle (from day to night). Following our earlier conclusions pertaining to the role of the metaphor in the cognitive process, we may assume that the “material” phenomenon observed here becomes a key to understanding other, intangible phenomena and a starting point for abstract constructs that, as they spread, achieve the status of “obviousness” that reflects on everything that is an object of further observation (Uspienski 1998: 48). That allows us to understand why the archaic man lived in harmony with cosmic rituals, or even identified with them: “the lunar rhythm not only reveals short intervals (week, month) but also serves as the archetype for extended durations; in fact, the ‘birth’ of a humanity, its growth, decrepitude (‘wear’), and disappearance are assimilated to the lunar cycle” (Eliade 1959: 87). Applying the terminology from the field of cognitivism, we could say that the cyclical movements of celestial bodies seen as a reference for comparison became a starting point for a concept of the cyclical time understood as the goal of comparison. If, according to the rule of adjacency and similarity, all elements of the world belong to one universe, they have to correspond to one another to the point of isomorphism. Hence, if some of them are characterized by a cyclical emergence and disappearance (the moon and the sun), the same applies to everything else, including the humanity and the man as such (reincarnation).

The relics of an archaic vision, according to which the sunrise and the sunset of the sun are isomorphic – hence identical – with a cyclical progression of the phases of the month, seasons, or day and night, function to this day in common beliefs of contemporary Europe, even in the popular concept of the *impending end of the world* that has been “planned” from the very beginning and in that sense inevitable like the sunset. Another proof of the relics of isomorphism between celestial bodies and the terrestrial nature in modern folk culture could be the conviction that following the “cosmic cycles” brings success, while ignoring them can result in failure. It was not a belief exclusive to Cieszyn Silesia, and surfaces every now and again still, claiming that seeds sowed during the new moon, and ones that would come in contact with an “empty” moon at the beginning of their vegetative path, would bring poor crops. However, if we were to sow them during the full moon, the crops would be better due to the plants’ initial contact with the “full” moon (Kajfosz 2001: 82–84). Another example of isomorphism of the universe could be the analogy between twelve days between

the St. Lucy's day and the Christmas Eve and the twelve months of the upcoming year that used to be recognized in the Cieszyn Silesia: "Each day was an equivalent of a month and the weather on that day would forecast the weather for that month in the new year. . . . Each month would be further divided into decades that would correspond with particular times of day: whatever weather it was in the morning that would be the weather in the first decade of the month, the afternoon weather corresponded to the second decade and the weather in the evening would anticipate the weather for the third decade of the month, etc." (Jankowska-Marcol 2001: 7).

It is worth mentioning that, in a tendency to categorize, simplify, and immobilize, we could recognize the pre-Socratic philosophical systems, in which one searched for a lasting and unchanging "essence" of the world in the form of a single, unified element (*arché*), from which, as if from universal building blocks, the universe is built, meaning that it can also be reduced to it. Without questioning the meaning of Plato's philosophy, we could assume, after Eliade, that it is inspired by the archaic escape from time, since a similar "essence" is also the Platonic realm of unchanging and perfect, because universal, ideas which served as a blueprint for the world and which, in that sense, constituted a common denominator of all things (Eliade 1959: 123). In fact, we may consider common gnosis – driven by a dualism of "that world," which is apparent, changing, and therefore irrelevant, and "that other world," which, by virtue of its everlasting quality, is the only one worthy of attention – as an expression that is characterized by the tendency to immobilize (Pokorný 1986: 192–193). The fact that the unchanging character is equaled within the magical order with the real is also revealed by the medieval image of the world. In that image, as highlighted by A. Gurevich, the other side of the world is more real than reality precisely because it is more stable and everlasting (Gurevich 1985). Assigning value to that which is unchanging – as opposed to that which is passing – has its cognitive motives.

In conclusion, the archaic image of the world is characterized by a somewhat "fuller" form of categorization that is unknown in such extreme to a man who possesses history. The archaic man does not move across any other reality than that of unchanging or everlasting patterns and repetitions. He is not familiar with the "chaotic" changeability, diversity, and multi-dimensionality of the world, with which a modern man often has to cope, nor is he familiar with a category of an accident, which excludes the possibility of complete understanding of the reality of "here" and "now." The image of the world and its guiding logic that respects the law of similarity and adjacency lead to a life which is lived according to extra-terrestrial models and remains aligned with archetypes. Most importantly, it is a

life in a safe and predictable world. The archetype is permanent – in the sense of having an immutable form – but it is also simple and easy to grasp. Phenomena that are not similar to the archetype, ones that have undergone irreversible and unpredictable changes are *amorphic* compared to other things, or they are difficult to grasp and thus, from the cognitive viewpoint, induce anxiety. Lasting by the archetype constitutes an archaic form of categorization, a form of creating permanence and simplifying the world or “transforming” it into a reality that is friendly to a man. In other words, a tendency to summon primal gestures – based on the law of similarity – translates into a tendency to categorize, or to simplify and immobilize, and to cognitively grasp and understand the world.

Harmony of the World, Predictability, and Fate

As we have concluded, the present (and the future) held for the archaic man meaning only when it identified with the past. In this sense it was necessary. This is how the concept of the everlasting return emerged, a notion of unending repetition of that which has happened already: “past does not pass entirely, but repeats itself: these or other forms of existence repeat themselves periodically (in cycles which vary due to their scale) and the past comes back to live in cycles within the present, or – which amounts to the same outcome – the present, while moving toward the future, periodically turns back toward the past” (Uspienski 1998: 49). As we have observed already, the concept of cyclical time gave the carriers of the magical image of the world a sense of safety, because it provided a reality with a relative lack of change. Contrary to the cyclical time, the linear time changes the cosmos into a new reality that, due to its unknown character, appears as chaos as long as man is not used to it. Not only the archaic man, but also the people of traditional cultures (and on the plane of colloquial thinking – simply men as such) tend to *perceive reality as a valuable certainty and a source of security*, which could stem from laws guiding human cognition and therefore from the human condition itself. The past is always known, or categorized in the form of a myth (historical narrative, while the future slips away cognitively. The easiest way to cognitively master the present and the future is to make it similar to the past, which results in a creation of the concept of a cyclical time.

Relatively lasting and unambiguous idea (understood as a prototype, an idealized image within consciousness) is cognitively always easier to grasp than changing and differing among themselves fragments of sensually experienced being. Past (precedent) phenomena exist in the present exactly in the form of ideas, even if in the sense that mythical narratives represent that which is long gone. Everything that is “physically” absent – that is present only through its

representation – is characterized by a perfect categorization (simplification and immobilization) when compared to sensually experienced reality. What follows is the fact that it becomes “attractive” in cognitive terms. To understand the sensually experienced reality within the framework of magical thinking is to identify it with the past that, by virtue of being absent (experienced only in the form of its representation, e.g. mythical narrative) can be its idealized prototype. The law of similarity overlaps in this case with a tendency to categorize. Transcendental models recreated in experimental phenomena are perfect, because they are inaccessible due to time (that which was *long ago*) or due to space (that which is *far away*, e.g. celestial bodies), which means that it is empirically difficult to verify their (im)perfection. Cognitive identification of a difficult to grasp present with a fully understandable past (and the resulting concept of cyclical time) is, therefore, a radical form of cognitive conquering of reality.

The cyclical concept of time hinges on the assumption that the present and the future reflect the past and that is why one is able to predict the future through narratives about the past circumstances. The past is considered in this case a pre-configuration of the future and *vice versa*. Within a similar image of the world the future, which is exclusively a repeated past, is predictable, however for the price of a total loss of its autonomy. In other words, the future appears as transparently organized (categorized) for the price of being saturated with a determining fatalism (Eliade 1959) in the sense that decisions and actions of a man have very little influence on the course of the world. In a future, “pre-programmed” (predestined) by the past, nothing can be changed (Uspienski 1998: 48–49). Instead of being a subject of history, man becomes a “cosmic puppet,” according to a similar ontology. It is so because the future of man depends not so much on his actions as it does on an independent course of the world, or the movements of the stars that mark human fate and from which we can, at best, “read” our future (Kieckhefer 1989, cf. Lebeda 2002: 21–28). Referring to the laws of magic, we could conclude that a man who was born under a certain star, meaning that he became adjacent to it at the very “beginning,” would be identified with it forever, therefore sharing the fate of the constellation that the star belongs to. Astronomical calculations of the future star constellations translate in that sense into astrological predictions of human fate. Man can also read his fate from the palm of his own hand that is identified with him, according to the law of adjacency, and lines of which, according to the law of similarity, reflect his future. Moreover, he can come into contact with the animal in the act of it being sacrificed and use its entrails to read the future of an individual making the sacrifice (Kieckhefer 1989). To illustrate this, we can recall some of contemporary variants of stories from Cieszyn Silesia that constitute examples of establishing

relationship between that which is present and that which is absent, according to the law of adjacency (the object belonging to the missing person) and the law of similarity (a picture of a missing person). By referencing this narrative, I abstract from questions about the actual events, assuming that the goal of an anthropological interpretation of the text of a narrative folklore is not so much about deciding on questions about an “objective” truth (where, when, and what happened) as it is about tracing the rules guiding collective consciousness:

On the Clairvoyant One from Wisła (1)

After the word spread that she's the clairvoyant one, people from all over Silesia would come to see her. It was during the war and she had to hide from the Germans. She could sense if someone was still alive or not. People would come to her during the war and ask her to tell them if a son, or a father, or some other member of the family is still alive. You had to bring a piece of their clothing, or a letter from that person. She would put it against her head, holding the thing in both hands and that's how she would see things. She would take it to a separate room and that's where she'd do it.

(Wisła, 2004)

On the Clairvoyant One from Wisła (2)

One woman told me how she went to the clairvoyant one. Her son was in the military during the war, I think in the German army. And so the mother didn't hear from him for a long time, no letter, nothing, not even a short message. She took his picture to the clairvoyant woman. The clairvoyant took the photo and said he's alive and will come home. She said her boy is in great danger, but he'll come home and in some two weeks he was back. But the woman knew that as soon as she touched the picture.

(Wisła 2004)

In a reality constructed by mentality marked, at least partially, by magical thinking, it is not only past, but also present that is a key to the future. In the world of magical culture, there is nothing that does not constitute a mirror reflection of something else. The world assumes a form of an infinite *continuum* of mutual relationships, adjacencies, while everything repeats itself and becomes similar to one another: “The relation of languages to the world is one of analogy rather than of signification; or rather, their value as signs and their duplicating function are superimposed; they speak the heaven and the earth of which they are the image; they reproduce in their most material architecture the cross whose coming they announce – that coming which establishes its existence in its own turn through the Scriptures and the Word” (Foucault 2002: 41–42). In this context, the world becomes a text that one has to learn how to read properly, or “decipher,” in order to see things that are hidden, including the future.

All phenomena taking place in nature (a comet, or the northern lights, clouds, or birds singing, etc.) are within the framework of magical thinking system of seeing and interpreting reality with clear signs of something hidden, something that these phenomena are similar to, and to which they are adjacent, hence relatively identical. The shortened line on one's palm is a sign of a short life; a movement of a star can disclose the fate of the one born under it; man's face reflects his soul, which means one can "read" his true nature from it, etc. (Foucault 2002, Guiraud 1992, Kieckhefer 1989, Kowalski 2000a: 288–291). P. Lombardi noted that "within a mentality where *everything has something in common with everything else* and everything could symbolize something else, it could be difficult to find something that is worth highlighting" (Lombardi 2004: 107).

When we finally understand behaviors of one part of the cosmos we can start deducing what happens to another part. "With such an understanding, the events – events of the present – do not generate the future, but could be interpreted as its foreshadowing. It is true that whatever happens in the present and whatever is supposed to happen in the future, appears as a reflection, or a symbolic representation of the same original state. The connection between these signs is coded by means of the same code used for the creation of the world" (Uspienski 1998: 36–37). A great example could be folk interpretations of dreams. The *Polish Book of Dreams* by Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska illustrates that, in fact, there are no graspable, easy to recreate later, dream contents that do not serve as a foretelling of future events (Niebrzegowska 1996: 57–91). The rules of folk interpretation of dreams are based precisely on the law of adjacency, or different types of metonymic relationships, and on the law of similarity, or different types of metaphorical relationships.⁵⁵

Whether in a dream, or in a state of being awake, nothing ever happens within the magical order of things that would not be related to other events. Nature is a book from which one can read: a *comet* as a hybrid (chaotic) star with a tail foretells the upcoming *chaos*, or a disaster in the form of a war, natural disaster, or plague; a stork is a sign of new life, a hooting owl – among other "mysterious"

55 One of the main rules of translating a dream into the future events is their opposite character (Niebrzegowska 1996: 59). That rule finds its application also in other disciplines of magic. An opposition could be, however, understood as a specific case of similarity (Foucault 2002). An opposition can be established only in reference to some common characteristic with contradicting meanings. Due to that characteristic, the opposite meanings are similar, e.g. *blackness* (total lack of light) vs. *whiteness* (total presence of light).

signs – foretells death (Kajfosz 2001: 99). Proofs for this can still be found in Cieszyn Silesia's narratives:

The Hooting Owl Tells of Death

Many years ago, when I was still a bachelor, I had a friend. We had motorbikes like they used to have back then. They were bringing city water to houses in our neighborhood and everyone had to dig access on their property. Me and my friend, we dug together. I was doing well, but he not so much and kept saying he's feeling weak. He took a second shift and was about to be done around 11 in the evening. I was lying in bed at home, it was in the summer and hot, so I had a window open. At one point an owl sat on my windowsill and hooted three times. I got scared, because they would always tell me it's a bad omen, a sign of coming death. I went to my mother and she told me: "Son, be careful, that hoot means death." I couldn't sleep that night. In the morning I was told that my friend was dead. And we were really close, we would go everywhere together. That owl was a message for me to tell me something bad was happening, not a warning for me.

(Wisła, 2004)

Signs of the Coming Death

The old man stayed in bed, very sick, and would not leave the house. His old lady would go out and work in the field. She was close by the house and suddenly she heard that something made three loud thumps by the house. She already knew that the old man would be dead in three days. And so it was. He died after three days in his own bed. It was an announcement of when it would happen.

(Wisła, 2004)

The magical image of the world, regardless of whether it assumes a more or less integral form, assumes the existence of hidden similarities (analogies, correlations, oppositions) and hidden adjacencies (e.g. neighboring) between phenomena that need to be simply taken into consideration in order to derive hidden meanings from transparent signs. As we have stressed, the clear example could be the prophecies that, *based on the current state of affairs, predict the future*, which is indicated by some secret adjacency, or similarity. If, between that which is similar and adjacent, we were to assume an ontological (or: unchanging) identity, it would mean that along with every actual, or potential marked element there appears its lasting – always identical – marking element. We can follow an example of folk divination: *If the New Year's Day brings good weather, the fields will be plentiful*, or *If the first week of August is hot, the winter will be harsh*, or *If there's frost on the first of December, many wells will dry up* to observe that the sign of future bountiful harvests is always good weather on the New Year's Day, while harsh winter or impeding drought have their unchanging signs as

well. It is all about having the right key, a code, at one's disposal to make it possible to derive conclusions about what is yet to come based on what is observed. In the context of our divagations up to this point, it is worth highlighting that observing nature, however long-term, cannot be a sufficient explanation for all meteorological prophecies. We need to ask about what was the paradigm within which a man observed the nature in the first place. In this sense, at least part of the meteorological divinations points to magic as – today only fragmentary – system of meanings (or one set of phenomena being pointed out by another) thanks to which our ancestors were able to discover relationships between phenomena that – from a contemporary point viewpoint – cannot have them (Kajfosz 2006: 22–34).

Magical interpretations of the world were considered mostly as unscientific from the beginning of the dominance of the enlightenment era. However, in common thinking and in modified, residual forms, they have survived to this day, which is proven by unrelenting interest in horoscopes in today's pop culture; horoscopes that allow to foretell the future, but also to notice signs of astral fatalism in the present (cf. Eliade 1959: 154–159).

We should also take the opportunity to conclude that the fathers of the church fought with the syncretic intertwining of Christian faith and magic, which, in a way, is a price for the Christianization of Europe on a mass scale, from almost the early medieval times (Eliade 1959, Gurevich 1985, Kieckhefer 1989). Evident attacks on the magical order of things, not in line with the biblical ban on magic and fortune telling,⁵⁶ was also brought by the Reformation (Cocchiara 1981, Lombardi 2004: 7–9). Its Italian precursor, the Jacobin monk Girolamo Savonarola, sharply criticized astrologists and popularity of horoscopes among the clergy in his late fifteenth century sermons (Lombardi 2004: 116). But even still in the Renaissance, magical thinking would permeate not only the image of the world of the vastest strata of society but also science itself, including medicine. A popular conviction at the time used to claim that a cut on one's head could help peel a green rind of a walnut, since it covers the nut, similarly to a skin covering the skull. The law of similarity stating that similar things can cure one another used to be a basis of yet another medical recommendation: a walnut used to be considered a remedy for a headache, since it looks like a brain nestled in the skull (Foucault 2002: 30–31). The same rule was applied to yellow stones that were said to cure hepatitis, while red stones were supposed to stop the bleeding (Le Goff 1988).

56 C=Cf. Deuteronomy 18:9–12, Leviticus 19:26

If we were to conclude that magical thinking permeated sixteenth-century science, we should not assume that it was considered magical at the time. For not all symptoms of magical thinking – according to the criteria established later by anthropology – were considered magical. Above all else, especially within folk culture, the rules of magic did not require any translation. Certain actions were taken because, according to common belief, they yielded results. A *witch*, as understood today, is a relatively late “invention.” Her emergence is a result of demonization of magical activities, but only those meeting the criteria of the time, in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries (Lombardi 2004: 18–19, 130).⁵⁷ Magical actions were not necessarily something in a need of a name or theory. It was simply an action based on tradition. People believed that it could bring results without the need to explain its mechanisms (Dobosz 2002: 63–64, Kowalski 1999: 16, 22–23). Moreover, a history of the emergence of certain forms of magic, or a history of their progressing objectification, is paradoxically a history of the “disenchantment” of culture, a history of a progressing disintegration of the magical image of the world. In other words, it seems that the degree of dominance of magical thinking is in inverse proportion to the ability of observing symptoms of magical thinking and formulating its rules.

Magical thinking does not know the category of an *incident* or *likelihood*. Within the magical order of things, everything has its concrete cause. Each event is a consequence of earlier actions, which allows for finding an explanation for everything and always points to a perpetrator. For the man of archaic cultures, suffering is never senseless, because he can always find an explanation: it has its source in the magical workings of the enemy, violation of taboo, passage into a forbidden zone, anger of the gods. The archaic man and, as we shall show in moment, not him alone, cannot understand “suffering” that is not evoked. It must be a result of a personal fault (whenever the person lives with a conviction that it is a religious fault) or a neighbor’s hostility. In all cases, the “suffering” becomes understandable and hence bearable. It acquires meaning and cause, which allows it to be incorporated into a system and explained (Eliade 1959: 102–103). The archaic man, whose thinking was dominated by magic, could withstand suffering and death, but was unable to handle a lack of certainty stemming from the

57 We should mention that fight against magic that took a form of witch trials meant – paradoxically – a triumph of the magical paradigm. Before institutions fighting the magical (within both denominations dominating in the West) could take care of the witches, they had to have faith in the effectiveness of magic. The first volume of the *Hammer of Witches* begins with condemnation not of witches, but of those who do not believe in witchcraft.

unclear and unpredictable character of reality. The fear of losing sense appears to be strong enough to trigger discovering sense everywhere, no matter the cost.⁵⁸ We are witnessing a *particularly strong striving toward categorization* and building of a cosmos and avoiding everything that is chaotic and senseless. The archaic man, and others too, could bear everything except a-categorial, accidental, uncontrollable, and unpredictable phenomena. Everything has to have its “cause” that is always transparent.

The magical structure characteristic of a fairytale, according to which good deeds are automatically rewarded and bad ones punished, finds its recreations in other genres of narrative folklore. One example is a story of a worker, who happens to survive an accident in a rock quarry:

Rock Quarry Accident

There was an accident in the rock quarry at Oblaziec. Two men were killed and one went deaf. Before that one man was also killed. He was crushed by a giant rock. It just came off the quarry wall and crushed him. It was like god's sentence. They used to use dynamite with a quickmatch, now they use an electric fuse. They would light the quickmatch and wait, counting the explosions, and if the number didn't match they looked for ones that didn't fire. Now all the explosives go off at the same time and you can't tell if all fired, or not. And so one didn't fire off, but got crushed under this giant rock. Three men were supposed to smash the rock with a jackhammer. As they were getting into it the hammer hit the explosive and made it go off. It killed the two drunks who worked there and the third guy went deaf. Once he told me that he survived because he's a good man, but if you ask me, I think he was just lucky.

(Wisła, 2004)

Just like a disease of a cow used to be considered a work of a witch in the past, so a misfortune resulted from earlier misdeeds of an individual. Also in this case, there is a tendency to “explain” everything (Kajfosz 2005: 96, Kajfosz 2006: 29–30). Somebody (or something) else is responsible for everything and that somebody (or something) can always be pointed out. The proof that the tendency for categorization, for ultimate ordering and legitimization of any reality, does not allow any possibility of a coincidence is not only in the form of the folk culture, but also the contemporary common thinking that very often can explain “everything” in an instant.⁵⁹

58 “Azande say: ‘death has its cause and nobody dies for no reason,’ meaning that death is always a result of somebody’s hostility” (Evans-Pritchard 2014).

59 As far as the ability for explanations and translations of events is concerned, the British anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard looked at magic. He managed to show on the example of an African tribe of Azande that magic allows its carriers to find answers to

In summary, we should recall that the magical image of the world is never the same, which means it assumes different forms across different places and different times. In that sense, magical thinking has its history – from more intense displays of magic in archaic cultures to less intense, or even rudimentary traces in today’s folklore and global pop culture. The traces of magic today do not constitute a coherent paradigm across contemporary Europe, even though the relics of the magical order of things could still provide a “safe harbor” for today’s common consciousness, where everything is granted its proper sense and where everything could be endlessly explained, even with the help of categories such as Friday the thirteenth or a black cat that crossed someone’s path.

Agency of Language

Since the discussed laws of magic pertain to all symbolic relationships, they must also pertain to language on all its levels – on the level of *a word*, *an opinion* (a statement) and *narrative*. Magical thinking is characterized by the perception of a sign – a synthesis of a nominator (a carrier of meaning) and denotation (a concept) – as a part of a designate or a phenomenon that took place in the world, to which the world is referring to (Engelking 1991a: 157). The word (as a case of a sign) is constantly “touching” its object, similarly to a text of language (understood as a sequence of language signs) constantly “touching” the very reality it is concerned with. And everything that touches each other is identical, which means that in the magical order of cognition wherever the word falls the represented object, or a state appears, or has a potential to appear, following the saying *speak of the devil*. Within the magical order of things, the word, which always sends us back to a specific phenomenon, is *identical with that phenomenon*, meaning that wherever it is uttered, the state it represents takes hold in reality (Burszta 1991: 97). In other words, a word within magical thinking has agency (Engelking 2000: 52–53). Speech is in this case not only a tool of

questions such as: “Why certain things happened to that specific person?” and “Why did they take place at this time?” He answers similar questions with an instant and flawless recognition of “causes” that lead to such state of affairs. For example, a sudden collapse of a roof over a pantry (a summer house) was caused by termites, which the examined people knew very well, and yet they looked for causes in magic. The explanation related to termites was insufficient, because it did not answer the question why at this exact moment there were people under that roof that got hurt. Magical explanations provided Azande the sense of safety and control over the world, a sense of living in an ordered *cosmos* (Evans-Pritchard 2014).

communication or persuasion but also, and above all, a tool for taking action, for making a *direct* intervention into reality (not mediated through people's minds), which means it has an essential and pragmatic dimension (Malinowski 2002).

It is difficult to talk about a cause-and-effect relationship between the word (sign) and its measurable effect on the world. Magical speech does not have to wait for results which it causes, often it is the result itself, directly interfering with reality. In magical thinking, a blessing (or curse) is not a "cause" of later consequences. From the very beginning, it constitutes a realization of luck (or misfortune) of the one who was blessed (or cursed). It is a result of the law of adjacency between the three poles of the semantic relationship: between the *signifier* (an expression qua an optical-acoustic phenomenon), the *signified* (intentional content of the expression) and the *object* (realization of the expression) (Burszta 1991: 102–103, Grzegorzczkowska 1999: 39–41, Kardela 1999: 15–16).

Hence, an important characteristic of magical thinking toward any differences in the grade of objectification in this case is indifference.⁶⁰ For magical thinking, where all the contents concentrate on one plane of being, everything that represents it is identical with its corresponding object. It could be a portrait or a photograph (or an icon, using Peirce's terminology), a name, or any other sign.⁶¹ If an image representing a man constitutes an integral part of him, everything that would happen to that image will also happen to the individual. That is why the piercing of a given man's image with a needle or spear means magical annihilation (wounding, killing) of the person represented by the image (Cassirer 1955, Frazer 2004). Let us pause over the ontological unity of different levels of representation:

60 As a trace of similar thinking, we could consider the presently observed custom of some Catholics in Cieszyn Silesia, who do not throw away any religious pamphlets, but burn them instead. It can be explained through the categories of magical thinking: if the image of Christ or St. Mary on paper not only represents these figures, but based on the law of similarity is – at least to some degree – identical with them, then throwing that paper into garbage would mean "throwing away" (a profanity) of the represented figures. As one can deduce, the fire is permitted as means of utilization, because it constitutes the *sacred par excellence*, it is a form of mediation between heaven and earth, which is symbolized by cultural objects such as incense or burnt offering, smoke of which goes all the way to heaven (Kowalski 1998: 377–378).

61 "We could do without images in the proper sense of that word. The very mention of somebody's last name, or a thought about the individual, a shadow of a thought identification is enough to turn a bird, an animal, a chord, a needle, a ring, or any other surrogate into a representation of a given person. It is important only to fulfill the function of representation" (Maus 1973: 88–89).

[PETER] ⇔ [PETER'S PORTRAIT] ⇔ [NAME "PETER"]

An inseparable relationship between each being and its name, characteristic for magical thinking, can be noticed primarily in the way magical thinking approaches names and proper names. It takes granting names very seriously: *nomen (atque) omen* – each name is a divination, a power that decides about its carrier's fate, because once given, the name constitutes an ontological whole with the bearer. From the fact that the name is ontologically identical with the being designated by it we could deduce that the knowledge of one's name gives one power over him. That is why, in many cultures, names and proper names were kept secret, in fear of somebody abusing the power stemming from the knowledge (Weisgerber 1929: 25). The ontological unity between the name and its carrier or between the proper name and the object it designates was meaningful primarily by virtue of interacting with beings of the sacred realm. Knowing names of deities and demons gave man power over them, this is why these names were often known exclusively to priests and wizards, who kept them most secretive. Anyone who enjoys the privilege of knowing the names has power over the deities and demons behind them, which means he has power over people as well (Cassirer 1955, Cassirer 1944, Weisgerber 1933: 157). Also for medieval folk culture, the connection between a name and its carrier was much stronger than today. Remembering the deceased was often more than simply recalling dead persons through the eyes of one's mind. When their name was spoken, the ghost would come back among the living. Celebrating All Saints Day was, in a sense, a social event, allowing for unification between the alive and dead (cf. Gurevich 1992). It is worth noticing that mechanisms described here reveal themselves to this day in séances, during which a ghost is supposed to be evoked from the other side of the world by means of using its name.

An important symptom of magical speech, within which an essence of things is not merely marked by a word, but is contained and present within it, is the linguistic taboo. A linguistic taboo is marked by a ban on using certain words and texts in fear of making their contents real. Hence, if we were to use a name to designate a wrong phenomenon, that phenomenon could attain characteristics of the name used to call it. In order to avoid unwanted or dangerous consequences, we should avoid words that could cause them. Linguistic taboo, therefore, is a symptom of – mostly unconscious – recognition of the *creative force of the word* (Engelking 1991a: 157). Intentions of a man saying a word are often meaningless in the context of the magical speech. The word that is exclaimed and cannot be taken back decides about everything. Oskar Kolberg documented a folk belief in Masovia, which stated that if you call a child a frog it will not grow (Engelking

1991a: 159–164). And if one were to exclaim the *devil*, he or she could be struck by his power:

The devil? – We were never told – And you shouldn't say it either! – We would never dare to say that word, devil or something. Just name him! And he'll come to you! So we were afraid to say the name. We wouldn't dare! That is how a woman from Łomna Dolna (Dolní Lomná) in the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia (Teschen Silesia, Těšín Silesia) scolded the unreasonable author, who in 1994 was asking her about the “devil” category. She strictly forbade him to talk about that and similar subjects, because as soon as we say Satan's name, he should appear besides us to lead us astray.

A genre that demonstrates the agency of a text is what *The Dictionary of Polish Folklore* by Julian Krzyżanowski defines as a “spell, word formula of a magical character designed to bring immediate results, avoid unwanted phenomena, or to evoke one . . . it can appear alone, limited to a word formula aiming to cause a particular outcome remotely, or accompanies particular acts and magical practices” (Krzyżanowski, ed., 1965: 459). For instance, *Hex – if you're coming from a man, go under his hat; if from a woman, go under her skirt; and if you're coming from a girl, go under her braid* (Engelking 1991b: 77–83, Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2007: 189).

An example of similar thinking from a more distant past could be a note of a medieval chronicler, who described the following accident: an angered father screamed at his son: “Go to the devil!” The moment he uttered the words, a devil showed up and snatched his son. Another example of magical speech could be an accident when an angered master addressed his servant by saying: “come here you devil, take off my shoes!” and his laces started to untie themselves, of course undone by the devil himself whom he recklessly summoned. Folk medieval culture ascribed speech with a power to realize that which it concerned to a point where, in medieval Iceland, it was prohibited to compose poems about a person without his explicit approval, because it was believed that it could affect one's destiny (Gurevich 1992). A thesis stating that a word in magical thinking summons its designate into existence could also explain why the medieval folk culture did often not distinguish between the artistic fiction and relating actual events. Fiction used to be realistic and was treated as memorate (Gurevich 1985).

Echoes of the belief in the causal power of words can be seen within an event recounted by an interviewee from Wisła:

The Curse

Skolanka and Łoncarka didn't like each other, you could say they hated one another. Skolanka would walk over Łoncarka's field for the St. John's day and Łoncarka told her that if she sees her there one more time, she'll make sure to get rid of her. But the next year

Skolanka was back and angered the owner, who said something to her. And I don't know exactly what she said, but it was something about how she forbids her to walk over her field and in that instance Solanka's leg got terribly twisted and stayed that way forever.

(Wisła, 2004)

Regular wishes could be considered a form of magical speech in the past. Wishes are often considered today as *flatus vocis*, or “ordinary words,” even when delivered with the best of intentions, but in the magical order of things they constitute acts. If the spoken word actualizes its contents, it could mean that rewarding those who gave one wishes – or actually paying them for the wishes – is in a way a form of an investment. The entire year, according to the law of adjacency and the rule of *pars pro toto*, is supposed to reflect a precedent New Year's Day (or another holiday). Hence, it is not without importance who the host will meet on that day and what he or she will hear from that person, especially since the words may weigh on the future.

Here is an example of New Year's wishes delivered in Istebna: “All the happiness, and let you be healthy for a whole year, let you be prosperous in all manners, God willing, let your fields be bountiful with crops, your to be plentiful like ants, and your calves like trees in the forest . . . Let you be happy like angels are in heaven” (Jankowska-Marcol 2001: 11). The well-being of recipients of the wishes is supposed to follow the patterns in nature, which means that all kinds of successes are to be based on other states observed in nature and the world: the number of calves should equal the plentiful trees in the forest, etc. Therefore, we could suspect that parallels emerging in this case cannot be simply reduced to the very stylistic, or poetic means. They can also have a magical dimension in a sense that the well being called upon is based on specific patterns and as such is supposed to constitute an element of the world's isomorphism. It is also a question of the culture as a system ordering and a question of a specific attitude of a person toward words directed at him or her, which the individual wishes to turn into a reality.

Within the framework of the magical image of the world in its original, integral form, everything that has been said has importance precisely because of the fact that it has been uttered. The magical function of language – at least in specific circumstances – made it impossible to articulate a false judgment, since every statement creates the reality to which it refers. In other words, *the world “adapts” to uttered words, judgments (claims) and narratives*. Hence, we could suspect that meteorological forecasts not only made claims about what the future would bring, but also simultaneously held the world at its proper course. They held its order, harmony and the related system of meaning, or its predictability

and coherence. Within the framework of the magical image of the world – within its earliest, the most integral, iterations – there cannot exist an “independent” description of events in the world (Burszta 1991: 94–97). Each similar description would have impact on further events. The description of the world is an intervention into that world because it will “adapt” to the description. The story has a world-creating quality in the archaic cultures, because it is able to summon into existence a precedent it is relating, or the “distant” past. The function of storytelling in this case is not only recalling of that which has happened in the world. The narrative kept the world in its tracks: retelling of the past allowed for heroic deeds of divine ancestors to be repeated, for able and just kings to sit on a throne, for *our own* to win over the demonic *aliens*, for *cosmos* to beat *chaos*, and the good to defeat evil (Kajfosz 2006: 33).

Elements and Relicts of Magic in the Folk Culture of Cieszyn Silesia

The proof for the fact that similarities and adjacencies can be considered as *the most general matrix* for all present symptoms of magical thinking, independent from the place and time, in which they occur, is the fact that within the folk culture of Cieszyn Silesia at the turning point of nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or even in the first half of the twentieth century (in the culture of the traditional type) there are ways of ordering similar things reminiscent of ones described by J.G. Frazer and M. Mauss on the basis of observations made of archaic cultures, or by A. Gurevich on the basis of medieval texts. Obviously, it does not mean that the image of the world of denizens of the Cieszyn Silesia has been and still is in the same way magical. As it has been shown, it should be treated as a multi-plane and relatively heterogenic, hence only its specific part displays marks of magical vision of the world, or its relicts. We could repeat after A. Engelking that the “folk worldview cannot be called a magical system in its entirety, but some of its elements, or planes, carry on the magical vision of the world” (Engelking 1991a: 158).

It was enough for a Cieszyn’s witch, in some cases (most often during sacral periods, such as *midnight*, *new moon*, or *Kupala Night* [St. John’s Night]), to get a hold of a bit of milk in order to, following the law of adjacency, take control over the cow that produced it. It was enough for her to collect some grass or dew from neighbor’s field to take control and profit from a farmer working on it. Milk is ontologically identical with the cow that produced it and herbs are ontologically identical with the meadow they grew on – just like the dew that covered it. A witch can take control over the cow by collecting the dew and profit from its milk, because the dew touches the grass, the neighbors cow eats grass and later

produces milk. Some mechanisms that aim to release one's cow from under the witch's control also operate on the basis of the principle of magic's adjacency. If we were to assume that the witch taking away the milk from her neighbor's cow and consumes it becomes ontologically identical with it, then whatever happens to the milk would happen to her as well. Hence, if we were to start a fire in our furnace and begin sprinkling the milk on a red-hot stove top, she would arrive to stop the process, because she should feel the burning sensation (Kajfosz 2001: 114–118). For a comparative purpose, let us quote a story:

On Harvesting

My dad saw one that would just walk over the field and say: "I'm harvesting, but not all." And so she would walk around and mumble like that. Sometime later, our neighbor came running to my dad and told him that when she milks her cow, no milk comes out and only blood. And she tied it to the woman in the field. So they told her what to do. Whatever you get from the cow, milk mixed with blood, spill it and poke it with a scythe. And whoever did that will feel stinging all over the body. And so it was. The woman who walked over the field came running and said: "Call the doctor, I feel pain everywhere." And so it came out, who was that hex.

(Zebrzydowice, 2002)

We can easily provide any more similar examples, which prove that, within the reality perceived by members of Cieszyn's ethnoculture, laws of magic still played a significant role not so long ago. Still today, some individuals see the connection between the phases of the moon and phenomena related to farming, although beliefs themselves lost their systemic character, meaning they do not appear widely – they do not repeat as often as up to the first half of the twentieth century.

To be clear, we should refer back to conclusions from the first chapter: a formally identical text (shared conviction, meteorological forecast, etc.) that in one space-time context is a text of folklore can be merely a folklorism or a text that reflects an earlier, now non-existent linguistic folklore, a reflection of texts that were broadly shared and reproduced earlier. As we have observed in the first chapter, a text that, in a particular epoch, is a folklore text could in time lose its systemic, or repetitive, character. It depends on the degree to which a given text within a particular communication community will retain its systemic character and to what degree it will remain a direct representation of particular mentality of a concrete image of the world. After all, a linguistic-cultural system undergoes constant transformations. If the folklore constitutes its integral part, it also suffers from progression, or overlapping of particular epochs and their respective orders, which organize knowledge, viewpoints, and the practice of

connecting of phenomena using relationships based on specific rules or laws (Kajfosz 2006: 24).

In some villages of Cieszyn Silesia, there used to persist a conviction – which sporadically can be still noticed – that plants should be sown and planted during a time when the moon is “growing,” preferably three days ahead of the full moon. In other villages people believed that, in order to secure good harvest, one has to sow and plants, which grow their fruit and grains above ground (like corn, wheat, tomatoes, or cucumbers) during the “growing” moon, while plants that have their bounty grow underground (like potatoes, carrots, or beets) when the moon is getting smaller (Kajfosz 2001: 82–84). Proponents of such beliefs would not suppose that similar rules could have anything to do with magic. It is all about the order according to which knowledge is organized, that rarely constitutes something that is recognized and named by its carrier. In any case, at the foundation of similar beliefs rest laws deciding about the ontological identity between the moon and plants that are directly adjacent (under the aspect of time) and try to emulate it. It is impossible to list all rules for actions based on similar premises. Phases of the moon caused noctambulism, were a factor when buying piglets, starting a family, cutting down trees, cutting hair, when to butcher farm animals, etc.

The ontological identity between the states of celestial bodies and terrestrial events that translated into isomorphism between the processes happening in heaven and on earth could be pointed out in Cieszyn Silesia’s folk culture on the example of the sun. The conviction that the herbs should be harvested on the Kupala Night (summer solstice), or at least during the period directly preceding that day, or the day after, could also be inscribed within the matrix that is comprised of the laws of magic: the “power” of the sun, which shines the longest on that day translates into healing-magical power of plants.

Into that same matrix, we could also inscribe the healing and apotropaic power of objects that have come in contact with the *sacred*. In Cieszyn Silesia, we could include the so-called *godni krajiczek* or a slice of bread from the Christmas Eve dinner that is kept as a medicine for the entire year and *Good Friday water* that has a preventive and apotropaic effects. The custom of morning bathing rituals using the Good Friday water has, according to a Cieszyn Silesia’s legend, a connection to Christ, who on the day of his crucifixion was supposed to be thrown of a bridge into a river (Kajfosz 2001: 87). Following this trace, also in this case, we could recreate, except for the pre-Christian cultural motives, an omnipresent magical structure of magical thinking: the sacral Christ, who, through being thrown of the bridge into a river, comes into contact with water, hence granting it healing powers, which reveal themselves every year on Good Friday, on the

day that is a recreation of the original day, or a day identified with it.⁶² So, when early on Good Friday we step into a river (or wash ourselves with cold water), we take advantage of the healing power of water, in which the Christ himself dipped into once. To be more precise, more or less consciously and through the laws of magic, we “force” the healing power on Christ, or at least have the impression that we do. The following legend indirectly supports this interpretation:

When Little Jesus Met the Bandit

Jesus had to escape to Egypt – my grandma used to tell this story – along with his entire family. So they walked and walked and once they had to pass through a forest where bandits used to be. They saw a light glimmer in the distance and they walked up to the cabin and it was the bandit’s cabin. So Mary was scared and asked the woman at the cabin for help, and the woman was scared too, because she knew that when her bandit husband shows up he will do something to them. But she gave them supper and fixed some sleeping space in the shed, so when the bandit comes home they can quietly go there, and if he doesn’t show up they can go along. But Mary was asking if she could wash baby Jesus. So the host fixed a bath and Mary bathed Jesus. The bandit and his wife also had a son and he was Jesus’s age and he was sick. So Mary said she’ll bathe him as well in the same water, but the bandit’s wife said she’s worried because her son has lesions, but she agreed after all and put him in. When she took him out, he was healed, there was no trace of the illness. Mary and Jesus went to the shed and when the bandit showed up his wife showed him the child and told the story. At first, he was a little scared and asked if they’re still there. She told him they were in the shed. So he took them into the house and gave them all they needed for the road and more. And so they went. And before they left Jesus said to the other boy: “grow strong and when we’re both grown up we’ll die on the cross together.” And it turned out it was the man who died on the cross with Jesus, to his right, who was saved.

(Zebrzydowice, 2002)

The law of adjacency surfaces through the fact that water, which has been in contact with baby Jesus, healed the little boy. What is more, the law of similarity emerges in this case as well. The event was a foreshadowing of salvation of one of the bandits by dying Christ.

The motives based on the discussed laws have their reflection in a conviction of the healing power of the *herbs of Corpus Christi* collected from church altars and taken home, dried and kept as medicine used to fumigate the ill, or

62 Cultural sources of similar convictions are rooted back in the pre-Christian epoch. Water taken before the sunrise still held its connection to the amorphic, sacral night, and powers it activates. Following the transformations of image of the world, the motivations, in the sense of “explanations,” undergo *uncommemoration* and different kinds of *reinterpretations*.

to enchant cows, or even people. It was all about herbs and flowers that came in contact with something saint, with an altar, on a day that recalls the sanctity, and which – following the law of adjacency – are capable of cleansing, protecting and even healing. Identical order of meanings was a foundation of the belief into apotropaic powers of *pussy willows from the Palm Sunday*, which were placed at the beginning of field ploughing under the first ridge, or mixed with grains dedicated for sowing, or with potatoes dedicated for planting. It is similar with the *holly water* that was used for blessings of the harness and horses before ploughing and the ploughman himself. Laws of adjacency and similarity also serve as the source for the custom of touching bellies of cows that were going out for the first time to graze in the new season with hardboiled eggs (Kajfosz 2001: 77–90, cf. Lebeda 2002: 165–200). Cows were supposed to become “round” like the eggs with which they were touched. We should also assume that one of the original motives was the goal of providing the cows with fertility through touching them with an egg, a kernel of life that is full of vital powers (Toporow 1975b: 175–176, cf. Kowalski 1998: 174–175).

One of the forms of contact that is equivalent to identification or an unlucky cause-and-effect relationship is a hex understood as an eye contact between the subject and the object of the observation, sometimes magnified by a physical contact. A hex is most often placed by means of a vicious gaze. It is enough for someone with a vicious gaze (someone with conscious or unconscious bad intentions) to look at an animal, or a person to get them ill, or even dead (Kajfosz 2001: 110–111, cf. Evans-Pritchard 2014).

Evil Gaze

I remember an old granny who was a witch. She could take milk away from a cow and then we would have to fumigate the animal with some herbs. But I don't remember what herbs they were. I went to check on a cow once and she came over to me. She stood by me and looked at the cows and said: “Your cows are so pretty, so pretty,” and then she left. In the evening, when it was time to milk them, my mom couldn't get any milk. So she asked me what happened when I was with them. So I told her Pinkaska came over. My mom just said that that's it for the milk than.

(Wisła, 2004)

The laws of magic also constitute the basis for actions neutralizing at least some of the hexes. Dropping of the so-called coals used to be a quite popular procedure. One had to get the furnace going, fill a receptacle with water and drop nine or ten lumps of red-hot coal into it, while counting down. That way, according to the rule of similarity, the power of a hex would be “weakened” and serving the

water to a person, or an animal, was supposed to make sure that the right person is affected, following the rule of adjacency (Kajfosz 2001: 110–114).

By analyzing the system of signs and orders related to a birth of a child, we can also find many examples having their roots in magical thinking, and explanation fixed within laws of magic we have formulated. For example, a future mother was not allowed to look at ugly, ill or mentally challenged people. According to the law of adjacency that governs eye contact as well, one should suspect that a child could look like those who mothers see. Therefore, a mother should look exclusively at beautiful and healthy individuals, because only thanks to such a form of contact she could secure beauty and health for the baby. A future mother was also not allowed to watch animals being butchered, due to a danger of miscarriage or a blemish on a child. It was believed in Cieszyn Silesia that when a pregnant woman witnesses a fire and then touches her body with her hand, her face for example, there would be a red blemish on her child that was commonly called “fire.” Future mothers were also forbidden to look at hares, because a child could be born with a cleft palate, known colloquially as *hare’s mouth* (Kajfosz 2001: 128–132).

A system of bans, orders, and recommendations that could be inscribed within the two basic laws of magic regulated taking care of a child. It was believed in Wisła, for example, that if one were to pull a newborn girl through a pantleg (law of adjacency) she would be popular with boys. If one were to put a blade of grass into girl’s bath, she would grow long hair (law of similarity and adjacency). Clothing of a child should begin with the right arm, otherwise the child could become left handed. When one was dressing a child for baptism, one should quickly undo its comforter, so that – following the law of similarity – its tongue would unfold quick and the child would start to talk early. In order to secure a strong voice and musical talents to a child, the mother had to glance at the organs during the baptism, while the child was crying, so that through the eye contact (which identified with a child) it would gain the talents. It was believed that when a carriage, in which a child was traveling for its baptism would cross hare’s tracks (touch them and therefore touch the hare itself), the child would become as vigilant as the animal. Therefore, child’s short and shallow sleep had a simple and obvious “reason” (Kajfosz 2005: 92–93).

Going back to the annual rituals we cannot omit Cieszyn Silesia’s customs related to the *Christmas Eve dinner*, which could just as well be inscribed into the matrix marked by the law of similarity and adjacency.

On the day of Christmas Eve, one was supposed to get up early, because whoever slept in would be lazy for an entire year. Husband and wife were not allowed to argue, because that would mean quarrels all year to come. Children attempted

to behave well, because whoever got a spanking on that day, would be spanked for the rest of the year and the apples hanging on the Christmas tree had to be tried in order to make sure they will be available whole year round. These customs clearly signal a magical motivation – according to the law of similarity, the conditions of life for an entire year are supposed to mimic the example given on the Christmas Eve (a day on which both the sun and the God are born) or on a New Year's Day. The year is identified with the “beginning,” this is why it mimics it. Before the beginning of the dinner, people would put some hay, grains or money under the tablecloth to have them be plentiful for an entire year (Jankowska-Marcol 2001: 9). Based on the law of adjacency and similarity, that which is in contact with a man on the day of Christmas Eve will remain in contact for the rest of the year and that is why it was necessary to put everything that is most important and precious on the table and to try to at least taste each dish or it could come short of supply during the year. We could consider the explanation of hay symbolizing the place of Christ's birth a sign of regressive rationalization. In essence, it had to be in contact – just like grains – in contact with the members of a household in order to secure its abundance.

We should suspect that the very act of breaking and sharing of the communion wafer has a very clear, although in time forgotten, magical explanation. Sharing the same piece of wafer, eating from the same plate, or sitting at the same table is nothing more than a form of contact, which should provide participants contact throughout the coming year.⁶³ Disturbing that contact through walking away from the Christmas Eve table during dinner could (on the basis of similarity) bring analogous results: the family circle could be broken by death or moving away of the family member who stepped away from the table.

The taxonomy of beliefs and actions based on magical motivations ruled by laws of higher precision could include also divinations about the Christmas Eve. For example, people would cut up an apple and if someone would find a pattern of seeds that would form into a little star that would foretell a good year. If there was somebody without the star pattern it meant the year would not be great and that he or she might fall ill. The host would also pass walnuts among the family, usually following the direction of the sun, or clockwise, and one person would

63 We cannot exclude a suspicion that the law of adjacency played an important role in the past when trying to understand the *Eucharist*, whose participants become a “single body.” For comparison we could recall a phrase used by the Anglicans in relation to breaking the bread: *Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread*. Metamorphic identity of the host and body, and of the body and blood could be reduced to the law of similarity (cf. Kowalski 2000b: 27).

receive four to symbolize four seasons. Each cracked walnut served as a divination for one quarter of the year – following the rule of similarity and adjacency – based on how the nut looked inside its shell.

Identical motivation lies at the basis of such customs as feeding the piece of a wafer (or food leftovers) to farm animals, which was supposed to provide magical unity to the entire micro-ecumene, or all inhabitants of shared space of everyday, family life. Similar sources can be identified for earlier convictions that leftovers from the Christmas Eve table (fish bones, nutshells, etc.) should not be discarded. They were meant to be buried in the orchard, under a fruit tree, so that the trees would bear plenty of fruit. We should assume that the “dispersion” of discarded remains could, following the laws of adjacency and similarity – lead to breaking off of all physical and spiritual ties between the members of the family, who ate the food. Burying the leftovers in one place, under a fruit tree that is a symbol of vitality, or life, should keep the family together and in good fortune.

Mating Rituals

We ate some bean soup and some cabbage. We had some dried pears, a spoonful for each. Then came fish and strudel. Dad brought half a liter of rum. Girls danced. We had apples and walnuts. Nutshells and fish bones had to stay under a tree for two or three days and then we buried them there so the trees would have plenty of fruit. And we would pat the beehives on the Christmas Eve so that they would make plenty of honey. Then one more thing. We would turn off the light and light a candle. Everyone stood in the same spot and blew out the candle, one after another. Then we'd watch where the smoke would go. Sometimes it would go so nicely, instead of going toward the door, it would go toward the bed, or a window, or a wardrobe. If the smoke went to the door, you'd die in a year. If it went to the bed or the wardrobe, you weren't going anywhere. And girls would go out into the field to listen for dogs barking. Wherever the barking came from, that's where the boy would come from. Animals would get the leftovers, but only the housewife could step aside from the table.

(Pietwáld/Petřváld. Zwrot 1984, No. 1: 47)

For illustration purposes, we may quote other examples of the tale telling folklore:

About the Cemetery

You can bring evil back from the cemetery. One woman liked to walk around cemeteries a lot and explain something to her kids there. She had two sons, age seven and five, and she would take them there, walk, and tell them things. She liked visiting that cemetery a lot. Someone told her: “Don't go there with the kids, because something will happen there.” But she would keep on going. At one point one of her sons started fading away right in front of

her. Nobody knew what was wrong. Doctors couldn't tell the cause of his illness. He died after two months. The exorcist told her she brought the curse from the cemetery.

(Zebrzydowice, 2002)

About Kelpies who Ate Servant's Supper

There was a farmer who served Knyps in Marklowice. And there was that servant who worked the horses because it was a big farm. They had fields, all the Marklowice meadows, and that servant always looked after grazing horses at night, because they worked during the day. And he kept getting thinner and thinner. But the farmers were good people so the man told his wife: "what's wrong with the boy? We'll have to take him to the doctor. Such a good boy and he's disappearing in front of us." And she said: "Ask him what's wrong." So he asked the boy: "Tell me boy, why are you so thin?" And the boy told him: "How could I be nice a fat when the housewife never gives me supper?" So the farmer confronted his wife and asked: "Why won't you give him supper?" and she responded: "What do you mean? I put the food out for him every night." The farmer hesitated because he wanted to make sure she tells the truth. So when the boy servant was supposed to come around midnight a bizarre cloud rolled in and five young kelpies and an old kelpie man and woman appeared. They put the pot with potatoes on the ground, sat around it and ate it all. When they were almost done, the farmer confronted them: "And who are you and what is going on here! The boy grazes the horses, gets no sleep and then goes to bed on an empty stomach because you ate all his food." And they responded: "It was made for us. The housewife didn't do it right. She was supposed to make a sign of the cross when she put the food in the pot, so we wouldn't have the right to touch it, but without the cross – it was for us."

(Zebrzydowice, 2002)

The narratives presented here can be contained within the matrix created by the laws of magic. If we were to concentrate on the first one, the death of the child was caused by its often visits to the cemetery. His contact with cemetery's space translates into its contact with the dead, to whom that space belongs, creating the danger of becoming like them. In other words, contact with death brings forth the danger of being consumed by it. In the second story, the *kelpie* (a demonic being) can be successfully scared off by a crucifix or even just the sign of a cross. By the rule of similarity, each sign of the cross is identical with the "original" one, on which Jesus Christ was crucified, and which sanctifies its copies through contact. And whatever touches the crucifix, or the sign, or attempts to recreate it becomes sanctified as well.

In the image of the world that is, to a larger or lesser extent, saturated with magical thinking, events rarely expire. Based on the rule of adjacency – that decides about the immutable relationship between objects (phenomena, circumstances) which in the past came into contact with one another – a crime scene or a scene of a deadly accident is forever marked by an event that took place in a given spot

and that is why, according to many legends and myths, such places are haunted. A crime that has taken place at a specific location should remain tied to that location, meaning it will touch anyone who should find himself at that spot, most often after dark, when the taxonomic order becomes suspended due to the lack of light. The same principle applies to cemeteries, places which, due to their designation, “come into contact” with death and through that conduit – with the other side of the world and the spirits. That is why spirits roam either at the cemetery or in its vicinity. The following texts can attest to the dependency between a place and a spirit:

Place of the Suicide

There was a place in the woods and I heard about it quite often. It was still before the cars, back when people drove carriages. There was this one spot where horses would stop dead in their tracks and get spooked, wouldn't go any farther. It was when I was a child before the war. It happened many times – what did those horses see there? People said that a boy hung himself there and that was why, but I don't know if that's true.

(Wisła, 2004)

A Haunted House

I didn't believe in such things, but people were talking. There's this old house up this way. It's still standing. They shot a couple men up there and took the grandma to Auschwitz. She never came back. And later the daughter came back to the house after couple years and it started to haunt her. Supposedly the clock would move around on the table by itself and jump up a little. And it could even fly from one table to the other. Now, nobody's been living there for a number of years. I never believed it, but people said it's happening.

(Wisła, 2004)

Ghost at the Cemetery

There is a shortcut from the new settlement to Głębce that goes by the cemetery. A friend of mine used to take it on his way to work. Once when he was walking he saw something white by the cemetery. He got spooked a little, but kept walking. Walking slowly, he thought maybe he imagined it. But it wouldn't go away and even started moving. As if it was walking back and forth around the cemetery. He kept looking at it and tried to walk around it. He went into the bushes and when he tried to go through they started making lots of noise, like they normally would. That thing then suddenly stopped and disappeared. It didn't come back that day, but others said they saw something too.

(Wisła, 2004)

Chapter Seven Origin of the Source Texts and Methods of Their Interpretation

Texts that we are about to analyze have been collected in the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia (Teschen Silesia, Těšín Silesia) called Zaolzie (former Český Těšín District). Cieszyn Silesia is a historical area of the former Duchy that bordered Lesser Poland in the East, Slovakia in the South, Moravia in the West and Upper Silesia in the North, and was split by the Polish-Czech border since 1920. I have omitted the historical outline of the area first, because there already exists a rich body of literature on the subject and second, because the political history of the area has no direct connection to the displays of magic in the popular narrative found there. The best proof for that could be the fact that there are no – as far as the researched phenomenon is concerned – significant differences between its Polish and Czech part (Kajfosz 2001: 137–144) and a lot points to a conclusion that there are no significant differences between the Cieszyn Silesia and its neighboring areas.

If we were to consider proposal of historical anthropology (Dülmen 2002), which looks at everything that is omitted or unappreciated in classical works about the past, we would have to conclude that the area we are looking at is rather interesting not only due to the history of the identity of its inhabitants or the history of its shifting territorial allegiances, but also because of its popular imagination and its everyday realities as such. Cieszyn Silesia saw the publication of a valuable research on its culture entitled *Uwarunkowania cieszyńskiej kultury ludowej* [*Cieszyn's Folk Culture*] (Kadłubiec 1987), which discusses everyday lives of its ordinary inhabitants in different historical periods. The choice of Cieszyn Silesia as a research subject area was not guided by the fact that its folk culture has been dominated by magic more than in other places. Moreover, due to historical circumstances surrounding that culture, we could accept quite the opposite assumption. The choice of the research area was guided solely by the abundance of materials collected there, with a significant number of folklore texts valuable for theoreticians of language and culture who examine magic.

The richness of the materials collected is an achievement of the Folklore Section of the Polish Cultural and Educational Society that operated from 1965 to 1995 in Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic since 1993). The object of analyses presented later on in this chapter are narratives collected by Józef Ondrusz and

Karol Daniel Kadłubiec between the 1950s and the 1980s. A vast majority of the presented texts was published by the General Board of the above-mentioned association (ZG PZKO) in the magazine *Zwrot*, in the column entitled “Living texts;” some of them appeared in *Głos Ludu* [*Voice of the People*] (published by the Congress of Poles in the Czech Republic) and others in different collections of stories. One of such collections, *Śląskie opowieści ludowe* [*Silesian Folk Stories*] by J. Ondrusz (1963), is particularly interesting from the perspective of the traces of magic. All texts, from among which only a representative part could have been reprinted and reinterpreted in this book, are written in Cieszyn and Jabłonków (Jablunkov) dialect.

Presented interpretations constitute an attempt of recreating the cultural “grammar,” according to which the worlds presented within those narratives are built. The focus was to recreate the “morphology” of texts, however not in the form of systematization of its themes (A. Aarne, S. Thompson), nor in the form of functions fulfilled by particular characters (W. Propp). The laws of magic became the focus of the search for the internal form of those texts. Based on the analysis of the folklore texts from Cieszyn Silesia, I will try to show that magic is something more than an action and objectified worldview. It is primarily a system of constructing the image of the world that, even within contemporary culture, can uphold its hegemony over some realms of the socially constructed meaning. The ambition of this work is to present magic as a particular, cognitive paradigm that, at least in some specific circumstances, governs the categorization or ordering of the world based on its spatial and temporal delimitations and defining the mutual relationships between its highlighted fragments.

As it has been already mentioned, the best source of knowledge about the culture of a particular place and particular epoch are the folklore texts functioning within its boundaries. The compositional norms emerging in folklore or the rules for building the represented world are relatively common and repetitive within the community of its carriers. The structure of a text of folklore has a universal, cultural character (as is the case of a folklore text created by representatives of one generation who form a communication community). If a particular text at a particular stage of history, and within a particular environment, can withstand attempts at placing it under preventive censorship, then it follows that the practice of building its represented world is not accidental, but is more or less characteristic for the entire community within which it circulates. This is why the image of the world contained within a folklore text has a commonly shared character more often than the image of the world contained in a literary text, which is marked, to a much greater degree, by individual creativity and its accidental qualities. The represented world within a literary text could obviously represent

the widespread image of the world of a particular group and epoch, however, deriving conclusions in this particular case is harder, because a researcher has to decide in each specific case whether the identified structure of meaning in each text has more individual or collective character. A researcher examining a text of folklore is in a simpler position, because he or she can be certain that whatever is found in the text represents a common image of the world or at least one of its planes – an image which is widespread in a given time, space, and social milieu.

By analyzing and interpreting particular narratives, we should be equally interested in what these texts concern and in the “silent” order of meaning within which these texts are created and acquire their sense. The concept of a *silent order of meaning* could be understood as a discourse which informs these texts, filling them with knowledge. In other words, the author is equally interested in the meanings objectified in the text (the *parole* plane) and in the meanings composing its background, which provides a basis for the objectification (the *langue* plane). Therefore, we are interested in the contents of the text and the system of meanings that constitutes a condition of their creation and existence. Repeating after P. Kowalski: “The categories of culture can be grasped not in the direct, explicit formulations, but on the level of ‘obviousness,’ that is *knowledge that is not justified* and, what is more, it does not undergo procedures of self-reflection from those, who act (perceive the world) according to these categories” (Kowalski 2000a: 11, cf. Ługowska 2002: 304, Sulima 1995: 58). By defining elements and relics (traces) of magic in the image of the world through the analysis of narrative folklore, we have to focus on what the text is saying and what are its “silent” cognitive assumptions.

The notion of fully objectified meaning is a contradiction, because the meaning can never be objectified “completely.” No phenomenon can be fully defined because it is impossible to recreate the entire context of meaning, within which the phenomenon occurs, nor all the contexts in which it has occurred before. Any presence understood as meaning defined within the interpretation is always conditioned by the absence. In other words, all meaning that is present, or recognized during the interpretation process is accompanied by irremovable absence (Frank 1989) in the form of “silent” meanings that precede and presuppose it. Hence, the condition for the recognized presence of meaning is always the inability to define it exhaustively, since it is co-created by only partially visible context. Therefore, the interpretation understood as semiosis can never be “completed” in a sense that the defined meaning cannot be reduced to the ultimate “explanation” (Bense 1980: 8–13,⁶⁴ cf. Frank 1989, Kalaga 2001: 74–77).

64 Foreword by Hanna Buczyńska-Garewicz.

Ludwig Wittgenstein stressed that a man who enters any kind of a linguistic game – and we should assume that also includes a cultural game – is never fully equipped with a secured, theoretical key that would allow him to enter into a new game (understood as a system of natural language) on the basis of unambiguous, previously presented rules instead of approaching it blindfolded. The conclusions for the very interpretation could be in this case that one cannot learn its proper criteria other than through the interpretation itself based, among other things, on *guessing* and confirming of one's own suspicions in different contexts (Wittgenstein 1997, Sapir 1921). By interpreting any cultural-linguistic system through the prism of its texts, using always partially “silent” criteria, H.–G. Gadamer spoke in this context about fore-understanding and how that fore-understanding, in the sense of criteria of undertaken interpretation, changes under its influence. Initial understanding transforms with new texts being read and placed in new contexts created by that reading itself. Hermeneutic circle that we are talking about here could be understood as an unending transformation of interpretative habits that constitutes a result of progressing interpretation (Eco 1993, cf. Wittgenstein 1997). Each interpretation begins somewhat half-way through and ends half-way as well, which is a result of a fact that the natural language and culture (understood as a semiotic system) constitute “soft” codes – changing, multi-plane, relational, or even displaying internal contradictions – rules of which cannot be fully defined. Moreover, each language-cultural system can be realized differently through individual and unique experiences and actions (among them communicational) by their respective carriers. Defining issues related to the questions of the image of the world by using a structuralist category of the system is imperfect because it removes the existential and moral dimension of perceiving and acting from individuals' field of view, something that cannot be reduced to that which is systemic and social.

We have to concur with P. Kowalski and his warnings against attempts of the absolutizing “systematization” of the researched phenomena to the detriment of unique, human individuality: “As a result of actions of the researchers there emerges an image of culture from of the Polish countryside that could be graphed like Mendeleev's periodic table. However, there are no doubts: *it never existed in such form*. It is a construct designed to order that does not fit with the historical reality. A system, a worldview as a structure, is a hypostasis and hypothesis that provides ordering, designed into the cognitive reality and disregarding that which is within events of an individual, unique and divergent from the standard” (Kowalski 2000a: 13).

The semiotic-hermeneutic method used in this case begins with guessing the meanings and confirming, or disproving them. During the process the researcher

directs his attention toward their final understanding. It is “final” – as it has been stressed – in the hypothetical sense, since the hermeneutic process is open, which means that the interpretative framework under the influence of new experiences constantly changes and the understanding can be deepened (Ricoeur 1976). If we were to recall that each linguistic-cultural system is marked by the multitude of layers of meaning, which, to a certain extent, are always related and indicate the possibility of their mutual transfer. It is important to repeat, after B. L. Whorf, that the ethnological and psycho-linguistic analysis of the same society feed off each other, especially when performed by the same researcher (Whorf 1956).

Sample Texts

Where Did the Mole Come From

There were two brothers who could never get along. Before their father died, he divided his farming land between the two. But one thought it was not enough, so he started a fight with his brother. The other one told him: “We can’t go to the court, we’re brothers. It’s a shame our father is dead, he would tell you if I have more land than you, or if we’re even.” But the greedy one told him that the next day they should go together to the field and ask their dead father how he divided the land and he shall answer. And when he returned home, he told his young son that tomorrow he will hide underneath the ridge, covered with soil, and when he calls him he will rise just a little and nothing more. First thing in the morning, before the full sunrise, the greedy brother hid his son under the ridge and went to fetch his sibling. When they got back on the field he said aloud: “My brother wants to take more field than he deserves. Make a verdict father! Let the ridge move where my field should begin.” And the ridge moved. The other brother, the good one, shook his head and went home. It is what it is! As soon as the good brother went away, the greedy one went to pull out his son. He turned over the ridge, but his son wasn’t there. He turned into a mole. Last thing he managed to say was: “You did this to me dad!” And ten he escaped into a hole.

(Stonawa/Stonava. Ondrusz 1963: 42)

The transformation of the boy into a mole took place under the law of adjacency and similarity: he hides underground and is in contact with the soil like a mole, which decides about his metamorphosis.

The explanation of the mole’s origin or its place in the order of the world is an example of categorization. Common rationality strives to ascribe some precedent, or a cause that would allow explaining it, to every event that could display markers of randomness. Etiology could be understood in that sense as a rationalization of the order of the world or its categorization. A text provides answers to questions about the origin of moles and why they need to live underground.

It also teaches about the laws guiding the human reality: every deed, whether good or bad and abominable, has not only temporary, measurable consequences but also “cosmic” ones, in the sense that every bad deed is metonymically “adjacent” to its creator and should reveal itself in due time. If the world is to be a *cosmos* or a reality fixed in a clear and predictable way, no unpredictable or incomprehensible events can possibly take place within it. There are no unlucky accidents without a clear “cause” at their root. Not just anybody turns into a mole. The metamorphosis is a punishment for sins – similar to rewards granted for good deeds.

How Church Moved

On Kopiec, by Bardoń, by the carpenter and Kokotek's foundry next to Sroszka is where the cemetery was. And right there, behind Krzipopa, was where the wooden church used to be. Where the church stood the Olza river used to flood and damage it. So they took the church apart and built a new one, brick one like they make them today. My mother used to say that they wanted to put the new church by Sośnina, where the cemetery is right now. But something would always move scaffolding at night to a different spot and that was where they built it.

(Darków/Darkov. Zwrot 1954, No. 7–8: 14)

The eternal order of the world in the form of the segmentation of man's space cannot be arbitrarily changed. The difference between the *sacred* and the *profane* lies within the nature itself and not within the culture, which should reflect that very nature. The *cosmos* cannot be “assembled” in a different way: the church and its spatial location has to reflect the order of the universe. World's harmony that a man wishes to disturb, regenerates itself in this case, going back to its original state. The place where the church is standing can be changed; however, it cannot be done in any given way, without paying respects to world-creating differences, similarities, and adjacencies.

Swedish Mound

There is a Swedish mound in Stónawa at Hołkowice. They say Swedes are buried in that mound, who fought in some war here. They camped by Stónawa and when they were ready to march on they put those who died overnight in a pit and each soldier passing by dropped a fistful of clay on the dead and the mound kept growing! The Swedish king was supposed to be there with the army. They say his little boy also died that night and they buried him together with the soldiers. My dad used to say that he heard from old folks that the boy was buried in a golden crib. But I can't say if that's true or not. But the part about the army is nothing but the truth! When the Swedes were already gone the king stayed behind and cried by the mound for a long time and when it was time for him to leave, he extended his hand, touched the mound and screamed: “Whoever wishes to harm my son, or my army even

after they're dead – he should die within a year!" Once two men from Stónawa wanted to dig out the mound and once they were done with work in the fields for the fall they started on the mound. Whatever they dug out during the day, though, was back there the next morning. The mound remained intact. They did that for three days and then they let it go. The year passed and both men were dead. Old folks used to say that the Swedes buried in that mound have their worship service once every year. Every year, in the fall, when it still rains and the wind howls, they all come together around midnight. One farmer saw it once. He was riding in his carriage and saw some light by the mound. So he stepped down and went closer to take a look. And then he saw the Swedish army kneeling and singing. He got scared and ran back to his carriage and then went straight home. People have long forgotten his name and I just remember that the army has its worship service once every year.

(Darków/Darkov. Ondrusz 1963: 45)

About the Swedish Mound in Stónawa

I was a young boy, maybe seven years old, when my grandma told me about the Swedish mound. The old Zuzka told me that there used to be a war with the Swedes and when the war was in its thirtieth year the Swedish army crossed our Stónawa river. They did well, but a bunch of their soldiers and horses died during the crossing. Back then, they didn't have army cemeteries yet. And they didn't have time. But they needed to bury the soldiers, so that no trouble would come out of their deaths. When they had all the dead together, they brought them onto the meadow and each soldier who passed them threw a handful of clay at the bodies and that's how the mound we call Swedish today came to be. It's beautifully round and 12 meters tall and tress grow all over it and there's a creek running next to it. You can only imagine how many Swedes there must've been for a mound as big as this one. My great grandfather, my grandmother's father, couldn't stop wondering how it is that a piece of land like this should sit unused, without anything growing on it, or any cattle grazing. And he was a good farmer, so he decided to level it. Right after the New Year's, when there was still less work, he took two carriages and some help and everyone who was around the house and took to leveling the mound. People told him not to do it, but he was stubborn. When he started digging he would find old sabers, a piece of a bayonet, or a horseshoe, but nothing more. He didn't make any progress and the mound stayed in place. He took a whole year and when the next New Year's came around he got sick and died. And that's how the mound remained and still is there today.

(Stonawa/Stonava. Zwrot 1953, No. 8–9: 19)

The first version shows the power of words: two farmers who tried to disturb the place of rest of the Swedish army died within a year, because that is what the king said (magical speech).

The change brought about by the passage of time becomes suspended: the bones, following the linear passage of time, gradually turn to dust and the burial sites become forgotten. In the case of the magical order, there is no such change: the burial site remains a taboo *sacred* and anyone who would want to

disrupt it will have to face the most severe consequences, including the loss of life. The sacred site within the magical order is characterized by a complete durability and its physical disturbance is impossible. The soil removed from the site returns there. The eternal, immutable right of the Swedish soldiers (fallen during the Thirty Years war) to their place of rest finds its confirmation in the annual worship service they hold. The implied message is that it is going to be like that forever.

The Swedish mound acts as a kind of axis mundi – a place of mediation between this world and the world of spirits. It is a paradoxical, boundary space that, on the one hand, belongs to our world, but on the other hand, since it holds the bones of the dead, its contact with the netherworld is permanent. To disturb the mound means is at the same time to disturb the boundary, a provocation directed at the vertical *orbis exterior* that brings about death. Whoever was to come into contact with the world of the dead by disrupting the place of the final rest of the Swedish soldiers shall die himself and become part of the world of the dead.

On the Swedish Mound

Here's what it is with that Swedish mound. I read about how the Swedes went through Stónawa in one book. There was a great battle and a lot of men were buried here. So all those knights were buried there and every soldier who passed by threw a handful of dirt into the pit and on the bodies. If you were to take a good look at this land, you'd see it's all overgrown. They planted trees and they won't go away even when cut. But let me tell you what happened later. Macura from Dymbowiec got married there. He married a local girl and was a very good farmer. He had a large field and work very hard. He didn't like the mound. So he told his wife and his field hands: "We'll start working on this side and spread the soil around. Every day we'll do a bit." And so they started. They would take the clay and load it up and haul it away. And what came out of it? However much they hauled out during the day, it would be back overnight. So Macura told Krzistek, the local priest. He also told the mayor. So they all came together and started deliberating. They said: "Well, it's a historic thing, a memorial. We heard there are all those officers buried there, maybe even their wives. We can't do anything about it, we should let it be in peace." So be it. And so they left it be, but then started drilling a hole beneath it in the ground. So finally there was this hole right under the Swedish mound. I went around that place when I was out hunting and this man told me about what went on there when they drilled there at night. "Sir, tell me what is that thing here? It's haunted, sounds like someone's breaking the trees, but they are all fine. It's a terrible noise." I told him: "I don't know, but people say that it is a memorial site and nobody should disturb it. They say Swedes are buried here, Swedish soldiers in their uniforms." And so it was.

(Stonawa/Stonava. Zwrot 1984, No. 11: 50–51)

Macura from Dębowiec, the new landowner of the parcel where the Swedish mound is located is a “good farmer” and as we know “good” has an unbreakable bond with person that evoked it in the magical order of things, meaning that it will sooner or later come back to its creator. In other words, the state of affairs experienced by the hero in one way or the other reflects his earlier deeds and tries to imitate them. It could be an answer for a question of why the irresponsible commitment of the young farmer who decided to level the Swedish mound did not end with the loss of his life and health. Most likely, Macura was saved at the last moment by his complicity with the local authorities – the priest and the mayor. He went to them for a word of advice and recognized its value, deciding to stop his work in time to avoid disturbing the *sacred* and escaping the consequences.

About Gaszyna

Master Gaszyna lived in the castle in Piersna. He lived very well and enjoyed all the luxuries his money could afford. And he was liked by everyone as well. He would go on vacation to Jastrzębie in Upper Silesia. He would travel there to play cards. He would entertain everybody there. And when he was tired of playing cards, he wouldn't pay, leave his coat and his hat, hop onto his carriage and go back to his castle in Piersna, where he would party with his people. One time, he felt like going to Jastrzębie, so he packed and went. He paid what he owed and started playing cards. That's how he was. In his castle, he had a portrait of Hehehe, a mural on the wall. That's the horned devil. He really liked the painting. He had it painted for him. And then the day came when he had to sell the castle. Another man bought it. It was count Szurszma. And the first thing he did when he moved in was to get rid of the mural of Hehehe. But it took a while and they had to tear down piece of the wall and put in a new one. That's how they got rid of the Hehehe.

(Piersna/Prstná. Ondrusz 1963: 48)

Master Gaszyna (apparently a member of the von Gaschin family), who stayed at the castle in Piersna (Prstná) as a representative of the emperor's authority and who travels between his homeland of Austria and foreign Prussia (Upper Silesian Jastrzębie) is partially “one's own” and partially “alien.” He is well off, which means there must be a cause for that. If gambling is a devil's domain, there are no doubts that the reason for his success is a pact with the devil.

Gaszyna's relationship with hellish powers has its semiotic marker – a devil painted on the wall of his castle. If, according to the magical order of things, the image of the devil does not constitute its mere representation, but is the devil himself, then it follows that the devil in the Piersna castle hosts him not only symbolically but also literally. The magical image of the world knows no expiration dates. Devil's reign in Gaszyna's castle is relatively permanent (the magic of

adjacency), which is proven by the fact that the devil cannot be easily removed from the wall.

The devil is not called by his name in this case. He is called Hehehe in the text. It might be a more or less conscious expression of a conviction that the statement (or the word itself) automatically generates the reality to which it refers. After all, magical speech “creates” that which it represents. If the characteristic of the devil would be his laughter, as an expression of happiness derived from each soul of which he managed to take possession, then the onomatopoeic “Hehehe” (laughter interjection) replaces him on the principle of metonymy or the rule of adjacency. Demonic laughter that accompanies the devil could replace the taboo word.

Bynda Haunts after His Death

Right there in that house there's a picture of Bynda plastered into the wall. My father would always say that Bynda was terrible to people. So bad! Once Bynda was going to a ball to the Old Town. He was crossing a river when the big water came and he drowned. Whenever anyone would come over to him and ask for help, he would refuse. But he always wanted to have his picture plastered in the wall behind the window when he dies. And after he died the place was haunted!

(Frysztat/Fryštát. *Zwrot* 1957, No. 5: 10)

Hołota

My father used to tell me this story sixty years ago. But I don't remember the exact year. There was a warden of these Pietwald mansions and a terrible man. He abused his servants and made them work very hard. They had to work hard from sunrise to sunset. And if someone didn't work enough he would make a terrible scene. The people didn't even have enough money for food. One time, when he was screaming at his people and someone stepped on the road he beat him up terribly. He rode on a horse. Suddenly, he saw a hare. And that hare started jumping up onto the horse. The man got so angry that he started chasing the hare all the way to the forest, but the hare just kept jumping and running until he got him to the edge of the forest, where he fell into a swamp and that's where he stayed. That was the end of Hołota and this forest is now called Hołotowiec.

(Pietwald/Petřvald. *Zwrot* 1984, No. 1: 46)

The evil warden dies when he is suddenly reached by the consequences of his own actions. He drowns in a river or in a swamp – he is enveloped by *chaos* or the underground (hell). He is “sucked in” into a vertically understood anti-space, with which – following the rules of similarity and adjacency – he is identical: his actions are not human, after all, but devilish. For a common, magical

consciousness that does not know accidents (unprovoked events) it is an expression of a necessity that provides justice in a world that cannot be tamed.

For a common rationality that knows only of pure good and pure evil, without taking into consideration a possibility of their coexistence within a framework of actions of one and the same person, an evil deed is exclusively a revelation of lasting and unchanging essence of its doer that could be either good or evil but never “mixed.” In that sense a legend or a myth is closer to a magical fable that displays tendencies for categorization (linguistic simplification and preservation of phenomena) in a sense that axiologically unambiguous essence of the hero remains the same to the bitter or relatively happy ending. In this case, a positive or negative protagonist is an idealized type with fixed, distinctive characteristics that represent either good or evil but not both at the same time.

Bynda’s portrait plastered in a wall behind the window of his own home is not merely his representation. If, in the magical order, the iconic character translates into identity, then Bynda – due to his representation – will remain present at the place where he used to commit his cruelties. His hauntings are a proof of that.

How Old Murzin Died

I was still a little child, maybe five years old, when old Murzin was dying. I remember well how it went because I was almost old enough to be a field hand when I lived with the Murzins. People started coming over around noon to sing some prayers to Murzin. He was lying on a table by the window and his children cried in the corner. He had twelve of them, like twelve apostles. And his wife was running around the house, didn't know what to do with herself, she was so nervous. Murzin was a drunk, so people didn't try to calm him anymore. He didn't say anything and didn't know much about what was going on around him. That same day he got drunk earlier than he usually did, and he barely made it home. That's where it got him and he was dying. As they were all sitting there, something cracked in the hallway and came in. I thought it was a horse, but it didn't last long. People started signing some church song and six little, furry imps flew out the door from Murzin's house. They had horns on their heads, they were black and furry and had hoofs like a horse. The wind shut the door closed and it sounded like a herd of horses just run outside the window. I saw it through a crack in the door. I didn't know what it was, but my dad was there as well to pray and he later told us these were the devils, who came to take Murzin. What difference did it make that Murzin went to church? It didn't help because all he did was drink, beat his wife and curse terribly. Devils made noise to the very evening. Murzin died drunk. Such a beautiful man. He could've taken care of kids, but he cared only about vodka. And so that was his end.

(Darków/Darkov. Ondrusz 1963: 88–89)

In the magical order of things, the afterlife is a reflection – although a reversed one – of the earthly life. Whoever abstained from pleasures during their lifetime

and properly fulfilled their tasks can expect eternal happiness. Whoever walked drunk all day and abused his wife has to face the consequences of being abused himself after death. Everyone receives exactly what he or she deserves, without exceptions. The only mechanism that can help a guilty soul in the last moments of its earthly life is based on rules of magic. To fetch the dying protagonist six devils are sent, who cannot stand being inside the house to the very end. When all the people who gathered around the dying man begin to sing church songs, the devils must get outside. Singing in this case performs a function of magical speech. The divine contents materialize through speech – in this case singing. Similar singing is an effective apotropaic measure or a way to keep, at least temporarily, the evil powers away from the dying individual.⁶⁵

The Good and Evil Souls

One woman used to go to all funerals and she could always see the souls of those who died. If the deceased was poor, his soul would be white and would walk with the funeral procession ahead of the cross. And if the deceased was rich and unjust while alive, his soul would walk behind the cross. And after the priest saw the deceased buried, the white soul would bow before the crowd and walk away. Once the girl went to a funeral of a wealthy man. His soul was black and walked behind the cross. And instead of bowing before people, it turned around and put out its behind and walked away. And the girl saw that and started laughing uncontrollably. The priest asked her why she's laughing, but she wouldn't tell. Eventually, she told him, but had never seen any souls again.

(Frysztat/Fryštát. *Zwrot* 1957, No. 5: 11)

The narrative about good and evil souls could be treated as a story about the order of the world. *Cosmos* is a system that works perfectly and knows no exceptions. Souls of the deceased can be split into two categories: “white” and “black.” The order of the world that we are speaking of knows only two options: either the soul was poor and noble during its lifetime, which would be proven by specific signs observed during the ceremony, or rich and unjust, which, again, was marked by specific signs. We can recognize a clear tendency for categorization,

65 We could also ask if the custom of gathering in the evenings (up until the day of the funeral) at home of the deceased and signing mournful songs was originally based on magical motives. It might have been that the songs were not simply meant to uplift the spirits of the mourning family, but also constituted a case of magical speech that was a part of the ritual of passage, granting the deceased a smooth transition to the other side of the world. Contents of a religious song within the magical order could “materialize,” meaning one was able to actually summon whatever was needed for the deceased to be saved.

simplification, and immobilization of that which – by its nature – escapes human cognition. Metaphorically speaking, the common consciousness separates wheat from the chaff in an immediate and unquestionable manner. Moreover, it identifies essential similarities – life after death mirrors its earthly counterpart. The “ahead of the cross” position reflects good life, which is a condition of salvation, while the “behind the cross” placement of the soul reflects an evil life, which could be a reason for damnation. The rationality that summoned the represented world of a given story into existence does not know any in-between cases (e.g. a man who is both rich and just), which could be a warning before a too snap identification of folk eschatology with the truths of Christianity. The common concept of life after death, based on the magical order of things, cannot be fully identified with the religious teachings. At best, one can speak of synthetic coherence between the magical order of things and the catechism on the plane of vernacular. The represented world of the narratives in question is not familiar with such concepts as forgiveness of one’s sins, conversion at the death bed, or salvation of a sinner out of grace.

Penance of Kuźnik

When the old Trachl, father of my husband, sold his house and was giving all the things away, he said to my husband: “Take the boards that are piled right there, you might need them.” So we took the boards and put them with Kuźnik for safekeeping. When Kuźnik bought a house in Stónawa, he also took our boards. And when we wanted them back, he told us: “Those are not your boards anyway!” and he didn’t give them back. So my husband said: “Let him have it!” But after Kuźnik died something would make noises every night upstairs, as if someone was moving boards around. It took about six weeks. It must’ve been Kuźnik having his penance.

(Stonawa/Stonawa. Zwrot 1955, No. 5: 12)

About Harasowski

There was an overseer at Szumbark and his name was Harasowski. He would ride his horse around and curse at the workers working the fields of his master. One of the workers once said: “Even after his death, he’ll still be riding this horse!” Then Harasowski died. A soldier once walked home around midnight, close to the cemetery in Szumbark and met Harasowski on his horse. But Harasowski was already dead. That was his penance for cursing the workers. And others saw him there, too.

(Sucha Średnia/Prostřední Suchá. Zwrot 1953, No. 12: 14)

Penance of the Greedy Farmer

My grandpa used to say that in Podolkowice area, in Górnio Sucho, two farmers went to court. They were arguing about the ridge between their fields. One farmer said that the

other one farms on his field and that the boundary stone is never properly set, because he moves it constantly. So he told the farmer who kept moving the stone that he would keep on carrying it even after death. One night, a soldier was walking home for his leave when he suddenly heard: "Where to put it? Where to put it?" So the soldier responded: "Put it back where you took it from." The pennant spirit did what he was told and thanked the soldier for freeing his soul.

(Sucha Średnia/Prostřední Suchá. *Zwrot* 1953, No. 12: 14)

Mira's Penance after Death

Around one hundred years ago all of this was farmer's Koziół land. When cholera struck in Karwina after the Austro-Prussian war [1866 – J.K.] both Kozióls, a wife and the husband, died. The law said back then that if both parents are dead and the kids are left, it's the municipality that took them into care. At the time, Mira was the mayor in Karwina. He wasn't very rich, but he was smarter than the most and spoke German and that put him ahead. So he took the kids under his care, along with the Koziół estate. Children need to work and he farmed on Koziół's land. He paid off their debts and when the kids grew up he made it so he could keep the land and they got nothing. Some of the land he even sold. One day a German named Forner came around. Koziół's land was up for sale so he bought it. There used to be this long, iron measuring chain used for measuring field by the town. And after Mira's death people would sometimes see him when the full moon was up, walking around Koziół's field and measuring it over and over again. When they started digging coal in Karwina another rich German showed up, Hóneger, and Forner sold him the land for a good price. He got a good price for the Koziół's field. They built a giant mine there and called it Hóneger, today it's Pityrszy Moj. But Mira was the first one to dig a coal well and people used to call it Mirówka. But the mine is on the Koziół's land.

(Karwina/Karviná. *Zwrot* 1950, No. 9: 13)

In circumstances where the “facts” observed contradict the logic of process, according to which bad people are plagued by misfortune and good people are blessed, the final instance of providing justice – or the cosmic “order” – is the other side of the world. From perspective of folk rationality, even *heaven* and *hell* (or *purgatory*) appear to be inadequate. It does not provide tangible proof for punishing the perpetrator. According to the magical order of things, justice that reaches the perpetrator after his death can be directly assessed. His soul – according to the law of adjacency – is atoning at the exact spot where it used to sin while alive and anyone who, at the right time (usually after dark, during the time of amorphous blackness, or at midnight), would find himself there could see it first-hand. Here is also where the law of similarity exposes itself: the perpetrator is sentenced to repeat the same (similar) activities he performed during his lifetime, or – like a *fajermón*, a spirit flame – waiting for gratitude from the people, something he never did during his lifetime. Within the framework of common

rationality displaying elements of magical thinking, a man could reach salvation only after having atoned for his sins. An individual needs to pay for his sins himself, atoning after his death.

Shining Fajermón

It was close to the harvest season. My dad had wheat on all of his fields. One evening we were all back in the house already and sun was starting to set. Dad came running from the barn into the kitchen and said we all need to go gather the wheat from the field because the rain is coming and it would be a shame for it to ruin the crops. So we went. We were kids so we didn't do much. When we got there my dad whistled three times and a fajermón appeared at once. What was it? It was a man who had to atone after he was dead. There used to be many more fajermóns back in the day. He was an extremely tall man without a head, with a fire bursting up high from his neck. It felt like it was a middle of the day on the field. My mom and the children were all scared and cried. Dad told us that if we don't disturb the fajermón he won't hurt us and there's nothing to be worried about. And so he lit the field for us, until we were done with the wheat. When we were loading up the last load and headed to the barn he followed us to the house. But he didn't go in, because a fajermón is banned from people's houses. So he stood in front of the barn and shone and shone and when dad finally closed the barn's gate he thanked him for the light: "We thank you fajermón for the light!" Suddenly the fire went out and before us was a tall man in white robes. And he said: "Thank you kindly for my liberation! With your thanks you ended my penance. I suffered for not thanking anyone for anything in my life. I thank you sir!" Then he disappeared and no one ever saw him again. Dad told us later that he recognized his voice and that it was one of the wealthy master who died some three years back out of jealousy.

(Darków/Darkov. Ondrusz 1963: 75–76)

Revenge of the Fajermón

There was a light that wondered around Doły at night and people called it firemón. It looked like a man, but had fire instead of a chest and shined very bright. My mother told me the story of this accident (my father died when I was three). It happened with my uncle who lived with us ever since I was born. Together with my dad they left the inn at night and then they saw the light. Their house was close to the inn. When they reached it my dad whistled loudly at the light and they both got hid inside the house quickly. The light came up to the house, walked around it, but wouldn't get inside – it wasn't allowed. So the fajermón kept walking around the house until its hour came and it disappeared. Everyone in the house was scared, but women the most. About three days later, on his way from work, my dad stopped at the inn. It was a beautiful evening, there was no wind. When he left after an hour suddenly a mighty wind picked up and blew his hat off his head. Dad started chasing it down the street. Whenever he thought he got it, it would roll down some more. He went around Doły for three hours or so chasing his hat. In the end he was so tired he fell asleep under a bale of hay. When he woke up in the morning the hat was laying right by his side.

It was his punishment for whistling at the fajermón (and a little bit for visiting the inn a bit too often).

(Frysztat/Fryštát. Zwrot 1951, No. 1: 8)

Water and fire can be anthropomorphized in the culture of Cieszyn Silesia and take form of two half-demons: *utopiec* (*wasermón*), about which we will talk later, and *fajermón*. The first name is derived from German and its etymological roots are in the word “water” (*Wassermann*). The other one is derived from fire (*Feuermann*). Both mentioned elements are isomorphic or structurally similar to each other in the sense that both cause disintegration of stable forms. Amorphous water can “dissolve” many substances that are in its way. Fire can do the same by burning (“consuming”), turning all shapes into formless ash. Water and fire are cases of *chaos par excellance*. Due to their similar properties, they have constituted basic categories of culture from the early days, fulfilling key apotropaic functions within family, and annual observances and rituals. Water, as a means of biblical deluge, “dissolves” (submerges in *chaos*) the old, rotten world, making it possible for the new one to emerge. A man goes through an analogous process during his baptism: the “old Adam” is “dissolved” in the water and a new, cleansed of the original sin. The same pertains to fire: as a hellfire it is a means of final destruction of a sinner and as a fire of the purgatory, it serves the purpose of his renewal and cleansing of past sins.

As far as the *fajermón* (“fire demon”) is concerned we could conclude that it is about the soul of a sinner, atoning after its death, waiting to be saved by a random man. *Fajermón* stands out because it has a human form. Most of the time, however, it is headless, with flames bursting out of its neck or chest. There are certain semiotic premises that could lead us to believe that *fajermón*’s fire is a cleansing one, a purgatory fire, whose role is to destroy only temporarily, allowing for regeneration and freedom from sins committed during one’s lifetime. It is most likely not a coincidence that a *fajermón* is known exclusively in north-western part of Cieszyn Silesia, where the number of Protestants, who do not acknowledge the concept of a purgatory, is minimal. In any case, the law of similarity allows to identify the fire bursting out of its body with fire of the purgatory. A man atones for his sins after he dies: all this happens during that passing stage, between heaven and hell, similarly to a *fajermón* wandering after dark. *Fajermón*, as any demon or half-demon, is a “chaotic” hybrid that differs from a human form which reflects the order of the world – the *cosmos* (Toporov 1983: 244–246, 251–252, Libera 1997: 25–26). If we were to assume that the similar is identical with the similar and the chaotic *fajermón* is identical with the equally chaotic *orbis exterior* (being assigned to anti-space), we should not be

surprised by the fact that it is forbidden from entering the *orbis interior* of the house, whose boundaries are marked by the doorstep, or a roof: “But he didn’t go in, because a *fajermón* is banned from people’s houses.” In an order built by myth, there is no space for doubt: everything is unambiguous and self-explanatory. The father of the narrator immediately – without even a hint of a doubt – recognized a repenting soul of a rich landlord within the *fajermón*, who died of jealousy three years earlier. Following the laws of magic, the evil, which is identified with its doer, returned to him after death like a boomerang: *fajermón* waits for an act of gratefulness from his potential savior similarly to his workers or neighbors who waited for any sign of gratefulness from him.

Whistling is an interesting phenomenon that allows one to summon not only the *fajermón* but also other demonic beings, such as *nocznica* – an evil spirit that roams around at night. Petrifying, “chaotic” whistling (the opposite of harmonious music), based on the laws of similarity, summons equally “chaotic,” a-categorical demon. The demon and the scream are similar to one another, due to the amorphous character of both, which – in that sense – makes them identical (cf. Kowalski 1998: 69).

Wasermón

My father in law was at a wedding. He had some to drink and was walking near water. He walked by the water because he lives here in the colony by Maryjanka. He walked up front and my mother in law was behind him. He kept saying: “Wasermón, wasermón take my old lady. Wasermón, take my old lady!” He kept calling the wasermón. Suddenly, something made a splash and my mother in law froze in terror. The water just splashed on them.

(Pietwałd/Petřvald. *Zwrot* 1984, No. 1: 47)

Recklessly spoken words impact the one who utters them, without realizing that he summons their actual designate. A jokingly proclaimed wish becomes reality. Similar recklessness is dangerous, especially around water (*chaos*), whose anthropomorphic embodiment is precisely the *wasermón* (*utopiec, utoplec*).

Utoplec in Olza

Me, my mom and Ms. Rucka of Józef walked together down a meadow and it was right after a big flood. I told my mom: “You know, I’ll go to see it tomorrow, if there’s not much of what the water brought and left behind on those bushes and trees. And I’ll bring you something to eat.” And what the water brought were pieces of wood that the river carries. And with it comes grass and hay. So we walk and talk and we finally got to the river and it was the river where the Prussians used to come by train and where there used to be tracks now there was a giant hole made by running water. And by the river there was a tree that was cut down and a trunk hang over the water. And we were maybe four meters away from it and I said: “Look, there is a child sitting on that tree trunk.” It had such skinny legs and

wore red clothes, like an altar boy, with bear legs up to its knees and thin like two fingers. It stood up on the trunk and spread its toes and then spread its arms under that red robe. And then it turned around to face us and jumped down into that water hole. I screamed: "Jesus and Mary! It will drown!" But Ms. Rucka said: "Don't scream! It's an utopiec." It looks like a human, just like a human, but an utopiec can change into whatever it wants.

(Lutynia Dolna/Dolní Lutyně. Zwrot 1982, No. 4: 59–60)

The Haunting of Bogocz

Mr. Bogocz was walking one time by a ditch and heard some noises deep down in there. One time it got him really curious and he decided to take a look. When he looked, he said: "Nothing, not a peep." Sometime later he was walking by the same ditch and suddenly saw this massive Bernadine dog. It blocked Bogocz's way and he couldn't walk along anymore. He took couple steps back and the dog disappeared. So he said: "I got really scared." He said a couple words of prayer and moved along. He never saw the dog again.

(Marklowice Dolne/Dolní Marklovice. Zwrot 1984, No. 2: 51)

Utopiec (1)

An old woman told me that story, she was from Piersna. She used to work there for Ledwoń family as a house help. They used to go to the river for water. It was a small one, very narrow. They had to carry buckets on a wooden pole. She went there once and there was a little bit of snow on the ground. When she got there she saw a boy, barefoot in a shirt by the stream. So she asked: "What are you doing here sonny? Your feet will freeze. Where's your mom?" "I don't know where she went," he answered. "Come with me, you'll get warm. I sit you by the window and you'll be looking out for her." She wanted to give him a hand, but he just jumped on the other side of the river. She told me: "He was a fine boy, maybe eight years old, and he ran ahead of me, but instead of getting by the window he jumped on the bench and then on the table. So I shouted, to get off the table!" The table used to be a sacred place and this boy didn't listen. He just smiled and did what he did. There was always a wooden stick in a palm for a Palm Sunday that was blessed nine times with holy water. You always had the same one so it would be blessed nine times. So the old woman went and grabbed it and she swung at the boy and he squealed. Water gushed and he disappeared in the water and that's how they knew it was utopiec.

(Marklowice Dolne/Dolní Marklovice. Zwrot 1984, No. 2: 52)

Utopiec in Styrża

My mom worked for Ledwoń family in Piersna. Once, she was walking to Styrża for water, where they had a small pond and water was really good. It was in the winter and snow and frost were everywhere and when they got to Styrża they saw a little boy in a shirt and barefoot, maybe four years old. My mom asked him: "Where's your mommy?" "I don't have one," he answered. "You'll freeze out here," she said. "Come with us into the house to get warm." They reached out for him, but he jumped over the pond and was running toward the house ahead of them. When they got there, they told him to sit next to the furnace to get

warm, but he sat right on the table. Mom would make him get down three times, because people used to treat a table with a lot of respect and sitting on it was a sign of disrespect. But he boy wouldn't get down. So mom went to find a stick that was blessed nine times already in a Palm Sunday palm. She swung at the boy and he jumped straight to the door, back to Styrża and he was gone. Now everybody saw it was łutopiec. Later on there was a wedding reception at the manor. A sister of the host was getting married. My mom still worked there as a shepherd. They got all the water ahead of time, so they wouldn't have to go at night to Styrża. But around midnight they run out of water, so they sent her for water! Mommy didn't want to go, she said she's scared. The host got angry, took all the buckets and went himself. He got barely to the fence, dropped the buckets and run back home. He thought he saw horses charging him with the fire bursting out of their nostrils. But they needed water. So they lit a blessed candle and all went, but didn't see a thing. The łutopiec was gone.

(Marklowice Dolne/Dolní Marklovice. Zwrot 1953, No. 4: 9)

Utopiec (2)

Let me tell you a story from an old woman, very old, she would be around hundred and fifty years old now. She told me that when she was a young girl, there was a family there that lived in a little house by the river. Their kids were gone, girls and boys married, and so the two elders remained. They sat there by the river and had a little pigpen and they also had a goat. One day, nobody knows from where, this old man showed up. He had a long jacket, all the way to the ground and he just showed up and sat on a bench in front of the house. As he was sitting, he grabbed a little pot and when the old woman was coming back from milking the goat, he lifted it to catch a little bit of the milk. She didn't think anything of it and poured him some and when he got over his shyness, he said: "Wouldn't you have something for dinner as well? Little bit of cabbage or some beans?" She had some, so she gave him a bit. And when she didn't have any more, he drank his milk and was on his way. And he never went inside, nor thanked for a thing. But while he enjoyed his cabbage, he told her: "You're a great cook, I liked that a lot." So he kept going back and forth and one day he showed up and said: "I'm so hungry today." "I don't have any cabbage today, or any beans. Don't drink the milk yet, I can bring you a piece of bread and we can have it together." She went inside, brought the bread, made the sign of the cross – they don't do around here anymore. She started to cut it, but he jumped off the bench and wouldn't take it. She asked: "You pest, why won't you take the bread?" He said: "Why now? Did you have to wave your hands over it like that, make signs all over the loaf?! I have no use for that bread anymore." He stood up and she was amazed to see water running down his sleeves. "Oh Mary, it's an utopiec," she said, scared. She made a sign of cross all over him, even more than over the bread and told him: "You vile pest, don't ever come back, the bench will be blessed as well, as well as the house, and never show up again!" She run into the house and told her old man: "Listen! There was a devil himself, if it was a simple utopiec he wouldn't be scared of the cross like that." Old man answered, "Now he'll do something terrible to us, he'll want his revenge." "He can do whatever he wants, I already blessed him." And since then he didn't show up, nor did any harm.

(Piotrowice/Petrovice u Karviné. Zwrot 1984, No. 3: 52–53)

Utopiec (3)

Not far from here, in a valley, at old Siewiora Halfar's place, they would leave a little bit of food out in the veranda. Little bit of sausage and some bread. They said it was for utopiec. And whenever they'd forget, there would be trouble. Something would make noises, break things and topple chairs. Siewiora said once: "Oh my, we forgot to give some clabber to the utopiec. He somehow likes us. Many times when I walked back from the inn, I would meet him by the Potysz Mound, where Doctor Chwajół lives now. I placed a holy picture there, because that's where he'd meet me and in different forms too. Once a dog came up to me. It didn't say anything, didn't bark. Just walked with me all the way to the house. Another time it was an old woman, bent down, grey, and she awaited me there and walked with me all the way. I talked to her, but she wouldn't talk back. And one time this old man awaited me and in front of him was a little hare. And the hare stood up on its hind legs and fixed his whiskers with a finger and the old man started following him. And I thought: 'Jesus Christ, it must be an utopiec.' After that, I went to old Rzymanek and told him: 'Listen, you have an utopiec out there. And even a fajermón shows up sometimes. We have to put a holy picture up there.'" And it stands there to this day, because old Rzymanek said: "Very well, Siewiora, put the picture there and have the utopiec gone for good."

(Lutynia Dolna/Dolní Lutyně. *Zwrot* 1984, No. 8: 59–60)

As a half-demon, as an embodiment of the amorphous *chaos*, *utopiec* (*wasermón*, *utopiec*) reveals itself not only in its unusual look but also through uncontrollable transformations: it can be a young boy one moment and an old man the next, an old woman, or a dog, or some other animal. The amorphous character of the *utopiec* (*wasermón*, *utopiec*) translates into unlimited possibilities for his metamorphosis. Even if the *utopiec* takes a form of a "regular," little boy, it is revealed by particular symptoms, which help identify him. The *utopiec* that takes a seat on a sacred, meditational table (metonymically related to an act of prayer, for example during the Christmas Eve dinner) does not respect the spatial configuration of the living quarters – does not respect the taxonomic rules of the space characteristic for human beings.

The laws of magic are also a foundation for the apotropaic means used for combating the *utopiec*. Sacred words, potentially as words directed to God, Christ, Mary, or one of the saints – due to their power of realizing their own designates – are sufficient as an apotropaic, which is illustrated by the first text. In the second and third text – two variants of the same theme – a stick, or a rod, that has been blessed nine times serves as a core of the palm for the Palm Sunday. Its use successfully scares the *utopiec* away, which has a magical foundation as well. There is a stick that had contact with the holy water, the water was in contact with the sign of the cross and the sign of the cross – according to the laws of similarity and adjacency – is ontologically identical with the actual cross on

which Jesus Christ was crucified and with Jesus Christ himself. A sacred candle, *grómniczka*, one that has been blessed to deflect storms, can perform that same apotropaic function. A palm rod and a blessed candle, due to their adjacency, are a *sacred+* that annihilates *utopiec* understood as *sacred*. On the same basis, in a place where *utopiec* operates there is a cross being erected, fulfilling apotropaic function. And when the sign of a cross is made over the bread, it cannot be touched by an *utopiec*, which helps identify him. As a half-demon, *utopiec* is metonymically related to the *orbis exterior* and will not, nor is allowed to, enter the house, which also allows people to identify it.

Another apotropaic tool is a sacred picture that performs a function of an iconic sign or one that differentiates itself with its likeness to the represented designate. If, within the magical order, similarity translates into ontological identity, then a picture placed in a specific place equals presence of the represented subject in a place of said picture's residence. It could be Jesus, Mary, or any other saint.

About a Wedding

When Elżbieta Bednorka was getting married to Jozef Potysz he was in the army at the front. The winter was harsh and he got frost bitten in the trenches. So they released him home. He got back and was ready for the wedding, as they have discussed it with Elżbieta before. He started working, but got even sicker. It was time for the wedding now and all the landowners had carriages and they all came in them. Elżbieta made arrangements with Gabzdyl Wincek who had one white horse. So the wedding party started with horse riding and we all watched from our front porches and wondered at it. She was riding last and alone, and he was up front, because the groom rides first and bride is last. She was riding in a carriage, last, and now the horses started to pull back when they reached a holy picture on the side of the road instead of going forward. All the others went forward but hers wouldn't. And we watched it and wondered and it kept buckling in front of the picture. Just this one carriage with the white horse. And she just sat there and started crying. And I screamed to her: "Elżbieta get off the carriage and walk and the horses will follow you." She got off and kept crying, saying that she'll die because of this, because horses wouldn't take her. I said: "Don't cry, don't be afraid, it will follow you." She walked up to a hill where the cross was, stopped there and called the horses, and they all started coming toward her. So what was that? Why are these pictures still there to this day? There must be some miracles happening there.

(Lutynia Dolna/Dolní Lutyně. *Zwrot* 1982, No. 4: 59)

Magic knows no expiration dates. Whatever came in contact with each other once, will be bound together forever. In a place where "evil" showed up once, its presence will remain forever endangering a man, particularly in situations when he or she is defenseless. Wedding is one of those situations when men pass from one state of being into another. Each seemingly meaningless event during the

ceremony could affect the future life of the bride, who is riding her carriage to get married. Each instance of disturbing the ceremony is an instance of *chaos* that could become a future of the newlyweds. Everything has a potential of becoming a sign that foretells future disasters or a long and prosperous life. On her way to the wedding ceremony, the bride enters a realm of the negative *sacred*. She has no choice. This is how the path leads her. The text does not reveal what is the cause of the haunting on the hill, but we can surmise that there must have been a murder or a suicide committed there (or, an unauthorized mediation) and that it is haunted now for more or less unspecified reasons. The proof is in the sacred picture placed there – it would not be placed or hanged anywhere without good reason.

If we were to assume that the task of a sacred picture is to sanctify or tame the space by summoning – based on the law of similarity – the content that it represents, then the picture must be hanging there to neutralize the “evil” that weighs on that space. Unfortunately, the effort is not entirely successful. Horses that are carrying the bride in her carriage stop in their tracks and rear up. They refuse to go farther, which could have tragic consequences, if we were to assume that there are no accidents within the magical interpretation of events. Each event is a part of an invisible order of things that could foretell inevitable events. Cutting the path of the bride translates here into a potential sudden break in her life in the nearest future or her married life, for other reasons, such as groom’s sudden death (already sickly from his time in the war). The bride is saved by, first, the collective folk wisdom taking form of a good advice from one of the participants in the event (the narrator) and second, by the positive *sacred*, since the bride says a quick prayer by the nearby cross, which makes the horse resume their stride. We should also mention that, within the magical image of the world, the prayer could be considered a magical speech in a sense that it works without failure and alters reality simply by being uttered.

Old Hauntings

These days it doesn't haunt that much here, because there's electric light everywhere and ghosts have nowhere to hide. But it used to be that there was not a place that wouldn't be haunted. Old people used to say that there was a mill Skulinowy Kopiciec that was haunted as well. People were afraid to walk around the mill, they said that something made noises there, that the sails would turn even though there was no wind. So people have said. I don't remember that mill myself. But one woman went once to fetch her husband from the inn. He was gone for long and she was worried about him, so she took a lantern and went out to get him. She was maybe a hundred and fifty steps away from Mitko's farm, it was a big farm up on the hill. Mitko had a large field. Next to where the field started was this stake and nobody knows what it was, or what it meant, or what it was made of, or if there was

a sacred picture behind it, or what. It wasn't big, maybe three quarters of a grown man. It stood therefore long and didn't rot. When the woman past by it with her lantern she saw this big, white dog, right next to it. But its eyes glowed red like ambers. It stared at her, wouldn't bark or growl, just stood there and watched her. She tried to walk around it, but it stepped back. It wouldn't let her pass. She had to take a big detour to fetch her man. And when they were coming back the dog wasn't there.

(Skrzeczoni/Skrecoń. *Zwrot* 1984, No. 6: 54)

Right next to the field's ridge that separates the two spaces, not belonging to any of them (being a space of *chaos*), there is a wooden stake in the ground. The narrator suspects that there might have been a sacred picture behind it in the past, which could be the reason why the stake did not rot. Sacred pictures are apotropaic objects and their placement is not accidental. Hence, it must be a dangerous spot, a place that used to be haunted and where it might start again, because the stake is without its apotropaic object that (on the basis of the law of similarity) used to summon the presence of Christ, Mary, or a saint and was able to ward off the evil and *chaos* as such. The woman, who goes out after dark⁶⁶ to fetch her husband from the inn, encounters a huge, white dog. It is most likely one of the shapes assumed by the amorphous demon (presumably a devil or an *utopiec*). Two things betray its true nature: unnatural eyes that glow like ambers and the fact that it disappears without a trace.

Old Hauntings

I was still a child, twelve years old. My mom sent me to run some errands. It was an evening already and it was getting dark. As I passed through a copse of alders, I heard a team of horses galloping behind me. When I stopped, it stopped, when I started walking again, it started again. I got goose bumps and didn't know what to do. Later it got quiet and I made it home. Close to us there was a place called Do Wsi and right next to it there was a cemetery with a meadow and a swamp. When it got little darker so many fireflies would come out, you couldn't even count them all. All the people said it's no good to go there at night, because those fireflies are really nocznice, demons, and whoever were to go there would get enchanted and beguiled. They caught one and kept asking him: "are you sleeping, sleeping, sleeping?" And when it was after midnight, they let him go. And he just slowly got back home. But he was so confused, he couldn't find it and kept getting lost. When he got home,

66 The fact that the time from dusk till dawn is considered a dangerous period, one that can reveal demons, has its cognitive motives. After dark, a man loses his ability to distinguish shapes. The world becomes amorphous, turns into *chaos* (Kowalski 1998: 351).

he told us to never go there after dark. But he also told the boys to whistle and when they did all the ghost came rushing to them and they all scattered, dead scared!

(Karwina/Karviná. Ondrusz 1963: 82–83)

The question of whether a man in a particular situation is endangered by a demonic activity is dependent on time and place of his whereabouts. The narrator was scared late in the evening, exactly at the time when the world started to plunge into the amorphous darkness, where shapes are unrecognizable (or difficult to recognize) and when a man loses his ability to get his bearings right. Chilling phenomena started manifesting after the narrator passed through a patch of alders. An alder (similarly to a birch) is an aquatic tree, related to water. If we were to take into consideration laws of magic, then alders – on the basis of metonymic adjacency – is equivalent to water, which in turn is an embodiment of *chaos*. To pass through alders is to pass through a boundary between the *cosmos (orbis interior)* – a people's domain – and *chaos (orbis exterior)*, a domain of demons.⁶⁷ The law of adjacency could be an answer to a question why hauntings happen around the cemetery, a boundary, or a space of the transition between the world of the living and the world of the dead. A cemetery is structurally similar to swamps that are characterized by a metonymical relationship to water or *chaos*. Swamps are an anti-space also because they constitute an amorphous “mixture” of land and water.

Nocznica is a demonic creature, taking a form of fireflies that fly around in complete chaos. They make one lose orientation when walking home at night. As any demonic creature, *nocznica* threatens a man only in a specific place (an anti-space of swamps or a field ridge) and time (during the amorphous night, or even more amorphous midnight). *Nocznica*, similarly to a *fajermón*, could be summoned through whistling, a chaotic sound that “evokes” that which it resembles. Under the roof – which outlines the range of a domestic *orbis interior*, *nocznica* cannot become a threat to anybody.

Hangman Who Haunts the Forest

It is true. When field hands and other men used to go for tobacco there was this one man who lived in the forest and his name was Szokala. And when they walked by with the tobacco he would go after them and ask for it. Later on he hung himself and they buried him right there in the forest. And when the field hands would walk by again with tobacco one called out: “Szokala, come here, we’ll give you some!” It was quiet and there was no

67 That cultural motive is present in *Erlkönig* by J. W. Goethe, inspired by folk oral traditions.

wind, but suddenly a great gust came around and they all feared it would break the trees. They all got scared and run as fast as they could. When they got out of the forest one of the said: "You're supposed to leave the dead in peace!" They kept walking through the forest, but none ever called Szokala again.

(Sucha Średnia/Prostřední Suchá. *Zwrot* 1953, No. 12: 14)

How I Got Scared

It's a true story. I was still working in the mine and I was down in the shaft. It was in the summer and I had a night shift, so I said to my friend: "Let's hurry and we can still catch some sleep." And it was so warm down there. There was this wooden trolley there, full of stone. And there was a bench there too and that's where we laid down. The minute I fell asleep, I saw a devil before me. One just like in the paintings. He was standing right in front of me. He started walking toward me and when he got close enough he poked me and I jumped right off the bench! Friend asked me: "What happened?" "Let's get out of here," I said. So we went, and he asked me: "Why did we go away, it was warm there?" And I told him: "Listen, there was a devil there and he tried to pierce me with his pitchfork!" Later on our boss came and I told him as well. And he said: "Don't sleep and you won't get spooked." But then he said: "You know what, a man died there – everybody gets spooked there."

(Dąbrowa/Dombrová/Doubrava. *Głos Ludu*, 11. August 1984: 5)

Within the magical order of things the dead, who interrupted the time of passage, constitute a serious danger for the living. Those are usually victims of suicide, who, by interrupting a natural course of their lives, performed an illegal mediation. A suicide victim is someone who did not fulfill his earthly voyage, did not go through a full process of transformation from life and into death, but is already dead. Therefore, he or she is suspended in an amorphous limbo between the world of the living that is off limits and the world of the dead, which he or she cannot yet enter fully (Gennep van 1960, cf. Eliade 1968, Kowalski 1998: 312). The soul of a suicide victim is a dangerous hybrid assigned to a chaotic boundary space between the world and the netherworld and identified with that space according to the law of adjacency. The hybrid soul of a suicide victim that got stuck in an equally hybrid space cannot rest in peace and continues to wonder around the world, haunting others. Another factor is a fact that victims of suicides used to be buried on the edges of the cemetery, or even beyond its walls (Bystroń 1980: 229), which should be considered as a tendency to categorize, of grouping according to similarities: a body of a suicide victim placed in a chaotic boundary space (by the cemetery's wall), or beyond its territory, in the *orbis exterior*. The space of the cemetery had to reflect the *imago mundi* and in that sense be "cleansed" of all *chaos*.

Following the inalienable law of adjacency, the soul of a suicide victim is bound to a place where the suicide happened. The soul of Szokała haunts the very forest where he took his life. Within the narrative the magical speech is also revealed. Words engage the reality which they represent, which means that the joke based on summoning the dead Szokała turns into a nightmare, because he actually appears.

In the second text, the soul of a deceased miner haunts the place of his untimely departure, also following the law of adjacency.

Return of the Dead

Long time ago there was a girl and a boy who went to school together. Girls sat on the one side, boys on the other and it was a crowded classroom. There was little room, but they were happy to see each other. But after the school was over he was sent to war. He said: "You know what, you'll get married, but if you can, wait for me." "I won't get married," she responded. "Let's make a vow," he proposed. He vowed: "If I don't marry you, the earth won't take me after I'm dead." But she wouldn't say that. She told him: "I won't vow that. I'll wait for you, but I won't vow that." The boy went away and was killed in the war, but he forbade his fellow soldiers to pass a word back. He got a military funeral with salvos and honors. They put the body in the ground and it would jump out. It wouldn't stay in the ground. When they tried for the third time and it jumped out again, the soldiers scattered in fear and the priest went away too. And he was gone and gone and wouldn't come back, didn't write for a year, didn't write for the second one and so there came another boy and the girl was ready to marry him. They were getting ready, she went to confession and all the pies were baked. She went to check in the pigsty and she saw some girls napping on hay. Suddenly, there was a noise outside. "What was that," she asked? "It's me," was an answer. "Who me," she asked. "It's me, let me in, I just want to talk to you" voice told her. She opened the door and immediately recognized him because the moon was full. "So now you come around?" she asked. "And you're getting married?" he replied. "You were gone and wouldn't give a sign of life," she answered. She didn't realize he was dead. He said: "Just walk me back. You're getting married and that's fine, but just walk me back." "But I'm barefoot," she resisted, but he said it will be fine. So they went. Finally, they reached the forest. And like in any other forest, the floor was full of pine needles and sticks. "I don't want to go any further, I'm barefoot." But they went toward a little cottage with a light in the window. He said, "Don't worry, I'll carry you on my back. I'll carry you across the forest and it will be easy after that." So she got on his back and they started going. "Moon is full, aren't you afraid?" he asked. "I'm with you, I'm not afraid." As if he didn't hear her, he asked again, but then they were through the forest and got to a cemetery. Then he said: "We made a vow and now you have to go with me." "But I'm alive and you are dead?" she asked. "I am," he answered. "I'm alive, so I'm not going with you," she told him. "It doesn't matter, you'll die here," he told her. He dropped her to the ground and she started running for her life. She run up to the house, but the door was closed and there was only one window. She got into the house but not a living soul, only a dead man. So she jumped up on the furnace. The boy stayed outside, wouldn't go inside. But he said: "You, dead man, get up and catch her

for me." And the dead man started moving on the ground. Boy kept repeating his spell. The corpse would get up, take a step and fall down again. The boy kept calling "Get up and catch her for me," because the midnight was approaching. The girl spent all night up on the tall furnace. In the morning people found her, went into the house and asked: "What is all that?" And they were surprised at what they saw and wanted to run back into the field. "Don't be scared, don't be scared – I'll tell you what happened but don't be afraid. The dead one is finally dead." And a man asked her: "who are those two beautiful girls with you?" And the girls said: "We carried her when she couldn't get up there." Those were her guardian angels. And once they said what they said they disappeared. Oh, oh, oh, oh. By the time she got home she was already old. She had no friends. She begged around for bread, worked as a servant here and there. Didn't even had the house anymore. That's what love can do sometimes.

(Bukowiec/Bukovec. *Zwrot* 1977, no. 8: 37–38)

We should mention that we are talking about a common theme, functioning already in the pre-romantic era, and versified for the first time in 1774 by a German folklorist Gottfried August Bürger as a ballad entitled *Lenora*. Another versified variant of the story is the ballad *Svatební košile* [*The Wedding Shirts*] from *A Bouquet: Of Czech Folktales* collection written by Karel Jaromír Erben (Erben 2012). Words of the girl's prayer to bring back her boy are the key here. The dead boy comes back after all, but the results are terrifying. The bond between the pair cannot be broken, either because of the girl's unending pleas for his comeback, or due to an unwise vow that cannot be taken back, like in the case of the Bukowiec variant. The fundamental mechanism turning love into a nightmare that operates in this text is the magical speech. In this case, it takes a form of a vow that holds the pair forever, because once it is spoken, it cannot be undone (Gurevich 1992). The impossibility of breaking similar bonds is a reason for hybridity of the "living dead," who is unable to leave for the other side of the world. Regardless of whether the direct source of the Bukowiec variant is strictly the folk oral art that lasted into the 1970s, or whether a literary text variant took part in its transmission, the fact remains that the theme perfectly realizes the magical plane of the cultural system of where it has been recorded.

The agency of words is revealed by the case of a dead man lying on the floor of the cabin where the girl takes her refuge. The dead fiancé summons him to help with catching the girl, and it's the roosters call, which is metonymically equivalent to a sunrise that breaks up the scene. Following the law of adjacency, the call of a rooster summons the morning, meaning the time of light – the *cosmos* – that cyclically following the amorphous, hence chaotic, night.

Except for the taxonomy of time, the text indirectly reveals the taxonomy of space as well. The roof and the doorstep of the house constitute boundaries that

mark the *orbis interior* of the house. The house is a relatively safe space, compared to the *orbis exterior*. The undead fiancé cannot enter the cottage and has to remain outside.

Don't Laugh at the Other's Misfortune

A woman was walking one time and she met a beggar. He had a hump and was missing a leg. She looked him over and started laughing. Then she told him: "Look at you, you cripple! Look at how you're walking! Stop scaring people!" That's how she made fun of him. When she came home, she learned her son would be on other's people mercy for the rest of his life. While she was in town, he fell down from the barn's upper level, broke his spine and he will be lucky if he even survives. She cried and regretted what she said to the beggar, but couldn't help her child anymore. A healthy one should never laugh at the sick.

(Darków/Darkov. Zwrot 1954, No. 6: 9)

The magical rationality is characterized by a tendency for absolute categorization, or an "ordering" of events no matter the cost, in order to eliminate accidents understood as event that escapes control. The crime and punishment assume a form of cause and effect, which means that evil returns to its "creator" like a boomerang. In this case, based on the law of adjacency, we could speak about the identity between the subject (starting point) and the object (end point) of evil deeds. Actions of a particular subject will be similar to what the subject will later experience. And the same applies to good deeds. An event mentioned in the text can be interpreted as a particular case of magical speech: offensive words addressed to the handicapped beggar self-realize in the form of a sudden accident of the son of a person delivering them.

A Foundling

When I was seventeen or eighteen I worked for the landowner Adamecki. I took care of his horses. And lady Adamecka was a daughter of Kijonek from Dziećmiorowice. I saw a boy there, he would go and run around one of the houses at the estate. I saw him many times, wearing a long shirt, a big man with a big head. And when he screamed it was as if a bull roared. And when he got tired of running, he would lie down in a trough. He was nasty to his parents and whenever he made a mess they would beat him up. He did that on purpose, so they would beat him and he could roar. Whether he was that foundling that people said he was claiming a devil switched him in for a real baby – I don't know. I think his father's name was Babisz.

(Marklowice Dolne/Dolní Marklovice. Zwrot 1951, No. 5: 8–9)

An Attack On An Unbaptized Child

There used to be those strange accidents. Once, a woman had a baby. Her husband was still sleeping and she stood by the child's crib because it was crying. It was around midnight. She

kept geese in the hallway. And the child screamed at the top of its lungs. And so the geese started going as well, the door swung open and the wind swept into the house and threw the woman onto her bed. It happened around midnight and the baby wasn't even six weeks old. It must've been some ghost that shows around midnight.

(Frysztat/Fryštát. Zwrot 1957, No. 5: 10)

A period between birth and baptism, a day on which one is given a name and therefore becomes a full member of the local and Christian community (Catholic or Protestant), is a period of transition (Gennep van 1960). A child is already in the world, however, its full integration with the *cosmos* is still ahead. Each period of transition poses a threat because a man is temporarily suspended at the boundary between the *orbis exterior* and *orbis interior*, being exposed to the influence of *chaos*. If we were to notice that the magical order of things is rich with similarities, then we should note that the child and its surroundings are exposed to dangers during the period before the baptism, just like bride and groom during the wedding ceremonies or a deceased, who still awaits for his funeral. Each failure to complete a necessary ritual and departure from unambiguous scripts that have been developed by means of tradition could turn out to be tragic in its consequences, not only for the person in transition (or undergoing a metamorphosis) but also to his surroundings. An unbaptized child was not allowed to leave the house (which included its mother, identified with the child through the law of adjacency) and had to be constantly guarded by its older siblings. The mother was not allowed to come in contact with the *orbis exterior*, because it posed a risk of her child becoming identified with *chaos* – it could disappear and be replaced by a foundling.

In the magical order of things the universe is full of signs, which man who receives his knowledge from tradition, can learn to “decipher.” A foundling who, according to the law of adjacency, is identical with the devil, and therefore with chaos, must display features of “chaotic” behavior and undermines the taxonomy of the world.

A ghost will attempt to attack the unbaptized child at midnight, a liminal moment, which could be explained by temporarily understood metonymy (adjacency) between the chaotic boundary and an amorphous spirit that is similar to it that functions as chaos as well.

A Foundling

One woman worked in the fields for a landowner and had to take her child with her one time. But to do work, she had to put the child down on some freshly cut hay. So the child rested there and she worked. And suddenly the landowner saw something fly out near the child, some man-like being, and it held a little log and was carving it. And when it was

done carving it flew up to the bale of hay where the child was, took it and flew off. And the little log he placed instead of it started to cry. So the woman wanted to check on it, but the landowner said: "No! Don't go near it!" He called on men who were cutting the grass and told them to remove their scythes from the holders and told them: "Go, beat the baby as much you can!" The woman cried and begged, but he told them to go and beat it. And they beat the baby and suddenly the ghost jumped out and swooped it and dropped the woman's child back. And the landowner said to her: "You see, if I didn't see it you'd have a foundling instead of your child, but now you have it back."

(Marklowice Dolne/Dolní Marklovice. *Zwrot* 1984, No. 2: 51–52)

About a Foundling

One woman had a foundling. That's how it happened. She went to work on harvest in the field and took her unbaptized child and put it in the grass. Suddenly the child started crying. She wanted to go and check on it, but the landowner told her not to and ordered others to slash the baby with their scythes. The woman fainted, because the child screamed up to high heavens. Finally, the landowner said: "That's enough!" Then he told the mother: "Now take it, it's your child again." He knew that the devil carved a baby out of wood, then took the woman's child and left the wooden one. Men were beating down on the foundling, so the devil took it back and left the real baby. He saw all of that, because he had a blessed wedding ring with him. He sent the woman back home, because she was too nervous to keep working.

(Marklowice Dolne/Dolní Marklovice. *Zwrot* 1953, No. 4: 9)

The devil carves out a facsimile of a child from a log, which due to the law of similarity becomes identified with the child to a point where it can replace it, making it almost impossible for others to notice. The law of adjacency is unfortunate for the devil, because it makes him identified with the foundling that he "created." The landowner, who witnesses the whole thing, is different in this version from others, because he has a sacred wedding band. It represents the *sacred+*, due to its connection to the sacrament (through the holy water). The landowner orders his field workers to beat on the foundling, which appears to be crazy at first. But the object of the beating, in fact, is the devil, which is metonymically identical with the foundling. He cannot stand the beating, takes the foundling away and puts the baby back in its place. It is important to note that the stolen child is out of wedlock,⁶⁸ making its place in the order of the world relatively uncertain, or

68 The word *foundling* was used in Cieszyn Silesia to designate *bastard* as well. Bastard's mother used to be called *zowitka*. Both terms (standing for a very low social status) disappeared from popular usage fairly fast, following transformations of social consciousness and the image of the world they brought along.

even chaotic. If we were to take into consideration the fact that it was left without care outside of the house (outside the *orbis interior*), we should not be surprised it becomes a victim of devil's scheme.

About a Mora

Women were moras and men were strzigóns. People used to say that if there were seven girls born in one family, one after the other, the seventh one was a mora. She would be born with her teeth already in and would go out at night and strangle people. One mora went once to smother shoemaker's wife. He didn't know what to do, so he asked his wife: "So what should we do? Every day you're so weak, she must be smothering you every night." He then said: "I'll stay up and catch the mora." So he sat quietly at night and wondered if the mora will enter through the door, or a window, or maybe somewhere else. Suddenly, he spotted a blade of grass sneaking through the cracks in the windowpane. He said: "Oh you! You're going through a crack?" He grabbed a hammer and a nail and hammered down a patch up and down the crack. The next day in the morning, it was still dark out, a neighbor woman run over screaming, because she had two holes, one in her forehead, another in her chin. She kept screaming and asking why are they torturing her like that. She was asking for that patch, so she could heal. But the shoemaker tore it up and told her: "You wretched mora, you want to go around and smother people? If so, walk around with your snout pierced!" And he didn't give her the patch and till the day she died she had two holes in her face."

(Piotrowice/Petrovice u Karviné. Zwrot 1984, No. 3: 53)

The Shoemaker and the Mora

There was a shoemaker once. He kept working long into the night. He was very thin, because a mora would go smother him at night. Every night right before midnight he would get very sleepy and whenever he'd take a nap, she would come to smother him. One time he told himself he needs to stay up and catch the mora. Right before midnight he noticed that a blade of grass was sneaking in through a crack in the windowpane. "Here you are," he thought to himself, grabbed a knife and cut right through it. The next morning people found his neighbor dead. People said it was a mora and it must've been because the shoemaker had his peace ever since.

(Karwina-Darków/Karviná-Darkov. Ondrusz 1963: 80)

A mora (a kind of wraith) is a half-demon that pesters people, usually around the full moon (time boundary on a month scale). It sneaks in around midnight (time boundary on a day's scale) into houses where it smothers sleeping inhabitants or drinks their blood. The results are usually weariness and weakness of the victims. Like all half-demons, it is amorphous when compared to a human being in a sense that it undergoes metamorphosis while active. It can gain access to people in the form of a blade of grass, as shown in the texts, or a moth, also called "mora" in that area. Between a blade of grass that makes its way into human

dwellings and a mora-neighbor there is a metamorphic identity, which makes it possible for the man to pierce through his neighbor's face and when he cuts it – he kills her.

A *mora* is also characterized by features often associated with half-demons. It is usually betrayed by its teeth (or a tooth), with which it is born. A chance for seven daughters to be born one after another in a single family is so unlikely that if it happened, it could be interpreted as an omen, or a sign that the seventh daughter will be a *mora*.

I Saw Death

My brother was getting married and had a reception. I was walking from the dance floor to my table for a meal. I was walking alone, it was a full moon and it was very bright because it was in the fall. I left the house and there was a little creek and I walked by that creek. Suddenly, I big woman, all in white, appeared before me. I thought it was my sister, so I said to her: "Madlyna, wait for me." But she just turned around toward the creek and disappeared. I got so scared I couldn't say a word. The next day, our neighbor's wife died. I met death. It was going for that woman and showed itself to me.

(Frysztat/Fryštát. Zwrot 1957, No. 5: 10)

How an Old Woman Saw Death

An old woman who lived in Darków was walking to fetch water from Młynka river. When she was fetching the water she saw this little girl by her side, all in white. And the girl kept growing and growing and soon enough she was as big as a house. And as she got huge she disappeared. The old woman ran back to her house and told everyone what she saw. The next day her niece died. The little girl was death itself.

(Darków/Darkov. Ondrusz 1963: 84)

The Story of Ram's Bridge

An old man told me this story that took place by Kościelec, where there is a giant hole in the ground. He was a landowner who had land by the church. One time, he was going to the market close to Cieszyn. He was taking off very early, already on the road with his horses at 3am. When he got on top of the hill, coming up on the chapel, by the ram's bridge, there he saw this lady in white, slowly walking in a ditch. "I rushed the horses, but she went along with us," he told me. "We were getting close to Kościelec, where there's a road toward Kamiönka, and that's where she turned around. I just rushed the horses and went to Cieszyn," he added. "And when we got there they said a woman died in Kamiönka," he concluded. It was supposedly a sign.

(Cierlicko/Tërlicko. Zwrot 1983, No. 8: 54)

Concretization (reification) and anthropomorphization of death could also be considered an effect of a tendency for categorization and cognitive process

building of *cosmos*. It allows for at least partial objectification and taming of a phenomenon that, by its nature, escapes any taxonomy. The white figure is unmistakably out of this world, since it is defined by its amorphous character displayed by the ability to change shape. The figure foretells the coming of death either where it is spotted or in the vicinity of a person that saw it. The contact, here understood as a metonymic adjacency of a white figure to a particular place, or a person, translates into death that will occur in the vicinity of the individual who witnessed the white figure.

Even though the composition of all three texts points to a direction leading from the cause to the effect and from a premonition to an event, the direction of interpreting the phenomena by people tends to be reversed. A man can retrospectively search (potentially in an exaggerated way) for sure “signs” that foretell these events, often exclusively in the face of their fulfillment – *post factum* – and cements his conviction that reality he or she inhabits is an ordered *cosmos* that lacks surprising, accidental phenomena. If, within the magical order of things, seemingly everything can be used to foretell the future, also the past that is recreated from memory should allow for “discovery” of a sign that signaled what has happened. The composition of narratives where similar signs appear, that reversed direction of interpretation, is for the most part ignored, thereby convincing the recipient that, for a person open for “signs of the world,” reality is predictable in the sense that almost everything that is about to happen can be discovered in advance.

The Warlock

A man visited a farmer once in Salajka. The farmer was at his house, making shingles for the roof. The man came over and asked if he had an egg from a black hen. The farmer told him to wait. He'll give him the egg, but his wife is out of the house right now and they need to wait for her to get back. But she was gone long, so the man kept asking. But the farmer was busy and wouldn't give him the egg. The man looked into the sky and said: "It will rain, it will rain!" The farmer answered: "What are you talking about? The sky is clear!" But the man just kept asking for the egg, saying he needs to be on his way already. The farmer got upset and told him: "If you're in such a rush, then go already!" So the man left. Soon it got dark, it thundered and the rain came. Now the farmer realized who the man was. It was the warlock and he brought the rain along.

(Łomna Dolna-Kamienity/Dolní Lomná-Kamenitý, Ondrusz 1963: 77–78)

The basis for warlock's revenge is the magical speech. Words, which in the farmer's ears sound like a preposterous forecast, are in fact a force that realizes it in catastrophic proportions. The farmer ignored warlock's request for an egg from a black hen. He committed a transgression, which, in the magical order,

always comes back to haunt the perpetrator. We should assume that the egg was meant for some magical rituals. If we were to wonder about the potential meaning of that accessory in warlock's actions, we should begin with an assumption that as a kernel of future life, an egg holds the greatest concentration of vital forces (Toporow 1975b: 175–176, Kowalski 1998: 174–175). Therefore, on the basis of a metaphorical-metonymic relationship, it could also be a kernel of the future “evil” that is identified with the amorphous blackness of the hen.

People Believed in Witches

People used to believe in witches and that they could hex your cows. A cow that was hexed would not give any milk. A witch didn't have to have a cow, but she could still milk it. She would hang a cloth with some strings on a hook with the strings hanging loose and would tug on them and the milk would slowly drip down. My mom, when I was still a little baby, would talk about those witches, but I almost forgot everything. I never believed in them and I still don't. If a farmer didn't feed the cows properly and later they lost milk they would blame the witches. A cow needs what it needs: if you give it what it wants – you'll know! If you don't – you'll know too!

(Darków/Darkov. Zwrot 1954, No. 6: 8)

About Witchcraft

A farm hand was taking horses out for grazing in Jasiyni on the night of St. John. He got them all tied to a tree and lied next to them. Suddenly he saw a woman going along the ridge, dragging a snuffle on the ground, and heard her say: “I collect the dew, but not all of it!” He saw that and did the same, went walking around the ridge saying: “I collect the dew, but not all of it!” When he got home with the horses and hung up the snaffle on a hook, it was dripping milk. What he did after that – I don't know.

(Milików/Milikov. Ondrusz 1963: 78)

The cloth described in the first story is a type of scarf that is about two meters long on a side with a strap usually sewn to each corner. It is used to carry hay. Once the hay is on the cloth, one would tie up all corners and carry it back on the back. A little bit of imagination allows to notice the similarities between the cloth – in Cieszyn's dialect called *dzichta* – hanging from a hook to a cow's teats. If *dzichta* was in contact with neighbor's field, therefore with his cows, then “milking” the cloth, according to the law of similarity, should translate into milking the actual cow.

The same mechanism constitutes a foundation of a chilling experiment conducted by the hero of the second story. A field hand, around midnight on the night of St. John's (a boundary moment both in the scale of the year and a day) collects dew on a ridge (a physical boundary space), by dragging the snaffle on

the ground. He repeats the words he overheard from the witch: "I collect the dew, but not all of it!" The words turned into a reality, because when he hung un the snuffle it was dripping with milk.

A Frog Can Do Witchcraft As Well

Lubojacka from Pioseczna told a story about how one time she was making butter and it would not churn. She spent a whole day working on it but couldn't make it. She was baffled, because she knew how to make butter very well. She knew someone must've put a hex on her. And it was true. It was a frog that hexed her, a giant toad with a tail. It sat by the window in the garden and just stared at her. Lubojacka said she never saw a toad like that. Her boys saw it that afternoon as well. She said it must've been a witch that turned into a toad.

(Karwina-Darków/Karviná-Darkov. Ondrusz 1963: 79)

In a magical order of things a success or a failure are never a result of a common coincidence. Intensive search and interpretations inevitably lead to an immediate and unmistakable identification of the cause. Witchcraft tends to be an unusually handy and helpful explanation for everything that needs an "explanation." A woman from Pioseczna was unable to make butter. A giant toad with a tail in her backyard is clearly amorphous and demonic in character. Atypical look of the toad (a tail) makes one suspect that it is a form taken by a witch. The toad keeps staring, establishing contact (adjacency) between its own consciousness and the object of observation, transferring its evil intention.

About the Witch (1)

My cow calved once, but she would give blood instead of milk. So, the old Tómiczkula advised me to gather some turanek, an herb. It grows on the rocks by the creek. I was supposed to fumigate the cow with the herb. I did it three times and the cow was well again. Her teats were swollen and full of blood, but after I fumigated her, the blood disappeared. The witch came over to my house the next day and said: "What did you want from me?" So I told her: "Go away, or I'll use the broom to sweep you out!" So she went away quick. After that I always kept the herb ready for use. Whenever a cow would calve, I'd always fumigate it and the witch would stay away. There was plenty of those herbs growing around Karwina and Sowiniec. And the blood I got from the cow I would pour over red-hot cinder blocks and the witch would have her head all in blisters. That's how I recognized her and I told her: "See, you pig, now you have your entire snout in blisters! Don't take what's not yours!"

(Stonawa/Stonava. Zwrot 1955, No. 5: 12)

About the Witch (2)

Milk got spoiled at my grandfather's place. So he went to a witch doctor and the doctor told him: "I'll tell you, it's that one woman that spoils your milk. So what can I do about it?"

Grandpa said: "Turn her face into her ass!" "I won't do that," said the witch doctor. "But tomorrow morning I'll go and make it right. She'll have a big scab on her left cheek." The next morning the woman walked by and she had a giant scab on her face. She said to my grandpa: "What are you up to today? I'd like to go and help you." But he told her: "It's you, you monster! You spoiled my milk!" He took out his broom handle and started beating her and she just run screaming.

(Nydek/Nýdek. *Zwrot* 1956, No. 7–8: 10–11)

Revenge On the Witch

There was a wise man living in Piersna. Everyone would call him to help with the cows whenever something was wrong. Once there was woman walking in the field, collecting something. He wondered for a moment and then started a fire in his furnace and put a spike from a harrow into the fire. When it was red hot he put it into the ground at his doorstep. The woman run up to him and begged for him to stop, but he kept pounding it into the ground until her eyed popped out of her head. That was his revenge on the witch.

(Marklowice Dolne/Dolní Marklovice. *Zwrot* 1953, No. 4: 9)

A cow that is under a witch's spell is fumigated with an herb from the *Erigeron*⁶⁹ family. Apotropaic power of the herb is strengthened by the apotropaic power of fire. The smoke, which, through its indexical connection to fire (adjacency by cause and effect), constitutes a metonymical fire, cleanses the cow from evil forces. By taking the milk away from the cow, the witch becomes identified with the cow by virtue of adjacency and establishes a permanent contact. Whatever happens to the cow, or the milk, the witch will feel it on her own skin. Oftentimes the process forces her to come back to the "crime scene," which allows others to identify her. If the housewife pours the soiled, bloody milk from a hexed cow over red hot cinderblocks, by virtue of the law of adjacency, or metonymically, the witch herself will get burnt. She arrives. What is more, her face is full of boils, which is a proof that it was her, who took the cow's milk. The ritual not only discouraged the witch but also managed to recognize and mark her.

In another case, the ritual of disenchanting, performed by a witch doctor, who followed the same laws of magic, caused the witch to come to the farm she was pestering, while marking her face with a blotch that made her instantly recognizable.

69 The Cieszyn Silesia's dialect name of the herb – *Przymiotno* – is rendered to German as *Berufkraut* or *Berufkräuter*, both derived from *berufen* (to hex, to perform magic, or literally, to summon), which could be considered as a proof of the plant being used earlier for magic and counter-magic.

In yet another story, the laws of magic that identify the witch with the farm she's exploiting become a tool of a cruel vengeance. Collecting anything from her neighbor's field of anything, even dew, at a boundary time (on St. John's night, at full moon, at midnight) means collecting his harvest or milk from cows that graze on that field. A side effect of such actions is the witch's lasting connection to the field, and everything that will come in contact with it. By virtue of that connection, she is also bound to a spike from harrows that worked that field. Actions affecting one thing are reflected in the other, related by the law of adjacency, e.g. the farmer who plunges the spike into the ground causes the witch to lose her eye.

About the Witch (3)

One woman had a cow and she used to get blood instead of milk from her. It was the witch who got all the milk. So the woman found out, who was abusing her and went out to buy a stoneware clay pot for an odd sum. It had to be odd, like 3 or 5 kreuzers. When she got home, she filled the pot with – forgive me – shit, and placed it on the furnace. It boiled over and smelled terribly and the witch got burned all over her face. She came running and begged her to stop. But the woman just took her broom and ran her out. And it helped. The cow started giving milk again, not blood. There are no more witches now! . . . Sometimes women would pour blood on the furnace and jab it with a knife and the witch would be hurt all over her body. People defended themselves in different ways!

(Frysztat/Fryštát. *Zwrot* 1957, No. 5: 10)

The magical laws are not only a dangerous tool in the hands of men, who harm and take away from their neighbors, but can also be used as a deterrent and a weapon against them. The resourceful woman learns from people (anonymous participants in the transmission of the folklore texts, including hearsay) about the witch that takes away her cow's milk. Woman buys a pot for an odd sum in the attempt to mimic the "odd" witch (which translates into the pot becoming identified with the witch) and boils feces of the hexed cow in it. It has an effect: the witch comes asking the woman to stop. The ontological identity between the witch and the cow's feces is secured by adjacency. It is a witch who, by taking away the milk, retains a secret connection to the cow. As observed in the following text, disenchanting rituals can be performed with milk alone, by "stabbing" or boiling it, because the witch is secretly identical with what she has stolen.

What Gives Birth, but Doesn't flower

My mom told me once how women, during the goose-feather stripping, used to tell riddles to one another. But you have to stop after sunset. I don't know why, but you shouldn't do that

after sunset. One time something knocked hard on the window and asked loudly: "What gives birth, but doesn't flower?" They looked at each other, and wouldn't say a word. Finally, a little child that rested in its crib said: "Juniper!" Everyone was saved. If they didn't answer right then and there, all would have some tragedy happen to them. But because the child answered, everyone was fine. That's what my mom told me, but why you can't tell riddles after sunset – I still don't know.

(Karwina-Darków/Karviná-Darkov. Ondrusz 1963: 81)

Failing to follow the rules that are sanctified by tradition almost brought misery down on the women in the story. By mistake, they broke the rule that forbids telling riddles after sunset. Lack of an answer during daylight (day's *cosmos*) is of no consequences, but during the night (understood as the amorphous *chaos*) it could lead to tragic results. A child saves the women. The child's innocence provides it with access to this unobvious knowledge. It is so, for the child is not fully inscribed into taxonomy that binds adults, primarily because it still lacks features characteristic of either gender. It moves on the edge of *cosmos*, which could translate into possessing unique knowledge or "seeing" the truth that is invisible to others.

Treasure on Babia Góra

There is a spring on Babio Góra, in the forest by Kocobyndz. There were supposed to be treasures buried by that spring. If you wanted to go and dig out those treasures, you could only do it while the Passion was sung in the church. But if you came at the wrong time, you would have to stay till next year. And you wouldn't feel the time pass, or the hunger. It happened once; otherwise people wouldn't talk about it.

(Darków/Darkov. Zwrot 1954, No. 7–8: 14)

The laws of magic reveal themselves in a quite common motif of a cave containing a treasure that opens once a year and traps anybody who, usually due to their greed, cannot leave it in time. The access to the treasure is granted during the boundary time, when the taxonomic order is suspended. At the normal time, such spheres are inaccessible to men. Cyclical suspension of the *cosmos* happens during celebrations of Christ's Passion on the cross that was, according to evangelists, accompanied by the darkness, opening of the graves, and earthquakes (Matthew 27: 51–53). Every year, the event is recreated on Good Friday in the form of the Passion of Christ. If similar phenomena translate into one another, then the world devolving into *chaos* translates into suspension of the boundary between the sacred underground – place where the treasure is buried – and the profane world of man. The Passion of Christ that recollects his suffering is, therefore, tantamount to suspending the order of the world and

could be considered a case of magical speech that “materializes” its own contents. The Passion of Christ influences reality only temporarily, for the time of its duration. When it stops, the world comes back to its normal state: the underground closes, taking the treasure with it.

How the Blacksmiths Went for the Monstrance

There were two blacksmiths in Lómno. One had a dream that there is a monstrance and a chalice buried under Czyrwióny Smreczek [Red Spruce – J.K.]. So he told his friend that they should go there on a Sunday in April. So they took some blessed chalk and some holly water and off they went. Then they started digging. As they were digging the other blacksmith came around and didn't say “God bless” or anything, but instead he started saying: “I had a dream too that I will find something here.” “If you say so,” said the first blacksmith, “we should go home.” And him and his apprentice went back. But they kept wondering about the other blacksmith and how he wouldn't even say “God bless.” As they got back, they decided to look out and see if the other one will bring anything back. But the other blacksmith was at the church during the whole time. It was the Evil one at the forest. If they managed to dig out that chalice and that monstrance, they shouldn't have walked across any water, but straight to the church.

(Mosty koło Jabłonkowa/Mosty u Jablunkova. *Zwrot* 1954, No. 12: 14)

Image that appears in the dreams is a sign representing particular content in the external world. In the magical order of things, the designation of a sign is not only epistemological (cognitive) in character, but it is also ontological (real). The hostile *sacred-* can be defeated only with the help of a friendly *sacred+*. Thanks to the laws of magic, the help of the *sacred+* can be “forced” at any point. As we have already concluded the holy water and blessed chalk enter into contact with the sign of the cross through the act of being blessed. The sign of the cross, following the rule of similarity, is identified with the actual cross, on which Jesus Christ was crucified. Following the same rule, the cross is identified with Jesus himself, whose powers are always available through the use of holy water and a blessed chalk.

The blacksmith and his apprentice, who are digging out the treasure, are visited by the devil, taking on the form of another blacksmith from the same town. The first one gives up and goes home once he is aware the other man also had a dream about a chalice and a monstrance. After they return home, the blacksmith and his apprentice realize the other man could not be whom he professed to be as the “real” second blacksmith was at the church this whole time. Both realized that they were conned by the devil. His true identity was revealed by his inability to say “God bless.” Rationalization of that kind is reminiscent of magical speech. If a word in the magical order of things is identified with a being to which it

refers, the devil must have remained silent, since he could never enter into contact with God as a creature that has been rejected by the Creator. Magical speech reveals itself in this case in yet another way: the devil is not called by its proper name. He is called the Evil one – most likely to avoid summoning him by using his real name.

Water is an embodiment of the amorphous (*chaos*) par excellence. Everyone who wants to safely carry their treasure home has to avoid water as a nest of demons and the devil himself.

About the Cursed Money at Girowa

Old people tell the story of money drying at Girowa on the Palm Sunday, right where Łóndraszek buried it at the Djobli Młyn [Devil's Mill – J.K.]. One time on Palm Sunday, two women from Mosty went to Girowa to look for happiness. Close to Djobli Młyn they drew a giant circle on the ground with a blessed chalk. They sat down in the middle and waited. Suddenly, bells started ringing in Jabłónków, they heard a hollow thump underground and right next to them on a little hill a pot full of gold suddenly emerged from underground. They jumped right to it and started filling up their pockets. One said to the other: "Hannah, now we'll get married for sure!" the moment she said it and the pot disappeared underground, along with all the money they had in their pockets. Later on they slowly walked back home. It was their fault, they were not supposed to say even a single word . . .

(Piósek/Písek. Ondrusz 1963: 69–70)

The treasure cannot be obtained on any other day than the one in the cyclical (calendar) order of the world that is dedicated to undertaking similar actions at the sacral moment announced and summoned by the church bells. Tradition is the source of information on the laws that govern the *cosmos* eternally and unquestionably. It tells one what needs to be done, when and how, and what is necessary to be successful and what is categorically forbidden. Heroines of the last story forget about a single fact: as long as the treasure is not within a safe *orbis interior*, or a house (sometimes, for the time being, within a circle drawn with a blessed chalk), one cannot utter a single word, no matter what are the circumstances. Breaking that rule, the women lost the treasure that was almost theirs.

About a Treasure That Was Dug Out

My dad was working the field one time with his helper. Suddenly their plough jumped out of the soil. They cursed it badly and suddenly heard loud clicking coming out of the ground. When they looked at it, it seemed like there was a hole in the ground the size and shape of a

giant pot. But there was no treasure. If they didn't curse at the plough they would've found the pot of gold. Óndrasz was the one who buried the money.

(Marklowice Dolne/Dolní Marklovice. *Zwrot* 1953, No. 4: 10)

The narrative confirms the causal power of words – including those that have been expressed as a result of unexpected circumstances and perhaps irresponsibly. One is unable to cancel a word that has been spoken, which makes the treasure gone forever.

Salt on Dziurawy Grón

A woman grazed her cows once on the Dziurawy Grón one time. She also had a bull there that would join them on the mountain. She once followed him to see what he was up to. She saw him licking salt. When she got home she told the farmer where the bull found the salt. He took her there to show him. When she showed him he killed her right there, so that she wouldn't tell anybody. But suddenly there was nothing there anymore. Salt turned into stone.

(Milików/Milíkov. Ondrusz 1963: 52)

The woman was the first one to notice the salt, which could be interpreted as something that establishes an irremovable connection between her and the mineral through eye contact (the law of adjacency). From that moment on, her fate will be forever bound to the fate of salt. When the greedy farmer suddenly kills her, the salt is lost as well. The murderer is punished.

Conclusion

Folklore, understood as a basic and relatively direct representation of the image of the world, is always systemic in character to a certain extent, while also non-systemic in a sense of creating an open, multi-plane system and by definition somewhat internally contradictory one. However, these types of contradictions rarely grow to a rank of a problem. Particular planes of the image of the world that is revealed through folklore, which on the plane of objectification (reflective take) would be standing in contradiction to one another, can complement each other on the plane of spontaneous perception (pre-reflective thinking). In particular cases, we may witness a clash of different planes of the image of the world, however, often a man will employ different criteria on the plane of colloquialism than on others (cf. Kajfosz 2003). Elements of magical thinking either coexist with elements of the post-magical thinking or the former dominates the latter, depending on the circumstances (Bakhtin 1984). Thanks to the situational logic, a man on the plane of colloquial thinking can relatively easily avoid confrontations between magical and non-magical explanations of phenomena that often coexist next to each other, depending on his needs.

The historical perception of time (the category of the linear time) and the cosmological perception of time (the category of the cyclical time, embodied in the form of a calendar) coexist on the same basis within the framework of a colloquial image of the world. “Historical [linear – J.K.] and cosmological [cyclical – J.K.] models of perception of time are precisely the abstract models that, technically, can coexist in a real experience . . . All of that refers back to the individual, as well as collective consciousness: different types of perception may take the lead in different types of cultures” (Uspienski 1998: 37). As far as the folk culture of Europe is concerned, at least since the medieval times we could speak of coexistence of the two paradigms.

Men of archaic cultures, and contemporary men, had never the ability for a theoretical overview of all realms of meaning of their own narratives and actions for every circumstance. Men are surrounded by realms of meaning that do not undergo their reflection every day (Fay 1996). In contemporary folklore, whose protagonists could be, for example, car and truck drivers, there is no shortage of direct displays of magic that pass unrecognized. If we were to use an urban legend, the common genre of contemporary narrative folklore, also here we would find the laws of magic identified by nineteenth century anthropologists: a *disappearing hitchhiker* is often a soul of a person that died in a fatal car accident

and keeps returning to the place of its passing, sometimes saving others from a similar fate. Sometimes, the hitchhiker “disappears” at a moment when the car he or she is travelling in passes by a cemetery, etc. (Czubala 1993: 36–47, Janeček 2006: 37–45). It is not difficult to identify the law of adjacency here, a law that binds one’s soul with the place and time of death or burial. Another example could be the theme of *dead man’s smell* (Czubala 1993: 47–58), in which we can identify the law of adjacency: a car, in which the body has been discovered, will be forever marked by the connection, which means there is no way to get rid of the smell of rotting corpse, etc.

Carriers of the genres of the contemporary folklore are not capable of recognizing all displays of magic within them – an inability shared with carriers of earlier folklores. Forms of a pre-theoretical (pre-reflective) experience have not been replaced by forms of theoretical and reflective experiencing of the world along with the departure from primal forms of magical cultures. They have been merely *complemented*. Even contemporary Europeans have no complete reflective consciousness of all the elements of their own images of the world and will not be able to objectify those images in its entirety. Their theoretical knowledge (whether encyclopedic or descriptive) is always an island in the sea of pre-theoretical knowledge (hence, not undergoing reflection). Hence, it is impossible for any contemporary carrier of a particular image of the world to fully identify its elements, primarily because they change and many layers of meanings of a given image do not possess an auto-interpretation plan. The signs of magical thinking rarely attain an apparent form in the sense that they are being called magical, because a man is not always in a possession of a “key” for their identification. Magic rarely matures to the form of a theory that could be confronted by arguments. Rarely does it rise to a form of a description that was presented at the turn of nineteenth and the twentieth centuries by J. G. Frazer, M. Mauss, B. Malinowski, or E. Cassirer. The *magical* adjective continues to mean *mysterious*, or *supernatural* on the plane of colloquialism and nothing points to a change in that situation. There is no doubt that magical thinking – and contemporary folklore and popular culture – is still present in the contemporary, common consciousness. A characteristic display of magic within the discourse of popular media is the example of defining one’s character features based on his zodiac sign. It is assumed that people born under the same star should possess the same character traits – after all, everyone without exceptions comes into contact with that star. Astrology takes a form of something that could be called *pop-psychology*. Therefore, the question of a relationship between one’s personality and one’s zodiac sign is not commonly perceived as a case of magic, but rather as a case of psychology, hence – of science.

The claim that contemporary folklore has less and less phenomena that are magical or “supernatural” in character (Czubala 1993: 33, Simonides 1969: 245, cf. Janeček 2006: 322–323) is not entirely convincing. We cannot come to premature conclusions based on the fact that, for example, collectors and researchers of urban legends rarely find a theme of a deceased who comes back to the place of the unnatural death. It could be explained by the fact that in the course of typical interviews folklorists do not reach similar texts, because they are characterized by a different type of circulation than a traditional urban legend (Janeček 2006: 46). It is difficult to reach a text that diverges too much from a popular worldview in terms of its setting (which makes it less suitable for casual passing on). We should assume that themes such as *a sign that warns of misfortune*, *a haunted house* or the already mentioned *vanishing hitchhiker* continue to appear in contemporary, narrative folklore, however only in the form of confidential communiqués that are typically difficult to reach by folklorists. An indirect proof could be printed or online columns dedicated to mysteries, where one can find all popular themes. If due to the social media contemporary folklore genres know no social boundaries, magical thinking can be present among all social classes on the plane of colloquiality (cf. Neugebauer–Wölk 2003: 316–347).

At the same time, we should recall that an urban legend or a tall tale should not be identified with a declaration of a worldview and certainly not with one that would possess a systematized or non-contradictory character. Elements of magic could fulfill the function of a particular explainer of the world – one of many – but their fundamental function is often ludic and aesthetic. Folklore texts, similarly to fiction or film often have to do more than answer a question “What is the world like?” They are supposed to evoke a sense of surprise, astonishment, fear or laughter. In narrative folklore, depending on a particular situation between the sender and the receiver, the aesthetic function dominates over the cognitive one or vice versa. The same story about the *utopiec* (similar to kelpie), depending on circumstances and consciousness of the recipient will either terrify him (if he or she believes in even a possibility of their existence) or evoke laughter that has its source in a clash of knowledge about the world with knowledge of people, who used to, still do, or just begin to believe in the existence of the *utopiec*. The same story, depending on a sender and a recipient, could fulfill two different, cognitive functions: inform about dangers waiting in the world or inform about imperfections of human cognition that is a result of fiction and illusion.

If we were to focus on particularities of Cieszyn Silesia, where all the narratives presented in this book came from, we could assume that magical thinking did not “have it easy” since the time of Reformation in that area, due to conflicts and religious persecutions that could have, paradoxically, stimulated

the critical consciousness by working against magical thinking (Kadłubiec 1987: 44, cf. Kubica-Heller 1996: 21). The Duchy of Teschen (Cieszyn, Těšín) did not see any executions for witchcraft, unlike in other areas where popularity of magical thinking among accusers and the accused resulted in a tragic death of many.⁷⁰ Presenting elements and relics of magical thinking of people from Cieszyn Silesia, which would take a form of Hegelian (evolutionistic) tale about man's path from unconsciousness, embodied by magical thinking, to consciousness embodied by positivistic rationality, is not necessarily correct. During the Reformation and Counter Reformation, which created a very particular climate for arguments and worldview decisions, everyday lives of people from Cieszyn (Těšín, Teschen), Frysztat (Fryštát, Freistadt), Bielsko (Bílsko, Bielitz), Skoczów (Skočov, Skotschau), Jabłonków (Jablunkov, Jablunkau) or Wisła (Visla, Weichsel) could very well be dominated by magical thinking to a lesser degree than at the end of the nineteenth century. Similar thinking would make perfect sense, if we were to recall premeditated attacks of some of the representatives of the medieval clergy on signs of magical thinking, which survive in various forms today and remaining unnoticed.

Reading texts through the prism of critical analysis of discourse, which poses a question about who is put in the privileged position by displays of magic can lead to interesting results (Dijk 2006, cf. Duszak and Fairclough 2008, Jäger 2004: 113–171, Keller 2007: 26–39). It seems that a fundamental factor deciding about the authority and resulting, potential dominance is the opposition of *old – young*. Quoted narratives show that a success and a failure can be often decided by the ability to act in accordance with “tested” rules. Man came out of existential dangers whenever he or she followed guidance of elders, which could constitute a form of gerontocracy (Le Goff 1996). The guidance and its related templates for actions have been passed on to others in the form of memorates.

Actions and the fate of the protagonists presented within the narratives that alone lead to success provide templates for behavior, while constituting a warning against actions that can result in failure. In other words, stepping away from reliable templates established by ancestors and tradition ends with failure. A silent presupposition of authentic legends could be reduced to the following

70 According to many historical sources, the largest number of victims of witch trials across Silesia belongs to the Neisse Principality (Fürstentum Neisse), today divided by the boundary between Poland and the Czech Republic. Around the year 1639, there were 242 individuals killed, while in 1654, 102 people were burned on the stake, including two children accused of having the devil himself for a father (Heppe 1880: 38).

conclusion: Whoever listens to the legends, whoever follows wise advice from elders and copies well established and tried courses of action will secure success for himself. However, if one was to disregard wisdom of the ancestors that was passed on by the elders and does not follow the advice must prepare for unpleasant consequences that result from violating magical rules that guide the world. There is a clear correlation between the magical rationality and the ennoblement of tradition (collective and tested templates for behavior). A man can handle different kinds of demonic figures thanks to the knowledge of well-tested rules of engagement and strict adherence to those rules. In this way any well known story, whenever it operates as a belief or an information about a remembered, authentic event *legitimizes itself* (cf. Lyotard 2004).

For example, if farmers, who tried to remove the Swedish mound from their properties and paid for it with their lives, followed the guidance of “protectors of memory” (cf. Grygar 2003: 135–159), who have known for generations *how to act* in that situation and followed the advice included in the legends, they would know that the mound involves Swedish soldiers, who cannot be disturbed. And if the girls taking off on the Palm Sunday for Girowa to claim the treasure adhered to the rules passed on via legends, they could be successful as well. One mistake, one move that is not the right one, can decide about failure of a whole enterprise. The guardian of memory is the arbiter, whose authority stems from preserved narratives.

The heroine of the following story is able to overcome her fear and apply the piece of advice of the *fajermón* only after given an advice from older and more experienced folks:

Fajermón

*A woman from Darków worked in a mine. When she was walking home at night after her shift, she was followed by a fajermón. It looked as if someone would light up a handful of hay. She would run as fast as she could, because she was afraid of it and the more she run the faster the fajermón would follow her. Later **the old people told her** she shouldn't be afraid and instead thank it for the light it provided. After that she wasn't afraid anymore.*

(Frysztat/Fryštát. *Zwrot* 1957, No. 5: 10)

This is how we can confirm the thesis that the displays of magic translate into unquestionable authority of an ancestor, hence – into an unquestionable authority of the guardian of memory, who inherited the knowledge on how to conduct proper rituals, about lurking dangers and means to cope with them. The success in this case was determined not so much by an intervention of an individual, but rather by a collectively tested “scenarios” for proper behavior, which

means that *collective consciousness dominates in this case over the individual one* (Gurevich 1985). Whoever wants to avoid being attacked by the night demon (*nocznica*), should not whistle at certain times (from dusk till dawn) and at certain places (a field). Whoever would like to avoid misfortune should not leave the table during Christmas Eve supper, etc. In the magical order of things, there is no room for questions for one simple reason: within the framework of the cognitive order that knows the consequences of particular actions in advance, all questions are redundant.

The presented conclusions, which pertain to texts marked by magical motivation, should not, of course, be connected to folklore as such. This is because texts that are dominated by magical motivation (laws of magic that guide lives of the protagonists) are merely a *subcategory of folklore texts* of a community living in a particular place and time. We could refer to Mikhail Bakhtin, who collected many proofs for the fact that even medieval and renaissance folklore cannot be fully considered as a realization of a magical vision of the world. Renaissance and medieval genres of folklore are no strangers to undermining currently held beliefs or the well established order of things that has been assigned to extra-terrestrial templates. As observed by Bakhtin, the very fate, which is a quintessence of magical thinking, would often become the subject of laughter, which at least potentially provides an opportunity for a specific distance. Astrology, which enjoyed great respect, would often be a subject of parody and prophecies. Laughter could be targeted at human fear that supports in many historical circumstances the dominance of all those, who knew how to employ it (Bakhtin 1984). Following Bakhtin, we could speak of a particularly transgressive character of folk comic quality, which allows to avoid dangerous one-sidedness when discussing questions of magic in premodern or contemporary folklore.

If we were to look at folklore texts from Cieszyn Silesia, starting from the second half of the twentieth century up until today, from that vantage, we would have to admit that even though we can speak of the presence of magic in their case, we certainly cannot speak of its dominance. If we were to refer to a narrative of by a storyteller Józef Jeżowicz (Kadłubiec 1973), we would find very few direct displays of magical thinking. The same should be concluded about the local mining humor (Kadłubiec 1995). Moreover, one of the sources of local humor is the “clash” between the magical vision of the world with phenomena that do not correspond to it. Oftentimes it could be reduced to stories about trying to scare those, who are superstitious and hysterical – all in good faith, of course (Kadłubiec 1995: 102, 164–165, 234–235, 240–241). There have been narratives recorded in Cieszyn Silesia that undermine magical practices, for example a theme of a Gypsy woman, who brags about foretelling the future, but

does not realize that the farmer she works for is about to give her a beating (Ondrusz 1963: 106–107), or she cannot see that she will not be paid for her services (Kadłubiec 1995: 176–177).

Here are some narratives we could use as examples of texts revealing narrators distancing themselves from spheres of traditions dominated by magical thinking:

Nocznica and Soldier

It was a long time ago, under the Austrian rule, I was unmarried and didn't work at the mine yet. Where the road goes to Solca, or from Solca to Stónawa, right there in the middle of the road, there was a little bridge, connecting the road from Gajdocz. It was haunted. There used to be this green light that would show up, and people used to say it was nocznica – a night demon. Whoever saw, or even heard the story would get scared. At night, people would go well around it and across the fields. One time there was a soldier from Stónawa riding through. He went to Karwina to a barber for a shave. As it was, he also had a drink, so he was walking rather happy. Suddenly, he saw nocznica on the road. He stopped and looked, amazed, and nocznica just waved from side to side. First, he got scared and wanted to run into the field, but then thought again and realized he's a soldier and it would be a dishonor to be afraid of nocznica! He drew his saber and started toward her. He came toward the bridge and in that bridge he saw a hole. And in that hole, there was a board sticking out and on that board was a lamp. A simple lamp with a green lens on it. He thought the demon must hide under the bridge, so he shouted: "Come out from under there!" board and the lamp stopped swaying and everything was quiet. So he called again: "Get out!" Nothing. For the third time: "Are you coming out, or not?!" But nothing happened. He got mad and said: "Just wait! I'll help you come out!" With a saber in his hand, he made his way under the bridge. There he saw a peasant, holding the board with a lamp, pale from fear. He dragged him out and laid him in on the bridge, with his ass sticking out, and gave him a good spanking with his saber. He told him: "Don't you ever come back to scare people here!" That's when the bridge hauntings stopped and people could travel without fear from Solca to Stónawa and back.

(Stonawa/Stonawa. Zwrot 1951, No. 1: 8–9)

Zymbolka and Wasermán

Eighty years ago there was Zymbolka in Karwina. My daddy told me how she supposedly caught a wasermón once. One time she was walking by the church and it was midnight. There were hangmen buried by the road. It was midnight and she had to go by there. She told herself all will be well, took her rosary and started praying and walking. She made it to a bridge and there was a little waterfall and a grassy shore by the road. Wasermán was supposed to live in that deep pool. When she got closer to the bridge something started making terrible noise. She got scared and was worried it was that wasermón waiting for her. She made the sign of the cross, twice, and saw him lying down. She made the sign of the cross one more time, looked again and saw it was a farmer she knew. He was down with his head close to the water. The moon was full, so she recognized him. She woke him up and when he

realized where he was, he thanked her greatly. He was drunk, took a nap and rolled down all the way to the water. If she didn't find him, he would roll into the water and drown. And then there would be a wasermón there.

(Karwina/Karviná. Zwrot 1953, No. 7 (44): 13)

What the Fear Can't Do

My grandmother was pregnant and there was dinner to be made and they were out of lard in the kitchen. And it was upstairs. There used to be a custom where a pregnant woman was not allowed to leave the main room before she gave birth. But she needed lard, so she took a knife and went upstairs. When she was maybe on a third or fourth step she stopped, terrified, because she thought she saw a woman cutting lard upstairs. She fell off the stairs and got beat up, and later she was sick and sick, and finally died. My dad was five when that happened and he became an orphan. He took it to heart so badly that he fought against superstitions all his life and told people it's a bunch of fairytales.

(Karwina/Karviná. Zwrot 1953, no. 7(44): 13)

We should stress that texts which constitute a display of magical thinking are an important element of the narrative folklore, but they are *not the only one*. Folklore, whether premodern or contemporary, is not homogenous and does not display a single worldview, providing an agreement of thought among all the people and in all situations. Limiting the image of the world preserved in folklore texts recorded in a particular area to magic alone would be a reduction. The image of the world is multilayered in character. Within the folk culture, apart from narratives that should be recognized as a direct expression (or a sediment) of magical thinking, there are narratives that are not realizations of that thinking.

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