



had no fairy stories to teach men. In Grimm, only a few are about men. *Iron John* was the first I found that was clearly about the growth stages of men.”

The book is an explication of the tale of a boy who frees a Wild Man, Iron John, whom the boy’s father, the king, has locked in a cage. Iron John takes the boy into the forest and step by step teaches him the secrets of being a man. In the fullness of maturity, he becomes a man and marries his princess. Bly tires of repeating that the men’s movement is not against women. Nor does the Wild Man imply savagery, brutality, aggression, obtuseness, smashing beer cans against the forehead or shooting small animals for the pleasure of watching them die.

In fact, by Bly’s calculation, there are at least seven different men’s movements: 1) a sort of right-wing men’s movement that is, in fact, frequently antifeminist; 2) feminist men; 3) men’s rights advocates who think, for example, men get a raw deal in divorce; 4) the Marxist men’s movement; 5) the gay men’s movement; 6) the black men’s movement, extremely important in Bly’s view because of the devastation to black males in American society; and 7) men in search of spiritual growth, the Bly wing of the idea, dealing with mentors and “mythopoeics.” The mythopoeic characters, Bly points out, are dividing into two groups: those concentrating on recovery and those, like Bly, who are interested in

men’s psyches as explored by art, mythology and poetry.

“The recovery tone can trap you into being a child,” says Bly. “The myth honors your suffering; it gives images of an adult manhood that you will not meet in your community. It takes you out of your victimhood.”

Bly’s ice-blue Norwegian eyes and white hair give him a theatrical air. His complexion sometimes radiates up to an alarming red, and he puffs a little after marching up the stairs. A large cast of characters of many ages flickers around his eyes and face. He strikes one as a struggling man, something like a difficult older brother. As he says, “The shifts take place with incredible speed. When I sit down at the table with my wife, do I speak to her as a self-pitying little boy or a victim? If I slip into the depressed victim of six years old, I’ll be no good to anyone.”

He sees the men’s movement—and his own celebrity—from the inside. It is a deeply formed, logical part of his own biography. It is an outcome of his years as a student at Harvard just after World War II, studying poetry with Archibald MacLeish, and then of a long depressed period, when he lived alone in New York City, subsisting on three-day-old bread, reading Rilke in the New York Public Library. “I thought I would end as a sort of bag lady,” he says. “I lived like an orphan. I said, ‘I am fatherless.’” After a stretch at