



**What Would a Poet Know
About Psychology?**

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What Would a Poet Know About Psychology?

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FROM LIBERATION TO TRANSFORMATION

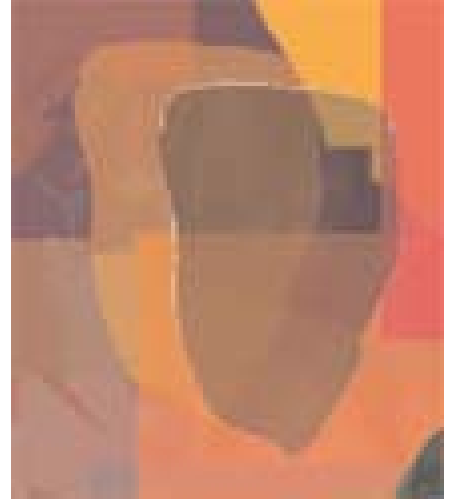
“O, Brave new world that hath such people in’t.”

“We are living in what the Greeks called Kairos—the right time—for a metamorphosis of the gods. . . ” wrote Carl Jung. “The peculiarity of our time, which is certainly not of our conscious choosing, is the expression of the unconscious man within us who is changing.”

Jung was writing at a time of great hope, when the horrors of the World Wars were finally in the past and the future looked bright. A lot has happened since the great psychologist wrote those lines.

We had the momentous liberation movements of the 1960s sparked off by students in many countries, initially in response to America’s war in Vietnam, following that in Korea. The opening up of ossified institutions of government and commerce followed. The women’s movement made a significant advancement in breaking down the walls of male domination and a step in the direction of women becoming persons in their own right. The men’s movement followed with the advancement of gay rights, not only to be recognized openly as people but for gays to live free in a more just society.

“It’s the work of poets and artists,” said the eminent mythologist, Joseph Campbell, “to know what the world-image of today is, and to render it as the old seers did theirs. . . what we lack, really, isn’t science but poetry that reveals what the heart is ready to recognize.” And then referring to Jung’s collective unconscious, he continues, “. . . there is a



Yeats, in A Vision, speaks of the two masks that life wears. The first is the primary mask that the society has put upon you—the technique of life. But in adolescence the individual has a sense of a potentiality within himself that has to throw off that mask and find what Yeats calls ‘the antithetical mask’—the mask contrary to that of society. . . with a gradual yielding and attention, the young person can learn his own possibilities and what they can do for him.

Joseph Campbell

common humanity built into our nervous system out of which our imagination works.” As the renowned gentle teacher, Jiddu Krishnamurti, has pointed out, the human brain has been developed for thousands of years but we have yet to learn how to use it to its fullest. Here lies the “work” : to set free the imagination, the mind’s eye, in order that this tremendous gift can achieve a fraction of its capability.

Liberation is fine but beyond the euphoria, how can we use that freedom to advance humanity? The current jubilation over same-sex marriages, for example, may overlook an opportunity to redefine not only the marital ceremony but of the relationship it speaks for. Joseph Campbell notes that marriage is not a love affair and rather speaks of it as “An ordeal”; the “yielding” in the relationship and the Adventure; “. . . amplification of ego, opening of ego—the grace of participation in another life. . . It’s a wonderful moment when people can make the decision to be something quite astonishing and unexpected, rather than cookie-mold products.”

Just as in a relationship, giving up power takes more courage than exercising it. The mythology to come, that Joseph Campbell has envisaged, will help to “solve the problem of the in-group by showing that there’s no out-group. . . The teaching of *humanity* rather than the teaching of in-group appreciations is what’s important.”

That teaching will involve greater efforts at “soul searching.” And here’s where poetics play a key role: “. . . to combine the art of making with the art of seeing.” Their tools of intuition and image building can help us to uncover those areas of the psyche that both limit our efforts at attaining humanhood and that can accelerate it: from *soul searching* to *soul making*.

Well then . . .

When the shadow becomes absorbed the human being loses much of his darkness and becomes light and playful in a new way. The unabsorbed shadow can darken the air all around a human being. Pablo Casals is an example of the first type, and Cotton Mather of the second.

Robert Bly

Jungian views recognize that the ego needs to be sacrificed. Some of the personal ego motivations for becoming more conscious are no longer valid once your being experiences the broader orientation of the Self. . . The main sacrifice is to give up power.

Marie-Louise von Franz

A Gathering of Men

[I]t is clear to men that the images of adult manhood given by the popular culture are worn out; a man can no longer depend on them. By the time a man is thirty-five he knows that the images of the right man, the tough man, the true man which he received in high school do not work in life. Such a man is open to new visions of what a man is or could be.

As my partner John Maher and I were mulling over the place of archetypal images, Robert Bly took us by surprise. I was volunteering in the office of New Dimensions Radio in San Francisco one day when the door opened and this tall fair complexioned man, with silvery hair in waves, fairly burst into the room. His enormous energetic movements were out of proportion to his body. I'd not known that the poet was coming to be interviewed by the show's host for one of their bi-weekly programs broadcast on US National Public Radio. He was dressed casually, with a brightly colored vest and a blue scarf loosely knotted around his neck. In one hand, he carried a sheaf of papers and under the other arm, his banjo. ("bazuki" as he referred to it.) Without formal introductions, he immediately began an animated discussion with me, punctuated with inflected tags—"hum?"—and improvised music as a background for some lines of his own poems and others. Needless to say, I was quite taken back. I'd become aware of him in the 1960s when he was a leading figure in protesting the War in Vietnam. His poem, "Driving Through Minnesota During the Hanoi Bombings," in 1967 had nearly torn my heart out. He won the National Book Award in 1968 for *Light Around the Body* and



Robert Bly stands for a more exuberant, surrealist, Jungian brand of antirationalism. For more than twenty years, he has argued its case in hyphobic, occasionally self-parodying pronouncements; in (generally excellent) translations of irrational poets from other cultures; and in an initially over-simplified but increasingly careful, learned, dialectical exposition of Jung himself.

Alan Williamson

Vietnam represents the desperate end of the masculine rage for order, the force that created American prosperity but a force basically corrupted by its denial of the inner world

Robert Bly

donated his prize money to The Resistance. I'd also been impressed with his belief that a poet is best off outside the university and so he'd remained one of the few public figures of his generation who still symbolized a rebellion against the stultifying academization of poem and poet—instead, he was attempting to integrate poetry into daily life. And very soon he was to receive national attention leading men's groups, exploring male archetypes through poetry, fairy tales and mythology. He had appeared with his good friend Joseph Campbell in a workshop in 1984 on the occasion of the latter's 80th birthday celebration at San Francisco's Palace of Fine Arts. But for this interview he wanted to discuss William Blake and his idea of "interior beings" or "interior observations." He began the interview by reading: "Now I a fourfold vision see/ And a fourfold vision is given to me/ Tis fourfold in my supreme delight/ And threefold in soft Beulah's night/ And twofold Always/ May God us keep/ From Single vision & Newton's sleep." (ending lines from "With Happiness Stretched Across the Hills.")

John knew of Bly's poetry and was doubly interested in hearing the tape from the interview as Blake was one of his favorites. Bly spoke of Blake's various states of energy or levels of consciousness (represented by mythic figures, the four Zoas or "seasons of the mind": Ulro, Generation, Beulah and Eden) to which Blake had added others, such as *Ork* for the intense and rebellious and *Urizen* (pun on "your reason"; Greek for horizon—limitations set on vision), for that which controls. Bly cited Ronald Reagan as the "perfect example of *Urizen*, one who constantly wants rules and tends to promote corporal war and diminish mental war."

That set John off:

When you say, "I have a feeling something's right," perhaps your intuition is one of the strongest of these energies because you can actually feel it, but it's also the most primitive and the most underdeveloped. Remember "The Doors"? The singer of that group, who's a poet, committed suicide from an overdose of drugs. Janis Joplin also died from an overdose of heroin. The type of *Ork*

Bly's is a poetics of ecstasy. The writer has to use images of the ordinary to get beyond the ordinary, has to use language to get beyond language. The prized conditions are Not Understanding and Not Saying. Dreaming or sitting, the latter Bly's term for meditation, will open the doors of perception to such states of full presence."

Donald Wesling

There is an alternative to the dead world, and Blake saw it and the subatomic physicists see it.

If one adopts the metaphor of the spectrum, with infrared at one end and ultraviolet at the other, one can then imagine the whole range as consciousness, rather than color. We are used to the consciousness that is verbal, but there may be consciousness that is not verbal. There are certain stones that seem able to hold memories of human events, and there are people who can pick up stones and hold them, and then the memory returns to the person. That's very strange.

Robert Bly

The names are arbitrary, but the functions and qualities are not. Blake's entire purpose in breaking with names like Venus and Apollo was to eliminate irrelevant associations, and we serve him badly by the more irrelevant of our pedantries.

Harold Bloom

energy they embodied, when left on its own, may well burn itself out, like they did. The caveat is when it links up with *Urizen* energy then it can become Establishment. Fidel Castro was the *Ork* in the early 1950s fighting the *Urizen* establishment—he set Cuba ablaze as it were, to cleanse it. But then *he* became the tyrannical *Urizen* afterwards. Just as Christ was *Ork* who comes along and the Church becomes the tyrant—the Pope is *Urizen*! And as Bly pointed out, of all the *Ork* energies that were abundant in the 1960s, we produced Ronald Reagan in the 1970s! The two energies sometimes can get linked up in a strange sort of way that one is not aware of. You know I think it's the same way that family members are related to each other—not that they're *like* one another, but they have a bond that goes much deeper than just the physical appearance. They're both linked somehow and once that linkage comes into play, *the person* can become quite tyrannical—family values and all that! In contrast to moving from Blake's *Ulro* to his *Generation* stage of the world of two where there is some awareness of differences and the need to work toward merging divergence. My sister Tony is a perfect example of living in the world of one—*Ulro*—where her life doesn't go beyond family, church, and Ireland. She lives in this tight little compartmentalized existence which is all very cozy, or at least it was until her oldest son started growing up. And then I got that photo of him with his hair dyed, lacquered in spikes and dressed in grunge. He'd moved from *Ulro* to *Generation* and left his poor mom behind! But I'd be willing to speculate that in time he'll slip back to *Ulro*. That's almost impossible not to do in Ireland with all the pressures such as the Church; Christianity conveniently abolished the 15 or so gods and goddesses that the Greeks and Romans had established and substituted the one Christ interior being for men and the Virgin Mary for women. That's where Tony exists.

Dennie: You know, it is helpful to me though, to have some kind of scheme to look at things, to clarify emotions—or energies—and then to act on them.



What gave me tremendous joy was the possibility that one could develop a second vision, a third vision, a fourth vision; that you weren't trapped into thinking always as one thinks at twenty-two. And of course we realized that when we were two and three years old, we had double and maybe triple vision and then we lost it again. So all art in a way is an attempt to move at least from single to double vision."

Robert Bly

Jung's idea was that the aim of evolution on this planet seems to be to create more consciousness. So, naturally, every bit of progress made yesterday, today, and tomorrow aligns us in that direction. As we become more conscious, we see the world and ourselves differently.

Marie-Louise von Franz

But I also have a problem with categorizing things like this because then we tend to think that this is *Urizen*, or stage two or whatever—like I’ve just done with Tony. I like to think that it’s more like depths of the ocean; it’s all water, but it has different layers and it all flows with one another.

I try not to go around thinking I’m in category B or anything like that. But it helps me to have some sort of a model in my head (and my soul) so I can have a little more idea of what I want to strive for—to become.

Well, that may be, but it’s not a “how-to” thing; it’s an individual matter and it’s everyone’s own struggle. But getting back to Bly and Blake, I couldn’t help but think of the similarities between Blake’s concept of consciousness and the kundalini chakras that Campbell introduced us to. Striking in fact, for you have the beginning of consciousness which centers on oneself—the world of one or the yogi’s primitive energy source—that goes into survival and procreation. Only in Blake’s view, we’re *born* into a world of two where there is some awareness of another human being but at any time may easily slip back into the *Ulro* state of being centered only in yourself.

As Bly’s examples of conversations in a bar—or at school board meetings!

I’ve been guilty of those kinds of conversations myself! But I was especially excited about Blake’s idea of merging relationships—between individuals as well as with the cosmos. . .

Thoreau’s comment: “Today I was in my hut and a drop of rain water came in under the door and the rain water and I came close together.”

That’s it—that’s the merging that Blake meant by moving from *Generation* to *Beulah*—the “marriage” or merger of separates—the heart chakra—where transformation of energies is possible. It’s uncanny how these ideas from two totally different cultures and in time and place are so harmonious.



Human experience owes to Tantra the discovery and location of the centres of psychic energy, chakras, in the subtle or astra body. Kundalini ‘Sakti, coiled and dormant cosmic energy, is at the same time the supreme force in the human organism. Every individual is a manifestation of that energy, and the universe around us is the outcome of the same consciousness, ever revealing itself in various modes.

Ajit Mookerjee

And the importance of “creativity” in fostering relationships. I was curious about Bly’s notion that two people could remain in this phase and actually be “in love” with one another to the extent that their relationship could revert back to Ulro, where the relationship itself had become a kind of stagnant, self-centered one. I’ve known such love affairs and they seemed awfully “sticky” to me. I think Bly used the phrase, “marriages that go on too long.” And when the children leave home, or when one of the couple dies, or the marriage fails, the other one goes to pieces. I liked the idea that people need to do creative things—work—together; activating Los energy. And to be attached which is far different from attachment.

Blake’s *Eden* phase with *Enitharmon* (representing time and space) where spirituality is possible.



Da Da Da Da mon da: five hundred men chanted a challenge accompanied by African drum beats in the north end of San Francisco’s Palace of Fine Arts auditorium while facing another five hundred to the south responded with *Bene’ Bene’ go Blao*. The audience had been divided in the center and we learned our parts from a pass-out of the 14-line contesting African refrain. When the doors to the auditorium had opened early that Saturday morning,

That’s why it’s a sacrament [marriage]: you give up your personal simplicity to participate in a relationship. And when you’re giving, you’re not giving to the other person: you’re giving to the relationship. And if you realize that you are in the relationship just as the other person is, then it becomes life building, a life fostering and enriching experience, not an impoverishment because you’re giving to somebody else.

Joseph Campbell.

It is the peculiar quality of a definitive poet that he always seems to have a special relevance to the preoccupations of one’s own age, whatever they are. Blake’s early critics found him especially eloquent on the sense of the infinity of experience.

For Blake . . . there must also be another dimension of experience, a vertical timeless axis crossing the horizontal flow of time at every moment, providing in that moment a still point of a turning world, a moment neither in nor out of time, a moment that Blake in the prophecies calls the moment in each day that Satan cannot find.

[T]he imagination unifies time by making the present moment real. In our ordinary experience of time we are aware only of three unrealities: a vanished past, an unborn future, and a present that never quite comes into existence. The center of time is now, yet there never seems to be such a time as now. In the ordinary world we can bind experience together only through the memory, which Blake declares has nothing to do with imagination.

Northrop Fry

we were instructed to form a single line. A long passage was blackened with draperies and as we arrived at the end, we were at the foot of the stage. We passed by 20 drummers beating away, faces brilliantly painted, some resembling animals and demons. As we walked past the line of drummers we could look up at the blackened stage where there were eight white pillars. Between, purple, green and blue cloths draped on rods forming a backdrop for masks in gold and silver depicting Greek gods and goddesses. In front of each mask was a chair covered in white cloth strewn with the god's implements. A large "herm"—a stylized statue of Hermes similar to those that adorned the entrance to Greek homes—stood to one side of the stage; it was flat as a tomb stone and suggested a large phallus. A group of statues of small boys, looking frightened, stood on the other side while Zeus stood before an enormous black and white mandela backdrop. Palms and green plants intermingled among the sets. Center stage contained a simple wooden table with a chair on each side. The twentieth drummer was Robert Bly, wearing one of his colorful vests, with a silk kerchief loosely tied around his neck. As we passed Bly, we were directed to find a seat. The thousand men remained standing clapping to the beat of the drums. When everyone had entered, the drumming became louder, joined by rattles, followed by a loud crescendo.

We had decided to spend a Saturday workshop with Robert Bly (billed as "A Day With Robert Bly and Friends). The brochure read, "We will work together as a community of men in the exploration of male archetypes and the male mode of feeling." He was to be assisted by story-teller and drummer Michael Meade. The brochure continued: "They will lead us through mythological and psychological themes of manhood using storytelling, poetry and discussion." John was elated at the prospect of meeting Robert Bly and especially excited as the workshop was to focus on Celtic stories.

It was a beautiful late November day as we walked down the steep hill from Pacific Heights on Fillmore street to the Marina and to the Palace of Fine Arts. The swans were floating on the lagoon and men were arriving. We didn't know exactly what to expect but felt certain that we'd enjoy ourselves, be stimulated, and perhaps come away with some new ideas. What we didn't expect,



I never expected to find a place in the modern world where the proceedings begin with drumming and singing, the language carries emotions and images, and what can't be said is danced and sung. It was as if a threshold had been located that allowed re-entry to the unfinished initiations of youth and the timeless forest of symbolic adventures.

Michael Meade

The journey many American men have taken into softness, or receptivity, or "development of the feminine side," has been an immensely valuable journey, but more travel lies ahead. No stage is the final step.

Robert Bly

was that one thousand men would show up. The men were, for the most part, Caucasian and middle-aged. But there were quite a few in their late twenties and early thirties, plus a handful of late teens. And some were in their seventies and beyond. A scattering supported themselves with canes and a few were in wheel chairs.

After the initial exuberance had subsided somewhat, Robert and Michael took to their chairs, the auditorium was darkened and Robert asked that we leave the world of east and west, north and south, and go to that inside. He explained: During the day, Michael was going to recount portions of the Irish folk tale “The Golden Apples of Lough Erne,” but wouldn’t finish it until evening. He lightened the atmosphere by saying that much of what they were going to say should not be taken as truth, because he and Michael might change their minds next week: “Better to wander without a guide in unknown territory than to read a map for tourists.” Some, he said, would feel that they hadn’t gotten their money’s worth, but at least they’d get a day away from their homes. He told a joke about the military, whose modus operandi is: “Ready! Fire! Aim!” Robert added: “My own life is 30 percent garbage, the rest is unspeakable!”

And so we were quickly spun into the theatrical whirl of the moment, all one thousand of us: men. John entered into the spirit at once and became absorbed. I was fascinated by the drama and the sudden cohesiveness of so many men. Robert spoke of the importance of initiation, of male bonding, of the spiritual element which older males provide in many preliterate cultures. And the difference between being “macho” and being a male. There was silence; a spotlight focused on Michael as he began a slow beat on his drum, which lasted for several minutes in the darkened auditorium. Then he began the first part of his tale. At times, he paused while he continued drumming as he appeared to be deep in thought and then resumed his tale.

It seemed time for a break; for several hours we’d been so intensively moved and involved; it was difficult for me to continue to focus on so much. Robert read a few lines from some of his poems, talked about the importance for men to recognize the influence of shame in today’s world. Then he got us on our feet for a



It’s becoming clear to us that manhood doesn’t happen by itself; it doesn’t happen just because we eat Wheaties. The active intervention of the older men means that the older men welcome the younger man into the ancient, mythologized, instinctive male world.

Robert Bly

Moving the body commits the mind, the emotions, and the imagination, gets head and heart on the same side. Moving breaks the abstract plane of the questions and creates separations that make it possible to discriminate the feelings in each group. Moving tells the psyche that there maybe something going on besides the play of ideas, and moving increases the tension in and between the groups. After moving, each group began to argue their position and establish their emotional territory.

Michael Meade

kind of role play session, where we paired off with the person sitting next to us. We were to imagine ourselves at two different ages in our personal lives and think of some incident in our childhood that had led to shame, then tell this to a stranger. John and I took different partners; within minutes, I could see he was intimately involved in revealing his innermost. I had more difficulty, not so much in remembering incidents, but talking about them. Robert then resumed his place, spoke about the importance of letting go of shame and allowing one to forgive oneself and move on.

Michael closed the morning session by returning to his tale and asked that we think about what was going to happen next. He listed three possible solutions to the dilemma his legend had thus far posed, then designated three areas of the auditorium and suggested that when we reconvened after lunch, we sit in the area in which we considered the most probable solution.

A gourmet caterer provided delicious box lunches and we gathered in the warm sun on the lawn overlooking the lagoon. The intensity of the morning was apparent as clusters of men shared their experiences and speculated on the next installment of Michael's tale. John asked me, from a psychologist's point of view, what I thought of the morning. He wanted to know if this was anything like the large groups I had conducted. While I had led groups of 100, I couldn't imagine doing anything on this scale. Besides, it was decidedly different. I was fascinated, both as to how intimate such a large group could become, and conversely, how anonymous. I was impressed at how much Bly knew about the psyche. But then he did hang around with people like Marion Woodman and Alice Miller and Marie-Louise von Franz and gave workshops with James Hillman. Furthermore, he could convey it in plain—and poetic—words. John mentioned the power of the drama both its staging and offering. Once more we spoke of how poets and other artists sustained and had kept the psyche thriving—before the shrinks came along and made it their trade. Perhaps we were witnessing a re-enactment. I didn't use the word "rebirth," although John pointed out the symbolism of our entrance through the dark corridor, and the re-entry into the auditorium that encompassed animals, demons, and "initiated" men. We were standing outside by



*Mountains, rivers, caves, and fields quicken us when we are in solitude. We then leap toward connections lost to our rational selves and see in ways that defy logic. This seeing, as Bly explains in *Leaping Poetry: An Idea with Poems and Translations* (1975), occurs when the newest of our three brains is activated.*

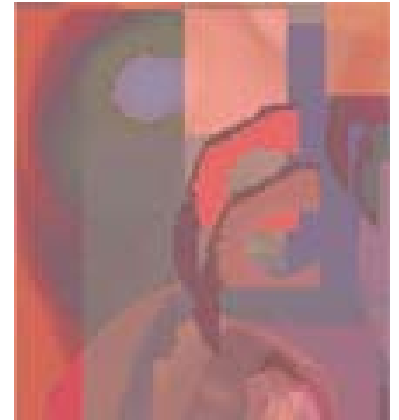
When this New Brain is activated, our words evoke miracles.

Language as mystery reflects profound events unlimited by time and space, generated in our New Brain. During meditation, cortical cells produce dance and ecstasy.

Robert Peters

one of the pillars facing the lagoon. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Robert Bly appeared. He looked intent as he stopped and came up to us. “Are you guys getting anything out of all this?” he asked abruptly. We said how much we were; he made some comments and went on his way inside.

Beginning the afternoon session, Michael focused on the three “small groups”: He asked members of one group to stand while he fleshed out a possible outcome to the dilemma the story presented and its ramifications, then asked its members for their contributions. He repeated the procedure for the other two groups with comments by Robert. Walking across the stage, at one point Robert Bly stopped abruptly and looked the audience squarely in the eye, “Without mythology, men stagnate. Mythology is something to move the soul and communicate with beings in another world.” Now he spoke of the “male mother” (the tutor, guru, mentor) who gives spiritual nourishment to supplement the physical side of the biological mother. And then he turned to the Grimm Brothers’ “Iron John,” and talked of the “Wildman” or *Ork* inside, that other energy that balances the civilized. (Also in the form of Enkidu, as John had said earlier, from his studies of Gilgamesh.) Bly showed slides of various versions of the Wildman. “Contact with Iron John,” he wrote in what was to become his best seller that same year (1987), “requires a willingness to go down into the psyche and accept what’s dark down there, including the sexual.” “We are no longer children,” he continued, walking across the stage. “Childhood is like being put into a closet that has no knob on the door from the inside and so children are completely at the fate of who opens and closes the door from the outside. Being an adult gives you the knob from the outside.” Michael gave the next installment of the Golden Apple story. After more “lectures,” poetry, and drumming, the afternoon session had come to a close. We were on our own until the last session in the evening. John and I treated ourselves for supper in a small, intimate restaurant near by. It seemed to be overtaken by men from the workshop. They buzzed with excitement. John and I were amazed at how much we too, had been immersed into the workshop, how vital, how alive, we both felt. We spoke of the intimacy and “fellow” feeling that had been generated



In The Odyssey, Hermes instructs Odysseus that when he approaches Circe, who stands for a certain kind of matriarchal energy, he is to lift or show his sword. . . . But showing a sword doesn't necessarily mean fighting. it can also suggest a joyful decisiveness.

Many men, however—and I am one of them— have found inside an ability to nurture that didn't appear until it was called for.

The universities are now overwhelmingly right wing. This tells me that a clean shaven universe is all that they know. The wild man used to be expressed by good rock bands in the '60s, but most of that is gone now. I would say some of the wild man appears in someone like Robin Williams. The wild man contains spontaneity preserved from childhood. Surely Robin Williams is guilty of that.

The wild man represents a positive view of male sexuality. Someone like Rambo is not a wild man, but a savage man.

Robert Bly

among so many strangers: the communion of men was like an aura. As I was struggling for words, John said: “A meditation, a prayer.”

“*Da Da Da Da mon dao,*” John contended later after the event had ended as we walked up the hill in the darkness. “*Bene’ Bene’ go Blao,*” I replied.

Robert Bly and Michael Meade are good artists,” I said to John as we were having breakfast next morning. “And that workshop was good theater,”

It’s not just being good artists, Den, they are in full control of their talents. They’ve worked very, very hard to achieve this. They may look sort of “loose” and casual at times up there on the stage as they make off-the-wall remarks. But Bly is in full control of himself, his mind, and his art: He’s the master of what he’s doing. It’s liberating because he’s worked so hard on himself that he’s freed himself. Bly can fool around, but you’ll never find a greater teacher. Just look at the way he put that whole workshop together. He was the center of everything, he guided it all and got through to the people in that huge audience. He knew his stuff so well, he was able to escort us—he became the “male mother.” But you notice that he was so skilled that he could guide without pushing. He took you through the experience without imposing anything of himself on you. If you’ll remember, he never spoke anything about himself, or that you should or shouldn’t be feeling this or that.

Didn’t a lot of it have to do with the staging—the drama that was created?

That was part of the structure, yes, the brilliant way it was crafted: the balance between the intellectual and the emotional. That combination and the pace they used to get their thesis out in the allotted time, without ever breaking the succession of the whole thing. That was partly the function of the story: the thread running through the entire day. If you have one thing constant, then you can allow for lapses because it’s going to be picked up again almost like



The positive aspects of Bly’s poetics evolve around his concentration on the image.

[Bly] erected a theory concerning the ‘subjective image,’ produced by the workings of the transrational mind, charged with mythical resonances, and bearing the major responsibility for organizing the poem’s energies. This image . . . resulted more from a special gathering of consciousness than from any purely verbal manipulation; it came from a region beyond syntax, and it had powers more than grammatical.

Bly makes his own poetic statements turn aside from the ease of identifiable cognitive patterns and plunge instead into dense, pathless areas of experience and darkly associative pools of feeling.

This persistence of mental energies and their eventual irruption into a waking state of mind, though originally discovered in a sleeplike state, is, of course, at the center of Bly’s poetic project.

Charles Molesworth

a loop. The audience's attention was returned to itself at times, so its concentration wasn't always focused on the stage; we were allowed to first understand intellectually, but then there was the direct experience so you had the combination all the time: a period of lecture followed by experience and looseness, then back to structure (lecture) and then participation. Getting people involved through interaction is getting them to understand emotionally, physically: it stays with you longer—right brain, left brain coordination. Very powerful.

You noticed the man in front of us refused to partake in the actions. He seemed purely disgusted with all that and probably saw it as a waste of his time.

Well, yes, you've got to allow for that. The guy sitting next to me in the afternoon commented that it was the best thing he'd ever experienced. So, you have the whole gamut between those two.

You mentioned earlier about how they'd set it up so that we participated in the "initiation" in order that it became an experience, rather than hearing about initiation rites.

You can see that on films but we actually went through it without any kind of explanation; it was after-the-fact that we realized we'd gone through it—the "ah ha, that's what it was." You retain the experience and the whole thing was structured so there was that moment at the end where you say, "Oh! Migod, yes, now I understand." But you understand on a deep emotional level that goes beyond an intellectual explanation. That's what you'll retain, the rest evaporates. It may be conscious, but the experience was placed in you very deliberately. If you're ready for it, it happens, but if you're not, it doesn't—the difference between the guy in front of us and the one beside me. The fascinating thing with Bly is that it doesn't matter because he gave you enough intellectual stuff that you can still go back and go through it—the groundwork has been laid for future experience—another workshop, by reading or what not. The workshop was structured much like a poem where



I define psyche as being the life process as experienced from within. . . Within the psyche there is a certain polarity between more physical and more mental processes. What we experience is the psyche—and all that is in between mind and body—feelings, emotions, judgments, fantasies.

Marie-Louise von Franz

The soul of each of us is given a unique daimon before we are born, and it has selected an image or pattern that we live on earth. This soul-companion, the daimon, guides us here; in the process of arrival, however, we forget all that took place and believe we come empty into this world. The daimon remembers what is in your image and belongs to your pattern, and therefore your daimon is the carrier of your destiny.

James Hillman

there are moments—a line strikes you because all the lines that preceded it prepared you for that one line. And then you prepare yourself for another punch line. I return time and again to structure. I remember when I was taking a poetry class at City College, the instructor taught us how structured the sonnet was: not only the number of lines, but the number of syllables within the line and the rhyme scene; it was so structured that it was liberating. The structure frees you from having to deal with that. That's what these masters have done with their craft.

I was struck by Bly's knowledge of the psyche from that interview on Blake. But I was even more astounded in the workshop by his profound understanding and ability to use it in a way that was compelling and uncomplicated. He got into some pretty heavy stuff. I've learned more from him about psychology than from most of the shrinks I've been around. And he's a poet!

“What would a poet know about psychology?” Quote, unquote. Isn't that what Max Jones first said when you sent him that interview on Blake? Unfortunately, we don't take much notice of what artists, musicians, writers have to contribute. They're too often dismissed. We've become so enamored by the sciences and so on. Anything outside science is too “fuzzy,” it's too fanciful, or it's not “real,” whereas if you read some poets, their understanding is quite profound. And that's one of the functions of art and artists: to find new images, to rouse people—their work is image-making and awakening. I read in an article some time ago—I believe it was in the *New Yorker*—words to effect that artists are persistently “implicated in the current crisis of vision.” Bly's reference to Blake and “four-fold” vision. And by the way, artists are uniquely “qualified” to construct images!

I'm having second thoughts about all this. And about workshops, who goes to them, and what they get out of them. When I was conducting workshops, I used to get quite annoyed when the perennial attenders would come to mine and say they'd been to Esalen and various others, then ask what my “technique” was. Remember



[S]elf awareness opens our minds to a wider field of intuition and to our latent ability to get beyond the reality of the scientific rational world in order to find a new reality in spiritual experiences, intuition, and the mystery of life itself.

[T]o seek truth (although truth means different things to different people), means for many people to seek something absolute and beyond our comprehension, but something that nevertheless represents the ultimate reality. . . in contemplation, there may come a feeling of exaltation with or without a definitive alteration of consciousness such as an awareness of a bright light or even an image. Usually I'm aware that my breathing is deeper, and a surge of energy accompanies the joyousness, and I'm an active seeker again.

Maxwell Jones

that woman from Texas who was at the Campbell workshop? She'd been to workshops there four times in one year. But I was thinking, you can easily pay \$100 a day for a modest hotel room in a large city. The cost at Esalen is about the same, and if you did nothing else, you could have an enjoyable weekend, good food, music, an incredible view, and meet interesting people. . .

Don't forget the hot tubs!

And if something happens in the way of growth, that's so much the better.

People have to experience these things on their own terms and not on what we expect of them. You make certain progress at certain times. Folks have to have the opportunity for the experience and then it takes time to sink in; your brain takes time to assimilate a lot of things. If you become overwhelmed, you don't learn. But what you do retain is the experience of an idea.



[A]ll mythologies are provinces of one great system of feeling. I think of the mythological image as an energy-evoking sign that hits you below the thinking system. Then words can be found to interpret the mythic image: image of the structure. Essentially, mythologies are enormous poems that are renditions of insights, giving some sense of the marvel, the miracle and wonder of life. And a poet working within a mythological system has the advantage of the major structuring of images being already at hand. All he's giving is part of the big myth.

Joseph Campbell

Mythology of Manhood

John M. Maher

Unlike womanhood, manhood is primarily a state of mind. Whereas nature tells a girl when she has become a woman through the menstrual flow of blood, a boy, a deepening voice notwithstanding, is pretty much on his own. He must figure out when he becomes a man.

He must rely on messages from the outside world: the way people treat him; what is expected of him; how people address him. The period of transition can take years to complete. During that time, he is presented with all sorts of role models. Yet, while the variations are countless, the basic themes are very limited. He can be either a warrior or a wimp.

One of the most recent aggressive models is portrayed in Rambo. He is all action driven by a brute sense of justice. With little tolerance for the finer points (questions only get in the way), he has no doubt about himself or the righteousness of his cause. He knows what he's about. The measure of the man is accounted in other people's fear of him. He is instinct on steroids; a killing machine who knows how to deal with enemies.

A gentler variation on this theme is the strong silent type portrayed by Gary Cooper. He is a gentleman in the company of ladies, but he has little time for women. He is chivalrous, but his chivalry is born of his sense of superiority. To him women are helpless creatures who need protecting from themselves and the outside world. Stoic and aloof,



JOB

*Was it grace of patience
Or the elemental force of catastrophe
That dumbed him into submission?*

*Terror may guise itself as piety,
The peccant bow down and know itself
For fealty. Balsamic. In petto.*

*His was the shock of a particle becoming,
Whose charge and spin dance its decay;
Or Goethe's light whose suffering is color,*

*Or the aphoristic $E=mc^2$
When light and mass are soul ecstatic,
Or simply because it's the human thing to do.*

John M. Maher

he will suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune in silence. He never gives into his emotions, especially those that might hint of weakness, such as grief. Therefore his self-control, so rigorously achieved, can easily succumb to sentimentality, which in turn requires even more self-control to subdue. True sentiment, however, eludes him, for he is inclined to take any “soft” feeling as a threat.

These two models are caricatures rather than real characters. And as such they represent absolutes: one-dimensional concoctions that take no account of men’s emotional needs other than rage and fear of emotion itself.

“Rambo” is an effort to regain that aspect of masculinity we lost in Vietnam, the part of ourselves we associate with courage, and justice, and individuality. According to our ideals, the soldier’s authority (and hence his honor) informs his actions: he may be hard though he is always fair. But in Vietnam we learned a few unpleasant secrets about ourselves. We learned that we can be brutal, arbitrary, and yes, even cowardly. Who can forget the bodies at Mai Lai, or the torched villages? “Rambo” is a conscious response to those memories. If we can’t put things right in reality, well then, we can make things right on celluloid; we can retrieve the soldier who is fierce and just, a worthy heir to the warriors of old.

A recent commercial for the US Marine Corps reflected that nostalgia. A Knight on a white charger rides through the gates of a castle one stormy night. In the great hall the King waits to bestow his authority on him. The Knight rides in; the charger rears as lightning flashes. The Knight approaches, and as the King gives him the sword, lightning flashes again, and the Knight’s armored hand changes into the gloved hand of a Marine. In an instant the connection is made between the mythical warrior and the modern day soldier. The mythical warrior was at once chivalrous and fierce. His was a clean-cut, blue-eyed masculinity. His even features evoked trust, loyalty; his bearing showed valor. What boy would not aspire to such a form?



‘INVISIBLE MAN’

*In living rooms and public places,
In street and square, in church,
‘You may freely come and go—
Stroll, loiter and pray,
Just as long as you behave
Just as long as you remain
A presence to yourself alone.
Reasonable people all agree
The rule must be applied:
Don’t ask, don’t tell,
Don’t advertise. Be invisible!
Oh, be invisible when you walk
among us.
Don’t stand out.
Don’t give us cause to notice you.
Don’t ask us to approve:
if you must love, don’t let it show;
live, but do not let us know.
Be like us in every way:
Pale and male and gray.
Oh, be invisible!*

J. M.

The problem for the modern day soldier, however, is that he gets sand in his boots; he gets cold and tired and lonely; he may sometimes be at odds with his fellows; he may even disagree with the policies of his government, and desert. Rather than bear up stoically under his misfortunes, he may complain bitterly or turn to drugs for release. Reality is messy.

As for the strong silent protector of the “weaker sex”: he has been lost among the statistics of domestic violence (which is the greatest cause of injuries to American women), divorce, child abuse, and delinquency in child support payments. For those of us with a successful family life, the middle-class model we saw in TV shows such as “Father Knows Best” and “Leave It To Beaver,” has proved to be a fiction, or an outright deception. The man who imagines himself the wise father, the reliable breadwinner, the husband his wife admires, quickly finds his aspirations undermined by the complexities of parenthood, the high cost of living, and the independent opinion of his wife. Furthermore, he more likely than not to be dependent on his wife’s second income to make ends meet; the successful middle-class family living on one income is a thing of the past.

So much for the warrior caste.

We now come to a type that had his genesis in the late sixties. He is generally known as the sensitive or “soft” man. Though he may be politically correct, most men regard him as a wimp whose sexuality is in doubt. His most eloquent advocate, Woody Allen, portrays him as an intellectual introvert who finds his own problems and insecurities far more interesting than the world around him. As the quintessential “soft man,” Allen’s version of the character frequently betrays himself; for all his sensitivity, he is an emotional eunuch, incapable of a relationship of equals. His appeal to a woman is that of a dependent: a child in need of comfort and reassurance. And while he might satisfy her maternal instinct, he is depriv-

ICARUS

I

*A necessary contempt
Of decreed limitation
Incited his wings.
He wanted more:
After all, father figures
Can take you only so far.*

*A single bird defies earth
With blithe impunity,
Leaves the branch springing
In the wake of its flight.
Why then should genius succumb
To human gravity?
Why should the father know more than
the son?*

*All sons, you say, must reckon thus,
Must live out the excess of ambition,
And give passion passion’s due
Without regard, presumption being
The prerogative of youth.*

II

*Faith is enigmatic to the Gods
Who show little in life, preferring instead
The absolute order of their laws;
So they look to men who have less in
themselves—
That is their tragedy, and ours.*

*Incensed petitions cannot reach them:
Only vague murmurs—aerial mutations—
Until, bored with our epic servility,
They touch one in a multitude
And thereby condemn him to failure:
For success breeds contempt.*

III

*Did he know that courage is not enough,
Strength is not enough; that a willing heart
Is mortal after all, subject to its pulse;
That human nature is inhumanly flawed?
Did he know those white undulations
Were insubstantial, not fit to step on?
But trek them he did for one brief moment.
And O, what joy when he broke
through the blue
And saw in the depths those reflected heights.*

ing her—and himself—of a relationship beyond their respective roles. Some men react to the image of the soft man by asserting themselves with excessive force, or in other inappropriate ways, lest they should be mistaken for wimps. But this attitude isn't necessarily exclusive to the insecure man in a hulk's body.

For months during his bid for the presidency, George Bush struggled hard to answer the "wimp factor." And in its aggressive appeal to "traditional values," his campaign reflected his determination to counter the image. In office, he continued to fight off the "accusation" by showing how hard nosed he could be at the bargaining table, be it with the Soviet Union, or the Democratic Congress. The ultimate assertion of his toughness came with the Gulf war. He wasn't going to let "that bully, Saddam Hussein, walk all over the little guy." And in one hundred hours, "the wimp factor" was dispelled once and for all.

Robert Bly tells us that the soft man is the result of feminist demands for a more responsive partner. But in trying to accommodate feminists, Bly says, men lost an essential part of their masculinity, the part that is vital to any sense of ourselves: the Wild Man. The Wild Man represents the spontaneous side of men's nature, and this includes the instinct to fight as well as to revel. But the soft man was also men's own response to the jaded stereotype of masculinity we saw in the forties and fifties: strong and silent, emotionally controlled (excepting anger), lusty, tough, and independent. The problem with ideals of gender, be they masculine or feminine, is that they are one-dimensional, flat, and ultimately inhuman. Therefore they are unattainable, forever fixed on the pedestal of idealism.

In the sixties, the old-style masculinity no longer served men's needs; besides, it was proving detrimental to their relationships with liberated women who wanted more expressive partners. And why should men keep everything bottled up inside? Why should they be numb? Why should-

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL

for Bob Briggs

I

*And what in the end did he have to show
For all that wandering, all that money spent?
A dozen tall tales to tell around the evening fire
Of adventures real and imagined
Of cities and peoples too strange for their
pebeian tongue.*

*O, the places he had seen, the travelers met!
Men much like himself, who had spoken to Solomon
Who knew the secrets of Delphi
And the intricacies of Euclid's thought;
Adepts who had crossed the Tigris and gone
To Persia, to India and beyond;
To places where eunuchs dressed in silks
Where the tide of a woman's hair flowed
Between her shoulder blades;
Exotic lands where foods were spiced with
ginger and clove;
Where the hieroglyphic sun was black at midday
And the moon afire, trembled on the brim of the world;
Lands where the phoenix preened her fiery feathers
And dragons slept: All his for the telling.*

*But there was more than wild accumulation
Of adventure and ripe living.
There was danger too, and some despair.
For every meal—days of hunger;
For every bed—nights of cold solitude;
For every welcome—stones and maledictions.
His was a life enchanted by risk and loss.*

II

*A special animation of the soul had called him
To the open road.
His father's ghostly eyes followed him in sadness
Until he met the Friend who asked:*

*"Of all that defines the heart of man
Surely longing makes it human most?
What is wealth if the world remains
A tentative place
If life unlive, and longing left unanswered
Contents us into sleepy death, and thereafter
oblivion?"*

*Surely he wanted more than that?
Surely his was a life not yet lived?*

*"Blunt duty and routine may serve
Your brother's needs, but you
Have heard the Voice that called
creation into being
And keeps the stars from madness."*

n't they express their feelings? Why shouldn't men wear colorful clothes and long hair? The backlash against conformity took men far beyond their fathers' notions of masculinity and into the zone of unisex where men could experience and express the feminine side of their psyche.

Now there is another shift. The last decade has seen the men's movement come into its own. In books, workshops, gatherings, and festivals, men are exploring themselves and their psychology, not in relation to women or male stereotypes, but in the context of their own society. Men are learning to relate to themselves and each other as human beings who are capable of feelings, frailties and strengths. In so doing, they are learning to redefine what it means to be a man.

Two very popular images in the new mythology of manhood are those of the Warrior and the King. The Warrior represents the fierce spirit of independence, integrity, and loyalty. The image is taken from Arthurian romance, or the American Indian heritage. He is the one who must "do battle" with the dragon (a symbol for the ego), or go on a "vision quest" in order to fulfill his destiny, which is to serve the King or the Tribe. The King represents the higher Self, which is the fully integrated soul—a source of personal power and authority.

Now, as effective as these two images might be, and however well they serve their purpose, they are singularly inappropriate for men today. In a time when war means outright annihilation at the touch of a button, the "glory" of the warrior is lost. For the warrior earned his honor in hand to hand combat, in the thick of battle; it doesn't take much to kill an enemy you can't see, even though the Marine Corps would have us believe otherwise. As a symbol, the Warrior limits men to their history as killers rather than opening them to their future as peacemakers. How inappropriate is the image when applied to the great men of recent times: Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Dag Hammarskjöld—all committed to non-violent action. And (ironically) how

*What was it
If slave ambition
Plugged their ears and dimmed their eyes?
They did not care to hear the song of life;
They did not see.
Dance on, dance on
Ye fools and blind. . .
Dance on!*

*He exulted in the prophet's truth
Whose fragrance swelled the living day.*

Dance on, dance on!

*Every step quaked the ground
Air trembled with possibility.*

Dance on!

*Every step left
The idle days of doubt behind
Every step brought
The ample world and wide. . .*

Dance on, dance on! Dance!

III

*What is this possession
Whose lucid delirium brings such joy?
This plenitude, this gentle death.
Wine inspired him: elevated words
Bubbled on his lips.
Brazen in company, he called strangers by name.
Laughter and forgetting. Song.*

*Ecstasy, child of love, led him
To the plain of Esdraelon, where
He sought the tenderness
Of every woman's rolling hips.
He played on the mountains of myrrh;
Waded in the cool waters of Galilee.*

That somnambulant Spring.

IV

*Ankle deep in jellied filth
He stood among the swine
Surveying his master's fields around.
Feasting on the nourishment of want
In servitude he found the tenor of his soul
Which was by nature melancholy.*

*The blunt snout of a hog
Nudged his ankle. He stepped aside
In bestial rapport: unthinking.
Nudged again, he kicked back
Slipped, and, face down in misery
Lamented the promised fate
That yielded such a paltry life.*

equally inappropriate is the notion that Rambo or Conan or any other matinee caricature could embody the Warrior spirit except in its most shallow dimensions.

The King is also an archaic image we should be wary of; the terms we use must be appropriate to our time and place. In other words, our social life cannot be democratic while our psychological life is given monarchical values. The inner world cannot be at odds metaphorically with the circumstances of the outer world without our being subtly schizophrenic. In a republic, a king is out of place: an anachronism. And if we are to lead integrated lives, our social and psychological worlds must be reflective of one another. To speak of Kings and Warriors is to reduce serious and complex matters to atavistic, and yes, simplistic images that have no relationship to our modern experience. As symbols they are out of keeping with our times, our politics, our hopes for the future; as models they represent a system of relationships that is hierarchical, and therefore destructive to psychic democracy.

Which leads to the question: What is the definition of manhood, one that is large enough to encompass the whole of the male experience and still allow for growth?

One possible model is Robert Bly's "Wild Man." It is open-ended enough to allow for all sorts of individual variations. The Wild Man can be the spontaneous self, the spiritual self full of purpose and passion, the self free of "civilization"; he can be each and all of these rolled up into one. Bly based his Wild Man on the Grimms' story Iron John which tells of a young prince and his relationship with Iron John, the wild man of the forest, who is the source of great wealth and power. But the Wild Man goes back thousands of years. He is a mythological figure whose earliest recorded depiction is Enkidu, the representative of uncompromised Nature-in-Man in The Epic of Gilgamesh. John the Baptist is his Christian counterpart; and in the Age of Reason he becomes the Nobel Savage. Today the wild man is Bigfoot and the Himalayan Yeti who, mysterious and elu-

*"Here I am in cold and want;
In cold and want among the swine.
A slave is better clothed a dog better fed
Yet here am I, craving the slop
I feed this sow. Enough, I say. Enough!"*

V

*In the pillared ruins of a temple
Whose lioned doors open to the raven sky
Remnant vines weep over shadows;
The vocabulary of stone tells
Of the futility of Paradise;
Its annihilating perfection.
Before the elemental order returned
Before heat and cold
Sundered this high celebration of Mind
Here echoed songs of praise, this place
Where now long vowels of wind cry out.*

*Here, here where stars converge
Where the ruminating night grinds
the stones to dust;
Here in the womb of the void
In terror of it all, he glimpsed again
The fatal scheme of things. And what joy
Eased his wadded heart in wonder at his loss.*

*"Now wonder, Friend:
Artist whose art
Requires tools not yet invented;
Wandering and want are your only expression
And therefore your finest."*

VI

*What road is this, familiar in its beaten way?
"At the other end my father's house
Waits warm welcome.
Every stranger finds comfort there;
It is the custom."*

*Bread, clean clothes;
Reconciliation.*

*The prodigal stopped
Shrugged and turned away.*

J. M.

ECCE HOMO

*Son, tell me of your father.
He sought in me a bosom brother,
But I was in blood other.*

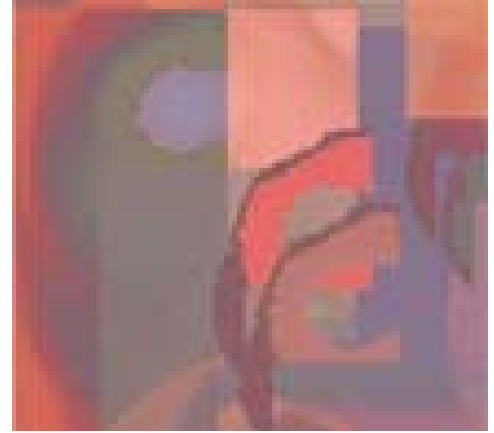
*Father, tell me of your son.
He looked for me in other men
And found himself in them.*

J. M.

sive, are sighted but never met. Perhaps as we become acquainted with the wild man within, these residents of the deep forests and snowy peaks will not be so shy?

For Robert Bly the Wild Man is the rich bounty of our nature which has been buried beneath the detritus of civilization. The Wild Man is authentic self, divested of false machismo, pretense and insincerity. He represents the natural self, whose profound respect for the earth and its inhabitants holds him accountable for his actions. He knows his place in Nature's scheme, which allows him to accept the cycle of life, from birth to death. Rather than trying to subdue nature, he trusts its complexity, and seeks to cooperate with it, to care for it while it takes care of him. Because his own nature is an expression of something larger, he strives to be true to himself—a quality called integrity. He asserts himself in terms of responsibility rather than rights. Though he is strong, the Wild Man's strength is not that brute force found in a gym; rather it issues from his self-discipline and compassion for all.

Another model is Joseph Campbell's "Hero," who ventures into his own world rather than the one society has prescribed for him. Because: "It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse." The Hero goes into himself to find the hidden treasure of his true nature. For him success isn't measured in dollars or fame. Rather success means the realization of his innate sensibilities in spite of the worth or waste society might attribute to them. His attitude towards the status quo is one of indifference, if not outright contempt. (In this he is akin to the Wild Man.) And although he may seem the epitome of ordinariness, he carries in him a fierce confidence in his own uniqueness. For this reason the hero's engagement with humanity and the world has the mark of welcomed fate. He is engaged with humanity through his mortality; he is engaged with the world through his deep commitment to the betterment of society. For him social engagement becomes engagement with the self.



SONNET

That Russian
who aimed to write ten thousand
poems by century's end
had the right idea:
fill nook and cranny, house and
home with the
radical blab; fill the night
with sonorous
braying; attune the mind
to its deep con-
nections; pull out all stops
so that our lazy
eyes might see the kind
of wonder poets
know.*

*Pundits flip-flop
on the question:
Can there be too much verse?
An argument
that tyrants try to win.
Poetry's natural
to all in us
that's best; we
need its antidote to sin.
There should be
as many poems as crimes
if only to justify
our claims.*

J. M.

*Dmitri Aleksandrovich Prigov

It is in this engagement with the self that the new man is to be found. The difference between the Hero and the old model of masculinity is that the Hero is able to know himself. He is able not only to feel; he is able to express his feelings in all their complexity and depth, from joy to grief. He knows the difference between sentimentality and true sentiment, which is essentially that of sincerity.

These two models, then—the Wild Man and the Hero—have enough in them to enable the notion of masculinity to flourish, without limiting it to any one model. The Wild Man can be found in the artist and the stockbroker as well as in the more traditional guises of the farmer and the cowboy. Likewise, the Hero is in the poet and the shopkeeper just as he is in the fireman and the doctor. What is important in both these models of masculinity is that they are not exclusive. For they focus on the innate nature of men rather than their ornate behavior.

We have too long relied on Hollywood for the definition of masculinity, and as a result we have suffered—individually and collectively. In trying to live up to screen images, we have denied (and in some cases entirely lost) our true nature as men, mistaking force for strength, sexual conquest for love, power for honor, and machismo for valor. It is time we put aside these shallow expressions and find instead the deeper meaning of masculinity.



THE TEACHER

*Their Questions asked,
They wait for him to answer.
They wait no more.
Quietly, they pass him by.
His use is almost over.
And they return
With more questions.
Questions he cannot answer.
His use is over now
His life is a life almost lived.
They ask their questions
But only silence answers.*

J. M.

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As the setting for this paper is 1987, I have not updated information on Robert Bly or the Men's Movement. Two of the most informative sources I've found on the poet are: Peseroff, Joyce (ed) (1984) *Robert Bly: When Sleepers Awake*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, and Jones, Richard and Kate Daniels. (eds) (1981). *Of Solitude and Silence: Writings on Robert Bly*. Boston: Beacon. The later contains a bibliography of Robert Bly's poetry, translations, other books and articles by and about him, dissertations and interviews.

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Available on cassette from New Dimensions Foundation, Ukiah, California (www.newdimensions.org)

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Page 8

Joseph Campbell in Maher, J. & D. Briggs *op cit* p. 127.

Northrop Fry. *op cit* pp. 6, 24.

The ceramic ceremonial scene and the shamen on pages 9,10 & 11 are from Jalisco,



West Mexico and date from 200 BC - AD 320. "Music, song, and dance were an integral part of the ritual practices among the various cultures in West Mexico. This wonderfully conceived group depicts a central drummer and two figures playing rattles. Two circles of dancers surround the musicians, with the inner

ring of men and the outer one of women. All their arms are intertwined. Similar choreography has been recorded in the 16th century by the Spanish who observed the Aztec shortly after contact." (From the Land Collection. T90.85.3C.)

Page 9

Michael Meade.(1993) *Men and the Water of Life: Initiation and the Tempering of Men*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco. p. 10.

Bly, Robert. Bly, Robert. (1990) *Iron John: A Book About Men*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley. p. 4.

Page 10

Bly, Robert. *ibid.*, p18.

Meade, Michael. *op cit*. p. 42.

Page 11

Peters, Robert. "News From Robert Bly's Universe: The Man in the Black Coat Turns." in Peseroff *op cit*. p. 304.

Page 12

Bly, Robert. (1990) *op cit*. p.4; *ibid.*, p. 18; Paige, Robert. (1993). "Robert Bly: The

Man's Man of the Men's Movement (Interview)" *Magical Blend*, Issue # 33. p. 24.

Page 13

Molesworth, Charles. " 'Rejoice in the gathering Dark:' The Poetry of Robert Bly." in Peseroff *op cit*. pp. 148, 149, 171.

Page 14

Rossi, Ernest and Donna Spenser. (1990) "A Woman's Way" A Conversation with Marie-Louise von Franz." *Psychological Perspectives* # 22. p.113.

Hillman, James. ((1996). *The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling*." New York: Random House. p.39. See also his (1975) *Re-Visioning Psychology*. New York: Harper and Row.

Page 15

Maxwell Jones. (1988) *Growing Old: The Ultimate Freedom*. New York: Insight Books, Human Sciences Press. p. 16. See also Briggs, Dennie. (2002) *A Life Well Lived: Maxwell Jones—A Memoir*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publisher.

Page 16

Campbell, Joseph. Maher and Briggs, *op cit.*, p. 22.

Page 17

Poems by the late John Maher have appeared in the *Advocate*, *Amelia*, and *Harbinger*. Poems can be read at:

www.poetrypoem.com/poetry2265;

www.poets2000.com/johnspoems;

www.poets2000.com/johnspoems1.

Page 18

Published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* June 23, 1993. (written in response to the policy of the Clinton administration's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy toward homosexuality in the US Armed Forces.

Page 20

Notes on the poem. I never liked the parable itself (Luke 15: 11-32); it strikes me as too pedantic, and lacking the subtlety of the others. I very much doubt its authenticity. I had been thinking about the Prodigal for some time. I often wondered what the story would be like from his point of view. You remember in the parable itself he comes across as a rather selfish brat. But I was inclined to think of him as the psychological counterpart of his elder brother. (As you know, the Bible is full of such dualities.) I wanted to tell his story, not of excess and self-indulgence, but rather of the adventure of self-discovery. He had to “follow his bliss,” as Joseph Campbell would say. As luck would have it, I had a book by Andre Gide called *The Return of the Prodigal*. You can imagine my delight when I read that Gide also perceived the prodigal son’s adventure in much the

same light as I had: the search for the Self. In Gide’s story, he actually returns to his father’s house, and argues his case. But I saw his return more in spiritual terms. The high living was a dead end (most spiritual journeys have their share of dead ends). But he did finally get back on track. In the end, he realizes that even reconciliation with his father would be another dead end, that he must continue to search.

And then as I got out Robert Bly’s *Selected Poems* I noticed: “The Prodigal Son!”

I am appreciative of Craig Fees providing a homeland.

Set in Times New Roman and Charcol
Illustrations are a result of Fred Holle’s inspired tutelage, done in Photoshop

