

Re-Envisaging Masculinity: The Struggle to Be or Become a Man

Some myths about masculine transformation, using the legends of 'Parsifal', 'Iron John' and 'Prince Lindworm'

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Abstract

There are a multitude of historical myths that Joseph Campbell (1969) called “roadmaps” to masculine development: many are out of date or (now) culturally inappropriate; most are ignored; and much has been forgotten.

The Jungian analyst, Robert Johnson re-examined the Arthurian myth of Parsifal in his book, *He: Understanding Masculine Psychology*; additionally, the American poet and promoter of the ‘Wild Man’ movement, Robert Bly, uses the Brothers Grimm’s fairy tale of *Iron John (Iron Hans)* in his ‘lexiconography’; and there is also a dark and ancient Scandinavian fairytale called, *Prince Lindworm*, that speaks about the redemption of a ‘monstrous’ prince through the persistence against all odds and in the face of great fear, of a naïve and innocent girl. All these three myths or legends talk about the transformation of a ‘boy’ (or a potential monster) into a ‘man’.

As with all old myths and fairy tales, there are numerous and varied versions – with different emphases – yet all with incredibly richness: however, they all have a common theme: possibly an unconscious one – the ‘struggle’ or ‘transformation’ that a boy has to go through to become a man. But this is not about the physical process of puberty; nor is it about a “rite of passage”; or even a social-cultural initiation; it is about a psycho-spiritual transformation that can happen at any time and that can be quite upsetting and provoking.

I start with a discussion about this process that precedes the actual re-telling of the myths and about some of the themes or aspects of being a ‘wounded’ man in our “civilised” world. When I started my psychotherapy training, I was familiar with many of these mythic stories, but I had not fully put them together properly: I was (and am) still wounded and I was (and am) still hurting other people badly. So, this discussion and re-telling is also my way of working things out – intellectually, at least. So (I also imagine), I will have to actually “go through” the process of transformation – psychologically and emotionally – in order to “get clear”. This raises up certain fears and issues.

After this discussion, I give a re-telling of the story of ‘Parsifal’, in Appendix 1; and, in Appendix 2, the myth of ‘Iron John’; and in Appendix 3, the tale of ‘Prince Lindworm’: the version that I first encountered in a children’s book belonging to my mother (!)¹

Key Words: Masculinity, Maleness, Transformation, Psychology, Society, Myths.

Male Stereotypes

In a recent article posted on Linked-In, Jessica Cotton² began to explore, ‘The danger of stereotypes’ and particularly those that seem to abound for men (in the West). She writes:

Statistics around boys and young men tell another story. And that is not to say a contradictory story, just another one: men are 3 times more likely than women to complete suicide, with suicide itself as the leading cause of death for men aged under 45. Boys are 4 times more likely to be excluded from school and 3 times more likely to misuse drugs and alcohol. Staggeringly, only 11% of 20 – 50 year olds say there is someone they feel they can speak to in a crisis. (Cotton, 2015)

There are indeed a number of stereotypes that we (men) are exposed to that tend to work to our (male) disadvantage, for example: men are supposed to be strong and tough; we are supposed to work hard; we are supposed to be “white knights” or “super heroes” with very few flaws; and we (men) also have a notorious difficulty in talking about ourselves. We are encouraged to be tough, unemotional and aggressive – to our distinct detriment:

Attempts to conform to the expectations of others can strangle our desires, alienate us from our ‘authentic’ selves and badly damage our self-esteem. Stress, depression and anxiety all form as symptoms of our desperate attempts to keep this suffering hidden, to ‘get on with it’, and for many to ‘man up’. (Ibid)

We are never – ever – encouraged to be soft, open, vulnerable, tender: so ... we are damned. This so-called ‘strength’ is now our lot, our prison, our armour, and our fate. For – for some reason - we dare not throw off these shackles; take off the armour; and expose ourselves (our true selves) for this would expose that which we are inside – and that is often something that we cannot accept.

We (as Men) are never – ever – (or hardly ever) – encouraged to be soft, open, vulnerable, tender: and so ... we are condemned (or damned) into a ‘form’ that is not really ourselves: we are ‘forced’ to grow into a strange, an armoured, or even a ‘monstrous’ shape. This so-called (male) ‘strength’ is now our ‘lot’, our ‘prison’, our ‘armour’, and thus also our ‘fate’. We seem to be unable (nor do we dare) to throw off these shackles; or to take off the armour; or to expose ourselves in this vulnerability, for this would expose our – rejected – “inner self”.

Talking about difficult feelings can make us all feel vulnerable. But how can boys and men in particular throw off the shackles of silence that society thrusts onto them without the very language to describe the ways in which they feel stifled and shamed?

Not being used to talking, or being told emotional expression is somehow a sign of weakness can make seeking help feel impossible. Yet, for those very same reasons it requires a huge amount of strength. How can something so difficult such as seeking support be considered weak? How can we re-frame help seeking as the courage, the bravery that it truly is? (Ibid)

The ‘Male’ Dynamic (or Problem)

Because we – as men – are effectively required to become something that we are not (and, by-the-way, the same applies for women); we eventually become removed – or divorced – from our true or proper ‘Self’ – as this seems to be unacceptable to those around us; and so we then eventually become adverse to that which we were and which we are now not: and therefore we can even become afraid of (or reject) the former (inner or true) ‘self’; and then this becomes something different (or opposite) to what we now are, or to what we have become.

Softness is thus transformed to ‘armour’; kindness is transposed to ‘cruelty’; flexibility becomes adverse to ‘rigidity’; (male) ‘beauty’ becomes metamorphosed to something horrible ... like a seething, crawling, odious ‘worm’ inside. All of these aspects become what we cannot accept, because – what we fear – is that no-one else will accept this side of ourselves as well.

There is also another wonderful fairy-story from Scandinavia, *Prince Lindworm*, and, in this story, a young peasant maiden is condemned to be wedded to a prince – who is a monster! But I get ahead of myself, and that particular story has many different layers ... I am – as often – looking more towards a solution; or looking preferentially at the (wounded) woman’s situation; rather than properly examining the problem – in greater depth – from my own ‘wounded’ (masculine) perspective.

We, men, have largely ‘forgotten’ how to become men, or what it is – really – to be a man. 6,000 years ago (or a little bit more, or a little less), we – or our nomadic ancestors – “liberated” ourselves from the dominant matrilineal culture that we had evolved in (and which is found in many other primitive human and mammalian groupings), and then “took charge” – but we didn’t (by then) know who we were and therefore we also became totally lost: we did not know how to “be” a man; we did not know how to “rule”; and we did not know how to “be” ... ourselves.

From another myth, we had tasted the “fruit” of the “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil” and thus we had become – in effect – “expelled” from the Garden of Eden: the sense of eternal peace and serenity. And we have still not found our way (back or forward) to a better place – despite building empires and striving for utopias.

This is why (perhaps) there is an antipathy to the serene, peaceful and constant and a prevalence of wars, rapes, murders and environmental damage – usually committed mainly by men – and that we cannot, for all our clever and ingenious (masculine) technology – ever – seem to eliminate. We don’t know – we *really* don’t know – how to be ‘nice’.

For the moment, exactly ‘how’ this damage happened (to us individually or collectively) is somewhat irrelevant – and I am not really suggesting that it was anything at all to do with Eve, or a Serpent, or an Apple – but ... since that revelation, since that hiatus ... when we became conscious of ourselves (in a way that animals are not – and thus ingested the ‘knowledge’ of good and evil) ... we have been struggling (really struggling) and mostly with each other, other men; – or struggling against nature (usually to her/our detriment); – rather than struggling within **ourselves** – to find a new definition, or a better way, of just ‘being’ (or ‘becoming’) a man.

We have tried to create kingdoms and empires; we have sought for wisdom in religion, alchemy, science and philosophy; we have used (or abused) technology; and we have also used (and abused) mind-altering drugs or hedonistic pleasures; all to no avail.

We – as men – are still hopelessly lost; and deeply wounded; and we really do not know how to heal ourselves. Women try to help us, but cannot help us: and when they try to, we often hurt them deeply. We do not (often) seek help from other men, because we fear them, or we are ashamed, or because we are also in competition with them ... and they with us: and that is the biological law of nature, and also the psychological basis, of the separation between us (as we are) and our ‘atman’ (spirit), which is what we might have been.

So, we became lost and we are still lost – and we don’t know how to find ourselves (our True Self); and when we try, nearly all the ways that are (we have) signposted tend to lead us astray. However, there are (perhaps) a few fragments of ancient parchments – and a little bit of received wisdom – or a few myths and legends – that can help us, if we can just decipher these.

But then, what works for me, doesn’t necessarily work for you: and, if I tell you how you should ‘be’, then that is perpetuating this nonsense; so, you/we will also have to work it out for your/our selves.

Little Boy Lost

How many young men nowadays come to a point of “wounded-ness” in their adolescence? Seemingly, every young man experiences a degree of wounded-ness to his new-found masculinity: especially around the time of puberty; or at the transition point of young adolescence into the world of men; or when he just wants to be accepted by the ‘tribe’ of other men – or by the ‘mystery’ of women.

By the time that he first meets a girl or a woman, he is already struggling, or, if not, he is already lost. The opening scenes of the film, *The Graduate*, (with Dustin Hoffman and Anne Bancroft) are just one example of this. Many of these wounds are the ‘wound’ of not being “good enough”; or of not “making the grade”; or of not “being successful”; or of “not being liked or loved”. The only people who might – really and truly – be able to help the young man at this point are his ‘elders’, or older men, and most of them/us also (nowadays) don’t really know the answer. We have to reject the modern “stuff”, and thus we only have ready access to some of the old ‘lore’ and to the deeper ‘wisdom’ of myths and legends.

"It is painful to watch a young man realize that his world is not just joy and happiness, to watch the disintegration of his childlike beauty, faith, innocence and trust" (Johnson, 1989). The inevitable ‘step’ into adult ‘maleness’, into daily "work-related" life, into the (so-called) ‘real world’ of money, power, fame and fortune, and also ... into a place where the young man can acknowledge the proper responsibilities of a man – and/or even stand ‘as a man’ – even to be naked in front of a woman ... is a step into the complete unknown. This is all so very difficult, and

it is often felt as harsh and ‘wounding’ in itself, and thus to be avoided by the (false) ‘real’ man: the ‘myth’ of being a man. *Dare we take our armour off?*

It is hard to leave behind, in a sense, the wonders of the maternal / primordial and almost magical, inner fairy-tale world of internal (eternal) all-embracing womb-like paradise of childhood, for the much more unknown external "reality" that is immediate, competitive, harsh and demanding: it is – indeed – a rigorous transition; a true Rite of Passage, and, very often, the young man has to find his way through this, usually unaided (but not necessarily unguided), then he is existentially totally alone.

Often – because of the society around him – the traditions, the conventions, the illusions – these are also false images: this is not a true ‘rite of passage’, this is (actually) a (false) initiation into the world of “real men” – those who don’t eat quiche; those who are not wimps or ‘pussies’; those who struggle and fight – not with themselves, but inevitably with other ‘men’.

What he – this young man – does **not** realise; what is essentially paradoxical; is that it is this struggle, this journey itself – where he, albeit wounded, struggles with himself – is the actual “way out”, the way through, and the way forward – out of the trap! We cannot escape being wounded, or being afraid, or being lost, or not knowing, but – in so being – and in the acceptance of this – we can potentially transform the wound, healing it, and – in so doing – becoming a whole man. This is: perhaps (1) what Machiavelli was trying to do in his book, *The Prince*; this is perhaps (2) what many (male) authors have tried to do in various valedictory or ‘exemplary’ (and usually fictitious) tomes; and this is also perhaps (3) what Wilhelm Reich was trying to do in his polemic (1974) book, *Listen, Little Man!*, however, this last book doesn’t give a clue to the answer of “how to be”, it really only decries what *doesn’t* work.

What Used To Happen

Pubertal initiations, in tribal cultures, which precipitate and guide the process by which a ‘boy’ becomes a ‘man’; and thus he becomes recognised as a viable member of the tribe, are often quite severe and painful “rites of passage”; some are even quite bizarre! ³

The ‘wound’ that is incurred during these rituals is often a physical one – like ritual scarring – to be accepted and carried with pride, as an outward indication of surviving the process of becoming a man. However, sometimes, the ‘wound’ is more internal: in the form of being abandoned in a difficult place, with a high expectation of not surviving the process, like a major journey alone in the ‘outback’; or of having to find (or kill) something (like a lion); or undergoing a vision quest; or through a ‘proof’ of courage and skill; or by killing – or being killed by – a(nother) man; or by making contact with a ‘power’ animal, or a totem; or through having – and thus embodying – a particular ‘task’ or vision.

However, puberty and adolescence – for most modern Western young men – is usually not a pleasant experience: it might include going to a pub with ‘Dad’ for the first time and getting stood a round of drinks by his mates; or it might involve various “pissing contests”; it may be “making” it with a girl; or it is – more often – a relatively unmarked, unknown “rite of passage” – just full of (wet) dreams, fears and frustrations, or a fight behind the bike sheds; and therefore it becomes an obscure, painful and mainly unguided period of adjustment into early manhood! ⁴

Being “thrown in at the deep end”; undergoing ‘gang initiations’; being sent to public school – or to reform school (often surprisingly similar); experiencing pubertal circumcision; being ‘mocked’ by other ‘guys’; etc. ... are usually quite damaging ‘wounds’, rather than wounds to be transcended, but this type of emotional ‘wound’ – being just physically or emotionally scarring – does not heal the soul, nor does it allow the spirit to grow.

This is why it is often repeated, often over and over again: e.g. that **(a)** fighting other guys makes one a ‘man’, but then one has to ‘stay’ there as the “King of the Castle”, which involves more and more fights; or that **(b)** ‘success’ – in material terms – is the main goal of life (if we get the ‘partnership’, or the Porsche, or the million dollars, or the annual ‘bonus’ – then we are ‘made’; or alternatively **(c)** that the concept of getting it ‘off’ with a girl, or not ‘getting it off’ with a girl, can ... make or break us – which sometimes even turns into sex addiction. ⁵

These are all ‘false’ goals: the only ‘real’ goal is what the ancient Greeks wrote above the entrance to the cave in which the Delphic Oracle would tell you your ‘fate’: and – of course – if you followed this maxim – paradoxically – you would not really need the Oracle: because it is ... to “Know Thyself”.

Initiation

The onset of puberty in boys often brings these potential young men face-to-face with the harsh physical realities of actually ‘being’ a man: they may have to hunt, to fight, and even to kill; they may be able to ‘win’ their first encounter with something big and bad (like a wild boar; or like the mythical Red Knight for Parsifal (see Appendix 1); or the ‘dragon’ that appears in many legends (like in Ursula Le Guin’s (1968) *A Wizard of Earthsea*,⁶) but these are all externalisations. The struggle is really (and very clearly) with something ... or someone ... deep within oneself: this internal ‘Dragon’ is often referred to (within Jungian psychology) as one’s “Shadow”.

And whilst it may seem that this struggle also might mean killing someone (or something) that is essentially armoured, symbolic, frightening, alien, hidden, monstrous, and/or anonymous – the ‘Dragon’, or the ‘Shadow’: it is really the struggle to kill (or soften, or transform) those particular aspects of our Self that are (or have become) the hard, alien, cut-off, dangerous, withdrawn, monstrous and obsessed, aspects. So, this can also (perhaps) be something of a form of reconciliation with those aspects of our Self that have become alien, or cut-off. This sort of distancing (objectification) through the ‘initiation’ may be designed to harden a young man’s feelings, but this sort of ritual also actually imperils his soul, his tenderness, and his humanity: it is therefore a ‘false’ initiation.

In order, outwardly, to become a ‘man’ – in this external sense – our young man, or ‘He’ – has had to become a cold, impersonal killer of another man, or of something ‘bad’: he has had to ‘steel’ himself and, in so doing, his soul is often stolen; or his heart hardens. This is what Reich calls the ‘armouring’ process; it is this ‘hardening’ process that actually turns ‘men’ into ‘monsters’. However, this ‘hardening’ process takes ‘him’ further from being himself: his true ‘Self’.

Actually, and ideally, the process of male transformation should be one of purification and spiritual healing: so ... we should (instead) wrestle with ... not the external ... but with our own internal monsters and daemons in order to defeat them, or we need to gain their power for ourselves, in a good (transformative) way. In the externalisation, we have to wrestle with something else, usually bigger and stronger than us, over and over again, and – in order to survive – we have to become as ‘big’ and as ‘strong’ and as ‘bad’ and as ‘hard’ as it (supposedly) is: and so we lose out: we become lost.

But we also cannot go through this initiation ... from within ... the comfortable (and also restricting) confines of the familial home. If we stay in the ‘home’, and if we struggle with our ‘father’ or ‘mother’, and – as we are still dependent on them – we may not be able to survive emotionally, as we have to conform to our parental wishes and parameters; but, we will – in effect – stay as a child; we cannot grow up in this confining environment. We have to break out – somehow! And to something!

So, this break-out takes us into the “unknown”. Parsifal – in the legend – realised this: the best intentions of his mother, Herzeleide [which incidentally means “suffering heart”], are totally understandable, but they also limit him disastrously. One of the edicts that she puts on him is not to ask questions: and when Parsifal gets to the Castle of the Grail and the (real and) Perilous Question is needed to be asked, he fails to do so, and so, nothing is healed, he is out in the wilderness – and it takes him 20 years to get back to the Grail Castle again (see Appendix 1).

The “Wild Man” must be kept inside his cage – as in the story of *Iron John* (see Appendix 2), so that, as a child, we can continue to play with our golden toys safely. But – if we get too close to the Wild Man – ‘he’ will inevitably change us. And so – at some point – we will have to choose: to stay as we are (as a child); or to break the rules, steal the key from under our mother’s pillow, and then have to leave the ‘home’ – and start to grow up. But, in order to grow up, we will firstly have to break the rules, and secondly, we have to leave the parental home.

What our present Western culture does not acknowledge is this necessity – of pain, of abandonment, of being alone, of having to struggle to survive in order to grow up, spiritually. It does not happen easily, just by itself, or as a ‘gift’ from the parents: it is their job to protect us until we are big enough, god enough, to leave home.

There are, nowadays, many forms of modern initiations: like being accepted to play in a team or club; learning a particular skill or craft (apprenticeship); going hunting or fishing with your dad (or uncle); going away from home – to school or university; getting a job; getting married; etc. But there are very few good (functional) roadmaps for this process of ‘male’ initiation: because it is a spiritual process, a “journey”, and not a material, occupational, geographical or physical journey. So, we – as men – often don’t have the inner resources to cope: we get doubly wounded; and then something else happens.

Sexuality

However, in the journeying process, the newly found biological urges and cultural (often sexualised) fantasies can also impact enormously on a young man’s (immature) sense of himself and his awareness of his growing sexuality. As boys grow up, their erotic self (largely masturbatory) is indirectly (by the culture around them) condemned to the dark, the toilets, or locked away in lurid (forbidden) magazines, pornography and the ‘underground’ (internet) fantasies of his (potential) sexual life.

This ‘distortion’ is also due to true masculine sexuality not being accepted, or successfully integrated, by our current cultural structures: the family, schools, educational structures, professional trainings, state regulation and religions, etc ... that exist around us. There was a recent report that teenagers and young adolescents have never before been exposed to the current amount of pornography.⁷ This absence (of acceptance) sends a ‘societal’ message that the boy’s sexuality cannot be open and free, cannot be truly enjoyable *with* someone else, but has to be conducted underground in the hidden, shadow, shady, murky and forbidden part of a boy’s life, where power is not shared ‘with’ the Loved One, but is ‘over’ them, or ‘subject; to them: i.e. that the ‘man’ does things to the woman, or the woman ‘does’ things to the man.

There is often such a silence (no healthy discussion about emergent sexuality) for young men, at this crucial time of development, that their sexuality may often be perceived (by himself) as being dirty (wet dreams), unhealthy (masturbation can make you blind)⁸; sinful (onanism), shameful (corrupting) or disgraceful⁹; and almost certainly needing to be hidden from his family’s (and wider society’s) knowing. This ‘shamefulness’ is epitomised in the ‘secrecy’ surrounding brothels, licentious institutions, pornography, and the like.

"There is a bizarre assumption that masculinity on one level excludes sexuality" (Wyly, 1989 a&b), as [his] sexuality is not *"openly acknowledged, integrated and clear!"* As a result, young men tend to become split-off from the healthy parts of themselves, and they start to act out their sexuality in the darker shadows of their life (behind the bike sheds; in the back row of the cinema; or on the back seat of a car parked-up in a dark lane). It is speculated that a boy’s pubertal experiences and the concomitant split-off or ‘wounding’ often stays with him throughout his life; eventually and hopefully, to be redeemed and healed consciously – with or without the love of a good woman; but more often, not!

In the *Parsifal* story (Appendix 1), women play a distinctly distracting role. The ‘mother’ (wounded herself) gives wrong advice; in his first proper encounter with another female, she is pure and innocent [Blanchefleur = White Flower], and then he “stole her ring” and probably deflowered her; and then his next significant encounter was with the enigmatic Kundry. Here, he has to demonstrate his ‘truth’ to his own sexuality and not become seduced by the sorceress’ temptation. Given the Christian components of the story, he retains his purity, and his redemption, by not becoming actually sexual.

In the legend of *Iron John* (see Appendix 2), the ‘hero’ eventually wins the Princess – and her father’s kingdom, plus becoming reunited with his own parents and thus (supposedly) being their successor ... however, ‘she’ is a fairly token Princess, with little active involvement, and whilst she recognises his true worth, there is little else that she partakes in the story. Yes, she

tosses him the “golden apple”, but – so what! He is the only one to get close to her: stuck on top of a mountain of glass (or ice): i.e. a very frigid form of sexuality.

Interestingly enough, in the *Prince Lindworm* story (see Appendix 3), the ‘monster’ that needs transforming is the eldest child: the first-born; the true Prince; the heir. And he was never accepted, was not brought up properly, nor was he loved or cared for, but he was hidden away, or he hid away ... until his ‘birth-right’ was threatened. This is often true of male sexuality: we have to hide it away. When it emerges, it may be surprising, controversial, threatening, monstrous, etc.

It is also interesting to note that the King (in the story) is an absent father that has very little to do with the young man; the younger brother is also a wimp, a spoilt child, who wants everything done for him. The transformational process here lies in the hands of the women in the story: the Queen (his mother), who has to confess her part in the deception and whose original ‘transgression’ was not to follow the rules of the older (wiser) woman, the ‘witch’; the Witch herself, who enigmatically returns and helps the young shepherdess to avoid death and win the Prince; and the young shepherdess, who – through her courage and determination – wins through and redeems the Prince.

Now, here the process (of transformation) gets interesting: in the process of the shepherdess shedding her shifts, she ends up (presumably) naked and then – naked – whips the pulpy mass of the ‘monster’... the ultimate Prince; then bathes him in (redeeming) milk; and then takes him into her arms (or bed). Wow! Maybe it was worth all the pain, isolation and effort! But, however ‘lustful’ or potentially redeeming, we are still left with a fairly two-dimensional version of womanhood.

We would need to go to other myths and legends to get a better picture of feminine development and how the masculine and the feminine can work together. So, beside the book, *He: understanding Masculine Psychology*, (Johnson, 1991) which uses the legend of Parsifal, Robert Johnson also writes (1992) about *She: Understanding Feminine Psychology*, using the Greek myth of Psyche & Eros; followed by, *We: Understanding the Psychology of Romantic Love*, using the Arthurian legend of Tristan & Iseult (Johnson, 1993); and then we find, *Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the dark side of the psyche* (Johnson, 1994), where he asserts that “until we have undertaken the task of accepting and honouring the shadow within us, we cannot be balanced or whole, for what is hidden never goes away, but merely – and often painfully – turns up in unexpected places.”¹⁰ The last in his series is entitled, *The Fisher King and the Handless Maiden: Understanding the wounded feeling function in masculine and feminine psychology* (Johnson, 1995). In all of these books, and similar ones, there seems to be a surrendering of overt (male) sexuality towards tenderness and union with the feminine.

Another ‘mythic’ and esoteric author, Dion Fortune, explores similar themes in some of her fictional books,¹¹ where she advocates that true sexual energy can be used – in a sort of controlled, mystical, tantric way – to achieve a greater spirituality. These mythic issues are also echoed in some of Charles William’s fictional books¹², in some of George MacDonald’s children’s books¹³, as well as some of the better-known ‘fantasy’ books by C.S. Lewis¹⁴ and some of those (much better known) works of J.R.R. Tolkien¹⁵.

Other ‘modern’ books that portray a somewhat different image of the male archetype include: XX – in addition, nowadays, there are many different stereotypes of ‘successful’ modern men in the media: viz: The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, David Bowie, Leonard Cohen, Boy George, Elton John, etc., etc. However, many other ‘popular’ stereotypes still echo the predominant ‘male’ paradigm: viz. James Bond; the somewhat masochist books of Dick Francis; and similarly, Lee Child’s *Reacher*; etc. ... whereas other ‘modern heroes’ try to echo a softer or more gentle type of ‘hero’: e.g. George Smiley, XXXXXXX

So, the main epithet is still that the (potentially) ‘wild’ man has to be controlled, to be contained, to become ‘civilised’: the nature of the Id is that it needs to become suppressed (or tamed); because we are terrified of the potential of rampant violence or sexuality and this fear even existed in Ancient Greece (3,500 years ago) with *their* ‘fear’ of the Dionysian rituals or of Dionysian ‘madness’; the ‘distancing’ oneself from Achilles’ type of blood-thirsty rampant berserker-type violence; and the ‘appreciation’ of Ulysses’ intelligence.

And, so, we – as men – tend to – or are encouraged to – suppress these ‘aspects’ of ourselves: we do not ‘wrestle’ with it: we do not try to find what its true creative potential is – especially when it is ‘seen’ in conjunction with, or confronted by, a powerful, sexual female.

There are also increasingly a number of excellent books about different types of female sexuality – totally independent of any ‘archetypes’ of male sexuality – but these don’t really need to concern us here. The archetype of such, Lilith, who was created equally with Adam, from the same earth and at the same time; however, she became transformed into a female demon, or a monster of the night, who eventually mated with Samael (Satan or Death). In some stories, she rejects Adam because she refused to become subservient to him. In any case, she was rejected for the “lesser female” form of Eve. Many other ‘powerful’ women have – throughout history – been similarly ‘demonised’. But, again, I will not go further into this particular line of enquiry here.

Suicide

Other types of male wounding that can happen around the time of puberty – that can further impact on a young man's fragile sense of his masculinity – are: a boys’ first love and loneliness; his first sexual encounter (often a disaster); probable subsequent rejections from a girlfriend; parental or ‘authoritarian’ disapproval; attempts by him trying to me independent; the potential for sexual abuse (sometimes from people who ‘should’ be trustworthy (teachers, scout-masters, priests, etc.); the separation/divorce of the role-model “lovers” (one’s parents); parental driven-ness for the boy to succeed (usually academically, career-wise or financially); feeling rejected, abandoned, emasculated, ... and so on.

Because ... this is what happens: if one is not seen as ... one of the boys; or if the only way of getting noticed (admired) is by being a rebel; or by becoming the “black sheep”; and/or by not conforming to collective "male standards"; or by being sensitive, effeminate, artistic, poetic, different (weird), or a non-sporting person in a sports-mad culture ... etc, etc! Each man has his own story, his own struggle: and every story carries the significant image of a ‘wound’! This is all archetypal stuff. We are (probably) already aware of the suicide rates for this age group.

Whatever the cause, a young man's sense of maleness can be devastatingly wounded at this time, but hopefully not totally destroyed. Alas, some young men (unfortunately way too many – about 15 per 100,000 – or 350 per annum of 15-19 year olds in the UK) distressingly commit suicide at this point in their life ... presumably because their life becomes just too painful: the incidence of adolescent male suicides is appallingly high; this is the ultimate in despair; and it is also the ultimate “fuck you” to all of the rest of us. This suicide rate goes on rising to a peak until about 40 years old. These people’s own particular ‘wounding’ is often experienced as a loss of meaning, a loss of hope for the future, a form of rejection, and/or annihilation, and is often coupled with a devastation of any of their (new found) self-esteem. Peter Gabriel in his famous song “Don't Give Up” wrote of the young man’s potential suicidal tendency at this time:

*"... taught to fight, taught to win, I never thought I could lose"... [then]
"No fight left or so it seems, I am a man whose dreams have all deserted [me]..."*

There are many other similar songs that echo the difficulties of adolescence: like the Jersey Boys’ “Walk Like a Man”:

*"Oh how you tried to cut me down to size; Telling dirty lies to my friends;
But my own father - said give her up - don't bother, The world isn't coming to an end."
"Walk like a man! Talk like a man, Walk like a man, My son!"*

And another perspective is given from “X Wild’s” 1969, heavy-metal ‘Savageland’ album, the explicit, “Die Like A Man” track.¹⁶

Politics

If we extend the lost-ness, the not-knowingness, and the desire for something better, into a wider national and political genre, then the somewhat enigmatic Leonard Cohen song ‘Democracy’ says it all! In a 1992 interview, he recounted that there were about 50 versions that he had discarded

from 1988, when he started to write it, until the final version was occasioned, or inspired, by the fall of the Berlin wall. In another 1992 interview, he said: *"It is the beginning of a culture, a great culture, because it will affirm other cultures, and a great religion because it affirms other religions. It is part of the appetite for fraternity and for equality that we have that has been animated in our hearts by the whole experiment. But we're just at the beginning, we're just at the edge of it."*¹⁷ Anyway, listen to it and see for yourself if something in these lyrics speaks to you.¹⁸ John Lennon wrote something different, but still a bit whimsical: *"All we are saying is 'Give Peace a Chance!'"*

Typically, a young man's dreams have all become deserted: he is badly wounded and left feeling worthless, defeated. He wanders in a Wasteland. Such a masculine wound is also directed to his generative ability; his ability to be creative from within himself, and externally to be potent in the world. The young man feels psychologically impotent, with no self-love, and therefore little or no capacity to experience his own beauty. He is left with a haunting sense of incompleteness and he is often too young to face it alone, as it is too overwhelming. So the young man metaphorically hides and runs away from the wounded "private part" of himself: - much like Parsifal did!

Alternatively our adolescent man can become hard and cruel – “just like a Man”, as the world seems to want him to be, and then we just repeat and repeat the abuses of the past. Leonard Cohen's lyrics in his sardonic song, *"The Future"* also echoed something of this.¹⁹

So, what can we possibly do? Or are we trapped as the Reichian therapist, Ellsworth F. Baker indicated in his (2000) book, *"Man in the Trap"* where he writes *"Wherever we turn we find man running around in circles as if trapped and searching for the exit in vain and in desperation ... The trap is man's emotional structure, his character structure."* This is what might have to change: but change into ... what?

Power and Recognition

Therefore, one traditional remedy for men is to hold a supportive process of initiation for adolescents and have elder men 'mentor' these younger ones: and this is what many traditional cultures do: many cultures, except (notably) the modern, Western, Judeo-Christian culture. The Jewish culture has the Bar-Mitzvah, which is something quite significant. The third set of the "People of the Book" – unfortunately – currently don't have anything similar, which is also why we may be seeing increasing problems in young male Islamists. Perhaps there is a warning (or an opportunity) here, with the Arab Spring of 2010, with the seeming popularity of quite extremist views, given all the successes and failures of the past, that we cannot afford to ignore.

Modern (young) men tend to charge off, hoping to find something that will make them feel good again (i.e. heal their 'wounded' masculinity), achieve something (over others), or acquire some material 'things' (for themselves). Many young males seek out more modern crusade-like experiences (like Grand Theft Auto and other "shoot-'em-up" computer games), or put a lot of effort into looking good and 'proving themselves' (often quite brashly) as they come out into this world.

Young men generally want to ignore that wounded part of themselves and hope that they will find Themselves when they have achieved their short-term 'goal' – of getting the "goodies" of material rewards or recognition (that even martyrdom can bring); or the sort-after "shiny objects" like watches, cars, knives, guns, etc; or fantasies of rescuing the fair maiden, the Princess; i.e. "getting the girl" (though she often experiences it more like an assault on her "cherry" at which point he loses interest); or like winning the Red Knight's armour (see the story of Parsifal) or finding the mythical (quasi-phallic) Holy Spear. All these external "goals" distract him from finding out something about his true nature: he/they will just feel a bit better about themselves – and so they do, but alas, only for a little while.

Boredom, restlessness, inner emptiness and their wounded-ness all return, all too quickly! For any quest – for power, knowledge, recognition, etc., or for outer forms of glory – cannot touch the inner part of their soul: and these 'quests' are usually undertaken primarily to ease the pain of loss: the loss of the Self – and are doomed to fail as they only succeed in inflating an already

wounded masculine ego. Attempts to bolster self-worth, potency and power in this world – especially in brash young men – are usually doomed to failure: and Carlos Casteneda’s lovely description of the Four Enemies of Man²⁰ tells it all! How many young men each day over-ride their wounds (or wounded-ness) and just ride off on their daily ‘quest’, hoping that this will fill their void? And, if they don’t have a clear channel for this – via work or academic success – then they can prefer the Jihad, or even martyrdom!

Materialism v. Spirituality

Our modern Western culture ‘teaches’ the young man that everything desirable can essentially be reduced to physical possessions, women, power, money, work, sport, and activities to distract and to entertain. A young man may therefore seek out woman after woman, looking for the “perfect partner”, however when women (alone or in succession) – or football game after football game; or more and more money; or the job promotion; or a Rolex watch, or a Porsche; or whatever – can never really ‘cure’ the young man of his inner longings: his deep wound! It is, of course, a psychic or spiritual wound that cannot be healed materially. There are, of course, many different goals: but some of these can often be very elusive, and mostly not within the young man’s sight – blinded as he is by the culture of materialism.

The physical, biological, hormonal developmental process – that transforms him from a boy into a man during his puberty and adolescence – and that has totally dominated the young man for several years – begins to settle down in his late teens. He is now attaining his future physical shape, as a man. There then needs to be an integration and acceptance process of this new young ‘man’ into the wider tribe of men, and also an integration of this new shape and his new potentials, into him ‘Self’. Only then, once this acceptance process has been completed, can the young man then start on the next phase of his development: his psychic or spiritual maturation.

Ken Wilbur speaks about eight stages in the development of consciousness (Brown, 2007), but most people only progress through the first three or four stages: ‘tribal’ or ‘pre-self’, which is the level of basic survival; the ‘ego’ or ‘self-centric’, which is where we express our ‘power’ over others; ‘ethno’ or ‘group-centric’ in which we subject ourselves to the power, logic and law of the group; and then perhaps, for some, ‘modern’ or ‘world-centric’, where individual achievement can distinguish us from the group. However, the next level is much more difficult as this is that of the ‘sensitive self’ – where we can submit to the greater good; where relationship is more important than achievement; and where process is more important than outcome. But even here, we are at the limits of the first threshold (or ‘tier’) of consciousness.

Carl Gustav Jung also speaks about the “process of individuation”, which expresses the process by which the individual Self eventually develops out of an undifferentiated **unconscious: the ‘soup’ of childhood conformity**. It is a developmental **psychic process**, during which innate elements of personality, the components of the immature **psyche**, and the experiences of the person's life, slowly become integrated, over time, into a well-functioning whole. This indicates that the young man eventually needs to individuate himself, to find himself, and also to ‘separate’ in some way from the ‘common weal’ of being with other men: he needs to find his uniqueness. But this is a different transition. We are concerned with the earlier transition, from a child to an adolescent young man: and incorporating something of becoming a ‘prince’, and not just a mature man.

Daniel Siegel writes, in *Brainstorm* (2013) about: “Why Adolescents May Be the Most Creative and Courageous Individuals in Our Human Family”; “The Fundamental Change in the Brain that May Be Behind Risky Adolescent Behavior”; “How Homework, Electronics, and Sleep Patterns Affect the Teenage Brain”; “Your Limbic System and Brain Stem Work Together to Help You Get Motivated, but Your Teenager's Brain Is Different”; and “Why Certain Psychiatric Disorders Like Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, and Addiction Often Surface during Adolescence”.²¹ This suggests that there is a whole neuro-psycho-biological process that happens to the adolescent brain. So, there may be much more to adolescence that we think!

We leave aside our spirituality at our cost. We will not be able to grow or progress without acknowledging this, following it, and going through the various 'psychic' or spiritual stages of development. These will take us away from the gross, the material, and the hedonistic values.

Glamour v. Pornography

Generally, men also have the strongly cultured belief of finding the "perfect woman" because all the books and films tell us that this is what should happen ... and then we'll live happily ever after: excuse me, that's the signifier of a fairy tale! In this belief system, the man is unconsciously looking for something – anything – to give his life the meaning and the beauty that he senses could be attainable – should be his. Of course, it is his own meaning and beauty that he is searching for: and/but – of course – he is defended against that and so projects it outwards onto the 'perfect' partner – who will never be able to give him that.

A familiar problem with young men, mostly in the West, is that he/they often fall for the honey-trap of "feminine good looks", which he then equates to him feeling good. She becomes a trophy: arm-candy or eye-candy! This is a cultural cosmetic lie for both men and women, who especially strive to "capture the heart" of the "good looking man", with little or no regard to any form of actual relationship, tenderness, self-worth, or character actually within that person: it is all superficial. This is the tragedy of most relationships that founder on these illusionary goals.

Annie Lennox sings, "*Keep young and beautiful - It's your duty to be beautiful - Keep young and beautiful - If you want to be loved.*" The man ultimately finds out that it's not possible for his "perfect" woman/wife to redeem his soul, or heal his wound, as she is with him for the wrong reasons (she has – in his eyes – often become a plastic Barbie doll to his Ken: a "Stepford wife"; a trophy). And women buy into this by trying to "keep young and beautiful". However, they are also increasingly dissatisfied by their inner desires not being met, as well. But we have to leave that aside for the moment.

We are surrounded by so many cultural and sexual images throughout our Western culture, and, most of the time, superficial attraction and casual sex is encouraged: there is virtually no reference to any 'higher' values. "Sowing one's wild oats" is a culturally endorsed practice for young men and the collective often understands it and condones it as such: as long as he eventually settles down and "plays the game". Fathers or uncles often initiate a young man by taking him to a brothel for his first sexual experience. This gives the societal message to a young man that – if he has many casual sexual encounters – he will feel good about himself and will therefore "feel like a man": the Beach Boys' song, "California Girls" also epitomises something of this. Then, it is assumed that young men will eventually 'settle down', marry and become good husbands and fathers. How? How on earth is this any of this some form of a preparation or initiation into proper sustainable male sexuality, or modern Man-hood?

Current pornography is on the increase – and this, where the (pubescent) woman mostly subjects (or abuses) herself for male pleasurable fantasies – is a horrendous distortion of what should be / could be happening sexually between men and women. This is probably one of the 'modern' Seven Deadly Sins: ²² replacing 'Lust'; just as 'Extravagance' has replaced 'Gluttony'; and 'Self-righteousness' has replaced 'Pride' – but I digress.

Forbidden Taboos

One may also ask (though most people don't), what happens to all the deflowered maidens (all of them someone's daughter) that are discarded along the way to this form of manhood? This is a destructive form of adolescent masculinity that is endorsed, both implicitly and sometimes more explicitly, by our culture – and it cripples our men, from the cradle to the grave: it also seriously damages the females involved. It is not a patriarchy: it is a fuck up! And some of the few people who have been brave enough to say so, get killed, or put in prison, or persecuted: no-one wants to hear that the Emperor – the dominant male culture – has no clothes.

Occasionally someone breaks the taboo: sometimes even a woman. Germaine Greer's (1970) *The Female Eunuch*: was one such book. Mary Orr (2000) writes: "*I will be paying particular attention to the codified roles and rights for men within the legal framework ... They*

reveal various negative power- and social relationships with men, as well as with women, to demonstrate that, while law is on their side, not all men are equal or unaffected by the laws of Patriarchy” (p.2). However, some men also speak out occasionally: Wilhelm Reich’s (1974) *Listen, Little Man*; James Nelson’s (1988) *The Intimate Connection*; Roy McCloughry’s (1992) *Men and Masculinity: From Power to Love* (which says it all!); and Richard Rohr’s (2005) book, *From Wild Man to Wise Man: Reflections on male spirituality*, all speak to similar issues.²³ But the young men of today don’t often read such books, or use such language (often expressed with a very Christian flavour), or would even welcome such a message. Other such essays are slowly also bringing this to our wider attention.

Patriarchy

Additionally, all of this sort of work, against patriarchy, is an attempt to try to get away from the focus that is centred on the penis or on male power: a phallic attitude that does not involve the heart in any way whatsoever: *“the attainment of manhood is often equated with active use of man’s phallus”* (Monick, 1987). There is absolutely nothing mentioned – ever – about proper tenderness or melting, orgasmic union, surrendering to the moment, prolonged intimacy, or even deep conversation. “Wham, Bang: Thank You Ma’am!” and only a lucky few actually get the ‘Thank You’, most of these instances are short-lived “flings” and “brief encounters”, with a request for the follow-up being met with silent absence.

Young men are perhaps too young, or too unaware, or too selfish and self-centred (narcissistic) to consider the other person involved, except possibly to keep her available for the next “shag”, keeping her “hanging on” for whenever she is wanted; or to build any form of relationship outside the bedroom; or to do any of the necessary “inner work” in order to explore something different; and thus to oppose the collective adolescent masculine societal ideals. This is very understandable: we are young, and – we have to learn to put away “these foolish things”. But what are the excuses of older men?

Sanderson (2002) writes: *“It is therefore fairly easy to attribute this faulty role-model of ‘adolescent masculinity’ to three main factors: namely; the “Don Juan legacy”; an un-integrated erotic life; and a total inability to “be a man” and thus to relate authentically!”* Let us look at these in slightly more detail.

The ‘Don Juan’ Legacy

Don Juan, or ‘Don Giovanni’, was an archetypal 17th century fictional character, and has often been portrayed in various formats. As a wealthy, seductive libertine, he was constantly beset by erotic thoughts, had the sexual morals of an alley cat, and pursued a life of vengery, debauchery, violence, gambling and trickery throughout his life: an acronym is *The Trickster of Seville*.

Prolonged intimacy – apparently – made him fidgety and he needed constant sexual stimulation in order to avoid becoming bored: nowadays he would probably be considered as a sexual adrenaline ‘junkie’ and a candidate for Sex & Love Addicts Anonymous. But those cultures that support (or endorse) the progress of a young rake or playboy (like Fielding’s *Tom Jones*), like the 2014 Korean film, “Hot-blooded Youth”, or cultures where institutions like “The Hell-Fire Club”²⁴ can exist, or where brothels and prostitution is accepted as the “oldest profession” and a “necessary evil”, all of these cultures lack an effective model of inner growth or spiritual development – other than he shouldn’t be emulated because he came to a “sticky” end; or try and be as pure as Jesus Christ, whose “marriage” at Cana was almost certainly edited out of the Bible after the Council of Nicaea. These societies promote this kind of ‘moral’ (good ⇔ evil, black ⇔ white) juxtaposition and there are a host of interpretation of the Don Juan legend throughout the centuries. It is not surprising that these cultures see other, more integrated societies – like some of the African tribal cultures or the North American Indian culture – as “savage”, “immoral” and “heathen”.

However, there exists almost exactly the same “collective” perception in modern man, that if he beds many women then he is having a really good time; he is “Alfie”; has had a “good innings”; he is “one of the lads”, or “a randy bugger” (said with warmth and admiration): he can

also boast to his workmates that “he got his leg over”, or. “got his rocks off” last night. Married men, committed to (apparent) monogamy, are slightly looked down on and denigrated in contrast. Man's fears of any flagging wounded masculinity are generally laid to rest by such ‘conquests’, and he will often retell stories of his sexual prowess to other men in order to win their admiration and approval: that “he can still ‘get it up’”.

The Mystery of Masculinity

Western definitions of masculinity congratulate a man for: his "Don Juan" abilities; his sexual prowess, often measured in how many times he can ‘come’ in a night, or the outsmarting (cuckolding) of other men; his power or strength (over others); his coolness, or his rational process, or any dispassionate and logical reasoning (viz: Sherlock Holmes); in Scots, “a canny man”. This may even (and probably does) extend to deceiving the desired woman as well: especially since many women like to feel loved and desired for themselves, and would not want to be seen as just another tick in the box of a very long list.

Robert Johnson (1989) said, "*It is eloquent that in our modern language we describe men we admire as ‘cool,’* [meaning not warm and relational]." Man's inability to relate authentically is a culturally transmitted "wrong path," which keeps boys and men alienated from expressing their feelings. We hear of the need for "self-love", but men in particular often do not like what they have become and by middle age often feel totally empty.

Modern man's feeling of ‘emptiness’ is often seduced by "Don Juan's" very adolescent masculinity as Don Juan "beds the women" or “gets the girls” and an empty middle-aged man can all too often re-vitalise his life only with an affair with a younger woman, or even, during the subsequent crisis, does he start to feel re-vitalised. So modern man, being somewhat envious, tries to emulate Don Juan's adolescent masculinity in to his (well-past adolescent) life – with devastating consequences. Man's tendency to seek out, or repeatedly fantasize, about sexual experiences outside of his "primary" relationship, carries a terrible cost to himself. The costs are experienced in restlessness, moods, depression, and relationship problems or breakdown, often the split-off from wife and children and his home, plus a general addition to his already wounded self. Why, because the inner trickery, the shady (split-off) adolescent side of "Don Juan" man has overcome the truer ‘nobler’ aspects of his masculinity.

Man may also come to disdain (loath) his sexuality and if so, this eats away at his self-worth, as in the knowing of his own soul, he feels humiliated "as a sexual man" – he is emasculated or feels that he has emasculated himself. His sexual, ‘shadow-shady’ thoughts, his addiction to porn, and his self-worth, even in a society that otherwise esteems him, have left him feeling humiliated. Conversely, the more eroticism is repressed or ignored the more it gestates, until it bursts forth into inappropriate and extremely harmful sexual shadow-side activity. For an example of this, we need only reflect on how priests can sexually abused children in their care; the prevalence of pornography, or using prostitutes and massage parlours; the high incidence of middle-aged men having affairs – often with a woman younger than their wife; and the onset of other addictions (alcohol, gambling, etc.) or obsessive activities that carry their own ‘thrill’! Clearly, any form of eroticism must be properly integrated and expressed appropriately!

Phallic energy and sexual thoughts, at their essence, are man's innate desire to connect with his life force, to feel alive, potent and creative. Therefore, man's fantasies are empowering thoughts that an inwardly bored, empty or disempowered man has to try and re-connect himself to feeling powerful and potent again. Most sexual attacks are psychologically understood as issues of power! Sexual thoughts towards a perfect stranger are to be understood as the healthy life instinct within man (the creative masculine) that is wanting expression in his life. However, he must ultimately understand that those same sexual thoughts and desires are totally inappropriate if pursued in isolation from true relating which would only lead to harmful actions and emptiness. Sexual actions without authentic relating split man off, foremost from the true masculine; the alive-ness, the "feel good" life force that he seeks. However, that healthy instinct within man is stirring up man's erotic sexual nature to ultimately reconnect him with his feelings, to reunite the split-off sides of himself and be co-creative. Unbeknown to most men, this is what drives his

"desires and fantasies" for sexual conquest! Man's "desires" emerge to re-connect him with his own feelings and to be creative and relational. Simplistically, man is being asked on an interior level to give his feelings expression! The healthy, instinctual life force pushes man's erotic nature into creative expression and ultimately towards wholeness of being in his life. This occurs only when erotic, sexual man co-exists with loving relating man; the two must not be split!

Erotic love is quite rightly part of the beauty and relatedness that men seek. Erotic love can be successfully integrated into true masculinity with a revitalized desire to feel and relate authentically. However, modern man is so badly wounded "too ill to live but not ill enough to die" (the "Fisher King" modern malaise) and the path towards true masculinity is rarely portrayed for him to see. In the myth of Parsifal, the Holy Spear (the masculine weapon or phallus) had gone off (was missing) and hence was split off from the Holy Chalice (feeling and beauty). For each man the journey is to learn, heal and change his life to live this true masculinity. The legend of Parsifal shows 'men' something of the way in which they can heal their 'inner' wound and to metaphorically re-unite the 'spear and chalice' (masculine and feminine) within themselves as an initial part of their spiritual growth.

However, we have a few new archetypes still remaining to "aim for" or to guide us. There is the lovely Hindu maxim, as outlined in *The Miracle of Purun Bhagat* in Kipling's *The Second Jungle Book*: '20 years a child; 20 years a warrior; 20 years a parent or a householder; and then one devotes the rest of one's life to God', however that is not suitable for everyone.

Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette (1992) argue that mature masculinity is generative, creative and empowering to self and others. They outline four mature male archetypes: the King (with the energy of justice and ordering); the Warrior (with the expressive or 'egressive' [out-going], but not aggressive energy of non-violent action); the Magician (who uses the energy of initiation and transformation); and the Lover (who is connected to others and the world). They also, interestingly, give the 'shadow' or immature sides of these four archetypes: the 'Puer Aeternus' (the child-god, [like Peter Pan], the divine child, who never grows up); the Oedipal child (who is mother-fixated and/or who wants to kill his father – symbolically, at least; the Destroyer, the Failure, the Man who cannot Love); the Trickster (with no real talent or ability whatsoever); and the Hero, or 'Golden Boy', or Narcissist (who just wants to be loved and admired).

Sam Keen (1992) also argues against the modern 'distortions' of male initiations and mutilations: especially the 'rite' of war (becoming cannon fodder or abusing the power to rape and pillage), the 'rite' of work (drudgery and the high price of success); and the 'rite' of sex (getting laid and keeping score); and instead explores a set of 'ideals'. He also relates the single most important bit of advice that he ever got about being a man: "There are two questions a man must ask himself: The first is 'Where am I going?' and the second is 'Who will go with me?' *If you ever get these questions in the wrong order you are in trouble.*"

Pathologies

There are lots of things that can go wrong on the journey towards manhood and maturity: a process that C.G. Jung (1923) called "individuation". If young men cannot find their way to a satisfactory form of manhood, then another "wound" is created: actually something more like a pathology. Guy Corneau (1991) makes this a central theme to his book, *Absent Fathers, Lost Sons*. He posits that it is because of the absence of the father – in reality, through the higher incidence of divorce and one-parent (mostly mothers) families – or effectually, through silence, distraction, work-routines or the effective matriarchy (in the home) in America – that the sons cannot grow up. The critical loss of the masculine initiation rituals that, in the past, ensured a boy's transition into manhood, are largely absent. This "second birth" – the transition into the culture of men – cannot happen if the men themselves have been "wounded" (by the numerous wars in the 20th century) and the 'rituals' have been dissolved in the breakdown of traditional cultures, especially in the post-WW2 generation. The young men have often been "wounded" themselves by and absent father (they become "Lost Boys" – as in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*) and they don't have any way of healing their wound and transcending the passage into male maturity.

One of the largest groups of unemployed people nowadays is youth unemployment, and we are really risking serious damage to our future generations by allowing this terrible situation to continue.^{25 26} As a society, we are really saying to them, “It doesn’t matter how hard you have worked or how well you have done in school; we have nothing available for you. There is no place for you in adult society.”

No wonder they riot, or use drugs, or get into street gangs, or drink too much. One of the ‘pathologies’ of young men not integrating, or having to deal with “too much” when they are not ready or prepared, can also be seen in the incidence of various extremes situations. Here, I would include: the increase of street gangs; the increase of drug use; young offenders; the ‘shooting up’ of various schools; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); suicide and self-immolation; and similar criminal or self-harmful actions, and these are nearly always that affect – or are undertaken – by young men. Young girls also self-harm, take drugs, or get pregnant too early.

The earliest historical accounts of PTSD are from the Greek historian Herodotus, of a Spartan warrior, Aristodemus, who develops a crying and a shaking that ‘un-mans’ him to the point at which he commits suicide, and also of a warrior at the battle of marathón, who was uninjured but struck blind by the shock of someone being killed alongside him.²⁷ Bentley (2005) writes that, “blindness, deafness, and paralysis, among other conditions, are common forms of “conversion reactions” experienced and well-documented among soldiers today. This is where something has gone drastically wrong. The incidence of PTSD is increasing in modern youth, surprisingly also in men who have **not** been sent to war.

One example of some thoughts from a fairly conservative (Christian) workshop, that explores helping people with their PTSD and in the “shedding of a skin” (of their trauma) and covering it with a “shift” (a healthier survival strategy) is given here:

“In order to return victims of trauma to healthy self and spiritual awareness, ... [we] describe a group intervention method whereby participants engage in discussions of their own common “skins” (defence mechanisms or habitual survival reactions) and desired “shifts” – coverings (healthy, virtuous survival mechanisms). ... The act of creating symbolic presentations of skins and shifts provide trauma victims with visual aids and tactile reminders of their recovery process. Some of the latest neurological research suggests that trauma causes over activity in the emotion centers of the brain while decreasing activity in the left pre-frontal cortex (an area used to engage in self-observation and to plan action steps). It may well be that this intervention encourages increased prefrontal cortex activity. ... [But] ... Do skins always express themselves in such a aggressive manner? While I would agree that fallen human beings are prone to acting in self-serving and sinful ways, I do not think all dissociation leads to the kinds of outwardly aggressive responses depicted in the actions of Prince Lindworm ”²⁸

But, morality aside, this is part of the necessary reparative, integrative work. The young man should not actually have been exposed to such horrors: and, under such expose, we have seen that even hardened soldiers can break down and cry.

The Problems

So, there are two major problems outlined in all of this: the first problem is how do we repair the damage that has already been caused; to ourselves, by our upbringing and our early environment: the damage of deficits and deceits; the abuse and the abandonment; the ‘hardening’, the hatred, the horrors, that allow us – when we become men – to go out and perpetrate such unto others. We cannot deny that we would not, or could not, do that: thousands of millions of decent young men – just like us – have been conscripted, have been duped, have been infected by religious and/or nationalist propaganda, to defend one’s country, and that God is on Our Side, and to go out and kill – and it is still happening this very day: in the Crimea; with Al Qaeda and the Taliban; in support of football teams; with sectarian violence; or with attacks against homosexuality in Uganda; in the defence of “freedom and democracy”: and we must learn to say “No, That doesn’t

work for me.” That is not my struggle; mine is an inner struggle – and only I can do it, and I must do for myself: we must do it our selves and for ourselves. How do we “heal the wound”? This is indeed the Perilous Question!

Many of our answers come through the guise therapy: though different therapies have slightly different answers. We have to recognise our own wounds: we must acknowledge our wound – and our inability to heal it – so far – totally by ourselves; we have to acknowledge that we need help from some “higher power” – some spiritual assistance, guidance or mentoring; for it is a spiritual struggle. This is the essence of the very successful Twelve-Step programmes. This is what Jesus did for 40 days in the Wilderness; this is what Buddhists do in 10,000 hours of meditation; this is the Vision Quest; Re-birthing; the Initiation; Enlightenment; or whatever you feel minded to call it. And we will come out of it, emerge from it (hopefully) – healed and wholesome. Anyway, that is the theory!

The second major problem is how do we ‘shepherd’ our young men, despite their initial wounding, into become one of the company of men who can work together and who accept each other. This way – perhaps – some of their wounds can be healed. The ‘society’ of AA alcoholics, gay, bisexual, trans or unsure guys (BGTU) groups²⁹, the Northern young men’s support project³⁰, and similar support groups are just one way; taking young men out into the wilderness as a cure for drug addiction³¹

A few years ago, there were a number of young men who met in the Scottish Men’s Group, and wanted to continue to meet themselves. I don’t know if they are still meeting: I doubt it. Whilst I can understand them not wanting to share their “stuff” with a load of grey-beards or fat old farts – for what do we know?

There have been many such groupings of young men – by themselves: the Knights of the Round Table; Alexander the Great’s “Companions”; Robin Hood and his Merrie Men; the 1950’s literary “angry young men”; etc. But they have not come up with many answers. It seems that – in order to heal – a bit more wisdom and experience is needed, probably some love and care, as well.

We are all still obviously struggling – but, by themselves, they won’t find the answers themselves. Even someone like President Obama³² saying, *"I didn't have a dad in the house. And I was angry about it, even though I didn't necessarily realize it at the time. I made bad choices. I got high without always thinking about the harm that it could do. I didn't always take school as seriously as I should have. I made excuses. Sometimes I sold myself short,"* to an audience of young men will not help them in their actual individual struggles. It is a start, and a good one: it acknowledges the problem. But it needs to be done in something less than the 20 years in the school of hard knocks that Parsifal had to go through.

I have written (elsewhere) about some of my personal struggles with ‘The Divided Self’.³³ And I have devised exercises to help others to try to understand their Inner Self, through the exercise like, “Descent into the Dark”.³⁴ This essay is just another part of my trying to understand and work with the struggle that we all have, as men, not just to understand, but also to have the courage and determination to leave ‘home’ and go through the process of initiation, and eventually emerge, as a Man.

In doing so, we have to reject some of the (false) images of manhood; we have to maintain our integrity, as to what works for us; we have to avoid the temptations of the Devil – power over all things; unlimited wealth, etc.; we have to experience the Seven Deadly Sins – and not succumb to them; like Christian (or everyman) in John Bunyan’s 1678 allegory, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, we have to struggle through the Slough of Despond, to climb the Hill of Difficulty, to go through the narrow Gate, and then the Valley of the Shadow where he confronts the demon Apollyon. We also have to ignore the distractions of Vanity Fair, escape from the Giant Despair and Doubting Castle, and cross the River of Death, etc. – not to get to the somewhat ‘ephemeral’ Celestial City, but perhaps in order to learn how to “travel well” as a Man.

Personal Note:

In writing this essay, I am – in part – deeply indebted to the writings of Richard Sanderson (2010). His input³⁵ on the Parsifal myth has structured my thoughts, ruminations and inspirations, and allowed me to weave my own material into the woof and warp of his. I have been struggling with many of these themes now, both in myself, and with my father (now long dead), and with my two sons now both mature men), for a very long time.

My struggle to be a man has also deeply affected the various (even numerous) women in my life – wounding several of them very deeply. The last struggle (or crisis) happened quite recently and particularly at a very emotional time in my life, when, faced with potential spousal separation and a lonely old age, as a grandfather aged 67, I am still struggling to understand what it is to ‘be’ a man; to accept my masculinity – rather than siding with those who have (seemed to) have rejected it (or rejected me).

It seems that I should now be acquiring wisdom, thinking of slowing down, considering retirement, enjoying my pension, or going on another pilgrimage. Instead, I am still applying for jobs, wondering what my life work really is, and not even succeeding making a success of “Mr Micawber’s Formula” – to balance my budget.

The ‘coming together’ of all these themes finally happened when taking part in a Scottish Men’s Group meeting in February 2014. In the group, I spoke much more directly about my current troubles and the troubles of those around me with me: it was very much like a confession, or a surrender into the “I don’t know”: – the “Void”. This essay, which emerged from that weekend, is just some of the intellectual and cultural background or framework to that “confession” or that “lack of knowledge”, and also to that (my) “struggle” to heal the wound, as I see it.

So, I would really like to thank James, Ben, DC, Ian, John, Larry, Malcolm, Matthew, Mike, Rocco, Roger, Willie and Tom, for all “being there” with me as I tried to “shed another skin”, or “heal the wound”, and I believe that I did receive some form of healing (absolution) by their presence, by their acceptance, and in their witnessing of my struggle. Thanks, Guys! Since then, I have also added significant bits and pieces to this extended essay. I have also worked on this in a male therapist’s group; in an Enquiry group; and with my partner. There has also been a significant input from Nick Duffell and his writings about the “wounded-ness” of the (male dominated) English public school system.

Endnotes

¹ This 1914 hard-bound book, *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, was filled with iconic and exquisite line drawings and amazingly spectacular colour plates by the Danish artist and illustrator, Kay Rasmus Neilsen

² Jessica Cotton: Palmeira Practice, Brighton: www.thepalmeirapractice.org.uk/expertise/2015/12/1/supporting-men-to-seek-counselling

³ Eight Interesting (And Insane) Male Rites of Passages From Around the World: by Brett & Kate McKay: Accessed 25-Feb-2014: www.artofmanliness.com/2010/02/21/male-rites-of-passage-from-around-the-world/

⁴ Men’s Rites of Passage: see www.malespirituality.org.uk/rites. Accessed 25-Feb-2014.

⁵ Sexual addiction is defined as: “engaging in persistent and escalating patterns of sexual behaviours acted out despite increasingly negative consequences to self and others”; it is also described as “compulsive searching for multiple partners, compulsive fixation on an unattainable partner, compulsive masturbation, compulsive ‘love’ relationships, and compulsive sexuality in a relationship”. Sexual addictive behaviour does not usually progress beyond compulsive masturbation or the extensive use of pornography or phone or computer sex services. However, for some, addiction can also extend into illegal activities: such as exhibitionism, voyeurism, obscene phone calls, child molestation or rape. (see: <http://psychcentral.com/lib/what-causes-sexual-addiction/>)

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- ⁶ The ‘Earthsea Cycle’ by Ursula LeGuin contain the various books: *A Wizard of Earthsea*; *The Tombs of Atuan*; *The Farthest Shore*; *Tehanu*; (a book of short stories), *Tales from Earthsea*; and *The Other Wind*.
- ⁷ BBC News School Report: Should sex education tackle online pornography? 11-Feb-2014: www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport/26127293
- ⁸ “Hypochondriasis, hysteria, chorea, epilepsy, apoplexy, and palsy, constitute part of the list of dire maladies induced or immediately excited, by onanism. The memory and intellectual faculties, in general, are enfeebled, and there are instances of complete idiocy, brought on by early and continued onanism, and of insanity from similar excesses later in life.” Haswell, Barrington, and Haswell: *The Eclectic Journal of Medicine, Vol. 3, No. 4. Nov 1894*. Philadelphia: p. 145.
- ⁹ Brian A. Aldiss: *The Hand-Reared Boy*. Souvenir Press, 1999.
- ¹⁰ From the back cover of the 1994 book: *Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the dark side of the psyche*. San Francisco: Harper.
- ¹¹ Dion Fortune’s ‘fictional’ books: “Moon Magic”, “The Sea Priestess”, “The Goat-foot God”, “Demon Lover”, “The Winged Bull”, etc.
- ¹² Charles Williams, one of ‘The Inklings’, wrote: *War in Heaven* (1930); *Many Dimensions* (1930); *The Place of the Lion* (1931); *The Greater Trumps* (1932); *Shadows of Ecstasy* (1933); *Descent into Hell* (1937); *All Hallows’ Eve* (1945); etc. amongst many other publications.
- ¹³ George MacDonald: *The Princess and the Goblin* (1972); *The Princess and Curdie* (1883); *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871); *The Wise Woman: A Parable* (1875); *The Flight of the Shadow* (1891); etc.
- ¹⁴ C.S. Lewis: *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950); *Prince Caspian* (1951); *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952); *The Silver Chair* (1953); *The Horse and his Boy* (1954); *The Magician’s Nephew* (1955); *The Last Battle* (1956); as well as the ‘Space’ Trilogy: *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938); *Perelandra (Voyage to Venus)* (1945); *That Hideous Strength* (1945).
- ¹⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien: *The Hobbit* (1936); *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55); *The Simarillion* (1977); and many other works.
- ¹⁶ “X Wild”: “Die like a man”: song and words accessed: 22-Feb-2014: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFIIn9Y7_6cg
- ¹⁷ Leonard Cohen interviews accessed 25-Feb-2014: www.leonardcohen-prologues.com/democracy.htm: with some additional verses: www.leonardcohen-prologues.com/lyrics/add_verses_democracy.htm
- ¹⁸ Leonard Cohen’s lyrics for his (1977) song “Democracy” are:
*It’s coming through a crack in the wall - On a visionary flood of alcohol - From the staggering account of the Sermon on the Mount which I don’t pretend to understand at all. It’s coming from the silence, on the dock of the bay, from the brave, the bold, the battered heart of Chevrolet:
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.*
It’s coming from the sorrow in the street: the holy places where the races meet; From the homicidal bitchin’ that goes down in every kitchen to determine who will serve and who will eat; From the wells of disappointment where the women kneel to pray for the grace of God in the desert here and in the desert far away: Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.
*It’s coming to America first - The cradle of the best and of the worst - It’s here they got the range - And the machinery for change - And it’s here they got the spiritual thirst - It’s here the family’s broken - And it’s here the lonely say - That the heart has got to open - In a fundamental way:
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.*
*It’s coming from the women and the men - O baby, we’ll be making love again - We’ll be going down so deep - The river’s going to weep - And the mountain’s going to shout Amen! - It’s coming like the tidal flood - Beneath the lunar sway - Imperial, mysterious - In amorous array:
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.*
*I’m sentimental, if you know what I mean, I love the country but I can’t stand the scene - And I’m neither left or right, I’m just staying home tonight, getting lost in that hopeless little screen - But I’m stubborn as those garbage bags that time cannot decay - I’m junk but I’m still holding up this little wild bouquet:
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.*
- ¹⁹ Leonard Cohen’s “The Future” lyrics: www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/leonardcohen/thefuture.html
- ²⁰ ‘The Four Enemies of Man’: Fear, Clarity, Power & Knowledge: see Castaneda, C. (1970). *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui way of Knowledge*. New York: Ballentine Books. See also: <http://www.prismagems.com/castaneda/donjuan1.html>

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- ²¹ Siegel, D.J. (2013). *Brainstorm: the power and purpose of the teenage brain*. New York: Tarcher.
- ²² The traditional Seven Deadly Sins are: Pride, Greed, Lust, Envy, Gluttony, Wrath and Sloth.
- ²³ See also Martyn Price's (1999) essay: *Sissy, Strong-Man, Saviour: The Masculinity of Jesus Christ in Men's Movement Literature*.
- ²⁴ The Hell-Fire Club or (later) *The Brotherhood of St. Francis of Wycombe*, was founded by the Duke of Wharton in the reign of George 1 and closed in 1721. It was then succeeded by various clubs founded by Sir Francis Dashwood in the mid- to late-18th century, and their regular meetings included well-known people like the Earl of Sandwich, William Hogarth, John Wilkes, and even, on occasions, Benjamin Franklin. A version of this club exists to this day, in the Phoenix Club in Brasenose College Oxford and in the modern Hell-Fire Club in Sunbury-on-Thames, West London: www.theold-hellfireclub.co.uk/.
- ²⁵ "Youth unemployment rates are generally much higher than unemployment rates for all ages. Until the end of 2008, the youth unemployment rate in the EU-27 was around twice as high as the rate for the total population, reaching its minimum value (18.1 %) in the first quarter 2008. The economic crisis, however, seems to have hit the young more than other age groups. From the beginning of 2009, the gap between the youth and the total unemployment rates has increased, so that at the end of 2012 the youth unemployment rate was 2.6 times the total rate. The EU-27 youth unemployment rate was systematically higher than in the euro area between 2000 and mid-2007. Since then and until the third quarter 2010 these two rates were very close. Afterwards the indicator moved more sharply in the EA-17 than in the EU-27, first downwards until mid-2011, then upwards until the end of 2012 (see also Figure 5). In the middle of 2012, the euro area youth unemployment rate overtook the EU-27 rate, and the gap increased until the end of the year. High youth unemployment rates do reflect the difficulties faced by young people in finding jobs. However, this does not necessarily mean that the group of unemployed persons aged between 15 and 24 is large, as many young people are studying full-time and are therefore neither working nor looking for a job (so they are not part of the labour force which is used as the denominator for calculating the unemployment rate). For this reason, youth unemployment ratios are also calculated, according to a somewhat different concept: the unemployment ratio calculates the share of unemployed for the whole population. Table 1 shows that youth unemployment ratios in the EU are much lower than youth unemployment rates; they have however also risen since 2008 due to the effects of the crisis on the labour market." Accessed 28-Feb-2014:
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics:
- ²⁶ Young Men and Suicide Project: Accessed 3-Mar-2014: www.mhfi.org/ymspfullreport.pdf
- ²⁷ Bentley, S. (2005). A Short History of PTSD: From Thermopylae to Hue, Soldiers Have Always Had a Disturbing Reaction To War. *The Veteran, No. 3*.
www.vva.org/archive/TheVeteran/2005_03/feature_HistoryPTSD.htm Accessed: 28-Feb-2014
- ²⁸ Munroe, P. (2013). Comment to "Symbols in restoring moral self-awareness in trauma psychotherapy". *European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology & Psychotherapy Journal*, Vol. 3, p. 161
- ²⁹ "Male Matters" – GBTU Young Men's Group: Allsorts Young Project: www.allsortsyouth.org.uk/groups/male-matters
- ³⁰ NEELB Project: Accessed 03-Mar-2014:
www.northerntrust.hscni.net/pdf/Northern_Area_Young_Mens_Support_Project_NEELB_LEAFLET.pdf
- ³¹ Wilderness Treatment Center, Marion, Montana, USA: www.wildernesstreatmentcenter.com Accessed: 03-Mar-2014
- ³² Accessed 3-Mar-2014: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/10666661/Barack-Obama-I-can-see-myself-in-Americas-young-black-men.html
- ³³ Young, C. (2012). The Divided Self: A very personal account. In: T. Itten & C. Young (Eds.), *R.D. Laing: 50 years after "The Divided Self"*, (pp. 121-141). Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books. Accessible: www.courtenay-young.co.uk/courtenay/articles/The_Divided_Self.pdf
- ³⁴ A Descent into the Dark: A meditational exercise. Accessible: www.courtenay-young.co.uk/courtenay/articles/Descent_into_the_Dark.pdf
- ³⁵ Richard A. Sanderson: Essay on "**Wounded Masculinity: Parsifal and The Fisher King Wound**" Edited by Paul Howell. Accessed: 22-Feb-2014: howellgroup.org/parsifal.html

APPENDIX 1: The Legend of Parsifal: a Knight of King Arthur's Court.

The Background To The Myth

In a far-off distant land, there is a castle, the Castle of the Holy Grail. At the heart of the Grail Castle, is a treasure room, wherein there are four, magic or Holy, treasures: a spear, a cup, a stone and a sword. The sword and the stone have been used to bring peace to the land of Britain. So, only two of the treasures are now left, the Holy Spear and the Holy Chalice. These two divine implements are needed daily for the "enactment" of the Holy Grail, the eternal task of bringing light into the kingdom; for that light is the source of the cycle of life and death. These two divine implements represent the masculine and feminine principles which when combined in perfect wholeness produce light into the kingdom of Faery, ruled by the Fisher King. This kingdom runs parallel to our world: what happens there affects our world, and what happens in our world is also reflected there.

The Holy Chalice represents the feminine aspect of feeling and beauty that both contains and transforms: images of the Chalice or Grail appear in the "crucible" of the alchemist's: the stone is, of course the Philosopher's Stone. The cup or cauldron is also The Cauldron of Plenty and also the Cauldron of Rebirth: this comes from Irish-Welsh Celtic lore: Cauldrons were very important in Celtic Mythology. Different magic cauldrons had different powers. There was the Cauldron of Plenty that was never empty and supplied great quantities of food, and there was the Cauldron of Rebirth. This was a cauldron of rejuvenation or rebirth and it also brought slain warriors to life again.

The chalice (in Christianised versions) is the cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper, containing the wine, which was later also used to catch his blood when he was dying on the cross. The Holy Spear represents the masculine strength required to stand 'erect' and guard the precious Grail. The Holy Spear (in Christianized versions,) is the same spear that pierced the side of Christ on the cross (or perhaps it pierced Christ's testicles?). The Sword was, of course, the Sword of Kingship and – when whole – the Sword of Peace.

Each day, every knight of the inner order (of the Arthurian tradition) would renew his oath to defend the Grail with his very life and affirm his service to the Holy Grail.

Now, the Grail Castle had fallen upon hard times: people did not keep to the old ways and had lost their faith. Worse, the Holy Spear – another treasure – had been stolen, and the king of the castle, the Fisher King, had been wounded by the Holy Spear as it was being stolen.

In some stories, the King's wound was in his heel (like that of Achilles?); in other stories, it is implied that the wound was in his testicles, as all the country around the castle was now a Wasteland. The King was described as being henceforth 'too ill to live but not ill enough to die' (the modern malaise).

The spear that caused the wounding is integral to this myth and the healing process for men. The spear represents the masculine integrity and feeling aspect, which has been stolen and without it there is no protection, no "holding", no "goal", or "aim" for the Holy Grail to serve. In psychology, the author Robert Johnson observed that, *"the Fisher King's wound [to his testicles] is symbolic of men's difficulties in being directly intimate in sexual matters."*

Why the name of The Fisher King? The fish is such an ancient symbol of the spiritual mysteries of life, the sign of Christ, Christians and "disciples" being "fishers of men". In Celtic myth, a strong link occurs between the salmon and knowledge. At breeding time, the salmon returns to the place of its origin, fighting against the flow of the river, in order to breed (to create). The crude expression 'that man is born out of the vagina and spends the rest of his life trying to get back in there' (return to wholeness) takes on a new significance in this light. This is understood as a troubled human soul (in man), perpetually struggling to reconcile itself with itself. Astrologically, the myth is also set in the dualistic Piscean Age (symbolized as two fishes) of man's current stage of evolution on this earth.

In some versions of the Parsifal myth, it speaks of Grail Castle being in disunity, as specific knights specifically used all manner of trickery, temptations and illusions to corrupt The Fisher King and ultimately The Holy Grail (the unity with God).

One of the characters in Wagner's *Parsifal* was the sorceress, Kundry (or Condrie, the High Messenger of the Grail), who was so talented that she spoke all languages. She also appears as a wild woman, an unkempt, shabby and repulsive crone. However, on the other side of the mountains, in the magic garden of the sorcerer Klingsor, she is transformed into a beautiful maiden. She was also apparently corrupted and trapped as a result of the demise of the Grail Castle. She was then used to help overcome good knights, using such weapons as temptation and other alluring appeals. As myth had it, many knights had tried to win back the spear, but were all corrupted (or seduced) by the (female) forces of the "dark side".

The wound to The Fisher King from the Holy Spear (through his testicles - the most vulnerable part of the male anatomy), signifies a wounding to man's sense of potency and his self-esteem. The wounding in this "private part" of himself will not heal and equates to The Fisher King's "Fall from Grace" (the noble part of the king has fallen from grace). He is metaphorically expelled from the Garden of Eden (The Holy Grail). Interestingly, the Fisher King only gets relief from his pain when he is fishing, meaning, doing reflective work on himself. However, the Fisher King's country has become a Wasteland, the meadows and flowers are dried up, and the waters are shrunken. The suggestion is that any malaise to the king is mirrored in his kingdom. This implies that if there is a wound to the "kingly-inner man", then the whole personality (his whole world) will be troubled! As if by magic, whenever the Fisher King becomes healed, the lands surrounding the king will be healed instantly and the Wasteland will flourish once again.

However – and this is the crucially important bit – the healing of the king and kingdom can only take place with the coming of "the good Grail Knight" – an "innocent fool" (Parsifal) who can restore health to the Fisher King, his land, its people by asking a specific question: The Perilous Question. Merlin is thought to have prophesied that a pure knight who will do mighty deeds of arms, of bounty and of nobility will ask the perplexing question "What does the Grail serve"? Another version of this question is, "How can the Wound be Healed?"

This knight, (Parsifal?) of the legend, was attitudinally innocent and pure, naïve, and not physically pure in a celibate sense. He had been brought up in the depths (instinctual realm) of the forest and could not have acquired any puritanical injunctions against beauty or love and the naturalness of sexual activity. Should the "pure knight" fail to ask the question, then everything will remain wasted, and the knight in question will have to leave the Grail Castle to search and learn. Should he finally learn, then again he may return to The Grail Castle and ask the Perilous Question. The king and kingdom will then be restored to health, as the waters of life will run.

The Legend

Parsifal's mother, Herzeleide was a "Queen of two Kingdoms," supposedly North and South Wales, which may have meant of both the spiritual and material realms. Wales had retained its integrity and honour, long before any English Knights emerged with their 'civilized' codes of chivalry. Herzeleide had just been widowed when she gave birth to her son, Parsifal. Her husband (and, in some stories, her elder sons) were all killed in battle. Herzeleide, meaning "heart's sorrow" then left her noble home to live in a forester's cottage far away from everything. She feared that the fate, which killed her husband (and sons), would overtake her youngest son, so she raised him to know nothing of knighthood and to be ignorant of his name and heritage.

How many mothers try to instil their own views in their son's integrity, in order to guard them from the foolhardiness of their fathers? She specifically instructed him to be courteous to all women; to wear fine clothes; and not to ask too many questions!

There is mystery surrounding the identity and heritage of Parsifal's father and so he grew up without a father (an absent father), which is often the case for many of today's youth. However, Parsifal's father was allegedly Gamuret and some versions say he was the Fisher King's brother. The young knight, Gamuret decided to journey to the Middle East to seek his glory and fortune, as was the want of many a true knight. After winning a great victory in a tournament, he attracted

Belakane, the dusky (dark) Queen of Zazamanc; they fell in love and were married. He shared the throne of Zazamanc for a time, but peaceful court life in a foreign land was not suited to the young warrior and he stole away (ran away). Following this, Belakane gave birth to Gamuret's first son, Feirefiz, the "piebald" (half-cast), Parsifal's half brother. Mythically, the relationship between Feirefiz and Parsifal implies the great brotherhood of man between different races and cultures. The legend of a half-brother (or dark twin) is repeated in many stories.

Gamuret arrived back in Europe and, while jousting, his gallantry won him the heart of Herzeleide, Queen of Wales. How many women fall for the exterior gallantry of men (the show, pomp and circumstance) to this very day? Herzeleide eventually convinced Gamuret that he should give up the love of the 'unbaptized infidel ... Queen Belakane' and so they were married. Again, there are echoes here of Adam's first 'wife', who was Lileth, a dark, female demon; but she left him as he refused to become subservient to her and thus deserted, he asked his father, God for a wife, and so God created Eve from one of his ribs.

This 'creation' of Eve story is also mirrored in the fourth book of The Mabinogian, a collection of Welsh myths which contains the story of Math ab Mathonwy, his nephew and heir, Gwydion, and his 'son', Lleu Llaw Gyffes, who, having been cursed by his mother, asked his uncle / father, the magician Gwydion, for a wife, who then had to be made from flowers, and so could never be a real partner to him: she actually betrayed him and brought about his death. His rebirth was at the hands of his father / uncle, Gwydion.

Back to the story of Parsifal: word then reached his father, Gamuret that his old lord, in the Middle East, was facing an invasion by the Babylonians. He returned with glee to assist his old friend and while fighting in the intense heat, Gamuret paused to rest, briefly removing his "charmed" head shield to drink. A lance blow pierced his head. When Queen Herzeleide heard of this, she went to live alone in the forest and gave birth to Parsifal, while still mourning for her husband. Herzeleide's, 'mourning' was in knowing that her husband loved another and was married "albeit illegally to Queen Belakane. His gallantry had amounted to nothing and resulted in grief to all and ultimately death to himself. His "gallantry and charm" was bravado and empty, as there was no relatedness to either, Herzeleide in Europe, Belakane in the Middle East, nor to his young son!

During Parsifal's upbringing, alone with his mother, his youthful years were spent totally in the forest. "He grew up handsome, strong, athletic, but with his rational thinking largely undeveloped". "He was later called "simple" or "innocent fool", not because he was indeed unintelligent, but for his guileless innocence, his simple perceptions, his naïveté and faith". It is also speculated that, being brought up in the forest with such a 'queenly' mother, he was able to see into the mysteries of the "inner" world. Ultimately, he would have to bring his instinctual knowing into the every day realities of 'the outer' (real) world.

No sooner had Parsifal "come of age" than, one day, he encountered some knights riding through the forest. He was so taken by their godlike appearance, that he immediately wished to become one of them. He told this to his mother and she wept bitterly, as she had tried to protect him from the ways of knights. She begged him to stay with her; but his heart was set, and at last she gave him her blessing to go, an embroider shirt that she begged him to wear, and several promises (already mentioned). Sadly, some versions have it that Herzeleide, Parsifal's mother died shortly after he left.

So off went Parsifal into the world where his naïveté and sincere enthusiasm atoned for his most of social blunders. However, he rescued a fair maiden, Blanchefleur, fell in love, and "stole her ring": the deflowering of a lovely maiden, no less! Additionally, Parsifal encountered, fought and overcame the infamous Red Knight. Parsifal did so, because the Red Knight had embarrassed King Arthur and because Parsifal 'liked the look of his armour'. Parsifal wanted a façade, to bolster his ego and to make a favourable impression. The "facing" of the Red Knight is the step that young men often have to take, symbolically standing up to the cruel, course father image, the authority that they can question, and learn how to exert their own emerging masculinity (power).

However, Parsifal wore his mother's "homespun" garment underneath his ill-gotten armour, which indicates that he had acquired only a knightly exterior! His own inner sense of

maleness was still very shaky and adolescent! His overcoming of the Red Knight won him some favour and so it was that, against all convention, King Arthur knighted Parsifal: he seemed to be a Perfect (Parfait) Knight. However, his simplicity and grace had remained intact largely due to his mother's rules, his unconventional upbringing and early life. Several adventures subsequently took place for the young knight and 'as if by chance', he found himself at the bridge leading to the mysterious but sought-after Grail Castle.

Parsifal is then wounded in the Grail Castle: we all need wounds from which we can learn and grow. Youthful enthusiasm, charm and early masculine bravado had got Parsifal to the drawbridge of the Grail Castle. He had earned the right to enter the castle, and with young eyes filled wide with hope he walked in! Fuelled with his desire for fulfilment, as a knight, as a man, and to manifest his deepest hopes, Parsifal enters into the magical realm of the Grail Castle. Please remember, the Grail Castle is an actual mystical experience, normally "hidden" (like the castle itself) amidst the mists from 'common folk', all those who cannot see.

It is written in myth that men only get two opportunities to enter the Grail Castle. The first time as a youth, a "gratuitous" gift, (given by God?) to let young men experience the potential of their "numinous self". However, they cannot stay there.

The second Grail Castle opportunity is not gratuitous and often coincides with man's mid-life crisis; a time when men re-evaluate their whole lives and hopefully re-discover true meaning and potency. To seek the actual outer location of the castle is to miss the point totally, as it is always hidden, yet near, and the two worlds (mystical-inner and material outer world) occasionally cross at specific moments through meaningful coincidences and at some specific locations where the boundaries between worlds become thinner.

Inside the castle, there was a transcendent moment: a 'sight' of the Holy Grail. But Parsifal was astonished at the majesty and splendour that he saw; the perfection and abundance that he had witnessed; and also the astonishing contrast with the wounded King, surrounded by a Wasteland, and yet he did not understand what was going on. He tried to behave in a 'correct' fashion: on the one hand, according to his mother's rules and also according to his recently acquired knightly teachings: after all, of course – this, after all, is the rational way to proceed! But he still wondered, "Why" and "How".

There was a hushed expectancy inside the castle, as everyone knew that an "innocent fool" – possibly Parsifal – was prophesied to ask the Healing Question that would magically revive the Grail, heal the King, and make the Wasteland flourish. One person asked Parsifal if he knew of the significance of what he had just seen? Others chanted as one to themselves for "fulfilment of the prophecy"; that would restore the Holy Grail to their midst. All attention – and compassion – was focused upon Parsifal and he felt a great stirring within him to speak, but alas he said nothing! He had, of course, been told by his mother not to ask questions. He heard some of the sophisticated 'ladies of the court' snigger, "He is just a boy", laughing audibly, and gazing upon a dumbfounded Parsifal.

Surely, he was not the Chosen One that they had mused about! How could he be? Parsifal still sat there motionless and speechless. Another knight rebuked Parsifal with the words, "You are just a common simpleton; get you gone from here"! Parsifal had to repress his male instinct to fight, so as to be accepted, and he had also repressed his 'Inner Voice' to enquire what this Mystery was about. He was just confused and overwhelmed by it all. His mother had told him not to ask questions and Parsifal believed that obedience was a virtue. But something (?) was being asked of him! Remember, Parsifal still wore his mother's embroidered garment underneath his armour! So, he just sat there; he said nothing; he did nothing; and the moment passed.

The next morning he found himself out, alone, in the Wasteland. Parsifal now realised that obedience to his mother's advice had failed him, so he vowed not to ignore his own intuition and instinctual knowing again! But what young man can really do that? Parsifal had felt ridiculed and deeply wounded by the whole Grail Castle experience. A heavy blow to his masculinity had been taken; his early knighthood dreams of glory and his whole sense of his worth as a man was now gone. He was confused and disillusioned. The Grail Castle had vanished into the mists and

Parsifal found himself back in the world of (real) time and space, on the edge of a desert, 'licking his wounds', rejected, abandoned, and very much alone.

Parsifal, albeit badly wounded, cannot drop his desire for wholeness. In the same way that our body is programmed to heal, our spirit also tries to heal. Time and again, we come back to these painful issues: mostly unconsciously, and then we don't heal, we just repeat.

He now has to search, to learn and eventually to find his own way 'back' to become worthy to re-enter the Grail Castle, for the second time. He conjures up a noble ploy to reinstate himself in the eyes of those who have "wounded and ridiculed him". Parsifal muses that – returning the lost Holy Spear to its rightful 'owner' will:- redeem himself; result in a healing to the King; and restore life to the Kingdom. So, a mighty quest is conceived – out of his pain, ego and good intentions! And – as we know – the road to hell is paved with good intentions!

Parsifal was embarrassed and ashamed for not doing the right thing in the castle. Yet that 'wound' had metaphorically ushered Parsifal into the beginning of consciousness, a search in the world, doing the necessary outer (and inner) work as the years go by, and with a degree of 'service' or self-sacrifice. Parsifal knew that previous knights had tried to win back the spear, but they were corrupted and fell. So his 'path' required courage, persistence and rectitude, although his mighty quest may have initially been seen as another "Red Knight" adventure in the world! Red is symbolically associated with blood; the passionate "desire" for experience in the world. When wounded by his own ignorance, Parsifal bleeds red (heart) blood, and thus he causes others to bleed similarly while trying to prove his manhood. So it was that Parsifal leapt onto his horse and charged off to find success in the school of hard knocks.

Parsifal demonstrates his 'true masculinity' 'in-the-field' (so to speak) with his meeting with Kundry. His example shows men how to relate authentically in their daily lives and especially how to relate to women more authentically. However, Kundry is not a real 'woman'; she is a sorceress. Parsifal's life to date can be seen as a battleground of both outer and inner opponents; he is struggling to make or break his wholeness. He eventually comes to the whereabouts, the location of the Holy Spear. Yet, before he could re-capture it, he encounters the now most beautiful and alluring sorceress, Kundry. She, as aforesaid, has been "bewitched" herself and has been trapped into service by the "Dark Side" and, as Parsifal gets closer and closer to the Spear, he meets the most testing aspect to his masculinity.

Parsifal's encounter with Kundry is very note-worthy, as he shows us how to relate to women in the face of luscious temptation, and yet ... It is also so instructive for men to explore the erotic temptations that they face, and yet, how to hold their true masculinity intact. Kundry had been sent to delude (seduce) Parsifal into wrongful actions, which would automatically have set the Holy Spear out of reach! This is a parallel to the temptation of Eve. Clearly Parsifal was instinctual man and Kundry (the sorceress) was at her most alluring, so it seems almost certain that he would have found her gorgeous and would have entertained sexual thoughts about her.

"Kundry was dressed in seductive finery of a regal courtesan so that any man who looked at her would see his heart's desire." He [Parsifal] encountered Kundry, lying on a divan in a lushly appointed chamber; he felt himself go flush with the flames of awakened passion. She twined her arm about his neck like a serpent, and drew him into a kiss. He pulled away disturbed, clutching his heart. "What!" said Kundry, shaken out of her role by this inexplicable out-burst. "The cost of such bliss," said Parsifal, "would be endless cycles of doubly-damned torment for both of us." The sin is not in the act," he said, "but in the actors." If the heart and the motive are pure, the love is blessed. If not, there will yet be the Devil to pay. At this she ripped off her flimsy raiment and spread her arms and legs wide, offering herself desperately for a thrust and a penetration that did not come. Parsifal only stared at her in pity, his fool's look gone, though not his compassion." (Kerrick, 1999).

Parsifal knew - in his heart - that to "partake" of Kundry was, in fact, a dual act of dishonouring himself and also Kundry. He chose to embrace his own erotic thoughts; to acknowledge their

presence; but to also put them away. He knew instinctively that to act upon them was not the right thing to do, as there was no beauty, relating, feeling or love present. He embraced Kundry and refused her offerings, looked at her with compassion, and in so doing made himself and Kundry whole at the same time.

With Parsifal's compassionate rejection of Kundry, he assumed more strength and merit to his being. With this right action, he had both asked and answered the infamous question, "What or whom does it serve" ... to act in this way. "Every thought and behavior [of man] in this light is subject to this same inner questioning and knowing" (Whiteout, 1987).

. Not only did Parsifal pass this test, but also - through his compassion towards Kundry - her "soul and queenly self" were restored and she managed to emerge from the entrapments that had bewitched her. She was redeemed by Parsifal's inner strength of true masculinity.

Kundry in fact was so thankful for being redeemed by Parsifal that she showed him where the Holy Spear resided! Symbolically, the finding of the Holy Spear was Parsifal finding his true masculinity, brought about by the feminine aspect of himself (and with the cooperation of Kundry). The feeling, compassionate side of Parsifal enabled him to become whole and "one", and thus not split-off, residing only in his masculine "phallic self." Parsifal underwent an enormous trial with the temptations of Kundry (as each man may at some point encounter) and he chose the path of honouring his true (inner) feelings and his masculine integrity. By overcoming the temptation of Kundry with such nobleness of being, Parsifal had set himself free and he had earned the right to re-enter the Grail Castle for the second time.

Again, we can find many parallels in literature: the character of Ransom in the second of C.S. Lewis's 'Arbol' trilogy, *Perelandra: Voyage to Venus*, manages to prevent a repetition of the 'temptation' of the naïve and innocent 'Eve' (Tinidril) to become corrupted by Serpent / Tempter (Weston = Satan), and so the Garden of Eden (Paradise – the natural order of things) manages to evolve on Venus, and can then become restored on Earth. However, notably, the main protagonist, Ransom, is wounded – in the heel – and the wound does not heal!

The second Grail Castle opportunity, as acknowledged, coincides with man's mid-life crisis, a time when a man reflects and re-evaluates his whole life, in order hopefully to re-discover meaning and potency in his remaining years. It is written in myth that every night, when we are asleep, the awesome "Grail experience" goes on.

Parsifal – through the school of hard knocks, over 20 to 30 years of 'knighthood' – had eventually earned the right to re-gain entry to the Grail Castle, for the second time, and this time to ask the Perilous Question. Symbolically, he had long since put off the homespun garment his mother had made him, which initially he had under his armour! Parsifal had "untangled himself from his mother, his adolescent complex, and now emerged as a man capable of potentiating his own individual destiny" (Wyly, 1989). From simple innocence, he had matured to (a degree of) profound wisdom, redeemed by his inner strength and high fidelity. Parsifal said at this point, "... for I am innocent no longer," rather he had acquired consciousness. This conscious innocence was Parsifal's guileless, authentic open and "warm" self, which had endured, and eventually shone through. It won the day and completed the Hero's Journey.

Once again, inside the Grail Castle, the same majesty and mystery was enacted out, but this time Parsifal was undeterred from what he must do. His first act was to touch the wound of the Fisher King, (his wounded testicles) with the Spear. This act by Parsifal made it plain to the King that it was the King's inappropriate sexual behaviour, and his lack of integrity, that had caused the 'wound'. The Fisher King had severed the kingdom's connection with the Holy Grail, by allowing "shadow/shady activity" to take place within his soul and within the Grail Castle (his domain).

Parsifal then asks the famous question, "Whom does the Grail serve?" or "How can this Wound be Healed?" Immediately the gathering was made aware of the answer, "The Grail serves the Grail King." Parsifal in giving "voice" to the mystery of what is important to uphold in the kingdom now knew that, "the Grail is located within himself." By asking the question, "Whom does it serve", he meant that every man must choose to give service to his conscience and honour that kingly part of himself, without reducing himself by the fact that he is 'wounded'.

With the Holy Spear returned, the Fisher King becomes healed and immediately the Holy Grail enactment commenced properly, restoring light into the kingdom. The land instantly transformed back into fertility, the waters flowed again, and the Wasteland flourished. Water, being a psychic element, re-emerged when the feminine aspects are wholesomely combined with the restored masculine aspects, thus enabling the Holy Grail (Life, Power, Beauty, etc.) to flow again in the Kingdom. Some versions of the myth have it that the Fisher King died three days later and Parsifal became the new king – the Guardian of the Grail – and served the Grail well throughout time.

Parsifal understood the reason for his own suffering, as well as the Fisher King's (and modern man's), for he had transcended the suffering that results from being split-off from one's own integrity. Achieving true "kingly" masculinity in this sense is an accomplishment, not a birthright and is 'birthed' only through suffering, self-reflection and clarity in all of one's actions. The Fisher King was (according to legend) the brother of Parsifal's father, and Parsifal could not simply inherit the "kingdom", he had to earn it and be worthy of it. Likewise, men have to accomplish true masculinity! However, in the "Old (matrilineal) Tradition", Parsifal would have been the true heir, and it is the patriarchal "absent" father that upsets the natural order.

Parsifal's "secret to success" as such, was his lack of trickery (the refusal of artificiality), his inner code of honour (integrity) and overcoming infidelity and temptation in all of his actions. He knew that, years before, as a "green innocent fool," he had left the Grail Castle wounded because he, like the Fisher King, had not had sufficient masculine inner strength to hold to his inner nobility (the Grail) and to do and say what was right.

Parsifal, as all of we men, set out on the hero's journey wanting The Grail to serve him (his ego) but, in the end, he realised that we must all serve the Holy Grail. Parsifal in serving The Grail simply learned to listen and honour his own conscience and uphold it with true masculinity: this is his spirituality. Conscience (in almost every culture) means, "one's unique duty, personal moral imperative, sense of right and wrong, inner voice, still small voice of God" (Bloomsbury Thesaurus). That inner voice, of conscience, that speaks to everyone and is there – all of the time – for each one of us – to take heed of his own inner voice! Parsifal, in becoming truly masculine, found his own (inner) voice – conscience – and was then whole enough (free) to re-enter the Grail Castle and ask the Perilous Question. When a man takes the ultimate step of courage to listen and honour his own inner voice, knowing and path, then he has turned the corner and can become whole and safe.

Parsifal had transcended and integrated the masculine and feminine duality within himself and had attained great humility by knowing the source (within) of his masculine strength and to whom he serves (the sustainable life-giving feminine). Parsifal had integrated duality in the following sense: His "red heart [of passion] had been opened to his feelings and merged with his mind." "He had integrated the black [erotic] with the white [purity] aspects of himself to achieve high fidelity of being" (Burt, 1988). For, without integration of duality, there remains "split-off-ness" within every man. "Only as an individual, undivided, can man continue on his journey, meet the feminine [within and without] as an equal opposite and fulfil his creative destiny" (Wyly, 1989 a&b).

APPENDIX 2: Iron John (Iron Hans): Grimm’s Fairy Tales – A synopsis.

Another myth or legend about male symptoms or masculinity, this time from the Germanic culture, that of *Iron John*, gives us a different view of this process of male transformation. It promoted a retelling of the story by Robert Bly (1990), which spawned the Men’s Movement, the book having spent about 62 weeks on the New York Best Seller list.

In this book, Bly explores the myths and cultural underpinnings of a distinctly vigorous male model of feeling, that provides a combination of fierceness and tenderness and individuality, which has long since been sacrificed to the demands for conformity of the Industrial Revolution. He writes that is clear to men that the images of adult manhood given by popular modern culture are now so out-of-date that a man can no longer depend on them. In *Iron John*, he searches for a new vision of what a man is – or could be – drawing on psychology, anthropology, mythology, folklore and legend. Robert Bly looks at the importance of the Wild Man, who he compares to a Zen priest, a shaman or a woodman.

Bly addresses the devastating effects of remote fathers and mourns the disappearance of male initiation rites in our culture. Finding rich meaning in ancient stories and legends, Bly uses the story, *Iron John*, in which the "Wild Man" guides a young man through eight stages of male growth, reminding us of long-forgotten archetypes of a vigorous type of masculinity, both protective and emotionally centred. Simultaneously, it is poetic and down-to-earth, combining the grandeur of myth with the practical and often painful lessons of our own histories.

The Legend

The King of a particular country sent a huntsman into a nearby forest to look for game for the King’s table, but the huntsman never returned. The King sent out more men into the forest, and each of them disappeared, probably meeting with the same fate. The King then sent all of his remaining huntsmen out, as a group, but again, none of these ever returned. Then the King proclaimed the forest as dangerous and it became forbidden to all.

However, a wandering explorer from another country, who was accompanied by his dog, heard of this dangerous forest and he asked permission to hunt there, claiming that he might be able to discover the fate of the other hunters. The man and his dog were allowed to enter the forest. And, as they come to a lake in the middle of the forest, a giant arm emerged and dragged the dog under the water. The man was very angry and returned to the forest the next day with a large group of men – in some versions, the king’s army – to empty the lake. They found, living at the bottom of the lake, a huge naked ‘Wild Man’ with iron-like skin and long shaggy hair all over his body. Somehow, they managed to capture him and he was then taken back to the king’s castle and locked up in a cage in the courtyard, as a safety-measure and as a curiosity. No-one was allowed to set the wild man free, or they would face the penalty of death. For safe-keeping, the King hid the key to the cage.

Some time later, the young prince was playing with his ball – a special golden one – in the courtyard. It accidentally rolled into the cage where the wild, hairy, iron-skinned man picked it up. The prince asked for the ball back, because it was his and was precious to him. The Wild Man said that he would only return the ball, if he were set free. He further stated that the key to the cage was hidden beneath the Queen’s bed pillow.

At first, the young prince hesitated, but he eventually built up his courage – and one day, when his parents were away, he sneaked into his mother’s bedroom and stole the key. He went down to the courtyard, in the hope of getting his ball back by releasing the Wild Man. But – in the process of opening the cage – the prince’s finger got caught between the key and the lock and began to bleed. He released the iron-skinned Wild Man, who then revealed his name to be Iron John (or Iron Hans depending on the translation). The prince now became fearful that his treachery would be discovered and he would be killed for setting Iron John free, so the Wild Man agreed to take the prince with him into the forest.

As it turned out, Iron John was a powerful ‘magical’ being and had many treasures that he guarded carefully. Everyday, before he left to go out, he would set the prince to watch over one of

these treasures, which was a magic well or spring, but he warned him not to let anything touch the water, or fall into it. The prince obeyed this implicitly on the first day; but, on the second day, his wounded finger was still paining him, and, without thinking, he dipped it into the cool water of spring. His finger immediately turned into living gold. When Iron John returned, the boy tried to hide his finger, but Iron John became suspicious and demanded to see it. Then, he warned him, that he must not touch the water on the third day, with anything, or disaster would happen to the prince. On the third day, he began to watch the pool in the morning. He sat beside the spring carefully, so as not to touch the water, but soon got bored. He then caught sight of himself reflected in the water of the spring. As he leant a little closer, one of the hairs of his head drooped down and just touched the surface of the water. Immediately, all his hair was turned into living gold. He tried to hide this by wearing an old cap, but again Iron John became suspicious and demanded to see what was under the cap.

Disappointed in the boy's failure to obey simple instructions and to fulfill even the simplest of tasks, Iron John decided to send him away. However, because the boy had tried hard, especially on the first day, Iron John told him that if he ever really needed anything, simply to call his name, 'Iron John', out loud three times and then he would come.

There was then a long period of time during which the Prince wandered, lost in the wilderness, and where he experienced hunger, poverty and hardship, and was forced to struggle for life itself. During this period, he must have also grown up in age and become a young man. The next we here of him, the Prince had eventually reached a distant land. He was so tired and hungry that he was forced to beg help from a young woman who was giving out alms.

This woman was actually the Princess of that country, who took pity on him and told him to ask the King, her father, for some work. Since he was desperate, and just wanted to live normally, he did so, but – since he was also ashamed of his strange appearance (with his golden finger, which he kept bandaged) and his golden hair), he kept his cap on and refused to remove it in the presence of the King – and so he was given the most menial of tasks and was sent to assist in mucking out the stables.

When, sometime soon, war came to the kingdom, and all able-bodied men were asked to fight, the prince saw that this was his chance to make something of himself. So he volunteered, but he was laughed at because every one saw him as a dirty, smelly stable boy: in mockery, they give him some rusty old saucepan lids for armour and a broken-down nag for a horse. The nag got stuck in the mire, and didn't have the strength to get out, and so he was left behind as the army marched to war.

At this point, he called Iron John by name, three times, who then appeared and gave him a magnificent suit of armour made of burnished bronze and a great roan war-horse to ride. The Prince joined the King's army at a crucial moment when it was just about to be defeated, and helped win the battle to defend his new homeland, but he rode quickly away before anyone could thank him, or identify him. He then returned all that he had borrowed back to Iron John before he resumed his former position, on the old nag, stuck in the mire. The returning army, when they saw him, again mocked and taunted him, calling him "Straw-boy", "Stick-in-the-Mud", and other insults.

The same thing happened again on the next day: the army rode out and, finding him still stuck, made great fun of him and then left him to go off to the battlefield. Again, he called on Iron John, who appeared and equipped him once again, this time with a magnificent white horse and silver armour. He was also given a squad of fierce soldiers to fight alongside him. This time, when he appeared on the battlefield, it was clear that he had joined the battle at a crucial moment, and again helped to win the battle for the King. Once again, after the battle, he rode away before anyone could speak to him, or identify him, and he returned the men and gifts to Iron John. The returning army again jeered and mocked him, there, in his tin-plate armour, on his broken-down nag, still stuck in the mire.

Much the same thing happened again on the third day: the army rode out, found him still stuck in the mire, and made fun of him once again, everyone laughing all the more. They then left him behind to go to the battle. The Prince called on Iron John for a third time, who appeared and

equipped him yet again, this time with a champion bay horse and a suit of golden armour. This time, he also gave him a full legion of magnificently equipped warriors to fight with him. Again, he joined the battle at a crucial moment, and helped to win it for the King: killing the King of the other country, and this time, winning the war. Again, he rode away before anyone could speak to him, or identify him.

In celebration of the victory, the King announced a magnificent banquet and offered his daughter's hand in marriage to the knight who could win a golden apple that would be given as a prize in a tournament, to be held the next day. Both the King and his daughter hoped that the mysterious knight, who had saved the kingdom, would show himself in order to win such a wonderful prize.

Early that morning, the Prince, still disguised as a stable boy, went out of the stables, down to the river, to wash himself, as was his custom, and the Princess, happening to look out of her window, saw him and also caught a glimpse of his golden hair. She now realised that there was something quite mysterious about this stable boy, so she asked her father, the King to allow him to take part in the tournament, despite his hopeless chances. Again, everyone mocked him and laughed at his saucepan-armour and his lame and haggard horse: some were even angry because they felt that this made a mockery of their tournament.

During the jousting, when passing him by, still struggling on his old nag, one cruel and jealous soldier fired an arrow at him, which wounded him in the leg. He was carried off the field, and the Princess discovered him and bound up his wound with her handkerchief. She then persuaded him to rejoin the tournament. He called again on Iron John for help – a final time – who appeared and equipped him again with the champion steed and the golden armour.

The legend varies here: in some versions, the Princess is sat on top of a glass mountain, and the competing knights have to scale the mountain and get near enough to catch a golden apple that the Princess will toss to them. Of course, they slip and slide and get nowhere near the Princess. But Iron John has given the Prince a horse that is strong enough and sure-footed enough to get close to the Princess. Each time, he tries, the horse is stronger and more sure-footed, and each time he gets closer.

Sometimes, the armour is red and the horse is chestnut in colour; or the armour is silver, with a white horse; or black armour with a black horse; or golden armour with a bay horse. All these are freely 'gifted' by the Wild Man, Iron John. But the Prince has to do the work: acquire the mastery, win the battle, or do the impossible, like ride up a slippery glass mountain.

Eventually, the prince wins the tournament and the prize of golden apple. But, at the presentation, the Princess notices that her handkerchief is binding his wound, and so he became found out. He then explained and said that he owed everything to Iron John and called him in order to give him the prize of the golden apple.

The Prince was now returned to his proper station in life and was also happily reunited with his parents. He then married the Princess. However, a third King came to the wedding. This king was Iron John, but now without the shaggy hair or the iron skin that made him so frightening. He revealed that he was both a King and a magician, under an enchantment, until he could find someone (a young man) who was worthy, generous and of a pure heart (a Prince), and who could set him free from the spell (restore his masculinity) by gifting him, which the Prince had done.

And so they all lived happily ever afterwards.

APPENDIX 3: Prince Lindworm – A Norwegian folktale ¹

In this Scandinavian legend, the monstrous aspect of a man is demonstrated a parable of a man's relationship with the hostile 'monstrous' twin self, that is coiled inside of himself – that was cast away during childhood, and who then waits years before it comes roaring back into his life and begins swallowing up those around him. The necessary 'transformation' is by a magical process (albeit at the hands of a woman) that describes – quite vividly – what it might feel like to go through the difficult process of transformation. We can then discover our true 'princely' self.

The Legend

Once upon a time, there was a fine young King who was married to the loveliest of Queens. They were exceedingly happy, all but for one thing – they had no children. And this often made them both sad, because the Queen wanted a dear little girl child to play with, and the King wanted a son and heir to the kingdom.

One day, the Queen was out walking by herself, when she met an ugly old woman. The old woman was just like a witch: but a nice kind of witch, not the cantankerous sort. She said, "Why do you look so doleful, my pretty lady?" "It's no use my telling you," answered the Queen, "nobody in the world can help me." "Oh, you never know," said the old woman. "Just you let me hear what your trouble is, and maybe I can help to put things right."

"My dear woman, how can you?" said the Queen: but anyway she told her, "The King and I have no children: that's why I am so distressed." "Well, you needn't be," said the old witch, "Because I can set that right in a twinkling, if only you will do exactly as I tell you. Listen: tonight, at sunset, take a gold drinking-cup, with two handles, and put it upside down (bottom upwards) in the ground in the corner of the garden. Then, to-morrow morning at sunrise, go and lift it up and look underneath it and you will find two roses, one red and one white. If you eat the red rose, a little boy will be born to you: if you eat the white rose, a little girl will be sent. But, whatever you do, you mustn't eat both the roses, or you'll be sorry, and that's a warning to you! Eat only one rose: remember that!" "Thank you a thousand times," said the Queen, "this is good news indeed!" And she wanted to give the old woman her gold ring; but the old woman wouldn't take it.

So the Queen went home and did as she had been told: and, next morning at sunrise, she stole out into the garden and lifted up the little drinking-cup. She was surprised, for indeed she had hardly expected to see anything. But there were the two roses underneath it, one red and one white. And now she was dreadfully puzzled, for she did not know which to choose. "If I choose the red one," she thought, "and I have a little boy, he may grow up and go to the wars and get killed. But if I choose the white one, and have a little girl, she will stay at home awhile with us, but later on she will get married and go away and leave us. So, whichever it is, we may be left with no child after all. And I know the pain of being without children only too well."

However, at last she decided on the white rose, and so she ate it. And it tasted so sweet, that – without thinking – she took and ate the red one too: without ever remembering the old woman's solemn warning.

Some time after this, the King went away to the wars: and while he was still away, the Queen became the mother of twins. One was a lovely baby-boy, but the first-born was a Lindworm (aSerpent). She was terribly frightened when she saw the Lindworm, but he wriggled away out of the room, and nobody seemed to have seen him, but herself: so that she thought that it must have been part of a dream. The baby Prince was so beautiful and so healthy, the Queen was full of joy: and likewise, as you may suppose, was the King when he came home and found that he had a son and heir. Not a word was said by anyone about the Lindworm: only the Queen thought about it now and then.

¹ Downloaded 22-Feb-2014: www.worldoftales.com/European_folktales/Norwegian_folktale_3.html

Many years passed by, and the baby boy grew up into a handsome young Prince, and then it was time that he got married. The King sent him off to visit the neighbouring kingdoms, in the royal coach drawn by six white horses, to look for a Princess grand enough and beautiful enough to be his wife. But, at the very first crossroads, their journey was stopped, as there was an enormous Lindworm, a serpent-like monster with horns, big enough to frighten the bravest. He lay across the whole road, opened his great wide-open mouth, and cried, "A bride for me before a bride for you!" So, the Prince made the coach turn round and try another road: but it was of no use. For, at the first cross-ways, there lay the Lindworm again, crying out, "A bride for me before a bride for you!" He tried a third time with the same result. So the Prince had to turn back home again to the Castle, and give up his visit to find a bride in any foreign kingdoms. When his mother, the Queen, heard the story, she had to confess that what the Lindworm said was true. For he was really the eldest of her twins: and so he ought to have a wedding first.

There seemed nothing for it but to find a bride for the Lindworm, if his younger brother, the Prince, were to be married at all. So the King wrote to a far-off distant country, and asked them to send a Princess to marry his son (but, of course, he didn't say which son), and presently a Princess arrived. Obviously, she wasn't allowed to see her bridegroom until he stood by her side in the great cathedral and she was married to him, and then, of course, it was too late for her to say that she wouldn't have him. But, next morning, the Princess had completely disappeared: the Lindworm lay in the marriage bed, sleeping all alone: and it was quite obvious that he had eaten her.

After a little while, the Prince decided that he might now try to go journeying again in search of a Princess: after all, his elder brother had had a bride, even though he didn't seem to want to keep her. So, off he drove in the royal coach with the six white horses. But at the first crossroads, there lay the Lindworm, with his great wide-open mouth, crying out, "A bride for me before a bride for you!" So the carriage tried another road, and the same thing happened. It happened again on the third road and so they had to turn back, just as before.

Then the King wrote to several foreign countries, to know if there was a Princess anywhere who would marry his son. At last another Princess arrived, this time from a very far distant land. And, of course, she was not allowed to see her future husband before the wedding took place, and when it was the Lindworm who stood at her side. And then, afterwards, lo and behold, the next morning that Princess had disappeared as well: and the Lindworm lay sleeping all alone in the marriage bed; and it was quite clear that he had again eaten her.

By and by, the Prince started on his quest for the third time: and at the first cross-roads there lay the Lindworm, with his great wide open mouth, demanding a bride as before. And, this time, the Prince went straight back to the castle, and told the King: "You must find another bride for my elder brother."

"But I don't know where I am to find her," said the King, "I have already made enemies of two great Kings who sent their daughters here as brides and who disappeared: and I have no notion how I can obtain a third Princess. People are beginning to say very strange things, and I am sure no Princess will dare to come." The Prince said he didn't care; he just wanted a bride for himself. So the King decided to try and find if there was any girl who would marry the Lindworm.

Now, down in a little cottage near a wood, there lived a poor shepherd, an old man with only a daughter. And one day the King came and said to him, "Will you allow your daughter to marry my son, the Lindworm? I will make you rich so that you can be cared for, for the rest of your life." "No, sire," said the shepherd, "that I cannot do. She is my only child, and dear to my heart. I want her to take care of me when I am old." But the King wouldn't take "No" for an answer: and at last the shepherd girl saw his despair and said that she didn't really mind being married, as long as her father was properly cared for. So, the old man had to give in.

However, when the King had gone, the shepherd told his daughter that she was to be Prince Lindworm's bride, and then she was utterly in despair, because she feared that if the Lindworm would not spare two beautiful Princesses, he would not spare her either. He would just gobble her up: and she certainly didn't want that.

So she ran out into the woods, crying and wringing her hands, and bewailing her hard fate. And after a while, as she wandered to and fro, an old woman suddenly appeared, as if coming out of a big hollow oak-tree, and asked her, "Why are you crying and looking so doleful, my pretty lass?" The shepherd-girl said, "It's no use my telling you, for nobody in the world can help me." "Oh, you never know," said the old woman. "Just you let me hear what your trouble is, and maybe I can put things right." "Oh, how can you possibly do so?" said the girl, "For I am to be married to the King's eldest son, who is a Lindworm. He has already married two beautiful Princesses, and devoured them: and he will eat me up too! So, no wonder I am distressed."

"Well, you needn't be," said the old woman. "All that can be set right in a twinkling: if only you will do exactly as I tell you." So, eventually the girl said that she would.

"Listen, then," said the old woman. "After the marriage ceremony is over, and when it is time for you to retire to sleep, you must ask to be dressed in seven snow-white shifts. And you must also ask for a bathtub to be filled with lye," (that is, water prepared by leaching wood-ash and which is thus very caustic) "and also a bathtub filled with fresh milk, and finally ask for as many whips as a boy can carry in his arms, and make sure that these are all brought into your bed-chamber before you retire there with your new husband."

"Then, whenever the Prince Lindworm tells you to take off your shift, you bid him to slough a skin. You must insist on that. And, when all his skins are off, you must dip the whips in the lye and whip him; and next, you must wash him in the bath of fresh milk; and, lastly, you must take him and hold him in your arms, even if it's only just for one moment."

"Ugh! The last is the worst notion of all!" said the shepherd's daughter, and she shuddered at the thought of holding the cold, slimy, scaly Lindworm. "Do just as I have said, and all will go well," said the old woman. Then she disappeared again as if into the oak-tree.

When the wedding-day arrived, the girl was fetched in the royal coach with the six white horses, and taken to the castle to be decked out as a bride. She was then arrayed in the most wonderful robes, and she looked the loveliest of brides: she might even have been a princess. She was led to the hall where the wedding ceremony was to take place, and she saw the Prince Lindworm for the first time when he came in and stood by her side. She did not say anything, and so they were married, and a great wedding-feast was held: a banquet fit for the son of a king.

When the feast was over, the bridegroom and bride were conducted to their apartment, with music, and torches, and a great procession. Then the girl asked for seven snow-white shifts to be brought to her, and a bathtub of lye, and a bathtub of milk, and as many whips as a boy could carry in his arms. The lords and ladies and the courtiers in the castle thought, of course, that this was some bit of peasant superstition: all rubbish and nonsense. But the King said, "Let her have whatever she asks for." So they did.

As soon as the door was shut, the Lindworm turned to her and said, "Fair maiden, shed your shift!" And the shepherd's daughter answered him, "Prince Lindworm, first you must slough a skin!" The Prince became very angry. "No one has ever dared ask me to do that before!" said he. "But I require that you do it now!" said she. Then he began to moan and wriggle: and, in a few minutes, a long snake-skin lay upon the floor beside him. Then the girl drew off her first shift, and spread it on top of the skin.

The Lindworm again said to her, "Fair maiden, shed your shift." But the shepherd's daughter answered him, "Prince Lindworm, first you must slough a skin." Angrily, he retorted, "No one has ever dared ask me to do that before," said he. "But I insist that you do it now," said she. Then with more groans and moans, he cast off the second skin: and she covered it with her second shift.

The Lindworm said for the third time, "Fair maiden, shed your shift." The shepherd's daughter answered him again, "Prince Lindworm, first you must slough a skin." He was furious. "No one has ever dared to ask me to do that before," said he, and his little eyes rolled in rage. But the girl. Who was afraid but did not show it, once more she commanded him to do as she bade.

And so this went on, until there were seven Lindworm skins lying on the floor, each of them covered with a snow-white shift. She was now naked, and there was nothing left of the Lindworm but a huge thick pulpy mass, most horrible to see. Then the girl seized up the whips,

dipped them in the lye, and whipped him as hard as ever she could until the bath of lye was empty and the whips were all broken. Next, she bathed him all over in the bath of fresh milk. Lastly, she carried him on to the bed and laid down beside him and put her arms around him. And she fell fast asleep at that very moment.

Next morning very early, the King and the courtiers came and peeped in through the keyhole. They wanted to know what had become of the girl, but none of them dared enter the room. However, in the end, growing bolder, they opened the door a tiny bit and looked in. And there they saw the girl asleep in bed, all fresh and rosy, and beside her lay, not a Lindworm, but the handsomest prince that any one could wish to see.

The King ran and fetched the Queen: and after that, there were such rejoicings in the castle as never were known before or since. The wedding took place all over again, much finer than the first time, with festivals and banquets and merrymakings for days and weeks. No bride was ever so beloved by a King and Queen as this peasant maid from the shepherd's cottage. There was no end to their love and their kindness towards her: she was their perfect daughter, because, by her sense and her calmness, her courage and her obedience, she had become a Princess and saved their son, Prince Lindworm.

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