



Literary and Visual Expression of Dual Descent in *Iron Hans*

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My essay concerns the literary and visual expression of the archetype *dual descent* in North American children's remakes of the Brothers Grimm's tale, *Iron Hans*. The remakes were published within a fourteen-year span following Robert Bly's bestseller, *Iron John: A Book About Men* (1990). Bly's study of the Grimms' wild man material examines the importance of the character's function as a superhuman second father to the prince, who thus becomes of *dual descent*. My intent in writing this article is to examine the contemporary expression of Jung's archetypes *dual descent* and the *wild man*. Relatedly, I demonstrate Bly's contribution is valued alongside the Grimms' tale within the contemporary children's literary scene. The children's authors I examine do not give any indication Bly's interpretation is contradictory to the Grimms' tales, as alleged in fairy tale scholarship. All four prominently reference the Brothers Grimm on the cover or within the inside jacket.

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I. Introduction

The last 25 years have produced several North American children's literature remakes of the Grimms' fairy tale *Iron Hans* (*Der Eisenhans*).¹ The timing of these publications is particularly significant, for each of the children's versions published within the fourteen-year period following Robert Bly's bestselling

¹ Throughout the article citations from the Brothers Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children and Household Tales) are to the critical edition published by the Deutscher Klassiker Verlag (2007). English translations are from Jack Zipes's translations (2002; 2013).

Iron John: A Book About Men, which is a *plaidoyer* for men to initiate younger men through ancient ritual (1990).² Bly's study, combining two Grimms' fairy tales *Iron Hans* and *The Wild Man (De wilde Mann)* addresses the way the enchanted wild man character functions as a surrogate second father to the prince, who can thus be seen as having Jung's archetypal *dual descent* (that is, both human and supernatural). Two of the four recent children's remakes examined here were strongly influenced by Bly. My intent in writing this article is to show that Bly's contribution was influential within the children's literary scene along with the focus on the Grimms' lineage of the fairy tale in their own works. Despite the criticisms of Bly's interpretation by folklorists and general reviewers, there is no evidence that the writers of the children's versions see Bly's rendition of the story as contradictory to the aims of the original Grimms' tales. Rather, each of the four children's versions prominently references the connection to the Brothers Grimm prominently on the front cover or within the inside jacket. The extent to which they incorporate elements of Bly's interpretation is the subject of this study.

Robert Bly tells us that archaic archetypes generally respond to new situations (1990). Accordingly, another intent here is to examine expressions of Jung's archetypes of *dual descent* and the *wild man* as they appear in contemporary in children's literature remakes of these fairy tales for the millennial generation. Of the corpus of children's literature in the current study, three of the four remakes were published before the new millennium (1993, 1994, 1999) with the most recent in 2007, three years after the second reprinting (2004) of Bly's *Iron Hans*, which was originally issued in 1990 and remains a bestseller. Of course, as Maria Kardaun notes: "different times and cultures produce (subtly) different archetypal material" (2010, par. 5). Thus Bly turned to the archetypal material of *Iron Hans* to address the specific societal fear of loss of a masculine identity in the post-Vietnam era of the Reagan years (1990).

Jack Zipes disagrees with Bly's psychoanalytic argument extolling the value of ancient male ritual. He argues that Bly "creates his own myth" (1994, 105) with a lack of precision and an overemphasis on particular aspects of the tale that, by ignoring others, discredits his scholarship among some folklorists. A close reading of Bly's analysis shows that he picked details from each of the Grimms' two versions of the fairy tale specifically in order to explore the value of ancient male ritual. But, in fact, the Grimms' earliest version of the story from 1815 does not include the ritual scene in the woods in which the boy is reborn at the pond that is central to Bly's persuasive argument. Zipes highlights some of these problems in his rebuttal of Bly's argument, offering instead a more complete overview of the wild man material that shows the richness of the variations (1994, 105). Zipes later republished several of the wild man fairy tale versions for comparison (2013, 407–52). Yet despite these criticisms,

² My article references the first printing of Robert Bly's *Iron John: A Book About Men* (1990).

Bly's work merits reconsideration by folklorists, children's literature- and other specialists specifically because other readers of Bly have been greatly influenced by his ideas. Bly's bestseller became, for example, central to the philosophy of the mythopoetic men's movement of the 1990s and continues to be read today in the turn to a darker era, in which mass fear is capable of being deployed to dislodge long-standing democratic traditions.

In three of the four children's stories, the wild man is publically caged to combat fear and uneasiness in the kingdom. Yet, despite the king's incarceration of the dangerous malefactor, the prince is not afraid of the prisoner, however, and turns to him as a spiritual father to conquer his fear of his own biological father. The wild man teaches the prince to face and transcend his boyhood uncertainty. The close readings of the children's stories explored here concentrate on this development. The interaction and immediate bonding during the wild man's imprisonment are the first of several interactions between the mysterious, enchanted wild man and the king's heir that presage the theme of the prince's dual descent. Thereafter a loving trusting relationship ensues which is mutually beneficial to both men.³ Thus, in the remade versions both exiled men – the prince and the wild man – encounter their inner selves. In promising to protect and look after the prince – beginning in the oath scene in the woods – the cursed older man embarks on a path that leads to the prince's rebirth and the development of courage. But simultaneously, through his assistance to the prince in love and war, the spell is broken and the wild man returns to society.

II. Background on *Dual Descent* and *Iron John*

Carl Jung outlined the concept of *dual descent* (that is, being born of a divine second father or mother in addition to the birth parents [1959, 45]) for his work on *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* which he wrote, beginning in 1933, during the rebalancing of culture in the aftermath of the First World War and continuing into the post-WW II period. Jung's remarks on dual descent respond to Sigmund Freud's allegation that Leonardo da Vinci depicts Christ as having two mothers in *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne* (1959, 45).

³ Iron Hans also transforms back from a frightening beast into a deeply caring leader. His transformation and journey depends on the prince's journey. And his own journey entails preparing the prince for a successful reign, a process which can be explained by Joseph Campbell's universal remarks regarding teachers: "like all heroes... he shows you the way to the truth." (1988, 150). This story follows Campbell's description of the twofold function of myth, which shapes adolescents into adults but also holds "adults to their given roles" (1960, 47). *Mitleid* (compassion) is the means by which the prince breaks the spell of the wild man that had caused societal fear and destruction. Campbell defines compassion as the ability to suffer for love or have a gentle heart capable of love (1988). The wild man slays his mysterious monstrous past, which had been embodied in his beastly appearance, and regains his own humanity as well as his kingdom. Thus Iron Hans's reentry into society to fulfill his role as king is a call for readers to complete their communal tasks in a loving way.

Although Jung disagrees with Freud's mistaken contention that St. Anne is also Christ's mother and with Freud's assertion that the picture speaks to Da Vinci's personal neurosis, Jung argues that the dual mother archetype is a collective commonality in mythology and religion. He gives as examples: 1) Heracles acquiring divinity after being adopted by Hera, 2) the mystery of the Pharaoh's second conception or rebirth that leads to his dual human-and-divine nature, or 3) Christ's baptism and rebirth by water and the spirit (Jung 1959, 45).

As with Bly and Jung, the Grimms' use of the theme dual descent occurred – perhaps more than coincidentally – in a time of political unrest in the aftermath of war. The Grimms published the first version of the Iron Hans tale in a Low German dialect under the title “De Wilde Mann” in 1815, at a time when the area where they were living had been under the foreign rule of the Napoleonic administration. Written in a Low German Dialect, it was first included in the 1815 edition of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, but was later replaced in the 1850 edition by a new version, *Iron Hans (Der Eisenhans)*, in standard German.⁴

In the first version of *The Wild Man (De wilde Mann)*, Iron Hans, a king who has been transformed into a wild man by a curse (never explained), is captured and imprisoned after he wrecks havoc in the kingdom's forest. Behind bars, he formulates an escape plan following a fortuitous bounce of the young prince's toy ball into his cage. The wild man negotiates with the boy and returns the ball in exchange for the boy's help in his escape. Because the king has threatened to punish anyone who opens the cage, the prince fears for his life after releasing the wild man. To save the vulnerable young prince, the wild man escapes, taking the boy with him out of the kingdom. Then he dresses him in shabby clothes and sends him in this disguise to a neighboring kingdom. But the wild man's paternal care continues through the boy's nuptials to the princess of the neighboring kingdom. Because the newlyweds do not receive her father's blessing and are not supported by her family, the princess starts to work in a brewery while the prince turns to petty theft. Eventually the prince is able to improve their financial situation through military service when he leads successful attacks against England by fighting twice in battle with a regiment magically conjured for him by the wild man (Grimms 2007). In the second battle, the prince is wounded and his father-in-law, as the neighboring king, tends to his wound. The boy's portentous wound and his success in battle

⁴ Unusual for the Grimms' collection, there were two different versions of the fairy tale. One replaced the other. On September 12, 1814 Jenny von Droste-Hülshoff sent Wilhelm Grimm a recorded oral version of *The Wild Man* in Low German from the city of Münster (Droste-Hülshoff 1929). The tale appeared as KHM 50 – the Grimms designated chronological number for the fairy tale – in the second volume of the first edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children and Household Tales)* in 1815 and remained a part of the collection for over three decades until *Iron Hans* replaced it in the sixth edition (1850). As KLM 136 *Iron Hans* remains part of the collection today and combines elements from *The Wild Man*, another oral story from the Hassenpflug family, and *Der eiserne Hans*, a written version of the tale from Friedmund von Arnim's collection, *Hundert Märchen im Gebirge gesammelt* (1844) (Zipes 2002).

lead to the father-in-law's change of heart and, giving his son-in-law the kingdom, declares: "perhaps you are the Lord Himself or an angel whom God has sent to me" (Zipes 2013, 411) ["vielleicht büst du Gott sölvst ader en Engel, den mie Gott toschickt hev" (Grimm 2007, 568)]. This reference to the prince as a deity ("the Lord himself") underscores the theme of his dual descent. The prince has grown into a balanced, integrated being along the journey and now has the capacity for continued communal contributions.

The plot of the Grimms' Low German version of the fairy tale *The Wild Man* (1815) differs significantly from their edited High German version, *Iron Hans* (published in 1850). In one of the important changes to the latter version, the wild man at first takes the prince with him into the woods, where the wild man and the prince initially live together harmoniously. There the wild man gives the boy the task of keeping the forest pond completely pure from any outside contamination. At the pond, the prince symbolically meets his unconscious as he gazes upon his reflection on the water. Ultimately, the boy dips his finger and hair in and they turn golden, which evidences both his transformation and his true nature. For, though he fails to fulfill his responsibility to the wild man, the boy's action stands symbolically for his ritual rebirth. The numinous energy that surrounds the mysterious wild man and is felt at the pond signals the moment when the prince, now wise, and open to the moment, is ready to be sent away. Inez Martinez interprets Jungian numinosity as Jung's psychologizing of divineness to explain the feeling of "experience of a power greater than one's will within oneself" (2011, 1). Yet the wild man continues to help him, further enabling the boy to conquer his fear and develop the courage to defeat an enemy and win the hand of the princess in marriage. Through his ongoing aid to the prince, the wild man simultaneously breaks his own curse and is able to return to civilization as a powerful king himself and be welcomed by a network of friendly alliances.

The expression of dual descent differs in Grimms' two versions. The boy's father-in-law's explicit reference in the 1815 version to his help as divine is not included in the 1850s version. Instead the idea of dual descent is expressed in an altered form. Here the ritual golden baptism in the woods is reinforced at the end of the tale when both fathers attend a state wedding that officially acknowledges the prince's descent. In the 1850's version the princess does not elope with the prince as in the 1815 text. The story thus concludes with a new configuration of peace throughout the trinity of kingdoms: that of the birth-father, the father-in-law, and the kingdom of Iron Hans, who has been released from the curse.⁵

⁵ An overview of fairy tale versions of *Iron Hans* from older Germanic collections shows dual descent to be the key element in the story. The boy's divine lineage can be traced in other German versions in ways that reveal this theme along with the wild man archetype to be integral to *Iron Hans* plot development. For example, in the nineteenth-century Ignaz and Joseph Zingerle's *Goldener* (1852), the boy is referred to as an angel by his future father-in-law (Zipes 2013, 424). In each case the father-in law recognizes the boy's numinous

III. Textual Examples of Archetypes

Jung's archetypes generally correspond to typical situations which, through repetition, form a collective social psychic constitution (1959, 48) and may explain the existence of hundreds of oral versions of the wild man archetype. Examining the archive of current remakes of the wild man material from North America that appeared at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century in the eras of the über-materiality of the 1990s and then in the post 9-11 period, it is clear that these North American children's literary adaptations of the wild man material are overwhelmingly based on the Grimms' 1850 *Iron Hans* edition. Robert Bly's North American poetic retelling from the post-Vietnam Reagan era describes a time when masculinity was in question (1990). Bly looks to the Grimms' *Iron Hans* tale as a model that both supports the continued development of gentle, male souls that care for the preservation of the earth and repairs the broken bond between father and son (1990). While Bly's focus in his writing is on the prince, his book calls for men to embrace their masculinity and pass on attributes of manhood that challenge images of men in popular culture (1990). Thus he concentrates on aspects of the Grimms' tale that he identifies as a series of male initiation rituals to prepare younger men for adulthood. Bly presents his wild man as the dormant energy of the collective unconscious that can be tapped into to encourage the healing of the man's loving heart.

Bly's message concerning masculinity was well received. It initiated nation-wide interest in the wild man's tale and shaped much of the material's contemporary reception. Of the four children's remakes – Steven Mitchell's *Iron Hans: A Grimms' Fairy Tale*, Eric Kimmel's *Iron John*, and Marianna Mayer's *Iron John*, as well as *Iron Hans* that attributes authorship to the Brothers Grimm but is illustrated by Marilee Heyer – Marianna Mayer closely follows Bly's lead, calling the Iron Hans's character Iron John. She further makes explicit reference to Bly's figure of Iron John, saying: "Once thought of as a pagan deity, today he is romanticized in films such as Tarzan and in books such as Iron John, a work of popular psychology written by poet Robert Bly" (Mayer 1999, n. p.). Eric Kimmel whose version is also titled *Iron John* also notes that he was deeply influenced by Bly. While neither Steven Mitchell's nor Marilee Heyer's illustrated children's editions make any reference to Bly, a 1993 book review of Heyer's illustrated volume states: "Fathers who follow in the path of Robert Bly will be happy to start acculturating their sons properly with this picture book version of 'Iron John.' [...] BH."⁶ The review is a testament not only to the degree of Bly's influence

achievements. In speaking generally about archetypes, Joseph Campbell calls us "to identify, fix and characterize the key-complex, the formal principle of the story's entity, that without which the story would not be" (1969, 14).

⁶ This note accompanies the University of Illinois's copy. B.H. likely stands for Betsy Hearne, the University of Illinois's former Director of The Center for Children's Books.

in the children's book market, but also on fathers. Though written in a different era, Bly's Zen-like wild man resonates with contemporary readers as evidenced both by the book's third reprinting (2015) as well as by the inclusion of beautifully illustrated adaptations to appeal to even younger generations. These richly illustrated texts for youthful audiences of the story of the prince and the wild man are rich in symbolic depictions of the divine. Each work in the corpus of children's literature — from Steven Mitchell, Eric Kimmel, and Marianna Mayer, as well as a fourth version that attributes authorship to the Brothers Grimm but is illustrated by Marilee Heyer — presents in the images used a manifestation of Jung's archetypes.

Heyer's illustrated version, *Iron Hans* (1993), is a near rendition of Grimms' tale in translation with subtly altered dialogue. Her bold and detail-oriented illustrations specify meaning in scenes that the Grimms left vague. In the incarceration scene, for example, the wild man is beast-like as he holds the boy's ball towering over the boy who sits on the floor at the foot of the cage. The boy's expression shows that he is curious about unlocking the cage. He negotiates with the enchanted monster and begs Hans to take him away to avoid his father's punishment, which the prince clearly fears as the consequence of releasing the wild man. The boy's fears are interesting, in that he fears his father yet not the beast, who in this portrayal is more monster-like than any of the other three illustrations of him in these works for children.

A picture of a dreaming prince holding tight to the frightful beast who carries him away visualizes this contrast at the center of Heyer's front cover (1993). Whereas the boy's fear of his father suggests that the king is heartless, the wild man's compassion suggests his commitment to the future of the boy whom he could have left behind. This characterization bespeaks a general trait of the wild man that Bly discusses: "the Wild Man here amounts to an invisible presence, the companionship of the ancestors" (1990, 41). He is a mentor who waits in the shadows until the archetype needs to be activated. According to Joseph Campbell, archetypes are "for the spiritual welfare of the individual or community" (1969, 7–8). The boy early on taps into this reservoir of energy in confronting his fear of his father by unlocking the cage. But later in the woods, the boy fails to meet the wild man's expectation to ensure that nothing contaminates the natural spring. And for failing to resist the water's lure, the boy is told to leave, but with the wild man's offer to aid him outside the woods throughout his development – a compassionate offer that stands in marked contrast to the hardheartedness of the prince's biological father, who had earlier threatened the boy with a punishment of death for his transgression.

In the next kingdom, the prince becomes a gardener where he is pictured with the lame horse that was given him to ride into battle. The lame horse represents the wounded self and society, which is an important thread in Bly's book. Though Heyer does not reference Bly, her depiction of the prince with the lame horse has a special meaning from a Blyian standpoint, as "all wounds threaten princehood" (Bly 1990, 33). But they also indicate his gift, for a

teaching says: “where a man’s wound is, that is where his genius will be” (Bly 1990, 42). In the fairy tale, the lame horse’s wounds parallel the prince’s own wound — a pinched finger from freeing the wild man is his first wound as a testament to his developing confidence. According to Bly, the site of a wound promises to be the place at which we will “give our major gift to the community” (1990, 42). Iron Hans provides him with magical armor and a horse that allow the prince to not only survive battles but also to vanquish opponents heroically and catch a golden apple to win the princess’s hand in marriage. The prince easily defeats the enemy with his sword, which earns him respect and the ability to develop peaceful relations among kingdoms.

Shortly before the end of the tale, the prince describes the wild man as both his father and the source of his success: “My father is a mighty king. I have all the gold I desire, and more than can even be imagined” (Heyer 1993, n. p.). His reference here echoes Iron Hans’s initial words to him at his escape from the cage: “If you do all that I tell you, you will be well treated, for I have enough treasure and gold – in fact, more than anyone else in the world” (Heyer 1993, n. p.). The concluding illustrations underscore the prince’s dual descent: two angels playing a pipe organ enframe both the wild man’s entrance into the wedding hall as well as the wedding scene itself. The prince’s biological father attends the celebration – showing that the boy has conquered his fears of him, as does Iron Hans, who embraces the prince and introduces himself with the words: “‘I am Iron Hans,’ he said. ‘An enchantment made me a wild man, but you have set me free. All the treasures which belong to me are now yours!’” (Heyer 1993, n. p.). Iron Hans can now join the community of leaders who acknowledge his status as a great king. The dialogue and images work in tandem to present Iron Hans as a king: not only does the wild man wear a gold cloak, but he also stands on a golden chariot that is led by a griffin, a legendary creature – part eagle, part lion – that was associated with the divine in antiquity (von Volborth 1981, 42). Considered together with the earlier picture of the caged wild man holding the ball and towering over the young child, the wedding scene is the only double-page illustration within the book that depicts the boy’s interactions with the man.⁷ It can be seen as the ending frame that showcases the evolution of their relationship from beast to mighty king and from a boy to an adult.

Eric Kimmel’s *Iron John* (1994), in contrast, is the only one of the four children’s remakes that leaves a picture of Iron Hans completely off the front cover. Instead, the illustrator Trina Schart Hyman depicts just the boy in the woods looking into the depths of the water and at himself, thus highlighting the boy’s development and his awakening. The wild man’s story is also omitted

⁷ The other double-spread illustrations in Heyer’s book include major scenes of the story: the boy gazing into the water in the woods; the turn of the princess to the garden that reflects golden rays from the boy’s head; the prince in full armor catching the apple; and the wedding (1993).

at the beginning of the tale, although Kimmel references the Brothers Grimm on the front cover under the title. Kimmel's decision to cut the wild man's story represents a significant departure from both of the Grimms' versions — *The Wild Man* and *Iron Hans* — in which the Grimm Brothers included the capture scene from the first edition in 1815 onwards through all of their revisions and the seventh and last edition in 1857 (Zipes 1994, 110). But Kimmel suggests that his own changes might be better understood within the context of Bly's interpretation of the wild man material: "Readers interested in understanding the story's deeper levels of meaning should refer to their [Robert Bly and Joseph Campbell] works" (1994, n. p.). Influenced by Bly, Kimmel likewise adopts the title, *Iron John* and tells a story that advances Bly's concepts.

Schart Hyman, in contrast, illustrates the wild man's capture on the inside title page and also depicts a private zoo where the wild man is held. The wild man is portrayed as a valuable addition to the king's collection of animals. Kimmel's written text supports this interpretation: "A king once lived who took great pride in his menagerie of beasts. He owned creatures of every description, from quivering shrews to trumpeting elephants" (1994, n. p.). Kimmel alleges in his author's note that the capture of Iron Hans is unnecessary to the tale (1994).

The boy, Walter, develops from a weak child to a mighty warrior, starting with his defiance of his father in unlocking the cage of the wild man, then going with the wild man to the woods and becoming a young man in the image of the wild man. He wears the skins of wild animals, as does the wild man, whom Walter loved: "as if he were his own father" (Kimmel 1994, n. p.). The wild man also recognizes his responsibility to protect the boy: "Here I am king. Nothing can harm you, save by my word. I roam these woods by day and return by night. While I am gone, you must watch over my spring. See that nothing falls into it" (Kimmel 1994, n. p.). With these words, the wild man demonstrates his role as Walter's *ersatz* father. He gives the boy responsibility to protect the water, which the prince does not heed.

When Walter fails the test, his mistakes are described as fate, given that the spring only existed for Walter to dip his finger and his hair into. His newly acquired golden hair marks his symbolic baptism, his divine state, and season of trial. The wild man tells the boy to leave, but before the two part ways, the wild man gives him advice as to the way to find work. Thereafter the wild man also continues to respond to his calls for help in love and war. In Kimmel's version the prince is called Walter, who courts the garden girl instead of one of the princesses — this story has three. Yet he carries out the tests to fight in battle and to attend the games, which in other versions wins the princess as his bride.

In this remake, the prince still achieves glory but fails to achieve acceptance for this accomplishment of saving the kingdom. At the end of the story, the wild man carries an unconscious Walter back to the kingdom after being

injured in battle. Only the tears of Else, the garden girl, can revive him. The conclusion differs the most from past and contemporary remakes when Walter takes the garden girl Else to the woods to live with the wild man there, rather than in a kingdom outside the woods. Hence, the wild man's failures as a father, king, and human being are not publically reconciled at a wedding. The boy's biological father does not return to the tale, and the wild man remains a mysterious creature. Kimmel's conclusion is reinforced by Schart Hyman's illustration of the totem. She depicts the new wild man clan – standing to form the shape of a totem pole at the end of the tale. The family totem consists of the wild man wearing a crown of antlers, the prince a crown of the golden eagle, and Else a crown of flowers. Symbolically together they represent the extension of the line through Else, the flower girl who will bear fruit for the family line. This representation suggests several loosely related ideas from Freud's discussion of family relations in *Totem und Tabu* as well as the symbol of the totem as a guide in the mythopoetic men's movement.⁸

In other versions of the material, the wild man returns to society as king to reign once again. Without returning, the myth cannot be created, as Campbell explains in talking generally about the interdependence between myth and civilization (1988). In Kimmel's version the wild man does not return to civilization or finish his work to lay the mythological pillars for civilization. In the Grimms' *Iron Hans*, Iron Hans's reintroduction to society fosters the idea that peace is desirable and obtainable when he is welcomed by all at the prince's wedding where a community of leaders, including the prince's and the princess's fathers, acknowledges his status as a great king.

By leaving him as a shaman to return to the forest, Kimmel builds upon Bly's interpretation of the material, which also downplays the wild man's transformation to the benefit of retaining the mysteriousness of the wild man. Bly states: "the Wild Man, who has examined his wound, resembles a Zen priest, a shaman, or a woodsman more than a savage" (1990, x). In *Iron John*, Bly asks the question directly, "whose story was this?," before elusively suggesting that this unanswered question helps us "to free ourselves from family cages and collective mind sets" and "to release transcendent beings from imprisonment and trance" (1990, 233–34). But if this story was the boy's, and for us, then naming the prince Walter and the garden girl Else does not help us to see ourselves in the character of the child protagonist and learn from his journey.

In Marianna Mayer's *Iron John* (1999), a Merlin character is introduced who, the reader is told, commonly disguises himself as a stag, a dragon, or a

⁸ Freud's first chapter of *Totem und Tabu* describes explains that totems are passed through a parent, who, if father, is feared and respected (1956). Siblings limit interaction so to avoid incest and in-breeding. Kimmel's story tells the story of a family member leaving home to seek a wife outside of the totem to bring home and keep the line alive. According to Freud's discussion of the totem, every man can be a father to a child, thus suggesting that children have multiple fathers.

wild man “to test promising young knights” (1999, n. p.). In this story, the character becomes a wild man with magical ability. Magic replaces divinity as the explanation for the prince’s amazing feats. Mayer’s illustrator Winslow Pels confirms the description of the wild man as a magician, shown holding the boy’s magical golden ball on the front cover. This picture associates the wild man to water through the shells and crabs in his beard that has the texture of seaweed. In the capture scene Pels illustrates a tense wild man under water, who nervously looks up as the water is drained from the pond. Once captured, the kingdom’s subjects mock the wild man and call him Iron John because of his rusty hair color as he sits motionless in the cage. His enchantment behind bars limits his magical ability.

The wild man is pictured as powerless in society, even though he is the king of nature. Throughout the book, he is illustrated with antlers. He describes an ideal way of life in the woods, where “all creatures are treated as equals” (Mayer 1990, n. p.). The prince learns the value of peaceful co-existence from his time with the wild man, which he, too, practices by the end of the story. These teachings serve the boy in tending to the animals that he saves on his journey to the next kingdom where he finds employment in the kitchen of a palace. Here he meets his future spouse, the princess. A new-founded balance allows him to be open to the moment. Unwilling to take off his hat and expose his golden hair, even when asked by the king, he can no longer serve in the king’s kitchen and becomes a gardener, courts the princess, and travels in disguise to battle to protect her from an imminent invasion.

That Mayer is deeply influenced by Bly, is evidenced by the title *Iron John*, but she also diverges greatly from Bly’s version. She does not, for example, include the standard lame horse, as in the other four children’s remakes, but replaces it with a donkey. The donkey also serves as the impetus to seek the wild man’s help, but it does not function in the same way as a lame horse. Mayer’s healthy donkey neither symbolizes a sickness in oneself nor in society.

Mayer’s version varies most from Bly in her focus on the girl’s perspective, especially when the young prince is offered a reward for his service. Though Bly explains that the feminist movement raised awareness of sufferings and some men began to notice and nurture their own feminine side (1990, 2), Bly is concerned with men in his book. In contrast, Mayer’s *Iron John* depicts a liberated princess who has freewill. This feminist reading is made explicit when the prince does not ask for the princess as compensation for defending the kingdom in battle, but instead allows her to make the decision.

The ending of Mayer’s retelling is central to the discussion of dual descent. The boy introduces himself to his future father-in-law by explaining his relationship to the wild man: “my adopted father, who lives in the wildwood, raised me. It is he who has helped me today” (Mayer 1999, n. p.). The prince owes his victory in battle as well as in the ensuing tournament to John’s supernatural assistance. Here the written text is quite specific concerning

fatherhood whereas the Grimms left the question murky. In fact, Mayer's version addresses the question of fatherhood the most directly of all four of the children's literature remakes. In addition to the prince calling Iron John his second father at the wedding (Mayer 1999, n. p.), so too does Iron John's explanation of his existence in the woods speak to another question the Grimms left unanswered: "Long ago I turned away from the world, preferring the company of wild creatures in the refuge I made in the wood. My heart has hardened toward humankind for their greed and cruelty. But you, Hans, remind me that there is also goodness in the human soul" (Mayer 1999, n. p.).

In the illustration of his entrance at the wedding, the wild man is portrayed as wearing a crown of deer antlers and walking with a deer and other forest animals as he carries an apple and a staff made of a branch on which a bird sits. These symbols of nature suggest an integration of the wild and a harmonious existence with the earth. Neither Merlin nor the prince's birth parents return to the tale. After the wedding scene, additional illustrations follow the traditional conclusion of the story and portray the couple living harmoniously in the woods, surrounded by children. This picture is reminiscent of Pels's earlier illustrations in which Iron John was surrounded first by fish under water and then by birds on the way to the ball. At one with nature, the word paradise is used to describe the life of prince and princess.

In coming back to Bly's question – whose story was this? – one need look no further than the front cover of Mayer's retelling where the wild man holds the golden ball of the boy. For Bly, the golden ball represents unity that one has in childhood before being split into male/female gender categories around the age of eight (1990). People spend their lives trying to find the ball because of its energy (Bly 1990). This book is the only illustrated children's version to highlight the imprisonment scene, including the golden ball, prominently on the front cover, although in all of the versions, the golden ball amounts to the negotiation tool that the wild man uses to break free.

Steven Mitchell's *Iron Hans: A Grimms' Fairy Tale* (2007) creates a metaphor associating Iron Hans to life, which provides the clearest demonstration of dual descent of the four versions. This remake was made following the second edition of Bly's *Iron John* in 2004. Mitchell's version provides considerable insight into characters' actions, especially concerning the development of the relationship between the wild man and the boy. In the imprisonment scene, "the wild man looked at the boy with surprise, then interest, then affection" (Mitchell 2007, n. p.), when the prince confronts the wild man to return his golden ball. The wild man explains that the (unexplained) curse he bears caused him to kill the hunters but that he will not endanger the boy, which leads the boy to become fascinated with the wild man. His fascination is the reason that the prince decides that he wants to go with the wild man. He not only wants to avoid punishment, but also to spend more time with the wild man, because he has never met anyone like this before.

The man takes an interest in the boy and the boy trusts the man out of love. Mitchell's version is marked by an open communication between the man and the boy. The wild man confides in the boy when he gives him the responsibility of watching the spring: "As long as it [the golden spring] remains pure, I feel that there is hope for me and that someday the spell will be lifted" (Mitchell 2007, n. p.). Different from Kimmel's version, the purpose of the water is not associated with the boy but with the wild man's future. Nevertheless, the pond still functions as a numinous space for the boy's discovery of his dual descent. When the wild man scolds the prince, he makes it clear that he will be there for him whenever he shouts "Iron Hans." Mitchell even captures the boy's reluctance to leave: "He didn't know why he wanted to stay with Iron Hans, but he longed to, more than anything" (Mitchell 2007, n. p.).

Matt Tavares mirrors the boy's feelings in his illustration for Mitchell's book of the boy walking away with his head down in shame as the wild man follows the departing boy with his eyes and his hands resolutely on his hips (2007). The boy leaves for the next kingdom and, when it is later attacked, Iron Hans supplies him magically not only with a stallion but also an army suited in iron armor to defeat the enemy. Following the boy's success, the king throws a festival for his daughter to meet the mysterious knight who had saved the kingdom. Iron Hans even helps him build his confidence in courting the princess by lending him a strong chestnut horse and a suit of red armor. At the end, Mitchell asserts: "the prince felt that he had passed all the tests that life, or Iron Hans, had given him" (2007, n. p.). Here Iron Hans is equated to more than a second father, he is compared to *life* – the tests that the prince needed to pass. Clearly, Iron Hans has supernatural powers and Mitchell's association of Iron Hans's tests and life not only elevates Iron Hans's status to god-like, but it is also reminiscent of the Grimms' original version of the material in *The Wild Man* (1815) in which the prince is asked if he is "the Lord himself" or "sent by him?" (Grimms 2007, 568).

Yet, Tavares's illustrations follow the description of the wild man in the 1850s Grimm version. Mitchell also picks up on the Grimms' description by explaining on the inside of the front cover that the wild man is a superhuman nine feet tall. The wild man is prominently featured on the front cover as a tall, long-haired man carrying the boy into the woods. His hairy appearance can be traced back to some older non-Grimm versions of the story in which the wild man is the devil. Zipes explains that Wilhelm's revisions were influenced by the tradition of *Robert der Teufel* (*Robert the Devil*) (1994). In the Grimms' *The Wild Man* (1815), the tale makes no reference to the man's physical features. Wilhelm added the body hair in his 1850 version of the story, *Iron Hans*: "der braun am Leib war, wie rostiges Eisens, und dem die Haare über das Gesicht bis zu den Knieen herabhingen" (Grimm 2007, 758). ["His body was as brown as rusty iron, and his hair hung over his face down to his knees"] (Zipes 2002, 444). It seems that the Grimms' addition of unkemptness draws on the beastly tradition of the character after the original Low German title,

“*De wilde Mann*” was removed. In Mitchell’s version, the wild man himself references his beastly appearance at the wedding: “from an arrogant king into a wild man, I am as proud of you as your own father and mother would be” (2007, n. p.). With this statement, Iron Hans expresses his paternal feelings for the prince. This statement also underscores Mitchell’s harmonious ending which advances the Grimms’ message concerning the boy’s contribution toward peace.

IV. Final Remarks

Joseph Campbell explains that if myths are not evoked by new generations, they will disappear. Here the ancient male archetype of the wild man appeared in children’s remakes of *Iron Hans* during an era of millennial angst that looked backward for wisdom in confronting the unknown. Myths and traditions offer knowledge and experience that are needed to prepare for the future. And, despite the changes to details of the tale, these mythical traditions are depicted the children’s books. The prince’s recognition of his archetypal dual descent comes with his acceptance of the wild man as his second father or the second king, as Bly refers to him (1990, x).

In Steven Mitchell’s version, the wild man’s divine state is recognized when the prince associates him with life. Marilee Heyer alludes to the divine through her illustration of two angels playing a pipe organ that enframes the wedding scene. Here the wild man’s supernatural or enchanted magnificence is portrayed through his riding of a golden chariot led by a griffin and an angel wearing a laurel wreath and blowing a horn. Both Eric Kimmel’s and Marianna Mayer’s illustrators, Trina Schart Hyman and Winslow Pels, depict, in addition, forest animals to symbolize seeking the divine in Nature.

As in the Grimms’ versions, the wild man’s incarceration allows the prince and the wild man to bond after they are away from the kingdom. The prince grows with the wild man’s help. In each of the four children’s versions the boy is twice born when he enacts the water ritual. The illustration depicts his resulting self awareness. In this father-son relationship, Iron Hans has calmed the prince’s fears by assisting him in courtship and in battle. Similarly, the prince’s help to the wild man throughout the story led to true personal growth.

Only Eric Kimmel’s ending rejects Grimms’ culmination when, in Kimmel’s rewrite, Iron John fails to reclaim his position in society and returns to the forest. The Brothers Grimm did not remove the wild man’s return to civilization, as a transformed being even despite their extensive editing over four decades. By returning to the woods at the fairy tale’s conclusion, Kimmel follows Bly’s emphasis on the necessity of man to break free from the industrial domination over the individual (Bly 1990). Yet, his rejection of civilization does not provide hope for a future kingdom, as it does not allow

the society to heal. Thus, in this version, child of dual descent has extraordinary god-like skills that go unrealized.

If, as Inez Martinez asserts, “literature functions as a conduit between unconscious and conscious understanding and bridges individual and collective consciousness” (2011, 1), then each children’s literature retelling can activate the archetypal reservoir of the wild man in a renewed era of uncertainty. For, just as each version of a tale relates to cultural differences specific to the time and place in which the story was recorded, the fairy tale’s essence remains, even as the plot is altered by each new generation and within each cultural context.

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