Mythology of Horses

Night Mares & Day Stallions

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MYTH , ARCHETYPE, AND SOMARCHETYPE

> *Myths are the dreams of the race.*
> *Dreams are the myths of the individual.*
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> — Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 73

> *[...]Excellent dream work can be done whether or not one knows these myths and folk stories. When the dreams call up archetypal images, the unconscious dreamer already knows what the basic story is, whether or not the interesting parallels to sacred narratives in other distant and obscure cultures are immediately available to consciousness. The universal themes can be discovered by "ordinary" explorations of the images for their personal associations and basic symbolic implications. The archetypal amplifications drawn from knowledge of the religious and folk traditions of other cultures enrich the work; but they are not necessary, since the same essential symbolic dramas and relationships can be revealed by the dream images themselves, even without their specific archetypal associations.*
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> — Jeremy Taylor, *The Living Labyrinth*, pp. 107-108

THE LIVING MYTH

Speed. Strength. Grace. Power. Beauty. Every physical horse is a living myth unto its beholder. We do not require a book of fairy tales or a Joseph Campbell to articulate the deep personal awe we feel in the presence of Horse. To see, smell, touch, fear, and mount a horse in the flesh is to feel the stirrings of archetypal energies arising from at least 35,000 years of human awareness of Horse.

When we encounter Horse in waking life, she already possesses a dreamlike quality. When we encounter Horse in dreams, we apprehend the living myth in manifestations that are easily related to the magic she evokes in waking life. In *She Flies Without Wings: How Horses Touch a Woman's Soul*, Mary Midkiff says, "A horse's body and limbs are not just palpable but symbolic, not just functional but suggestive."

The nature of myth as something larger than life, a story on steroids, begs for protagonists that, like Horse, are literally—and so figuratively—more momentous than ourselves.

For contemporary cultures no longer dependent on the horse for food, draft, or transportation, the living horse has ceased to be part of daily experience. If we see him at all, it is in parades or mounted patrols, from a car window on a drive in the country, in televised sports, or, uncommonly, as an aide in hippotherapy, therapeutic riding, equine- assisted psychotherapy, and equine experiential learning. [1]

The mundane associations having receded from our experience, what is preserved and magnified are Horse's mythic qualities. Urban children become familiar with Horse mainly through folk and fairy tales, movies and television. For them, only a mythical relationship to horses exists. Yet even children who grew up on farms with horses retain a sense of wonder and love for them. When Horse enters our

dreams, her magical qualities emerge whether or not we are currently in a relationship with a waking life horse.

Mohammad ascending to Seventh Heaven on Al Borak.

Most folk tales portray Horse as extending the physical abilities of his rider and so becoming an accessory to the Hero's quest. He is literally and figuratively a means of transport across the terrain of the tale's setting and into the internal landscape of the Hero's journey of self-discovery and awareness. In Egyptian, Greek, Armenian, Norse, and Hindu mythological traditions, horses pull the sun (and sometimes the moon) across the sky. Al Borak, a horse with the head of a woman and the wings of an eagle, raises Mohammed to Seventh Heaven. Bucephalus, a horse mythically enhanced from historical record, carries Alexander the Great into victorious battles. Gods and goddesses such as Diana, Epona, and Odin rode horses. So too, did Hades, god of the Underworld, on his steeds Nonios, Abaster, and Abatos.

In the Rig-Veda of 3000 BC several references are made to the Aswin, the twin sons of the sky Dyaus, and brothers of Usha the Dawn. The Aswin were gods with horse heads and their sister Usha brought forth the dawn on her horse-drawn chariot. The Book of Revelations in the New Testament foretells the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse who will usher in the end of the world, the second coming of the Messiah, and God's vanquishing of all evil. Muhammad, Vishnu, and Christ are all prophesied to return on a white horse.

In many tales, Horse is an independent agent who corresponds to a singular physical or psychological type. Pegasus alone stood among the Greek pantheon as a god, sprung from the sea god Poseidon and the bleeding head of Medusa. Pegasus was sacred to the Muses, and from his hoof sprang the Hippocrene foun-

tain whose waters conferred the gift for poetry in those who drank from it. No one was able to mount Pegasus before Bellerophon sat astride him. Bellerophon could not tame Pegasus until Athena visited him in a dream. She handed him a golden bridle and bade him ride Pegasus to defeat the monstrous Chimaera. When Bellerophon awoke, he held the golden bridle in his hands. Thus the bridling of Pegasus symbolizes the rationality of Athena, goddess of Wisdom, overcoming the instincts and uncontrollable passions, represented by Pegasus in his wild, unbridled state. The story also links the dream world to the waking world. We are reminded of our ability—the necessity—to use will and reason to manifest in the physical the gifts from the seemingly chaotic, ephemeral, and disconnected world of dreams, instincts, and imagination.

When we tell stories such as *Good Luck Horse, Bad Luck Horse*, recounted below, we endow Horse with his own agency. When we examine horses in the dreams of contemporary people, we will note whether they act as free agents or as physical extensions of the dreamer.

ARCHETYPES AND PROJECTIONS OF MIND AND BODY

PSYCHOLOGICAL ARCHETYPES

Archetypes (Greek *arche*, original or beginning + *type*, form or pattern) is the Jungian term for the blueprints for human personality and character essences that exist across all cultures, throughout all time, in every individual. They are the straight-from-central-casting roles that each society clothes in its own customs and prejudices—loving mother, wise old man, beautiful princess, knight in shining armor, evil fiend, god and goddess, beloved baby animal.

The entire cast of archetypes performs in every human psyche, usually in the wings where we are unaware of them. Each of us is an omnipotential personality, capable of expressing every archetype. Myths, folk legends, and fairy tales—remarkably similar in all languages and cultures—are stories built around archetypal themes.Noting these cross-cultural similarities, twentieth century psychiatrist and mystical intellectual Carl Jung postulated a *collective unconscious*—the universal repository of all human beliefs, knowledge, patterns, and experience that has not come to conscious awareness. The collective unconscious is like a library of millions of books that taken together reveal the infinite possibilities for the past, present, and future of the psyche. Taking books out of the library is the act of making unconscious patterns and beliefs become conscious.

Archetypal dramas come to us in folk tales and in night time sleeping dreams. We also see them in waking dreams, those highly symbolic or highly charged events that seem to *happen to* us—our triumphs, tragedies, lucky breaks, "accidents," and illnesses. In Jungian psychology, the work of a lifetime is the process of *individuation* in which one attempts to integrate all the archetypes into consciousness of the Whole Self. In this process, and in common with the mystical traditions of every world religion, we recognize the fundamental unity of all beings and all experience.

To the extent that we have not acknowledged, embraced, and integrated all possible archetypes within our own psyches, we will forever project them outward onto others. Projection is the act, often unconscious, of attributing or blaming one's feelings, thoughts, circumstances, and attitudes to or on other individuals, racial or ethnic groups, or animals. Everything we experience as otherness, external to ourselves, represents, in part, a projection of our internal states upon our mates, parents, children, enemies, heroes, and animal companions. When our unconscious projections lead to hateful emotions, destructive behaviors, or dangerous infatuations, we damage our relationships and ourselves. When we read myths and folk tales, we can harmlessly project our unacknowledged archetypal roles onto the heroes, lovers, villains, and animals of fiction. Children do this quite naturally and playfully by becoming monsters, witches, and fairy princesses for Halloween.

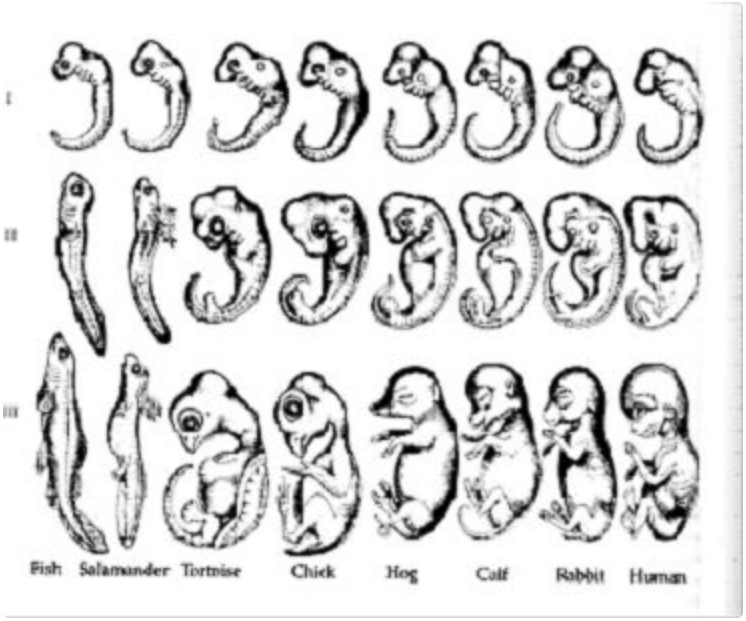
In myth and folk tale, whether idolized or demonized, Horse appears in forms that correspond to all the major Jungian archetypes we meet below—Anima and Animus (Gender Complement), Dark Shadow and Bright Shadow, Trickster, Hero, and Willing Sacrifice.

ARCHETYPES OF THE PHYSICAL BODY

Archetypes as Jung defined them are psychological concepts that press down like cookie cutters on the dough of our personality and character. However mental constructs are insufficient to represent all our projections onto Horse. We also project onto him our nonverbal sensations of size, strength, balance, grace, coordination, agility, and speed. The body has its own unconscious material that needs to be integrated into the Whole Self. As is attested to in research on cellular memory and in some sudden changes in personality in organ transplant recipients, the body has its own consciousness.[2] Like concepts of intuitive empathy, mental telepathy, and emotional sympathy, we can postulate a somatopathic function that is body-to-body. Just as tendon reflexes like the knee-jerk reaction are mediated by the spinal cord and do not need the brain, somatopathic projections are not relayed via the cognitive brain for their enactment. If you have ever found yourself involuntarily and almost unconsciously bobbing your head to a jazz beat, you've experienced a somatopathic response to the music.

Physical qualities are not adequately addressed in psychological archetypes. Physical archetypes are separate but equally primal and universal. They exist in the language of visceral repertory that the body understands on its own terms. The body does not merely react to ideas. It has its own primary apprehension and response. Martial arts teach us that our mental states can be secondary to how we center, balance, and move our bodies.

Let us suppose the existence of *somarchetypes* of the physical body's universal primordial experiences.[*] The forms, shapes, and sensations experienced as Other, both animal and human, receive projections from the sensory unconscious. In waking life and in dreams, we project somarchetypes onto animal bodies and probably onto plants and inanimate objects as well.[†] We project our imagined versions of tallness and shortness, strength and weakness, skinniness and fatness, baldness and hairiness, vaginas and penises, onto those who have attributes unlike



Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. Ernst Haeckel, 1868.

our own but known to the collective physical unconscious of which we are part. We project our undesirable, rejected Dark Shadow somarchetypes onto disabled or disfigured forms. [3] We project our desirable, ideal Bright Shadow somarchetypes onto Olympic athletes, beautiful ballerinas, and horses.

When we dream of animals, one layer of the dream is the dream body representing itself as an earlier stage of our physical development. The memory of these forms is stored over the millennia of evolution in the consciousness of our cells.

A now largely discredited theory of human embryonic development states "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny." ‡ In the figure to the right, executed, some say fraudulently, by late the late 19th century German biologist, Ernst Haeckel, the human fetus in its nine months of development passes through forms that resemble stages of evolution—from fish to amphibian to bird to "lower" mammal to "higher" mammal.

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* From Greek *soma-*, body. The term *somatype* might have been preferable, however it was already used in the early 1940s by American psychologist William H. Sheldon to describe ectomorphs, mesomorphs, and endomorphs.

† Hence we have the Gestalt technique of being all characters and objects in our dreams.

‡ This concept means that the gestation, or coming into being (ontogeny), of each "higher" animal passes through all the stages of evolution of each kind (phylum) of "lower" animal.

Ivory carving of a horse found at Hohle Fels Cave in southern Germany. Around -33,000.

In an analogous way, oneirogeny—the creation of dreams by the dream ego—recapitulates mythogeny. That is, dreams reënact the history of myth and replay the primitive, modern, and universal dramas of myth, legend, and fable. We dream ourselves in more primitive physical as well as psychological forms. Scenarios of animals behaving idiosyncratically and other fantastic dream scenarios lend the power of myth to our night dreams. That is what Freud meant when he said, "Myths are the dreams of the race; Dreams are the myths of the individual."

EVOLUTION OF THE ARCHETYPE

FROM DARWIN TO DISNEY

Horses evolved 60 million years ago as Eohippus, a 4-toed, leaf-eating forest dweller with approximately the habitus of a medium-size dog. Today's horse, *Equus caballus*, has been known for 20 million years. Late Paleolithic (-30,000 to -2,000 *) humans hunted wild horses for food, evidently used them in ritual, and vividly depicted them in cave art found all over Europe and, from a later period, in Asia Minor.

As an herbivore, the horse preys on no other animals, but is itself the target of predators such as large cats and wolf packs. Most horses take flight under stress, but when domesticated for ranching and battle, have been known for their bravery, aggression, and selflessness. Some historians have proposed that the horse was first domesticated by migratory reindeer herders in Northern Europe, who by –5,000 rode reindeer and hunted horses, and somewhat later by the Proto-Indo-Europeans on the Ukrainian steppes.

Beginning in the -3rd millennium, and over a period of 3,500 years, pastoralist horse peoples from the Pontic-Caspian steppes began a methodical migration into Europe, Anatolia (current day Turkey), the Indus region, and Western Siberia. The new settlers underwent in part a syncretic absorption of the agrarian and mercantile native societies. There is also archeological evidence of horse and chariot warfare, whereby invaders forcefully conquered indigenous populations. In essence, the horse evolved from a draft animal, to a warrior's steed—both harnessed to chariot and mounted—to a form of general transport. [4]

* Negative numbers designate dates "Before Christ" or "Before the Common Era." Ivory carving of a horse found at Hohle Fels Cave in southern Germany. – 33,000.

As the horse evolved in relation to humans, from food source in –35,000 to domesticated laborer in –5,000 to warrior steed in -2,000 to sporting companion, he appeared in different roles in myth and projection. We can only wonder what the Lascaux cave artists were thinking in –14,000 when they painted horses inside the caves. Were they thinking in terms of art for art's sake, religious iconography and ritual, or dinner? [5]

Cave drawing at Lascaux, France. 15th century BCE.

By the first millennium, numerous cultures abound with myths, folk tales, and rituals involving the horse, including a form of horse suttee—where horses were buried with their masters.

Until recently, horse tales were told by and to people who were familiar with physical horses in daily life. In the age of the tractor and the automobile and the snowboard, horse myths are spread by the mass media to people, especially children, who have little or no contact with live horses. Old movies such as *National Velvet, the Black Stallion, Ben Hur, and Equus*, and newer movies such as *Spirit, Lord of the Rings, Seabiscuit and Hidalgo* proffer mainly archetypal images to a new generation of dreamers.

The following sections describe the most significant Jungian archetypes and how the horse portrays each archetype in mythology.

ANIMUS/ANIMA/GENDER COMPLEMENT

Animus and anima are the archetypal figures that hold, respectively, masculine and feminine qualities. Masculine, or yang, qualities are traditionally active, penetrating, aggressive, assertive, hard, dominant and rational. The feminine, or yin, is associated with passivity, acceptance, nurturing, receptivity, envelopment, softness, and intuitive processes.

In Jung's time, the animus was a woman's "inner man" and the anima was a man's "inner woman." In a predominantly heterosexual society * conditioned by the persistent influences of the 20th century, Jung's definitions remain relevant and useful in the interpretation of dreams and myths. But because masculine and feminine do not necessarily equate with or attach to biological males and females, and because there are so many variations of intergender and transgender identities, the term *gender complement* denotes the set of opposite or missing gender qualities that complete each individual. Strong projections onto one's gender-complementary person are often experienced as sexual attraction or falling in love.

* Demographers estimate that between 5 and 9 percent of the US population self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender—Harris Interactive. 2004.

One of the more remarkable aspects of a living horse is that he dually expresses both strong masculine and strong feminine qualities. On one hand the horse's physical powers suggest the strongman figure whom Jung's student Maria-Louise von Franz uses to exemplify the *wholly physical man*, one of the four stages of the animus. [6, 7] On the other hand, in *The Tao of Equus*, Linda Kohanov claims that horses relate to the world from a primarily feminine, or *yin*, perspective:

> *As a result, the species is a living example of the success and effectiveness of feminine values, including cooperation over competition, responsiveness over strategy, emotion and intuition over logic, process over goal, and the creative approach to life that these qualities engender.*

Especially when gender-based philosophies such as feminism, as in Kohanov's case, are the framework for one's observations and interpretations, it is tricky business to map masculine and feminine onto men and women, much less onto mare, gelding, and stallion. Labels aside, we observe that horses exhibit behaviors that, even within a single horse, seem to be paired opposites: big and strong, yet shy and fearful—always a prey animal, never a predator; stubborn and headstrong yet willing and large of heart; hardy yet sensitive; easily domesticated and trained, yet (except when abused) forever wild, free, and unpredictable; quick to take "offense," yet immediately forgiving.

In equine-assisted psychotherapy and equine experiential learning, patients and participants are frequently, and usually unconsciously, drawn to horses that mirror some aspect of the person's gender-complement relationships. These affinities, which can be mutual from the horse's point of view, often enact the archetypal dramas of the human relationships. For example, Kohanov presents the case of a smart-women-foolish- choices type of client named Joy. In Joy's initial equine-assisted psychotherapy session, she has "an overwhelming attraction to a horse who

mirrored the traits of aggressive men in her life, and [an] initial inability to recognize the danger this horse represented."

A striking enactment of the anima/animus dynamic with horses was the elaborate and, to the modern mind, gruesome and grotesque ritual of the *asvamedha* and its Roman derivative, the October Equus. Dating from thousands of years ago, and last performed in the 18th century, the *asvamedha* is described in the Rg Veda as the merging with—in some retellings, copulating with and then devouring—the sacrificial horse. *

In this ritual, a stallion is set free for the period of one year. It roams far and wide, accompanied by 400 of the king's warriors who assure his freedom to wander at will and at the same time prohibit him from mating. At the end of the year, the stallion is ritually killed and the king's favorite wife is placed under wraps with him. She lies with the dead stallion for a full day and mates with him. The next day, the stallion is dismembered into three parts –for each of three classes of society: warrior, priest, and herder-cultivator—and roasted. Portions of the meat are sacrificed to the gods and portions are eaten. Thus the king's wife not only ritually integrates her own animus archetype of male potency, but the king himself courts power, fertility and abundance vicariously through his living anima

T.C. Lethbridge describes the complementary ritual, which he personally witnessed in Ireland in the 17th century, wherein the king physically mates with a mare in an enactment of union with the Divine Sovereign Goddess. In this Ulster ritual, the mare is also divided into three parts, which are boiled to form a broth in which the king bathes and which are then consumed.

* The Proto-Indo-European root word ekwo-meydho, or horse-drunk, contains the root of our word "mead" as an alcoholic beverage, and suggests that such horse rituals antedate even the antiquity of the Vedas.

Both the Vedas and the Celtic myths relate the deeper significance of physically mating with and devouring the horse. The act is not just a fertility rite, but the union with the Divine. In an essay on the Universe as a Sacrificial Horse, Swami Krishnananda describes the elaborate rituals of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad in which the horse of the asvamedha sacrifice is the object of consecration and meditation. In this Upanishad, the horse "becomes a piece of contemplation which is the avowed purpose of the Upanishad—to convert every act into a mode of contemplation, to transform every object into the Universal Subject." In effect, the mating of anima and animus in our personal relationships is a ceremony of ecstatic union with the divine.

Throughout the amateur equestrian world, there is a marked preponderance of girls and women. During the lunch break at a local horse show, one dad and I were noting this gender imbalance as we watched his 12-year-old daughter compete in her all-girl class. I asked him, "Why do you think this sport appeals so much more to girls?" He shrugged and replied, "They want something powerful between their legs." Whether or not this rather wan and nerdy Silicon Valley type was experiencing strong projections of his own anima, there is probably some truth to his assessment. There is certainly some appeal for girls and women of commanding and merging with a 1200-pound beast who holds for us a certain animus archetypal attraction and the somarchetypal attraction of strength and power.

DARK SHADOW

Dark Shadow is the archetype that holds our rejected qualities such as "evil," violence, ignorance, ugliness, weakness, decrepitude, and barbarism. When we fear we have these qualities or have not recognized their positive alter egos, we project them onto our enemies and villains, the "axis of evil," a despised relative or colleague, a race, nation, or class of people. [8]

Horses that are portrayed as behaving demonically, as if motivated by evil or ill will, carry Shadow energy for the human race. In keeping with the gentle nature of waking life horses, there are relatively few stories of mean, savage horses. In fact, most horses in such tales derive their demonic qualities from shape changing gods, such as Keshi or from their riders, who, like the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, are themselves identified as the Devil or an evil witch.

The illustration on the right depicts an episode from the early life of the god Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, who periodically descends to earth to battle the forces of evil. Here Keshi, a mighty demon in the form of a horse, has been sent to destroy Krishna. The combatants glare at each other, eyes bulging: Krishna's from the intensity 20 of resolve, Keshi's from the surprise of defeat, indicated by the corpse of his horse below.

Krishna battling the horse demon Keshi. 5th century. Uttar Pradesh, India.

Centaurs

Centaurs, a hybrid race of horse and human, are known for their barbarism. We must conclude that the centaur's directives, coming from its head, are human. While some centaurs, notably Chiron and Pholus, were benevolent, most are depicted as having atrocious appetites for debauchery, especially with liquor and sexual

intercourse. Centaur myths often feature them drunk and attempting to abduct women.

In seasonal street parades in the British Isles, men dressed as horses chase women as part of the pantomime. The most famous of these festivals is the May Day antics of the 'Obby 'Oss at Padstow in Cornwall. Men dressed as a full-skirted horse attempt to capture women under the folds of cloth. To be caught in such a way is supposed to bring a pregnancy to the married and a fine husband to the single miss. The frolic relates to the horse as a fertility (and perhaps potency) symbol who, as in the asvamedha rites, also ensures a rich harvest. Thus a woman's worst nightmare of a being molested by a Shadow figure is transformed into an enactment of potency and fulfillment with an Animus figure. In fact, all archetypes show protean forms that merge and shift and become one another.

BRIGHT SHADOW/THE DIVINE/HERO

Bright Shadow is the archetype that holds our esteemed qualities such as goodness, rightness, intelligence, creativity, beauty, entitlement, talent, and power. When we fear we do not have these qualities, or are blocked by our inhibitions from acting on them, we project them onto movie stars, elite athletes, heroes, gods, saints, and pets or totem animals.

Most horse myths are tales that depict horses in heroic deeds of strength, speed, and endurance. While many of these stories portray horses in battle, there is a delightful legend from China, thousands of years old, where the horse acts as a different kind of hero.

In this story, The *Good Luck Bad Luck Horse*, a lonely little boy, the son of a man wealthy with horses, longs for a horse of his own. The stern Father will not give the boy a horse, so he makes one out of paper. A wizard hears the boy's wish for a real horse and makes the paper horse come alive. But because the boy forgot to draw eyes on his horse, the little pony cannot see. It proceeds to blindly stumble through the Father's garden, trampling everything in its path. The Father banishes the horse, whereupon the wizard takes pity on him and gives him the power both to see and to fly.

The horse flies off, finds a wife, and after many years returns to the little boy, who is now a grown man in a kingdom on the verge of war. The horse and his mare fly off to the battleground and speak to the horses of the enemy soldiers. All the horses collude to bring the warring armies together in the river, where they cannot shoot eachother but get tossed into the water and can only laugh at themselves.

After peace breaks out, the horse and mare return to the kingdom of the boy-become-man and his Father. The little horse has proven his worth and everyone

lives happily ever after. So the horses, onto which the small boy projects his hopes and dreams, come home to roost.

The somarchetype of the horse captures our strongest Bright Shadow projections. When I watch horses galloping across a field or bursting forth at turn out, I long for a tiny part of that energy and strength. My body attaches itself to the powerful movement. Whether we envy their physical prowess or idolize and idealize them as noble savages, we are prone to investing horses with that which we yearn for and cannot fully attain. Many myths and dream images portray Horse as the vehicle for mythical journeys and magical powers.

TRICKSTER

The Trickster archetype holds the imp sitting on our shoulder who says, "Lighten up. Think different. Let go." He opposes the subpersonalities who are stubborn, serious, morbid, doctrinaire, addicted to stability and terrified of change. He attacks our fixed ideas and our attachment to the way things are. Trickster seeks to undermine our pride, especially when it is vested in a static self-image that stunts our spiritual growth.

Because duplicity and chicanery are generally considered unethical in Western society, the Trickster archetype of the used car dealer or the fox is often met with the same antipathy as is felt toward the Shadow. But Trickster is the fellow who can get us to laugh at ourselves. He is the voice of a black person using the "n" word to his brother; he is why we pay extra to sit in the front row at comedy clubs and get harassed by the headliner; he is why kings had court jesters. The fool in Shakespeare is particularly aware of when his king crosses a moral line and is in the play to remind the king of his own folly with thinly veiled derision.

Unlike Shadow with whom we can more or less choose our skirmishes, Trickster comes to us unannounced and on his own terms. He is the great cosmic banana peel of the unconscious. We let him in by giving him something to work with—our hubris, our conscious and unconscious assumptions, our prejudices, our fears, our puffed up images of ourselves. He creates a stampede among our sacred cows when they have outlived their usefulness or tied up our energies in old structures and systems that need to be overturned and overhauled. Trickster forces us to break out of our stereotypes and our boxes, whether they've been imposed by our families, our culture, or ourselves.

Carl Jung states that the trickster archetype is "a primitive cosmic being of *divine-animal* nature, on the one hand superior to man because of his superhuman qualities, and on the other hand inferior to him because of his unreason and uncon-

sciousness." This description helps explain why in mythology, Trickster often appears as animals—Coyote, Blue Jay, Raven, Spider, Snake, Monkey, and Horse.

The horse as Trickster abounds in Celtic folk tales, where horses take the form of shape-shifting water horses such as the Irish Each Uisge (*ach* (horse), *ish-kee* (water)) or the Scottish Kelpies. Typically the water horse wears a golden bridle that appeals to human greed. Although travelers are warned not to trust horses that appear at rivers and lakes, the weary human wants so badly to believe in the human that promises easy passage across the water. Immediately the human is on its back, the Kelpie dives to the bottom of the body of water where the human suffocates and drowns. The story seems to be a cautionary tale about get-rich-quick schemes and attempts to take short cuts on the emotional and spiritual journey represented by the water.

One manifestation of Kelpie was a handsome man, no doubt seducing women with the promise of the false animus. In variations on this story, if the human tells the truth, s/he is released to the surface.

Sometimes the horse trickster rewards the trust placed in him. In a most enchanting Celtic tale, *The Bedraggled Horse*, a huge homely draft horse takes 17 of the warrior Cuchulainn's men down to a fairyland under the sea in an almost shamanic journey. Once there, the horse is transformed into a brilliant, beautiful steed and the underwater inhabitants pledge always to come to the aid of the humans.

The allegory of the water horse is one of diving deep into the unconscious, especially into unconscious emotions. If one bravely acknowledges the feelings that reveal her personal truths and values, at the expense of her tightly-held conditioned misjudgments, she receives the gift of Trickster.

Living horses often play the role of trickster—ducking us in the water, getting away with little bucks on a fresh spring day, stealing carrots from our back pockets, and generally reminding us to keep a sense of humor about ourselves.

WILLING SACRIFICE

Willing Sacrifice is the archetype that holds the nature of our transpersonal, transcendent Self, the part of our unconscious that is able to see beyond the temporal and material. It is able to withstand pain and suffering for the greater good of our Whole Selves and for the sake of others. It is the sorrowful renunciation of the earthly for the sake of the Divine. It is the soul's consent to experience suffering in order to elucidate the nature, the phenomenology of suffering. Suffering provides the counterpoint to joy so that joy may be felt all the more strongly by being juxtaposed to its opposite. The most prevalent allegory of Willing Sacrifice in the last two millennia is that of Christ dying on the cross for the sins and salvation of humanity.

The word *sacrifice* comes from the Latin *sacrificium*, which is a combination of *sacer*, meaning something set apart from the secular or profane for the use of supernatural powers, and *facere*, "to make." At one time sacrifice referred to a religious act in which objects were set apart or consecrated and offered to a god. Our authentic selves are by definition unique and unlike any other. So the more we develop and discover our personal truths and passions, the more we experience the isolation of setting ourselves apart from our former selves and from others. The ultimate sacrifice in personal growth is giving up a sense of belonging, even if it is belonging and being beholden to a set of sanctioned behaviors that is not true to one's own nature. Yet ironically the search for authenticity is the most unifying feature of existence. It is the quest that restores the ultimate sense of belonging to and in an abundant, miraculous, and benevolently evolving universe.

We project selflessness and altruism onto religious figures such as Mother Theresa and other ascetic and celibate spiritual leaders and onto heroes such as the firefighters who lost their lives in the World Trade Center. We project victimization on abducted children, injured animals, and those who suffer from diseases, such as breast cancer and AIDS, that have inspired various causes célèbres,

postage stamps, and fun runs. In the mythology of karma, a soul chooses to be born into a life of hardship and disability to teach humanity about sacrifice.

The Unicorn in Captivity. 15c tapestry. NY Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Horses have always willingly sacrificed for their human companions. Mohammed was said to have corralled 100 horses and withheld water from them for three days in the desert. When they were half-crazed with thirst, he let them out. As a test of loyalty, he then ordered the horn of battle to be sounded. All but five horses ignored the call. These five— all mares— who denied themselves in order to answer the battle cry became beloved of Mohammed. They were known as The Five Mares of the Prophet and their foals were deemed *asil*–pure of blood.

A striking allegory of Willing Sacrifice is the unicorn myth old by the third century Christians in the parables of the Physiologus and their later representations in the bestiary fables of the Middle Ages. The unicorn myth handed down through Rome and translated and embellished across Western Europe portrays the unicorn as a fierce and solitary beast. By dipping his horn in water poisoned by the venom of the snake, a symbol of the Devil, the unicorn purifies it for all the animals to drink. The unicorn cannot be captured except by a virgin, who lures the unicorn into her lap. When he has thus been lulled to sleep, the hunters spring out of the woods and stab the unicorn to death. In some versions of the tale, he is resurrected by the juice of pomegranates, symbol of life and fertility, and is given to the king.

The parable is likely an attenuated form of earlier Pagan myths in which the charms that attract the unicorn are anything but suggestive of virginity. Yet the later version was interpreted in Christianity to signify the Virgin Mary's attraction of the Son of God, who incarnates, dies, and is reborn.

In animal sacrifice, including that of horses as in the asvamedha, humans are not only sacrificing their own food to the gods, but are projecting their inner Willing Sacrifice onto the animal. What other way is there to attempt to rationalize the cruel use of mares and the sad plight of PMU (pregnant mare urine) foals to produce estrogen for human females?

Many of the living horses with whom we come into relationship have in a sense sacrificed their freedom and bent their wills in order to bond with us as partners in work, play, and discovery. We too enact the drama of willing sacrifice, giving up both luxuries and even necessities to provide food, shelter, amusement, and companionship to our horses and mucking out their stalls at 5 AM on a dark, freezing winter morning.

WARRIOR

Warrior's Watch, by Joe Valasquez, Wyoming.

A special subset of the Hero archetype deserves separate mention here because it is so indelibly associated with Horse and set on horseback. From Genghis Khan to the *Iliad* to cowboys and Indians, from *The Lord of the Rings* to El Cid to Ben Hur, the warrior archetype holds for us notions of bravery, courage, justifiable aggression, and glory. The bloody images of battle both antagonize us with their violence and gore, and arouse us with their massive displays of power and ruthlessness. Richard Strozzi-Heckler, in his book In *Search of the Warrior Spirit* describes his time spent training United States Special Forces (Green Berets) and other top flight military troops in the art of aikido. [*] He describes the nature of the true warrior when war was a gallant hand-to-hand, horse-to-horse combat, not one fought impersonally with missiles and guns and bombs and other actions at a distance.

It is ironic that the wars fought today enact the failure of the integration of the true Warrior spirit both by those who fight and those who condemn the fighters. That is, hawks and doves are eachother's Shadow archetypes. Pacifists do not understand the basic human need to enact and integrate the Warrior. Warmongers running unchecked use their armies for their own Shadow plays. They do so with hatred and mass destruction that is inimical to the Warrior spirit.

Outward Bound and ropes courses, corporate paint ball fights, and contact sports attempt to express healthy forms of courage and aggression, but there is nothing like a good old fashioned war, where one's very life is at stake, to bring home the lesson of the Hero and the Warrior, and their related archetype, Willing Sacrifice. [†] It is ironic that one of the most prominent wars being fought today, that

in Iraq, was formerly the battleground of the most courageous and valiant war horses, fighting perceived infidels then as now.

* Strozzi-Heckler and his wife Ariana own horse ranches where Ariana teaches equine experiential learning. The programs emphasize principles of somatics, martial arts, and the warrior spirit.

† A popular computer software product is named Code Warrior—evoking the notion that nerdy little guys who write code (computer programs) are capturing the warrior spirit.

HORSES IN THE TAROT—MYSTICAL CHIVALRY

The Tarot is a deck of 78 cards that, differentiating their upright from reversed positions, depict 156 conditions of the psyche. The history of the Tarot is obscured by ghost stories until the appearance of Italian decks in the Middle Ages. In the absence of any objectifiable history, the numerous decks must be taken at face value suggesting a syncretism of multiple mythologies. Prior to the many PhotoShopped desktop decks with pop and high tech imagery, the images and traditions of the classical decks have been eclectically pagan, Christian, Arthurian, alchemical, and Kabalistic.

In the Waite-Coleman Tarot, one of the most commonly used for divination, there are seven cards depicting horses: The Sun, Death, the 4 Knights, and the 6 of Wands. In all the illustrations, the horses are mounted, in portrayals of physical and metaphysical transport.

In The Sun and Death, horses carry respectively the youngest person and the oldest person in the Tarot—the crowned and conquering child of the new aeon and the grim reaper himself. As in many horse myths, the horse in the Death card is a psychopomp, one who carries dead souls to their final resting place. The horses contribute to the Tarot's framework of transition, cycles, and process. In essence, the Tarot is like the Book of Changes, the I Ching, where the only constant is change. The Death card in the Tarot, as death in dreams, is one of the most reliable indicators and harbingers of profound psychospiritual transformation.

Each of the four court cards represents the querent's evolving use of the energies represented by the suits— wands (intuition), cups (emotions), swords (intellect), and pentacles (sensation). Knights in the Tarot signify energies that the

querent is in process of integrating but has not fully mastered. The Knight's use of energy is, in the chivalric sense, for the sake of the Other—the fragmented self split off from the integrating ego who has not yet learned the mature and confident use of that energy. In the mythos of chivalry, with its values of courage, courtesy, honesty, courtly love, and service, the Knight seeks his fortune in uncharted regions of consciousness. For Waite, a 19th century mystic who was steeped in the esoteric significance of the Holy Grail and who wrote books on the Arthurian legends, Knights and their horses represent the Hero's journey to spiritual wholeness.

SUMMARY

Horses are ubiquitous in the fables and legends of many different cultures. Like other mythical figures, horses dramatize the Jungian psychological archetypes—roles or caricatures derived from the experiences of a culture and present in the unconscious of each individual within the society. Archetypes constellate the psychological characteristics and identities that we unconsciously project onto other people, mythical figures, and animals.

Horses also invite projections from the physical body—the somarchetypes that constellate projected sensations of balance, speed, and strength.

When horses appear in dreams, one layer of the dream is the archetypal and somarchetypal role of Horse. When we encounter horses in the flesh, our minds and bodies consciously and unconsciously resonate with the stirrings of both psychological and physiological archetypal energies.

Endnotes

1. Hippotherapy is the treatment by horseback riding of severely disabled persons by a physical therapist, speech therapist, or occupational therapist. Therapeutic riding is the schooling of high-functioning disabled persons by specially trained and certified riding instructors. Equine-assisted psychotherapy is the treatment of psychopathological disorders by licensed clinical psychotherapists, credentialed counselors, and life coaches. Equine experiential learning, also known as equine-facilitated growth or equine-guided education, is conducted by a variety of practitioners and guides for the purpose of psychospiritual growth and transformation. All four kinds of horse therapies require partnership with the horse and a horse handler, or equine expert, as partners.

2. In the passage quoted below, Jung describes the role of the physiological in engendering symbolic systems: (***my emphasis***)

> ***The symbols of the self arise in the depths of the body and they express its materiality every bit as much as the structure of the perceiving consciousness.*** *The symbol is thus a living body, corpus et anima. The uniqueness of the psyche can never enter wholly into reality, it can only be realized approximately, though it still remains the absolute basis of all consciousness. The deeper layers of the psyche lose their individual uniqueness as they retreat farther and farther into darkness. Lower down, that is to say as they approach the autonomous functional systems, they become increasingly collective until they are universalized and extinguished in the body's materiality, i.e., in chemical substances. The body's carbon is simply carbon. Hence at bottom the psyche is simply world. In the symbol the world itself is speaking.* ***The more archaic and deeper, that is the more physiological, the symbol is, the more collective and universal, the more material it is.*** *The more abstract, differentiated, and specific it is, and the more its nature approximates to conscious uniqueness and individuality, the more it sloughs off its universal character. Having finally attained full consciousness, it runs the risk of becoming a mere allegory which nowhere oversteps the bounds of conscious comprehension, and it's then exposed to all sorts of attempts at rationalistic and therefore inadequate explanation.*
>
> — Jung, C.G. (1966), p. 173

In this passage Jung admits to a curiously Cartesian division of body and soul. One can agree in that in zoological terms, the more physiological a symbol is, the more universal. However, the physiological seems to holographically retain the characteristics of the whole self. We speak of cellular memory, unique fingerprints, and experiences that are held by the body and released in body work.

3. Michael Shea has assigned the Shadow archetype to the Body. He implies that the psyche projects its Shadow onto the body:

> *The body is part of my shadow because it contains a long suffering history of how the spontaneous excitement of life is killed, denied and rejected in numerous ways until finally, the body becomes robotic and senseless. ... Touch therapists, body-centered psychotherapists and others who can read the body will hear the recording of the rejected part of the self located in the living tissue of the human body. It is the side too often denied or projected onto others. ...*
>
> *As the 21st Century begins, the body, as shadow, becomes more compelling. ... The body becomes the repository of a lost mythology. This mythology connects the living matter of my body to the earth and the spirit world.*

This concept is different from saying that the body itself projects unconscious material outward onto, for example, horses.

4. There are several theories, none universally accepted, of how the Indo-Europeans and their horses entered the historical record. There are mythic and counter-mythic academic wars fought among cultural chauvinists (Indologists, Aryan supremacists, Marxists, etc), feminist revisionists ("matrist historians" such as Marija Gimbutas) and their critics, anthropologists, and linguists. The most cogent and agenda-inapparent meta-analyses of the archeological and paleo-linguistic evidence as compiled by Mallory, Hayden, and others suggest that the Indo-Europeans spread in several waves, by some combination of invasion, slow migration with their own women and children, and diffusion with acculturation, not necessarily in that order. Certainly if I had been a late Neolithic farmer's daughter slopping pigs in the Pelasgians, I might have been quite attracted to the dashing horsemen coming to trade in Corded Ware.

5. Henry Blake noted,

> *Modern man appears almost completely to have lost the ability to transmit mental pictures, probably because this was the first skill he ceased to use when he gained the ability to speak. If you could describe with your voice what you were seeing, you did not need to transfer a mental picture. But some primitive tribes still retain the skill and we have seen that Laurens van der Post in his travels among the South African bushmen observed a witch doctor gaze at the cave drawing of an antelope, throw himself into a trance, and then so accurately describe the location where the antelope was grazing that the hunters could go out and kill it.*
>
> — Henry Blake, *Talking With Horses*.

6. Von Franz, presumably following Jung's convention, refers to the four stages of the anima and animus, as if there is a developmental sequence for each facet of the archetype. In this hierarchy, the physical is trumped by the romantically esthetic (emotional), which in turn is superceded by spiritual love (intuitive), which ultimately gives way to wisdom. Examples from von Franz are, respectively, Gauguin's bare- breasted Tahitians, Helen of Troy, the Virgin Mary, and the goddess Athena.

   Other Jungians describe the chief manifestations of anima and animus as four egalitarian functions—thinking, sensation, intuition, and emotion. The best description of the facets are as Harding describes: Hetaera (beauty), Great Mother (compassion, nurturing), Amazon (strength), and Wise Woman (seer) and Great Father (wisdom), Hero (courage), Puer (frivolity).

7. There is an interesting difference here between the horse's physical capacity as a somarchtype and as an archetype. When I feel the horse's body as an extension of my own and as a compensation for my own waning strength as I age, I am projecting onto the somarchtype of strength. When I look to a horse, typically a stalwart, older gelding, to take care of me on the trail, I am projecting onto the archetype of Wise Father or physical protector.

8. The Shadow is typically a person of one's same gender for whom one feels an irrational hatred. A striking example of projected Shadow qualities is the murderous gay bashing committed by homophobic heterosexual men. These men experience uncontrolled rage when they see or imagine effeminate behavior in another man. Because the perpetrators of these hate crimes have not embraced their own feminine side—the softer, more nurturing, quiche-eating side that can cry in a tender moment— they project Weak Woman as Shadow onto less macho

males. Like the caricatured effeminate-femininity pair, all negative Shadow qualities—even so-called evil—are paired with a positive aspect of itself that needs to be integrated into the psyche.

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