

Elements

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Featured element:

Water



Elements

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The Minnesota Jung Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the exploration of the individual human psyche and its interconnectedness with community and the world. To facilitate this purpose, we are committed to the study, discussion, and practical application of the theories of the Swiss analytical psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung, and other pioneering students of soul and spirit. Through theoretical and experiential inquiry, we seek to honor and enhance human awareness, conscious that the vitality of a community is based upon the living authenticity of its members.

Upcoming “Elements” Key Dates:

Featured Element: Air

Submissions Due Date: September 1, 2011
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Featured Element: Earth

Submissions Due Date: December 1, 2011
Publication Date: January 1, 2012

Featured Element: Fire

Submissions Due Date: March 1, 2012
Publication Date: April 1, 2012



The staff of Elements reserves the right to accept for publication and edit submissions for publication on the basis of relevance to the Minnesota Jung Association membership.

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Wilor Bluege

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***“The Black Swan”*: Three**

Perspectives

Wilor Bluege

Part I: The Canary in the Coal Mine of the Collective Unconscious

For all its darkness, the film “The Black Swan” carries within it images and metaphors illuminating the unconscious forces stirring within the collective life of modern America. It is a paradox that something so dark could “illuminate” anything. What possible illumination could there be in this visually chaotic and confoundingly opaque psychological thriller? It is, I believe, possible to wrest meaning out of the darkness by bringing an understanding of the nature and function of symbols as transformers of human consciousness to bear on the subject matter of the film. Without an understanding of the symbolic nature of the images or the metaphoric nature of narratives arising from the collective unconscious of our time, we are left to our own ego devices and consequently experience life — or a film such as “The Black Swan” — only as disturbing, meaningless, random chaos.

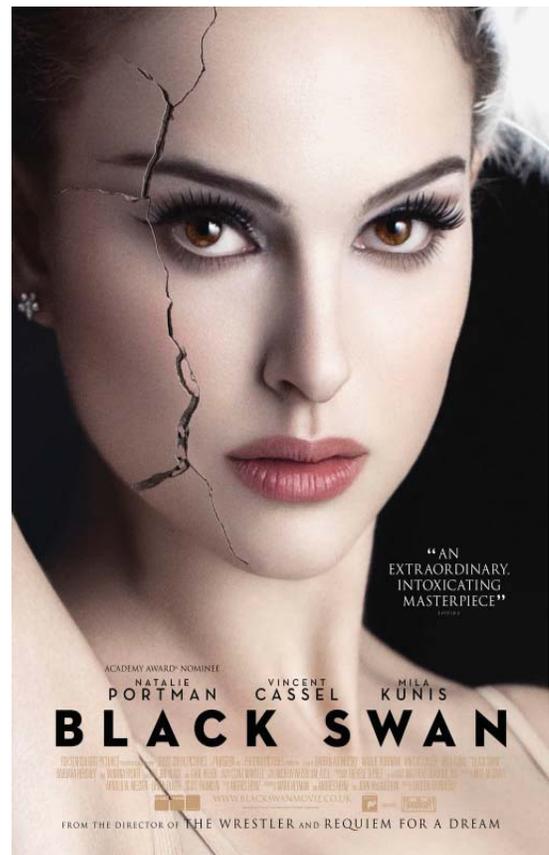
Myths, rituals, and ancestral tribal stories serve the development of human consciousness, providing meaning and context to human suffering, as well as “explanations” of the ineffable mysteries of life, death, and cultural history binding a people together. With traditional structures gone, however, the relationship between the archetypal forces of destruction and creation, death, rebirth and cultural identity are no longer clarified or contained. In today’s world, the medium of the cinema has taken the place of sitting around a fire retelling the archetypal tales of the tribe. The prominence of films in modern life is not merely the result of effective marketing. Films, particularly those of an archetypal or fantastic nature, constitute the mythology of our age. They serve the same function as the myths, legends, and fairytales of old and the few, isolated but still extant indigenous cultures. In short, the stories we tell ourselves serve the purposes of the development of human consciousness.

The makers of “The Black Swan” have created nightmarish scenarios and chaotic permutations of images that “read” like a dream. For this reason as well as for reasons having to do with the film’s source in the unconscious, we are justified in approaching it as an archetypal story rather than simple biography. It is possible, I believe, using the Jungian model of symbolic, analogical, associative thinking, to come to a better understanding of this film and, indeed, other cultural products emanating out of the

modern world’s collective unconscious.

Humankind has always looked to the stories we tell ourselves for guidance, for these are narratives arising from the collective unconscious. While many still find meaning and comfort in traditional religious symbols, narratives, and rituals, for others those symbols no longer provide an explanation of our psychological and spiritual situation and can no longer contain the immensity of the questions or the irrationality of archetypal powers that press on us from without and from within. The social activity of participating collectively in watching films, hashing them over, waiting with anticipation for the announcements from the Oscars, strikes me as a type of modern-day ritual in which movie stars are our gods and goddesses. Without rituals and narratives to illuminate the meaning of the irrational powers operating in the psyche, we fall prey to addictions, which are ritual substitutes without the salutary effects. These deadly, unconscious, addictive rituals, like Nina’s anorexia in “The Black Swan”, do not raise consciousness, but rather are the cause of the personality’s (or a culture’s) spiral into deeper and deeper unconsciousness. It is no coincidence that we are the most addicted society that has ever existed.

The addicted personality is the canary in the coal mine for modern collective society. Or, to mix our avian metaphors: the black swan is the canary in the coal mine of the collective unconscious. Before sophisticated



systems for detecting leaking poisonous, explosive gases in coal mines, workers would carry a canary in a cage with them into the depths of the mine. Since the canary was much more sensitive to the unseen, odorless threat, if the bird collapsed the miners knew that they must get out of the mine at once because of the potential for a devastating explosion. The black swan is our canary in the coal mine, telling us of a potentially violent overthrow of consciousness. We must look to current artistic expressions — like, for example, “The Black Swan” — that erupt from the deep layers of the collective unconscious, if we are to understand the source of the addictions of our time and heal ourselves and our world. Addiction needs to be understood symbolically as much as chemically. We are very good at the brain science of addiction. We are much less adept at understanding the transforming capacity of symbols that arise from the collective and personal unconscious psyche — symbols capable of curing our addictions and healing our lives.

By raising the individual’s personal drama to its archetypal, collective proportions, authors of the great Greek and Shakespearean tragedies performed the function of raising human consciousness. Whether or not the tragic story of Nina in “The Black Swan” will serve the same function in our time remains to be seen, but it does have the potential to do so, if we can bring ourselves to understand Nina’s addiction and tragedy from the standpoint of the personal and collective unconscious dynamics that engendered it. The form of a classical tragedy always reveals a fatal flaw within an individual human consciousness that causes the tragic unfolding of events and ultimate disaster. Nina’s fatal flaw was her addiction to perfection — to the Apollonian ideal — and her inability to bring together this ideal with her aggressive, competitive, sexual side. Like Icarus, she flew too close to the sun. Her too rational patriarchal consciousness constellated its opposite: a deadly, violent insurrection of her dark feminine shadow which viciously (and tellingly) attacks (with a phallic instrument) the head (symbolic of rational consciousness) of the deposed-ballerina/shadow-self sitting in the hospital room. In scenes like this and others, the confusion of images reflects the shadow projections and the attacks of these inner, psychic dynamics that repeatedly rend Nina’s conscious personality.

Unable to face her own dark shadow, Nina’s fall (literally and figuratively) was inevitable. The dark side of the god Apollo, the wolf, continually attacked and raped her feminine self. Literally starving for life, Nina’s shadow self snarls like a wolf and attacks. In her work about anorexia and addiction, Marion Woodman says, “What begins as hunger for life becomes greed and is displaced onto

some object or person. The obsession and the fantasy world, the compulsive, repetitive behavior, are attempts to avoid the real pain of having been denied the depth and breadth and height of life itself.” (p.134, “The Pregnant Virgin.” Inner City Books, 1985.) At the heart of every addiction is a legitimate human aspiration or value that has not been given an appropriate means of expression, and is thereby forced to live a dark life.

Culturally we, like Nina, have delivered ourselves over to the perfection of the ideals of solar consciousness: the rational mind, the analytical, scientific, and technological pole of human experience. This is where we live. Though responsible for and indispensable to the scientific and technological advances of civilization, the rational intellect cannot feed the soul. Only the irrational can feed the soul. We have ignored the irrational, the ambiguous, the natural, the emotional, body pole of human life. We are out of balance. In our lopsided logos consciousness

“Only the irrational can feed the soul. We have ignored the irrational, the ambiguous, the natural, the emotional, body pole of human life. We are out of balance.”

we have ignored other valid aspects of human life and experience. The despised and rejected irrational elements necessary for a meaningful life appear as “aliens” everywhere one looks in modern entertainments. Films and TV programs too numerous to mention, depict totally depersonalized bodies and the usurpation of consciousness by dark forces of the collective unconscious — latter-day versions of the 1950’s film, “The Invasion of the Body-Snatchers”.

In addition to “aliens” everywhere one looks in the entertainment media, concretization of the dark aspects of the unconscious also produces the ravaging whore, unrelated to her own body or to her masculine partner. Much of the sexual expression that we witness in entertainment and in society is compulsive, “recreational”, inhuman, unrelated, and sterile rather than humanly related and fructifying. To judge from the images and narratives that over-populate the media, one would think that we have no model of sexuality capable of transforming and fertilizing the creative consciousness of both male and female. “The Black Swan” certainly pulls no punches in portraying devouring, rapacious sexuality, but this is not the core of the film’s intent or interest. The core

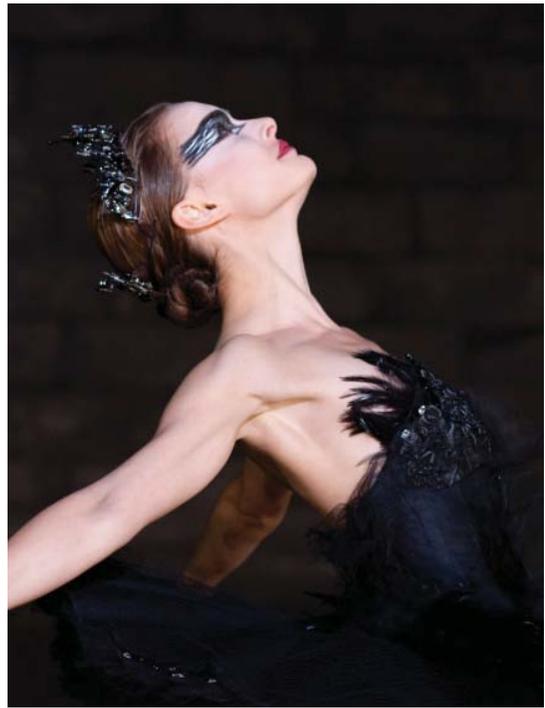
interest and intense focus of the film is the deepening psychosis of Nina's addiction and (by inference) our culture's psychotic addiction to the isolated perfection of the rational intellect which ravages the soul and starves the body.

The answer for us is not to go farther into our heads and intellect but to go farther into conscious awareness of our bodies and our emotional life. We do this by tapping into the images that arise from within, whether from journaling, from dreams, from meditation or yoga. We do this by bringing conscious attention to what is being produced for collective consumption by movie makers, because — for better or worse — these are the symbols of what is going on in our collective unconscious. Like highway signs emblazoned in bold letters, "You are about to drive off a cliff," we need to pay attention — as difficult and unpleasant as that may be in the case of "The Black Swan"; or as easy and pleasantly entertaining as that may be in the case of other products coming out of Hollywood and elsewhere, because the narratives and the images that go with them have something important to tell us about the deficiencies of modern consciousness and about where consciousness needs to go. We need first to educate ourselves about the symbol-forming

"The Black Swan" is much more than the story of one lost soul. It shows us the topographical landscape of our collective psyche which underpins all our addictions, abuse, violence and stunted, rigid intellectualism.

capacity of the psyche with its power to transform and heal our psychic wounds. More than that, however, we need to allow ourselves to feel the pain caused by the betrayal of our innermost life. Otherwise we will continue to be tossed about by the extremes of addictive fixations and obsessions, extremes of exaggerated emotions, and outbursts of uncontrolled affect. Addictions persist from not allowing ourselves to acknowledge and feel the full impact of our own self-betrayal.

Make no mistake about it: it is not just "Nina", the lonely individual woman, who suffers. We all, men and women, suffer from the hubris of an overly rational intellect separated from nature and from our own bodies. Men as well as women suffer alienation from their own intuitive and emotional powers. "The Black Swan" is much more than the story of one lost soul. It shows us



the topographical landscape of our collective psyche which underpins all our addictions, abuse, violence and stunted, rigid intellectualism. Addictions — whether to substances, sex, or technology — and all abuses, whether of power, nature, or other human beings, are directly related to unconscious values that have been rejected by Western consciousness. We reject the "irrational", but it comes in by the back door through addiction and violence. It is true that violence has many causes — primarily the denial of human values — but violence is also the result of a reaction by the unconscious to redress the imbalance of our grotesque rationalism and the denial of the human values of life, meaning, relationship, intuition, feeling and the wisdom of the human body.

There are basically three interpretive standpoints from which to approach a psychological analysis of this film: (1) from the standpoint of feminine psychology; (2) from the standpoint of masculine psychology; and (3) from the standpoint of unconscious dynamics moving within the collective life of modern America. None of these precludes the other, but rather contributes another perspective on this darkly brilliant piece of film making. "The Black Swan" disturbs and befuddles as much as it reveals and illuminates the dark corridors of the psyche.

An interpretation based on feminine psychology is, of course, the first and most obvious. My view, however, is that we risk losing something by cutting off discussion and dismissing it as solely a problem of feminine psychology or the story of one lost soul. I submit that insofar as the writers (Mark Heyman, Andres Heinz, and John J. McLaughlin) and director (Darren Aronofsky) of the film are men, this film reveals more about their

psychology and of masculine psychology in general than we might like to think. We ought at least to keep open the possibility that “The Black Swan” might reveal an enormous amount about the condition of the masculine unconscious and a dying patriarchal cultural dominant that feels threatened. In any event, our understanding of this material cannot be tidied up nicely into one, easily digestible package. But then, nothing about this film is easily digestible.

A paradoxical way of looking at the material is absolutely essential if we are to reach a fuller understanding of the film and “Nina’s” situation — which is our own situation, culturally speaking. This brings me to the third interpretive perspective: from the point of view of cultural dynamics operating within the collective unconscious of modern American culture. “The Black Swan” points to those unconscious processes. Ours is arguably the most addicted society that has ever existed, and this film goes straight to the heart of those addictions. “Nina’s” addiction to perfection is a power principle that seeks her death. By understanding the causes and dynamics of Nina’s psychology and what this might mean in a collective sense, we just might come to an epiphany.

This is my basic premise for understanding the film “The Black Swan”, but before turning to an analysis of the individual psychology of the film’s main character, “Nina”, it will be helpful to contemplate the film within a larger context. Our discernment will be enhanced by having knowledge of the film’s historical predecessors, culturally and psychologically speaking. It is to this that we now turn.

Part II: The Ancestral Cultural and Psychological Lineage of the Film

For me personally, what “redeems” and makes sense out of the inherent chaos of the film, “The Black Swan”, is having an understanding of a much broader context. Without a broader context for coming to grips with its imagery, the experience of the film leaves one emotionally bereft, gasping for air and sunshine. The need for catharsis is what pushed me into writing about the film in the first place. This essay is an attempt to place “The Black Swan” within the context of a much wider conversation about human consciousness. Only then can we reach an epiphany about our current situation.

To understand the place of the film “The Black Swan” in the developing consciousness of humankind, we must understand the historical and the cultural milieu that

preceded it. Most people have a quite visceral reaction to the film and quite naturally recoil from its images and content. We recoil as much from the thought that our own unconscious might be filled with such horrific images and possibilities as it does from the tragedy portrayed on screen. We suspect and fear the sucking pull of the unconscious. If the film is to reach its optimal potential as a transformer of consciousness, it must become more than a deeply disturbing story of one lost soul’s tragedy. If it is to remain more than a grim residuum in the minds of people exiting the theater, we must place the film in its historical, cultural, and psychological context. Understood properly, as part of the much larger historical process of unfolding human consciousness, the film has the potential to raise that consciousness and transform our reality. We must dig into the past if we are to understand the present and transform our future.

The psychological dynamics and the cultural antecedents of the current film have roots deep in balletic history. Psychologically as well as culturally speaking, the immediate predecessor of the “The Black Swan” is, of course, the full-length classical ballet “Swan Lake” (created in 1895; choreography by Lev Ivanov and Marius Petipa). To fully understand the film we must first understand the origins of the classical ballet from which the central character of the current movie was taken. Studying the psychological, cultural, and historical dynamics that produced the original ballet “Swan Lake” reveals the film’s extensive ancestral lineage in the history of human consciousness. Comprehension of that background underpins both the original ballet and the film “The Black Swan” and illuminates one of the great movements in the development of human consciousness: the stirrings of the feminine. Contrary to the view held by some, “Swan Lake” is not a “musty, old ballet”. It is, rather, one of the

“The Black Swan” continued on page 13



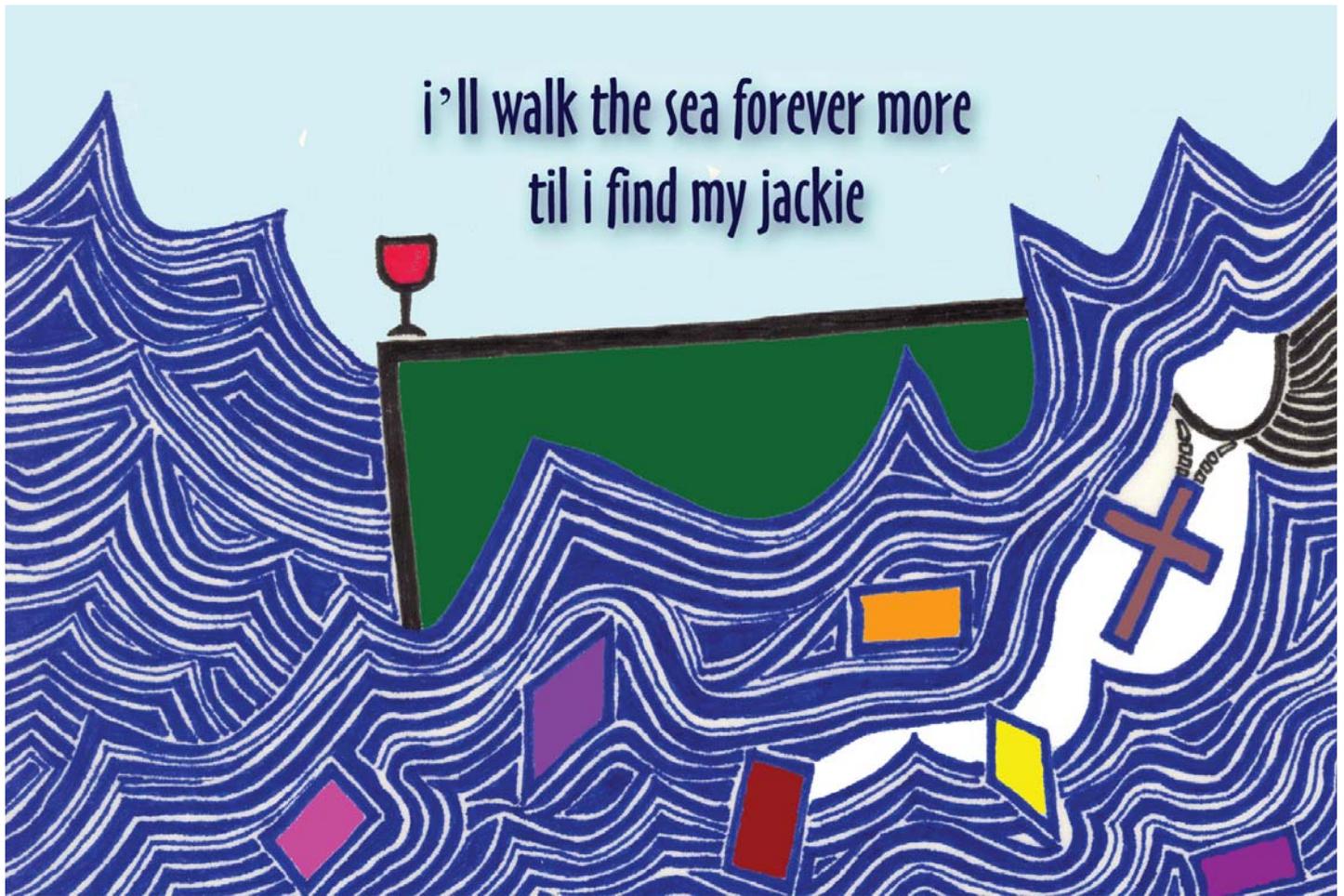


“Aphrodite Rising”

Christine Podany

2009 Acrylic 48” x 60”

Imagine my surprise upon seeing the trailers for the movie “Avatar” featuring blue skinned natives, having done this painting years prior. When director James Cameron was asked why they chose blue as the skin color, he commented that it was simply a color that has never been seen before on a character. My reason for choosing blue for Aphrodite is that it adds greatly to her unearthly, watery beauty. Her sacred flower is the rose, but I have given her a more eastern depiction with the lotus flower in one hand, the style of headdress, and henna tattoos. In the other hand she holds a fishing net illustrating her way of “casting a spell of love” over others. Although her official sea animal is the dolphin, I have flanked her with a sea-stag and sea-guanna. The sea-stag playfully blows bubbles while the sea-guanna sports flirtatiously red lipstick. It is only fitting that pearls be present, nestled amongst the coral and the sword of Ares, her lover. In honor of her other sacred animals - the dove, swan and sparrow - I have given my version of Aphrodite her own gossamer wings, reflected in the light of a full moon.



“jackie”

Shawn Nygaard

I created this picture while listening to Sinéad O'Connor's song "jackie" over and over and over again. Initially resistant to her music, I eventually became completely absorbed by it. Sinéad's music is mythic, epic, and archetypal in nature. I was captured by the story of "jackie" - the first song on her first CD - about a woman mourning her lover lost at sea, a woman more ghost than human, full of aching and longing for lost love. For me, the song captures the connection between water and memory, with the watery realm evoking timelessness and the mysterious longings and rememberings of the soul. In "jackie" the sea even carries hints of the river Styx, the pathway of water between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Who jackie is, I do not know. With water, however, it's likely that we can never really know anything for sure. All that is left, then, is for the imagination to go where it goes, imagine what it imagines, and find renewed ways of expressing its mysteries. "jackie" is where my imagination took me.

The Mississippi River

Evelyn D. Klein

Life force of the earth, Titan,
enchancing with sun-dipped face,
challenging in bleaker state,
draws us close to fish for dreams,
look for direction.

We watch the current,
pulse of boats and barges,
inviting us to join the journey,
escorted by trains along its banks.

We follow contours of the at times
mist-veiled body, curving south,
past bluffs and caves into flatlands,
joined by tributaries, a nymph dancing.

We lay claim
to the River's ground
as if it were ours to own.

River of our destiny rises, like Proteus,
beyond daily bounds, unexpectedly
regularly, as if it were
a natural disaster. It sweeps

over house and field, over nest and tree,
sweeps into its valley time and again,
driven by forces greater than the pool
of all human willpower combined.

Like children we watch the River
bursting in the distance. Neither
lock nor dam can tame it
nor labor or prayer levee it.

Risen above its bed onto the plane
glaciers endowed it, irrevocably,
the river god never loses center,
sweeps along the way rivers do,
taking its path full measure.



Great Lake

Evelyn D. Klein

I

Bathers crowd on the hot, sandy beach,
storehouse
of sunshine and romance,
seek summer's reprieve,
ride waves
in water that numbs limbs.
Endlessly, crested waves surge forward, pound
shoreline rocks
in a lullaby of fallen kings.
Sailboards glide north, dip forward,
flutter in waves
like colorful butterflies.
In the distance, sailboats cross
in midday haze
like scale models,
respectfully clear a freighter at anchor.
Blue-green
Lake Michigan curves
into faded canvas dome sky.
Swallows scan
water's surface.
Seagulls patrol gates of Poseidon's
chilly domain.



II

Along the breakwater, open shirt inflates
like the sail of a ship.
Damp air tastes of fish.
A fisherman explains to a woman
how to reel in
her line.
Hair flies from face; wind wraps head,
soothes body,
whistles softly.
Small fish lies motionless, forgotten
on breakwater block.
Fishermen cast lures.
Minnows swim frantically in jars, pails,
await their
inevitable fate.

III

Beyond bars, the sign reads "Danger.
Keep out."
Large cement blocks
piled side by side, stretch east.
Empty bottles, cans
lodge in crevices here and there.
With foaming fists Poseidon pounds blocks,
reaches cold fingers
over sandaled feet,
rising to draw onlookers into his depths.
To the west, dark
massive buildings
tower, confront. Flat-faced and
hollow-eyed,
they stare back at
the mighty sea god in his preserve.

Down the Well

Shane Michael Nygaard

She poured all her old thoughts
Of old friendships, old memories
And old beliefs
Down the well into that anonymous abyss
Where she could easily miss
Every single word they say

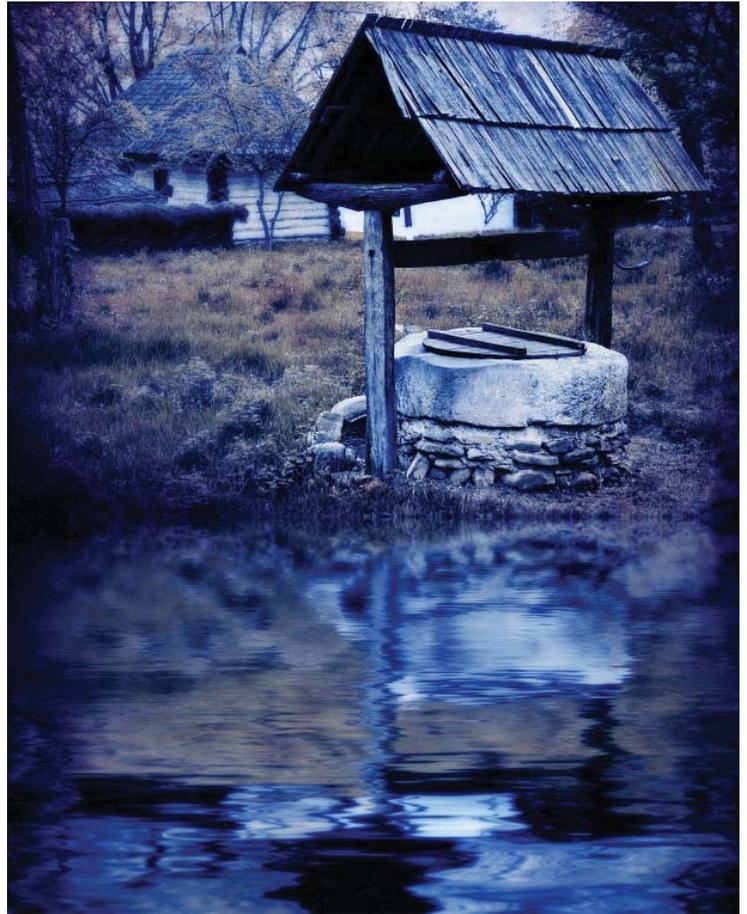
As the thoughts fall
Nicking the bricking of the walls
All ricocheting and rowdy
And diving like madmen with wild cat calls
They plunge into the dank dark waters below
Where she thinks she lets them go
But they know her better than that
And can hold their breath
For a mighty long time down there, where
All the thoughts she'd rather forget
Have gathered together and met
To make plans of their own for her
So they sit and they wait and they stir

"You're such a wonderful person!" sat down
With "What eloquence you have!"
And shared their volumes of stories
Of how they know she hangs with the "Oh poor me"s
Much too often
And they're going to have to do something
About that pretty soon

"You really don't love him, do you?" danced a tango
With "Why don't you just let him go?"
For the wildest, most passionate and sweatiest of dances
Hoping to remind her still-beating heart
It's still beating within

"You're wise beyond your years!"
Shed some tears with both
"Write that book," and "I love that sexy look!"
And decided it's time to stop crying and
To pull themselves together

So sitting on the greenest of grasses
Growing from the richest of soils
She gazed through the shaded trees
At the old, round brick well
And thought anew "Oh what the hell
I'm rather thirsty." And she grabbed a bucket
To go fetch some water.



great archetypal works of art of the last two-hundred years that sheds light on the development of human consciousness in general and the rise of feminine consciousness in particular. The current film "The Black Swan" is an important development in the continuing story of the feminine archetype and what is currently going on within the collective unconscious of humankind.

This film focuses on the black swan character for reasons that clearly must have something to do with contemporary processes and dynamics within the collective unconscious. Otherwise, notwithstanding its tragic motif, the film would not grip us in the way that it has. In the original ballet, the white/black swan (which roles are danced by the same ballerina) figure represents a duality, a split within the feminine archetype at the end of the 19th century: the pure idealized, spiritualized, self-sacrificing feminine, Odette, (the white swan) and the chthonic, sexual, manipulative, power-driven feminine, Odile (the black swan). The current film clearly wants us to focus on Odile, the black swan. If we ask ourselves the question why this material should erupt at this particular time, we must conclude that the unconscious wants us to focus on this image of the black swan. The question is: why does the unconscious want us to focus on this image?

To answer that question, we must ask ourselves what swans represent symbolically. In hundreds of myths, legends, and fairytales, swans are considered intermediaries. Because of their high soaring flight they are related to solar, intellectual consciousness and high spiritual flights of thought. On the other hand, because of their connection with water and the mucky depths from which they pluck their sustenance, they are connected also to the chthonic underworld, the unconscious. Being creatures of the air and water, they are cumbersome on land and are really not fit for survival on land — "middle earth" as it is known in myths, legends, and fairytales. Middle earth, of course, is where we humans must live. Swans are always somewhat out of their element on middle earth. Mythologically, therefore, the swan is a symbol for the transcendence of the middle-earth-bound human condition. In other words, the swan is an intermediary for human consciousness between the transpersonal realm of the celestial ("upper") and the chthonic ("lower") worlds of the psyche. Psychologically, then, the swan represents a shamanic, medial quality of human experience — the ability to communicate between conscious and unconscious. Because of its relationship with both the celestial realm

of consciousness and the underworld of the unconscious, the swan symbolizes a union of these extreme opposites within the human psyche. Therefore, the swan might be considered to be a symbol, a metaphor, for the process of individuation which can be described as an on-going conversation between conscious and unconscious.

Created in 1895, the full ballet "Swan Lake" is a product of its time, the Victorian era which had placed the feminine on a pedestal, where she was worshipped from afar in her non-sexual purity. Along with two other ballets — one earlier, "Giselle" (1849), and one later, "The Sleeping Beauty" (1898) — "Swan Lake" provides a window onto the development of human consciousness and the rise of the feminine. [I have written elsewhere about "Giselle" (choreography by Jules Perot and Jean Coralli) and "The Sleeping Beauty" (choreography by Marius Petipa).] Taken together, these three ballets reflect the growth of human consciousness that developed as a result of the rising empowerment of women in collective life during the second half of the 19th century. They also show where consciousness has been deficient and point the way to a new direction.

The setting for Act I of "Swan Lake" is Prince Siegfried's coming of age party at the local castle. This informs us immediately that the ballet is about masculine initiation into mature, responsible adulthood. His mother, the Queen, tells Siegfried that he must choose a wife, but he sidesteps the issue and goes off on a wild swan chase. The hero in fairytales represents the ego (masculine consciousness), and it is the immature masculine (not yet "initiated") that is reluctant to take relationship seriously. Siegfried comes to a lake, symbolic of the waters of the personal unconscious, upon which a flock of swans are gliding. The motif of the hunt for birds tells us that the ballet is about a man's spiritual quest to find his soul. In the world's myth and literature both women and swans are guides to the upper and lower spirit worlds. (It may be recalled that in certain parts of the UK women are called "birds".) Birds in general, but swans in particular, are symbolic of spiritual intuition because they are able to travel on all planes of existence. At home in the water and in the air, they symbolize immersion in the waters of the unconscious as well as the flight of transcendence.

Siegfried discovers that the swans are really enchanted women, souls of maidens who died before their wedding. (By the way, the same motif is in the earlier ballet, "Giselle". Like a recurring dream, the psyche seems to be saying, "Well, you didn't get it the last time, so here it is again!") The "unwed" inner feminine has not yet been related to, i.e., "married to", the male ego personality. Unlike the wilis of "Giselle", however, the swans are not

vindictive or threatening, so this shows that culturally as well as from a psychological standpoint there has been some movement, some development towards consciousness of the feminine values in the collective situation. And, indeed, women's role in collective and public life and the steps made in their education had advanced by the end of the 19th century from what it had been in 1849 when "Giselle" was created. The fact that the swans appear in a positive (albeit bewitched) feminine guise indicates that they are guides for the masculine's highest creative and spiritual aspirations. At the end of the 19th century, women were idealized in art as well as in life; placed securely on a pedestal from which they could not descend. Women's sexuality was simultaneously feared and cosseted. Interestingly and tellingly, women in the patriarchal culture were considered "bewitching". As within, so without: the inner feminine of the man is also split, "bewitched". Birds generally symbolize ideas. The fact that these birds are half-formed feminine creatures suggests that they are half-formed ideas or only a partial awareness about feeling, sexuality, and intuition flying about in the "wilds" of the masculine unconscious, symbolized by the lake/ woods of the balletic setting.

At the lake of the unconscious our hero meets Odette, Queen of the Swans, who represents the positive spiritual guide to his masculinity. He falls in love with her. Notice that the feminine is now of royal stature. Recalling the disparity of status between the feminine and masculine in "Giselle" that made it impossible for the peasant girl Giselle and Prince Albrecht to be united, this is a significant development. "Swan Lake" shows that there has been a considerable appreciation in the value of the feminine collectively: she actually is of greater status than he, because she is a Queen and Siegfried is only a Prince — a "king-in-waiting", so to speak. This reflects the spiritualization of women, who were typically put on a pedestal and not allowed to be fully human or fully participatory in public life in the late 1800s. Thus, Odette is on a higher spiritual level than Siegfried. She represents Siegfried's anima, his soul guide. However, the soul guide is bewitched, which means that the psychic value "she" represents cannot be related to on a human level. The man is split, of two minds as regards the feminine.

Suddenly, a sorcerer, Von Rothbart appears. Von Rothbart is an evil magician, an enchanter who can change himself into an owl. It is he who has bewitched the women and holds the feminine in thrall. Owls are frequently "helping spirits" of shamans who tread the paths of the dead on their ecstatic shamanic journeys and are, therefore, related symbolically to death. Transformation

into an animal is a typical shamanic talent, and Von Rothbart is obviously an evil shaman. He represents the Trickster Magician, the Adversary, the Shadow archetype within patriarchy and within the individual masculine unconscious. This, by the way, is what happened to the psychic value represented by the character of Hilarion in the ballet "Giselle"! (Hilarion was the game keeper in "Giselle" who was thrown into the lake by the wilis.) So this is what happens when earthy, instinctual, intuitive masculine energy — energy in touch with the natural world — is "thrown into the lake": it appears in a more sinister and less human form later on. Having been dismissed from consciousness by a developing industrial world in the late 1800s, the instinctual, intuitive archetypal energy has turned malevolent and less human. We may speculate that had the energy represented by Hilarion been allowed a continuing role in consciousness in 1849, the evil magician would not have appeared in "Swan Lake" in 1895. Nor would we have experienced "him" as the evil wizard of atomic armaments and environmental calamities in 20th century history. Had he been allowed a place in Western consciousness, "Swan Lake" might perhaps have featured the appearance of the Wise Old Man or the benevolent wizard — a Gandalf, an Obi-wan Kenobi, a Yoda, a Dumbledor, or the youthful Harry Potter.

The evil magician is a power attitude that does not understand love, human values or relationship. In the 20th century, we had ample evidence of the presence of the evil magician/sorcerer: the power struggles within society, the nuclear bomb, the evil use to which modern science and technology is sometimes put. The evil enchanter is removed from all instinctual and natural life and treats everything as if it were a game, while people's lives hang in the balance. We have seen stock market games and mortgage schemes, ending in the financial catastrophe that descended upon us in 2008. We have seen political games, games of corporate takeovers, the pillaging and decimation of the ecosystem. These are examples of the cost of denying or denigrating earthy, instinctual, intuitive, and feeling components in our collective human life.

It is Von Rothbart, the power attitude that keeps the swan maidens in thrall by a spell of enchantment. He is the father of Odile, the black swan, who appears in Act 3 of the ballet. This relationship is entirely missed in the film, but it is a salient fact that must be considered when analyzing "Nina's" psychology in the "The Black Swan". Unless you know the original ballet you will not understand the significance of the figure of von Rothbart in the movie, because the fact of Odile's paternal parentage is not alluded to in the film! What Odile's

paternal parentage means is that from a perspective of the individual woman, or the feminine within a man, or the culture at large, it is a power attitude of ruthless manipulateness that “fathers” the unrelated, power-driven seductress, Odile. Odile is interested in conquest, not relationship. Von Rothbart’s owl-like appearance indicates the possibility that he represents the value of intuition (“the wise old owl”) that was rejected by the rationalism of the Enlightenment and has been systematically rejected by our culture ever since. What happens to intuition, or any other human value, when it is repressed is that it becomes demonic and dark. When something becomes demonic it means that, psychologically speaking, it has become a tool of power rather than of love and relationship. Von Rothbart is, like all tricksters, a very slippery character; as a shape shifter he represents something rather more than a single attribute of consciousness that has been denied. We’ll come back to this momentarily.

At the end of the 20th century, this repressed, angry wizard energy took the form of Darth Vader in popular culture. Vader is pure, unredeemed power. He is not even humanoid or animal, but mechanoid — a shell of outward appearances with no inner substance. He is even less human than the owl-like Von Rothbart. He appears as totally black, which means he is totally unconscious, both within the collective and within the individual. The opposite of Darth Vader is, of course, Obi-wan Kenobi. The appearance of this duo at the end of the 20th century is a positive sign that a realization of a greater consciousness may be imminent. The motif of twins, one good, one evil, shows up universally in dreams and mythology and indicates that a particular content of the psyche is on the threshold of consciousness. So, for us at the end of the 20th century, what was once undifferentiated intuition (Von Rothbart) has begun to be differentiated into two extreme opposites: Darth Vader and Obi-wan Kenobi. Recognition of the opposites is always the necessary prelude to consciousness. The twinning of the feminine occurred in “Swan Lake” in 1895 with the Odette/Odile figures, and now, almost 100 years later in “Star Wars” the twinning has occurred in the masculine (Darth Vader/Obi-wan Kenobi). We have reason to hope that there can be a conscious acceptance of those rejected unconscious contents, and that a reconciliation of those two sets of opposites (two feminine and two masculine) may be possible.

The swan maidens are bewitched. When something is bewitched or enchanted, that means psychologically that the human value it represents cannot be related to consciously on a normal human level. It is still on the unconscious or animal level. As enchanted feminine

contents, the swans represent a function of relationship that can only act autonomously, that is to say, on its own. This inconsistent energy is not under the control of the masculine ego. It operates only on the very primitive level of infatuation and lust. It is not particularly well-adapted. It is flighty, like birds, reacting with moods and outbursts of excessive emotion. Those men who are more or less permanently possessed of this bewitched, flighty inner feminine are capricious and unreliable in relationships. Their feeling responses tend to be alternatively exaggerated or almost non-existent, and certainly somewhat dysfunctional.

In the ballet, Von Rothbart, comes between the lovers Odette and Siegfried, causing a storm to arise and the lake to overflow its banks. This represents a dangerous situation for consciousness. The image of the evil wizard is very important to understand, because it is “he” who comes between the individual man’s and the patriarchal cultures’ realization of feminine values. We must, therefore, look more closely at what the motif of an “evil wizard” means. “He” is black, which means that he represents an unconscious content living in a realm inaccessible to the light of masculine solar consciousness.

What does an evil wizard represent from a psychological standpoint? Of relevance here is a discussion by Jungian analyst Marie Louise von Franz about the bewitchment of the animus/anima and the psychological phenomenon of a “complex behind a complex”, which she calls a “Weltanschauung” (a world view) opposed to the soul which takes the form of the malevolent wizard archetype. The malevolent wizard, she says, “Is the dark aspect of the God image which has not been consciously accepted and so has lived a dark life; it has an unconscious Weltanschauung, a point of view or philosophy of life, which influences the anima [or animus]. . . . A Weltanschauung is a tendency in the unconscious which cannot get into consciousness and therefore takes hold of the anima or animus instead. It is a complex behind a complex.” (“The Psychological Meaning of Redemption Motifs in Fairytales”, Marie Louise von Franz, p.41.) Von Franz describes a Weltanschauung as a collection of assumptions and beliefs that comprise a collective worldview that is non-negotiable because it is an unconscious prejudice that has not been worked out. It is, therefore, an unquestioned “given”. It is this “Weltanschauung” that has gotten between modern man’s consciousness and the inner life of his soul. On the collective level, it is this “Weltanschauung” (“von Rothbart”) that has come between collective consciousness and the fuller development of individual human beings.

What is our “Weltanschauung”, our non-negotiable collective worldview? It is a grotesquely over-blown rationalism and logos consciousness that has raped the feminine values of intuition, relationship, feeling, complementarity, convergence, and correspondence. Our linear, analytical logic has denigrated and destroyed the analogical, mythical, metaphoric, medial modalities of an entire realm of human experience considered “feminine”. Western culture does not give space or value to what it considers “irrational”. But the irrational is precisely the place where meaning is to be found. A culture of unbridled consumption (the concretized form of psychic hunger) cannot provide meaning to the soul hungry for it. This is the crux of why we are so addicted. Denied a place in consciousness, the irrational is lived out unconsciously in addiction. Von Rothbart, then, represents the malevolent wizard archetype — that collection of rationalistic assumptions that is non-negotiable when it comes to allowing anything it does not understand to get into consciousness. Collectively, Western mentality has no experience, no “hook” as it were, to hang the more intuitive, medial “feminine” values on. Individuals in Western cultures and Western society at large simply have no experience of the mediumistic, intuitive, body-oriented, analogical qualities of feminine consciousness. Most treat those qualities like they would treat a ball of hibernating rattlesnakes — a form in which it may appear in dreams, fantasies and movies! Western culture has been constructed on competition rather than complementarity, on consumption rather than convergence and correspondence.

It is this “Weltanschauung” (represented in the original ballet by von Rothbart) that causes the storm in the unconscious and the bewitchment of the feminine. In myths, dreams and fairy tales, storms represent conflict within the psyche and within the collective unconscious. In the ballet, as von Rothbart separates the two lovers, a storm causes the lake (the personal unconscious) to overflow its banks, suggesting the overflow of unconscious contents submerging the ego. It is a dangerous situation psychologically. It represents nothing less than a mini-psychosis, i.e. a neurosis. As we all know, being “in love” is completely different from learning how to love another less-than-perfect real person. Being “in love” is frequently neurotic and obsessive and has often been described as a mini-psychosis in which we are overwhelmed by the archetypal powers of the unconscious, the anima or animus.

“As within, so without,” as the saying goes. Collectively on the world stage in 1895 another violent storm was brewing, a dangerous external situation was developing.

The evil enchanter energy was building up in the collective unconscious, and within only a few years of the first performance of “Swan Lake”, the storm of the mass psychosis of world war broke out, engulfing the entire world, not once, but twice within a generation. It is not without deep irony that the ballet “Swan Lake” is based on a Germanic Fairytale, and our hero, Siegfried, whose name means “victorious peace”, is German.

Just as Odette is the positive aspect of the anima, Odile, the black swan, is the anima’s negative aspect who deceives Siegfried and turns vindictively against him. It is the negative aspect of the anima that the film “The Black Swan” wants us to focus on. “She” appears in Act 3 of the ballet, just as Siegfried is about to select a bride from a ballroom chock full of visiting candidate princesses from foreign lands. He is immediately transfixed by the seductress, Odile, however. Also a bird, Odile has the powers of flight, but her kinship to the owl, her father, Von Rothbart, as well as her black costume give her away as evil, i.e., unconscious. She is, therefore, representative of an inner feminine power attitude residing in the man’s psyche and in the collective psyche. Why Prince Siegfried cannot see this is not disclosed; yet projections are always unconscious. Odile is a projection of the dark, sexual feminine, which had been rejected by the dominant culture at the turn of the century, a time when the feminine was spiritually idealized. Rejected and repressed, the sexual aspects of femininity were forced underground, becoming vindictive and manipulative. Odile acts with cunning to entrap Siegfried, toying with him capriciously. A man who is unconscious of this feminine element within his own soul easily falls for that kind of woman in real life. Until he takes responsibility for his own manipulateness, his own power attitude with respect to life and relationships, he will not only be completely unconscious of the fact that he is a



manipulator, but he will repeatedly fall into the trap of manipulative women in real life.

In 1895, from the standpoint of collective consciousness, there was a split within the feminine archetype into its polar opposites: the pure, spiritualized feminine, Odette, and the cunning seductress, Odile. At that point in history, there was no middle ground for a humanly feminine reality in collective consciousness. The struggles of modern women to identify and establish this human middle ground is one of the great movements of the 20th century. That movement is foreshadowed by the recognition of the polar opposite feminine types in "Swan Lake". Unlike the ballet "Giselle", in which there is no recognition of the dark, earthy, sensual feminine — (Myrtha, the Queen of the Wilis, in "Giselle" is a cold and totally non-sensual, non-sexual, evil spirit akin to a nature spirit) — "Swan Lake" has moved consciousness forward, in that we are now aware of the split. We are aware of the opposites within our own soul and of the two extreme images of the feminine in our culture. To define and create a human feminine reality is the great task of the current generation.

After a brief period of awakening (roughly 1960 through 1999), we seem to have gone backwards in this task at the beginning of the 21st century. One has only to turn on the television to be aware of the abysmal self-devaluation of women (and, by the way, of men, too). One has only to spend time in the classrooms of our schools to be convinced that a majority of our young people hold themselves in less esteem than those of us who grew up in the 1940s, '50s and '60s. The posturing, brash impudence and crass exhibitionism merely mask a fundamental lack of self-esteem. One has only to be aware of the advertising hyperbole all around us to be convinced of the shallowness of our souls. Indeed, culturally speaking, to judge from the content of current TV and film manifestations, "Siegfried" (i.e., masculine consciousness) is apparently helplessly, hopelessly bewitched by Odile. Thus we have, once again, the appearance of yet another "Odile" today, because this bewitched energy is what we need to contemplate. I will have more to say about what this bewitched energy represents in today's world, because what was true in 1985 is no longer the case in 2011. We need to understand the difference between that time and our current situation.

Psychologically, to be bewitched is to succumb to the Trickster-like quality of the unconscious. This can happen to anyone. The unconscious is very seductive, like Odile. There is a very sneaky, paradoxical quality to it, and anyone can fall into it, and Siegfried succumbs

to his own unconscious power attitude, Odile. The best defense against this seductive pull of the unconscious is to stick to one's human reality. Unfortunately in "Swan Lake", Siegfried takes the oath of fidelity to the wrong woman, and thus dooms Odette, his true spiritual soul-mate, to death, i.e., to unconsciousness. As he succumbs to the unconscious power attitude, the ballroom darkens, signifying the dimming of consciousness collectively.

After the deception, at the beginning of Act 4 of the ballet, Siegfried rushes to the lake (the unconscious) in remorse and torment to rescue Odette or die trying. This resembles another descent to the underworld, however, this time it is a conscious decision undertaken by Siegfried as an awakened and chastened ego, not because of a chaotic flooding by the unconscious as occurred before when the storm arose on the lake. It is Siegfried's conscious recognition of his situation, the depth of his love for Odette, and his willingness to sacrifice himself which breaks the evil spell of Von Rothbart, who dies. This is interesting, because as we know, anything which "dies" is, mythologically and psychologically speaking, shoved back down into the unconscious, to return later in a darker, more evil form. And, guess what, he has appeared in these latter days in Star Wars in the figure of Darth Vader! And now, interestingly enough, von Rothbart has appeared yet again in the current film, "The Black Swan." This is not an accident.

As in "Giselle", the lesson in "Swan Lake" is this: Only love can overcome the power attitude. The ego's willingness to sacrifice its dominance, sacrifice its power and control is what gives life to the feminine, to the irrational feeling side of life; it breaks the unconscious spell (i.e., cures the neurosis) and saves the situation for consciousness. The end of "Swan Lake" shows a better solution than the ending of "Giselle" in that the two lovers are united in a celestial wedding, indicating that there has been some development in consciousness. However, the fact that they don't stay on earth but are spirited away into the celestial realms means that the situation is not yet complete. It means that for humanity, the union of masculine and feminine has been reabsorbed into a distant celestial collective unconscious and is not yet enfolded in a normal, concrete human reality.

Interestingly, the film "The Black Swan" diverges from this more usual version of the ending of the ballet, having Odette plunge back into her death in the waters of the lake. What this means psychologically is that from the standpoint of masculine and collective consciousness, the spiritual and positive aspects of the anima are consigned to the realm of the unconscious once more. The feminine

aspects of life have again been denied a place in middle earth. This can only presage a more violent upheaval in the future.

At this time, as we watch the images coming from Japan, North Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere, it is impossible not to think somewhat synchronistically, given the scope of the political and social upheavals throughout the world as well as the catastrophic events and disasters emanating from within our rumbling planet itself. Certainly, as we watch catastrophic events unfold, we are profoundly emotionally moved and tempted to compare the level of violence of the inner happenings of collective consciousness with the outer rumblings and conflagrations. We cannot help being aware of the correspondence between the inner life of the psyche and outer situations which seem to mirror them.

This, then, is the backdrop for a more complete understanding of the place of the film "The Black Swan" in the continuum of the development of human consciousness and the rise of the feminine in our time. An in-depth discussion of the psychological dynamics of the film's main character, "Nina," follows.

Part III: Inside the Rabbit Warren of the Fragmenting Mind of the Addicted Personality: A Psychological Analysis of "Nina"

"The Black Swan" is the tragic story of a young anorexic ballet dancer's slide into madness and self-mutilation, leading to a complete break with reality (psychosis) and her ultimate self-annihilation. The film reveals the unconscious power principle behind the drive for perfection that has been Nina's life in the ballet. We see a severely neurotic personality at the mercy of highly charged complexes erupting from the unconscious. The images in the film are visual metaphors of a compartmentalized mentality sliding into psychosis, in which there is no communication between the various parts of the personality.

The brilliant directing and tight-in camera work takes us through the dark underground complexes and rabbit warrens of the theater and the New York subway, and through the warren of Nina's ever-more-darkening apartment complex. The "complexes" do not communicate. These images are apt metaphors for the deep, dark corridors of the neurotic mind, where doors are continually slammed. Communication is blocked both between the ego and the complexes and between the warring complexes within. Nina's frail ego consciousness cannot communicate with the forces of the unconscious, which bang at the doors and scream

from within.

The word "complex" as well as images of "complexes" gives us a clue to the psychological dynamics. In dreams the image of a building complex may be understood as a metaphor for a psychological complex. Like dreams, all art reveals at least some part of the unconscious of the personal or collective unconscious psyche. However, not all complexes are pathological. Many psychological complexes are normal, not pathological. (For example, the ego is a normal psychological complex.) In psychology, a complex is defined as a nucleus within the psyche that attracts energy to itself and acts autonomously, in isolation from the other complexes. A pathological complex is an emotionally charged, split-off, insulated area of the psyche, inaccessible to consciousness — like the rooms of Nina's apartment, the subway cars in the New York underground, and the dressing rooms in the warren of corridors beneath and backstage at the theater. The rooms and rabbit warren of corridors contain the repressed dynamisms of the psyche: like the man on the subway, the lesbian lover, the power-driven shadow, the alternatively nurturing/negative mother, the owlish von Rothbart character of the ballet.

Even when the film makers occasionally bring us up above ground for a breath of air, the camera lens is nevertheless still tightly, claustrophobically framed on "Nina". Nina herself gasps for breath, and we can barely breathe ourselves. This technique has the intended effect of showing Nina as ever more isolated in her own "bubble", not related to the outer world. One notices that the ambient light is much brighter at the beginning of the movie than it is at the end of the film. This technique by the film makers is an apt metaphor for the dimming of consciousness as Nina slides into the darkness of the unconscious. Throughout the film, we see an increase in the number of darker and darker shadows flitting everywhere, as they do in the mind of the individual suffering from incipient psychosis. The moment in the film at which the lights suddenly shut off while Nina is practicing alone in the studio, is the visual metaphor used to indicate Nina's final break with reality. The unconscious swallows up the conscious personality in a full-blown psychosis. That is pretty much the definition of a psychosis.

In "The Black Swan", normal sex has been split off by the mother complex which suffocates Nina and keeps her infantile. Even the voice of Nina is childlike, not the voice of an adult woman. "Sweet child," coos the mother again and again; and Nina's apartment shows her to be surrounded by the stuffed animals of childhood — until, in a complex-induced rage, she stuffs them down the



incinerator chute. It is a futile gesture. By that time, the mother complex has turned very dark indeed. In fact, I am not altogether sure that the “mother” we see is actually physically present to Nina, since “she” soon shifts shape, snappishly turns her back on her daughter, and visually becomes darker and more severe as the film proceeds — with hair pulled back, dressed in black, like a witch. It is entirely possible that the mother figure is the omnipresent negative, inner mother complex of Nina’s psyche, both suffocatingly succoring and sharply critical, rather than an actual human being who inhabits the apartment complex with her daughter. The film’s representation of the mother figure indicates strongly to me that she represents that complex known as the mother archetype which encompasses extreme opposites — both positive (“good”) and negative (“evil”) aspects of the mother.

It could be argued that the image of the mother putting her finger into Nina’s mouth is symbolic of the psychological rape of (i.e., psychic identification with) the daughter by the mother, with the finger substituting for a penis. That small detail made my skin crawl and was creepy enough to warrant my consideration of such an interpretation. Certainly, to judge from the images on the walls of Nina’s apartment complex, there is a too close identification between Nina’s mother and Nina. A mother-self identification has occurred within Nina’s psyche. The rising cacophony of idiotic babblings by the inner voices of criticism shout out from the childlike drawings of the mother-self plastered on the walls of a closed-off backroom of the psyche. In the end, we see the mother complex, completely dressed in black, sitting in the audience, her face glowing triumphantly, watching her daughter’s self destruction. The unconscious complex has achieved complete control over Nina: “It was perfect,” Nina whispers as she lies dying.

An unconscious complex that is ignored builds up negative energy within the psyche, transforming into the darker and darker images of the mother/witch and the owlish, inner bringer of death, the evil sorcerer, von Rothbart, who psychologically rapes her and ultimately overpowers the conscious personality. Those two figures are in unconscious collusion against the conscious personality. We learn from myths and fairytales that when a part of life that deserves attention is ignored, it seeks vengeance. A goddess, or any other archetype of the unconscious, scorned is terrible indeed. (Need I remind anyone of the evil “fairy god-mother” of the ballet “The Sleeping Beauty”, who was not invited to the christening of the Princess Aurora, and subsequently cursed the infant feminine?) Von Rothbart is what normal intuitive, earthy, natural wisdom turns into when it has been shoved down into hell (the unconscious): a demonic autonomous complex that erupts with violence against the personality. Like a black hole in a galaxy, it sucks everything into it. A black hole is a very good analogy for what happens psychologically: whatever is sucked into the depths of the unconscious of the psyche is placed under enormous pressure and builds up enormous amounts of explosive energy at the center of the personality, just as a black hole does at the center of a galaxy. When the explosion finally comes, it results in a full-blown neurosis, addiction, or even psychosis.

Bewitched complexes frequently appear in animal form in dreams and fairy tales. Von Rothbart is a bewitched complex, i.e., a complex that is sub-human, i.e., no longer humanly related. Thus, when a content of the psyche is not recognized or accepted by the conscious ego personality, it appears in animal form in dreams, fairy tales, fantasies and certain art forms, particularly those of an archetypal nature, like “The Black Swan”. Von Rothbart represents a psychic content that is not recognized by

Nina's conscious ego personality. From the standpoint of the collective Western culture, von Rothbart represents an unconscious content of the collective psyche that has been rejected by the dominant patriarchal point of view. What might this collective unconscious content be? Since dreams, fairy tales, fantasies and films like "The Black Swan" compensate for what is missing in consciousness (whether that of the individual or that of the culture), we must ask ourselves two questions: (1) What is the dominant mode of collective consciousness at this time in history, and (2) What value has been rejected by that dominant in modern life? In other words, what is missing and rejected from our conscious life that has consequently turned "evil" and now exists for us only in a "bewitched" form, rather than having its rightful place in consciousness? A bewitched content of the psyche acts erratically, erupting in outbursts of uncontrolled affect and causing all kinds of trouble for the dominant standpoint, both for the individual and the society. Recognized, paid attention to and given a normal place and an outlet in consciousness, a content that has been bewitched can be transformed. (To put it in the metaphoric language of fairy tales, had the fairy god-mother been invited the party, she would have brought the Princess wondrous gifts rather than visiting her revenge and vindictiveness upon the young creative feminine in "The Sleeping Beauty".)

In the previous section, we looked at the form in which the unconscious rejected value has been embodied in the film. We saw that it takes the form of von Rothbart, the evil sorcerer who appears as an enormous black owl. On the one hand, I equated von Rothbart with the dynamism of the "evil wizard" archetype, a "Weltanschauung" opposed to the soul — a complex behind a complex that has taken a hold of the anima/or animus. In this version of things, "he" represents the collection of assumptions and beliefs that comprise the dominant collective Western worldview that is non-negotiable because it is an unconscious and therefore unquestioned "given". The dominant view is our intellectual rationalism, which precludes the feminine values of mediality and intuition. On the other hand, the owlish von Rothbart, like many things in the unconscious, has more than one possible symbolic association and psychological interpretation. Since he is both a wizard and an owl we are justified in looking at him both ways, and doing so will help us extract more pith from this extremely slippery character.

Because owls see very well in the darkness, have exceptional hearing and an unerring ability to seize their prey in the dark, they are symbols of intuition. Von Rothbart is what happens to intuition (or any other human value) when it is rejected by consciousness: it

becomes dark and rapacious. Owls are also, since time immemorial, associated with wisdom, being associated with no less than the feminine goddess of wisdom, Athena, who represents female self-determination, teaching of the intellect and skill in the civilized arts. When these positive gifts of the goddess are ignored, the archetypal energy seeks redress. "Athena" goes underground and becomes vengeful. Athena, the virgin goddess was a "father's daughter" and gave all her allegiance to Zeus, her father. Nina, like many anorexics is more than likely also a "father's daughter", but we don't have that particular piece of information from the film itself. However, given that Nina cannot relate sexually to a man, her psychic incest with the father can be inferred. Usually, when a girl is a "father's daughter" there is also a negative mother complex operating in the background as well, and the latter we see quite well enough in the film. Notably, in the original ballet of Swan Lake, though not in the film, von Rothbart is identified as the father of Odile, the black swan. This significant detail of Odile's lineage is completely omitted in the film. However, the father/daughter psychic incest is fully apparent towards the end of the film when the lights go out and Nina discovers von Rothbart and her shadow/self en flagrante.

What are we to make of the fact that von Rothbart is a male? As frequently happens, one complex (because it is acting autonomously and unconsciously) undermines and contaminates another complex. In this case, the normal masculine complex (the animus) within a feminine personality has been contaminated by the negative mother/witch with whom "he" is secretly aligned. What should be a normal operating animus, helping the woman to self determination and intellectual and creative potential has turned deadly. However, because these qualities have been rejected by Nina's conscious attitude, they have become dark, negative, vindictive, and destructive. As the girl's bewitched negative animus, "he" is secretly aligned with the negative mother/witch. The negative animus acts in collusion with the negative mother/witch complex.

The animus complex is a normal part of feminine psychology that tends to be shaped by a woman's relationship to her father. It is the "inner masculine" of the feminine personality, which when properly related to is a positive influence, leading the woman to use her highest creative gifts. When, however, the animus is ignored by consciousness or contaminated by the negative animus of the mother, it turns negative, vindictive, and violent, turning in retribution upon the conscious personality, by visiting it with neuroses and addictions, as it does to Nina in "The Black Swan". It overwhelms, "rapes" and "ravages" the conscious feminine personality. Nina needs to

differentiate the animus from the negative mother. She needs to rupture the collusion of the two complexes, if she is to survive the bewitchment. But this she does not do. Unfortunately, Nina has no help or inner resources, nor even any idea of what is happening to her to be able to successfully engage the overwhelming powers of the unconscious. This is the tragic flaw in her personality. Unable to confront her unconscious, infantile, narcissistic shadow, her tenuous grip on reality slips, and she descends into psychosis.

If we look at the story of Nina as an archetypal story rather than simply biography, the figure of the ballet director in the film represents the domineering, autocratic patriarchal masculine not only within the culture at large, but also within the psyche of Nina, whose tragedy plays out because she succumbs to the drivenness of this inner dynamism. She cannot stand up to “him”, which is to say that she cannot stand up to that driven quality within herself. It is obvious that Nina has never developed her mind or become self-determining (“Athena” qualities), and this defect is what turns the animus negative. The attitude of consciousness has rejected independence; remaining childish, she cannot relate sexually to a man. She cannot relate to a man because she cannot relate to her own feminine essence except in its devouring form (the dark mother/inner lesbian lover/greedy shadow manipulator). If a woman works on herself, the images within (the images in her dreams and fantasies) will become less dark, less threatening, and more human. But Nina does not take responsibility for herself. Indeed, her diffuse consciousness (not to mention the physical impact of starving herself!) makes it impossible for her to extricate herself without help. There is no intervention, however, and Nina’s increasingly exaggerated behavior no longer presents as normal, humanly proportional reactions. This is how a bewitched complex acts — erratically. Nina’s behavior swings from pole to pole, from submissiveness to aggressive rage, from innocent purity to savage sexuality. She cannot reconcile the opposites at war within her soul and she succumbs. All of her conscious personality is ultimately sucked into the black hole that is von Rothbart.

Throughout the movie, the costumed figure of the evil von Rothbart lurks backstage, flitting through the shadows. When we first see him, he is just a guy in a costume, going about his business. As the film proceeds, however, “he” turns into the representation of that autonomous power principle directed against Nina’s conscious personality. He represents the polar opposite of a positive animus. Nowhere do we see Nina’s positive inner masculine come to her rescue. In dreams and fairytales, the witch mother is frequently accompanied

by a bewitched masculine consort (black birds, black cats, etc.). Birds are symbolic of idealistic thoughts, but Von Rothbart’s black costume and wings indicate that he is an unconscious complex of negative, dark suicidal thoughts. Although owls, as mentioned, are thought of as symbols of wisdom because of their association with Athena, they are just as frequently symbols of death and the unconscious in myths and fairy tales, due to their association with woods (the domain of the feminine and of the unconscious). This turnabout in the owl’s status occurred historically several thousand years ago, when patriarchy usurped matriarchal culture. When that occurred, all goddesses and the feminine values they represented were thrown into the unconscious, denigrated, and consequently became dark, threatening, and suspicious to the masculine patriarchal solar consciousness that prevailed.

In the end, Nina cannot separate the inner images from outer reality. She is mystified after an evening of debauchery that her friend denies their fling. Clearly, the evening was not physically real but an inner psychic reality. Nina cannot bring to consciousness her aggressive, competitive, sexual feminine shadow. She cannot relate humanly to either the feminine or the masculine. Nina’s shadow succubus rapes her, which looks like and is, psychologically speaking, a devouring of her feminine essence. It is a union that destroys and annihilates rather than fructifies. Her inner psychological rape by the devouring feminine results not in more consciousness but in less and leads directly to the image of her ultimate rape by von Rothbart. This psychic event is pictured in the film immediately after the lights go out in the studio (indicating a complete break with reality — a complete psychosis), and Nina “sees” her shadow/self in her dark union with von Rothbart backstage. Nina feels betrayed, but it is a self-betrayal. The psychic union of von Rothbart with her shadow/self is a death marriage that cannot produce consciousness (the birth of consciousness would appear as a divine child in Nina’s fantasies) and, instead, produces death.

The house of Nina’s fragile ego was not strong enough to stand to her own truth. In her addiction to perfection, she succumbed to the power drive of the unconscious. All the mirrors and dark, reflective surfaces throughout the film show that the reflective capacity of Nina’s consciousness is simply not clear or strong enough: she appears literally as a shadow “beside herself” or standing “behind herself” or “in front of herself”, which means, psychologically, that the complex of the shadow personality has been activated. Nina ought to deal with this shadow self, but she cannot. It is this failure that results in her psychotic possession. All the mirrors are

shattered, indicating the splintering of all self-reflective capacity by ego consciousness. It is one of these shards that Nina ultimately uses as the weapon of self-destruction. In the end Nina's final words are, "It was perfect." But it is the perfection of death.

What does this film say about the condition of masculine consciousness? How might we interpret "The Black Swan" from the viewpoint of masculine psychology today? Just as a woman has her inner masculine energy, the animus, which appears in a woman's dreams as a male figure, so also a man has his inner feminine, the anima, which appears in a man's dreams as a female figure. A man's anima development is reflected in how he relates to others, but more particularly in how he relates to women. The state of a man's soul life can be seen in the condition of the feminine figures arising from his unconscious in dreams and in products of his unconscious: products such as the film "The Black Swan".

Both men and women in our culture have been abused by the ravages of the monstrous, top-heavy rationality that rules our collective life. Since the creators of this film are men, it follows that the condition of Nina is a mirror of the condition of the creators' inner feminine "soul" as well as a mirror of the soul of the patriarchy: abused and starving and erratic. In a highly competitive world, feeling values are of little use. "She" starves. In our patriarchal, overly-rational, male-dominated society, "she" is going psychotic. "She", i.e., the "soul" — man's normal human intuitive feeling values — is in a dreadful state. "Feeling" used in the context of psychology does not refer to emotions (which arise from activated complexes) but to a rational function of consciousness which evaluates the worth of relationships and situations. If not related to by the conscious ego, "she" will cause depressive and violent mood swings. If a man lives in his head and does not pay attention to the needs of the body, his anima will "pay him back" with all sorts of physical and emotional maladies, including neuroses, addictions, and erotic and other obsessions. The drivenness which plagues us all, men and women, is embodied in the drivenness of Nina's behavior. Driven by the expectations of the mother dominatrix, the man's soul life languishes, like a bird in a cage that cannot fly free.

The appearance of the seductress/enchantress in modern cultural life reveals the devouring feminine archetype developed to its farthest extreme. Why the seductress has appeared now is a question that needs to be addressed. The facile answer is to blame the appearance of the seductress on repressed sexuality. The only problem with that is that not by any stretch of the imagination could the current state of collective life be

called sexually repressed and puritanical. This is not 1895; what was true in 1895 is no longer true in 2011. There are no societal or cultural constraints or stigma any longer associated with sexual expression. This is not to say that much of the current freedom of sexual expression is not totally unconscious. We are, after all, more connected by our neuroses than we might like to admit. But it is patently inconceivable to claim that repressed sexuality is the immediate cause of the appearance of the black swan in the imaginative life of contemporary American culture. Therefore, since sexuality is not the human value that has been shoved down, we must look somewhere else for the value that has been denied consciousness in modern collective life. I submit that it is the unconscious itself as a whole that requires a hearing, not just the sexual aspects of life.

I submit that it is the so-called "irrational" aspects of human life, those values that give life meaning and purpose that have been shoved down into hell where they have festered and become negative. It is the rejected so-called "feminine" values (which are in actuality human values) of connectedness, complementarity, relatedness, analogical thinking, metaphoric and symbolic thinking, empathy, feeling, and intuitive and medial capacities which have been repressed and built up explosive energy that erupts in the form of the seductive enchantress, the black swan, at this time. I believe that I am correct in this because the central mythic image of the film is a swan, the symbol of medial consciousness. She is black because she is unconscious. It is as if she (intuitive, medial consciousness) were "dead" in the eyes of Western consciousness.

I mentioned earlier that the swan is a symbol of transcendence of the human condition. Mythologically, the swan is an intermediary for human consciousness between the transpersonal realms of the celestial ("upper") and chthonic ("lower") worlds of the psyche. Psychologically, then, the swan represents the medial quality of human experience. Because of its relationship with both the celestial realm of consciousness and the underworld of the unconscious, the swan is an image of the union of extreme opposites within the human psyche. I will go even farther now and say that the swan represents the transpersonal psyche itself as a whole in bewitched form. It is the reality of the transpersonal psyche itself that has come knocking on our door in the film "The Black Swan." The images are horrific because the transpersonal psyche as a whole is horrific, and because dialogue with it has been rejected by modern consciousness. It has risen up to get our attention.

Modern life is empty and shallow because it is

disconnected from nature and from its roots in the numinous unconscious. Images arising from the unconscious enchant and mesmerize us for a reason! The unconscious, the unlived life, wants our attention! And, it ought to get our attention with the images we see erupting in our collective life. I mentioned earlier that swans are always somewhat out of their element on middle earth. This is true of the medial personality, the individual with far-seeing, prophetic insights, the one who picks up on the subtle currents within the collective psyche. Medial consciousness is a human value that wants and deserves our attention. It appears darkly, seductively, and negatively only because it has been rejected by the dominant attitude of consciousness. The unconscious itself, as a whole, is extremely seductive — like the image of the black swan. Left in the unconscious rather than being raised up and given a place in consciousness, the negative aspects of medial unconsciousness certainly have the power to overthrow consciousness with neuroses and psychoses, both collective and individual. However, given a proper place in consciousness, alongside and equal to rational consciousness, medial consciousness and the reality of the transpersonal psyche shows a human face. If this were to occur, there would be a radical transformation of Western human consciousness.

Medial consciousness, awareness of the transpersonal psyche, is not limited to women; it has erupted in those men who created “The Black Swan”, grabbing them by the scruff of the neck and pushing them forward with the making of this film. I would be quite surprised if, in the creation of this work, they did not feel somehow impelled by forces that would not be denied (the “she who cannot be denied”, to use the lexicon of myth, dreams, and fairytales). “The Black Swan” has come up now, at this point in human history, for a reason. The image of the black swan is what the transpersonal psyche wants us to meditate upon at this moment in the history of consciousness. The black swan is the value missing from consciousness that the directing, ordering, unifying principle within the psyche is trying to bring up. In part one of this article, I suggested that the swan might reasonably be considered to be a symbol, a metaphor, for the entire process of individuation, that on-going conversation between conscious and unconscious. The possibility of having this conversation, this on-going dialogue, is where I believe the film “The Black Swan” points us. ■