What can a silly, chaotic figure like a Trickster offer the world? Jungian psychoanalyst Deldon McNeely argues that Trickster's value lies in amplifying and healing splits in the individual and collective psyche and in inviting us to differentiate our comprehension of evil. Tricksters, long held as aspects of the divine in many cultures, are an archetype of transition, guides in the journey of individuation and psychotherapy, and mediators between the conscious and unconscious world, that which is either unseen or banished from consciousness.

Mercury Rising examines Tricksters in light of contemporary cultural trends, including:

- society's current disdain for heroes and the hero archetype;
- Trickster's need for mirroring and its implications regarding the narcissistic nature of contemporary culture;
- the Trickster's role in psychotherapy in terms of truth, reliability, and grounding;
- the relationship between Trickster and the feminine, and the concomitant emergence of feminine values and voices of wisdom;
- and feminine influences on the philosophy of ethics as well as current attitudes toward evil, violence, and sex.

Inasmuch as Tricksters force us to question our sense of order and morality, as well as our sanity, Mercury Rising explores the hope that "the Anima-..."
Also by Deldon Anne McNeely

Becoming: An Introduction to Jung’s Concept of Individuation

Touching: Body Therapy and Depth Psychology

Animus Aeternus: Exploring the Inner Masculine
Mercury Rising

Women, Evil, and the Trickster Gods

Deldon Anne McNeely
Mercury Rising
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1. SUPERMAN IN HELL

Part I: Heroes, Cynics, Celebrities, And Tricksters
Defining the Realms of Heroes and Tricksters

Part II: Wanted: Ethics, Dead Or Alive
Divine Research on Greed - Progress's Shadow - Theoretical Ethics - Individuation and Integrity - Clowning Around in the Shadow - Shadow's Guide - Order's Shadow

Part III: Sociopathy, Stamina, And Hope
Sociability's Shadow - Heroes, Hermes, and Hubris - A Developmental View of Disorder - The Stamina of Hope

2. THROUGH LENS AND LOOKING GLASS

Reflection and Survival - Mirrors, Dreams, and Truth - Whoever Knows God Has an Effect on Him - Trickster as a Messenger of God's Plan - The Seen, the Unseen, and the Camera - Reflections on Reflection - The Matter of Narcissism - Trickster, Narcissism, and the Search for Soul - Longing for Center

3. SCRUPLES AND SOUL DOCTORS

The Search for Meaning in Suffering - Trickster, Shaman, Healer - Freeing the Double-Bind - Doctors of Darkness - The Imaginal Trickster - Trickster and the Borderline - The Therapeutic Trickster - Trickster as Mediator - The Reverent Boundary

4. TRICKSTER WOMAN


5. ETUDES IN PARANOIA

Lies - Evil - Violence - Sex - Innocence

6. THE ANIMATED TRICKSTER

The Dark Trickster and Anima - Parenting the Divine Child - Inclusiveness and Compassion - Devouring Giants: Exploitative Greed - Parenting Nature

ENDNOTES

INDEX
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INTRODUCTION

So much of importance has been written about the Trickster Archetype in its various representations by psychologists, anthropologists, and mythologists. Why put forth another book on this subject? I have three objectives: One is to expound the survival value of recognizing the Trickster Archetype in our individual and collective psyches; another is to raise the possibility of developing a more enlightened approach to ethics by our species, by attending to the Trickster as an agent in the differentiation of evil; a third is to explore the feminine side of an androgynous archetype which is portrayed universally as masculine.

My primary motivation for this work springs from a personal need to continually deepen my understanding of an archetype which has shaped my life. It was when first reading Karl Kerényi’s *Hermes: Guide of Souls*, that I became enlightened in my attitude toward certain dark aspects of my life which had made dull sense to me at the time, but which, with Kerényi’s inspiration, were imbued with meaning and motion. Mercurius had entered consciousness. Now I often recognize that potential for enlightenment in others as Mercurius enters through a dream or moment of inspiration. Usually such awareness must be quickly grasped, or it will as fleetingly disappear.

To those who may feel closed to admit that such a silly or chaotic figure as a trickster could offer anything of substance to an individual or developing society, I invite you to look more deeply into this subject. You may be surprised at the levels of perception which this door opens. New perceptions allow rebalancing of energies in the psyche, and lead to new solutions to problems.

To attempt to catch hold of an archetypal moment or pattern and verbalize the experience is the chore of clinicians particularly. I must apologize to those scholars whose task it is to cleanly articulate and place in context something as
nebulous as the Trickster in its many manifestations and meanings. I am essentially doing the opposite here, as I blithely stir together gods, goddesses, folk-heroes, fools, magicians, and other creatures, real and imaginary, into some great archetypal stew.

I justify this in order to share an appreciation for the value of the Trickster Archetype as an amplifier and healer of splits in the individual and collective psyches. The healing quality makes Trickster an extremely relevant—perhaps the most relevant—archetype for our time of fragmented societies and personalities. The Coyote figure of Native American culture does not literally translate into African Legba, or alchemical Mercurius, but all carry a similar spirit, and their stories evoke the same profound truths, truths which I shall argue here are cogent and valuable for the questions which face us presently as a human race.

I must also ask my readers’ forgiveness for leaping between examples of happenings in the collective psyche and individual psyches. I respond to the phenomena which I, as an archetypal psychologist, believe to be happening on both levels; while I am more qualified to describe individual experience, I cannot resist making comparisons between what I experience everyday in my clinical work with what I intuit from wider social interactions. One can relate to the collective experience as one would the images of one’s own archetypal dream; this brings the large picture into personally meaningful focus. In any case, I hope that the combinations of personal examples, intuitions, and generalizations may be stimulating, if unscientific, as I look less for data than for awareness.

My second objective is to offer the hypothesis that our contemporary worldwide problems may be not just warnings of an imminent apocalypse, but an invitation to differentiate our comprehension of evil. I suggest that if we were to separate out certain truths that Trickster brings, from our very diffuse sense of good/evil, we could leap ahead to new ground in our ethical development. Trickster gods and goddesses, by their very nature, force us to question our premises regarding order and morality. Mercurial and paradoxical, tricksters always open us to something new, to something larger than our current state of awareness. The Trickster Archetype, old as mythology, has been held as an essential aspect of the divine by most cultures. But in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies, whose approaches to morality dualistically polarize Good versus Evil, Trickster has no apparent place. In societies influenced by these contemporary theologies, Trickster’s qualities are more often subsumed by the Devil, the principle of evil. Trickster’s characteristics are also projected onto women as negative qualities, while not acknowledged as Trickster’s. This pattern of suppression of the Trickster Archetype and then projection onto Satan
and woman will have unfortunate consequences for our civilization until we further differentiate our concept of evil.

The third objective for writing is to pose a question: Why are trickster figures usually portrayed as masculine? I propose we circumambulate this question without having to adopt one answer. I suspect that the inclusion of the feminine in our conceptualization of the Divine Trickster would considerably enhance the development of a wiser ethical vantage point. You will notice that I often refer to the Trickster as “it,” and sometimes as “he” or “she.” Regrettably, “it” connotes asexuality, while I would prefer a pronoun that connoted androgyny. The absence of such a word in the English language may be related to a culture-wide imbalance that renders the Trickster, an androgynous archetype, to be thought of as masculine.

On the subject of pronouns, I deliberately use the personal “we” in examples of particular personality types or traits. I do so to emphasize a strong belief: that understanding each other demands examining ourselves. Seeing in ourselves every possible component of human nature enhances communication and facilitates connection.

Jungian psychotherapists consider the Trickster Archetype to be the guide of the journey of individuation and of psychotherapy, much as alchemists saw Mercurius as the guide of the opus, and the Greeks saw Hermes as the guide of souls. We are influenced by Jung’s treatment of Mercurius as mediator between the conscious world and the unconscious world which is unseen, has never been seen, or has been seen and banished from awareness as too frightening, too unworthy, too challenging, or too confusing.

An individual psyche requires a mediating or integrative function to tolerate the pushes and pulls of conflicting energies. Whether experienced as within the psyche, or projected outward onto a deity or ideal, the mediating experience establishes integrity; its absence results in disturbing feelings, such as emptiness and self-contempt, and then in protective devices against such unpleasant feelings. Examples of such devices, which protect the personality from feelings of unabated inner-division, include excessive narcissism, extreme arrogance, attempts at over-control of one’s environment, and rationalizations of contradictions in behavior or beliefs, all among the traits included in the syndromes identified clinically as Personality Disorders. The Trickster Archetype is essentially related to these dynamics, dynamics which are abundantly evident in contemporary society.

In the collective psyche as well, the splits and shards of modern life invite a mediating principle. In the absence of such, societies will continue to be torn apart by chaotic governments, civil wars, moral anarchy, and the decline of
culture. The Trickster Archetype provides this function when channeled constructively by a society and given its due along with other archetypes.

I conceptualize our present archetypal situation as one in which the patriarchal Masculine Archetype is diminishing in prominence, and with him the Patriarchal Hero; the Feminine Archetype rises in importance, as does the archetype of transition, the Trickster. Because of the absence of images in our current-day culture to house these archetypes, I borrow from other cultures to illustrate these relationships: for example, Tricksters like Coyote, Legba, Hermes; Patriarchal Heroes such as Apollo, Herakles, and Superman; the Feminine Centering Principle, such as Hestia, Mawu, Isis. These archetypes influence our behavior unconsciously until we find a way to bring them into awareness.

In the hermetic spirit of questioning and opening, this series of essays, each of which can be read independently of the others, examines the relationship of the Trickster Archetype to the problem of fragmentation in our individual and collective psyches. Chapter I, “Superman in Hell,” explores the present trend of disdain for heroes and superior beings, for fixed criteria, and for universal ethical standards as ordering or centering principles. In the absence of such principles, the psyche exists in disharmony, vulnerable to sociopathic influences. This chapter considers the value of the Trickster in mediating the tendencies toward fragmentation, arrogance, disorder, and sociopathy of humankind in transition. The essay consists of three parts: Part One examines qualities of the Hero and Trickster Archetypes and their influences in the psyche; Part Two focuses on ethical issues; and Part Three explores the place of sociopathy in the individual psyche and its relationship to the Trickster Archetype.

Chapter II, “Through Lens and Looking Glass,” focuses on the relationship of the Trickster to the need to be mirrored, and to seek in being seen a sense of meaning and of future—immortality at best—as a source of hope for something beyond the mundane pieces of our finite lives. Here the argument is raised that the narcissistic character of today’s lifestyles is a manifestation of a desperate need for hope, a symptom of the missing integrative function.

In Chapter III, “Scruples and Soul Doctors,” the attention is on the Trickster Archetype in the practice of psychotherapy, the need for centering of the personality in some experience of truth and reliability, and the dis-ordering of personality which occurs in the absence of such grounding, as seen, for example, in the borderline personality dynamics.

Chapter IV, “Trickster Woman,” looks at the relationship of the Trickster Archetype to the feminine as described in myth and story. The intention of this essay is to recognize the juxtaposition of a current concentration of trickster
aspects in our society and the arousal of feminine values and feminine voices of wisdom.

One way that feminine voices are being heard is through feminine influences in the philosophy of ethics. Chapter V, “Etudes in Paranoia,” aims to articulate some attitudes toward evil, lying, violence, and sex in the hope of promoting dialogue and differentiation of these typically over-generalized and sentimentalized subjects. Chapter VI, “The Animated Trickster,” explores one feminine ethicist’s influence and proposes to separate more consciously the experience of the Trickster Archetype and of the Feminine Principle from the experience of evil in the individual and collective psyche.

I would like to believe that there are some ideas here for the adults among us to chew on, but I must admit that the greater impetus for writing comes from the child in me who loves Trickster and sees her as a rescuer of the young, a child who acknowledges death, but says, “Not yet,” and wants to hope. The child’s hope is that the Anima-ted, life-affirming Trickster will flourish and prevail over the death-dealing excesses that threaten to annihilate many species, including our own. This book is an effort toward that hope.

INVOCATION

You of many names ... Trickster, Hermes, Mercurius, Melusina, Baubo, Thoth, Loki, Coyote, Eshu ... I will call “Holy.” For in the great mystery that we humans know only through a dim and short-spectrumed vision, You are a bright facet of the divine. You manifest, by hook or by crook, in each of us. If by hook, You catch hold of us and twist us about like little pawns until we find it difficult to walk a straight line. If by crook, your impact is felt through projection; that is, You act through another to treat us to a glimpse of life’s crookedness and unpredictability. You put your spin on us and our perspective changes; the straight and narrow is less discernible; boundaries which we count on to keep us safe and sure about our place in the cosmos become confused. Help us to keep a lively spirit at such times! In other days when our vision was less clouded, we spoke of You in stories carefully preserved and told only in sacred spaces at auspicious times. The stories were more than entertainment; they invited the people to reflect on their perspectives, their values. Here’s a prayer: hear us and enlighten us as we seek the essence of our humanity.
Superman is dead. The comic-book merchants of the early 1990s announced that they had him rubbed out, shameless about their motivation, to make even more money on his resurrection someday. This bit of pop-trivia strikes me as a fertile metaphor for our present time. We might say that every super-hero and super-heroine is imperiled today while the Joker has the upper hand. Of course, the high and mighty have always been an endangered species, threatened as they are from above by pigeon droppings, space debris, and lightning, and from below by envious rivals who aim to topple them or fawners underfoot who cause them to trip, as well as by the sheer weightiness of their crowns and egos. But something extraordinary seems to be at large today, working against idealization and undermining the established order. The Trickster Archetype, that representative of inverted values, paradox, and sacred foolishness, dominates our collective value system. A study of mythologies suggests that this is the case in times of transition, whenever the established principle, or high god, is able to be outwitted. What does this mythologizing mean for our modern condition?

We moderns are relatively unconscious of our mythological patterns. Typically we don’t look for archetypal patterns, nor recognize that a Trickster Archetype exists and colors our values. Yet awareness of an archetype who holds dominion over boundaries and who guides us through ambiguity is crucial to our survival. Why crucial? Because acted-out unreflectively, the Trickster is unpredictable and possibly destructive, even sociopathic. Under its influence we can destroy other species and self-destruct as a species. On the other hand, an individual or society which can consciously and deliberately invoke and
integrate the Trickster into its psyche will experience a creative and transforming archetype. We cannot afford to ignore the wisdom of the Trickster, though our culture does not have a name for this wisdom. This book does not make claims to wisdom or to be an answer to society’s ills, nor is it a how-to book about handling tricksters. It is an invitation to contemplate and respect one of the oldest and most powerful archetypes within the collective psyche.

PART I: HEROES, CYNICS, CELEBRITIES, AND TRICKSTERS

So-called facts are fraud
They want us to allege and pledge and bow down to their God.
We need a movement with quickness ...
You are the witness...
To change and to counteract
We have to take the power back.

*Rage Against the Machine* (alternative rock band)

Lyrics of popular music such as these attest to the fact that cynicism, once a flag of the underground or counterculture, is now culture-wide. To know Trickster, we must consider the meaning of idealism and cynicism, of heroes and anti-heroes, of order and anarchy. Perhaps in our world society we have become too cynical to take anyone seriously as a superior hero. No sooner is a hero born than she or he is taken down by the anti-structural gravity of our current culture. In every profession the mighty have fallen; respected business leaders, statespeople, sports pros, men and women of the cloth, the military—found guilty. The word “patriarchy” inspires images of senility. Even the old patriarchal planet, Jupiter, has been bombarded by pesky comets recently.

Cynicism, which archetypal psychologist James Hillman has defined as “that sneer at our star,” makes many of us too wary to want to empower any leader for very long. A public official appointed to investigate allegations of conflict of interest in the highest level of U.S. government described the situation as “cannibalism loose on the land.” Comedians joked about “the failed presidency” even before the inauguration. And the bones of those giants of psychology, Freud and Jung, are being cleaned by their own followers as every rumor of character flaw is amplified. Many believers who had looked to the clergy as spiritual heroes, or to political leaders as men of integrity, feel betrayed when the intimate details of human frailty are exposed in the media.

So whom does society hold in highest esteem? Not clergy, educators, humanitarians, philosophers, artists, poets, dancers, creative scientists; they have little status, at least in America. Those unsung heroes, teachers, our cherished resource, are short-changed and often treated with disrespect or contempt.
Judging by monetary rewards, comics, television hosts, and professional gossips are our valued sages and mentors; our heroes and heroines are sports figures, movie/T.V./pop-music celebrities, and business tycoons. And yet the rewards of honor are brief: envy and contempt are strong, and being in the public eye with all the media attention that ensues is an invitation to hubris—hubris that is tenuous because it is so hard to keep the media’s attention. Bad sportsmanship can find applause, but it is not only sports celebrities who regard themselves as above the law, even to the extent of feeling entitled to harm their rivals. Tonya Harding, the figure skater whose boyfriend whacked the knee of her rival, made news, but she was not the first, nor will she be the last, to use foul play to get ahead.

Deliberately harming or undermining a competitor is something to which no traditionally honorable hero would stoop. In traditional folklore the wisdom-hero is never shifty, but is firmly planted in an ideal that demands honor above material advantage, even above death. But today we walk on the shifting sands of consumerism, where venality, and seldom an eternal value, dominates our tastes. Today “value” more often means money than merit. Once we spoke of the “seedy” elements of society, but now who can define “seedy”? What does it mean that we, the public, can’t hear enough about the shabbiest aspects of the lives of other ordinary citizens, stars, and public servants? Many young people consider ours a society of liars and cheaters, where no values are sacred enough to escape ridicule, and anyone can be bought. If we as a society are becoming more “seedy,” we need to ask what is being seeded.

**Defining the Realms of Heroes and Tricksters**

In a speech to the Radio and Television Correspondents’ Association, humorist Garrison Keillor urged journalists to hold to a standard of truth. He said, “When you slip into the field of fiction and entertainment, then you will be expected to be fascinating. This is going to shorten your careers.” His distinction between the fields of entertainment and serious journalism is cogent, differentiating two different archetypal worlds, represented by such images as the gods Hermes and Apollo. This differentiation of the aegis of Hermes-Trickster, and the aegis of Apollo-solar hero of civilized life, is one we will continue to explore here.

For example, a lack of this differentiation is seen in the blurring of lines between serious art, simple amusements, entertainment, truth, and fiction, creating some artistic and literary nightmares. It is worth pondering why we make celebrities of our criminals and reward them for writing best-selling autobiographies. Or why we have pictures of serial-killers on record jackets and calendars (“Killer of the Month”). Or why opportunistic writers command
attention and riches, not by any artistic talent of their own, but by writing sordid fictional biographies of living celebrities. Is the current state of the arts in danger of becoming a wasteland, as T. S. Eliot predicted, watered down to the point of absurdity? Woody Allen's futuristic movie *Sleeper* suggests so; its leading lady represents a vapid victim of cultural emptiness, reciting shallow verbiage which she passes off as poetry. She illustrates what happens when poorly educated consumers become the arbiters of taste. Of what value the classics when one can study wine-tasting and surfing for college credits? On the other hand, the classics and fine arts are accessible to, and possibly more appreciated by, more people than ever before. Who can decide the standards for culture? Who is wise enough? Who is arrogant enough? Woody Allen and Garrison Keillor are suggesting that we distinguish between serious art (or journalism, government, etc.) and light entertainment. Maybe it is a measure of our cultural flattening that this needs to be said. According to gossip columnist Liz Smith, “No one ever went broke underestimating the taste of the American public.”

In honoring heroic Apollo and Athena, the Greeks delineated divine realms of civilized forms and reason, such as government, medicine, military, and science; there, taking oneself and one’s occupation seriously is expected because life/death repercussions are involved. In such professions, according to the ancients, Hermes plays a significant role as mediator and communicator, but does not usually usurp the responsibilities of these solar deities. While tricksters of mythology often prod and poke at their more serious fellow-deities, they cannot destroy each other’s power. Because in the modern world we lack awareness of these archetypal powers, we do not differentiate their realms, much less respect them. The comedy of Keillor and Allen fosters such awareness, and opens a space in the psyche for exploring: What matters? What is worth fighting for? Where has the passion gone? When do we play?

In the realm of serious professions where the responsibility for human lives is in the hands of a few, a fine line between dedication and arrogance can be discerned. For instance, the Iran-Contra affair divided the U.S. populace into those who saw the plan as a clever and justifiable trick of patriotic dedication and those who saw it as an arrogant betrayal of power. Such divisive judgments can be expected in a democracy, or in any situation where responsibility is given over cautiously, and supposedly respectfully, to those who represent our interests. Our representatives are easily able to rationalize exploiting us “for our own good,” and we may have trouble recognizing when we have been used. A therapist may use his power to violate a boundary and seduce his patient in the guise of providing experience. A professor may exploit the admiration of her student, using him as an easily accessible sexual partner, or plagiarizing his
work to advance herself professionally. A religious leader may manipulate the fear of God in her followers to build a material fortune.

An example of such dangerous actions shocked the American public in 1993 when it came to light that human beings had been innocent subjects of secret research on the effects of radiation between 1944 and 1974, some of it sponsored and funded by the United States government. Was it arrogance that existed in the designers of such research and the political leaders who condoned it? Secretive and scientifically unethical approaches were applied to experiments with powerful unknown chemicals. Such research should have had the blessing of an Apollo, a god who represents clarity and justice. A clear and honest approach to studying radiation might have been more time consuming, but need not have involved lying and harming human beings who could not argue their rights. Devious attitudes, which belong to the playful realm of a Trickster god like Hermes, were wrongly brought to play in the realm of the gods of science.

Trickster gods of mythology are known to bring down the arrogant, but they do not destroy the innocent; in fact, the Trickster is usually depicted as a savior of the innocent. The example of using trickery in the radiation studies underlines our society’s confusion and lack of differentiation of power principles. This kind of example points to the fact that we can still naively give power to irresponsible leaders and then feel betrayed by them, just as the ego can lose all sense of priorities under the sway of archetypal movers that are beyond its control.

In our complicated world, we can no longer afford to encourage our leaders to feel like superheroes, as was done in simpler times and places. Imagine, at one time rulers were not allowed to set foot on the ground because it was feared it would dissipate a transcendent charge they carried from forces on high! To project power onto strong leaders gives a group a feeling of safety and control; the group members need not take the responsibility that freedom entails, but instead experience their power vicariously through the leader.

But today the greatest insult we can lay on a leader is that she holds herself aloof, much less aloft. The power of royal families like Britain’s diminishes with each generation, as envy and resentment grow among the have-nots about the cost of the monarchy. I suspect that resentment grows in the royalty as well, about having to maintain decorum in the face of constant surveillance by the press.

In contrast, Czechoslovakia’s velvet revolution evolved under the leadership of Vaclav Havel, who refused to live in the palace. After becoming president, he continued to reside in his working class digs in downtown Prague. Although to his constituents he was a hero, Havel did not define himself as su-
perior to the common man; he preferred to be the common man. Havel lives out a relationship to authority that seems to include respect for the hermetic as well as the heroic.

In a materialistic society where money attracts power and attention, we can always see ourselves as have-nots, relative to someone else’s acquisitions. Leaders easily fail to evoke a balance of respect and envy and become targets of resentment from those who perceive themselves as have-nots. Nevertheless, envy of the powers of leadership does not seem to be provoking many to clamor for the responsibilities of leadership. Sociologist Amitai Etzioni sees that Americans have a strong sense of entitlement and a weak sense of obligation to their communities. A study has shown that many young adults would expect to be tried by a jury of peers, but the same population said they would be reluctant to serve jury duty! This suggests a disquieting trend toward wanting security and comfort without responsibility, setting the stage for careless but charismatic leaders to step in and fill the vacuum created by an absence of leadership. We want leaders who will not be self-serving and will speak for all, a task which has become impossible except for small interest groups. Unity has become difficult to manage, even for the small group of the family, or the marital pair. With so many philosophies, attractions, and distractions available to us, the ground shifts just as we are about to take a stand. How is commitment possible? Still, races and nations cling to their notions of firm self-identity with all the desperation of those promoting lost causes.

Without foresight of the outcome, we can at least say of the present world that the collective shadow is being unfolded, or, as Billy Graham put it, “Evil is getting worse!” What’s more, goodness is hardly getting better!

If it is hard to be a leader, and even harder to be a hero, how will we govern ourselves? Can a society survive, have viable authority, without heroes? Are we in a hero-lull, or are heroes history? Heroes bind us to the future, remind us of our passions, motivate us to struggle, inspire, raise us from lethargy, rescue us from anarchy. What will happen to the archetypal energy carried by heroes? If death is transformation of consciousness, what is afterlife for sky-heroes, and where do they go to be transformed when there is no underworld? For the fabric of culture is being turned inside-out, so that what was hidden and forbidden is deliberately exposed and scrutinized.

In the absence of an underworld, perhaps a Superman’s hell is to be earth-bound. There is, after all, no privacy. A hero cannot find a decent place to change personas without being intruded upon: Clark Kent would surely have a problem! Phone booths are few and far between; we must conduct our most intimate phone conversations in the open within earshot of every passerby.
And forget anonymity. If the satellite spies or Internal Revenue Service don’t uncover Superman, the advertisers’ hit lists will.

But wait! Isn’t the business suit the power costume of our lifetime? With institutions pandering to “the bottom line,” the purely motivated—dedicated teachers, researchers, clergypersons, medical servicers—are rarely free to work without money-baggers breathing down their necks. Perhaps we haven’t heard the last of Clark Kent. After all, business, commerce, and merchants are in the realm of the Trickster Archetype, so who knows what’s in store for Mr. Kent? And who knows what’s in store for us if Mr. Kent turns his superpowers toward the world market? Would he retain his attitude of altruism or take the approach of looking out for Number One? Would it mean the end of hunger, or the proliferation of Kent Towers, Kent Enterprises, etc.?

If the Hero is earthbound, his vision may become lateral rather than vertical; the distance between peaks is great, but if our Hero resides in the neighborhood, he can see more details of the ordinary. Instead of conquering other universes or acquiring more power, perhaps he could apply his passion to everyday minutiae; in the psyche of the individual and collective, he could repair, teach, encourage, maybe fall in love.

Myths describe Trickster as not a mere polarization over against the hero; indeed, Trickster sometimes collaborates with or even becomes the folk-hero. Neither do the trickster gods typically stand in opposition to the high god as open rebels, except in the Judeo-Christian religions, which we will examine later. Rather, they play off of the dominant authority, and by their contradictions bring issues to light and reinforce the basic structure of the society by their clarification of fundamental conflicts. As folk-hero, the Trickster represents the underdog who prevails in the end. African mythology, like that of Native Americans, tells of the Hare as that cunning aspect of the creator which represents the prevailing of the small and weak in the face of great power. We can appreciate why Brer Rabbit stories were passed along through the generations of American slaves, who enjoyed identifying with the quick little Trickster, who outwitted all the more powerful creatures.

But the typical hero of literature and myth is, unlike Brer Rabbit, a super-being; without conflict, his bravery never wavers, his greed never bests him, his righteousness is laudable. His very existence calls out for a trickster who violates boundaries, ridicules righteousness, and poses ethical questions. No matter how hard the heroic psyche tries to repress it, in the long run, the Trickster will arise to fulfill his purpose: to further awareness and communication between all possible factions.

Hence, as the patriarchal era seems to be approaching decline, bringing unrest and universal turmoil in its wake, we can expect the Trickster to be around
to take up the energy which has been withdrawn from patriarchal investments and vestments. The continual rise of commercialism, communication explosion, relativity of values, prominence of satirical comedy, high energy, fast pace, and preoccupation with sexual imagery of our times characterize the Trickster rising. Whether Trickster’s influence will ultimately be expended creatively or destructively depends on the awareness and intentionality of human beings, us.

**PART II: WANTED: ETHICS, DEAD OR ALIVE**

Trickster gods of mythology move within a divine plan which orients their continual state of flux and gives meaning to their actions. But human beings are not always situated in clear relationship to the divine. The Trickster Archetype, moving through human beings, may be positively oriented with regard to a purposive core, or may be an autonomous, meaningless force which can be destructive. In contrast, when the Hero archetype moves through a human being, it is decidedly oriented to some high god or principle; but heroes also cause destruction when their vision is too narrow or they are overwhelmed by arrogance and need for power. When we identify with the Hero, if we do not also relate well to the Trickster, chances are these two archetypes will meet in us in a troublesome way, often with the Trickster diminishing the Heroic potential. And the anti-heroic psyche is equally vulnerable; without a positive relationship to the Hero, it can exhaust itself and inundate us with a reckless energy. And both Hero and Trickster can be ruthless and heartless unless related to the goddesses who love and protect life, nature, and the inner regions of the psyche.

An example of imbalance is the plight of urban youth, not just in North America, but worldwide. Goaded by images of the rich and famous, feeling unseen as individuals, having a high degree of aggressive energy with no opportunities to apply that energy in service beyond the personal, the youth of big cities resort to having power or getting high as their means of self-gratification. In archetypal terms, young city dwellers are often identified with heroic and ecstatic powers (such as the Greeks attributed to Herakles and Dionysus), unbalanced by lack of exposure to the nature goddesses and to the relativizing influence of the Trickster. When one feels treated like an object, rage ensues. When one feels unseen, being Somebody warrants fool-hardy heroics; but without the perspective of a Trickster god’s larger life-view, the future of such heroics is usually early death or prison.

Lucky is the adolescent who comes under the influence of an adult with a healthy dose of Trickster available in their psyche, for example, a humorous teacher, an ironic coach or cop, a playful adult relative. Exposure to Trickster
INDEX

A

Abram 117
active-imagination 94–95
Adam 121, 126, 136
Adamah 128
addiction 35–36, 100, 158
Adler, Gerald 45
Aeneas 133
Ain 128
Ali, Muhammed 44
Allen, Woody 16
Amazon 121
American Psychiatric Association 40–41, 74
Ananga 135
Ananse 81, 83–85, 111
Anima 11, 25, 32, 100, 126, 182–184, 186–187, 189–192
Animus 32, 117, 184
Antisocial Personality Disorder 41
apartheid 187
Apollo 10, 15–17, 21, 85–87, 100–101
Aquarian Age 25
Arafat, Yasser 50
archetype
identification with 114
Ares 112
Argeiphontes 54, 63
Argus 63–65, 101, 112, 120, 161
Armageddon 24
Armstrong, Karen 109, 158, 160–161, 189
arrogance 43–45
Artemis 54, 107–108, 132
Asase Yaa 79, 83
Asclepius 86–87
Ashanti 79, 83, 103
Astrachan, Gary 63–64
Athena 16, 128–129, 131–132, 171
mirror shield of 61
Atwood, Margaret 132
Augustine, Saint 109

B

Baba Yaga 129
Babette’s Feast (film) 131
Barr, Roseanne 44
Basil the Great 159
Bateson, George 89–90
Baubo 11, 100, 103–104, 113, 136
Beebe, John 116
Beelzebub 121
Begg, Ean 126
Behemoth 22
Beidelman, Thomas 110
Belushi, John 103
Bergen, Candice 132
Berlin Wall 187
Bernhardt, Sarah 132
Berry, Patricia 72
bhakti yoga 135
Bible 52, 119, 161, 192
Binah, Soul of Chokmah 128–129
Black Madonna 108
Bly, Robert 140
Bolen, Jean Shinoda 108–109, 131
Bollingen 140, 141
Borderline Personality Disorder 96–101
Boszormenyi-Nagy, Ivan 47
Brantley, Phillip 50
Brer Rabbit 19, 100
Brimo 54
Brown, Norman O. 184
Buber, Martin 188
Buddha 60, 133–134, 138
Buddhism 134, 137

C
caduceus 85–86
capital punishment 36
cause and effect 102
chakras 102
Chicago, Judy 132
child-care, male role in 176, 187
Chione 54
Christ 23–25, 65, 88, 122, 140, 161–163
Ciccone, Madonna 44
Circe 36
clown
ability to repair psychic damage of 32
as creator of space for ego 43
cognitive styles, masculine and feminine 27–28
Conrad, Joseph 35
Coyote
as trickster 8, 10–11, 42, 43, 100, 103, 142–144
Cretan paradox 89
Cronus 54, 187, 193
Curie, Marie 109
Cyclops 60
Cythera 54

D
Dahmer, Jeffrey 48–49
Dalai Lama 137
Dalletr, Janet 183
Daly, Mary 60
David 119, 173
Dawson, Darrell 91–92
deintegration-reintegration process 37
Demeter 103–104, 113, 130, 132
democracy 29, 53
denny, Reginald 51
denys the Areopagite 161
Derber, Charles 176
Desroche, Henri 50
de Beauvoir, Simone 110
de Sade, Marquis 38, 175
diagnoses, usefulness of 39
Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) 40, 74
Din 160
Dinnerstein, Dorothy 22, 110, 191
Dionysus 20–21, 80, 86–87, 100–101, 187
Disney, Walt 175
Divine Child 75, 80, 123, 175, 182, 184
double-bind 87–89
Dourley, John 123
Dr. Seuss 92
Duncan, Isadora 132

E
Earhart, Amelia 117
Earth Woman, Soul of Coyote 142–145
eating disorders 100
Eckhart, Meister 59
Eden 121, 126
Edinger, Edward 22, 26, 59, 124, 150–151
Eigen, Michael 52, 183
Einstein, Albert 23–24
Eliade, Mircea 85
Elijah 126
Eliot, T. S. 16
Ellis, Albert 91
Enoch 161
Erasmus

Praise of Folly 61
Erickson, Milton 88–89
Strategic Therapy 88
Erikson, Erik 23, 30, 31, 51
Esalen 88
Esau 76, 117, 118
Eshu 11, 111, 148–150
Estes, Clarissa Pinkola 158
Esther 119
ethics 11, 30–32
Etzioni, Amitai 18
Eve 121, 126
evil 155–163
eye-contact
power of 57–59

F

Fa 66–67
false self 76–77
Faulkner, Shannon 53
Fellini, Federico 166–167
Feminine Archetype 10, 108
Feminine Principle 11, 25, 182, 189
Fon society 65–67, 79, 81
fool
as carrier of collective consciousness 33
Fool’s Mass 103, 162
Fordham, Michael 37, 97
Freud, Sigmund 14, 80, 173
G

Gaea 55
Gandhi, Mohandas 23, 27, 31, 51, 53
Giesel, Theodor. See Dr. Seuss
Genetic engineering 28–29
Gestalt Therapy 88
Ghadu 66–67
Gilmansh 125
Gilligan, Carol 27–29, 54, 188
Gnostic 124–125, 163
Goldberg, Carl 158
Golem 160
Gorbachev, Mikhail 50
Graham, Billy 18
Grandin, Temple 36
Great Goddess 123, 127
Greed 22
Greed, unreflective 22–24
Grotstein, James S. 169
Guggenbühl-Craig, Adolf 24

H

Hades 120, 134
Hagar 126
Haley, Jay 90
Hamilton, Edith 55
Harding, Tonya 15
Harp, H. R. 110
Havel, Vaclav 17
as Aphrodite Zerynthia 134
Hephaestus 112–113
Hera 63–65, 80, 93, 120
Heraclitus 156
H erakles 10, 20–21, 55–56, 130, 171
Hermaphrodite 54, 108
as guide of souls 9
as refuge from the double-bind 87
hero 13, 14–15, 17–18, 24, 31–32, 51, 55, 129, 140
undoing by trickster 44
Hero Archetype
present trend of disdain for 10
Hesed 160
Hesiod 106
Hildegard of Bingen 59
Hillman, James 14, 31, 75, 112
Hinduism 134
Hippocratic oath 85
Hitchcock, Alfred 166
Hitler, Adolf 45
Holbein 61
Homer
  Homeric Hymn to Hermes 21, 54
  poem to Herakles 56
homosexuality 187
Hopi culture 32
Horus 59, 130
  Eye of Horus 59
hundredth monkey, story of 26
Hussein, Saddam 45

I
Id 80
Idris 161
Il Bidone (film) 167
Inanna 122
Indiana Jones 93
initiation ceremonies 176
Io 63
Ionesco, Eugene
  Rhinoceros (play) 26
Ireland 187
Isaac 118
Ishtar 131
Isis 10, 106, 128–131, 142

J
Jacob 76, 117–118
Jainism 134
Jayakar, Pupul 135
Jerome, Saint 109
Jesus 23, 80, 120
Job 24–25, 62, 84, 103, 122
John Barleycorn 35
John Paul II, Pope 137, 152, 163
Jonah 121
Joseph 119
Judah 118–119
Judith 119
  Answer to Job 25, 62–63, 122

K
Kali 128
Kama 134–135
Kargu 110
Kast, Verena 141
Keillor, Garrison 15, 16, 26
Kerényi, Karl 7, 87, 106–108, 155
Keser 128–129
Khadro, A-Yu 138
Khetsun Sangpo Rinbochay 137
King, Jr., Martin Luther 27, 44, 79
Kirk, Stuart 40
Kohler, Lawrence 27, 29, 154
Koltuv, Barbara 127
Koran 24, 52, 161
Kornfeld, Jack 137
Kundera, Milan 68–70, 74, 147
  Immortality 68, 147
Kutchins, Herb 40
Kwan Yin 128

L
Laban 118
Laing, Ronald 88
Lao Tsu 129
| Lapine, James | INTO THE WOODS | 33 |
| Leah | 118 |
| Lear, Edwin | 33 |
| Legba | 8, 10, 66–68, 70, 81, 111, 148, 207 |
| Leonard, Linda | 35 |
| Leo XIII, Pope | 24 |
| Lessing, Doris | 132 |
| Levertov, Denise | 132 |
| Leviathan | 22, 121 |
| Liebovitz, Annie | 132 |
| lies | 148–154 |
| Like Water for Chocolate (film) | 131 |
| Lilith, Soul of Satan | 121, 125–128 |
| Lincoln, Abraham | 44 |
| Logos | 125, 128, 163 |
| Lopez-Pedraza, Rafael | 21–22, 87, 94, 112, 167 |
| Lucifer | 160 |
| Lug | 140 |
| Lysistrata (play) | 172 |

**M**

Maat | 128 |
Madanes, Cloé | 90 |
Madonna (singer). See Ciccone, Madonna |
Maher, Bill | 44 |
Maia | 54, 63 |
Malkus | 128–129 |
Mana personalities | 88 |
Manichaeism | 160 |
Marduk | 160 |
Maria Prophetissa | 129 |
Marx, Minnie | 132 |
Masculine Archetype | 108 |

diminishing prominence of | 10 |
Mawu | 10, 65–67, 70, 81, 98 |
Mawu-Lisa | 65, 81 |
Maxwell, Robert | 42 |
Maya | 58, 128 |
Mayet | 65 |
McCabe, Annis | 122 |

**Mead, Margaret** | 110 |
Medusa | 61, 121, 164 |
Melusina, Soul of Mercurius | 121–124, 140 |
Menelik | 127 |
alchemists’ view of | 163 |
as guide of the opus | 9 |
Jung’s treatment as mediator | 9 |
Merlin | 127, 139–142, 144, 152 |
mermaid | as manifestation of rising feminine |
| 108, 122 |
Merton, Thomas | 149 |
Minona | 67 |
Minuchin, Salvador | 91 |
Mithra | 171 |
Mnemosyne | 87, 101 |
Moore, Thomas | 38, 92, 110–111, 175 |
Morrison, Toni | Beloved | 127 |
Moses | 126 |
Mother Archetype | introjection of | 46 |
Mother Meera | 137 |
Mother Teresa | 109 |
Mt. Olympus | 43, 55–56, 60, 133 |
Mudd, Peter | 93 |
Multiple Personality Disorder | 101 |
mutilation | 172, 173 |

**N**
narcissism | 9, 61, 70, 72–75, 78, 81, 154, 176, 185 |
as manifestation of need for hope | 10 |
as Trickster | 78 |
dominance over cooperation of | 24 |
preoccupation with reflection of | 62 |
role of anger in combatting | 60 |
Narcissistic Personality Disorder | 74 |
Narcissus | 57, 60–61, 79 |
Native American | 19, 42, 102, 137, 142, |
Nemesis 60
Nephthys 130
neurosis 40
Niditch, Susan 117, 118
Nietzsche, Friedrich 87, 105
Nitsch, Grandmother Twylah 136
Noddings, Nell 155–156, 159, 188, 189, 190
Norbu, Namkhai 138
Nyame 79, 83–84
nyami 123

O

O’Keeffe, Georgia 132
O’Leary, Hazel 186
Odin 140
Odysseus 35–36, 129
Olds, Sharon 132
Onan 118
Osiris 106, 129–130

P

Pan 54, 108
Paris, Ginette 86, 101, 131, 140
Parsifal 140
Patton, George 44
Paul, Saint 62
peacock
as alchemy’s symbol of unity 64
Pelton, Robert D. 65–67, 78, 81, 83–84, 103, 148–149
Perera, Sylvia 122
Perls, Fritz
Gestalt Therapy 88
Persephone 80, 103, 120, 122, 132
personality disorders 38–39, 41, 45, 48, 54–55, 75, 96, 102, 111, 168
Antisocial Personality Disorder.
See Antisocial Personality Disorder
Borderline Personality Disorder.
See Borderline Personality Disorder

Q

quantum theory 82
Queen of Sheba 126

R

Ra, Eyes of 59
Rabin, Yitzhak 50
Rachel 118
Rage Against the Machine (band) 14, 190
Raiders of the Lost Ark (film) 93
Rational Emotive Therapy 91
Raven
as animal aspect of Trickster 33
Rebekah 117–118
Regardie, Israel 128–129, 151
Reich, Wilhelm 58, 174
Rhea 187
Rice, Anne 132
Rich, Adrienne 132, 186
Rilke, Rainer Maria 148, 154
ritual sacrifice 172
Rosen, John 88
Ruehl, Mercedes 132

S

Sachs, Oliver 36
Sadat, Anwar 50
sadism 52, 92, 168, 175
sado-masochism 167
Sand, George 132
Sarai 117
Sarton, May 132, 164
evolution of 158
Saturday Night Live 26–27
Satyagraha 31
Satyricon (film) 167
Scheherazade 120
Schindler’s List (film) 166
schizophrenia 88
Schlappner, Martin 166–167
Schwartz-Salant, Nathan 77–78, 97–98
Selene 132
Self 25, 43, 45, 49, 53, 70–71, 77–79, 84, 93, 95, 97–98, 100, 127–
128, 139, 168, 170
Semele 93, 98
Sephirah 128, 160
Set 129–130
sex 172–179
Sexton, Anne 186
Shakti 128
shamanism 85–87
Shekina 126–127
Shelah 118–119
Shiva 60, 134, 135
Shulamite 150
Sibyl of Cumae 133
siren 35
Smith, Liz 16, 195
Snider, Clifton 33
sociopathy 10, 35, 42–43, 46–48, 50, 54, 64
Solomon 126, 127
Sophia, Soul of Yahweh 123–125
Soundgarden 155
Sperry, Roger 47
Spielberg, Steven 166–167
Stave, Shirley 127
Stein, Gertrude 132
Suhrwardi, Yahya 161
suicide 55, 102, 176
superego 47
Superman 10, 13, 18–19, 33, 50, 56
Sutker, Patricia 50

T

Tamar 118–119
tantra 135
Tarot deck 62, 151
temenos 129
Tertullian 109
Themis 106
Thoth 11, 65, 128–130, 151
Ti’amat 160
Tolstoy, Nikolai 139
transcendent function 46, 87
transference 77, 86–87, 92–93
tree-spirit
as indication of rising feminine 108
Trickster Archetype 7–11, 13, 19–20,
32, 77, 98, 100–102, 116, 162,
177, 182, 189
Turandot (opera) 77
Typhon 55

U

udjat 60
Ulanov, Ann and Barry 32–33, 43,
113–114, 135
USSR, fall of 149
Utopia 181

V

violence 164–171
Virgin Mary 61, 127
Volavka, Jan
   *Neurobiology of Violence*  47
volcanic-spirit
   as manifestation of rising feminine  108
von Franz, Marie-Louise  25
von Stroheim, Eric  166

W
Wakoski, Diane  132
Walcott, Derek  82
Walker, Alice  164
West, Mae  132
*West Side Story* (play)  171
Whitaker, Carl  91
White, Victor  155–156, 160
Wife of Bath  132
wild woman  108
Willeford, William  33, 61–62
Winnebago Trickster myths  97, 103, 172

Wotan  171
wounding, narcissistic  45

Y
Yahweh  24, 123, 160, 171
   need for reflection of  62–63
Yaqui creation story  57–59, 72
yin-yang  80–82, 115
Yoruba  148
youth, urban  20

Z
Zaharias, Babe  132
Zen  137
Zeus  21, 54, 63–64, 80, 93, 98, 106, 120, 131, 187
Zohar  126, 160
Zoroastrianism  160
Inextricably enmeshed in the life of every woman is a constellation of autonomous energy that Jung called animus, her masculine side. As a woman develops psychologically, animus changes, appearing and reappearing as child or adult, lover or enemy, king or slave, animal or spirit. All these manifestations of animus energy are reflected in her experience of masculinity, both in herself and in others.

*Animus Aeternus* weaves developmental theories from depth psychology with the poetry of women—including Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, Emily Dickinson, Teresa of Avila and Edna St. Vincent Millay—to trace the history and meaning of this lifetime companion, illustrating how animus participates in a woman's life, whether we are conscious of it or not.

Like dreams and active imagination, poetry speaks in images from the soul. In choosing women's poetry as well as their dreams to illustrate the essence of animus, the author adds the immediacy of soul-made truths to the lucidity of her conceptual matrix.

Deldon Anne McNeely received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Louisiana State University and is a member of the International Association for Analytical Psychology. A senior analyst of the Inter-Regional Society of Jungian Analysts, she is a training analyst for their New Orleans Jungian Seminar. Publications include *Becoming: An Introduction to Jung's Concept of Individuation*; *Touching: Body Therapy and Depth Psychology*; *Animus Aeternus: Exploring the Inner Masculine*; and *Mercury Rising: Women, Evil, and the Trickster Gods*.
Also by by Deldon Anne McNeely

Becoming: An Introduction to Jung’s Concept of Individuation
ISBN 978-1-926715-12-4

Becoming: An Introduction to Jung’s Concept of Individuation arose from Jungian psychoanalyst Deldon McNeely's reflections on her lifelong work in psychoanalysis, as well as her sadness at the dismissal by current trends in psychology and psychiatry of so many of the principles that had guided her. The teaching of Jung's psychology is discouraged in some schools, and, while Jung's ideas generate lively conversations among diverse groups of thinkers that are presented in journals and conferences, little of this reaches mainstream psychology.

Dr. McNeely realized the need for a new explication of Jung's process of individuation, one written for twenty-first century readers who have little or no knowledge of Jung. Becoming begins by identifying the historical and philosophical contexts in which Jung was situated and then addressing the question of where this approach fits with the cultural issues of today. Dr. McNeely addresses contemporary issues such as gender identity, addiction, the collective, depression and mental health, and the view from outside a western cultural lens. The volume touches upon topics like the overvaluing of the heroic ego, elitism, the function of introspection in an extraverted culture, and the role of inner resources in self-development. Religious parallels include perspectives on eastern thought, mysticism, spiritual experience, and the development of a “new myth” for modern times. Her chapter “The Opus: Finding the Spirit in Matter” delves into Jung’s description of alchemist Gerhard Dorn’s three stages of individuation.

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What can a silly, chaotic figure like a Trickster offer the world? Jungian psychoanalyst Deldon McNeely argues that Trickster’s value lies in amplifying and healing splits in the individual and collective psyche and in inviting us to differentiate our comprehension of evil. Tricksters, long held as aspects of the divine in many cultures, are an archetype of transition, guides in the journey of individuation and psychotherapy, and mediators between the conscious and unconscious world, that which is either unseen or banished from consciousness. *Mercury Rising* examines Tricksters in light of contemporary cultural trends, including:

- society’s current disdain for heroes and the hero archetype;
- Trickster’s need for mirroring and its implications regarding the narcissistic nature of contemporary culture;
- the Trickster’s role in psychotherapy in terms of truth, reliability, and grounding;
- the relationship between Trickster and the feminine, and the concomitant emergence of feminine values and voices of wisdom; and
- feminine influences on the philosophy of ethics as well as current attitudes toward evil, violence, and sex.

Inasmuch as Tricksters force us to question our sense of order and morality, as well as our sanity, *Mercury Rising* explores the hope that “the Animated, life-affirming Trickster will flourish and prevail over the death-dealing excesses that threaten to annihilate many species, including our own.”

Deldon Anne McNeely received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Louisiana State University and is a member of the International Association for Analytical Psychology. A senior analyst of the Inter-Regional Society of Jungian Analysts, she is a training analyst for their New Orleans Jungian Seminar. Publications include *Becoming: An Introduction to Jung’s Concept of Individuation; Animus Aeternus: Exploring the Inner Masculine;* and *Touching: Body Therapy and Depth Psychology.*

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