

THE YEAR OF THE WOOD HORSE Pt. 2

The Chinese have several types of horses in their mythology—a ‘dragon horse’, a ‘thousand-*li* horse’ and a ‘heavenly horse’. Each of these horses is said to be able to perform stupendous feats of various sorts. The dragon horse is the largest of the three, at heights of up to eight feet tall, has wings and scales like a dragon and can cover a distance of 300 miles in a single day. It can walk on the water without sinking, and it heralds a holy man on the throne. On the whole, it is a signifier of eminent people. It is difficult to tame and of a fierce nature. The thousand-mile horse is also a winged horse and is too swift and elegant to be mounted by any mortal, and is able to cover a distance of 400 miles in a single day (1000 *li* = 400 miles). This horse is representative of geniuses in obscurity who have yet to be mentored to greatness, or of rulers who gather around themselves very talented people and scholars. The heavenly horse is also known as the ‘sweats blood horse’, and there is literally a type of horse from central Asia that is known to ‘sweat’ blood under sustained hard gallop¹—the Ferghana horse. They were the finest mounts known in ancient China. Of the three types of horse, the latter one most closely fits the description of the Wood Horse (see the Wood Horse key phrases at the start of Part 1), although the three types just mentioned can apply equally to any of the Horses of the five elements. As we read the following paragraphs, though, we should keep those key phrases in mind. The Wood Horse is one of the hardest-working types in the Chinese zodiac, and because of that fact, they can produce legendary results.

Past Wood Horse years have produced a litany of firsts: the first mass vaccinations against polio, the first H-bomb test, the first color TV, the first atomic power station, the first nuclear sub, the first Burger King restaurant (Hungry Jack’s in Australia), the first successful kidney transplant, the first battery-operated switchboard, the first minimum wage law (New Zealand), the discovery of the first noble gas, the TV dinner, Coca-cola in bottles, the first Godzilla film (the 1st of 22), Sports Illustrated magazine, the First Continental Congress, the first Birkenstock sandals, one of the first electric cars, and the birth of South Australia. Now, some of these firsts are of great moment, some are tongue-in-cheek, and others are of passing interest, but they were ‘firsts’. Remembering that Wood starts the cycle of the elements, representing new growth and the start of the creative process, and that the Horse is the most yang of the signs, yang producing structure, it is not surprising that we would see firsts in Wood Horse years. It is also perhaps not surprising that some very artistic people are born in those years, Wood being the element that rules artistic creativity.

There were also some other notable events that took place in Wood Horse years: the Dreyfus Affair (spying scandal which divided France—1894), the May Day riots of 1894 (Ohio, US), the Pullman strike (US, 1894), the founding of the international Olympic committee (1894), the patent for motion picture films, the formation of the Bilderberg Group (1954), the unveiling of a Soviet spy ring in Australia (1954), the abolition of slavery in the British Empire (1834), the foundation of the Office of Indian Affairs (1834), the first publication of “New Yorker” (forerunner of “The New Yorker” magazine—1834), the first US dental society, the establishment of Britain’s poorhouses (1834), the isolation of oxygen from air, Labor Day was established as a holiday in the US, the first graduated income tax law (US), a vaccine for diphtheria, the US began keeping records on the weather, Nasser seized power in Egypt (1954), plans were announced to build Disneyland (California), school desegregation began in the US, the European Convention on Human Rights went into effect, “Rock Around the Clock” was released, Elvis Presley’s first commercial recordings were made, the Tonight! Show was debuted, Hurricane Hazel occurred (US), and the V8 engine was introduced, to name a few events.

To get an idea of what is to come this year, we need to take a look back at last year so we have an idea of the most probable outcomes. So, from last year’s Chinese New Year letter, what eventuated out of the predictions made?

- **I expect this year to produce some real landmarks in film.** *Twelve Years a Slave*, *Fruitvale Station*, *Blue is the Warmest Color*, *La Grande Bellezza (The Great Beauty)*, *Gravity*, *Table No. 21*, *Ender's Game* This was a year in film that confronted people psychologically, as we would expect from the Snake. They are only a few from the many that came out this year. While the listed films may not be landmarks in their own right, they are notable for their reflections of happenings in the public domain and for their addressing of unresolved public consciousness. There is a quote from one of them that is quite striking, and which is reflective of the Snake: "To travel is very useful, it makes the imagination work, the rest is just delusion and pain. Our journey is entirely imaginary, which is its strength."² The films in 2013 confronted people's sense of entitlement, the theme of survivorship in a hostile world, LGBT relations (which were big political and social issues in 2013), and what we imagine our lives to be, in distinction to the realities of our lives.

- **In politics I expect to see legislation that reflects more the will of the people. It will be a year of statesmanship rather than brinkmanship and brute force.** One of the clearest examples of this is the handling of the Syrian civil war, along with the Iranian nuclear issue. Statesmanship prevailed in both of these instances over the use of military force. In another instance, and considering the empowerment of women, India began to overhaul its sexual offences laws after public outcry over several high-profile rape cases in that country. There are ongoing debates over gay marriage laws in US states and other countries. Egypt has just ratified a new constitution, which speaks of equality and secularism, but it is still being debated.

- **In religion, it will be fascinating to see what happens with the Catholic Church, now that the Pope is resigning.** We all know what happened there—Pope Francis. He is stressing the need for the Church to focus more upon the need for tenderness, humility and compassion, encouraging interfaith dialog, rather than the Church's past over-focus on abortion, contraception and homosexual acts. Francis is a champion of the poor and the needy.

- **In science I expect to see some cures for some of our more dreaded diseases, like cancer and AIDS.** We saw the development of lab-grown organs, cures for HIV, Usher Syndrome, leukemia, and leukodystrophy, as well as a cure for the scourge of malaria.

- **...a resultant lessening of the health care burden we face in the West, especially in the US.** See the comments about 'big pharma' below.

- **Now, the biggest revolutions I see will come in the form science and technology, as well as economic legislation.** The Year of the Black Snake was a bumper year in that regard. Consider the following: Our ability to begin investigating 'negative temperatures' (below absolute zero), the first-ever brain-to-brain interface, the discovery of the Higgs boson, the 'transcriptor', a robotic ant colony, a new lithium-ion battery thousands of times more powerful than current battery technologies, the multi-lens digital camera (gigapixels, not megapixels), a form of magnetic graphene that could revolutionize the electronics industry, the "cheetah-cub robot" as well as some amazing advances in robotics on the whole, microscopic batteries, a table-top particle accelerator, optical fiber using 'twisted light' (with data transfer rates of 1 Tb/sec), a hand-held X-ray vision device enabling us to see through walls, 3D printing of liquid metal that retains its shape, flexible sensitive electronic skin, new physics beyond the standard model, computational quantum teleportation, Ununpentium 115—a new element, the fastest-spinning man-made object (600 million rpm—that's a rotation rate of 10 million times a *second*), major breakthroughs in nano-sensing, a mind-controlled prosthetic leg, the first fusion reaction that produced more energy than it used, the finding of a fundamental reason for sleep (brain detox), the discovery of the thousandth known exoplanet, a method that shrinks nuclear waste by

90%, the world's smallest FM radio, a battery electrode that heals itself, the discovery of undersea regions that can store huge volumes of CO₂, a self-regulating artificial heart, water vapor on the dwarf planet Ceres, and the naming of a new dwarf planet—Varda, as well as the autonomous (driverless) car. As for legislation, we saw the economic sequester in the US, as well as a deal that ended it, the rollout of Obamacare, which affects people financially, and ongoing debate in the US over the minimum wage.

- **The power of women will be increased...**2013 was a year of record enrollment of women in the halls of power, even though the numbers are still far below being representative of the world populace. For instance, in the US, there are now 98 female members of congress, but that is still only roughly 18% of the total number of members of congress. There is now a woman in charge of the US Federal Reserve (Janet Yellen), there are several female heads of state in South America, and we may well see a woman as the next president of the US. There are a number of prominent US cities where women have taken mayoral postings. Still, the US lags behind other countries in the political empowerment of women. Forty-seven countries have had a female head of state in the past 50 years, while the US has yet to elect one. Australia ranks 43rd in the percentage of women in parliament, ahead of the US at 79th place, which is tied with Albania at 79th. It may be of interest to note that, of the world rankings in this regard, African and Nordic nations are the clear leaders, taking the top ten spots, along with Cuba and Nicaragua. Rwanda tops the list at 64% in their lower house of parliament. It should be noted, though, that these were not big increases. The US did not make any real overall progress in electing women to national office, for example. There is still a long way to go with gender equality in politics.³

- **We may well see the beginning of the waning of influence in 'big pharma' with a resultant lessening of the health care burden we face in the West, especially in the US. Again, this too will take years, but a beginning will be made this year.** This year began the rollout of the Affordable Care Act, or 'Obamacare' as it is called in the US, amidst much controversy. America still chafes at the idea of universal health care for its citizens, with people there still under the illusion that it would somehow wreck the country and introduce socialism, or that it would lessen the quality of health care. I hear this again and again in conversations with people there. Still, a step in the direction indicated has been taken, whether it goes the distance or not. This is going to be a painful process in the US. Specialists' fees are astronomical, and people get outrageous bills for procedures that should only cost a fraction of what they are, and which in many cases are needlessly performed. Insurance often does not kick in until a large deductible has been paid out, and even after that, the payments made by the patient can be crippling. I have seen this firsthand. People in the US may think things are bad now with regard to health care, but the real storm has yet to come. This will be one of the prime areas where labor and capital will see equilibration in coming years, but it will be a rocky path. Still, a small step has been taken, which may well begin inroads into the huge costs associated with medicine, especially in the US.

- **The major advances in technology will come through the realm of media and in medicine.** I should have qualified this statement at the time with the word 'some', but in that regard: the 3D printing of a living artificial ear from collagen, a 'protein passport' able to bypass the body's immune system, the 'spider sense' body suit, discovery of the mechanism by which certain brain cells can survive being starved of oxygen, the discovery that sleep loss can alter the behavior of genes, the discovery of genetic links to autism, ADHD, bipolar disorder, depression and schizophrenia, the release of the details of the Human Connectome Project, development of a breathalyzer-style test that can quickly and easily test for stomach cancer, a pioneering cloning technique that eliminates the short-lived nature of clones, development of the 'smelling screen',

the ability to illuminate up to 100 biomarkers (very useful for detection of cancers and other diseases), reduction of the Down syndrome phenotype in mice, a potential cure for gray hair, the first cloning of human embryonic stem cells, the curing of blindness in mice using stem cells, the use of DNA to assemble a transistor from graphene, the first artificial pancreas, the discovery of a chemical that prevents the death of brain cells from prion disease—and, for the top 10 from MIT —computers that learn (artificial intelligence is finally getting smart), self-destructing text messaging (privacy), prenatal DNA sequencing, ‘additive manufacturing’ (3D printing), interactive robotics, memory implants, smart watches, ultra-efficient solar power, big data from cheap phones, and supergrids (power transmission). These are but a few.

- **...we will still see some amazing things this year – mysteries revealed.** As if the preceding is not amazing enough. The discovery of fragments of the ancient ‘lost’ supercontinent of Rodinia under the Indian Ocean, discovery of the lost city of Ciudad Blanca in Honduras, the discovery that there were European settlers in America as far back as 400-600 CE (1000 years before Columbus), a giant circular stone structure in the Sea of Galilee (where did *that* come from?).

The past forms the foundation upon which the future is built. Given all the preceding, then, what do I see coming in 2014? What inferences could we take from the above? To begin with, it is typical that scientific discovery leads to commercial application, at least eventually. For instance, I expect to see our understanding of matter to change fundamentally this year in some ways. Now that we can produce temperatures below absolute zero, now that the Higgs boson has been discovered (although there is still some discussion about that), now that we are on the verge of having commercially viable quantum computers, now that we are well on the way to having computers that can think for themselves rather than needing our laborious input, now that fusion reactors are another step closer to reality, now that we are just on the verge of verifying the existence—of actually being able to sense—dark matter in the universe, now that the CERN accelerator is getting ready for a major amp-up—all of this coupled with amazing advances in robotics, what will all this reveal to us? It will only take a brilliant mind or two to put all of this together somehow, and who knows what can eventuate?

A door into the mysteries of the very fabric of our universe was cracked open last year, if we could realize it. We have peeked into the box, in a manner of speaking. Whether that box will turn out to be a Pandora’s box or a treasure chest is up to us. It will probably be a little of both. I have talked about it before, but nearly every technology that we used to marvel at in the old Star Trek TV series is now within our grasp. We have quantum tractor beams now, quantum cloaking technology, machines that can print whatever we want—food included—mind transfer, medical tricorders, antimatter, a whole plethora of extra-solar planets to investigate, phasors, ‘photon torpedoes’, voice-activated computers with which we can converse, computers that can compute for themselves—the only thing really not yet within our grasp scientifically is the warp drive, but we will get there. We have to have some fundamental shifts in our understanding of matter, energy and space itself before we can make inroads there, but we are quickly headed in that direction. Are we moving too fast with our technology? I don’t think so. I think it has followed a natural progression. Finances are a big determining factor in whether a technology becomes viable or not, and the public is the major determining factor of finance. If not for public demand, we would not even have the computing technology we have now, for instance. And in these days, it is increasingly difficult to keep a secret, so what was once only the domain of secret installations are quickly becoming public domain.

Watch the media for the coming technologies, for future trends. If 2013 produced powerful films, then 2014 will produce powerful performances in film. The film itself may not be iconic, but the performers will shine. *On the Waterfront* (1954) was such a film, for instance, and helped to make

Marlon Brando a cultural icon, and for which he won an Oscar. I expect this to be another big year in film and media. It will be the 60th birth year for the Wood Horse actors listed in Part 1. The 60th year is a sort of coming-of-age year with regard to one's place in society, and begins the time of mentoring, the time when one begins to pass along the wisdom of one's years to the upcoming generations and to society at large.

In politics this will be a big year for immigration reforms. Migration remains a contentious issue in many countries, but it is a simple fact of human life as people seek better lives for themselves and their families. The Horse loves movement, and in the last Wood Horse year we saw the full implementation of the International Organization for Migration, initially established in 1951 to help resettle people after WWII, but it was fully empowered in 1954. There are fights brewing in the US congress over immigration reform, which will come to a head this year, especially now that Obama is making noises about using executive orders to get things moving and possibly sidestepping a deadlocked congress. Europe and Australia have ongoing public debate over the issue, but I expect to see legislation in many countries this year on the topic of immigration reform, or perhaps of the hardening of boundaries.

The topic of spying will receive larger attention this year, too, as Wood Horse years have produced several high profile spying scandals. Whereas the Snowden incident in the US has highlighted the antics of the NSA in recent years, we are likely to find similar scandals in other countries, or concerning them. These events will bring about strong public reactions and possibly legislation to shore up privacy. Don't expect to see moves toward more transparency in government, though. Horses look after their own, and the personal dynamics of a sign are reflected in the events of the associated year. The Petrov Affair (Australia) of 1954 is a case in point, which caused violent anti-communist demonstrations at Sydney Airport and lingering conspiracy theories as to the alleged involvement of the Menzies government in the affair, although it was later concluded that Menzies (who was a Liberal) had told the truth through the entire episode. Some of the records in that case were sealed away, and the Labour government did not win power again until 1972. What the Snake likes to conceal or conduct behind the scenes, the Horse will bring to light. The Horse and the Sheep are polarizing signs, and strong ones at that, and we will see some culminating and deciding influences in political and social polarization in the next two years, as well as public displays of prejudices and us-and-them attitudes.

Expect to see start-ups of new enterprises this year based upon the discoveries made in the years immediately passed. Robotics should get a boost this year, as well as materials technologies. The middle classes should benefit out of the next two years, too, with further legislation on wages and labor rights. It is a curiosity of Wood Horse years that, although they can produce strong rulers and tend toward the conservative in politics, they do introduce legislation that favors worker's rights and wage laws. Perhaps it is a subconscious recognition of the hard-working nature of the populace that moves politicians to act on those areas. More to the point, perhaps it is also because this will be an election year in many countries, with congressional elections taking place in the US in particular.

Media icons will be born this year, and some long-lasting series will debut in the media. The Wood Horse was born for the camera and visual arts of all sorts will benefit from this year. Conservation movements and all outdoor activities are favored this year and next. People will be able to exert their influence more this year than in recent years. Expect some strong leadership actions to take place this year, as well as strong people stepping forward. It should be a year of strong growth and decisive action, so whatever your sphere of influence, step up and be heard. Put forward a new initiative, be enthusiastic and be prepared to work hard on it. Gather clever people around you, whether you are clever yourself or not. If you do, then success should be yours. Your enthusiasm will win over the nay-sayers. So, whether you are a Dragon Horse, a Thousand-mile Horse or a

Heavenly Horse—whether you are larger than life, able to do extraordinary feats, or able to sweat blood in the pursuit of your goals—this is your year, and it will be a year in which hard work and communion with like minds have the capacity to produce great works. Those works will go into the pages of history.

This is a year to act courageously. Take the reins of this year and ride off into the history books. You can do it, you know? Let this year inspire the indomitable spirit that you are, and let your effort be your joy. I look forward to hearing about your exploits and your projects. I have a few in mind for myself. May we all inspire each other this year to great things and noble ambitions!

Happy New Year, Everyone!

Malvin

30 Jan 2014

References can be furnished on request. Scientific and technological references can be found on the science subheadings on the Wikipedia 2013 page.

¹ The blood sweating is believed to be caused by a parasite, a type of nematode, that would cause blood to get mixed with the sweat of the horse. See: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferghana_horse

² From *La Grande Bellezza*, a quote from *Journey to the End of the Night* (*Voyage au bout de la nuit*), by Louis-Ferdinand Céline (1934).

³ www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm