

“Dreams Frequently Color and Deepen My Day”: An Interview with Susan Rowland

Robert S. Henderson

In this interview, Prof. Susan Rowland reveals how she became acquainted with Jungian psychology and how it has helped her cope with the fear associated with her fundamentalist Christian background. She describes the importance of the International Association for Jungian Studies, for which she has provided leadership, and she discusses the salient role of academia and scholarship in deepening our knowledge of Jung. Dr. Rowland explores aspects of her trip to Africa, her understandings of the feminine and its contribution to leadership, and the current state of psychology and psychiatric medication. Finally, she discusses the importance of dreams in her life and her literary students' impressions and appreciation of Jung.

Susan Rowland is a Professor of English and Jungian Studies at the University of Greenwich in the United Kingdom and a leader in the International Association for Jungian Studies. She received her first degree at Oxford University in English literature, and later received her Ph.D. in Jung and literature from the University of Newcastle. She has been a contributing author to three books: C. G. Jung and Literary Theory (Palgrave, 1999), Jung: A Feminist Revision (Polity, 2002), and Jung as a Writer (Routledge, 2005), and she is an author of numerous papers and articles. An introductory work on Jung and the humanities (called, simply, Jung: A Beginner's Guide) was published by Oneworld in October 2009. She and her husband, Gerald Livingstone, Ph.D., live near Greenwich, England.



Julie Heffernan, *Self-portrait as Thing in the Forest II*
Oil on canvas, 64 × 52 inches, 2002

Rob Henderson (RH): How did you become interested in Jung?

Susan Rowland (SR): Like, I suspect many people, my first encounter with Jung was through *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (MDR), and it answered both very personal and intellectual concerns.

I arrived at Oxford University when I was aged 19, the first person in my family to go into higher education. I was 3 weeks away from a serious breakdown! Somewhere in that first term I managed to make an important friend, Edmund Cusick, who lent me a copy of MDR.

Coming from a background of fundamentalist Christianity, I was struggling with religion as something I could not bear and I could not bear to do without. Jung made sense to me on a feeling as well as thinking level.

I became aware of the *Collected Works* and continued to think about Jung as an undergraduate studying literature. There was little chance to include that focus in my degree work. However, Jung came into my academic work when I realized that he answered a problem of fear that I encountered doing a literature master's at the University of London.

Previously, I had been off sick from Oxford and applied for unemployment benefit (those were the days!—students cannot now). While enduring the long wait in the office, I read Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and was absolutely terrified by it.

When my M.A. studies forced me to consider Lessing again, I realized that Jung could be a “container” for both my emotions and my intellect by providing a framework with which to understand how Lessing's long life's work fits together. I guess this has been the pattern for my work from then on: something powerfully emotional and intuitive that I try to spread out on paper—put into words—in an intellectual, thinking-type way.

From the M.A., my excursions into Jung were confirmed by the Ph.D. topic I chose several years later. It was the later 1980s in Britain and nuclear terror and protest were at their height. I had myself been involved in anti-nuclear protests. So what came forward and gripped me profoundly was the way some contemporary novels were using Jungian ideas to explore and ameliorate nuclear fears. That became my thesis topic and then my first book, *C.G. Jung and Literary Theory*.

I have made a point of mentioning Edmund Cusick at the start here because he remained a treasured friend in discussing Jungian matters. Edmund became a wonderful poet, and I was delighted to invite him to the Jungian International Association for Jungian Studies conference held at my university in July 2006. He read from his first solo collection of poems, *Ice Maidens*. Edmund died very suddenly at the beginning of 2007. So I want to pay tribute to him here. I think the Jung in his life just made his greatness of spirit more visible.

RH: What problem of fear did you feel that Jung answered for you during the time at the University of London?

SR: I am going to have to explain this carefully. Jung turned psychic chaos into culture in a very specific way. Jung, whether through analysis or through reading his ideas, etc., is about transforming the intolerable into a structure that can be tolerated. Mostly we call this individuation; it could also be termed *enculturation* because it usually entails a process through which personal material acquires a relation-

ship to archetypal symbolism in culture. Specifically, I am talking about the act of reading causing mental distress.

The Golden Notebook by Doris Lessing (1962) was a bestselling feminist novel in the United Kingdom. Many readers found it life-changing. I found it so disturbing that I remained terrified of it from the age of 20 to 29, when Jung helped me to contain that fear. Basically the novel is about women breaking down in the context of social assumptions about sex, marriage, and children that are themselves cracking up. Ultimately, the way to cope with the visceral impact the novel had on me was to see that it had a place in a larger scheme.

The key was Lessing's *Canopus in Argos* science fiction series written in the early 1980s. These novels provide a macrocosm of which *The Golden Notebook* was a microcosm. To put it another way (in a way I can only see now, in the 21st century!), *The Golden Notebook* resembles Jung's MDR in covering similar material from a similar point of view. *Canopus in Argos* is like *Answer to Job* in covering the same material from the point of view of the self. (I write about this change of perspective in Chapter 2 of *Jung as a Writer*.)

Jung allowed me to see, even then, that *The Golden Notebook* was not just an invitation to chaos . . . that however painful, it was possible to find a structure of ideas and symbols to contain the chaos. That is something I keep on learning!

RH: What was it like for you with your fundamentalist Christian background to encounter Jung?

SR: It was an enormous relief! Religion, God, did not have to be a strangulation of the soul. Indeed, I discovered that it was possible to have a living

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spirituality that was not canceled or killed by doubt. And to put it in an extraverted way, it is possible to want to be in touch with the sacred without condemning other religions, and to be able to counter doctrinal rejections from others. Jung's view of religion was the kind of relief that is water falling in the desert!

RH: You have been involved in the creation of the International Association for Jungian Studies. Why was the organization founded, and what are some of your hopes for it?

SR: As far as I understand it, IAJS was created to foster exchanges between Jungian analysts and academics like myself who research Jung, but who are not clinicians, on an equal footing. I was not present at the origins of IAJS. That achievement, I believe, is owed to Renos Papadopoulos, Andrew Samuels, and the International Association for Analytical Psychologists (IAAP) Academic Sub-Committee. I think that they realized that Jungian scholarship was inhibited by not having a forum where everybody could participate by virtue of their academic work and not because of any other criteria. In fact, it seems that two-thirds of IAJS members are clinicians but only a few of them are analysts. So we are bringing together Jungian scholars who had not previously shared the same space.

I got involved because the starting point, the birth, if you like, was a moment at the end of the IAAP Academic Conference in Essex 2002 when a group of us got together in a corridor. I allowed myself to be nominated as the person to whom e-mails should be sent to start the process of setting up the organization! Yes, I knew it was the start of something bigger than I could handle. Still, we ended up with a wonderful Steering Committee and then a first class elected Executive Committee. With them, I was Chair of IAJS for three years, from 2004 to 2006.

You ask about hopes for the organization. I suppose I have three. When we started, it was evident that two issues would recur: What is the relationship of clinicians and academics, including the situation where both roles are contained in the same person? Secondly, what is Jungian studies? My hopes are that IAJS can be a space—particularly lived out in e-mail, seminars, and academic conferences—wherein the relation between healer and researcher can be creatively explored. I hope that IAJS does not just present Jungian studies to the world, but continues to reinvent it. Thirdly, I would like IAJS to offer something in and of itself. I would like the organization to be a *temenos*, a container, from which new and even numinous things emerge.

These very idealistic thoughts need tempering, I know. They need to recognize the shadow. Do you think Jungians might be better dealing with the personal shadow than an organizational one? Before you ask, those closely involved with IAJS have felt the shadow. Various individuals have bravely

bodied it forth as IAJS went out into the world and held major academic conferences with the IAAP (Texas in 2005 and Zurich in 2008) and on our own (Greenwich in 2006 and Cardiff in 2009). Perhaps my own large ambitions for IAJS have been part of the problem—for the truth is that I have not been able to get away from wanting IAJS to be a maternal source of healing energy for an academic culture that I believe to be arid and stuck. Watching it now, I can see how links have been made and people are starting to work together who might otherwise never have discovered each other. That should be enough, I think.

RH: Do you worry that some people make Jungian psychology too academic—or not academic enough?

SR: Let's start with the word *worry*! Making things too academic or not academic enough (both are possible) in Jungian psychology is a problem when knowledge is used as power. If someone is “not academic enough” and pulling Jung off the shelf to say that this is absolutely how the psyche works and no one can question it, or equally, that this man, Jung, is a nutter and his name should never be uttered, that is a problem if used to assert personal, institutional, or theoretical power. Or, it might be used merely to attack valuable imaginative and caring work with the psyche.

Similarly, the “too academic” scholar sees Jung as entirely contained by one or more disciplines or as merely a link in a great chain of thinkers in European thought. What is problematic here is that what is distinctive in Jung, and what is undiscovered, is entirely smothered by knowledge conventions. Being “too academic” means letting one's academic discipline entirely eat up Jungian psychology so that nothing valuable remains. For instance, if I wanted to be too academic I would treat Jung's texts entirely as literature and berate them for not falling into the rules of specific prose genres. Fortunately for me, I am interested in the unconscious and chaotic margins of English, where Jung fits very well as an Other to literature whose particular qualities can be recognized. Indeed, I would argue, such a careful use of the margins of a discipline may make distinctive qualities visible for the first time.

Another way of being too academic would be if a historian alleged that only the historical research about Jung—only the parts of Jungian psychology subject to historical validation—can be regarded as real knowledge. A philosopher might hold the same attitude. Being too academic sometimes means insisting that *academic* means that knowledge is always conscious and ordered and comprehensible. Disciplines have an unconscious and even more so the margins between disciplines. For Jung this is especially important because his work is all about approaches to knowledge at the margins of consciousness.

So the overly academic approach is one that squashes the unconscious out of Jungian psychology as a body of knowledge and dismisses it as a way

to the psyche in individuals. It is no good, in my opinion, in having a therapy of the ego's relations to the unconscious if the therapy itself is trapped in a discourse pretending to be perfect truth. If Jungian psychology pretends to be truth because it refuses to look at the context of knowledge from which it came or to which it now speaks (not academic enough) or because it becomes totally transparent and validates knowledge as psychology or philosophy, then it will have killed its most vitalizing capacity: to see its own unconsciousness.

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I have recently become very engaged by Ann Baring and Jules Cashford's *The Myth of the Goddess*. One conclusion of that remarkable work is a realization that we are formed by two creation myths of consciousness: a sky father myth of separation (becoming patriarchal monotheism) and an earth mother myth of connection

and body (still visible at the margins and as animism). The dynamic of exchange between sacred transcendence and sacred immanence is a key aspect of our culture. I wrote about it in Jung's writing in Chapter 7 of my book, *Jung as a Writer*. It is crucial here as well. Be too academic about Jung and he is drowned in the academy, not even present as immanence. Be not academic enough and Jungian psychology soars above as a cruel and separate god without human connection, body, and limits.

We need to take Jung in relation to the academic, but not as subject to it. That way, we allow Jung's immanence to shine forth within our disciplines and his transcendence to be modified and made ethical in clinical practice and scholarship with a connection to the earth.

RH: You have recently returned from a trip to Africa, where you attended the IAAP Congress and also made a safari into the jungle. As a student of Jung and as someone interested in the unconscious, what are some of the things you learned?

SR: I was struck by different types of knowledge. For example, I knew that African cultures had many complex and sophisticated healing rituals. Some of them are not too distant from analysis. Yet seeing presentations about symbols used in African and Jungian healing, at the Cape Town conference, while being conscious of being *in* Africa—that was something else! I knew something of Jung's travels in Africa. But prior to the conference I went on a wilderness trail, and Blake Burleson, author of *Jung in Africa*, was also one

of the participants. Having had that wonderful experience of walking, waking, and wondering in the African bush made all the difference to watching Blake's presentation in Cape Town on faded film footage of Jung's journey. What difference am I talking about? Well, I suppose it was a certain wholeness of orientation towards the material—a sense of more than one reality to what was being presented. Regarding the quality of experience, there was a paradoxical sense of being more immersed and more excluded. The wilderness trail is meant to be an immersion, and it was. I learned about the sheer difficulty and necessity of giving myself to the touch of nature and to the activities of the small group making the trip possible.

The conference was fascinating and quite a *temenos*. The Cape Town Convention Centre, where the conference took place, is designed to be a bright bubble ignoring the earth and South Africa's past. It definitely did not have enough earth for me, as my vertigo was worse there than in any other building! The Convention Centre is a very high glass box with internal glass walls and transparent floors. Outside we were warned off wandering around Cape Town, especially at night. What was so good about the conference was hearing from prominent South Africans in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and we also heard of the excellent work done by the local analysts in helping the underprivileged.

However, it did feel as if the society still suffered from its deep wounds. That was a reality we could not compass, just as we could not really get a sense of indigenous cultures, from our perspective of layers and layers of estrangement from living close to the land. I had a sense on the wilderness trail and at the conference of the sheer psychic difference of national cultures. On the trail I was the only British person among Americans and South Africans. I felt psychically closer to the South Africans, which made me acknowledge the “unconscious” of being British in Africa, the legacy of imperialism.

I suppose I see the conference in retrospect as all about the possibility of healing deep personal and collective trauma, whatever people thought they were presenting on. I brought to it, saw it through the lens of, my “faith,” if you like, that experiences such as the wilderness trip could heal my own personal pain. And that faith, though I claim no miracles, was not betrayed.

RH: If you had a chance now to spend several hours alone with Jung, would you welcome it, and what are some of the things you would enjoy discussing with him?

SR: My very first reaction is negative, fearing that Jung would be dismissive of a woman. Then I realize how silly that is. And I remember my dream. You know, I think someone should collect and publish dreams of Jung by Jungians! About two years ago at a very difficult time for me I dreamt I went on a visit to Jung. He was very, very old, so old that no one knew whether

he was wise beyond our understanding or had lost his mind. He said to me: “Let’s play”!

I find that dream enormously encouraging, so here goes my imaginary visit. Firstly, I would ask him about war in the 21st century, and I feel him full of energy and things to say about war and terrorism. I think he would be transfixed by the reality of suicide bombers and see them as having been eaten by the psyche. He would be respectful of Islam, and he would now be studying the medieval Islamic scholars. He would be thinking of war as the result of mass psychic failure on the part of powers in the West. Probably he would find it difficult to discern what symbolism could be used to bind our multicultural states. Maybe, he would admit to being confused.

Then I would ask him about nature and global warming. I would ask him about Wolfgang Giegerich’s argument that there is no psychic investment in nature any more; nature is over for the West. I expect Jung to say, yes, Giegerich is correct, but what about those non-Western cultures in places like Africa that are still bonded to the land? In a global culture, *their* psychic reality counts. Moreover, maybe even more crucially, there is the “other” within. Alchemy and the arts preserved some of the orientation to nature through centuries of industrial revolution and capitalism. They still do. The picture is one of dominants and marginals, not an obliterating monotheistic wasteland.

I would ask Jung about that potent force in today’s social experience: the popular culture of Facebook, texting, the Internet, film, television, music etc. Would he agree with luminaries such as Joseph Campbell and Don Fredrickson that the psyche is diminished by them? Or is the creativity of the psyche greater than the overwhelming powers of money and technology? I think Jung would be optimistic—but it is a tough one!

And I would say, Professor Jung, how has it been in the underworld for you? Have you continued to individuate after death? Have you carried on talking to Emma and Toni Wolff? Do you see their point of view now? Do you feel less mistrustful of women? Is there a different kind of psyche “down there”? I am thinking of some late poems by W.B. Yeats. There is one in which the great warrior and lover, Cuchulain, sits down with fellow shades and learns to sew his shroud. There is one where the old poet renounces “the lion and the woman and lord knows what” in favor of “the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.” And then I would ask him what he wanted to teach me.

RH: I have noticed that in some of your writings you reference the well-known German Jungian Wolfgang Giegerich, who has presented some wonderfully challenging ideas about Jung. What are some of the salient points Giegerich has contributed that have touched you?

SR: I am a great admirer of Wolfgang Giegerich’s work, although I have only read a proportion of it and only in English. I was enormously struck by his argument that the soul is caught up in great historical and cultural shifts.

Specifically, that there is no relationship to nature any more because the soul of Western modernity is bonded to capitalism, technology, and money. Crucially this argument depends upon the notion that the dominant Western capitalism will subsume the marginal—those cultures outside the heroic and triumphant narrative of the Colonial West.

I discovered a fascinating short piece by Giegerich, called “Killings,” in *Spring* that seems to offer a myth of origin for Giegerich’s linear history. “Killings” talks about the soul of early man being formed by hunting, killing, and blood. The soul of early woman is different since her role is with baskets not spears. Yet it is the consciousness of the spear-carrier, not the basket wielder, that becomes the paradigm for the culture. This essay is a perfect counterpart to one published earlier by the Jungian science fiction writer, Ursula K. Le Guin, called “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction.” She

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delves back into mythic time and focuses upon the basket carrier. Her argument is that, although the spear thrower is the dominant paradigm for consciousness—the cultural form of the carrier bag, of containing, gathering, putting into a relationship with many items—this contribution to the evolution of culture does not get subsumed. Rather, the carrier bag remains marginal and yet vital to the health of society. Its necessary role becomes ever more obvious as the heroic spear-carrying science develops into those pointed weapons of mass destruction.

I am with Le Guin and also Jung, who had a strong sense of the potency and necessity of the marginal. In a postmonotheistic age we are accustomed to dominant discourses that model truth as oneness or one thing. Yet even our cultures of masculine monotheism were not able to expel the other as femininity, body, earth, images of the earth mother. For Jung the “other” is temporal and spatial. Unlike Giegerich, I think Jung would look to the temporal other of the part in our psyches and as our psyches meet past consciousness in art. He would also look to our spatial “other” in cultures not wholly dominated by capitalism. These others may look too weak to provide a counterweight to the dominant culture, but they are the visible expressions of the powerful otherness within, and integral to, the mainstream.

RH: I find it common in our patriarchal culture that women who become leaders usually are not guided by the feminine. I have heard them described as men dressed as women. What do you think a female leader who is led by her feminine side is like?

SR: I have not seen many women in leadership positions up close. In my workplace of a university, it seems to me that women struggle with the role. Some are Medusa and freeze the blood. Some do use sexuality, which is usually effective with many men. Mrs. Thatcher used a version of the mother archetype. She was the nanny, which was quite terrifying for the upper-class British males surrounding her in government.

When I was Chair of IAJS I was not really conscious of being in a leadership role. I deliberately cultivated that unconsciousness because I have a morbid fear of being bullied. So I made myself relatively invisible or the personification of the group, the Executive Committee. On the other hand, I did have to develop an archetypal voice to speak to IAJS members via e-mail. When I left the position, someone said that I had a wise old woman element, and no one could ask for better than that! Also I did a form of the type test and was described as a collegial facilitator, or some such.

Keeping my leadership repressed to myself was ultimately very dangerous and provoked a breakdown in my last year as IAJS Chair. But to further answer your question, here is a posting I have just made to an IAJS seminar on the feminine:

Dear all,

I know this is going to sound even more self indulgent than usual, and my only excuse is that I have been caught by this notion for a number of years. I cannot believe that knowledge is a field, a level battlefield upon which we draw up lines such as “the feminine” and slug it out until the last intellectual flagpole gets planted on the bodies of weaker ideas.

No, knowledge is a planet upon which we must build and re-build until we create a place for us all to live free. It means coming to terms with very different terrain, digging into the underworld and climbing the mountains and learning to traverse the forests without destroying them. Indeed, we must learn how to build on this planet in a way that becomes part of its growing self.

That is partly what I mean by saying that I see gorgeous goddess imaginal psychology as another aspect of the way contemporary science (of emergence and complexity) and philosophy (of Derrida and deconstruction) as different viewpoints of the same planet/soul stuff. Our planet is where it is, and it needs

a change from modernity; so it hooks into our psyches and turns on the feminine within the arts, the numinous, science, philosophy, etc.

So too in this seminar I am persuaded, for the psyche after centuries of figuring maleness as (hu)man, needs to practice positively the female body, yet also to celebrate the lack of fixity of gender as creative energy. And yes, I am persuaded because their arguments are cogent and make sense, even if holding up half the sky, not in the beauty of the logic in the particular archetypal style of the words.

These, today, are some poor and tricky responses on the feminine. Suppose the feminine is this, the desire to imagine around the corners of our inherited field of stuff?

RH: Will you speak more about the way a woman would freeze the blood as Medusa or use sexuality in her leadership roles?

SR: It is interesting, isn't it, that our conversation has led to this question, and my first reaction is that I am helpless, at sea with it. So, yes, I do think there is something, some avoidance. Secondarily, when I imagine women using archetypal dynamics in leadership roles—Medusa or Aphrodite, as I mentioned—then I think that women and power are very archaic. Of course a woman of power might also be an archetypal mother and loom large and dark because she reminds us of archaic origins in infancy. Yet the archaism of Medusa and Aphrodite seems different. It is inhuman, ancient, lacking pity. These figures are woman-serpents. We have a classical patriarchal lens on them and live in cultures that can too often eject them into outer darkness as demons.

What about men? I ask myself if masculine power is also archaic, and I think it is. For me, masculine power is the hero, and he is not, at root, a modern figure. Yet it cannot be denied that the imaginative weights of Medusa and the hero are different. Jung was fascinating in describing time in terms of space, and vice versa. Male power is the hero of our time looking all the way back to Trojan warriors. Female power stems from preclassical goddess cultures and comes through to us filtered by the patriarchal Greeks and Christians.

There is one important advantage to this. Taking female power as "other" in our symbolic systems compels us to be creative. We are compelled to imagine the goddess culture that may have never been. That struggle permits a rethinking of power as Eros dominated, dependent upon relationship and feeling. Such an incursion into the otherness of power may rejuvenate the tired old hero and transform the snakes of the Medusa into the health-giving goddess symbols they once were.

RH: The Philemon Foundation has said that there is a large amount that is still unknown about Jung—that, in fact, if we knew what is still unknown about Jung, we would have some radically different understandings of what he was about. Do you agree?

SR: This is a really important question because it is about the different kinds of knowledge and the different claims they make. In the first place it is hard to say yes or no to your question because of your crucial plural: radically different understandings! I agree that lots of new and startling information about Jung would offer new understandings of his work. On the other hand, for me, it would not determine an understanding (singular) of his work, nor would it have to be accepted by the existing understandings, multidisciplinary in nature, in the Jungian field.

What I think lies behind your question is the notion that one academic discipline can subordinate all others in a hierarchy of knowledge. Here it happens to be history. Science often takes this heroic persona, philosophy rarely leaves it, biology is a recent candidate, etc. Jung explicitly denied any such possibility—although I must admit that the trickster in his writing likes to play rhetorically with the notion that psychology is the inside–outside of all knowledge. This important move by Jung gives a space for the life and fire of the unconscious to live in his work. Call any one discipline master, and you have betrayed the positive, romantic possibilities of the other.

So in my view, the historical fallacy (phallusy) is that evidence from the past enables the historian to present “The Truth about Jung” and that this Truth determines Jungian psychology. These drives—fantasies, if you like—exist respectably within historiography, and it is open to the contemporary historian to be captured by them.

However, significant objections do arise. For example, historians make a lot of what counts as evidence and what does not, but they cannot argue that necessarily the best, most representative traces of a life survive. What if Jung’s psychology were actually built around his lifelong obsession with his sister but he never told anyone or wrote it down? And if traces of consciousness are likely to be arbitrary, how can Jungian scholars fully accept research that does not include its subject’s unconscious—and moreover the unconscious of the researcher! Also, the idea that an individual person, however autonomous and charismatic, entirely determines the practice others set up, down to all the ideas it encompasses—this does not really work.

Yes, it might affect our imagination of the beginning of Jungian analysis if every reference in the *Collected Works* were followed up, every idea given an actual or probable origin in the history of European thought, the papers of every patient of Jung, every analyst he trained, plus every scribble recovered with his mark on it. Yet I cannot help feeling that such a claim—to

definitively shape the understanding of Jungian psychology by such historical research—is overkill that actually kills. The claim to know with unquestionable authority kills the soul in the knowledge it claims to be upholding. Historical empirical research with documents must be supplemented by imagination and generosity of feeling if history is to be part of a living landscape of soul knowledge.

Finally, I am denying the authoritative claim of such historical research because Jungian psychology is not subject to the past, nor is much of Jungian studies. Jungian psychology is a forward-directed discipline—appropriately—and is in the hands of past, current, and future scholars. Jungian analysis belongs to analysts as they begin from the beginnings of every hour, every day in their consulting rooms.

My own work in Jungian studies is not about what Jung was, but what Jung could be. Some knowledge is discovered, some is created. Much of Jungian studies is both, with an emphasis one way or the other. I believe that Jung shows us the inestimable riches of created knowledge, creative scholarship.

RH: Jung had a very special and long relationship with Toni Wolff, who was a single woman and a former analysand with whom he worked intimately. Some have described it as an affair. Many of the first-generation Jungians speak of it in supportive and understanding ways. As a woman, how do you understand the relationship between Jung and Toni Wolff?

SR: I think this is a very difficult area. You have asked me to approach it as a woman, as embedded in a gendered perspective. This reminds me that recently I have been writing about the benefits of Jung offering such a gendered perspective in his writing.

That it is not so much that he unwittingly showed blindness to the feminine point of view as any male author might. No, rather he allows the reader to experience the partiality, blindness, and eroticism of gender in the writing. And furthermore that this is part of a larger project to situate knowledge of the psyche as immanent, in the grain of the body and the collective social world.

So that framework brings us to Toni Wolff and C. G. Jung. It goes without saying that there is always a mystery in the relationships of other people. Where those relationships transgress conventional boundaries of marriage and the professions, that mystery becomes a combination of freedom and

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danger. As a woman I feel that however much Wolff and Jung were embarking upon what is recognized as an affair, Wolff risked social ostracism, lasting loneliness, and a sense of herself as adrift from the expectations of a woman's life in her world.

My sense is that she suffered all these things in later life, yet was bitingly intelligent and reckless enough to enter into the situation with remarkable foreknowledge. I think she felt that it was in her nature to want a relationship with a man that placed her outside the dreary routine of domestic obligations. She accepted what was offered knowing that to be "outside" is also to be deeply alone. She also accepted this relationship knowing that she was actively tormenting another woman.

To consider Wolff and Jung from a woman's point of view is inevitably to feel for Emma Jung as well. For Emma, it is not just the jealousy, but the risk of feeling shamed by the constant presence of Toni in her family life. Here I wonder about Emma as a writer. She always wanted to be involved in Jung's work. However, without the painful leverage of Toni's ongoing relationship with her husband, would her descriptions of the animus be so independent of Jung, and so lively? I suspect that both women were forced to discover their selves in the pains and strains of their triangular relationship. Perhaps it is an aspect of Jung's own fragility that he required both women to be mutually accepting of their role in his life.

Perhaps it would have made him ill to choose, as Emma suggested. All in all, the three of them represent an important mystery about inner and outer loves. Looking at it, I suspect women feel the hurt and possible rejection of having to share a loved man. I wonder if men feel that Jung had too much, was in danger of being overprotected?

RH: As a woman, can you share a time in your life when you felt the presence of the feminine?

SR: That question, and variations on it, always makes me feel that I ought to be answering, "When I hold a baby," or "When I gave birth." And I can't oblige. I quite like holding babies, but they make me feel human, as if I have a species responsibility rather than a gender one. I have never given birth, out of choice, because I do not think my psychological makeup would be fair on a child. So I cannot conform to those ideas of the feminine.

Yet the second thought that came to mind on reading your question was that recently, and separately, a woman and a man (both Jungians) had called my writing feminine. No one had done that before, and it made me feel as if I had a way to a feminine of my own. So following this thread of awareness, I realize that I feel in the presence of the feminine when encountering feminine creativity or art.

For example, looking back at the Jungian conference at my university, Greenwich, in 2006, my most powerful meeting with the feminine came from

a sculpture by Ien Hazebroek-Buijs, which looked like a fossil in a rock, a perfect spiral form. In 2000 the London gallery Tate Modern opened with its well-known huge hall. Within was a sculpture of an enormous spider, high as a two-storey house, with its clutch of eggs. This spider was created by Louise Bourgeois and appears quite visionary and feminine to me. I am afraid of spiders and very ambivalent about motherhood!

This vast creation speaks to the personal conflicts in me, but the size is part of an epic reach, a framing of the issues of motherhood and all other kinds of fertility as well. It is a wonderful evocation of culture and nature and therefore it is the feminine embedded in mystery, able to talk to the other. So for me the feminine is most often generated in art. I also sense the masculine in art by men.

However, I will leave you with a cultural and political feminine. Over twenty years ago the anti-nuclear movement was gendered in the United Kingdom by the setting up of a women-only protest peace camp at Greenham Common, where American soldiers guarded U.S. cruise missiles. I went on a couple of demonstrations and joined some camps overnight to help the long-time residents.

One demonstration was the last of the big ones! There were thousands of women singing, holding hands, decorating a cruel-looking fence. The atmosphere was charged with energy. It was different. I was on my own, far from home, yet felt absolutely safe and was able to talk to anyone. Looking through the fence we could see orange lights on army uniforms and could hear the barking of orders. I felt there was an extraordinary collision of energies between the creative, flowing, nurturing outside and the rigid, phallic, hierarchical order inside the fence. That night the fence came down—and was erected again in the morning. The women stayed until the missiles were taken away in the 1990s.

RH: How important are dreams to you, and what are some of the ways that you work with your own dreams?

SR: You know, that is a question that makes me recognize that there are parts of myself that are unsure, underdeveloped. I am sure an analyst would react to such a question with confidence. My first thought is that I wish I knew how to work with my dreams. I wish I knew why I find it so difficult to record dreams.

I know it makes a difference. I would like to do it. I intend to do it—sometime. Perhaps it is a new year or a new life resolution to come! Anyway, for now part of me is stubbornly resistant to “work” with dreams. Part of me does not want my dreams to be a task. There is a real, what can I say, *resistance!*

And yet I have two things to say about my dreams. I deeply value them. Dreams frequently color and deepen my day. I respect them. Some dreams I

remember from the past as having prophetic value of encounters or dangers to come. I have often used an example of a dream to my students: I am a man, second in command of a rebel space station circling imperial and evil Earth. In this dream an old woman frustrated my manly purposes, and a young woman had to be rescued by me when drunk!

Tomorrow, I am going to lecture to students on the unconscious and literature. I am going to tell them the true story of what happened when my father died. Around six weeks later I became convinced that he had not died after all. Indeed, I had a clear memory of visiting him a few days before. Managing to stay in this reality for two weeks at least, it was only then that I was forced to concede that my so-called “memory” was, in fact, a dream—although to this day, it is a memory for me.

My second point about dreams is that I feel I work with them through my intuition. For I do foster whatever dream residue I have in the early part of the day. And it is that feeling or scrap of narrative or image that I draw on when thinking/being intuitive. Intuition is probably the most important part of my soul that I feel good about and am prepared to trust. Instinctively, in my bones, in my depths, I believe intuition to be a dream partner.

RH: In the Western world of psychotherapy and mental health, attention is now given to short-term and solution-focused work. More and more people have an assortment of medications they regularly use, often without any end in sight. More parents are asking doctors to prescribe medications for their

children, and more and more children are given psychiatric diagnoses. People often want to feel good quickly—more quickly than long-term healing and the transformation work involved in depth approaches usually take. Furthermore, insurance companies do not pay for the depth approaches. Some people today feel they are “in therapy”

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by seeing their psychiatrist monthly for a medication checkup. Given this context, what do you see as the future for the work of depth psychotherapy such as Jungian analysis?

SR: There are really big issues here, and of course, I can only speak as an outsider to the clinical profession. I do not have the temperament to be an analyst and have no desire to do it. On the other hand, I do speak from the position of one who has benefited enormously from Jungian analysis over time. Interestingly, from the point of view of your question, I also speak as someone

on long-term chemical medication, who is also a patient in the mainstream health service of my country, in which, perhaps like yours, pills are preferred. Now the innovation is cognitive-behavioral therapy, only supplied as a quick fix, short-term cure-all. I have not had cognitive-behavioral therapy and am not attracted to it.

Let's start big and broad. Somehow, psychological medicine seems to be taking on the weight of the Newtonian mechanical scientific paradigm just as the actual sciences are moving on! It seems fashionable and shockingly acceptable in psychiatry to regard mental illness as merely a chemical imbalance that can be quickly cured. The cause-and-effect relationship is viewed in a purely mechanistic and linear manner.

The closest such medicine comes to a human view of mental illness is to note the epidemic of it in the Western world and to suggest that we have produced a society that is toxic to mental health. Jung, of course, both noticed this early on and predicted much of where we are now. I do not understand *why*, when biology and physics and cosmology, etc., are talking about the sciences of complexity and emergence; *why*, when they are confident of a new holistic paradigm that can cope with the unmeasurable complexity of the human brain—*why* psychiatric treatment has to perversely simplify itself!

There is clearly an important history here in the relationship of depth psychology as it emerged in the late 19th century and the medical division of psychiatry. Such a division now seems disastrous for the future of analysts and for ordinary people in distress.

There is one huge issue: money. Of the 25% of the population that may suffer some form of mental distress, only a very small proportion can afford analysis as it is now constituted. I know that the profession as a whole, with many wonderful individual examples, has tried to do something about this. If analysis is to survive, then I would have thought that it should develop a productive relationship with mainstream healthcare, such as regularly visiting hospitals, or maybe developing ways of supplementing other treatment.

Drugs are something to get excited about. In the United Kingdom, I believe that they are less pervasive, in particular, less used with teenagers and children. We are all afraid of drugs! We are all afraid that our system of power is secretly sinister. Below a carapace of care, our populations are being drugged into quiescence. The epidemic of depression is not sickness; it is revolt. The resistance to cruel, inhuman capitalism and war is repressed until it shows as individual not-rightness, illness, and is then drugged into submission.

Well, yes, *but*. I do think there is truth in the above. The big question about mental illness, as Foucault showed, is, who decides? The boundaries between the mad and the sane are not only thin, they are power itself. (What

was that fascinating example about classifying the characteristics of patients in a mental hospital? The survey was stopped when the doctors showed more symptoms than the patients.) Every mental health professional should read Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* to see a fictional exposé of the mental health system used as social control.

Yes, I do think that drugs are overused and amount to, at an unconscious level, an attempt to control the population. But if only I could get hold of those drugs! My own experience is one of drugs not working well over 25 years. So then I spent some years refusing them, then having a breakdown that required emergency treatment, including drugs.

They still do not work all that well, but on behalf of other patients like me, I say they are sometimes necessary. I found it helped to try to see what drugs were mythically. As we are all *lunatics*, I found my drugs to be moon dust, physical, moon-drenched earth, a *prima materia* earth in the hope of better alchemy in the psyche. It goes without saying that the alchemical processes go better with the help of a therapist to aid the "*solve et coagula*."

To come back to analysis, there are surely signs that the psychological profession, as a whole, will eventually discover wholeness, complexity, and the new holistic paradigm. There, Jungian analysis is the advance guard with the sophisticated sense of transference, the *mundus imaginis*, and synchronicity. Or to put it less theoretically, to get really better, patients must become someone else, or in Jungian terms, become them-*selves*.

This takes time and dedication. I believe that Jungian analysis will eventually be recognized as part of a new holistic medicine that can include the complementary therapies and many Eastern traditions, for these have been practicing the holistic paradigm for centuries. Let's hope analysis can speed up this process, for the hard-working analysts deserve an easier time of it!

RH: You teach Jung to university students. What are some of your impressions of how Jung is received among young people?

SR: University students in the United Kingdom tend not to have heard of Jung. Although I am teaching humanities students, and specifically those doing an English literature degree, from what I gather, this would be true of psychology students too. Why Jung is shunned in the British academy is a big issue and not the focus of this question. What is interesting here is how positive I always find the reception of Jung to be. For my students, Jung has to be introduced in the context of Freud because Freudian psychoanalysis is a hegemonic literary theory in the discipline. To put it simply, I teach them Freud in year two as one of the main literary theories they *need* to know. They then opt for my third-year specialist theory course and discover they are doing Jung, something they find they *want* to know.

Freud is stimulating yet also limiting for them. One reason for his hegemonic position must be the way some literary theorists have found it possible to unite atheist Freud with post-Marxist cultural materialism.

Lacanian notions of the unconscious of writing in a literary text can produce exciting reading. However, my students are persistently troubled by the Freudian/Lacanian privileging of masculinity. Moreover, Freud has little to say to the growing cohort of Muslim students, who are used to having to leave their faith at the door. I think they should not have to.

These literary students quickly appreciate that his ideas about valuing the “other” and the meaning-making unconscious can counter what is lacking in the psychoanalytic tradition of the feminine.

So, for my students I offer Jung, whose founding principle of the creative and in part unknowable unconscious also speaks effectively to theories such as Derridean poststructuralism. Moreover, Jung provides a framework for those students who wish to take the sacred in literature seriously, while not forcing a religious position on any of them.

Finally, although one cannot unproblematically celebrate Jung as a feminist (!), these literary students quickly appreciate that his ideas about valuing the “other” and the meaning-making unconscious can counter what is lacking in the psychoanalytic tradition of the feminine.

Crucially, I ask my students to analyze Jung’s writing in a literary way in order to perceive how his so-called “theorizing” is, in fact, an “artistic” performance of the unconscious. They can then see how rational theory is placed as important, but not paramount, in his writing. We also examine some of his more misogynistic statements so that students can see the pressure of the personal and the inferior side consciously evoked in his work.

The upshot is that the students are somehow “released” by Jung. They come to feel “at home” with him. One student, recently bereaved, asked me about his attitude toward death, in class. She was visibly relieved by my answer. Other students say, on their course evaluations, that they are glad to have learned about Jung “for their future life.” I am proud of them to get so far in twelve weeks!

RH: You have written a very interesting book about Jung (*Jung as a Writer*; Routledge, 2005). What are some of the things you learned about Jung as you examined his manner of writing?

SR: When I began working on *Jung as a Writer*, I expected to find affinities between Jung’s way of composing and literature in general, and perhaps

Romantic literature in particular. Jung is deeply heir to German Romanticism. I know this legacy only from its treatment by the English Romantic poets with their proto-Jungian belief in the supremacy of the creative imagination. What I found, researching that book, is that Jung is an astounding experimental writer. His work with words is not, and never should be, regarded as a description of his ideas and analytical practices. No, his writing is a performance of his inner being. Writing is his work, not a secondary dimension of it. Jung's writing is more a model to be imitated than it is a collection of ideas handed down to be followed to the letter. After all, the writing is discernible as coherent and true only when we remember the core principle of the primacy of the creative unconscious. This primacy, as Jung never ceases reminding us, comes before any fidelity to rational argument or conceptual ideas. Jungian concepts derive from a matrix of the creative unknowable—the person, the historical, and the social.

Yes, we belong to a modernity that treats apparently scientific concepts as transcendent of their origins, but Jung's gift to us is that he does not. Rather, Jung's theory-writing is a dialogue of transcendent concept with immanent matter. He rewrites the priorities of the Baconian/Newtonian science of modernity to reintroduce the sky father god of rationality and transcendent separation to the earth mother goddess of knowledge by connection and bodily incorporation.

Essentially, Jung's *Collected Works* are not *about* healing the modern world. They are an attempt to do so. His writing *enacts* the many voices of the psyche. These archetypal impulses are an animistic multitude always operating in a relationship with our culture's education of us to produce a single monotheistic voice. Yet, we cannot do without the animism of the feminine in our individuation, our culture, and our science. For "she" stands for all that we lose in losing the mother, connection to body, sexuality as also divine, Eros, matter as animated, knowledge through love. Jung's big problem in writing is that he knows that modernity in general, and science, in particular, need the unconscious/feminine. However, part of him finds the "other" in other persons as too difficult! In particular, he wants to bring in the desperately needed earth mother feminine to shore up traditional masculine signifying. He is a conservative with revolutionary ideas in his writing!

Nevertheless, his writing is fundamentally fascinating and vitally important because it attempts to rework that ancient philosophical division of our world between form and matter. Hitherto, this inspired experimenting has been the preserve of the artist. Jung is an artist *and* a scientist. His writing deconstructs our cultural boundaries between science and art. His work reveals such boundaries to be culture.

What I discovered is that Jung's writing is at the heart of his project to take modernity on a quest into the unknown psyche. It is a very underreached area of his work. Jung's *Collected Works* are a gift to help the

modern world reimagine itself, now in a new century. In *Jung as a Writer* I argued that *Aion* works as a literary-historical novel (one modeling of the self). *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* and *Answer to Job* work in a dual spatial relationship, since MDR is a sequel to *Job*, while *Job* is also a spatial companion, being self vision to its ego vision. Another example is that Volume 12 of the *Collected Works* connects the psyche to nature through textuality. With all these I am trying to help release the writing into the new century.

I learned that we are taught to read Jung monotheistically, to distill from the many voices of his text, single-eyed visions or concepts in an authoritative, authoritarian manner. I am sure that Jung, the man, would, in certain moods, encourage this stance. But author intention, which always means conscious, rational intention, does not have to be the single god of the text. Jung's writing teaches us also to respect the animism of the archetypal psyche, to listen for the many voices and what they may invoke in us.

I learned that Jung's writing makes us newly aware of the creative and restrictive choices we make as readers in forming meaning. Jung's writing offers us psychic healing, redemption, through bringing together monotheistic and animistic practices: to be part of enacting sky father and earth mother as embracing.

RH: What are some of the important things you have learned in your life about sexuality and sensuality?

SR: I have learned that sexuality and sensuality are great, fiery powers—that their power is fertilizing, transforming, overwhelming, necessary, and the blood of life. That I wish my inferior function were not sensation!

RH: What is your favorite poem and selection of music?

SR: I am not going to answer that about music because it is not a proper question for me. I am a dancer. I do not mean a trained dancer. What I mean is that I relate to music through dance. So I love all music that I can dance to, from rock to ballet to jazz and more. However, I will answer on a poem. "Wild Geese" by the American poet, Mary Oliver.

RH: I have really enjoyed doing this interview with you, Susan. I have enjoyed getting to know you and I look forward to following your career, especially in the Jungian community. How has it been for you?

SR: I have enjoyed it very much too. I found myself able to surrender to the process and enjoy what I was then discovering in our correspondence.

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