

A Tale of Two Houses: Küsnacht and Bollingen

(part 2)

by Pamela Cooper-White, PhD

The Stone Carvings at Bollingen



On Jung’s 70th birthday in 1950, he set up a cubical stone by a tree at the side of the lake, and inscribed three sides – one with a quote from the alchemical treatise “The Philosopher’s Stone”: “*hic lapis exilis extat, pretio quoque vilis, spernitur a stultis, amatur plus ab edoctis*” (“this stone is poor, and cheap in price; it is disdained by fools, but it is loved all the more by the wise”); one with a figure of Telesphorus – a sacred homunculus featured in the *Red Book* and reminiscent of the manikin he first created as a child; and on one side a memorial of gratitude for his 70th birthday. A copper cover was added later for protection. The side of the stone facing the lake reads:

I am an orphan, alone; yet I am found everywhere. I am a youth and an old man simultaneously. I have known neither father nor mother, because like a fish I have to be lifted up from the depths. Or because I drop from the sky like a white stone. In woods and mountains I roam, but I am hidden in the human’s innermost. I am mortal for everyone, but remain untouched from the change of times. (Translation provided by Jorst Hörni)

With irony, Mr. Hörni pointed out a book cover from a recent book where Jung’s image was photoshopped onto the stone making it seem much larger. It’s surprisingly small—maybe 3’

square—and more modest than isolated photos of it suggest.



Although Emma Jung was not buried at Bollingen, Jung beautifully carved a memorial stone to her memory. Its symmetry and elegant classical lines reflect Emma’s own aesthetic as seen at Kusnacht. In this place, it is not difficult to imagine a grieving Jung laboring over this work of art. Note the sun and moon (male and female symbols) over what appears to be a Eucharistic host and paten. The inscription in Latin reads:



*Oh outstanding vessel of devotion and obedience!
To the ancestral spirits of my most beloved and faithful
wife Emma Maria.
She completed her life and after her death she was la-
mented.
She went over to the secret of eternity in the year 1955.
Her age was 73.
Her husband C.G. Jung has made and placed [this
stone] in 1956.*

(Translation provided by Jost Hörni.)

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One of the lesser known carvings at Bollingen shows a bear rolling a ball, with the inscription in Latin: The She-bear moves the mass. Mr. Högni said that, unlike many legends that cannot be verified, Jung told him directly that the carving related to the ancient myth of Ursa Major (the “big dipper” but in ancient times the great bear) who kept the world rolling in the sky. Later, however, Jung told a visitor that it was the Soviet Union manipulating the world. Mr. Högni said, “This shows the multivalence of symbols!” There are several other inscriptions and carvings, both inside and out at Bollingen, including a face of a Trickster character, a brief obscure quotation about “Pegasos,” and an earlier, smaller frieze of Telesphorus inside the tower.

Just outside the entrance into the courtyard is a stone on a wall inscribed: “To the unknown French soldier who died for the glory of his fatherland in the year of 1799. He lies buried here.” Mr. Högni told the story that Jung’s older daughter (Agathe) was never comfortable at Bollingen, saying the place felt haunted. Jung himself, after long periods of solitude, had an auditory hallucination of soldiers rushing by rattling their weapons. Then during the continuing building process, Jung unearthed a skeleton. A button from a French army uniform identified the soldier as belonging to the troops that fought at a nearby bridge in the Napoleonic war, and the body must have floated down the lake to rest here. Jung gave the body a formal military-style burial, even shooting 3 times into the sky, and the remains now are laid to rest under this stone. Supposedly the property is no longer haunted!



As we were leaving, Mr. Högni showed us one more carving, one of his favorites, the Snake Stone, which is now ob-

scured behind some vines and weeds by the courtyard entrance—Jung made it a part of the foundation for the enclosed courtyard. The snake was a central symbol for Jung, representing death and rebirth, as well as the life force (Kundalini), and healing (Aesclepius); it appears in the Red Book also as the dying and rising god he named “Atmavictu.” The inscription reads: Because it devoured a fish too large the snake suffocated. In this way, both perished simultaneously, to testify that the (Christian) mass and the (alchemical) work are the same and not the same, namely their death an event coinciding and corresponding with my thoughts. In memory of this event, I, C.G. J., placed this stone in the year 1933.” Mr. Högni stated that Jung was greatly moved by finding this snake and fish, as it coincided with the time he was working on the symbols of fish/Christianity and snake/alchemy. This awareness of “synchronicity” helped him to realize how much these symbols had always meant to him, both archetypally and also representing his own struggle to find a way to integrate the alchemical (or perhaps more broadly his desire to discover ancient wisdom of all kinds) and Christian sacraments and symbolism. Much later, someone found a small stone fragment out by the road, on which (apparently) Jung had made a simpler carving and which now sits on the mantel over the fireplace in the room near the courtyard—the family believes it was a small gravestone he made to bury the actual dead snake and fish.

It is difficult to get a full view of all the parts of the building except from a boat out on the lake. It is perhaps telling that this private castle is more visible from the water than the modern highway. Mr. Högni said that his mother preferred one of the intermediate building phases, when the courtyard was open to the lake, but later in life Jung wanted a deeper sense of privacy. Even the windows are set in the walls so that you cannot see (or be seen) unless standing up. The result is one of deep privacy toward the world, with secret gardens leading to the lake. Late afternoon sun began to pour in through the trees and doorways and around the tower as we were getting ready to depart, giving the buildings a truly mystical feeling—not of dark mys-



teries, but of divine light:

If You Go

It is not possible simply to travel to Küsnacht and just drop in. Before the family decided to allow certain visitors to Bollingen by appointment, adventurous analysts were known to rent a sailboat to try to glimpse the tower from the lake! In both cases, it's necessary to request an appointment in writing, giving your reason for visiting, before the exact address and directions will be given. Know what you want to see and why you want to see it! The Jung family today is at the same time dedicated to passing on the legacy of their grandfather, and "very Swiss" as my Swiss friends asserted: very formal, very courteous, and very private. Anja and I commented to each other that each grandson we met seemed a good match for the property he oversees. Andreas, the architect, was impeccably dressed, and is a consummate professional with a gentlemanly bearing. He asked about my research interests and what I most wanted to know, "since it's impossible to talk about everything." Jost was roughing it with his family at Bollingen, and accordingly had a days' growth of beard and was wearing a casual shirt and pants. Mr. Hörni is a bit of a coyote or trickster. He had a set of notes to share about the property, but then left it up to us to ask what we wanted to see. If you don't know about it, you won't get to see it! Nothing is easily offered, but if you know what to ask, nothing is denied, either. There was a quality of initiation about the time with Mr. Hörni at Bollingen.

The family's attitude toward visitors is understandably ambivalent. They do not want to be besieged by visitors who are merely curious. Mr. Andreas said "People want to know about scandals and what not," but did not continue and was clearly indicating that such inquiries were not welcome. (No one ever mentioned Toni Wolff much less Sabina Spielrein, and there is no monument to Wolff on either property, although she appears in some of the historic pictures of the *Wohnhaus* and is also known to have spent time with Jung at Bollingen.) Mr. Hörni spoke somewhat tongue in cheek in reference to those he called "the Jungian adepts" who come to visit Bollingen to be inspired, and even to meditate. Many members of the family hold the history here in tension between the seriousness of Jung's legacy and the intimacy of their family relations, which they wish to keep private. Jung was "C.G."—not just the famous Dr. Jung, but beloved grandfather and patriarch. The awe which others feel here by turns amuses and perhaps annoys them. They carefully guard their family's privacy, even while acknowledging the importance of Jung's historical legacy.

Conclusion

Passing through the threshold again at the end of our visit, the late afternoon light sent shafts of light and shadows around the old stone and trees. There is no doubt that this place holds a meditative atmosphere—no doubt long predating Jung's ownership, but fully appreciated by him, and enhanced by his deeply personal buildings and carvings. The door to the interior of Jung's dreamed-of castle and monument to the spirit is perhaps truly a *limen* between the world of proper Swiss society, and the world of dreams.