

## Visiting The Red Book and More in D.C., Part 1

by Mary Davis

The fourth and last of the big events scheduled to celebrate the publication of C. G. Jung's *The Red Book* (*Liber Novus*) and to introduce it to its United States' audience occurred in June, 2010, in Washington, D.C. at the Library of Congress.

After attending the third of these events, in Portland, Oregon featuring a seminar by Sonu Shamdasani (See "Reading the Red Book" at [www.jungatlanta.com](http://www.jungatlanta.com)), I considered attending these Library of Congress' events in this symbolic setting, both to see the actual original Red Book itself and to hear a number of Jungian scholars discuss its impact and meaning. I believe the symposium's overflow crowd indicated a deep interest in Jungian thought and its place in our intellectual history.

I arrived in Washington on a very hot Thursday, checked into my hotel near the Library of Congress, and met a school friend for a good visit. Friday morning I visited the Library of Congress to see the exhibit, arriving at the same time as Beverly Zabriskie, a New York Jungian analyst with a key role in the symposium. We chatted briefly before she met the next day's speakers to view the exhibit. I then went to see the exhibit: "The Red Book of Carl G. Jung: Its Origins and Influence." The Jung exhibit was tucked into a corner gallery near the reconstructed library of Thomas Jefferson, which I had never seen. The Jefferson Library was exciting with its breadth and depth of topics.

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I enjoyed seeing *The Red Book* itself. The colors of the illuminations were especially vibrant and luminous even seen through the protective glass. The final letters between Jung and Freud were also highlights for me. Exhibited were numerous examples of the influence of Jung's thought on others including dancer Martha Graham and filmmaker Federico Fellini. Except for *The Red Book* itself, many, perhaps all, of the documents exhibited were from the Library of Congress' extensive collections, and some of these may be viewed at their website [www.myloc.gov](http://www.myloc.gov).

After seeing the Jung exhibit, I walked down the Mall to the Museum of the American Indian. Not only have I wanted to see this Museum because of the connection to some of my ancestors, I also feel that symbolically the Museum's construction and its ongoing programs honoring the First Peoples are significant steps towards the healing needed in our nation. My school friend had encouraged lunching there where a huge variety of traditional foods from many tribes were presented, tribe by tribe. So just walking around the cafeteria was educational. The Museum is built so that nature is an integral part of the experience: from the lunch tables one faces a huge wall of glass overlooking a water feature. While the exhibits were interesting, for me the very best was the cosmology exhibit on the top floor, "Our Universes: Traditional Knowledge Shapes Our World." Many creation stories were presented as well as each tribal community's "interpretation of the world order." The belief systems, the feeling of the importance of our relationship to this earth and

her creatures, and the actions and rituals reflecting these beliefs were all presented so that I felt them on a cellular level. My hope is that most citizens and especially Members of Congress would walk down the Mall and be present to this exhibit, and that policies enacted by Congress would reflect the truths shown here.

Then, Saturday, up early, because, while everyone has tickets, seating is not reserved. I walk over to the Library of Congress and find Jung Society member Bill Bridges and several of his school friends already in line. I also talk with Tom Charlesworth, another Jung Society member (and Philemon Board member). Atlanta is represented!

The Symposium begins! The morning session is titled, "What the Red Book Reveals About Jung." We are greeted by James Billington, Librarian of the Library of Congress, a scholar known for his expertise on Russia. Billington was a friend of Zabriskie's husband, Jungian analyst Philip Zabriskie (deceased in 2005). They were Rhodes Scholars, studying at Oxford University at the same time. He discusses Jung's influence as well as the significance of the period of 1913 -17 of Jung's "prolonged confrontation with his unconscious" from which "everything derived...about unlocking the mysteries of the human mind."

Chairperson for the morning session is Beverley Zabriskie. She says that the idea for this exhibit and symposium developed during her dinner in London in 2003 with her husband Philip Zabriskie, James Billington, and Sonu Shamdasani. She introduced and thanked the Jung's descendants who were present. She noted Jung's thoughts about "befriending our enemies within so that we do not project them without." Zabriskie then introduced Sonu Shamdasani, telling us about his personal journey: his Indian heritage and his travels from England to India at the age of 18 "to find a guru." After hearing about Carl Jung's work and beginning to read it, she said he realized "the guru is within." Shamdasani is the Editor and primary translator of *The Red Book*, co-founder with Jungian Analyst Stephen Martin of the Philemon Foundation in 2003, author, and professor.

Dr. Shamdasani's lecture title is "*Liber Novus: Jung's Descent into Hell*." He places *The Red Book/Liber Novus* in the context of Jung's time and culture, beginning with descriptions of the view of hell and heaven then current. Quoting Dante (from *The Commedia*), "Abandon all hope, all who enter here," he says *Liber Novus* can be seen as a descent into Hell (Jung's and ours).

Shamdasani continues with a discussion of classical descriptions and illustrations of hell. He compares Jung's descent to (1) Odysseus' descent into the underworld and (2) Christ's descent into hell to redeem the dead and to redeem Adam after his crucifixion as described in the Apocrypha. He discusses Zwingli's and Calvin's questions about Christ's death.

Discussing Dante's *Commedia*, he says the two modes of reading it are (1) the literal, from the letter and (2) the symbolic, allegorical. He discusses historian D.P. Walker's view that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, hell began to lose its hold. Hell no longer has a location, a place, and the word "hell" is more often used as a metaphor for suffering.

The writings of Chaucer, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Meister Eckhart are all part of the historical backdrop. Shamdasani says that Goethe's and Nietzsche's impact on Jung have been much discussed, so his focus today will be the impact of Dante, Emanuel Swedenborg, and William Blake on Jung. The geogra-

phy of Swedenborg's hell, he says, in its infinite variety and diversity was close to matching Dante's, and he quotes Swedenborg, "Heaven and hell are from the human race." He says the most acute reader of Swedenborg was William Blake, who at one time was a member of Swedenborg's church in London, but broke with him, critiquing organized religion, and saying that Swedenborg conversed not with devils, but only with angels, the wrong informants about hell. Blake, who had experienced visions since childhood, felt that heaven and hell were born together, that they are in dynamic opposition, a basic series of contraries.

At this point, Shamdasani emphasizes that the focus on the Jung and Freud relationship (the "Freudination of Jung") leads to a serious misjudgment about Jung's place in intellectual history; that we should see Jung and *Liber Novus* in the visionary tradition. He says that like Dante's and Swedenborg's, Jung's vision of hell contains its own hermeneutics (methodology of interpretation) of how it should be read.

He quotes from a 1935 Jung lecture in which Jung described himself at age 35 as "astray in a dark wood," at a turning point as things began to change, "going down to death," saying fate does this and some turn away and some plunge in. Indications exist that Jung was reading the *Commedia* at this time and reading it as a visionary experience, not as a historical description.

Shamdasani states that Jung replaces Swedenborg's "spiritual realism" with "psychological realism." He discusses Jung's citing Blake in *Psychological Types* in 1921, and he encourages us to re-read Chapter 5, especially, after reading *Liber Novus*: that it will be transformed for us. He discusses Jung's views that poets give form to the imageless primordial experience, using mythological figures, clothing the experience in mythological language. He cites numerous examples from Jung's work in which Jung refers to William Blake. He also discusses Jung's ambivalence towards considering *Liber Novus* as a work of art.

Continuing, he mentions Jung's sailing trip with friends in 1910 when they read from *The Odyssey*, reading about Odysseus' descent into the underworld, the nekyia, Circe, the sirens and Jung's view about Odysseus' lengthy wanderings: *the necessity of the wandering, the erring, to Odysseus' becoming*.

In 1913, he notes, Jung fantasized that he was digging a hole in rocks and saw blood and snakes, serpents. In 1914, Jung had his precognitive vision of the bloodshed coming to Europe, "hell let loose," and yet from *Liber Novus* we know that Jung felt this was not senseless but meaningful to the development of mankind.

Shamdasani says that at the time Jung in 1913 had the fantasy of hell as a lending library, an old man and his daughter were the "stuff" of then current romantic novels, so Jung's (and our) hell is what one has rejected, hated; "hell is when the depths come to you with all that you no longer are." "Everything good is also bad, everything high is also low." Hence, the notion of going to hell is the acceptance of one's fullness; the deepest hell is also when we realize it is also heaven.

So, he asks, what does one do when one finds oneself in hell in life? He notes that Jung says to live one's life as fully as Christ lived his life; that no one knows what happened during the three days Christ was in hell; and he suggests that we read the unknown books of the ancients. In Jung's understanding, he

says, Christ's descent was necessary before he could ascend. "In Jung's theology of the dead in *Liber Novus*, redemption is accepting the laments of the dead, taking on the legacy and the souls of the dead, answering their questions." He quotes from Jung's 1937 Terry Lectures and from a 1952 lecture about Jung's view of Christ's descent to hell as equivalent psychologically to the individuation process, to the integration of the collective unconscious.

Shamdasani cites a 1950's lecture to the Psychological Club in which Jung discussed the fact that some visions are recognized not from their form, but from their effects. An example is Swedenborg, who went into "doctrinaireness" because he was afraid, who formed concepts to protect himself from fear. Jung cautioned that one must give the patient something to hold onto, a guard-rail, a safety net (even though this may block access to the source). Shamdasani asks if Jung clothed his visionary experience in psychological concepts like "archetypes" as contrasted with mythological concepts. He asks, "Is this a new route to hell and back?"

Next, Zabriskie introduces James Hillman (Jungian Analyst, scholar, author) whose topic is "Jung and the Profoundly Personal." Dr. Hillman begins with a quote from W.H. Auden, "We are lived by powers we pretend to understand." He says that Jung's life work was trying to understand the powers, as well as the limitations of the mind and language and words. Hillman says, "The ego is a myth, I still don't understand, but I *feel* it." He notes that these words like ego and unconscious are "rational words, left over."

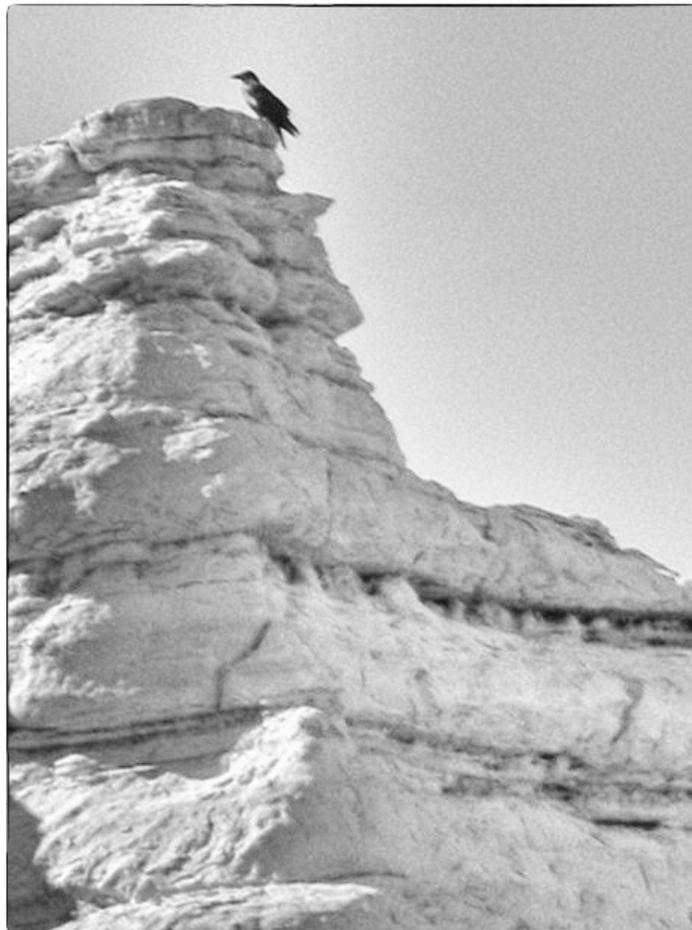
Hillman says that in 1961 when he was 35 years old, he carried a calla lily to Jung's home to pay homage to Jung's body after his death. He mentioned that Jolande Jacobi brought red roses. The meaning, the message he felt he was given then was: "Get out, get on, do my work." And at the same time, he says, "undoing my work and living the tension between the public and the private." He asks, "What difference does it really make? We are all scandals." He cites *The Red Book* as "deep, deep, intimate privateness," and "like a revelation for me..." He discusses the "language of contraries" within it; that contraries are "co-relative, necessary to each other like black and white," and that they are only considered opposites "if your mind thinks in an Aristotelian way."

"But now, with *The Red Book*," he says, "I realize the language of psychology is imagistic, dialectic, poetic." He discusses the beginning of the psychological imagination, the language of the mind, the creative, poetic phrases. Referring us to Paragraph 7:22 in *Psychological Types* on "Imagination," he discusses, "What does the mind do? It creates melodies... What does the psyche do naturally? The human psyche fantasizes as its primary activity...our dreams are primary activities." He says, "The rational mind doesn't do the job and psychology from the rational mind doesn't do the job! But melodies, fantasy are direct expressions of psychic life." He says *The Red Book* realizes this in Jung's life.

Hillman says if one feels trapped, try to find the image of the emotion. The flow of our psychic life, our psychic energy are found in our fantasy figures and forms. He notes that thinking derived from Descartes and psychology derived from Cartesian thinking are using the wrong form of thought.

He cites Jung in *Psychological Types* (Paragraph 78), "Psyche creates reality every day." He says that whatever we

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Frank Shelton - Raven, NM, 2011

## Curiosity

by Frank Shelton

It circled  
once,  
twice, three times  
as though to  
greet me  
into it's nest.  
Vanishing  
as quickly as  
it appeared,  
the sound  
of fluttering  
wings  
cut the silence  
of the morning.

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call reality is a fantasy that's been blocked; that fantasy opens the soul to living; that "what happened when we were four years old is also a fantasy." He continues, "This is profoundly personal and it happens to everybody. It is the engagement with one's own demons, the visit to hell, the encounter with one's soul. Jung felt he'd lost his soul." He says Jung in *The Red Book* explored what was in the depths of the soul given to him and that it takes a courageous "let it be done to me" to drop into that.

In his own case, Hillman says, in 1953 he reached Zürich and he felt "things from below were coming up to get me." He created little paintings as encouraged by his analyst. He experienced a descent into water, into the bottom of the sea, and he had the vivid experience that he could breathe and talk underwater. He uses this as one example of the kind of work that Jung invented for modern psychology, "Active imagination as something which can be experienced and recorded in a phenomenological way...allowing the phenomena to have its way."

He quotes Mark 1:34 when Jesus suffered the devils not to speak. But Jung let the devils, the demons speak, "a radical move in relation to Christianity. Jung is allowing other voices to speak and have realities, be personified." He asks who are the dead in Jung's experience and in our culture, which he says has "such problems with death, with no sense of the permeability of the live and the dead, no sense of being welcomed by the ancestors when you die," and he says, "Of course, our ancestors are the American Indians who lived on this soil." He speaks of the dead as a "daily encounter with everything that's been left out, burned, buried," and as the omens, the cautions, the hunches, the intuitions, the wisps who "protect us every day." He notes that Socrates was never told by his daimon what to do, only cautioned what not to do!

So, Hillman asks, "What is *The Red Book's* importance in our culture at this time?" He notes humanity's polytheistic background that's been forgotten. He says the individual's search, not for meaning, but for images is important. "The voices and figures you live with and talk with carry you through." He says this search for images is radically different from anything else in psychology.

Hillman refers back to 1915 and Blavatsky, Joyce, dadaism, German expressionism, surrealism. He reminds us that Jung wrote his thesis for his medical degree on occult phenomena. He acknowledges that in our time some may consider *The Red Book* "freakish," He says our time has such a shrunken *weltanschauung* (way of seeing the world) with our rational, technological approach that, "*The Red Book* is a necessity in our time and is recognized on a deep, psyche level, collectively.

Note: As we leave for lunch, I speak with Dr. Hillman to thank him again for his generous guidance and support for the Mythic Journeys conferences and Mythic Imagination Institute in Atlanta. He is recovering from a fall and while he still has his stern persona, there is a sweetness about him on this day. This was the last time I spoke with him before his death in late 2011.

Part 2, in our next issue, continues with Ann Ulanov, "Encountering Jung Being Encountered," and includes highlights from the afternoon sessions with Joseph Cambray, Ernst Falzeder, George Makari, Betty Sue Flowers, John Beebe, and Thomas Kirsch.

This essay is written from my notes. For the full Symposium and for a good sense of the speakers' personalities as well as their numerous quotes from *The Red Book*, visit [www.myloc.gov](http://www.myloc.gov).