



Answer to Jung

Making Sense of 'The Red Book'

Lynn Brunet



ANSWER TO JUNG

The Red Book is C.G. Jung's record of a period of deep penetration into his unconscious mind in a process that he called 'active imagination', undertaken during his mid-life period. *Answer to Jung: Making Sense of 'The Red Book'* provides a close reading of this magnificent yet perplexing text and its fascinating images, and demonstrates that the fantasies in *The Red Book* are not entirely original, but that their plots, characters and symbolism are remarkably similar to some of the higher degree rituals of Continental Freemasonry. It argues that the fantasies may be memories of a series of terrifying initiatory ordeals, possibly undergone in childhood, using altered or spurious versions of these Masonic rites. It then compares these initiatory scenarios with accounts of ritual trauma that have been reported since the 1980s. This is the first full-length study of *The Red Book* to focus on the fantasies themselves and provide such an external explanation for them.

Sonu Shamdasani describes *The Red Book* as an incomplete task that Jung left to posterity as a 'message in a bottle' that would someday come ashore. *Answer to Jung* brings its message to shore, providing a coherent, but disturbing, interpretation of each of the fantasies and their accompanying images.

Lynn Brunet is an Australian art historian whose research examines the coupling of trauma and ritual in modern and contemporary Western art and literature. In particular, it traces the connection between Masonic initiation rites and complex trauma in the work of so-called 'tortured' artists and writers.



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To Monica and Kevin.

To my father Kevin, who was able to find the strength to be honest with me before he died, and my mother Monica, whose loving support guided us both through a painful discovery.



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PREFACE

My father's confession

In 1999 I produced a body of artwork entitled *The Mason's Daughter* that was exhibited at the University of Newcastle in Australia, where I was a lecturer in Art History. These images spoke of dark chthonic realms but were also strangely like a child's fairy tale. They seemed to be posing a set of riddles which I didn't understand at the time, but I had been gradually becoming aware that my inner images had something to do with my father's membership of the Masonic Order. They embodied a sense of trauma, but it was not until my mid-forties that these artworks, and many more that I had previously created, began to yield up their secrets; they were to do so progressively over the next seventeen years. These secrets involved a series of terrifying initiations that occurred throughout my childhood during the 1950s and '60s, from the age of four to fifteen. They took place in my father's Masonic Lodge.

In 2002 I confronted my parents about these memories. Thankfully, both of them were able to respond with honesty, although it took my father a couple of years to finally acknowledge the truth. This came in the form of a confession when his health was deteriorating in his eighties. The mere fact that neither of my parents were defensive about this allowed a gentle healing to begin between us, and my mother wrote to me on several occasions saying she was trying to help her husband to remember. In mid-2004 my father became ill with the onset of Alzheimer's disease. When he was first admitted to the nursing home I spent a few days with him and he seemed keen to talk to me. This is when he began to talk about the dark side of his Masonic involvement and confessed that he was aware of a range of cults that used Masonic rituals to initiate children. 'There are many of these groups', he said, 'a lot of people know about them but don't talk about it because it is embarrassing'. He began to tell me about a group to which he belonged that used these secret rituals and mentioned the names of various men who were also

members, and how surprised he was to see 'so-and-so' there. I have to admit, I was so flabbergasted that he was being so matter-of-fact about this that I was not paying attention to the names. Indeed, my interest was more to do with understanding the principles behind these practices rather than a search for individual perpetrators. Also, by this stage I had done a lot of research on my PhD project which was based on Masonic themes and trauma in the work of contemporary artists (Brunet 2007). Through this research, I was finding that abuses in Masonic Lodges were being discussed within the fledgling field of ritual abuse research and so my own story was no longer so unbelievable.

These quiet, calm and sober talks with my father took place in the lovely gardens of a nursing home which looked out over the Pacific Ocean. They could have been discussions of any interesting topic, for they emerged with no obvious emotion from my father. At one stage he acted quite surprised that I hadn't always remembered the initiations, but clearly we had both dissociated from these events. However, in the evenings he became quite agitated and one time when I visited him he was busily drawing up a plan with a pencil on a scrap of paper. The marks were very faint and there were no clear words on it, but it seemed to make sense to him. At the time, the family thought he might have been returning to the events of World War Two where, as a pilot of a Lancaster bomber, he was shot down over Holland, eventually taken to a P.O.W. camp and subsequently escaped. His faint squiggles on the piece of paper did seem to suggest some sort of military mission.

Later in the evening, after I had left, the nursing staff were to call the police as he had escaped over a high wall and was nowhere to be found. The police combed the parkland nearby as he was wearing a beeper and the signal was coming from there. They couldn't find him, though, and in the morning he was back in his room as if nothing had happened. This occurred several times and it transpired that all the while he had been up in the trees, looking down on the police searching below. After these excursions were over he seemed to relax, as if his mission was accomplished. The family was puzzled by this but dismissed it as one of the odd behaviours associated with dementia. However, when I was alone with him I asked him what he had been doing. He answered, 'I've been working with the Chief of Police to get the children out of the cult'. Once he believed that he had retrieved all of the children he appeared to be very satisfied with his accomplishment and all signs of his turmoil abated.

Each time since, when I have remembered his words, I feel overwhelmed with emotion to know that in his dying years my father was redeeming himself through his own process of 'active imagination'. In my discussions with him prior to this I had never used the term 'cult' but he was quite clear that this is what he was involved with and this is what my artwork and memories had brought back to me. Closer to his death in 2007 I visited him when he was bedridden and no longer able to speak, but the look in his eyes of utter emotional anguish broke my heart. My mother was beside me and begged me to forgive him, but I assured her I already had. My research had shown me that my father had been as much a victim as a perpetrator and was trapped in a system much larger than himself. Any anger

that I had felt towards him had melted by this stage and I was much more concerned with understanding the nature of the system of cult practices that damages the souls of young children, and that of their perpetrating parents, so profoundly. Naturally, his funeral brought up more deep emotions. It was a Masonic funeral with men from the local lodges and elderly war veterans filling the chapel. There was something stilted and automaton-like about the two men who recited the Masonic part of the ritual. One of the men commented on how small my father was, a sentiment that seemed to reflect some of the ways in which I saw him mistreated in front of me in the lodge during my childhood.

When I first confronted the memories of the initiations, and the accompanying memories of sexual abuse in the home, I began to see my father as clearly split into two men. On the one hand, Dad, the caring man who passed on many practical skills. For example, prior to working on this project I spent three years building a house, doing all the building tasks apart from the plumbing and electrical work myself. Dad is also the one I can feel accompanying me in my research on the relationship between initiation and modern and contemporary art. I believe that his act of redemption in the final stages of his life has continued on as a feeling of support for this work. But the other side of the man was the one who participated in abhorrent group behaviours and age-old 'magical' practices. Membership of this dark version of Freemasonry, what Masons themselves call Spurious Freemasonry, has the capacity to split the psyches of individual men in two: on the one hand, dutiful citizens and family men, and on the other, puerile, senseless and cruel creatures at the baser end of the human spectrum. As I was to discover, one side of the personality, the everyday good citizen, can be completely unaware of the activities of the other side. It is possible, that by confronting him in 2002 I had plunged my father into an internal conflict, which led to the emergence of this other awareness, a release from the fetters of secrecy and a new ability to be honest and frank about his clandestine activities.

My father and Carl Jung

By the time I was a teenager my father had also joined the Rosicrucian Order. While his beginnings on a farm in the Depression years were humble and his schooling was cut short, his drive to develop his intellect was encouraged by these initiatory organisations and he became a voracious reader, particularly of anything associated with psychology and spirituality. The family also became a centre for discussions of matters mystical, experiments in group hypnosis, of soirées with other Rosicrucians and a general interest in 'enlightened' pursuits of this kind. My father made much of 'seeing the light' through a single transformational mystical experience and spent many years trying to regain the sensation. He also preached his beliefs to us on a regular basis, but nevertheless held on to a secret that we could never know.

Amongst the books in his expanding library the work of Carl Jung was a favourite and it could be said that he became a Jungian. In her forties, my mother approached a nervous breakdown and, reluctant to see her go into the medical system (and perhaps in order to keep charge over the secrets), he launched into his own version of Jungian

dream analysis with her. This was a tedious process. He was a traveling salesman and would expect her to record her dreams during the week and on the weekends they would analyse them together. After ten years of this Jungian home remedy my mother did remember her own experiences of child sexual abuse and her mental health greatly improved. But perhaps her improvement was as much to do with my father's increasing attention towards her, after a long dry spell between them, as with the analytical process itself. In his latter years he would sometimes say how deeply he loved her, which was clearly a product of the close and intimate work of analysis undergone during this period of their marriage.

My father, then, turned to trying to get to the root of his own inner turmoil and was hoping his wife could use the same techniques of dream analysis on him, but she didn't feel able to do this in return. She was a more practical person, not intellectual in the way that would be required for such a task, and perhaps she was unconsciously aware that my father's story would take them into even darker territory. I do remember him telling me in my early twenties of his sexual abuse at the age of eight at the hands of a Catholic priest and incestuous encounters with his mother when he was a child, so he had shifted part of the way. And I do believe some of the atrocities he witnessed as a young airman during the war probably played a role in his disturbance, as he did, on one occasion, tell me some of this. But there seemed to be much more that was bothering him that he was unable to access. He tried various techniques, including building a lead-lined flotation tank in the back yard, to bring his unconscious material to the surface, hoping, too, that it might bring about another mystical experience. In frustration, he eventually let go of this search and turned his focus to the external world of local politics. In a way, I suppose my own inner process years later enabled him to confront more of his dark side, and even though it was an incredible shock for him, and it was very late in his journey, perhaps it did allow him a measure of healing.

After the birth of my first child my father gave me a copy of Jung's *Man and His Symbols* as he clearly believed that one of the most important tasks in life was the inner journey of facing oneself, and Jung's concept of individuation seemed to offer a useful map for this journey. I have to admit, though, that after an initial reading it has sat on my bookshelf amongst my art library and I have turned to it more for the beautiful artworks it depicts than for Jung's words themselves. I am not a Jungian scholar or an analyst but an art historian, and it was not until 2016 that I happened across Sonu Shamdasani's translation of *The Red Book*, published in 2009. I am thus coming to *The Red Book* without the benefit (or perhaps the burden) of extensive knowledge of Jung's collected works and of Jungian discourse more generally. With my first read, and with my own memories of initiation in childhood and the research I have done on Masonic ritual abuse, I soon recognised the parallels in Jung's writing of the various trials and ordeals of initiation. It was then of great significance when I read Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* to discover that his paternal grandfather, Carl Gustav Jung (1794–1864), was a Freemason and Grand Master of the Swiss Lodge. While Jung never met his grandfather, it did raise the possibility that Jung might have been another damaged child of Freemasonry.

My question in this study here is: could *The Red Book* be a detailed account of a series of memories, albeit extremely confusing and confused, of actual initiations undergone in childhood that correspond with contemporary accounts of the ritual abuse of children? The following is a close reading of *The Red Book*, examining the fantasies and their accompanying images in the light of this question. It will be up to the reader to decide whether the argument presented here has any validity.

Lynn Brunet (PhD)

Notes on layout and referencing

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are discussions of *Liber Primus*, *Liber Secundus* and *Scrutinies* respectively. The layout of these chapters follows that of *The Red Book: Liber Novus* in the 2009 facsimile edition. These chapters are then divided into the entries under their respective titles. In each entry the title is given with the page numbers of the entry in both the facsimile edition and the reader's edition, as in the following example:

The way of what is to come

(Jung 2009a, pp. 229–231; 2009b, pp. 117–126)

Under the subheadings in these three chapters the years 2009a and 2009b are deleted and the page numbers simply appear in brackets, for example, as (pp. 231–232/ pp. 127–130).

All biblical quotations refer to the Authorised King James Version of The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments.

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Since discovering these practices in my own life, I have been researching a series of case studies that examine the traces of initiation rites in the work of artists and writers. However, getting this material to publication in my own field of art history has been met with resistance. In the social sciences, however, there has been a major shift towards the acknowledgement of ritual abuse and a steady growth of research into its complex nature. Karnac Publishing has been one of the publishers that has courageously supported this research and so I must thank Rod Tweedy, who first approved of my proposal, and then Russell George and Elliott Morsia of Taylor & Francis, who took over from there. I would also like to thank Robert Shatzkin from W.W. Norton, who granted the rights to use Jung's words, and the librarians of the Jung Institute in Kusnacht, of ISAPZurich, and the Cantonal library of St Gallen Vadiana.

In Australia there has been a shift in collective awareness of the many ways in which children can be damaged with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which completed its work in 2017, and I would like to thank Justice Jennifer Coate, who patiently and respectfully listened to my own story when I presented it at a private session. I would also like to thank Rev. Jane Fry, who listened respectfully and with demonstrable empathy when I made a similar presentation to the Uniting Church. The shift in attitudes has been most noticeable amongst those professionals who work at the coalface with the survivors of ritual abuse and I would like to thank Helen Basili and Cristina Santolin, social workers for the Uniting Church, who offered ongoing support and encouragement to pursue this research. I would also like to thank Claire Hudson-McAuley, a counsellor with a Jungian background who has worked for many years with ritual abuse clients, who urged me to pursue this research, and Dr Hassanah Briedis, a friend who supported me during my process with the Uniting Church and who graciously shared her insights through her counselling work with similar clients.

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1

INTRODUCTION

When C.G. Jung embarked on his ‘most difficult experiment’ (Jung 2009a, p. 198; Jung 2009b, p. 15), a confrontation with his own unconscious during his mid-life period, he was faced with a collection of intense and frightening narratives and their accompanying imagery that plunged him, at times, into the feeling that he was going mad. He knew what madness looked like, as his years as a psychiatrist at the Burghölzli Mental Hospital involved daily contact with the full stratum of mental illness. As a result, he dedicated much of his early career in attempts to understand these mental states, in particular the psychology of dementia praecox, known today as schizophrenia (Jung 1963, pp. 125–130). So for Jung to question his own sanity to such an extent was no trifling matter; but his sharp scientific mind and scrupulously honest recording of these narratives, along with meticulous research, was to ultimately protect him from succumbing to their power.

As he began to discover, these narratives and their accompanying terrors belonged to a tradition, and this was the tradition of the Mysteries, found in many cultures such as ancient Greece, Rome and Egypt, that were comprised of a set of secret initiatory practices that accompanied the various religious beliefs of the ancient world. One of these sets of beliefs was Mithraism, a cult of the Roman soldiers that was taken to the far corners of the Roman empire. In a seminar in 1925, Jung was to reveal what he believed was the source of his visions, saying: ‘All this is Mithraic symbolism from beginning to end’ (Jung 2009a, p. 252, note 211; 2009b, p. 197). The argument presented here will focus on this aspect of the *Mysteries in The Red Book* and demonstrate that Jung’s attempt to make sense of his fantasies by examining the myths and practices related to the ancient Mysteries was only part of the story; there is another layer which we will discuss here that can make far more sense of these confusing narratives.

The Red Book or *Liber Novus* is a stunning work and a summation of an experimental process of ‘active imagination’ that Carl Jung conducted on himself intensely from late 1913 to 1917, though he continued with this process until as late as 1930

2 Introduction

(Jung 2009a, p. viii; 2009b, p. xi). It contains an extremely complex series of fantasies that he first recorded in a set of personal journals he called the *Black Books*. The text is divided into three books: *Liber Primus*, *Liber Secundus* and *Scrutinies*. The first two of these books is further divided into a series of entries, each one containing a description of one of these fantasies along with a commentary. Sonu Shamdasani, the scholar who has undertaken the impressive task of editing *Liber Novus*, describes these two aspects of the entries as two layers, with the commentaries pursuing a wide range of questions, such as the structure of the human personality, the relationship between the individual and Western society, the role of Christianity, science, war, divine madness and so on (Jung 2009a, p. 207; 2009b, p. 48). In his lifetime, Jung considered publishing *Liber Novus* but for various reasons never achieved this, although in 1916 he privately published the concluding section of it as *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* (Jung 2009a, p. viii; 2009b, p. xi). The original manuscript is bound in red leather with the text handwritten by Jung, some of it in beautiful calligraphy, along with his own exquisite paintings. The pages are embellished in the manner of a medieval manuscript and, as many have observed, it has the aura of a holy book. The content, however, is quite disturbing, with many questions concerning soul loss or soul damage and a strange confusion over its inexplicable scenarios. As Sanford Drob observes, ‘even Jungians find *The Red Book* jarring’ (Drob 2012, p. 260). Nevertheless, Jung felt that the visionary experiences outlined in *Liber Novus* were central to his entire life’s work as a psychoanalyst and theorist of the unconscious (Jung 1963, pp. 190–191).

In order to understand the complex nature of the human psyche, the riddles of his visionary experiences and the role of the Mysteries, Jung embarked on a life-long study of myth, ancient religions, Gnosticism and alchemy that were to furnish him with his theories of the unconscious. These subjects were all products of the ancient or medieval world. However, one thing Jung failed to do, at least as recorded in *The Red Book*, was to question where these same subjects and their association with the Mysteries might be found in the practices of his own time and possibly much closer to home.

Jung’s paternal grandfather and namesake, Carl Gustav Jung (1794–1864) was also a doctor, held a chair in medicine at the University of Basel and created a psychiatric clinic (Jung 1979b, p. 10). This Carl Jung was an ardent Freemason and Grand Master of the Swiss Lodge and, as a signifier of his dedication to this organisation, he changed the family’s coat-of-arms, altering its design to include Masonic symbols (Jung 1963, p. 220).¹ Interestingly, Jung says very little about this action on behalf of his paternal grandfather, interpreting it as a form of resistance to his own father, although he does proceed to talk about the historical and philosophical role of Rosicrucianism. What is significant about Jung’s discussion of this matter is that he believes he has inherited a karmic responsibility to deal with a set of unanswered questions that were posed to his forefathers in some way (Jung 1963, p. 221). In the context of the discussion here, this reworking of the family’s crest is significant: the senior C.G. Jung was not only claiming his Masonic allegiance for himself but also for the Jung family as a whole.