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The Holy Grail of the Unconscious

By SARA CORBETT

This is a story about a nearly 100-year-old book, bound in red leather, which has spent the last quarter century secreted away in a bank vault in Switzerland. The book is big and heavy and its spine is etched with gold letters that say “Liber Novus,” which is Latin for “New Book.” Its pages are made from thick cream-colored parchment and filled with paintings of otherworldly creatures and handwritten dialogues with gods and devils. If you didn’t know the book’s vintage, you might confuse it for a lost medieval tome.

And yet between the book’s heavy covers, a very modern story unfolds. It goes as follows: Man skids into midlife and loses his soul. Man goes looking for soul. After a lot of instructive hardship and adventure — taking place entirely in his head — he finds it again.

Some people feel that nobody should read the book, and some feel that everybody should read it. The truth is, nobody really knows. Most of what has been said about the book — what it is, what it means — is the product of guesswork, because from the time it was begun in 1914 in a smallish town in Switzerland, it seems that only about two dozen people have managed to read or even have much of a look at it.

Of those who did see it, at least one person, an educated Englishwoman who was allowed to read some of the book in the 1920s, thought it held infinite wisdom — “There are people in my country who would read it from cover to cover without stopping to breathe scarcely,” she wrote — while another, a well-known literary type who glimpsed it shortly after, deemed it both fascinating and worrisome, concluding that it was the work of a [psychotic](#).

So for the better part of the past century, despite the fact that it is thought to be the pivotal work of one of the era’s great thinkers, the book has existed mostly just as a rumor, cosseted behind the skeins of its own legend — revered and puzzled over only from a great distance.

Which is why one rainy November night in 2007, I boarded a flight in Boston and rode the clouds until I woke up in Zurich, pulling up to the airport gate at about the same hour that the main branch of the Union Bank of Switzerland, located on the city’s swanky Bahnhofstrasse, across from Tommy Hilfiger and close to Cartier, was opening its doors for the day. A change was under way: the book, which had spent the past 23 years locked inside a safe deposit box in one of the bank’s underground vaults, was just then being wrapped in black cloth and loaded into a discreet-looking padded suitcase on wheels. It was then rolled past the guards, out into the sunlight and clear, cold air, where it was loaded into a waiting car and whisked away.

THIS COULD SOUND, I realize, like the start of a spy novel or a Hollywood bank caper, but it is rather a story about genius and madness, as well as possession and obsession, with one object — this old, unusual book — skating among those things. Also, there are a lot of Jungians involved, a species of thinkers who

subscribe to the theories of [Carl Jung](#), the Swiss psychiatrist and author of the big red leather book. And Jungians, almost by definition, tend to get enthused anytime something previously hidden reveals itself, when whatever's been underground finally makes it to the surface.

Carl Jung founded the field of analytical [psychology](#) and, along with [Sigmund Freud](#), was responsible for popularizing the idea that a person's interior life merited not just attention but dedicated exploration — a notion that has since propelled tens of millions of people into psychotherapy. Freud, who started as Jung's mentor and later became his rival, generally viewed the unconscious mind as a warehouse for repressed desires, which could then be codified and pathologized and treated. Jung, over time, came to see the psyche as an inherently more spiritual and fluid place, an ocean that could be fished for enlightenment and healing.

Whether or not he would have wanted it this way, Jung — who regarded himself as a scientist — is today remembered more as a countercultural icon, a proponent of spirituality outside religion and the ultimate champion of dreamers and seekers everywhere, which has earned him both posthumous respect and posthumous ridicule. Jung's ideas laid the foundation for the widely used Myers-Briggs personality test and influenced the creation of Alcoholics Anonymous. His central tenets — the existence of a collective unconscious and the power of archetypes — have seeped into the larger domain of New Age thinking while remaining more at the fringes of mainstream psychology.

A big man with wire-rimmed glasses, a booming laugh and a penchant for the experimental, Jung was interested in the psychological aspects of séances, of astrology, of witchcraft. He could be jocular and also impatient. He was a dynamic speaker, an empathic listener. He had a famously magnetic appeal with women. Working at Zurich's Burghölzli psychiatric hospital, Jung listened intently to the ravings of schizophrenics, believing they held clues to both personal and universal truths. At home, in his spare time, he pored over Dante, [Goethe](#), Swedenborg and Nietzsche. He began to study mythology and world cultures, applying what he learned to the live feed from the unconscious — claiming that dreams offered a rich and symbolic narrative coming from the depths of the psyche. Somewhere along the way, he started to view the human soul — not just the mind and the body — as requiring specific care and development, an idea that pushed him into a province long occupied by poets and priests but not so much by medical doctors and empirical scientists.

Jung soon found himself in opposition not just to Freud but also to most of his field, the [psychiatrists](#) who constituted the dominant culture at the time, speaking the clinical language of symptom and diagnosis behind the deadbolts of asylum wards. Separation was not easy. As his convictions began to crystallize, Jung, who was at that point an outwardly successful and ambitious man with a young family, a thriving private practice and a big, elegant house on the shores of Lake Zurich, felt his own psyche starting to teeter and slide, until finally he was dumped into what would become a life-altering crisis.

What happened next to Carl Jung has become, among Jungians and other scholars, the topic of enduring legend and controversy. It has been characterized variously as a creative illness, a descent into the underworld, a bout with insanity, a narcissistic self-deification, a transcendence, a midlife breakdown and an inner disturbance mirroring the upheaval of World War I. Whatever the case, in 1913, Jung, who was then 38, got lost in the soup of his own psyche. He was haunted by troubling visions and heard inner voices. Grappling with the horror of some of what he saw, he worried in moments that he was, in his own words,

“menaced by a psychosis” or “doing a [schizophrenia](#).”

He later would compare this period of his life — this “confrontation with the unconscious,” as he called it — to a mescaline experiment. He described his visions as coming in an “incessant stream.” He likened them to rocks falling on his head, to thunderstorms, to molten lava. “I often had to cling to the table,” he recalled, “so as not to fall apart.”

Had he been a psychiatric patient, Jung might well have been told he had a nervous disorder and encouraged to ignore the circus going on in his head. But as a psychiatrist, and one with a decidedly maverick streak, he tried instead to tear down the wall between his rational self and his psyche. For about six years, Jung worked to prevent his conscious mind from blocking out what his unconscious mind wanted to show him. Between appointments with patients, after dinner with his wife and children, whenever there was a spare hour or two, Jung sat in a book-lined office on the second floor of his home and actually induced [hallucinations](#) — what he called “active imaginations.” “In order to grasp the fantasies which were stirring in me ‘underground,’” Jung wrote later in his book “Memories, Dreams, Reflections,” “I knew that I had to let myself plummet down into them.” He found himself in a liminal place, as full of creative abundance as it was of potential ruin, believing it to be the same borderlands traveled by both lunatics and great artists.

Jung recorded it all. First taking notes in a series of small, black journals, he then expounded upon and analyzed his fantasies, writing in a regal, prophetic tone in the big red-leather book. The book detailed an unabashedly psychedelic voyage through his own mind, a vaguely Homeric progression of encounters with strange people taking place in a curious, shifting dreamscape. Writing in German, he filled 205 oversize pages with elaborate calligraphy and with richly hued, staggeringly detailed paintings.

What he wrote did not belong to his previous canon of dispassionate, academic essays on [psychiatry](#). Nor was it a straightforward diary. It did not mention his wife, or his children, or his colleagues, nor for that matter did it use any psychiatric language at all. Instead, the book was a kind of phantasmagoric morality play, driven by Jung’s own wish not just to chart a course out of the mangrove swamp of his inner world but also to take some of its riches with him. It was this last part — the idea that a person might move beneficially between the poles of the rational and irrational, the light and the dark, the conscious and the unconscious — that provided the germ for his later work and for what analytical psychology would become.

The book tells the story of Jung trying to face down his own demons as they emerged from the shadows. The results are humiliating, sometimes unsavory. In it, Jung travels the land of the dead, falls in love with a woman he later realizes is his sister, gets squeezed by a giant serpent and, in one terrifying moment, eats the liver of a little child. (“I swallow with desperate efforts — it is impossible — once again and once again — I almost faint — it is done.”) At one point, even the devil criticizes Jung as hateful.

He worked on his red book — and he called it just that, the Red Book — on and off for about 16 years, long after his personal crisis had passed, but he never managed to finish it. He actively fretted over it, wondering whether to have it published and face ridicule from his scientifically oriented peers or to put it in a drawer and forget it. Regarding the significance of what the book contained, however, Jung was unequivocal. “All my works, all my creative activity,” he would recall later, “has come from those initial fantasies and

dreams.”

Jung evidently kept the Red Book locked in a cupboard in his house in the Zurich suburb of Küsnacht. When he died in 1961, he left no specific instructions about what to do with it. His son, Franz, an architect and the third of Jung’s five children, took over running the house and chose to leave the book, with its strange musings and elaborate paintings, where it was. Later, in 1984, the family transferred it to the bank, where since then it has fulminated as both an asset and a liability.

Anytime someone did ask to see the Red Book, family members said, without hesitation and sometimes without decorum, no. The book was private, they asserted, an intensely personal work. In 1989, an American analyst named Stephen Martin, who was then the editor of a Jungian journal and now directs a Jungian nonprofit foundation, visited Jung’s son (his other four children were daughters) and inquired about the Red Book. The question was met with a vehemence that surprised him. “Franz Jung, an otherwise genial and gracious man, reacted sharply, nearly with anger,” Martin later wrote in his foundation’s newsletter, saying “in no uncertain terms” that Martin could not “see the Red Book, nor could he ever imagine that it would be published.”

And yet, Carl Jung’s secret Red Book — scanned, translated and footnoted — will be in stores early next month, published by W. W. Norton and billed as the “most influential unpublished work in the history of psychology.” Surely it is a victory for someone, but it is too early yet to say for whom.

STEPHEN MARTIN IS a compact, bearded man of 57. He has a buoyant, irreverent wit and what feels like a fully intact sense of wonder. If you happen to have a conversation with him anytime before, say, 10 a.m., he will ask his first question — “How did you sleep?” — and likely follow it with a second one — “Did you dream?” Because for Martin, as it is for all Jungian analysts, dreaming offers a barometric reading of the psyche. At his house in a leafy suburb of Philadelphia, Martin keeps five thick books filled with notations on and interpretations of all the dreams he had while studying to be an analyst 30 years ago in Zurich, under the tutelage of a Swiss analyst then in her 70s named Liliane Frey-Rohn. These days, Martin stores his dreams on his computer, but his dream life is — as he says everybody’s dream life should be — as involving as ever.

Even as some of his peers in the Jungian world are cautious about regarding Carl Jung as a sage — a history of anti-Semitic remarks and his sometimes patriarchal views of women have caused some to distance themselves — Martin is unapologetically reverential. He keeps Jung’s 20 volumes of collected works on a shelf at home. He rereads “Memories, Dreams, Reflections” at least twice a year. Many years ago, when one of his daughters interviewed him as part of a school project and asked what his religion was, Martin, a nonobservant Jew, answered, “Oh, honey, I’m a Jungian.”

The first time I met him, at the train station in Ardmore, Pa., Martin shook my hand and thoughtfully took my suitcase. “Come,” he said. “I’ll take you to see the holy hankie.” We then walked several blocks to the office where Martin sees clients. The room was cozy and cavelike, with a thick rug and walls painted a deep, handsome shade of blue. There was a Mission-style sofa and two upholstered chairs and an espresso machine in one corner.

Several mounted vintage posters of Zurich hung on the walls, along with framed photographs of Carl Jung,

looking wise and white-haired, and Liliane Frey-Rohn, a round-faced woman smiling maternally from behind a pair of severe glasses.

Martin tenderly lifted several first-edition books by Jung from a shelf, opening them so I could see how they had been inscribed to Frey-Rohn, who later bequeathed them to Martin. Finally, we found ourselves standing in front of a square frame hung on the room's far wall, another gift from his former analyst and the centerpiece of Martin's Jung arcana. Inside the frame was a delicate linen square, its crispness worn away by age — a folded handkerchief with the letters "CGJ" embroidered neatly in one corner in gray. Martin pointed. "There you have it," he said with exaggerated pomp, "the holy hankie, the sacred nasal shroud of C. G. Jung."

In addition to practicing as an analyst, Martin is the director of the Philemon Foundation, which focuses on preparing the unpublished works of Carl Jung for publication, with the Red Book as its central project. He has spent the last several years aggressively, sometimes evangelistically, raising money in the Jungian community to support his foundation. The foundation, in turn, helped pay for the translating of the book and the addition of a scholarly apparatus — a lengthy introduction and vast network of footnotes — written by a London-based historian named Sonu Shamdasani, who serves as the foundation's general editor and who spent about three years persuading the family to endorse the publication of the book and to allow him access to it.

Given the Philemon Foundation's aim to excavate and make public C. G. Jung's old papers — lectures he delivered at Zurich's Psychological Club or unpublished letters, for example — both Martin and Shamdasani, who started the foundation in 2003, have worked to develop a relationship with the Jung family, the owners and notoriously protective gatekeepers of Jung's works. Martin echoed what nearly everybody I met subsequently would tell me about working with Jung's descendants. "It's sometimes delicate," he said, adding by way of explanation, "They are very Swiss."

What he likely meant by this was that the members of the Jung family who work most actively on maintaining Jung's estate tend to do things carefully and with an emphasis on privacy and decorum and are on occasion taken aback by the relatively brazen and totally informal way that American Jungians — who it is safe to say are the most ardent of all Jungians — inject themselves into the family's business. There are Americans knocking unannounced on the door of the family home in Küsnacht; Americans scaling the fence at Bollingen, the stone tower Jung built as a summer residence farther south on the shore of Lake Zurich. Americans pepper Ulrich Hoerni, one of Jung's grandsons who manages Jung's editorial and archival matters through a family foundation, almost weekly with requests for various permissions. The relationship between the Jungs and the people who are inspired by Jung is, almost by necessity, a complex symbiosis. The Red Book — which on one hand described Jung's self-analysis and became the genesis for the Jungian method and on the other was just strange enough to possibly embarrass the family — held a certain electrical charge. Martin recognized the descendants' quandary. "They own it, but they haven't lived it," he said, describing Jung's legacy. "It's very consternating for them because we all feel like we own it." Even the old psychiatrist himself seemed to recognize the tension. "Thank God I am Jung," he is rumored once to have said, "and not a Jungian."

"This guy, he was a bodhisattva," Martin said to me that day. "This is the greatest psychic explorer of the

20th century, and this book tells the story of his inner life.” He added, “It gives me goose bumps just thinking about it.” He had at that point yet to lay eyes on the book, but for him that made it all the more tantalizing. His hope was that the Red Book would “reinvigorate” Jungian psychology, or at the very least bring himself personally closer to Jung. “Will I understand it?” he said. “Probably not. Will it disappoint? Probably. Will it inspire? How could it not?” He paused a moment, seeming to think it through. “I want to be transformed by it,” he said finally. “That’s all there is.”

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND and decode the Red Book — a process he says required more than five years of concentrated work — Sonu Shamdasani took long, rambling walks on London’s Hampstead Heath. He would translate the book in the morning, then walk miles in the park in the afternoon, his mind trying to follow the rabbit’s path Jung had forged through his own mind.

Shamdasani is 46. He has thick black hair, a punctilious eye for detail and an understated, even somnolent, way of speaking. He is friendly but not particularly given to small talk. If Stephen Martin is — in Jungian terms — a “feeling type,” then Shamdasani, who teaches at the University College London’s Wellcome Trust Center for the History of Medicine and keeps a book by the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus by his sofa for light reading, is a “thinking type.” He has studied Jungian psychology for more than 15 years and is particularly drawn to the breadth of Jung’s psychology and his knowledge of Eastern thought, as well as the historical richness of his era, a period when visionary writing was more common, when science and art were more entwined and when Europe was slipping into the psychic upheaval of war. He tends to be suspicious of interpretive thinking that’s not anchored by hard fact — and has, in fact, made a habit of attacking anybody he deems guilty of sloppy scholarship — and also maintains a generally unsentimental attitude toward Jung. Both of these qualities make him, at times, awkward company among both Jungians and Jungs.

The relationship between historians and the families of history’s luminaries is, almost by nature, one of mutual disenchantment. One side works to extract; the other to protect. One pushes; one pulls. Stephen Joyce, [James Joyce](#)’s literary executor and last living heir, has compared scholars and biographers to “rats and lice.” [Vladimir Nabokov](#)’s son Dmitri recently told an interviewer that he considered destroying his father’s last known novel in order to rescue it from the “monstrous nincompoops” who had already picked over his father’s life and works. [T. S. Eliot](#)’s widow, Valerie Fletcher, has actively kept his papers out of the hands of biographers, and Anna Freud was, during her lifetime, notoriously selective about who was allowed to read and quote from her father’s archives.

Even against this backdrop, the Jungs, led by Ulrich Hoerni, the chief literary administrator, have distinguished themselves with their custodial vigor. Over the years, they have tried to interfere with the publication of books perceived to be negative or inaccurate (including one by the award-winning biographer Deirdre Bair), engaged in legal standoffs with Jungians and other academics over rights to Jung’s work and maintained a state of high [agitation](#) concerning the way C. G. Jung is portrayed. Shamdasani was initially cautious with Jung’s heirs. “They had a retinue of people coming to them and asking to see the crown jewels,” he told me in London this summer. “And the standard reply was, ‘Get lost.’ ”

Shamdasani first approached the family with a proposal to edit and eventually publish the Red Book in 1997, which turned out to be an opportune moment. Franz Jung, a vehement opponent of exposing Jung’s private side, had recently died, and the family was reeling from the publication of two controversial and

widely discussed books by an American psychologist named Richard Noll, who proposed that Jung was a philandering, self-appointed prophet of a sun-worshipping Aryan cult and that several of his central ideas were either plagiarized or based upon falsified research.

While the attacks by Noll might have normally propelled the family to more vociferously guard the Red Book, Shamdasani showed up with the right bargaining chips — two partial typed draft manuscripts (without illustrations) of the Red Book he had dug up elsewhere. One was sitting on a bookshelf in a house in southern Switzerland, at the home of the elderly daughter of a woman who once worked as a transcriptionist and translator for Jung. The second he found at [Yale University](#)'s Beinecke Library, in an uncataloged box of papers belonging to a well-known German publisher. The fact that there were partial copies of the Red Book signified two things — one, that Jung had distributed it to at least a few friends, presumably soliciting feedback for publication; and two, that the book, so long considered private and inaccessible, was in fact findable. The specter of Richard Noll and anybody else who, they feared, might want to taint Jung by quoting selectively from the book loomed large. With or without the family's blessing, the Red Book — or at least parts of it — would likely become public at some point soon, “probably,” Shamdasani wrote ominously in a report to the family, “in sensationalistic form.”

For about two years, Shamdasani flew back and forth to Zurich, making his case to Jung's heirs. He had lunches and coffees and delivered a lecture. Finally, after what were by all accounts tense deliberations inside the family, Shamdasani was given a small salary and a color copy of the original book and was granted permission to proceed in preparing it for publication, though he was bound by a strict confidentiality agreement. When money ran short in 2003, the Philemon Foundation was created to finance Shamdasani's research.

Having lived more or less alone with the book for almost a decade, Shamdasani — who is a lover of fine wine and the intricacies of jazz — these days has the slightly stunned aspect of someone who has only very recently found his way out of an enormous maze. When I visited him this summer in the book-stuffed duplex overlooking the heath, he was just adding his 1,051st footnote to the Red Book.

The footnotes map both Shamdasani's journey and Jung's. They include references to Faust, Keats, Ovid, the Norse gods Odin and Thor, the Egyptian deities Isis and Osiris, the Greek goddess Hecate, ancient Gnostic texts, Greek Hyperboreans, King Herod, the Old Testament, the New Testament, Nietzsche's Zarathustra, astrology, the artist Giacometti and the alchemical formulation of gold. And that's just naming a few. The central premise of the book, Shamdasani told me, was that Jung had become disillusioned with scientific rationalism — what he called “the spirit of the times” — and over the course of many quixotic encounters with his own soul and with other inner figures, he comes to know and appreciate “the spirit of the depths,” a field that makes room for magic, coincidence and the mythological metaphors delivered by dreams.

“It is the nuclear reactor for all his works,” Shamdasani said, noting that Jung's more well-known concepts — including his belief that humanity shares a pool of ancient wisdom that he called the collective unconscious and the thought that personalities have both male and female components (animus and anima) — have their roots in the Red Book. Creating the book also led Jung to reformulate how he worked with clients, as evidenced by an entry Shamdasani found in a self-published book written by a former client, in

which she recalls Jung's advice for processing what went on in the deeper and sometimes frightening parts of her mind.

"I should advise you to put it all down as beautifully as you can — in some beautifully bound book," Jung instructed. "It will seem as if you were making the visions banal — but then you need to do that — then you are freed from the power of them. . . . Then when these things are in some precious book you can go to the book & turn over the pages & for you it will be your church — your cathedral — the silent places of your spirit where you will find renewal. If anyone tells you that it is morbid or neurotic and you listen to them — then you will lose your soul — for in that book is your soul."

ZURICH IS, IF NOTHING ELSE, one of Europe's more purposeful cities. Its church bells clang precisely; its trains glide in and out on a flawless schedule. There are crowded fondue restaurants and chocolatiers and rosy-cheeked natives breezily pedaling their bicycles over the stone bridges that span the Limmat River. In summer, white-sailed yachts puff around Lake Zurich; in winter, the Alps glitter on the horizon. And during the lunch hour year-round, squads of young bankers stride the Bahnhofstrasse in their power suits and high-end watches, appearing eternally mindful of the fact that beneath everyone's feet lie labyrinthine vaults stuffed with a dazzling and disproportionate amount of the world's wealth.

But there, too, ventilating the city's material splendor with their devotion to dreams, are the Jungians. Some 100 Jungian analysts practice in and around Zurich, examining their clients' dreams in sessions held in small offices tucked inside buildings around the city. Another few hundred analysts in training can be found studying at one of the two Jungian institutes in the area. More than once, I have been told that, in addition to being a fantastic tourist destination and a good place to hide money, Zurich is an excellent city for dreaming.

Jungians are accustomed to being in the minority pretty much everywhere they go, but here, inside a city of 370,000, they have found a certain quiet purchase. Zurich, for Jungians, is spiritually loaded. It's a kind of Jerusalem, the place where C. G. Jung began his career, held seminars, cultivated an inner circle of disciples, developed his theories of the psyche and eventually grew old. Many of the people who enroll in the institutes are Swiss, American, British or German, but some are from places like Japan and South Africa and Brazil. Though there are other Jungian institutes in other cities around the world offering diploma programs, learning the techniques of dream analysis in Zurich is a little bit like learning to hit a baseball in [Yankee Stadium](#). For a believer, the place alone conveys a talismanic grace.

Just as I had, Stephen Martin flew to Zurich the week the Red Book was taken from its bank-vault home and moved to a small photo studio near the opera house to be scanned, page by page, for publication. (A separate English translation along with Shamdasani's introduction and footnotes will be included at the back of the book.) Martin already made a habit of visiting Zurich a few times a year for "bratwurst and renewal" and to attend to Philemon Foundation business. My first morning there, we walked around the older parts of Zurich, before going to see the book. Zurich made Martin nostalgic. It was here that he met his wife, Charlotte, and here that he developed the almost equally important relationship with his analyst, Frey-Rohn, carrying himself and his dreams to her office two or three times weekly for several years.

Undergoing analysis is a central, learn-by-doing part of Jungian training, which usually takes about five

years and also involves taking courses in folklore, mythology, comparative religion and psychopathology, among others. It is, Martin says, very much a “mentor-based discipline.” He is fond of pointing out his own conferred pedigree, because Frey-Rohn was herself analyzed by C. G. Jung. Most analysts seem to know their bloodlines. That morning, Martin and I were passing a cafe when he spotted another American analyst, someone he knew in school and who has since settled in Switzerland. “Oh, there’s Bob,” Martin said merrily, making his way toward the man. “Bob trained with Liliane,” he explained to me, “and that makes us kind of like brothers.”

Jungian analysis revolves largely around writing down your dreams (or drawing them) and bringing them to the analyst — someone who is patently good with both symbols and people — to be scoured for personal and archetypal meaning. Borrowing from Jung’s own experiences, analysts often encourage clients to experiment on their own with active imagination, to summon a waking dreamscape and to interact with whatever, or whoever, surfaces there. Analysis is considered to be a form of psychotherapy, and many analysts are in fact trained also as psychotherapists, but in its purist form, a Jungian analyst eschews clinical talk of diagnoses and recovery in favor of broader (and some might say fuzzier) goals of self-discovery and wholeness — a maturation process Jung himself referred to as “individuation.” Perhaps as a result, Jungian analysis has a distinct appeal to people in midlife. “The purpose of analysis is not treatment,” Martin explained to me. “That’s the purpose of psychotherapy. The purpose of analysis,” he added, a touch grandly, “is to give life back to someone who’s lost it.”

Later that day, we went to the photo studio where the work on the book was already under way. The room was a charmless space with concrete floors and black walls. Its hushed atmosphere and glaring lights added a slightly surgical aspect. There was the editor from Norton in a tweedy sport coat. There was an art director hired by Norton and two technicians from a company called DigitalFusion, who had flown to Zurich from Southern California with what looked to be a half-ton of computer and camera equipment.

Shamdasani arrived ahead of us. And so did Ulrich Hoerni, who, along with his cousin Peter Jung, had become a cautious supporter of Shamdasani, working to build consensus inside the family to allow the book out into the world. Hoerni was the one to fetch the book from the bank and was now standing by, his brow furrowed, appearing somewhat tortured. To talk to Jung’s heirs is to understand that nearly four decades after his death, they continue to reel inside the psychic tornado Jung created during his lifetime, caught between the opposing forces of his admirers and critics and between their own filial loyalties and history’s pressing tendency to judge and rejudge its own playmakers. Hoerni would later tell me that Shamdasani’s discovery of the stray copies of the Red Book surprised him, that even today he’s not entirely clear about whether Carl Jung ever intended for the Red Book to be published. “He left it an open question,” he said. “One might think he would have taken some of his children aside and said, ‘This is what it is and what I want done with it,’ but he didn’t.” It was a burden Hoerni seemed to wear heavily. He had shown up at the photo studio not just with the Red Book in its special padded suitcase but also with a bedroll and a toothbrush, since after the day’s work was wrapped, he would be spending the night curled up near the book — “a necessary insurance measure,” he would explain.

And finally, there sunbathing under the lights, sat Carl Jung’s Red Book, splayed open to Page 37. One side of the open page showed an intricate mosaic painting of a giant holding an ax, surrounded by winged serpents and crocodiles. The other side was filled with a cramped German calligraphy that seemed at once

controlled and also, just given the number of words on the page, created the impression of something written feverishly, cathartically. Above the book a 10,200-pixel scanner suspended on a dolly clicked and whirred, capturing the book one-tenth of a millimeter at a time and uploading the images into a computer.

The Red Book had an undeniable beauty. Its colors seemed almost to [pulse](#), its writing almost to crawl. Shamdasani's relief was palpable, as was Hoerni's [anxiety](#). Everyone in the room seemed frozen in a kind of awe, especially Stephen Martin, who stood about eight feet away from the book but then finally, after a few minutes, began to inch closer to it. When the art director called for a break, Martin leaned in, tilting his head to read some of the German on the page. Whether he understood it or not, he didn't say. He only looked up and smiled.

ONE AFTERNOON I took a break from the scanning and visited Andreas Jung, who lives with his wife, Vreni, in C. G. Jung's old house at 228 Seestrasse in the town of Küsnacht. The house — a 5,000-square-foot, 1908 baroque-style home, designed by the psychiatrist and financed largely with his wife, Emma's, inheritance — sits on an expanse between the road and the lake. Two rows of trimmed, towering topiary trees create a narrow passage to the entrance. The house faces the white-capped lake, a set of manicured gardens and, in one corner, an anomalous, unruly patch of bamboo.

Andreas is a tall man with a quiet demeanor and a gentlemanly way of dressing. At 64, he resembles a thinner, milder version of his famous grandfather, whom he refers to as "C. G." Among Jung's five children (all but one are dead) and 19 grandchildren (all but five are still living), he is one of the youngest and also known as the most accommodating to curious outsiders. It is an uneasy kind of celebrity. He and Vreni make tea and politely serve cookies and dispense little anecdotes about Jung to those courteous enough to make an advance appointment. "People want to talk to me and sometimes even touch me," Andreas told me, seeming both amused and a little sheepish. "But it is not at all because of me, of course. It is because of my grandfather." He mentioned that the gardeners who trim the trees are often perplexed when they encounter strangers — usually foreigners — snapping pictures of the house. "In Switzerland, C. G. Jung is not thought to be so important," he said. "They don't see the point of it."

Jung, who was born in the mountain village of Kesswil, was a lifelong outsider in Zurich, even as in his adult years he seeded the city with his followers and became — along with [Paul Klee](#) and Karl Barth — one of the best-known Swissmen of his era. Perhaps his marginalization stemmed in part from the offbeat nature of his ideas. (He was mocked, for example, for publishing a book in the late 1950s that examined the psychological phenomenon of flying saucers.) Maybe it was his well-documented abrasiveness toward people he found uninteresting. Or maybe it was connected to the fact that he broke with the established ranks of his profession. (During the troubled period when he began writing the Red Book, Jung resigned from his position at Burghölzli, never to return.) Most likely, too, it had something to do with the unconventional, unhidden, 40-something-year affair he conducted with a shy but intellectually forbidding woman named Toni Wolff, one of Jung's former analysands who went on to become an analyst as well as Jung's close professional collaborator and a frequent, if not fully welcome, fixture at the Jung family dinner table.

"The life of C. G. Jung was not easy," Andreas said. "For the family, it was not easy at all." As a young man, Andreas had sometimes gone and found his grandfather's Red Book in the cupboard and paged through it,

just for fun. Knowing its author personally, he said, “It was not strange to me at all.”

For the family, C. G. Jung became more of a puzzle after his death, having left behind a large amount of unpublished work and an audience eager to get its hands on it. “There were big fights,” Andreas told me when I visited him again this summer. Andreas, who was 19 when his grandfather died, recalled family debates over whether or not to allow some of Jung’s private letters to be published. When the extended family gathered for the annual Christmas party in Küsnacht, Jung’s children would disappear into a room and have heated discussions about what to do with what he had left behind while his grandchildren played in another room. “My cousins and brothers and I, we thought they were silly to argue over these things,” Andreas said, with a light laugh. “But later when our parents died, we found ourselves having those same arguments.”

Even Jung’s great-grandchildren felt his presence. “He was omnipresent,” Daniel Baumann, whose grandmother was Jung’s daughter Gret, would tell me when I met him later. He described his own childhood with a mix of bitterness and sympathy directed at the older generations. “It was, ‘Jung said this,’ and ‘Jung did that,’ and ‘Jung thought that.’ When you did something, he was always present somehow. He just continued to live on. He was with us. He is still with us,” Baumann said. Baumann is an architect and also the president of the board of the C. G. Jung Institute in Küsnacht. He deals with Jungians all the time, and for them, he said, it was the same. Jung was both there and not there. “It’s sort of like a hologram,” he said. “Everyone projects something in the space, and Jung begins to be a real person again.”

ONE NIGHT DURING the week of the scanning in Zurich, I had a big dream. A big dream, the Jungians tell me, is a departure from all your regular dreams, which in my case meant this dream was not about falling off a cliff or missing an exam. This dream was about an elephant — a dead elephant with its head cut off. The head was on a grill at a suburban-style barbecue, and I was holding the spatula. Everybody milled around with cocktails; the head sizzled over the flames. I was angry at my daughter’s [kindergarten](#) teacher because she was supposed to be grilling the elephant head at the barbecue, but she hadn’t bothered to show up. And so the job fell to me. Then I woke up.

At the hotel breakfast buffet, I bumped into Stephen Martin and a Californian analyst named Nancy Furlotti, who is the vice president on the board of the Philemon Foundation and was at that moment having tea and muesli.

“How are you?” Martin said.

“Did you dream?” Furlotti asked

“What do elephants mean to you?” Martin asked after I relayed my dream.

“I like elephants,” I said. “I admire elephants.”

“There’s Ganesha,” Furlotti said, more to Martin than to me. “Ganesha is an Indian god of wisdom.”

“Elephants are maternal,” Martin offered, “very caring.”

They spent a few minutes puzzling over the archetypal role of the kindergarten teacher. “How do you feel

about her?” “Would you say she is more like a mother figure or more like a witch?”

Giving a dream to a Jungian analyst is a little bit like feeding a complex quadratic equation to someone who really enjoys math. It takes time. The process itself is to be savored. The solution is not always immediately evident. In the following months, I told my dream to several more analysts, and each one circled around similar symbolic concepts about femininity and wisdom. One day I was in the office of Murray Stein, an American analyst who lives in Switzerland and serves as the president of the International School of Analytical Psychology, talking about the Red Book. Stein was telling me about how some Jungian analysts he knew were worried about the publication — worried specifically that it was a private document and would be apprehended as the work of a crazy person, which then reminded me of my crazy dream. I related it to him, saying that the very thought of eating an elephant’s head struck me as grotesque and embarrassing and possibly a sign there was something deeply wrong with my psyche. Stein assured me that eating is a symbol for integration. “Don’t worry,” he said soothingly. “It’s horrifying on a naturalistic level, but symbolically it is good.”

It turned out that nearly everybody around the Red Book was dreaming that week. Nancy Furlotti dreamed that we were all sitting at a table drinking amber liquid from glass globes and talking about death. (Was the scanning of the book a death? Wasn’t death followed by rebirth?) Sonu Shamdasani dreamed that he came upon Hoerni sleeping in the garden of a museum. Stephen Martin was sure that he had felt some invisible hand patting him on the back while he slept. And Hugh Milstein, one of the digital techs scanning the book, passed a tormented night watching a ghostly, white-faced child flash on a computer screen. (Furlotti and Martin debated: could that be Mercurius? The god of travelers at a crossroads?)

Early one morning we were standing around the photo studio discussing our various dreams when Ulrich Hoerni trudged through the door, having deputized his nephew Felix to spend the previous night next to the Red Book. Felix had done his job; the Red Book lay sleeping with its cover closed on the table. But Hoerni, appearing weary, seemed to be taking an extra hard look at the book. The Jungians greeted him. “How are you? Did you dream last night?”

“Yes,” Hoerni said quietly, not moving his gaze from the table. “I dreamed the book was on fire.”

ABOUT HALFWAY THROUGH the Red Book — after he has traversed a desert, scrambled up mountains, carried God on his back, committed murder, visited hell; and after he has had long and inconclusive talks with his guru, Philemon, a man with bullhorns and a long beard who flaps around on kingfisher wings — Jung is feeling understandably tired and insane. This is when his soul, a female figure who surfaces periodically throughout the book, shows up again. She tells him not to fear madness but to accept it, even to tap into it as a source of creativity. “If you want to find paths, you should also not spurn madness, since it makes up such a great part of your nature.”

The Red Book is not an easy journey — it wasn’t for Jung, it wasn’t for his family, nor for Shamdasani, and neither will it be for readers. The book is bombastic, baroque and like so much else about Carl Jung, a willful oddity, synched with an antediluvian and mystical reality. The text is dense, often poetic, always strange. The art is arresting and also strange. Even today, its publication feels risky, like an exposure. But then again, it is possible Jung intended it as such. In 1959, after having left the book more or less untouched

for 30 or so years, he penned a brief epilogue, acknowledging the central dilemma in considering the book's fate. "To the superficial observer," he wrote, "it will appear like madness." Yet the very fact he wrote an epilogue seems to indicate that he trusted his words would someday find the right audience.

Shamdasani figures that the Red Book's contents will ignite both Jung's fans and his critics. Already there are Jungians planning conferences and lectures devoted to the Red Book, something that Shamdasani finds amusing. Recalling that it took him years to feel as if he understood anything about the book, he's curious to know what people will be saying about it just months after it is published. As far as he is concerned, once the book sees daylight, it will become a major and unignorable piece of Jung's history, the gateway into Carl Jung's most inner of inner experiences. "Once it's published, there will be a 'before' and 'after' in Jungian scholarship," he told me, adding, "it will wipe out all the biographies, just for starters." What about the rest of us, the people who aren't Jungians, I wondered. Was there something in the Red Book for us? "Absolutely, there is a human story here," Shamdasani said. "The basic message he's sending is 'Value your inner life.'"

After it was scanned, the book went back to its bank-vault home, but it will move again — this time to New York, accompanied by a number of Jung's descendents. For the next few months it will be on display at the Rubin Museum of Art. Ulrich Hoerni told me this summer that he assumed the book would generate "criticism and gossip," but by bringing it out they were potentially rescuing future generations of Jungians from some of the struggles of the past. If another generation inherited the Red Book, he said, "the question would again have to be asked, 'What do we do with it?'"

Stephen Martin too will be on hand for the book's arrival in New York. He is already sensing that it will shed positive light on Jung — this thanks to a dream he had recently about an "inexpressively sublime" dawn breaking over the Swiss Alps — even as others are not so certain.

In the Red Book, after Jung's soul urges him to embrace the madness, Jung is still doubtful. Then suddenly, as happens in dreams, his soul turns into "a fat, little professor," who expresses a kind of paternal concern for Jung.

Jung says: "I too believe that I've completely lost myself. Am I really crazy? It's all terribly confusing."

The professor responds: "Have patience, everything will work out. Anyway, sleep well."

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: September 20, 2009

An article on Page 34 this weekend about Carl Jung and a book he wrote about struggling with his own demons misspells the name of a street in Zurich where, before it was published, the book was held for years in a bank safe-deposit box, and a correction in this space on Saturday also misspelled the name. It is Bahnhofstrasse, not Banhofstrasse or Banhoffstrasse. The article also misstates the location of Bollingen, the town where Jung built a stone tower as a summer residence. While it is on the north shore of Lake Zurich, it is south of the Jung family home in Küsnacht.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: October 4, 2009

An article on Sept. 20 about the publication of Carl Jung's Red Book misstated part of the name of the Swiss bank where the book was kept for many years. It is the Union Bank of Switzerland, not United.

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