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My Break with Jung

by Virginia Apperson

Women have been in darkness for centuries.... And when women write, they translate this darkness. Men don't translate. They begin from a theoretical platform....

—Marguerite Duras, "Smothered Creativity"

*...As when a little Girl
They put me in the Closet—
Because they like me "still"—
Still! Could they have peeped—
And seen my brain-go round—*

—Emily Dickinson

OK, it was a short-lived one, but a break still the same. And a significant one in my own development as a Jungian Analyst. It was December 1993. I was studying for my final exams at the C.G. Jung Institute in Kusnacht. Between the cramming sessions, I was reading Claire Douglas's *Translate this Darkness* about Jung's patient Christiana Morgan. Using Duras and Dickinson's words (see above), Douglas gives the reader a potent whiff of what Morgan was up against throughout her life, a longing to translate her darkness while multiple forces colluded to tame her. Morgan was one of Jung's analysands and the woman behind the visions that were the basis for Jung's "Vision Seminars." (Some of her "visions" are displayed at Oglethorpe University's current Mandala exhibit.) According to Claire Douglas, Jung was intrigued by Morgan's capacity to enter the imaginal world, her "passionate earthiness" and "the spiritual side of her sexuality" (p. 150). Morgan had floundered in and out of a depression for years; so she was touched deeply by Jung's help finding a legitimate place for her unconventional libido.

Though genuinely impressed by Christiana Morgan's facile access to the chthonic realm, Jung was handicapped when it came to responsibly shepherding her towards her own sense of self and empowerment. In what proved to be a cataclysmic shift in their analytic relationship, he betrayed Morgan by encouraging her to funnel her idiosyncratic talents towards her lover, Henry Murray, through becoming his muse. Jung told her, "Your function is to create a man...[to be] a femme inspiratrice.... You have your ideal of him. You must make him live up to it" (p. 151). And so, with Jung's blessing, Morgan and Murray were emboldened to pursue a relationship based on naïve projec-



Christiana Morgan

Virginia Apperson's belief in the creative potential within each of us led to her training at the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich. In addition to her analytic practice, she works with couples, leads dream groups, and lectures on Jungian topics.

tions. Furthermore, their romance paralleled Jung's affairs with Sabina Spielrein (the subject of the recent film, *A Dangerous Method*) and Toni Wolff. Apparently all three women shared similar temperaments and "led [Jung] into unfathomed reaches" (p. 158).

Frankly, I was horrified after reading *Translate this Darkness*. Learning of Jung's subjugating response to Morgan disturbed me enough to question whether I wanted to continue my training, and I considered heading home, sans diploma. In spite of this dis-ease, I took my final exams and then used my thesis as a way to wrestle with the knowledge of Jung's egregious advice to Morgan to sacrifice her individuation in service of Murray's pursuits. Prominent among the Jungian authors that had resonated with me were women such as Marie Louise von Franz, Sylvia Brinton Perera, Linda Leonard, Marion Woodman, Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Ann Ulanov, to name a very few. Their insights, that advanced Jung's ideas around feminine development in both women and men, helped me enormously in my own personal development, as well as work with my analysands. Before completing my training, I had to reconcile the discovery of Jung's interference in Morgan's individuation that seemed completely at odds with what had become most precious and fundamental in my understanding of Jungian Psychology.

Claire Douglas grappled with a related paradox as she tells a tale as old as time of a scintillating woman sidelined and obscured by the men in her life: men that claimed to admire and adore her, as long as she served their narcissistic need to project their feminine potential onto her, rather than recognize such an animating experience as an opportunity to connect with their own feminine potential. Douglas puts Morgan's tragedy into perspective in her description of some of the most impressive women in Jung's (and Freud's) circle that had a:

Beguiling combination of vibrancy, charm, quick intuitive thinking, a deep interest in the world of ideas, and a capacity for exciting and inspiring the men in their lives. These women tended to manifest a problematical creativity of their own, which penetrated the unconscious and explored its realms to a depth that fascinated both Freud and Jung. The women were able to form bridges between their own creative energies and the creativity at times latent in their analysts. However, instead of cultivating this creativity for their own benefit, the women were encouraged to project it onto a series of numinous men and to subordinate their own talents in order to advance the men's work. Each poured her talents and energy into the career of a male analyst who took her as a companion. Recently some of these women – Lou Andreas-Salome, Anais Nin, Ruth Mack Brunswick, Beata (Tola) Rank, Toni Wolff, Sabina Spielrein, and Christiana Morgan – have found a degree of recognition, but all lack a comprehensive and empathic analysis of their struggle as creative women at the center of their own stories. (pp. 12-13).

Douglas generates such an analysis of Christiana Morgan's life in her well-documented book. In a similar vein, though not as responsibly documented, David Cronenberg brings Sabina Spielrein's story to an even larger audience with his film, *A Dangerous Method*.



Christiana Morgan - drawing for Thematic Apperception Test

As I revisit my initial reading of *Translate this Darkness* and my subsequent falling out with Jung, I remember how important this disillusionment was, challenging me to consider what mattered most in Jung's visionary theories. To hold the tension of opposites (one of Jung's most fundamental concepts) between Jungian theory and the realization that Jung (like all of us!) was a flawed, complex-influenced person helped me through this confusing time. Writing my thesis, "Revising the Notion of Living Happily Ever After: Finding the Gleam in Your Own Eyes," provided me the outlet for this wrestling match. And for weeks on end, I holed up in my tiny apartment working furiously and feverishly.

As I tried to square the Jungian theory I had come to value with Jung's shortsightedness, I was aware of how easy it was to get stuck in my inflammatory reaction to Jung's duplicity and lose sight of that which I found so life-giving. Similarly, I imagine many leave *A Dangerous Method* disgusted—with vivid images of the sensationalized sadomasochistic sex scenes between Jung and Spielrein—forgetting the portrayal of the intensely curious and radically insightful Jung. In contrast, Douglas balances her exposure of Jung's self-serving parochialism with his progressive approach that afforded Morgan an opportunity to plunge into the rich depths of her unconscious, resurfacing with brilliant experiences and images (p. 164). With her enviable facility for reverie, Jung enthusiastically supported her trances and active imaginations, enabling Morgan to bring her feeling function to life. From Morgan's journals, she relates an evolving heroine's tale that demanded a "conscious relation with her dark dragon," rather than the typical hero quest in which the dragon must be slayed:

Crucially, she did not make the dragon nice, or socially acceptable, nor did she kiss it in the hope she would be-

come a beautiful princess and live prettily and happily ever after [my italics] with and for some man. She realized that a woman hero needed her dragon to stay a dragon. (p. 172)

Fortified by these visions, Christiana was invigorated by the possibility of a new way of living.

Regrettably, the novelty of their work together was diverted because it seems Jung was hampered by his patriarchal prejudice.

As Jung...encouraged her visions, his countertransference...grew. He had known that she was going through a process similar to his own, but now he realized that she was doing it in a passionate feminine way. It was as if he were seeing an alternative world full of dynamic images that simultaneously excited and repelled him; they caught him between erotic attraction for their discoverer and a need to dismiss her power. (p. 161)

We learn from Morgan's journal how resentful she was of Jung's directive to make Murray's achievements her priority rather than her own: "Came home raging over what he [Jung] had said about me being too lyrical. Then it flashed on me that he is throwing me back into my problem.... It makes me feel appallingly alone" (p. 152). Regardless, her attachment need to be validated by Jung and cling to the relationship with Murray trumped her misgivings, a pattern that persisted long after her work with Jung in the 20s. A chronic pattern of prostration (up until her death in 1967) grew out of Jung's counsel to Morgan, sprinkled with moments of exquisite clarity about the anima identification she was complicit in: "I wish that with [Henry] I didn't have this feeling of a snake in the grass somewhere" (p. 133); "although he gives me much of his mind & spirit he gives me nothing of warmth and of earthiness" (p. 152). To remain in the relationship, as it was, precluded her own individuation, leaving Morgan to carry the "warmth and earthiness," and Murray the "mind and spirit," a classic patriarchal split.

The unfortunate bifurcation of Morgan's psyche was the backdrop of her analysis with Jung, which helped to perpetuate her already ingrained father complex and permeated her life thereafter. As a pioneer of the dangerous method called psychoanalysis, Jung did not have the luxury of a supervisor and established ethics code to help mediate the countertransference blindspots that colluded with Jung's privilege as a man. Though she worked with others after leaving Zurich, Christiana Morgan was never able to find the help that she needed to give her dragon energy its due. Ultimately she succumbed to the regressive pull of the anima projections, betraying her soul's behest. Towards the end of her life, her ruminations echo her earlier qualms,

I cannot wait upon him any longer.... The knowledge of my spiritual loneliness is quite stark and terrible and brings with it fear. My daemon tells me that this shall only be found through my work. It is the long drawn out pain of the provisional life—not yet—not yet the trances made alive, not yet my true being said. Sometimes I feel that I

come close to the verge of insanity. I feel unutterable terror. (pp. 230-1)

As the relationship deteriorated, Morgan saturated her terror in alcohol (pp. 264-5). While vacationing on St. John with Henry Murray, the couple made their last ill-fated gesture towards a rapprochement. Awakening from a drunken stupor, she heard Murray say, "You disgust me!" (p. 313). Later, he found her body drowned in the lagoon below their cottage (p. 314).

Reading of Morgan's demise wrenched my gut, and the only tonic I had was to write. So you can imagine my dismay when I met with my first reader, Sonja Marjasch, to discuss my thesis and saw red slashes through the sections on Jung's participation in stunting Morgan's growth. She said, "Virginia, you can't put this in the Jung Institute library. You're questioning Jung's character!" I was especially shocked to hear this from Sonja who was known as a bit of a renegade. We spent hours that day in her home, a renovated barn where mice freely skittered about, hashing our differences out. By the time I left, not only had my own inflamed complex been analyzed, but also Sonja realized some of her edits were unwarranted. "You are the next generation. You can write this, we (the analysts that trained in Jung's life) could not publicly address these issues."

Soon after, I sat for my thesis exam, back in Sonja's barn, mice and all. When it was over, my 3 examiners toasted me with champagne and Sprungli chocolate and regaled me with scurrilous tales from the Jungian community. For a brief moment, my self-righteousness reloaded, as I considered handing my minutes-old status as a Jungian analyst back. But then I remembered another of Sonja's cogent remarks: "What makes Jungian psychology so brilliant is its capacity to grow and evolve, because of the core belief that when we bring opposing tensions into relationship something life-giving arises." And the only way that happens is if we take C.G. Jung's words to heart that our own individual and collective survival depends on each of us doing our own consciousness-raising work. In other words, if we expect Jung to have the final word, then we deny our own daemonic potential, whatever form it might take.

Christiana Morgan was never able to plant herself in soil that could allow her most precious asset, that dark chthonic energy, to blossom. Had she lived today, I'd like to believe that she would not only have thrived, but would have so much to teach about translating the dark feminine potential that is still dangerous to our reasoned sensibilities. We can all learn from Jung's unconscious mishandling of his anima complex because we are still so very guilty of housebreaking our own dragons. And by the way, don't feel alone if you're wondering what chthonic means. It's hard to find anyone who does. And yet, we're trodding over it every day, taking it for granted. Chthonic energies exist deep down in the soil, rich and fertile, where earthworms live and seeds get planted. It is the nigredo, where we project scary, but our very existence depends upon it. Ever since I've made up with Jung, I've been able to reinvest my incensed reaction to his misconduct into a much more productive pursuit—trying to unravel what the under-appreciated feminine realm might have to offer. Since this is the Year of the Dragon, isn't it high time we all resolve to put an end to our lazy anima projections and identifications and join Christiana Morgan's quest to transform the darkness?