

# Facts, dreams, culture, intimidation – another Jung life

Deirdre Bair's biography of C.G.Jung

## *Peter Geyer*

Deirdre Bair: *Jung: A biography* Little, Brown 2003.

*Can you follow?*

*Now that the trace is fainter in the sand?...*

*Try sleeping with the dancers in your room.....*Jack Bruce (1971)

Part of the enchantment surrounding C.G. Jung seems to be that many people want to find out about him and some others are prepared to oblige them with the occasional weighty tome about his life and times from a particular point of view. Read, unread, or dipped into at random, these texts over the years have built up a Jung *mythos*, appropriate in some ways for such a controversial and influential man.

An adequate history of Jung the person seems hard to grasp. His own, rather mixed contribution to the field, contained within *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* has an undeserved autobiography status, but still sells as such. Other authors have set out to honour a valued guide (Barbara Hannah, 1976), explain his ideas and life together (Anthony Stevens), left the whole thing as a myth (Marie-Louise von Franz) or psychoanalyse him, thus finding him wanting (Ronald Hayman).

There are many more besides, particularly if you read Jung's Freudian and other antagonists. The only Australian review I've located of Deirdre Bair's opus, by Helen Elliott, stops dead at one point in some bewilderment that Jung is taken seriously, as all those Freudian claims must be right, notwithstanding that the book she's writing on carries on an extensive investigation of those issues that seem carefully thought out and well researched.

In fact, if anything could confidently be stated about Deirdre Bair's work, it's that it is well-researched. A substantial proportion of her 800+ page book is Notes of clarification or discussion. Phrases like "I could find no evidence for this", references to interviews or private documents and other information abound, which pleases my historical bent, even if it does lead to some complex reading. Bair seems to be interested in facts and winking them out, a fairly useful attribute for a biographer, particularly someone like Jung.

This doesn't mean it's all plain sailing. She admits, as an American presuming some sort of openness to scholarship, to seriously underestimating the extreme privacy of Swiss culture which almost stopped her project before it started. Interestingly enough, the book seems to have benefited, as it places Jung and his family and colleagues in their cultural and historical milieu in a way I haven't read before. This means a lot of things are de-mystified, so we get a less sanitised view of these people, but from someone who, unlike others, seems to have no axe to grind.

So we are treated to the complexity, the argument, the hyperbole of the invention of a psychology. Friendships and lives fall by the wayside. You discover Jung was never really accepted by the Zurich cultural elite. He was considered boorish and uneducated (crime novels rather than modern literature and art) and of course a bit of a boat-rocker, even though he himself fitted into Swiss family culture more or less in the traditional way, and didn't really question it.

Jung's relationships with females and males are also given a lot of attention, with various associations or liaisons examined and the tensions apparent between Emma Jung and Toni Wolff over some years. Even Emma Jung regretting that her famous husband had "no real friends". Presumably his personal acquaintances were professionals, not boon companions, or mates. It's rather sad, really, but one can see how it came about, and Jung as a lonely man is something to take away from Bair.

This is not to say he was asocial, or morbid, because he was good company, and enjoyed a laugh, something quite unusual in his profession, apparently. There's the wit and the bullying and the anger as well, and one suspects that this tall, large man was intimidating in more ways than one. It follows that not all his ideas were his own.

As far as translation of his works into English was concerned Jung, fluent in the language (and others) in any case, also seemed greatly enamoured of the work of R.F.C.Hull, his Collected Works translator with whom he struck up a friendship and supported him in difficulty. Translation is not a word for word activity and Jung valued Hull's appreciation of meaning in the German language and its attendant culture, notwithstanding the latter's complete unfamiliarity with Jung's writing prior to commencing the task.

Jung knew nothing about money, and apparently was in some needless disarray after Emma died regarding finances. Interestingly, it seems he had the contemporary midlife red sports car in a much loved red convertible. Revelations about his involvement in American secret service activities during World War II are extremely interesting, and complexify the perennial discussion about whether Jung was anti-Semitic. He does make a particularly NT word distinction on this issue at one point.

As to his type, the prevailing view for Jungians and others is still for INTJ, this view being largely centred around his investigations into the unconscious, hence introverted intuition (e.g. Giannini 2004). I found some evidence for that, but no evidence that Jung was a "J" in MBTI terms: the reverse in fact. So I wonder in this case whether there are two different constructs being discussed. In these cases, eyewitness testimony or observation can be contingent on the knowledge of his typology and the definitions carried by people. Hinkle's published views (1923) and the work of van der Hoop (1939) and Joan Evans (1939) come to mind as examples, for me at any rate.

Deirdre Bair writes logically and clearly on a difficult topic, in contrast to Hayman's work, which I reviewed some time ago, which is curious as they have some affinities in their choices of people to investigate. A biography can never be the last word on a topic as huge as the life as C.G.Jung, particularly as his heirs have recently agreed to release more material.

This will include the famous *Red Book*, and be under the general editorship of the John Coltrane-loving and controversial choice of Sonu Shamdasani, whose recent book is worth a read, even though his scanty information on the MBTI is quite incorrect (2003). But the attempt by to stick to available facts, with some consequent speculation is recommendation itself., I found it better to read the book a chapter at a time, so the notes made sense.

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**Peter Geyer** teaches about and researches personality. [www.petergeyer.com.au](http://www.petergeyer.com.au)

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