
ON MEETING A REMARKABLE WOMAN

By Ilene Serlin

Aniela Jaffe, editor of C. G. Jung's famous autobiographical work, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, was a scholarly author and long-time collaborator with the great analyst. She was also his personal secretary during his last seven years. One of his early analysts, she became an analyst herself. What follows is Ilene Serlin's narrative of her 1991 visit with Aniela Jaffe. It is notable for its timeliness and its fascinating comments on Jung's personal relationship to yoga, spirituality, dance and music. —Ed.

During July, 1990, when I was teaching at the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich, friends there thought that I should meet Aniela Jaffe, personal secretary of Jung and collaborator on his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. It was too late to schedule an appointment for that year, however, so it was necessary to wait until July, 1991.

I arrived at her apartment in Zurich the next summer, feeling like a star-struck adolescent. I felt as if she carried the original spirit of Jung, and that the meeting would be powerful. In addition, I knew that she was interested in dance. As a dance therapist and psychologist, I very much wanted to ask her about Jung's relationship with dance.

When I walked into her apartment, I saw that it was small, filled with books and papers. It could have been the apartment of a graduate student preoccupied with books and learning, but it was the apartment of a woman who committed her life to learning, to a life of psyche, spirit and mind. I saw a woman in her eighties, nearly blind, who had difficulty walking. I saw a woman who was thin and frail, with a luminous face, who greeted me energetically and lucidly.

"Come in," she said, decisively pointing and directing me to the living room, and motioning to me to "have a seat in the

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red chair." She took her seat on the chair next to a couch. I had a strong impression of a clear and sharp intelligence, combined with a presence which was strong, direct, and also fragile, vulnerable, and ethereal. Still beautiful, she threw back her head and patted me.

Saying directly, "I'm almost blind, let me look at you," she put on the light and peered at my face. In German she said something like "good image," and released my face with a smile.

"Next," she said, "put yourself in this book." Presenting an old address book, she asked, "What is your name?" Handing me the book, she said, "Here, enter it yourself." The book was aged, with yellowed paper and leather binder. After I signed in the S page, she held up a magnifying glass to the page, and peered at the address.

After this we settled down to the substance of our visit. I asked Aniela Jaffe about Jung's relationship to dance.

She said that the body became more and more important to Jung, who said, at the Institute [in Zurich], dance was "very good" [and] "We need to bring in the body."

She said, with a faraway look on her face, "I never saw Jung dance."

Then she brightened, remembering an incident at Eranos, a yearly conference held at Ascona, Switzerland. That evening, Jung had drunk quite a bit. She giggled, remembering and demonstrating a "hop-step" he did, shifting weight from one foot to another. She remarked that people said that Jung didn't like music, but preferred silence. She said, however, that this was not true, and that Jung had said that although music interrupted his ability to listen to his inner voice, he did like "Negro spirituals." She remembered that one time a famous woman concert pianist came to him, played the piano for him, and then noted that Jung had a most perceptive musical ear. When Aniela Jaffe described this incident, she giggled girlishly, saying, "Isn't that wonderful?"

She went on to say how, for Jung, dance was spiritual, uniting body and spirit. Dance without spirit was, in fact, like gymnastics. She asked me about a Tibetan exhibit in the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, noting at the same time that pictures of the Dalai Lama, displayed in her apartment, were given to her by a friend. Jung practiced yoga, she said, but he stopped practice when the images stopped, and wasn't interested in what you call in English "emptiness."

When I told her that I was a student of Tibetan Buddhism, but thought that sometimes it lacked passion, she said that Jung said that spirituality sometimes was too removed from being human. "What interested him was a unity of spirituality and materialism," and that dance combined the two.

At this point, Aniela Jaffe giggled. She asked, "Guess what I like?" I guessed the waltz, but she said it was Mozart. She liked the quadrille, but did



not like "American Indian or Negro music." She then told me that she had danced with a pupil of Mary Wigman (an originator of German expressionist dance), and described how they would dance out emotions such as sadness.

When she was in Berlin as a young woman, she had worked with children who could not walk. Although she did not dance with them, she taught them to walk, and said this was very important for their feeling for themselves.

Aniela Jaffe then asked me if I like sports. She said that she liked swimming, skiing, and tennis, although she ad-

mitted that tennis was not very glamorous.

She then asked, "What do you think of hands?" Saying that she thought hands expressed character, she took both of mine. Peering at a palm, she turned it over, speaking of the inner and the outer hand. My hand was, she said, very expressive and very strong, a generous and giving woman's hand. I then grasped hers, and she asked me what I felt. To me, her hand was strong and present, but quiet and receptive. When I said this to her, she laughed, and agreed that she was not assertive but receptive.

I then asked her if she minded me sketching her, since that was how my hands registered the images I saw. She readily posed, and during that time, became very relaxed and told me about her own life.

She asked if I were married. She told me that she was divorced, and had been married for six years. I asked her if she thought it necessary for a woman to be married and have

family, husband and children. She said "no," that she actually always liked being alone. "Alone," she said, "but not alone."

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