



Figure 1 *The view from Eranos: the mountains over Lago Maggiore. (Photographer: Catherine Ritsema. © Eranos Foundation, Ascona. All rights reserved)*

The Story of the Three Women Who Created ARAS

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ARAS, The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism has a long history, reaching back to the early 1930s in Switzerland. Many known and unknown contributors have been part of making ARAS what it is today, a national organization with centers in New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, as well as ARAS Online, serving visitors from many other countries. But it all began with three remarkable women who dedicated their lives to exploring the transformations of the psyche – and creating an actual place to do this, each in her own way.



Figure 2 *Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn at Eranos in the 1930s-1940s. (Photographer Margarethe Fellerer. © Eranos Foundation, Ascona. All rights reserved)*

The time is the beginning of the 20th century when we first meet Olga-Froebe-Kapteyn, the first woman of the ARAS lineage. Olga (I hope she and the other women would allow me to use their first names) – Olga was born in 1881 in London. Her parents were Dutch. Her father Albert Kapteyn was an inventor, a photographer and

director of Westinghouse London office. Her mother was a writer on social issues and a friend of George Bernard Shaw. And according to Paul Mellon, who wrote about Olga in his autobiography *Born with a Silver Spoon*, Olga once joined a circus, which might help explain the more adventurous side of her.

As a young woman, Olga went to Zurich to study applied art. It seems that she was interested in art and images from the very beginning. There she met Irwin Froebe, who was a musician from Austria. Olga was only 27 years old when her husband died, following an airplane crash, during the first world war. Some years later, Olga and her father went on vacation to Ascona, a small city south of the Alps in the Italian-speaking area of Switzerland. Olga fell in love with the area, and her father bought for her Casa Gabriela, a villa on a beautiful piece of land overlooking Lake Maggiore.



Figure 3 *A view of Eranos from Lake Maggiore in the 1930s-1940s. (Photographer unknown. © Eranos Foundation, Ascona. All rights reserved)*

The stage was set for what was going to become a remarkable meeting place for people and ideas. But it began with seven years of solitude in which Olga lived in Casa Gabriela completely isolated except for a servant. She was studying metaphysics, and she was particularly interested in Eastern mysticism. She came across the *I Ching*, which was to have a great impact on her and later she met Richard Wilhelm, its translator. He was the first of three men who were to be very influential in her life. Through the *I Ching*, she found an ancient Chinese system that spoke to her as a method of aligning one's inner nature with the outer world and of knowing what is the right way at a particular moment. In this way, hidden patterns are revealed, making the invisible world visible. This was to be a motif throughout Olga's life.

Another important early influence in her life was Rudolph Otto, whom we know from his remarkable little book called the *The Idea of the Holy*. It was written more than 100 years ago and has never been out of print in English. Writing in the German academic tradition, Otto finds a way of describing what cannot be described – the experience of the mysteries. He created a new word for this experience, which he named 'numinous', derived from the Latin word, 'numen' which means 'nod,' as if a god is present with you, nodding. The Hindu calls this presence Darshan: when we are being seen by the divine, and the same ideas appear in Greek icons where the divine sees us through the eyes of the saint pictured in the icon. It seems to me that both in her work and in her life, Olga searched for this presence of the divine.

Rudolph Otto suggested that Olga arrange conferences on her beautiful land and call them "Eranos". It seems that Otto had been making plans for a conference, but at the time when he and Olga met, he was not well and before he died, he not

only shared his plans with Olga but also gave her his list of the speakers he had thought of inviting.



Figure 4 Olga Foebe-Kapteyn and C.G. Jung at Eranos in 1933. (Photographer Margarethe Fellerer. © Eranos Foundation, Ascona. All rights reserved)

And then, there was of course Carl Gustav Jung, whom Olga had first met in 1930. He was to become the central figure throughout her work, although this started less than smoothly. Olga writes, in a letter written at the end of her life, that there was from the beginning a battle between them. They were both very strong personalities, but they also shared a vision and neither of them allowed the personal to interfere. From the beginning, Jung encouraged her to use her beautiful land and her interest in the meeting of East and West to create a conference where these dreams could manifest. She invited Jung to speak at her first conference, but he refused and, told her that she wasn't going to pick his brain, (this is according to

Olga). Then she showed him the list of people who had agreed to speak and he exclaimed: “You devil! You have invited all my friends and colleagues! Of course I will come!” During the next 20 years he attended the conferences, often as a speaker. A conference would last for 10 days and each year there was a particular theme that evoked the meeting between the inner world and the outer.

Among the many people who spoke during those years, and also the first speaker ever invited, was Heinrich Zimmer. He was also the one to open the first conference. He liked to address Olga as “die Grosse Ur-Mutter” – the Great Ur-Mother. Other speakers were philosopher and theologian Martin Buber, the anthropologist and Jungian analyst John Layard, the kabbalist Gershom Scholem, and the Greek scholar Karoli Kerenyi. Kerenyi was one of the most popular speakers. He was very dramatic and charismatic, but perhaps too much for Olga. In 1950, he was no longer invited to speak at Eranos and only returned to speak again after her death in 1962. Other names were Mircea Eliade, Joseph Campbell and James Hillman. Olga didn't have a plan beyond the first conference but it seems that the Eranos conferences took on a life of their own. The material of each conference was published afterwards as an Eranos Yearbook. In time, Joseph Campbell selected and edited five volumes that were translated into English. Olga writes in the introduction to the English translation that the aim of the lectures was in no way to cover any subject completely: “Their value is evocative...They touch on unusual themes, facts and analogies, and in doing so evoke the great archetypal images.”

Olga was extremely intuitive and there are many stories about this. According to the Jungian analyst Joseph Henderson, she was able to act as a medium. He describes how Jung would sometimes send people to Olga when they were stuck and

they couldn't relate to the unconscious. When they came to her, she wouldn't *do* anything. They would just sit in the room and then spontaneously begin to have an active imagination.

This even happened to Dr. Henderson once, in her house. He just suddenly began to have visions.

It seems that Olga began to collect images rather early on. She was asked by Jung to find images for his writing on alchemy and archetype. She had a most unusual way of searching for images; she would listen to her inner voices and intuition. She would wait for a dream that would direct her as to where to go and then would travel wherever she was guided. "With her inborn sense of certainty, she then asked for the folders and books in which the most diverse of subjects revealed their inner relatedness." (*Danziger, Du Magazine, 1955*) Soon, Olga began enlarging some of these images to illustrate the particular Eranos conference theme of the year. And slowly a magnificent collection came into being, like a fabric of motives and symbols, which were having a magical effect on the viewers. Olga kept her intuitive approach and organized the images into about 100 motifs. The word 'motif' already tells us that we deal with something that moves. And for Olga it was the moving force in these images that was the point - not the art historical importance or even beauty or knowledge.... "It was the through the magic wand of Analogy that this collection came into being," wrote the Jungian analyst Hans Danziger in an article about Eranos (*Du Magazine, 1955*). Later, Edward Edinger, one of the early Jungian analysts in the U.S., explained that making analogies is like prayer - and anyone who has had their inner dreams or visions reflected in the universal images in the archive knows that it becomes a dialogue with one's own soul.

The 1930's, when Olga began her conferences, were a fateful time in Europe, leading up to the second World War in 1939. Erich Neumann was one of the Jungian analysts who had to flee Nazi Germany, but after the war he returned to Europe on vacation. He happened to go to Ascona with his friend Gerhard Adler who introduced him to Olga. This is how Neumann sums up his experience of Eranos: “Eranos, landscape, garden and house. Modest and out-of-the-way, and yet a navel of the world, a small link in the golden chain. As speakers and listeners, we always have to give thanks.” (*C.G Jung Word and Image*, 1979).

Olga was asked in 1955 by the editor of Du Magazine, Walter Robert Corti, how she would describe Eranos. Olga begins by saying it cannot be described in a rational formula but what she knows deeply is that there is a connection with a deep source. Olga continued to give her conferences until she died in 1962. And they have continued every year in some form since then.

Now we move across the Atlantic to the U.S. It is the Fall of 1937, when Jung was invited to give his Terry Lectures at Yale University and afterwards gave a dream seminar in New York City for the Analytical Psychology Club. Among those who attended were Mary and Paul Mellon. In the spring of 1938, the Mellons went to Zurich to attend the seminars on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that Jung was giving in English. After the seminars they went down to visit Eranos and they met Olga Froebe Kapteyn. There seems to have been an immediate friendship and understanding by Mary Mellon of what Olga was trying to do. Afterwards Mary wrote about their meeting: “The first thought that went through my mind when I stepped onto the terrace at Casa Gabriella was “This is where I belong.”



Figure 5 *Mary Mellon*

Mary Mellon was born Mary Conover in Kansas City, Missouri. Her father was a medical doctor and from early childhood on, Mary suffered from asthma attacks. She went to Vassar, where music was her favorite subject. She played the piano and was the song leader of her class. In Bill McGuire's book *The Bollingen Bill*, a classmate recalls her in this way: "She led the singing like someone possessed – vibrant, tense, gesturing in a staccato way. A vein in her neck stood out." And another remembered: "She was a joyous spirit, with an instant laughter and a quick remark. Everybody loved her."

Paul Mellon was the son of Andrew Mellon, one of the wealthiest men in the U.S. He was the founder of the National Gallery in Washington. Paul and Mary met in 1933 and they instantly fell in love and four months later they were married. They returned again to Ascona 1938 to attend the Eranos conference. Mary was 35 years old at this time and it seemed that she already was beginning to formulate her ideas and make plans for what was later to become the Bollingen Foundation. “The Bollingen Foundation is my Eranos” said Mary.

Mary stayed on after the conference and analyzed with Jung. The Mellons were invited to Jung’s home and to his Bollingen Tower and it is easy to see that Mary saw Jung not only as her analyst but also as a modern prophet. In his honor, she gave her own project the name Bollingen Foundation. The Mellons returned to the US in 1940 and began their work here.

Mary decided to publish *The I Ching*, which had been Olga’s great inspiration. Mary invited Jung to write the foreword. And for the next 25 years, the Mellons’ main focus became the translation into English of Jung’s Collected Works. It is difficult to overestimate the importance Mary had for introducing Jung in the U.S. They also published an amazing list of books during the years. In his autobiography, Paul Mellon writes that “The source of Mary’s interest in these subjects was, of course, the visits to Olga Freobe Kapteyn’s villa.” And the Bollingen Foundation was not only involved in publishing, but also gave grants to scholars in a variety of humanistic fields – which can still be seen to this day.

But Mary herself was never to see all of her dreams and plans come into reality. In 1947 the Mellons were again going to go to Zurich to see Jung and to attend the Eranos conference, but just before they were going to leave Mary

cancelled their trip. She had consulted the *I Ching* and the answer had been *Exhaustion*. She wrote to Jung that she was exhausted from a recent operation and decided that it was not the right time to go. Sometime later, Mary and Paul Mellon had gone fox hunting. Mary had continued to suffer from asthma attacks but it hadn't stopped her from riding, and this day she got a severe attack. Later that afternoon she died of a heart-attack in her home in Virginia. She was only 37 years old. Paul Mellon completed the plans Mary had drawn up for Bollingen, including the very slow process of publishing Jung's Collected Works. It took another 20 years before the 18th and last volume was published. Many of the Bollingen books have remained in print or are now being reissued by Princeton University Press. Mary's legacy continues.



Figure 6 A book collection published by Bollingen

And without Mary Mellon, ARAS would never have come into existence. Mary had helped fund the Eranos conferences and at one time even discussed with Olga buying Casa Gabriella in order to secure Eranos for the future, but because of her unexpected death this never took place. What she had agreed on was to pay for the duplication of Olga's picture collection. And in the late 1940s a copy of the images arrived in New York.



Figure 7 *Jessie Fraser*

This brings us to the 3rd of the women in ARAS history, Jessie Fraser. Jessie was quite a formidable person: proud and at the same time, sensitive. She had spent

a great deal of time in New Mexico, where she studied at the Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe. She had a degree in teaching from NYU and had also studied Egyptology, which was to be her great love.

When I asked Jessie how she got involved with the Bollingen Foundation, she told me that she had come across a copy of Esther Harding's *The Way of All Women*, browsing in a bookstore, and it had made such an impression on her that when she found that Esther Harding actually lived in New York City she decided to go into analysis with her. When the Bollingen Foundation was looking for someone to organize the Eranos picture collection, Esther Harding suggested Jessie Fraser. And as with everyone else who had been involved with the images of the Eranos collection, they worked their magic on Jessie. She worked in a crowded office at the Bollingen Foundation, going through the 6,000 images from Eranos that arrived in boxes. At first it was very unclear what was going to become of the collection, but as Jessie studied the images, she began to have her own vision about how to organize the Archive. She had found her own Eranos.

First, she decided to make an exhibit to demonstrate how she was imagining the archive. She wanted to add written material, and catalog both images and text. She brought all of this to Zurich and also to Eranos, to Erich Neumann and then to Dr. Ricklin, the President of the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich, who exclaimed when he saw it “Yes, yes – this is real analytical psychology!”

After she returned in some triumph to the Bollingen Foundation, the funding was increased and the picture collection now became a special Bollingen project. Many more images were added. An exchange was worked out between Zurich and the Bollingen Foundation, which also helped to pay for a copy of Jung's own

collection of about 1000 pictures, as well as Jolande Jacobi's collection of 2000 images on magic. Another collection was added from Dorothy Norman's exhibition on the "Hero's Journey." When all of this had been agreed on, Jessie decided to change the name of the collection to the Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, ARAS. She continued to add some 8,000 images and a system was set up to duplicate the images for ARAS centers being set up in San Francisco and Los Angeles. And, until she retired, she dedicated the rest of her life to the Archive.

The ARAS collection lost its home when the Bollingen Foundation was closing. San Francisco analyst Joseph Henderson had worked with Jessie for many years as a consultant, to help create the subject headings or categories which make up the cataloging system. These headings are in a sense an effort to categorize the archetypes; and Joseph Henderson was the archetypal consultant. He knew the collection very well. When he heard that Bollingen was going to give away the image collection, he wrote that the San Francisco Jung Institute would very much like to take the collection. When the Jung Foundation in New York heard this, they said that they wanted the archive and that is what happened: ARAS was given to the Jung Foundation in New York, and that is where it stayed until it became a National Archive in 1983.

Jessie had volunteered her time and work throughout the years. In 1976, the Jung Foundation, ARAS, and the Kristine Mann Library moved together into a new building. New furnishings were needed. Jessie and her sister Janet Jones, who had also worked with Jessie, sold their mother's jewelry, and with this money, they were able to set up the ARAS office with furniture and office equipment.

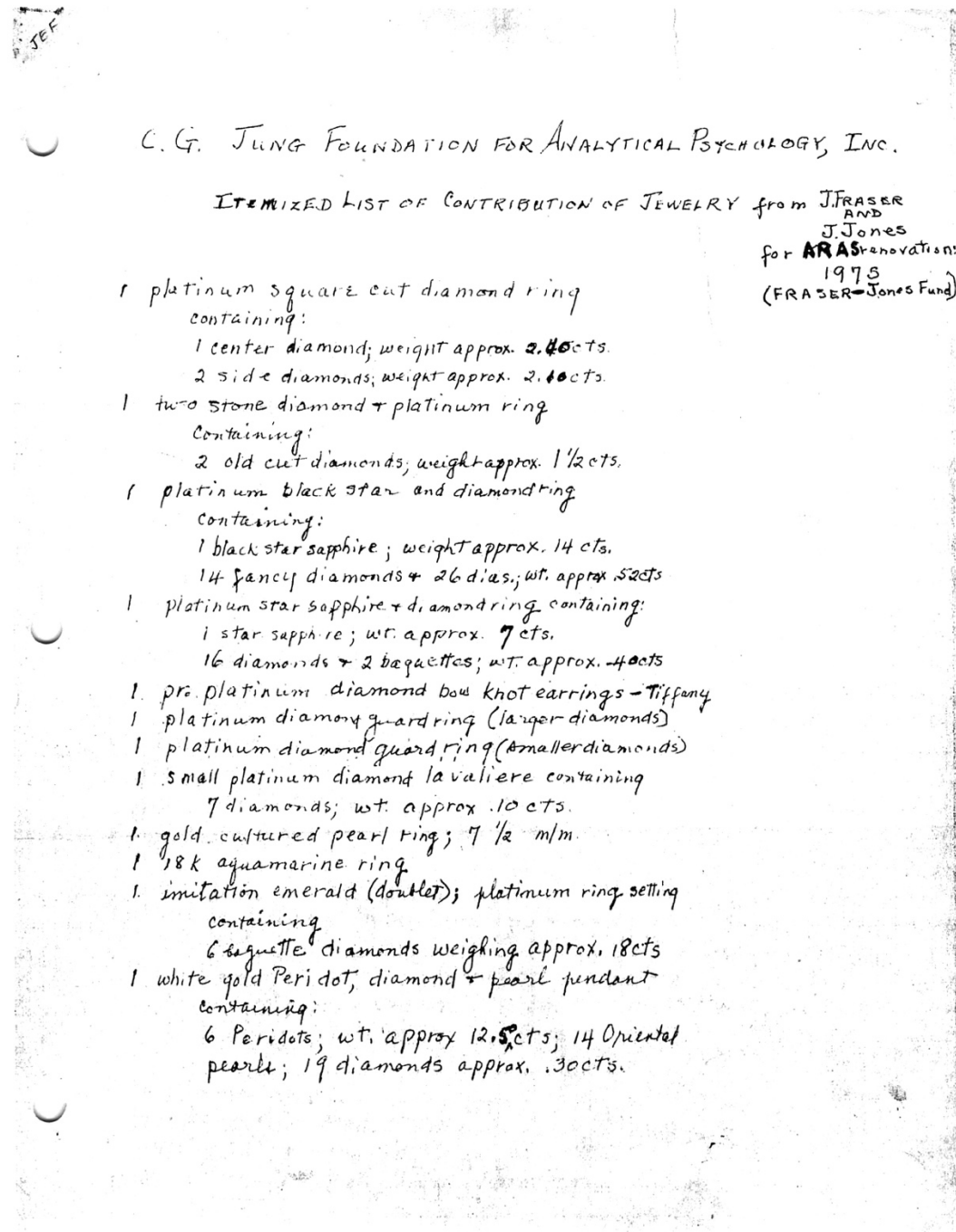


Figure 8 One page of the list of jewels that had belonged to Jessie Fraser's mother that were sold in order to set up the ARAS office.

There were two areas in the archive that Jessie was particularly fond of:
Paleolithic Art and Egyptian Art. Jessie taught Egyptian art for many years at the

Jung Institute. Sylvia Perera once told me that she had Jessie as a teacher and I asked what she was like. Sylvia answered that she loved it, once she realized that she almost had to go into a trance in order to listen to Jessie. It was almost like listening to someone's active imagination – as if Jessie really was in Egypt. Harry Prochaska, the curator in San Francisco, knew of her love for Egypt and once asked her if she had ever been to Egypt. He said that she paused for a while – and then answered “I think so.” – as if she wasn't sure. In any case, it was no doubt that in her imagination she had been to Egypt!

After leaving the Bollingen Foundation, ARAS was supported by a 10 year grant from the Frances Wickes Foundation and by Jane Pratt, a member of the Analytical Psychology Club. When this grant was ending, there was even talk of selling ARAS to Texas. But Jessie said that somehow, she knew that everything was going to work out, and added, “you know, ARAS has a life of its own.” I think she referred to the Archive itself but I think she also meant that the archetypal reality evoked by the archive will always have a life of its own. She knew that “working with these eternal images becomes a dialogue with one's soul and through this a dialogue with the soul of the world.” (*Danziger, Du Magazine*)

What Olga evoked in Ascona, and what Mary and Jessie understood - is the spirit as the moving force in the images. This can appear anywhere where people are moved by the images – and I believe that this vision lives on in the ARAS of today.

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Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images, published by Taschen and also Managing Editor of two previous publications, *An Encyclopedia of Archetypal Symbolism*, the second volume titled *The Body*, published by Shambhala Publications. She has been a member of the Art and Psyche group since its beginning in 2008. Various papers from the Art and Psyche conferences are regularly published in ARAS Connections. A recent combined project was *Art in a Time of Crisis* which sent out a daily image with a brief text in response to the COVID-19 crisis with contributions from all parts of the world.