

Airy Passages lectures abstracts (January – June 2026)



1. January 31st: Stanton Marlan: The Dark Tremendum

This presentation is a reflection on the experience of how psychedelics can open the door to profound darkness and numinosity—fear and awe in the face of a tremendum. The experience requires both a descent and decentering, a going under that results in a defeat for the ego and a revisioning of the Self. It links the experience of ego death and rebirth, darkness and illumination, horror and ecstasy, a sacred chaos and volcanic numinosity. One major theme is the question of how to engage with numinous experiences: can they be psychologically integrated into a rational process of individuation or does the archetypal force itself transform the soul and the complexity of psychic reality?

My reflections are in part based on my early experiences at Millbrook with Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert, and Ralph Metzner, and my lifelong struggle with an understanding of the process. My talk includes a reflection on Jung's Red Book, and extracts from a number of my own publications that struggle with this question.

2. March 7th: Peggy Hanson: From Suspension to Transformation: A Ghost Story

I first presented this story this past Halloween, October 31, 2025, at the Fall meeting of the Inter-Regional Society of Jungian Analysts in Omaha, Nebraska. It is not a scholarly, didactic presentation on Jungian theory, but very personal. I am honored to be asked to share this story with fellow analysts from your society. We live in very different parts of the world, but, I believe, we share a deep connection beyond divisiveness, beyond time and space.

As I introduce my presentation, I will ask the audience to allow themselves, during this hour, to live in suspension: to suspend their disbelief as I share my personal "ghost story". In the first half of the lecture I will share the profound Nordic myth of Odin, the All-father, as he first sacrificed an eye to the well of wisdom at the base of Yggdrasill, the Tree of Life, and then suspended himself upside down on that tree, in his search for wisdom.

Suspension is a necessary and painful stage of the nigredo - a stage that we all face during liminal times of complete darkness, loss and confusion. In the second part of the presentation I share a profound and personal experience of such a time in my life, and my unexpected relationship with a tree, located in an old cemetery in Bangor, Maine, and the spirit that I believe resided in it "in suspension". The presentation will include photos of the tree and the uncanny images that led me to the belief that beyond time/space I formed a moving relationship with the young woman buried there in obscurity in 1861, whose spirit was, I believe, finally released as I honored her story. We were both transformed. The presentation is dedicated to her memory.

3. March 28th: Mordechai Brodi: One God or Many? Monotheism, Polytheism, and the Practice of Depth Therapy

"The soul demands your folly; not your wisdom." Carl Jung Abstract: Both Carl Jung, and James Hillman, the founder and chief exponent of post-Jungian Archetypal psychology, could be considered 'Men of God'. Throughout their writings they refer repeatedly to 'God,' 'a god,' or 'the gods,' suggesting that beneath the psychological language of their work lies an enduring concern with the nature of the divine in human experience. Both thinkers insist that psychology is, in the end, inseparable from religion. This is hardly surprising. The very word psychology means the words, or stories, of the soul. However we define it, the soul belongs to that dimension of human life concerned with meaning, purpose, consciousness, love, beauty, suffering, death, and eternity. These are not merely psychological curiosities; they are the very questions through which human beings encounter the sacred. How a person relates to, and is connected with, the Divine, or how God or the gods communicate with us, and to what end, are subjects that are at the heart of all religious belief. It is also the hidden concern of depth psychology, whose task is to listen carefully to the life of the soul. Given the immense body of thought devoted to these questions, one might reasonably wonder what can be said within the modest span of a single hour. Rather than attempting a comprehensive account, this talk will distill several key ideas concerning the images of God in the writings of Jung and Hillman, while drawing an important distinction between theological questions and psychological ones. Psychology, after all, is not theology. Psyche's first task is discrimination. As depth therapists, we are not guardians of doctrine. We are accountable only to the movements and images of the psyche itself, wherever they may lead. From this perspective, an important tension emerges between psychological monotheism and psychological polytheism. The difference is not merely philosophical. The myths that live - often unconsciously - within the therapist shape the very way suffering is heard and understood. If one imagines the psyche as ordered around a single, organizing principle - the Self - then the work of therapy tends toward unity, integration, and the movement toward individuation. If, however, one imagines the psyche as fundamentally plural, inhabited by many archetypal voices and figures, then therapy becomes less a

movement toward unity than a negotiation among the many presences that inhabit the soul. The question, then, is not only whether there is one God or many, but which vision of the divine the therapist serves in the consulting room.

4. April 18th: Kaitryn Wertz: The Archetype of Rebirth in an American Cultural Complex

No single image has been more powerful in the American cultural imagination than that of our borderland, that ever-shifting frontier, both literal and symbolic, that has divided “us” from “them” throughout our history. This presentation explores the archetypal foundations of “the Myth of the Frontier”, a potent psychological story that has set American armies marching from the Puritan colonies to Afghanistan to Los Angeles, wreaking devastation on those regarded as ‘other’ for four hundred years.

The explosion of the MAGA movement into American collective consciousness has polarized the culture with intense emotion, extremism and cruelty. The heart of the MAGA ideology is fear and demonization of the other — the immigrant, the person of color, the practitioner of an unfamiliar religion, or the person who does not conform to traditional gender norms. These must be eliminated so that “real Americans” can regenerate an imagined golden age. At the heart of MAGA’s appeal we find potent psychological images, particularly what cultural historians describe as “The Myth of the American Frontier.”

From a Jungian perspective, the American psyche is in the grip of a resurgent cultural complex (Singer & Kimble, 2004), rooted in a mythology of divisiveness, dominance, violence and scapegoating, and given immense energy by the archetype of rebirth at its core. Cultural historian Richard Slotkin’s seminal study of the frontier myth can deepen our psychological understanding of the distinct shape these potent archetypal patterns have assumed in American culture. Slotkin writes, “The first colonists saw in America an opportunity to regenerate their fortunes, their spirits, and the power of their church and nation; but the means to regeneration ultimately became the means of violence, and the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of American experience” (1973).

A different archetypal pattern is to discover, during the darkest times, new hope in an obscure and under-valued place. Signs of a compensatory American myth of rebirth may be emerging in a recent stream of highly successful children's films. Each of these Hollywood productions tells a similar story: a courageous girl, living in a time of cultural or environmental crisis, renews the people and restores the land through her ability to embrace what seems profoundly 'other'. Psychological themes in these films will be amplified by dreams arising in individuals, suggesting a possible direction for our divided collective psyche.

5. May 23rd: Donald Kalsched, Ph.D.: Recognizing and Working with Dissociation in Dreams

Recognizing and Working with Dissociation in Dreams People with an early trauma history frequently use dissociation to regulate their feelings and their anxiety. Such dissociation is more severe than Jung's classical "complex theory" and is present in every session. It may also appear in dreams. Learning to recognize its symbols in dreams becomes an important tool for understanding how a client is using dissociation and how to get around it to the feelings that are being blocked. In this lecture, Dr. Kalsched will present a series of dreams that show dissociation's presence and show how it manifests in the patient's life afterwards.

6. June 27th: Murray Stein, Ph.D., and Henry Abramovitch, Ph.D.: "Speaking about Friendship".

The presentation will consist of a reading by Henry and Murray of their play, "Speaking of Friendship." This will be followed by conversation and discussion as time allows. The play is about the value of friendship in the present world where isolation and loneliness are so prevalent among people in many countries. Friendship, along with its shadow, betrayal, is one of the most powerful emotional and archetypal bonds. Yet the impact and importance of friends have been almost entirely ignored by depth psychology. This event will allow us to speak of friendship in different ways.

