

REFLECTIONS: BOOKS & EVENTS

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JOURNEY TO SNAKEWOMAN THE VISIONS OF NORMA CHURCHILL

BY NORMA CHURCHILL

A Reflection by Marion Anderson

Santa Monica, California, USA

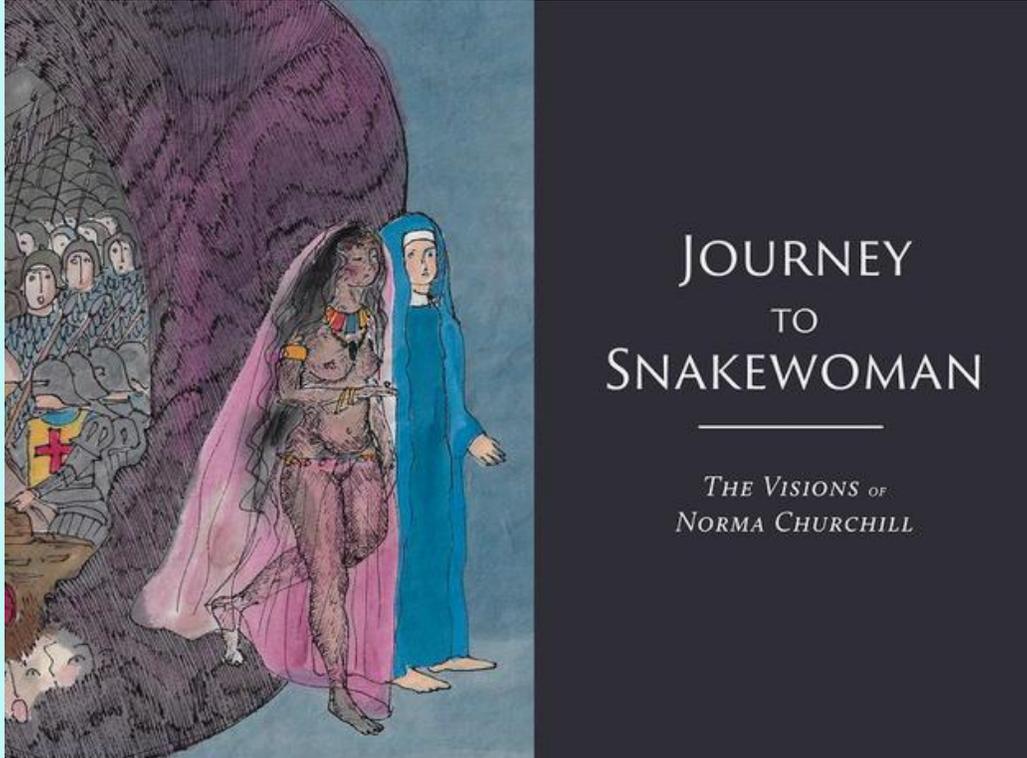
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Paintings
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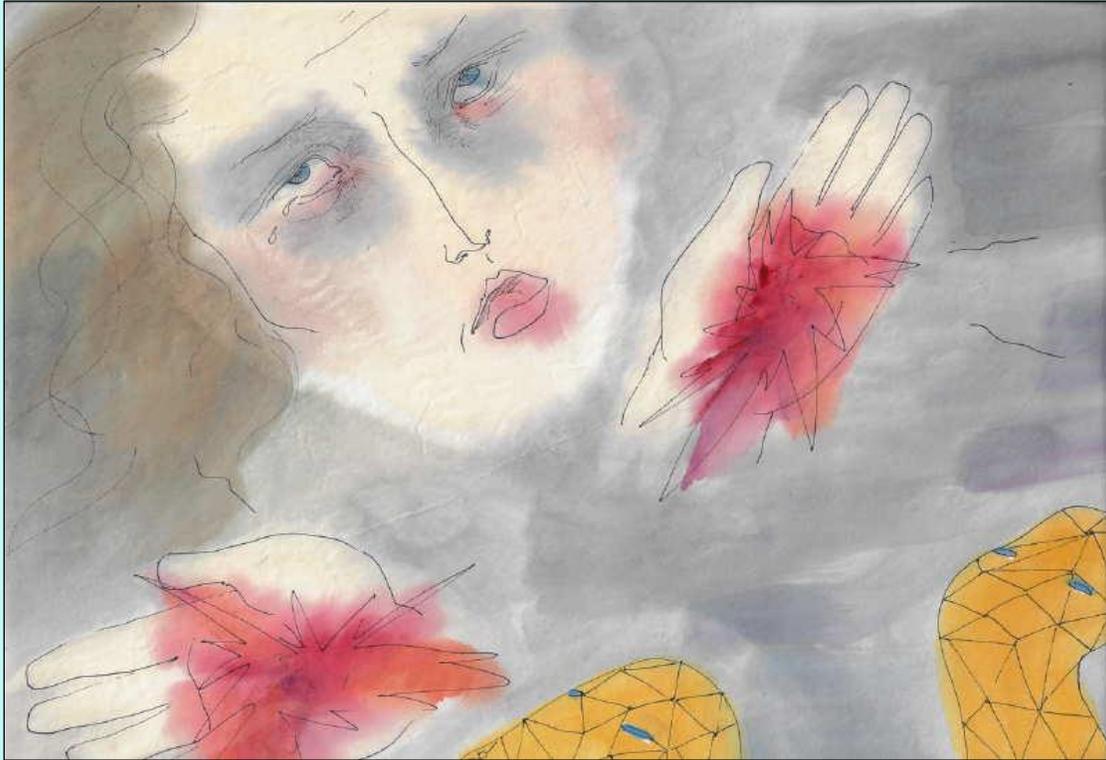
Active Imagination is a significant part of Jung's work with the unconscious and personally one of my favorite approaches to work with the psyche. *Journey to Snakewoman* (Churchill, 2021) is published in two sizes (12 by 9 inches and in 9 by 6 inches) by Dancing Raven Press, an imprint of Analytical Psychology Press, owned by sandplay therapist and Jungian Analyst Dyane Sherwood. I immediately ordered the book and when I opened it for the first time, I was stunned. Flipping through the pages of this very beautiful book, I was absorbed and deeply affected by Norma Churchill's paintings of her visions. I needed to look at the impactful images multiple times before I felt ready to start reading the accompanying texts. The imagery first spoke to me nonverbally. Then reading the text and how the visions came about, I realized that the text amplified the visions. This served to deepen my experience. I appreciated references to the contemporary spirit of the 1970s, a time when many of Churchill's visions took place, as well as the importance of timeless themes in women's lives.

Journey to Snakewoman is well organized and accompanies Churchill's personal life story, which includes a traumatic childhood event and the circumstances of her first visions. She briefly addresses her understanding of Active Imagination, including quotes from Jung. Churchill includes her personal reflections from a current perspective. She speaks to the meaning of the visions, their effect on her personal life and of her wish to share these archetypal themes with all modern women.



Churchill's paintings of her visions are shown chronologically. She devotes a chapter to each vision, which makes it easy to follow the developments in her psyche over time. Her original narrative of her visions and her recent comments appear in different color fonts. As a reader I felt I had a choice on how to approach the content: to look only at the images, to follow the descriptions of the visions at the time they occurred, or to contemplate Churchill's recent reflections and comments in an analytical manner.

Churchill comes across as a very strong personality, able to endure the enormous weight of archetypal imagery that not only moved through her, but literally devoured her at times. During the years of these spontaneous visions, Churchill was not yet in Jungian analysis. When it became increasingly difficult to bear such deep imagery alone, she searched for help. Jungian Analyst Don Sander encouraged her to paint her past visions. Even years after she had experienced them, she was still able to remember precise details of scenes and images. This analytic process must have been very grounding, organizing and meaningful to her. She openly shares Sander's amplifications of her most important figures in the series of visions.



I found it helpful to read the personal and collective meaning of the most important symbols in Churchill's visions to gain further context. I applaud her courage to publicly share this intimate material centered around the perception and development of the archetypal feminine.

The overall visual composition of the book is very compelling. Churchill's technique, mostly watercolor in bright shades, conveys a strong yet fluid feeling tone, accented by precise black lines laying out the essential forms and figures. The lines might represent the thinking aspect, telling a story with a continuous stroke. Colors are the expression of feelings and often unconscious imagery reflects this intensity.

I hope *Journey to Snakewoman* (2021) will touch you as deeply as it has touched me. It is an invitation to contact and remain connected to the nonverbal realm. May it inspire us to be creative and active with our hands, expressing our own path to the personal and collective imagery of the unconscious.



REFERENCE

Churchill, N. (2021). *Journey to Snakewoman. The Visions of Norma Churchill*. Oberlin, OH: Dancing Raven Press an imprint of Analytical Psychology Press.

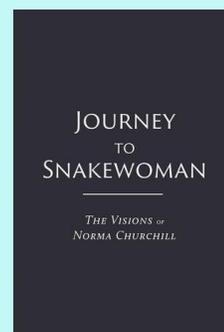
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KEY WORDS: Active imagination, paintings, visions, images, imagery, women, analysis, Donald Sandner, Jung, Reflections: Books & Events.

ABSTRACT: The author reflects on *Journey to Snakewoman: The Visions of Norma Churchill* by Norma Churchill published in 2021, Dancing Raven Press, an imprint of Analytical Psychology Press.



About the author of this reflection

MARION ANDERSON, PHD, CST-T is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Jungian Analyst and a Teaching Member of Sandplay Therapists of America (STA) and the International Society for Sandplay Therapy (ISST) as well as Founding Member of the Instituto Brasileiro de Terapia de Sandplay (Brazilian Society for Sandplay Therapy). Dr. Anderson is a member of the C.G. Jung Institute of Los Angeles where she also teaches. She trained as an analyst at the Brazilian Society of Analytical Psychology (SBPA), International Association for Analytical Psychology (IAAP). She is an Editorial Associate for the *Journal of Sandplay Therapy* (JST) translating article abstracts into German and Portuguese. She has contributed several articles to the JST including “The Sandplay Collection and its Implications in the Transference Relationship” (2016) and the “Embracing the Past: Moving into the Future” (2019) -- a proceeding from a keynote presentation with Harriet Friedman at the STA National Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She is an STA Regional Coordinator. She apprenticed in the 1990s with the German Jungian analyst Ingrid Riedel in painting inner images, Dr. Anderson continues to lead workshops on this method biannually. She maintains a private practice in Santa Monica, California, USA.
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