Walking With Shadows: Writing Trauma, Short Fiction & Jungian Psychoanalysis
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Abstract
A growing field at the intersection of literary and trauma studies makes the persuasive case for creative writing as a means to represent and process trauma across a range of genres from traditional memoir to hybrid and fictionalised approaches. Yet despite this, how the specific qualities of short fiction can expand on existing modes remains theoretically underexplored. This paper offers an intervention into the aforementioned field through an exploration into how the qualities of brevity and experiment that are associated with short fiction can be employed to mirror and synthesise aspects of the psychoanalyst Carl Jung's ground-breaking work on the unconscious and his narrative approaches to processing trauma. Firstly, this paper presents the short story, "Disappearing Act", a hybrid of memoir and short fiction based on a personal traumatic experience of childhood abuse and informed by the Jungian concept of individuation (commonly referred to in contemporary psychoanalytic circles as shadow work). Secondly, it includes an accompanying critical reflection on the story's creative process and the ways in which autobiographical short fiction can be employed as a mode of shadow work to demonstrate how the form operated as a creatively rich device to process traumatic life material for this writer.

Key Words: trauma; short fiction; memoir; autobiographical fiction; therapeutic writing; psychoanalysis; Carl Jung; shadow work

Disappearing Act

You didn't know when you set off for the zoo with your mummy and new baby brother that you would end the trip a different young girl. Never mind what came later, nothing could have prepared you for its sheer size. Vaster than you had imagined, in your eyes it was like hundreds of gardens stitched together into a giant patchwork of grass and paths and tall iron railings marking the boundaries between the enormous enclosures filled with animals you had only previously seen in books or on TV.

It was an especially hot day and the sun was doing its magic trick of making the air ripple so that it felt like you were swimming through brightly lit water between black patches of shadow, which you made a point of skirting around in case they turned out to be holes you could accidentally fall down like in *Alice In Wonderland*. Through the haze, you were conscious of the flickering silhouettes of legs and tails and horns which you took to be buffalo or gazelle or rhinos grazing on the brown withered grass in the distance.

In the intense heat, the zoo smelled of boiled bones and the chalky stone of the path, which scuffed the toes of your shoes and turned your ankle socks grey. By the penguins, the smell of fish was so strong that you could taste the sharp gluey brine on your tongue. It was almost as bad as the sulphurous smell of the boiled egg your mummy produced when you said you were hungry. You didn't like boiled eggs any more than you liked fish. The egg tasted exactly as it smelled, and you held your nose as you ate so you wouldn't be sick.

From the bench where you had been told to sit, you watched your mummy reach a hand into the dark mouth of the pram and pull out the slight, slithery form of your brother. He flipped and jumped in her arms like the fish you had watched the penguins being fed until your mummy squashed his pink mouth onto a waiting nipple and he greedily began to suck, clawing at her exposed breast with tiny, curled fingers. You could smell the same milky aroma emanating from the gaps between your new baby brother's toes and his squashed, pimpled nose. Your mummy had a similar smell, but beneath it was something meatier, like the rind of skin on the top of the milk when it's about to go off. Her smell plumed from her wiry, red hair and rolled off the small mound of her tummy.

Your mummy's tummy was eye height and wherever you were, it was always there on the periphery of your vision. Although now empty of your brother, it curved out from beneath her skirt waistband like the coils of snakeskin in the reptile house in a way that made it look like something was still nesting inside her. You wondered if the presence of this other thing was the reason your mummy had started to spend so much time lying on the sofa with the curtains drawn, even though it was nowhere near bedtime, as if this other thing inside the warm, dark space that had been left by your brother was gobbling her up in the same way as he was gobbling her milk.

The sun was at its apex in a sky raked of all cloud and you were flushed pink from the mid-day heat when your mother drew you to a halt so she could take a photograph. Your mummy was in charge of the camera, and under her command, any such venture was a major operation requiring much labouring over light meters and speed settings. Parking you and your brother at the ornamental lawn beside a bed of marigolds, she pulled her new Nikon camera from the chassis under the pram. It was on a long leather holster, like those you had seen the cowboys keep their guns in during the Saturday afternoon matinees that your Granny let you watch whenever your mummy sent you over, which was often, especially now she was so busy with your brother.

Inside its holster, the camera bounced against the mound of your mummy's tummy as she set about arranging you. Ideally, she would have liked you sitting prettily on the lawn but since there was a "keep off the grass" sign, she opted for the next best thing, which was to have you on the gravel path running alongside it. Then you had to be sitting and not standing because she wanted the photograph to be of you and your brother, who was too heavy in his big nappy for you to otherwise hold. Once she had you in place, your mummy re-adjusted your floral headscarf so that it was nice and straight and whipped a comb from her skirt pocket to smarten your fringe, telling you that, if you were good, you could have a miniature ceramic zoo animal from the shop.

"Watch his head!" The stern note in your mummy's voice sounded above you as she lowered your brother onto your lap. Terrified his head might snap clean off, you raised the crook of the elbow in which it was balanced an inch higher as an extra precaution.

"Now stay like that and don't move!" Your mummy had stepped away from the precarious ensemble of you and your brother and was shouting her clipped instructions from further away up the path. The sun was directly behind her and you had to screw up your eyes in order to see the dark silhouette of her shape. Encased like a butterfly inside the glass

paperweight of the sun's glare, you waited for your mummy to indicate she was ready. But no such signal came and she continued to adjust her camera, as if it was not a photograph she was about to take but some other form of capture which required a level of precision closer to hunting.

The longer you waited the more the light stung your eyes and the harder it was to keep them open. On your lap, soft gurgling noises bubbled up from your brother. Although his weight was grinding your knees into the gravel, making them hurt, you were determined to hold him straight as you had been told. With each minute that passed, he seemed to increase in weight, crushing your legs with even greater force into the gravel and turning your blouse clammy where his body was resting against your chest. Whichever way you held your brother, you couldn't get comfortable. The pain jumped from spot to spot like a fly, from the crook of your arm to the gravel boring into your knees to the burning sting of the sun in your eyes.

You were beginning to wonder how much longer you would be able to hold your brother straight when you heard your mummy ordering you to look at the camera and smile. Relieved that soon it was going to be over, you tried to do as you had been told. But the sun hurt and the gravel hurt and you couldn't smile and you couldn't look at the camera any more than if your mummy had told you to spin straw into gold.

"Mummy, *I caaan't*." You pleaded, hoping she would let you get up or turn you so that you weren't facing the sun. But your mummy continued addressing you in her cross voice.

"If you don't smile properly, there'll be no miniature zoo animal and we'll be going straight back home. Now look at the camera and smile!"

You tried to explain that the sun was in your eyes and that you were doing your best. But it was as though your mummy was shouting at a different girl who was not you and who could perfectly well smile but had chosen not to out of sheer spite. You felt something heavy and jagged drop from your chest into your stomach, as if you had swallowed a large chunk of gravel. Although it sounded like your mummy was talking to the wrong girl, you knew there was only you and that you were the naughty girl spoiling the photograph and ruining the day. You.

Beneath you, the gravel was alive, burrowing its rocky molars into your bones. Against the crook of your arm, your baby brother had mysteriously doubled in weight. Somewhere just ahead, you could hear the crunch of your mummy's sandals on the gravel. Then a gust of meaty breath hit your neck and a voice began to scream.

"How dare you disobey me! How dare you!"

Although you had become used to your mummy's cross voice, this new screaming voice seemed to come from nowhere. It flew from her dark shape, all teeth and claws, a wild animal released from a trap as you clutched your brother more tightly towards you.

"I'm sick to the back teeth of you! I bring you all the way here and this is how you behave!"

As the voice screamed, the air around you turned cold. Shielding your face, you dared to look up but all you could see in the place of your mummy was a giant black shadow. And then you saw. You *saw*. From out of the dark shape, four feet leaping towards you. You would have given anything, then, to be Alice falling down a hole far underground.

But as the blackness closed itself around you something else happened. There, on the gravel path, you started to disappear. It began with a tingling in the tips of your fingers, followed by pins and needles in both your legs. Then you couldn't feel your hands and feet. Then you couldn't feel anything. Draining first of colour, then of form, you faded into the marigolds, a phantom trace, captured in the irreversible CLICK of the Nikon's shutter, forever hanging in the air. Smiling for the camera.

Walking With Shadows: Introduction

While a growing field at the intersection of literary and trauma studies makes the persuasive case for creative writing as a means to represent and process trauma across a range of genres from traditional memoir to hybrid and fictionalised narrative approaches, how the specific qualities of short fiction can expand on existing modes, based on the form's tendency towards brevity and experiment, remains theoretically underexplored. This paper offers an intervention into the aforementioned field through an exploration of the ways in which the characteristics of short fiction can be employed to mirror and synthesise aspects of psychoanalyst Carl Jung's ground-breaking work on the unconscious and his narrative approaches to processing trauma through a critical reflection on the accompanying story "Disappearing Act". A hybrid of memoir and short fiction based on a personal experience of maternal emotional abuse and related childhood trauma, the literary strategies of "Disappearing Act" are informed by Jung's concept of individuation (commonly referred to in contemporary psychoanalytic circles as shadow work), which incorporates uses of metaphor and symbol to tell the shadow story of the unconscious and its hidden wounds, while also playing an active role in trauma recovery. This paper explores the complementary relationship between autobiographical short fiction and Jungian analysis through a discussion of the writing process behind "Disappearing Act" to shed light on how the form can be employed to echo and enact the psychoanalytic process of shadow work in a way that offered a creatively rich device for this writer to represent and process traumatic life material.

But before I had settled on the form of short fiction to convey this, my writing journey began with the challenge of putting the enormity of a difficult, painful, often intangible experience, into words. How could I translate the experience of trauma, which is by definition, a cataclysmic psychological event (Hermann [1992] 2015), onto the page? Drawing on Freud, Cathy Caruth suggests the traumatic event is so unbearable that it becomes unconsciously buried in the body as a hidden, psychological wound, inaccessible to the conscious mind (Caruth 1996). The story of trauma, Caruth claims, is that of the silent voice at the centre of this wound 'that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available' (Caruth 1996: 4). This, in turn, makes writing about trauma essentially problematic because this voice can never be fully known or remembered, Caruth argues, and so never fully expressed.

While Caruth highlights the paradoxical challenge of saying the unsayable, Arthur C. Frank's 'wounded storyteller' ([1995] 2013) is one who tells stories as a means to recover 'the voices that illness… has taken away' (Frank ([1995] 2013: xx) by 'way of re drawing maps and finding new destinations' (Frank [1995] 2013: 53) in order to instigate a restorative process of meaning making. Echoing Frank, Louise DeSalvo also draws parallels between therapeutic and literary approaches to storytelling, claiming that both can allow us 'to take experience and re-enter it and represent it after the fact in some kind of symbolic way' (DeSalvo 2000: 55), as a means to process and heal from trauma.

Building on this equivalence, Reina Van der Weil references the writing of Virginia Woolf and Jeanette Winterson to illustrate how literary modes of storytelling can 'instigate, facilitate or represent a transformational process of working-through of trauma by successfully containing its emotionally overwhelming content through form and style' (Van der Weil 2014: 48), reducing the risk of re-traumatisation through the use of distancing devices such as metaphor. Meanwhile, both Van der Weil and DeSalvo explore how authors like Winterson and Woolf make fiction of experience by way of the novel and memoir, as a means to write on trauma.

Like Jeanette Winterson's autobiographical novel *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985), which also deals with childhood trauma, "Disappearing Act" likewise fictionalises real-life material. Although autobiographical elements make up the bones of the story, it employs 'invention and imagination… to make self-representation possible' (Gilmore 2001: 24), speculatively making the girl who is me in the story literally disappear, to convey a psychological truth relating to the horror of that day.

If the translation of memoir into fiction was a strategy to convey intangible aspects of the traumatic experience, it was also a distancing device to manage the overwhelming content of trauma that Van der Weil refers to. Narrating "Disappearing Act" in second person, I could detach myself from emotionally challenging subject matter and tell the story from outside the narrative frame looking in. Enacting the fictive narrative voice of an intuitive 'knowing subject' who 'works with dissonant materials, fragmented by trauma and organises them into a form of knowledge' (Gilmore 2001: 47), writing in second person allowed me to stage an encounter with my worst fears (in this case being annihilated by my mother) in order to make sense of what was beyond my understanding at the time.

But "Disappearing Act" is not only a form of autobiographical fiction. At less than two thousand words with minimal back story and only a few characters, it also conforms to the specific characteristics of short fiction. As previously noted, while the field of literary trauma studies is an established area of study, incorporating investigations of how poetry, the novel and memoir (including the autobiographical novel and autofiction) can operate as containers for trauma, far less critical attention has been paid to short fiction and the ways in which the form might add to existing approaches.

Although short fiction shares many qualities with other longer forms including the novel and the memoir, this paper suggests that it is the rhetorical qualities of brevity, condensation, fragmentation, ambiguity and elision (Lohafer and Clarey1989) that are associated with short fiction as a distinct genre, which lend themselves particularly well to experiment (Pratt 1981) and, thus, to innovative approaches in the handling of difficult subject matter such as trauma. While experiment is by no means an exclusive characteristic to

short fiction, this paper aims to show how short fiction can offer a complementary alternative that does not supersede other modes, so much as it extends and expands on the available possibilities through an exploration of the complementary relationship between autobiographical short fiction and aspects of Jungian psychoanalysis.

The Dark

Like most children, as a girl I was afraid of the dark but I was even more afraid of my mother. She loomed over my childhood, a furious, screaming figure of whom I lived in perpetual terror. It wasn't until years later, following a breakdown and related chronic fatigue, that I came to understand the extent to which my mother's behaviour constituted a form of emotional abuse that had catastrophically torn apart my basic sense of self in ways that were all the more dangerous because I had remained largely oblivious to them. A traumatic experience that cast a long shadow over everything that came after, my way of dealing with this was by not dealing with it. I buried my pain and pretended I was fine. Except I was not fine and the 'acquired unconscious undertone' (Jung [1964] 1972: 40) of my fears became a constant white noise of worry and anxiety, fusing the past with the present into the one discordant note. And so I became ill, both mentally and physically.

Deep in denial about what psychoanalyst Miriam Greenspan terms the 'dark emotions' (Greenspan 2004) of grief, fear and despair, for a long time writing about the traumatic impact of childhood emotional abuse was the last thing I was interested in doing. Believing my past to be behind me, in reality, I had exchanged what Greenspan describes as the 'authentic suffering' of feeling my dark emotions for the 'neurotic suffering' (Greenspan 2004) of denying them. Repressing my dark emotions, I developed a 'fear of fear' (van der Kolk 2015), which left me in a fragile state, caught between the 'twin crises' of the psychic death that is a result of silencing the unbearable, on the one hand, and the equally crushing psychic death, that is living with this silencing, on the other (Caruth 1996).

As my physical and mental health suffered, so, it turned out, did my writing. Overwhelmed by this twin crisis, I wrote a novel in the midst of a breakdown, in which the first thing I did was kill off the protagonist's mother. Demonstrating the pitfall of 'skipping a step in awareness, moving from repressed, shamed emotions to an act that expresses unconscious feeling' (Greenspan 2004: 185), despite my best efforts to bury my dark emotions along with this fictional maternal figure, they did not go away but staged an invasion of my novel by stealth. What I did not want to write about emerged on the page in the form of overwhelmingly intense writing which drowned both the characters and the narrative beneath the immense freight of unprocessed trauma.

Hitting the bottom, creatively, psychologically, physically, I had arrived in exactly the place I did not want to go. With nowhere left to fall, I came to the difficult realisation that I had got here precisely through avoiding my pain. Where writing had been part of the problem, my view from the bottom helped me to see that it could also be a cure – 'writing the worse (as) an exercise that requires us to be stronger than ourselves' (Cixous 1993: 42) and, in the process, attend to my pain.

Making The Darkness Conscious

Once I had made the decision to write about my traumatic experience, the question that remained was, how? It was through an experience of Jungian-informed analysis that I came to understand how the dark emotions I had so successfully repressed for so long, and which I struggled to talk about, remained active in the unconscious realm of my dreams, unmediated by my waking self. My encounter with this 'symmetrical counterpart of the conscious mind and its contents' (Jung [1974] 2002: 249) which 'night after night practice philosophy on their own account' (Jung [1974] 2002: 261), suggested that, beneath the autobiographical facts of my experience, was a parallel shadow story, whose rich symbolic dream language I might adopt and adapt to inform the handling of traumatic subject matter in my own writing.

Along with this shadow world, I also became acquainted with the Jungian concept of the shadow self. One of a number of multiple selves which, according to Jung, make up a larger totality or whole self, the shadow self shape-shifts across numerous internal psychic characters, personifying aspects of unprocessed trauma. Where Caruth theorises trauma as the voice in the wound that is beyond representation, Jung suggests that we can attune to this voice through a process of individuation which uses dream analysis to bringing shadowy aspects of the self into a conscious awareness in order to integrate them into a larger whole, as in the Taoist symbol of yin and yang. Suggesting this process cannot be arrived at by critical thinking alone, Jung claims

> It is of course impossible to free oneself from one's childhood without devoting a great deal of work to it… nor can it be achieved through intellectual knowledge only; what alone is effective is a remembering that is also a re-experiencing. The swift passage of the years and the overwhelming inrush of the newly discovered would leave a mass of material behind that is never dealt with. We do not shake this off; we merely remove ourselves from it. So that when, years later, we return to the memories of childhood we find bits of our personality still alive.. being still in their childlike state, these fragments are very powerful in their effect. Then can lose their infantile aspect and be corrected only when reunited with adult consciousness (Jung [1974] 2002: 136).

Having experienced the benefits of this process in dream analysis, the concept of shadow work suggested itself to me a generative device to further explore 'the immense and extensive feelings that the dreamer, in real life, is unable to cry out' (Estes [1992] 1998: 381) not in therapy but creative writing.

Brevity And Managing Difficult Subject Matter

In her memoir on writing about trauma, Jenn Ashworth describes a traumatic experience as being 'exploded and rubbed out' (Ashworth 2019: 2). But asking, 'how to write about everything? How to take in the things that don't belong to you without being poisoned by them?' (Ashworth 2019: 91), she finds 'fiction cannot hold this' (Ashworth 2019: 17). Ashworth's struggle to write about trauma at this time illustrates the overwhelm that can be experienced as a result of trauma and the related difficulty in finding an appropriate literary form to contain the unbearable, while also suggesting that it simply isn't always possible to do so.

While Ashworth discusses the emotional, psychological, ethical and technical challenges of managing overwhelm and writing authentically about trauma, Louise De Salvo highlights that not all writing on trauma is necessarily therapeutic and that, in some cases, it can have the adverse effect of re-traumatisation (De Salvo 2000: 94). As an antidote, De Salvo advocates longer forms of creative writing as being the most advantageous to writers in terms of enabling 'a healing process that is deeper' (De Salvo 2000: 134) and managing difficult traumatic subject matter. However, in my experience, it was precisely the characteristic brevity of short fiction that provided a sufficiently robust container to hold my own feelings of being exploded and rubbed out.

With no singular beginning or ending to my traumatic experience and no visible connection between my anxieties in the present and the dark emotions I had learned to bury as a child, the story I wanted to tell was not linear and cohesive but broken into pieces with no clear through line. However, much like attending an hour-long therapy session, "Disappearing Act" offered a similar structure, bound by narrative length rather than a period of time. Focussing on the single event of being photographed at the zoo, the condensation, brevity and elision that characterises short fiction allowed me to work with a manageable amount of material over a few pages, extracting fragments from the whole and placing them beneath the enlarging microscope of short fiction for closer inspection

Rather than trying to say everything, the focus of "Disappearing Act" uses the narrative frame of that day at the zoo as a vehicle to not only remember but also re-experience the psychological wounds of the girl I was then. Using the writing process to connect with the child I was in the past as her shadow remains alive in me in the present, the narrative compression of "Disappearing Act" created the conditions for me to access the dark emotions it was too dangerous for me to feel at the time.

Meanwhile, I found the brevity of short fiction not only allowed me to manage overwhelm. It also created opportunities for experiment and therefore more failed attempts, with less at stake, due to the form's short length. Behind the version of "Disappearing Act" included here, stands the "shadow" of many earlier attempts, through the writing of which, I was able to discover what did and didn't work for the difficult task of translating my trauma onto the page.

Author Carmen Maria Machado describes how, when writing about trauma, it was the experimental qualities of short fiction that enabled her to

> jump from one idea to the next, searching for a kind of aggregate meaning. You know that if you can break (the stories) and reposition them and unravel them and remove their gears, you will be able to access their truths in a way you couldn't before. (Machado 2020: 171)

Like Machado, I found that I, too, could take apart "Disappearing Act", jumping between different registers of memoir and fiction, realism and surrealism, in order to access the emotional truths of that day and arrive at the version included here.

A 'Special Domain For The Fantastic and The Supernatural'

Blending not only memoir with short fiction but also concrete physical reality with internal psychological realms, "Disappearing Act" can be considered as a work of surrealist short fiction. A 'special domain for the fantastic and the supernatural' (Pratt 1981: 189), the origins of surrealist short fiction can be traced to early iterations of the short story form in the fairy tale and ghost story (Pratt 1981, May 1989) which function as 'a primal narrative that embodies and recapitulates mythic perception' (May 1989: 66) employing metaphor to externalise otherwise hidden aspects of the psyche.

Likewise, the origins of shadow work can also be traced to back to the primal narratives of myth, suggesting a natural affinity between the two approaches. Throughout his lifetime Jung extensively researched the symbolism and myths of ancient civilisations, spiritual beliefs and religions, including Taoism and Buddhism, to inform his theory on the collective unconscious and uses of metaphor in the interpretation of dreams. Believing the content of dreams to be partially composed of "mental forms whose presence cannot be explained by anything in the individual's own life and which seem to be aboriginal, innate and inherited shapes of the human mind" (Jung [1964] 1972: 67), Jung describes dream symbolism as an 'emotionally charged pictoral language' (Jung [1964] 1972: 43) through which the hidden world of the unconscious might be grasped.

Where Jung employed this metaphorical language in the interpretation of dreams, research at the intersection of trauma studies and creative writing indicates how metaphor can be employed as a restorative mechanism that connects feelings to events in a way which 'enables us to express non-literal experiences in a highly individualized way' (De Salvo 2000: 166) when writing about trauma, regardless of form. But if metaphor lends itself particularly well to trauma narratives, then May further argues that short fiction lends itself particularly well to metaphor (May 1989, 2004), which in turn suggests that short fiction might be especially suited to dealing with traumatic subject matter when considered alongside other forms.

Of course, metaphor has long been employed by writers as a metaphysical device to illuminate the ineffable and is by no means exclusive to short fiction. But May argues that it is the compression demanded by the form which give characters, objects and events 'metaphoric significance' while 'the hard material outlines of the external world are inevitably transformed into the objectifications of psychic distress' (May 2004: n.pag.), so shifting the apparently everyday into the realm of the metaphysical, indicating a complementary synergy between Jungian psychoanalysis and surrealist short fiction that I could exploit in my own writing.

Adapting the metaphoric mother-tongue of the psyche to tell the emotional truths of trauma in "Disappearing Act", the terrified girl and her furious mother double as both literal representations and metaphors symbolising an internal cast of shadow selves. An impressionistic porous space between external and inner realities, lightly framed by allusions to the surrealist landscape of *Alice In Wonderland*, these narrative strategies allowed me to experiment with fraying the edges between recognisable figures and worlds and the metaphoric realm of the psyche. While my mother didn't shape-shift into a giant shadow and I didn't evaporate into thin air, the story employs the symbolic pictoral language of dream to tell the emotional truths about the shadow of my mother's rage, as it was projected onto me, and the way I defended myself against it by learning to emotionally disappear.

Thinking about the mother character not only as *my* mother but as a representation of 'the matrix, the hollow form, the vessel that carries and nourishes' that simultaneously 'suggests darkness, something nocturnal and fearful, hemming one in' (Jung [1974] 2002: 106), which is how Jung describes the mother archetype, was as an imaginatively rich device to further experiment with the surrealist elements of the story. Heightening the slippage between the recognisable reality of my own mother, her body and her smells, and the mythic realms of the symbolic maternal, working with archetype was a generative means to engage with enlarging a harrowing personal experience through the universal themes of death and rebirth.

Inventing Reality

In Jungian psychoanalysis, this symbolic use of metaphor isn't simply a rhetorical device that can point to otherwise inexpressible truths of the traumatic experience but a mechanism with the potential to change it. Central to Jung's thinking is his claim that the unconscious is unable to tell the difference between a real act and a symbolic one. Whatever stories we tell, whether consciously or unconsciously, real or symbolic, the psyche takes to be true. Relating the concept of invention to its Greek root, meaning to find, for Jung, it is through story that we *find* the truth. Reality, he claims, is not a fixed external entity but something more groundless and mutable that, ultimately, we make up as we go along.

Although surrealism can be used as rhetorical device to convey the poetic traits of a situation where reality makes little sense (Onega Jaén and Ganteau 2011), I was interested in how I could employ surrealist tropes to not only represent the disintegration of trauma but also to go beyond representation and think about narrative as a form of becoming. Central to this process of invention or creative realisation, is what Jung terms the 'transcendent function' (Miller 2004) of metaphor. Jung's pupil James Hillman describes the relationship between this function and the healing process as the point at which

> We move out of the audience and onto the stage of the psyche, become characters in fiction…and, as the drama intensifies, the catharsis occurs, we are purged from attachments to literal destinies, find freedom in playing parts… never *being* the whole but *participating in* the whole. (Hillman 2004: 38, original emphasis)

Staging this play of shadow characters in "Disappearing Act" – confronting those I was afraid of in the form of the shape-shifting mother and listening to those I had buried in the form of her traumatised daughter – I was able to begin accepting the parts of myself that I had previously preferred to keep in the dark.

Integral to this process of participating in the whole, meanwhile, is Jung's concept of the 'true self', which both belongs to and stands outside this cast of shadow characters, allowing us to view them as part of who we are but not as *all* of who we are. Echoing Leigh Gilmore's intuitive 'knowing subject' (Gilmore 2001), Jung's true self functions as a wise, hieratic elder, who is *both* grounded in the individual self *and* connected to what he terms a larger 'collective unconscious' born of an infinite 'original mind' (Jung [1964] 1972).

Both me and a fictive version of a larger 'supra personal force… as if something is looking at me, something I do not see but sees me – perhaps that Great (Woman) in the heart'

(von Franz [1964]1972: 162), the narrative voice of "Disappearing Act" is a speculative performance of this Jungian true self. Inventing this voice on the page, I could write towards becoming her off the page, 'living the metaphor… to recognise not only the gifts we buried long ago, but gifts we do not know of' (Woodman and Dickson [1996] 1997: 166) and, in so doing, enact a wiser, kinder, more compassionate version of myself who is able to see the suffering of the girl that stands in for me in the story, in the way she/I is not seen by her/my mother.

The Tension of Opposites

According to Jung, it is this inter-relational dance between the opposite poles of unconscious and consciousness, shadow selves and true self that can generate 'a living birth that leads to a new level of being' (Miller 2004: 90), which is both the process and goal of individuation (von Franz [1964]1972, Estes [1992] 1998, Woodman and Dickson [1996] 1997, Greenspan 2004, Miller and Jung 2004). A creatively generative device to re-map the story of my traumatic experience, the tension of opposites underpinning the individuation process simultaneously provided a helpful framework with which to consider the ethical questions involved in balancing the authentic representation of pain with the possibility of healing.

Aside from the psychological and literary challenges related to saying the unsayable, the risk of putting the unbearable into words is that the unspeakable truths of the silent cry at the heart of the wound (Caruth 1996) are in danger of being compromised. While this raises fundamental questions about the narrative ethics of writing about trauma in relation to truth-telling, an equal and opposite risk is the potential over-identification with traumatic wounding 'as if such vulnerability defined the essence of what it is to be human' (Ganteau 2020: 139), resulting in 'flattened self-narratives, legible in only one, dark context" (Jensen 2016: 442), that don't allow for complexity.

On the other hand, Jean Michel Ganteau also highlights the ethical problems related to false recovery narratives, where 'the structural characteristics of working through (trauma) are presented and even performed narratively, among which is the problematical closure that is such a constituent of (this) poetics' (Ganteau 2020: 139) where traumatic wounding is minimised and complex experiences are equally over-simplified.

This paradoxical challenge of neither denying the truth of suffering nor the possibility of recovery is especially apparent when considered in the light of short fiction and approaches to endings. Reflecting on this dilemma, Jenn Ashworth suggests the brevity of the short story encourages endings that conclude with epiphanies 'where a sudden insight, perhaps prompted by a conveniently placed line of dialogue or change in the weather or even a domestic object, bubbles up through the consciousness of the focalising character' and resolution is achieved, arguably at the expense of the truth (Ashworth 2019: 21).

While Ashworth highlights the problematic aspects of closure in short fiction, May's suggestion that the 'tension between the necessity of the everyday metonymic world and the sacred metaphoric world' where 'truth is embodied rather than explained' (May 2004: n.pag.) through aesthetic patterning conforms to what Jungian analyst Clarissa Estes calls an 'aperture story'. Founded on ambiguity rather than epiphany, it is apertures stories which 'allow us to glimpse the hidden healing structures and deeper meanings (where) things are implied rather than stated' (Estes [1992]1998: 351) as a strategy to avoid oversimplification.

Thinking about "Disappearing Act" as an aperture story and playing with aesthetic patterning as a means to embody the girl's/my pain, the references to *Alice In Wonderland* are intended to stage an inter-play between the fantastical landscape of the zoo as an unfamiliar exotic space and a childhood fear of darkness. But while the fictional version of my childhood self in the story initially is afraid of falling into a hole, when the traumatic event of having her photograph taken occurs, that she would rather do so than face her mother, is meant to hint at something of the unbearable nature of her/my pain in that moment. Meanwhile the intended meaning of the final sentence, which finds this girl smiling for the camera after all, is meant to transform a familiar phrase into something more sinister, based on the escalation of the mother's increasingly hysterical shouting which precedes this.

At the same time, the ending of "Disappearing Act" is intended to sound a note of ambiguity by not hinting only at the girl's/my pain but also at the ways she/I might have withstood, and perhaps, survived it. The phantom trace of the girl left hanging in the air is meant to imply a playful trickery on the part of the girl with a view to complicating her/my victimhood. Meanwhile, the ending also returns to the image of the marigolds. Foregrounding what had been in the background, according to Jung's pictoral language, flowers are friendly messages from the universe and are meant, in this story, to hint at the girl's possible transformation into a numinous level of being 'that has no form but contains potential for everything' (Dickinson and Woodman [1996] 1997: 43) beyond the site of her physical body.

Conclusion: Seeing In The Dark

Illuminating a creative synergy between Jung's psychoanalytical approaches to working through trauma and autobiographical short fiction, the process of writing "Disappearing Act" allowed me to *both* represent intangible aspects of my traumatic experience *and* stage a form of shadow work on the page. Holding the tension between the pain of dark emotions and wisdom gained from working through them, it demonstrates how the practice of creative writing can walk the shadowy line between memoir and fiction, trauma and healing, known and unknown in a way that, for this writer, did not dispel the dark but allowed me to see in it.

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