



GRADUATE
LIBERAL STUDIES

**When the Day Closes Itself:
A Collection of Poems and an Essay**

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a creative work that explores the relationship between psychological healing and the writing of poetry. Primarily creative, the paper presents poetry written in a variety of contemporary styles, from French surrealism, to contemporary American poetry, in particular an imitation and homage to the poet Joe Brainard and his poetry book *I Remember*. Given the profound place of Chinese culture in the life of the poet, the paper includes explorations of Chinese poetic traditions. In each poem, the poet sought to describe some aspect of an overarching quest to both become a better poet, and to understand the origins of the poetic process. Surrealism's interest in dreams and the unconscious is a significant part of the paper, as is various writing procedures taken up to further explore the relation of inner and outer reality. In keeping with this ambition, the essay formulates a poetics, a way, that is, to think about the nature of poetry in its possible relation to psychic wholeness and recovery from trauma. The paper both brings to the surface suppressed pains in the life of the poet, and sets these pains in a therapeutic context, one inspired in part by Carl Jung, and in part by the growing field of Poetry Therapy. Written to reflect the power of words, the poems spotlight self-relations and self-growth, they embody the interconnections among self, other and the world, and awaken one's inner creativity in the healing of body, mind and soul.

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When the Day Closes Itself...

A Sickle

A sickle hangs over its dark sky
a baby lies upon her tanned arms
a lullaby is chanted in dialect:

Moon Pa Pa
Protects Baby Baby
Grow Up Up

To make Money Money
To slaughter Pig Pig
for Happy Happy New Year!

Your little ears in sleepiness
embed a twisted story into your brain
---Moon Pa Pa cannot protect the grown-up baby
from being killed to celebrate Spring Festival---

The sickle is on the field ridge
waiting for seedlings
breaking through their swaddling
soaring under the scorching sun
until they grow twice higher than you ---
people cut them, bathe them within the rooftop sunshine
until dried enough to be separated from husks and straws
your grandma says,
it is the price of an unavoidable maturity.

Grasped by a workman's hand, a sickle
her disheveled hair is the straw
head, without husk
is hit on the wall
One, Two, Three, Four...
until it is dyed the color of a red brick wall
your grandma says,
it is the price of an unblest marriage
--- She is not singing Moon Pa Pa anymore,
she tells bedtime stories about your mom and dad
you listen and fall into a circuit of nightmare ---

There are always hooked phantoms
swishing in your dreams
so many years later
you recognize them
they are sickles:

*A sickle here, held by Cronus¹ to harvest harm.
A sickle there, held by Chronus² to heal harm.*

Etched into your bone
you feel the same blood running
throughout your veins
where recalcitrance blooms
to be uprooted.

¹ God of Harvest
² God of Time

Again

And Yes

A Beast

Again

There again

A room without door

shuts all

A face without mouth

won't howl

Bottles, bowls, baskets

All Full

All Fall

All wait on the floor

For tear's drop

Again there,

wind carries pollen

to a sinned stamen.

The Lock

I saw
she was frothing
like bubbles in the tub
I heard
she was groaning
face haggard and gaunt

A hardtack
soaked in water—
she is a lock
she locks
herself out
of her heart

Some words
locked inside throats
a handful of sorrow
sprinkled, here and there
feeding the brain, blood,
bone and body

sorrow is her body

At the break of dawn
I crawled out of her bed
sneaked through the
living room, lightly
unscrewing the lock
Before a relocking,

I saw
my great grandma's eyes
on the wall, watching at me.

Out of the hallway
I caught the sight of a few stars
beyond the sky.

At the Funeral

The smoke's ring
above the incense
fume my eyes
in the funeral
while other tears
remain in the air

I am standing
there, like dust
dust cannot cry
dust will wash
itself away by tears

I keep on standing
until my feet bleed
blood touches dust
turns into red dust

I stay static in a funeral
until I become dust
that stands upon your
tombstone, forever.

Never Ends

It is a colorful teardrop
a teardrop from your eyes
eyes behind the bamboo basket

Bamboo strips are turned around
around by tips of fingers
fingers' callus touched loss of time

Who is weaving a karmic circle?
circle that you cannot escape
escape never beats the curse

of Sisyphus' megalith, rolling back
back and forth to complete a sin
sin sees your rusty soul

casted by a repetitive over-loaded ego
ego is good at tasting the bitterness
bitterness is happiness

that hides in the basket.

There Is No Door

I.

There is no door
there is flow in space
where a tree is framed by a window
and some rain drifts into the minds
of people, standing there
looking afar
looking forward to a door
into a shelter.
There they plough and pray
pray and plough
there is a shelter
but there's no door.

II.

There is no door
not even a road
only clouds
roll in layers
there hills loom
their peaks are peering at you
you are watching them back
as if you hear
some silent echoes
climbing all their way up,
and down,
and up into your ears.

III.

There is no door
only three of you
standing still
in the direction of the south
the heated blood-soaked south

Three of you
three women
standing steadily in the moor

barefoot
bleeding
deep into the earth
barehanded
body props up itself
like dancers, trapped dancers
facing afar, facing being apart
facing fate that fools itself
cornered
under the dome.

There is no door

you are going home.

There You Are

Prism pinned on the two eyeballs
reflects colors of frailty
while furtive connivance
is tiptoeing imperceptibly
until the coagulated blood lump
on the cheek, like a dormant volcano
sprawling into a branchy flower

The blindfold
now flings you off
with fugitive pleasure
a cindery column of rain
extinguishes your hypocrisy

Listen, who is singing a dead song
out in the hallway
long and deep enough to
devour any walking shadow.

The raven
oh, the raven
hews a hyaline flower stalk
from the cheek
and hands it to you.
Upon it tears shed
like rain's trail on the glass window
a silent dip

Then you hear
a train thundering through
the darkness, pulverizing the thick night air
and its rolling whistle scratching
an oblique stroke of tears

The far
chasing the far
there you are
with barefoot treading on thorns

You look at her
wearing a fitted stone
time in time
upon which flowers grow.

My Decayed Tooth and I

My decayed tooth and I
have lived together
in a foreign country
for one year and six months

During that time
I have started to count
how many other holes
invisible holes are
living inside me.

The Hole

Earthly materials and flowing spirits converge
in the eyes of an observing child
who is looking through a narrow hole
behind a thick muddy wall

The hole is the whole.

Many years later,
you are standing near a cliff---
the deep chasm, a ferocious beast
opens its mouth
like a hole
where the bouts of
your habitual sorrow
temporary joy
and tardy progress
are spouting out
spinning like a bulky machine

You stretch out your hands
trying to untie the string
around her neck, yet they remain
stiff in the air, waiting for time
to flow in the hole
where the child hides in.

A morning rush
the faster my mind runs
the slower my body acts
wind walks past me

It is light enough
to speed to complete
unlike me, it has no
further heaviness.

Approaching a Deadline with a Backache

I rush to my deadline, but it
is running to me faster than I do
It's an ache that feels red

The red grows in my body
it flushes out
with some black granules

The backache grows in my bone
it accumulates up, and
crawls onto my shoulders

I want so much, to run to
my death, but I feel it is running
to me, faster than I do.

Lava erupted from the body
spreads shards of brittle solo
in the rickrack crepe
snare of voracious appetite
hides in the urn of childhood freeze
A jagged delirium
a postmarked indulgence
creep all over the
thawing wraith

Pearlized standstill forges
a Byzantine gesamtkunstwerk
the undertow of loss
slips through the net
all the evanescent fishes
sway the wind of reed

Your Choice

There is a space
between pain
and pain
there, resides
a sponge
and a sword

Sometimes the mind
rushes towards the sword
then livers and intestines are cut
into inches, pain occupies the fortress
where nothing outside can get in
and everything inside is trapped

Sometimes the mind
opens the poriferous wideness
of the sponge, a soft self
sews pain
to breathe and
to be believed

Let pain pain
let the night sleep nigh to the moon.

Consider the body

I.

I woke up at 4 in the
morning, it is flaming
a snake snake
two snakes snakes
coiling around its branches

It is suffocating
it crumbles
as drawn into a gaze
a permanent gaze
an evanescent gaze

I got up and opened
a back-yard door
the papaya seeds sprinkled
sprouted greenness. The Easter
egg dropped, resurrected
two mutilated perfection

My broken words
upcoming today
4-am body
and all the other
are pieces of bitter gourd

II.

Circle, circle, make a circle
a permanent circle
an evanescent circle
a life circle, gently,
slowly moving your palm
to make a permanent evanescent
circle, circled around each one
of your seven chakras

Root chakra

—I have
Nature builds me, but not all
my father only considered his own future
without knowing where to go
my mother only lingered in her past
without knowing where she has been,
they left me alone
drowning in the presence

Sacral chakra

—I feel
sensing
being
oh, open it!

The tree climbs from the root ground

Solar plexus chakra

—I can
Heart chakra
—I love
Throat chakra
—I speak
Third eye chakra
—I see
Crown chakra
—I understand

III.

Open chakras
open body
consider bodies
consider not being—
only heads—stiff above water
with eyes open—without watching
mouth open—only for eating
--from necks down
drowned bodies
like octopus, eight tentacles
reaching and stretching
yearning and yelling

under the water

Consider

Eyeing

Earing

A white bird

Nosing

Tonguing

Touching

Consider being your body.

I REMEMBER the teacher told us that humans' memory is clearest from 2 to 22 years old.

I remember feeling nervous about raising my hand and answering questions in class, and feeling bad about myself if I failed to be brave.

I remember in primary school, I had to eat my snack secretly because my mother had forbidden me to do that (she still does), and usually I ate more to resist her.

I remember always being left alone at my childhood house and the only thing that accompanied me was a small TV.

I remember in high school, a boy came to me with a love letter. My heart beat fast and before I could guess why he liked me, he asked in his rare politeness: "please translate this for me. You know, my English is poor."

I remember my mom beating me with a heavy wooden rod that was used by people to hand wash the clothes.

I remember mildewed tofu and rice porridge being the best breakfast match.

I remember listening to the sound of the hawker.

I remember weeding in our front yard the whole day. The next day my muscle got sore. I thought I was sick and my father took me to the clinic. I remember hating the doctor who suggested my father let me do more manual work.

I remember I had such an urge to kick the little kid into the sky. He was dressed like a chubby ball, standing on the snowfield.

I remember squeezing a red succulent plant on my nails as a polish.

I remember when I was little, my aunts always joked that I was picked up from a trash bin because I didn't look like my mother and father at all.

I remember the last time I called my father "Dad" was 15 years ago.

I remember how much, in third grade, I was proudly awkward about my mom being my Chinese teacher.

I remember my first menstruation. I thought that was something serious like pregnancy.

I remember many dreams of falling from a high place and waking up suddenly in frustration, without knowing where I fell.

I remember having a bag of Big White Rabbit candy beside my pillow to fall asleep sweetly.

I remember a dream my mom died, then I woke up with tears everywhere.

I remember on my walk to school, I heard someone walking behind me. Without looking back, I knew he or she was a friend. I kept on walking, pretending that I knew nothing about it. She or he kept on walking, pretending that she or he didn't know I realized that. After a

while suddenly we started to laugh simultaneously and I turned around to see who he or she was. Then we walked together to school.

I remember in middle school, class 9 and class 5 (which I was in) had the same English teacher, and he always gave me a lot of compliments in front of class 9. A past primary classmate (he was in class 9) would appear outside of my classroom every day after my English class finished. He'd borrow my English book and I wondered why he never brought his book to school. He did that for a couple of weeks and then stopped. Upon graduation, one of his best friends came to me with his year book and there was a blank page for me to introduce myself and write down words of wishes. I asked why he didn't come to me directly. She said he liked me and asked me to keep this secret for her.

I remember the cabinet in my parents' room; I noticed a disk behind the comic book Schuck and Beta, upon it posing a golden-hair naked woman and a muscled brown naked man. I watched it and got bored quickly because they were speaking a language that I didn't understand.

I remember every winter morning my father washed his face with freezing water from the well.

I remember my then best friend thought she fell in love with a man who was as old as her father. She started to drop school and act crazily. She hid in my place, so her family would not find her. I told her sisters my address. My friend called me a betrayer and said she hated me. I felt guilty and doubted myself, and didn't know what's the right thing to do (I still don't know, but this is the only thing I'm clear about: I loved her so much and I still do).

I remember being touched into tears when a little squirrel was standing in front of me, composing in its still pose, just like me.

On Dream

If insomnia is a bird
is it white, or black?
It must have a pair of fledged wings

If I stand still on the grass
will I become a white-haired old woman?
It must be an overnight frost

If there is something running
in my brain, ceaselessly
it must be a carriage

If there is something falling
slowly from my mind tree
it must be a maple leaf

If a naked stare is a bud
it must be sitting silently there
to be a Buddha

If you are looking at me
it must be you are looking for
something, something beyond
or behind, but not me

If you are sunshine, if I am bough
if the wall is a standing
letter without words
if the bird can be free.

Orphan Dream (I): The Fear

The old woman, like a witch, gave me a box. I opened it and saw a decayed block, scattered with some mildew. I then flipped the block over and noticed soft red and solid white. Suddenly I realized it was a combination of teeth, sticking together.

"Yes, my daughter died."

The old man said, coldly, without any look on her face

"These decayed teeth made her die, quickly."

I tried my best, but could not feel any of the teeth in my mouth.

Orphan Dream (II)

The driver
gave me a ride

Half way to somewhere
I was thrown out (by nobody)
into the branches of a tree
beside the road, a tall one

I stayed there, unmoved
nobody saw me
they didn't even raise their heads.

Orphan Dream (III)

I am waiting for a bus
it comes
but doesn't stop

After a long time
another bus comes and stops
but I pretend not to notice it

I keep on waiting for a bus
my eyes turn darker and darker
until I cannot see any bus

But I am still standing there
waiting for a bus.

Orphan Dream (IV)

Her dreams were always playing “lost and found” with her.

*I lost my way home, after I found my way, I lost my vehicle
then I walked back home, but the house is empty
then I started to look for everybody and everything
after I found them, I lost my memory...*

In her dreams she is always looking for something after losing something.

梦归何处之卡农 D 大调

路旁

松子安安静静地躺着
小黄花是刚睡醒的模样

谁的梦？

有时重重硬硬地踏在石阶上
有时轻轻软软地踩在落叶上

梦着谁？

梦的手

将你的声音采摘
养在一个无水的空瓶里

她不曾听见它的绽放

梦的手

将弥散的烟雾
绑了一株又一株结

编成一个又一个

我的身体
在空中打转

乘风 撒野

要往哪儿去
要往哪儿去。

Whose Dream (IV) -- Canon in D³

Pine seeds by the road lying
little yellow flower waking up

Whose dream ?

thundering upon stone stairs
mincing upon fallen leaves

Who dreamt whom?

The hand of whose dream

picks up your voice
raises them in a bottle, without water

Its bloom has never been heard

The eyes of whose dream

tie all the diffused mists
into one pearly knot and another

into one body and another

whose body
swirling in the air

Rides, whose wind

Rides, whose dream

Where to go

Where to go.

³ The poet wrote the Chinese poem first, and then translated it into English.

The Stranded

Drawn into the whirlpool
of the same ocean
both are rolled over by
the contagious cholera
with unknown etiology
and symptoms of vomit/diarrhea

Biased waves of identities
skewed waves of giving
fated waves of time
threw them onto the shore

One stands up and leaves swiftly
the other gets stranded
like a mite on the tree
coated by a dropping resin
fossilized in the freeze
of time and space

Perhaps
the stranded is
 the gifted
perhaps there are two perishable tragedies
---love unrequited
---love gained
yet there is no refrigerator for
the ephemerality to reside in.

Red Rhinoceros in Lemon Love

I.

My gum is lemon flavored
I am a woman of lemon
he is a man, raising a rhino
maniac for lemon

The rhino is in estrus, crying crowing bloodily

Stairs are athrob doses
containing eye contact of aphrodisiac
 one step after another
the man picks up her lemon gum
stuck on the ground
sucks the smell into his lung

The rhino devours love as fodder

Balcony, out in the balcony
wind is catching her red pajamas
as if the flower has a heart
longing for a spring fondle

The rhino blindfolds its eyes with a black cloth.

Red lemon
wears a red dress and red shoes
walks into a beating broken heart

*The rhino gradually turns into red
all—red—*

II.

A red rhinoceros is in lemon love
in love the rhino writes a poem
engraves it on its thick skin

A red rhinoceros is in lemon love
in love it steals a photo
and a piece of red hair
from his lover to burn them in fire
into ashes, and drinks up

Love wears a charm

containing ripe karma and a two-headed serpent
tiptoes on the flagstone covered by emerald moss
with a rhino leashed behind
a red rhinoceros is in lemon love

Again and again and again
the rhino is lowered into
and hoisted up from a deep well
by the windlass of love

A bulky rhino is in gossamer love.

I Close My Love

I close my love, like
how I turn off the tap
I remove my love, like
how I pull a tooth out

*I'll take the ride of wind
to where I start off*

and tear up all the atlas so that
my feet can find their own compass
so that my body can draw a new map
in the air to track the shadows in time

I'll put a glass of water
on the table, and watch
its stillness for the whole hour

I'll listen to the sound of
an accordion that's addicted to
surfing on the waves of light

I'll fall, like rain
onto the mystery of
the self.

He & She

desert is a "he"; water is a "she"
desert craves water
water is a "she"; fish is a "he"
water is home for fish
fish is a "he"; shrimp is a "she"
fish eats shrimp
shrimp is a "she"; plankton is a "he"
shrimp eats plankton
plankton is a "he"; alga is a "she"
plankton eats alga
alga is a "she"; sun is a "he"
alga lives for sun
sun is a "he"; meadow is a "she"
sun shines on the meadow
meadow is a "she"; dog is a "he"
meadow is a resort for the dog

I am a "she"
you are a "he"
I am also a "he"
and you are also a "she"
we are not completing each other
we are completing ourselves
by communicating with
the "she" and the "he" inside us.

WHY

What do you do when you are feeling unhappy, or sad? Do you sleep? Do you eat? Do you escape? Do you scream? Do you hit the pillow? Do you cry? Do you exercise? Do you dance? What makes you feel bad? How does your body feel when you're not happy? What blocks you? Do you feel red? --blue? --yellow? --green? --white or black? Can you feel your emotions sprouting in your body before it blossoms? Do you hear what the body says when it feels bad? Did you ever say "thank-you" to the discomforts? What makes you happy? Are they sunshine? --friends? --books? --flowers? --work-out? --writing? Do you love your body? Are you always talking to yourself, like a friend? What is happiness? Do we really care about ourselves? Do you love your tears? Do you love your smiles? Did you ever tell a friend "at least you own something else like blah blah" if one thing didn't go her way and made her feel terrible? Did your words help her? Why not say something like: "I know you are feeling like a shit now. I don't know what to do but I am here with you and all your inner feelings"? Have you ever felt you don't crave much for something you've never owned before?" "Did you say a "good" BYE to the person who is important in your life?" Are you happy? What are you doing? Is it what you want to do? What do you want to do? What do you want to be? Does a squirrel want to be another squirrel? How far is it to where you are going? How could you get there? Will there be stars in the sky? Will you sing? Will the flower sing? What are you thinking when you are listening to a song? What are you thinking when you are running? Can you let your mind shut up? Is there a river flowing there? Is my childhood river still in front of my parents' old house? Is the gardenia still blossoming? How old is it now? Do they miss me? Did they witness my parents' fights? Is the well well? Do you have an opinion about why the kid is looking at you with her big beautiful eyes? Do you know she loves you so much? Do you love her? Do you love the one you love? Did she give you a gift? What is it hiding there in her eyes? Is she a flower? Why is the tree standing there? Why not give the tree a hug? How do you locate your needs? Why does she keep giving you stickers? Why do you need a sticker to enter the galleries? Why is chocolate for Valentine's Day? Did you say hi to your loneliness? Why am I here? What are you looking at when you are looking at me? Why did my parents get divorced? How far is your home? Why are you and the kid lowering your bodies to the ground and listening with

an ear each to the floor? Is there a pair of eyes behind the door? Why does a door exist? Is the coffee good for your sleep? Did you eat books like a freak? Were the emails flooding you? Why does woman wear make-up? How long will the beauty last? How far are you away from your heart? What's the difference between a piano and a harpsichord? Is it a red banana? What of your future? Don't you think a headache correlates with your decayed teeth? Do you have a schedule--a deadline--an appointment? Am I looking all right? What should I reply if a penguin asks me questions? How old is your body? How old is your heart? Are you expecting to love or to be loved? Can you remember how you felt in your mother's womb? Did you feel how sad she felt? Why does something keep growing? Why does something stop growing? Is it raining? Do you see the rain creeping down on the glass window? Do you see the tears sliding on the cheek? Are they your tears? Are they only your tears? Can you feel a light pain? Have you ever taken a look at your palm and felt amazing about them? Don't you feel your stress, anxiety, sadness and negativity are things that keep you alive and healthy? Do you feel trained by the discomfort? Who is that girl, with a viridis umbrella above her head and a pink scarf around her neck? Do you like rain? How about dancing in the rain, with a flower in hand & without shoes on feet? Does the lily feel different about dancing in the rain and in the sun? Did your father plant those morning daffodils that you brought to office on a rainy Monday? Why does the girl in blue dress use her hand as a little umbrella for her white lilies? Which flower is the rain going to invite for a barefoot dance?

Questions

You close my door
 yet vulnerability breaks in
an infinitesimal fragment
riding on the translucent tip of a fin
wakes you up with the thump of hooves

who are you?

The question evaporates into the midnight air
and you hear from the light gossamer
on the window, taking a heavy sigh

---It must have crawled all the way
like vines on the mud wall
from my grandma's wrinkle
to my mama's scar
then to my cut.
It lasts decades and generations
to contour the Pi of karma

The sigh freezes the air
the silence ices up
to envelop the loop of Pi

I sigh your sigh of whose sigh---

"All you know is crying, crying, and crying!"
resounds in the darkness

What are you doing?

Fight,
what if tears can turn into stones
to be thrown into his mouth?
Flight,
what if tears drop, heavy enough to
cut a hole on the ground
for you to submerge?
Stiff,
what if tears glaciare your whole body
like a frostbited vegetable?

All the what-ifs
mound themselves to

forge a grave
that buries forgiveness.

Where are you?

If samsara opens its big mouth, with effrontery
if deny, if defy, if debate, if deemphasize
if nothing works—
try crawling yourself into
a ball of cotton
let them punch
on your softness

If the axe of impermanence and unsatisfactoriness
rip the insubstantiality apart, into pieces
being thrown into a wilderness
drifting wilderness
let me be

What do you want to be?

Somebody or nobody
Something or Nothing
Self

or

No-Self.

Stone Girl

A triangle stone
you used to be
there grew
thorns of rage
thistles of fume

A cobble stone
now you are
eaten away
by foot traffic
on a dead street

Like most of us, you forget you used to be a kid, or seed.

Inner Child Meditation

"You are ugly."

The voice says

"You should study harder because you are ugly."

The voice continues

"Your father loves you because you are good at school"

The voice is still here

"How you can feel so good about yourself? You are nothing!"

The voice never stops

"Your father says you're useless! You have to prove you're not!"

The voice squats in the corner

"You never feel shamed about your caprice, crying or everything you want!"

The voice sets fire to tears

"You're the reason why I am so unhappy!"

The voice is drowning in a man's sewage

"You don't know how selfish you are!"

The voice closes the door

"I must have done something wrong."

The voice arises

"I feel guilty about someone not being happy."

The voice plants fear

"I have to perform my best to win his/her fondness."

The voice activates deliberativeness

"I need to satisfy his/her needs."

The voice tenses my senses

"I am probably not liked by them at all."

The voice is trying to fool you

"I am valued if I am attractive."

The voice decorates itself with a vain garland

"I have to be smart."

The voice feels stupid

"Why do you keep on feeding the peptide in your body?"

It sounds like a new voice

"Why don't the present you hold the hand of the past you?"

The new voice is talking in a way I'm not used to

"Why do you throw yourself to someone else and expect them to take care of you?"

The new voice is clear

"Why are you allowing the previous tears to flow into your present eyes?"

The new voice keeps distance from the old one

"Why are you giving up your right of happiness to someone else?"

The new voice likes to ask questions

“Why not offer yourself love, instead of waiting for somebody else’s?”
The new voice is independent

You hug them
with a mother’s ear
and a child’s fear
to crystalize the debris in your tears
to melt the icy stone in your shoulders

I know how you feel
I know how fear fears to flood
I notice your voices
Let me listen to them
talk to them, my child
like a father.

I cried at needs—not at loss—
I heard a girl say
“Don’t go”—and the trembling threads in her voice
twine my cravings around the bud

So far I have been away, to myself
It seemed the rare way,
And body, and seed, natural things—
To open me, like a stranger—like me—

To hear “the masculine” wakening
And see “the feminine” tendering
And combine, originally—into completeness,
For adult, made of heart—of time—

But not to part, with a desire
—a thought—a mood—
And on and on and on—had caged us,
had hell held similarly—

I wish I knew where the girl was—
So I could stand in front of her,
To open my being, and tender my eyes
For—ephemerality—and—breath—, I hear her say.

The Self

I am
watching your back
and you are
watching his back
fading away

Don't ask where he is going
there will be a place where
trees are still growing
birds are still flying, and
the sun is rising

Don't call him back
the path he's trod has
engraved fate upon his feet

*he is going away from you
and walking back towards you.*

All the Possibilities

There are all the possibilities
like stars in the sky
like sparks in the eye
like you.

You, the bird that trusts wings
You, the book that reads worlds
You, the pearl that contains wills
You, the pen that ploughs cropland

You, the mud that hatches seeds
You, the season that sings change
You, the air that sows breath
You, the tree that listens to wind

You, the courtyard that collects rainbows
You, the moonlight that counts tiptoes
You, the dust that muses on the silent stone
You, the glimpse that approaches eternity

You, the butterfly that tells secrets
You, the fountain that dresses moss
You, the thunder that scrawls sky
You, the river that flows growth

You, the piano that seizes threads
You, the lute that harvests stories
You, the flute that remains silent
You, the note that gathers lilies

You, the swing that nestles in the wing
You, the feather that carries an echo
You, the thread that skims blush
You, the dusk light that swaddles doves

You, the eave that hangs a poem
You, the counter light that tunes chimneys
You, the desolation that dwells in the womb
You, the stranger that retells stories

You, the pure the real the tale
There are all the possibilities.

The Air is Missing You

I

There is always something special in the air
of October
the crispy fragile light draws nigh
lingering upon golden greenness
upon the swirling little girl
it is catching her skirt's hemline
kissed by seasons in change
I hear a leaf falling upon that kiss
and you say: the air is missing you.

The air is missing you.

II

I watched your back
getting smaller, in Turnl Lane⁴
axle kept on rolling
at one moment
your head turned around
to see my eyes
seeing you off

only the air knows the weight of air

III

Those subsided in time
like pebbles in water
staying there, polished

water knows how water flows.

If he can't find them in you
go and find yourself in them

flowers know how flowers grow

IV

You run, run on the tip of a leaf
only the air can feel

⁴ The street name in the city of oxford

you've been here, once.
It's the air
it's not only the air

It's a body
that lies to itself
mind minds
devouring the decay
chewing the repetition
oh, nothing comes out
nothing flows in
nowhere to go

V

Go home?

Along the blue ocean on a grey day
spindriffts sign along, adding weight to salty air
there hangs a yellowing album on the wire
with each end connects a pole
the color of sky and of melancholy
that stands like an old fisherman.
Above the shore
mirage looms
reflections of dreams reign over minds
like moon in water

Yes, go home
the air is a carrier pigeon
a fly letter writes:

Home is missing you.

Penguins are not Pandas

I.

Penguins are not pandas
he says
only pandas can be my kids

You watch his stern lips
opening and closing
like a fat jellyfish
on a masculine face
with sharp angles
your eyes are
a pair of wings
flying into his mouth
traversing the viscera
and reaching the beating red
it is as dark as
cold coal

II.

Penguins
then swim to
a smaller village—in its head
lying several grave mounds
like door gods
down the road

You notice
in the field, standing a man
back bending, like half-moon
swinging a hoe
that hoes a fatal samsara
and a scalloped nirvana

His drops of sweat
thrust themselves into
the earth, they grow,
grow and grow
into wheats and grains
to feed the penguins

Penguins are not pandas, he says

*but your penguins are pandas
in my eyes*

there you see
a similar pair of wings
pure as light, like yours.

Women Back Home (I)

My brother brought his girlfriend home at Chinese New Year

She speaks Putonghua (standard Mandarin)

My grandma speaks dialect

--- She tries to mingle it with all the Putonghua she knows
 though my brother could serve as a translator

“This morning you tied your hair on the top of the head and
rounded them like a ball. Now you put them down
on your shoulders. You look much better this way.”

My grandma judges her, with big smiles.

The future granddaughter-in-law smiles back
without understanding what she was talking about.

Women Back Home (II)

From hundreds of thousands of miles away
I talk to my ma and grandma

They'd tell me two different versions of
a (grand) daughter-in-law

My mom's first sentence was:
"Emmm...she is toooo short."

My grandma (who raised us) went:
"Good...good...she has beautiful smiles."

Then I started to wonder:
what makes my brother likes this girl

She is totally different from my mom
and she laughs a lot, just like my grandma.

Women Back Home (III)

My mother said the woman on my side of the family were known for beautiful looks, sleek hair and pleasing figure, but not me. They were all given girly flowery names (in Chinese) passed down for generations. I knew them as my pretty cousins. "Daisy" who married a husband whose family is rich, and failed to make a match between her husband's nephew and her cousin (me). And "Rosy Cloud," who once said to me: you are the type of fruit that looks hard outside but soft inside. We were 9 or 10 then. I now realize that she is the opposite type. There was "Doll Doll," she was the second woman who got divorced on the mother's side of the family. She left her husband, leaving everything behind, including her two little kids. My mom said she was stupid, but she seemed happier than my mom. And my mother's only daughter, who didn't get her looks (my brother did), or figure, and got a manly name, is satisfied with this inheritance.

LOVE

I love you
I text her
on the bus home

She is my mother
I am her daughter
It is an ordinary day.

Dear Friend

I look at you, like looking at myself
I talk to you, like talking to myself
I listen to you, like listening to myself
I know you
because I know how to know myself.

Josefin

If I could paint

your little flyaway hair
would be dancing with
the soft dusk light
to make a beautiful ballet

your crescent flying eyelash
would be writing
a soul poem
to touch the first morning dew

your run-on lines without punctuation
would be chasing
a dusk daisy
to warm the Sweden sunset.

Friend

I have a friend who loves to hate.
Her moods from dawn to dusk could rival London weather.

She hates Chinese food in America.
She hates people celebrating festivals.
She called everything “plastic” shows.
She hates studying in the library, and name it “tomb”
She said people walking by her have icy eyes and stony faces.

I want, so much, to tell her that if you love hating, the hatred will love you back.

I want to remind her: watch the sunshine, feel the wind, touch the smiles on children’s’ faces. You know I am by your side, and you are with me. Nothing else could win over your strong feelings than these little precious things; nothing else are as present as them; nothing else are as real as you, me and the moment.

I want to warn her: the anger comes from your deep sorrow; the anger comes from your inner fear; the anger comes from your arrogance in ego. Let it come and let it go. It is not you. It cannot take your breath. It cannot poison your presence— wherever you are, whatever you are doing, whomever you are confronting.

But I did not, I did not say a word. I know, I know that she knows beauty, she even knows that beauty could exist in everything she hates. She is a girl with great heart. It might be—it should be—she is fighting, like a solitary warrior. She is fighting in a seemingly hateful way to express her connections with this world, these people and maybe, herself.

If I know her as a bosom, if I see her with my heart, I shall give her a hug. I shall touch the real her, the tender her, and her mute love locked in her atrium.

If you happen to meet her, please hug her, and her hatred as well.

NETWORK I -- The Startup Boy

The Startup boy
in a plaid shirt and blue jeans
with curly hair and square glasses
says:

My phone is one of my organs

I kiss my computer goodbye before I sleep

He has found his Eve.

NETWORK II -- The Girl Who Listens to Brokenness

People post their “perfect” lives in social media
so she creates a space where people
can post their “defects”, or shit life.

The startup girl says:

What’s not under the sun also needs the light

I ask her:

*“Would it turn into another competition
of comparing ‘how hard my life is’
and ‘how much I need to be healed’?”*

“Maybe. A masochistic show-off.”

She says.

The Wind

The wind takes its clothes off
piece by piece
flying like a naked butterfly

It is standing there, grounded
with golden hair
drifting in air

Who is waiting for
another leaf to fall
and leaves to fall?

The autumn
she is walking by you
spreading chippings of contemplation
to be written in golden water

You and he and she and I
riding on different leaves
so heavy on a light yellowing soul
to chase for a similar ephemerality

Time
holds up an umbrella
steps out of the house
and disappears into the orange rain.

7 AM Under Sakura -- How I Wish I Could Paint

There are two trees standing in front of me
one is cherry in full blossom
another is elm in ancient meditation

Cherry is breathing in the spring
elm is breathing out the winter

a mindful season's breath

I'd steal the breath
to soften my twigs
to parent my petals.

7 AM Under Sakura – Fridays

She stands on the grass, side face in the sun, skirt hem in the shade, reading poems by another woman. She'd compose a little or watch a small squirrel climbing onto the sakura.

One morning she notices the squirrel eating the flowers! Does every squirrel eat flowers? This was a mysterious question for her then but she refused to google the answer. She knew someday someone (a poet in all probability) would tell her a story about this, in a different way. She decided she'd better not know it earlier than that. She also felt this squirrel must be a special one even if every squirrel eats flowers, because it likes to eat cherry blossoms, only for breakfast!

Every day she watches people come toward her up the grassland, take a look into the blossoms before her, kissingly, and walk away with something, something invisible in their eyes.

She then chants, to herself, cherry flower's poetry: Love and Hope.

5 O'clock Bell

Moon wears the white gown
the cloud wove for her
Light mutes itself
when she is dressing up
Star, her bride
accompanies her

You're here
with a pen and a piece of paper
You hear words
walking towards you

from afar
taking you home.

DAWN & DUSK

Why is my shadow facing me
like a stranger?

Why is the rugby sitting in the
corner of the thick trunks?

What shapes does the light
split the tower into?

What is the color of your breath
in the golden dusk light?

Why don't you tie a bell on your breath
so that it could be tolled when you forget it?

Why is the moon always
following me wherever I go?

Why can I see the moon but not my hometown,
though the distance to the moon is way farther?

Why does time cast itself into
a statue in the middle of the sea?

What's the difference between
dawn light and dusk light?

When the day closes itself (I)

The day closes itself as the sun sets

as the sun sets

people go back home

squirrels are nowhere to see

only the tree stays

only the tree stays.

When the day closes itself (II)

At every dusk, I walk across the
campus to say goodbye to
the sunset, each is
a first, yet a final one

When the grey blue covers the golden red
when the day closes itself
I cry out, silently:
Don't go, don't go
stay stay, or take me away

My plea, somehow, calls out
the moon, a silver arched needle
And I hear its drop
onto my poem.

Today

What came into your mind
when you were sitting there
watching today walking by?

A butterfly
more alive than you
fluttering her uncertainty
about the coming fall
something in the solitary air
solidarizes her beauty
and yours.

After Halloween

i

8 in the morning I walk to the market
it's already autumn
the season has changed
fruits and vegetables remain the same

I see a woman holding a basket
inside pumpkins lean out of their little heads
she is holding a festival's hand
towards home

ii

Last night I dreamt of Santa Claus
I asked if he likes pumpkin soup
he said he can bake
I said he was lying
then it was Chinese Spring Festival Eve
a golden pumpkin pancake was hanging
above my bed, like a sock.

iii

After the kid named Halloween
grows into the adult Thanksgiving
then turns into old Christmas

After Christmas New Year tiptoes here
Chinese Spring Festival comes
then Lantern Festival follows

We should be happy about
having both holiday seasons
at home or abroad

Yet as a stranger
we are not good at
celebrating either of them.

Pig Nian (The Year of Pig)

Preliminary Eve rings the bell for small Nian
New Year's Eve holds the hand of spring
to countdown to big Nian
Expectations are the girl's winged pigtails
Blessings are the grandma's blossoming wrinkles

Lantern's hanging riddles are glutinous
rice cake hit by pestle, and plump rainbows drawn
by dinner table. Flying fishes, dancing dragons
and singing phoenixes are dressing up in the
five-thousand-year red, to light a golden morn

Happy as a little piglet
chasing for the traditional family reunion
Pure as a new-born
opening eyes, opening heart

Then we start to count down
what exactly is it that we count

our handful of years
or our finite encounters of eyes?

Early Spring Rain --- Ring the Ripple

Today

sky—the open blue umbrella—
sunshine— hides in her pink wool scarf

Birds are standing on
the top of that tree
each reigns a twig
twigs across grey cloud

Are still in the drizzle
people think those birds
are leaves before they rise
and fly and rest again

Leaves are birds without wings

The drop of rain
ripples in the reflections
of a silent tree.

Rainy Day – Wuzhen⁵ in Rain & Rain in Time

Some rain, creeping on the glass, trace its path down until it feels tired
lying there, the rain stills time in its silent stare
some rain, they don't know what evaporation means
some rain, remaining in time, evaporate to be rain

Peering through a drop of rain,
you see a bridge on the left, a bridge on the right
you see dyed cloth flying in the air
you see a little girl running on the flagstone
 an old man sitting in the courtyard
you see the letters the books
 stacked up on the shelves
a bamboo broom, a paper lantern, two swaying pigtailed,
and some bean shells scattering on the ground

You see Wen
seeing Ying off
you see the
bus stop under
the similar rain

You see
Wuzhen in rain
under another sky.

晴耕雨读⁶

有些雨，在玻璃窗上蜿蜒爬行，足迹清晰可循
有些雨，趴在玻璃窗上，陪伴着滴滴答答的时针

有些雨，还不知道是“蒸发”
有些雨，在时间里蒸发，只是为了成为雨

你透过一滴雨
看见了左边一座桥 右边一座桥
你看见染色布在飞
那女孩永远在跑
时针永远在走

⁵ The name of a famous ancient town in China

⁶ The poet wrote the English version first, and then wrote the Chinese one.

那老人坐在门口

你看见

一些书架 一堆信

角落里的竹节扫把和屋檐边的纸质灯笼

你看见

一扇木门 两条恣意晃动的马尾

三五粒豆子散落在地

你看见

文要送英走了

你看见

水从他们的脸庞滑落

你看见

天空底下的乌镇 正在下着雨

7:58 AM: Reading Japanese Poets By a Rainy Window

Loneliness I am in this room, by a rainy window
when I feel these women's tears flooding like blood through the vines in my body
I think about love, theirs and mine.

I try to breathe, hardly and deeply
but something, something cannot be exhaled out
something heavy as if those women's
bones, blood and bodies
are part of mine.

Propitious Wind & Rain

Pipa joins fieldworkers
at the harvest
Flute blows wind away
at a propitious pace

tree, bridge, a muddy man

and you see
a fish lying on the
watery ground
that reflects clouds
dying in the embrace of sky

The boat, tied to Zhang Xin Dike
forgot to take it home

Lotus candles, at shrine
are lit to mourn

And you see
a rusty bicycle
rests on a fresh field
where golden grains
spread to dry

Fields, canal, a farmer

and you see
and you sit here
talking to every
breath of rain
drop of wind
that I grew up with.

A guitar lost a string

A guitar lost a string
like an old man lost a tooth
but it can still sing, sing an old song
that smells like wine

Music takes the world by its hand.

Sunshine Symphony

Whose hand is drawing
sunshine on the girl's cheeks?

What songs are the folds of
her blue plaid skirt singing?

Why is Miss Hair inviting
Mr. Light to dance in the air?

When did the bird carry
the spring on its wings?

How did the balloon sit
on the rooftop?

Who is composing a childhood
in the strides of little feet?

What does a sunflower do
after the sun sets?

SUNSHINE SYMPHONY

i

While sitting on the roof edge
beside you
the prince
points at the sky afar
says:

*my poem resides
in the mushroom clouds
plants pink babysbreath
that is named "star"
by humans on earth*

ii

A father holds the
cantabile andante
in the big hands
walking his princess
to one of the poems

--

that sits on a leaf
dances in circle to
be a river
to moisten
the dried soul.

Rooftop

Paralleling your head with the spire
that tiptoes on its tower. Overlooking
a postman, head for the town to a sealed
waiting heart. Words, exiled in crispy
fragile morning light, whispering all
the way to iridescent night air.

An empty lane
baptizing itself in silence,
ready for somewhere unknown.
Those chimneys, high and low,
composing on keys of light and shadow
they are folded into a wavy giant origami.

And you listening.
Wings of bird, leaves of tree
rustling in breeze.
Pigeons gazing at you
tiptoeing on the rooftop.

The Edge of DREAM

In its ancient stand
the tree is silvered
 by the moon
I, at the moment
do not need anything
any music, any food or
any self

Zero is a blessing

of the dead of the alive
of the dust
piled heavily on your heart
of the snail
that eats flowers.

To My Poem

You should grow up
poem
you should grow up
---to be an adult
you should grow up
---by yourself
my little poem...

Healing and Poetry: An essay in Poetics

Introduction

This analytical essay is a case study about Jun and how therapy leads her to write poems of healing. It might seem unusual to have a case study as an introduction for a poetry creative writing project. However, both me, the therapist, and the patient, Jun, have been gradually changed by the entire journey—a healing one for both parties. We both felt it would be inspiring if we could write our common “project” down. As a therapist, I follow what the poet and physician Rafael Campo describes: “I ask my patients to engage in the creative act as another modality of healing. In reading the poetry and narratives of my patients, I have found a complementary means of conceiving of their suffering that amplifies my ability to respond to them empathetically and with an open heart” (Campo, 2001). Likewise, if you, the reader, knew the stories behind the poetry in this project, you might cherish and weigh each word in a different way—through the eyes of a healer, of a person being healed, through both, or neither, or through your eyes. Eventually, you might connect with your own inner self and find the key to the door of your own inner power. You might even consider starting a self-explorative and self-healing adventure of your own.

In the first part of this case study of the creative process, I, the therapist, will narrate the key stories in the poet Jun’s childhood and adolescence. These details will serve as the basis for my analysis. In the second part, I will use the case study method, and focus especially on Jung’s gender theory and deductive dream hypothesis, as summarized in the *Handbook of Jungian Psychology*. The third part will touch on several methods from the emerging field of Poetry Therapy. Here, we will learn more of Jun’s self-conducted adventure, in the course of which she begins her words of healing. As a therapist, I was excited to learn from my patient about the International/National Association for Poetry

Therapy (IAPT and NAPT). I am planning to attend the Annual NAPT Conference in Baltimore, and carry out a deeper research in this area to develop my practices of therapy.

I shall confine myself to those details narrated by the patient and let them interpret themselves. In the future, I intend to keep on researching Jung and Poetry Therapy, and I look forward to combining both methods in my practices. Additionally, in the years ahead, I will follow up with my patient Jun, who in many ways is a mirror of me, a part of me or another me, to share her after-therapeutic life journey. I believe if this process of understanding and writing is successful, one day she will consider herself as her own mentor, and find that everything she craves for and chases after is already inside her.

Clinical Materials

Jun is the youngest child of two in a southern village family in China. She has an older brother who is five years older than her. Born in the last decade of 20th century, she witnessed as a child a new era coming to be, where the country's economy was booming, and society was experiencing big transitions. As a result of the "one-child" policy, her birth cost a large amount of her family's savings. The penalty was especially severe, because her father was the government leader in the village committee. "They even took away the only black and white television," her grandmother would complain every year on Jun's birthday. Grandmother had seven children with two husbands (the first one died of cancer), and liked Jun's mother least among the four daughters. But Grandmother was fond of her son-in-law, and thought he was a smart leader. His position not only made it easy for his wife to be a teacher in Jun's primary school, but it also brought a lot of benefits to the extended family.

Jun describes her parents as brave lovers who got married despite the two families' mutual hatred, and also, eventually, as great enemies who maneuvered to frame each other during the war of divorce. From Jun's account, childhood was a time in which she did well at

school, had a lot of friends, and was well-liked by teachers, relatives and villagers. Sometimes, though, she was envied by a small group of female peers. She saw herself as a sensitive child who hid inside the quilt after her mother's required sleeping time, reading novels by Qiongyao (a Chinese romance novelist). The novels were made into shows but her mother forbade her to watch TV on school days. Jun also liked to go with her grandmother to visit other people's homes in their village, and to visit relatives in other villages. Jun sang and danced when they asked her to do so. She seemed to gain inspiration from reading different lives in the novel or watching different stories on TV secretly when her mother was not at home.

As a child, Jun and her father were quite close, though he was not always at home. Initially, she described him as "intelligent" and "capable" and "popular." She remembered him as a smart and proud man who had beautiful handwriting, and valued her very much. He would give her whatever she wanted, just as, inversely, he always ignored her mother's needs. Her mother seemed not to care much about her. In her memories, she could never get anything from her mother—her answers were always "go ask your father". At 25, she recovered childhood impressions that her parents, especially her father, took pride in her and took her everywhere to show off how well she did at school. But back at home, her mother was never satisfied with her. Once, when she was about to beat Jun with a wooden club (it was used to help hand-wash the clothes at that time), her father saved her.

Jun and her father's relationship changed suddenly after she was told that he had had a mistress ever since she was born, or even before, and changed for the worse when she saw her drunk father shouting at her mother and pushing her violently into the corner. Jun had heard about her father beating her mother before, but she never really saw it with her eyes. "I now understand why my mother liked to shout at me and even beat the students at school," Jun said to me. Before Jun witnessed her parents' fight, they had already fired the first shots

in the war of divorce, without letting the kids know. One day, the mistress's husband died. Jun's father announced that he wanted to divorce her mother immediately. Her mother and both families didn't agree, so they started to pull the kids to the mother's side to see if the father could change his mind.

In the recollection, Jun's impression of her father dramatically altered. She came to feel that he was a violent, self-centered man who didn't listen, and who started to curse everyone in her mother's family. She felt that he viewed her as if she was another version of his wife and shouted at her (even called her "bitch") when Jun was counting up every "mistake" he had made in regard to the family. From then on, she stopped calling him "dad" anymore.

To her father, she had become a traitor, who stood by his wife's side and blamed him for everything. As the therapy progressed, Jun became aware of her roles as the family's "victim", "redeemer", and "persecutor". Her parents utilized her as a weapon to fire at each other, and once the weapon chose its owner, the lost side would try to destroy both the enemy and the weapon. This was why she felt like a victim. Her parents, especially her mother, had expected her to become accomplished and provide safety/love/glory to her so as to compensate for her loss of a secured husband and a seemingly decent life. The child Jun thought the only way to save her mother was to carry her hatreds and pains on her little shoulders. At the same time, Jun started to "persecute" her father by ignoring him and testifying about his adultery in the court. She did not acknowledge, then, that he was being tortured, being blamed by his own kids, his families, and his people, and being criticized more broadly by the conventional culture. Meanwhile, in her subconscious mind, Jun felt angry about her mother "separating" her father and her, and thought that her mother did not have the ability to keep "their man". So after the two lived together by themselves, Jun rebelled against whatever her mother said to her, and behaved as if her mother was her

biggest enemy. Jun's heart was filled with more guilt, anger and resistance whenever her mother shouted, "such a violent asshole, just like your father."

In Jun's mind, the triple role-playing led her to view herself sometimes as in a dark miserable sewer, sometimes in an unrealistic glorious light, sometimes in a stinky, messy slaughterhouse. And even worse, she kept on playing these three roles until her adulthood: in the self-directed role-playing of any relationship, she always put herself in the position of a "victim" when something did not work out, and then she would take every effort to save herself out of the painful feelings and tried to prove that she would not become her "vulnerable mother" or "violent father". Eventually when she thought someone acted like her father or she as her mother, she would turn to self-hatred and self-condemnation, and circled back to "victim" mode.

Jun felt that she had an emotionally distant but tangled relationship with her mother, whom she described as a critical, rigorous, sensitive, vulnerable and bad-tempered woman who loved planting flowers and over-cleaning everything inside/outside of the house. In her childhood memory, her mother was always ill, and she told Jun she was like this when she was born—Jun's grandmother cried too many days for her grandfather's death when she had her mother. This affected the baby's health. Her mother had (still has) a lot of taboos in the family menu: no spice, no soy sauce, no MSG, no fry; any kind of junk food was considered poison. Since the mother was terrible at cooking, the three would find excuses to eat at the grandmother's house, which was behind theirs in the same village. In addition, as mentioned above, her mother was never satisfied with whatever she was and she did: her look, her dress, her housework, her homework, her attitude and her temper. She even hated how she liked to pout to let the upper lip touch the tip of the nose (just for fun). In Jun's adolescent years, they had countless fights about cutting her hair/how short the hair should be, and what clothes she should wear. She would stand in front of her favorite dress, shedding tears, silently, while her

mother was repeating how abominable her opinion and attitude were. Her mother tended to become angry or panic whenever things did not conform to her rules, even if the thing was only about choosing a dress. Before the divorce, Jun tried her best to ask her father to join the school's parent-teacher routine meeting, and she made the biggest efforts to hide everything from her mother: little things she bought, friends she made, happiness she had for the day and unhappy feelings she held. To her, expressing emotions in front of her mother would be a disaster.

In one particularly traumatic incident when Jun was in third grade, she was sleeping with her mother that night because her parents had fought again. Her mother kicked her awake at midnight, she opened her eyes reluctantly and saw her mother's mouth frothing. She described it as if the white bubbles have been in front of her eyes for all these years. Without knowing what happened, she unlocked the front door, went through the hallway, and ran upstairs to wake up her father in her brother's room. Finally, the doctor came. He asked a lot of questions about what the patient had eaten or drunk. Her mother did not say a word, she just shed tears, and her father had no idea at all. The next day, Jun went to her grandmother's house as usual. Her grandmother was busy preparing for lunch, "your mom, a stupid woman, must have tried to drink the pesticide to kill herself again! How stupid! Why did I bare such a stupid daughter?" She seemed to talk to herself as if her granddaughter was not there. "The first time she tried to do this was several months after you were born. You'd be given to your second uncle if she made it! They wanted a daughter for so long. Fortunately...fortunately...I found out and sent her to hospital...how far the hospital was...how cold the dawn was...we did not have cars at that time...I could only carry her on my back...oh...how little you were...how little...how could she be so cruel to even had the idea to abandon the little baby...after that, you had to be suckled by that woman in our village, who had a several-month-old baby, for almost a week...for almost a week..." She would stop cutting the vegetable, sighing heavily

and staring at the outside tree for a while. Her grandmother had told her many stories like this, sometimes they were repeated, and sometimes they were never heard by her before. Usually, Jun pretended that her grandmother was telling her someone else's story because she did not know how to react, and she felt most of the times her grandmother was not actually talking to her. She was just listening, without saying a word. She felt nothing in her heart, or perhaps, she had no idea how she (or her grandmother) was feeling.

After Jun started to read psychotherapeutic books and recollect all the memories, she would ask her grandmother about things that had happened in the past. She would let her old grandmother go her own way and tell whatever she felt like, but she never had the courage to ask for her grandmother's memories of her parents' stories she had heard as a kid. She never had the courage to ask her mother about her versions of the stories. She thought their stories must be different. She believed they all would be broken-hearted by the memories, especially her mother. So, she decided not to ask. She also had a feeling that she herself was not ready for this, at least not now. And she even doubted: Were her memories all true? Were her grandmother's memories all the facts? Were her mother's memories being twisted by her sorrow and hatred? She also imagined, one day, she would sit in front of her father, whom she hasn't met for more than ten years, and listen to his version of the story for the first time. Though she believed that the one-hundred-percent truth could never be known, she hoped she would have enough inner space to settle those memories and stories down, and would not be afraid of being told about them or even telling them. "It needs time." She told me, but I knew it was said to herself.

Her mother created an overwhelming negative environment around her. It was intensified after their divorce. Jun presented various memories of her mother cursing her father and crying about how miserable she was raising the two kids by herself. Jun recounted with sadness that her mother's conclusion after divorcing her second husband was, "I had to

marry him because we were so poor two years ago, and you needed a better life. Also, your grandmother's family insisted he is a good man. He is, but I just cannot bear him at all." Jun recalled the financial situation back then was not as terrible as what her mother described, but she didn't say anything to retort because she felt her mother would suffer much more if there were no one for her to blame.

Although Jun hated her mother's pattern of being a victim, she ultimately had a more difficult time deciphering her father's dramatic change from the best man in her eyes into someone indifferent in her mind. She remembered that the last two times she met him were both at funerals---a senior's and his elder brother's. He did not talk to her, neither did he look at her. She remembered the last conversation they had. It was not long after Jun told the judge that she wanted to live with her mother in the court. One day, in the middle of class, the headmaster asked her to go to the front gate to meet her father. She felt rather awkward but went there with some expectations. He did not say much, and seemed rather heavy. She acted like she did not want to talk to him at all (she actually did not know what to do if he did not explain everything he had done to her, to her mother and her grandmother's family). At the end, he talked about the contract he had with her mother---it was about paying for part of her living expense through a bank card. Jun and her mother both thought the monthly payment was too little, but she did not ask for more in front of him. The only feeling she had was: she did not recognize this person anymore, and she did know how to trust any word coming out of his mouth. After that, her father never contacted her again, or invited her back to his parents' house to spend the festivals. Once, her math teacher (who knew what happened to the family and adored Jun as a diligent student) was having dinner with his friends and friends' friends. Jun's father happened to be there. Her teacher deliberately made a toast to him, talked about how hard Jun worked at school, and implied that as a father, he should support the kids, financially and mentally. But he just replied, coldly, with something irrelevant, as if the

teacher was talking about someone else's daughter. Her math teacher was shocked and told her mother the story when they happened to meet each other on the street. Then her mother went back home and immediately reported to her, angrily and somehow excitedly. Jun always felt that her mother would only be really satisfied if her daughter could hate her father down to her very bones.

Since Jun grew up in her grandmother's house, she had never felt happy to visit her father's relatives, before or after the divorce. The uncles invited her more frequently after the couple broke up. She would go, especially to the routine visits in Chinese New Year, if her mother said she could. But it was rare for her mother to say so, and she usually found some excuses not to meet them. As Jun grew older, she and her father's family ignored each other. She sometimes heard from her grandmother that they were complaining about her impoliteness and indifference. She did not know how to react, because she had never been close to them. Jun also remembered, with anger, that her mother and the families in her grandmother's side kept on listening to updates about her father and his new family from some acquaintances. They repeated with exaggeration what they had heard to her brother and her. Every time they got together, the seniors would discuss whether Jun should reach her father for help or not. During the time, her mother was experiencing financial difficulties, but the school teachers had tried to help Jun out through financial aid. The family would be divided into two parties but there was usually no agreement at the end. Jun felt the repetition was sad and meaningless, so she started to escape and tried not to be at home that much.

Discussion

1) Patterns and Emotions

In Jun's case, she had been experiencing an inextricably intertwined relationship between love and loss. To her, if there was love, there would not be loss and abandonment.

Personally, she seemed to feel that love only existed if it was innocent and flawless. That was why she seemingly stood on her mother's side to blame her father for everything, but hated her mother at the same time. My sense was that nobody, neither her parents nor her, could be perfect. Likewise, nothing, neither her childhood nor her love, could be perfect. But I also sensed that she did not need to be perfect to love and to be loved. In other words, her dread of loss and abandonment did not need to be an obstacle to love.

Jun struggles with her affection towards people, especially towards men. She tends to believe that intimacy would bring loss and destruction. Each relationship would suddenly disintegrate one day, no matter how wonderful it was at the beginning, just like her parents', or more acutely, her father's and hers. What's even worse, she carried this belief with her into relationships—worrying about the future at a very early stage and involving the intimate ones in her constant fear and flooding emotions that rarely anyone else could bear. Once the result went like what she expected, she would feel that her belief was validated. The deep reason was that she kept on turning her love into a problem, and her loved one into her father, so to repeat the relationship she had with him. The duplication made her feel "safe", though tortured as well. Her lifelong work would be confronting both herself and others as unique beings, not her parents or someone else. It would also be treating every relationship as a different one, as one that combines love, loss and pain, as a natural flow. To materialize the psychological "work", she had to learn to step back, notice her patterns, and try her best to hold onto herself in the present. Thus, she would not act on the old thoughts and beliefs that did not benefit her. All these steps required a lot of daily practices, especially when a negative thought arose. Meditation could be one of the most effective ways to help her restrain the habitual repetitions, and parent/befriend "the child Jun" in a better way.

Another thing that bothered Jun most was her emotions. She had had a hard time dealing with them, like her mother. The two major negative feelings she resisted were: self-

pity and self-criticism. The former came from her mother's ignorance and her father's frequent absence and later abandonment. The latter originated from her mother's rigorous requirements and negative valuation of her. She felt even worse when the family moved to the town and she started to go to school with the kids there. She believed her peers had a better family and a greater confidence than she did. In order to prove herself, she studied harder than anyone else, and blamed herself if she felt tired of studying or if her grades dropped. Even though she did better than most of the kids at school, she never felt she was as good as those girls. These feelings remained deep inside until she became an adult. My therapeutic method was to help Jun lessen the burden of her mind through self-talk: "these feelings are not me, they come from my childhood, and they cannot be applied to what is happening now. Let them come if they want, but the adult me could choose not to identify or fight with them".

2) Animus

Jun's entanglement with her father and her mother lead her to play the three roles (victim, redeemer, and prosecutor) to such an extent that she had sacrificed what Carl Jung would call her true self. These roles were circling from one to another in her adult life, repetitively—she thought she hated her father as a person, but she acted like him in front of her mother: ignoring her in a coldly violent way. This was how she expressed her inner loyalty to and hidden love of her father. Jun also despised her mother's victim mode, yet she herself was as sensitive and emotional as her mother—she had a man and a woman in her body, but refused to take care of them. Rather, she let them duplicate her father and mother—more accurately—her parents' images in her mind. What's even worse, in a certain period of time, she was trying to suppress either her feminine traits or her masculine ones—in middle school and high school, she cut her hair as short as possible to get rid of her "mother-like" feminine part. She felt ashamed about expressing her needs and thought all the emotions she

had, including the happy ones, were problems. And she herself was the biggest problem. However, there was also a long period of time, after growing up, when she judged herself for not being girly enough, and tried to "weaken" herself, especially in front of men, to please them, just like how "the child her" did to her father—to gain love from him.

In the period when she pretended to be strong, assertive and decisive, Jun was suppressing her feminine part. She was unconsciously playing her father's role in the family. But that kind of masculinity was fake, because her feminine part was neglected. Roslyn A. Karaban explains more about this: "It is important to note that Jung believed.....a woman can and should become conscious of her masculine traits (or a man his feminine ones).....However, for a woman to become conscious of her masculine qualities does not mean to allow them equal status or dominion over her feminine ones" (Karaban, 1992, p. 40). One more thing to specify here was that Jun was not performing her masculinity based on her own awareness through growth, but instead, she was trying to make up for what was lacking in her family. Therefore, this kind of masculinity was not her "real" Animus. It was more likely to be an ideal image of her father.

Jung's wisdom about sex was helpful to her here: "You, woman, should not seek the masculine in men, but assume the masculine in yourself, since you possess it from the beginning. But it amuses you and is easy to play at femininity. But humankind is masculine and feminine, not just man or woman" (Jung, 2009, p. 263). Jun needed to understand that it was not about her imperfect father, her imperfect mother, or their ideal images. Her unhappiness was more about how she looked at herself and her femininity/masculinity in her body, and eventually, how she would learn to embrace both of them for a healthier completeness. To gain an authentic growth of individuality, Jun would have to be alert whenever she was playing a father's role. She also needed to develop an appreciation for her own Animus. Likewise, she needed to embrace herself as a female, rather than rejecting her

femininity as a way to resist her mother's feminine traits. There were, therefore, eight persons to deal with in the growth to be the self, perhaps ten! There was the person Jun is, and her Animus. There was the person of Jun's father, and his Anima, and of Jun's mother, and her Animus. There was also the person Jun unconsciously wished her father to be--an entity somewhere between herself and her animus. And there was the person Jun's father and mother wished she would be (Becker, 1971, p. 36). It would be a lifelong journey for Jun to distinguish all these forces inside her, and to be clear about what she wanted to be, and how she could choose to be the self. Additionally, while going deeper into the self, it might be helpful for Jun not to label anything "masculine" or "feminine" in her or in others, but stay open for a more "integrated, holistic and balanced personality" (Karaban, 1992, p. 44). Thus, she would not be limited while viewing herself as a human person (not a man, a woman, a "masculine" woman or some other concept), and she could probably free herself more in the development of self.

3) Dream Context

As Jung points out, the Animus serves as a bridge connecting the conscious and the unconscious (Mattoon, 2005, p. 49). To understand her Animus, Jun had to understand both. Dream, one of the most powerful manifestations of the subconscious, was playing an important role in our second therapeutic stage. According to Mary Ann Mattoon's interpretation of Jung's theory, *dream context* consists of several major parts: *dream content*—details of the dream; *Amplifications* includes personal associations (facts/thoughts/feelings) and archetypal parallels; *Conscious Situation*—what was going on in her life (outer and inner) on the day or two before the dream; *Dream Series*—choose a typical one for interpretation. After gathering all the materials, people could allow the dream to speak its own language by approaching the interconnections among dream images, facts and the subconscious (Papadopoulos, 2006, p. 249). After doing the first dream interpretation for

Jun, she volunteered to conduct the second one with my aid. I felt this was a perfect chance for her to start a conversation with her subconscious, and it was an exploration that she could continue throughout her lifetime. What follows is a detailed record of her work (in her own words):

“Dream: Some friend (he might be a relative in the family) introduced me to a male friend. He was studying “Blah-blah” science in the most prestigious university. Her mother and this friend were giving the boy a lot of compliments on his unique talents and great qualities, and mentioned that he has not been in any intimate relationship for a long time. I noticed that he seemed indifferent and did not care for anything they were talking about—he was in his own world. Their intention was that I might walk into his heart to find the answer for something. However, his mother seemed to maintain a vague attitude toward our match. She sounded supportive and reluctant at the same time. Despite this, we started to date and had some good days together. I found there was a certain kind of attractiveness inside him, and he also seemed curious about some parts of me. We hugged and kissed on day 1 or 2. I felt it was too fast and our kisses contained more desire than attachment. That day, we were supposed to eat at home but he chose not to. The next day his mother called him to ask us to go back home because all the family members were together. Actually, we found the truth was that both families were worried that our relationship went too far at the very beginning. The dream ended with me staring at the man and other people in front of me, feeling lonely and disappointed.

Amplifications {personal associations (Facts/thoughts/feelings) without archetypal parallels}: The blind date image reminded me of the one that I had with a boy back in my hometown. The two families knew each other before and sat together to introduce us to each other, awkwardly. The difference of the dream was that the boy, the boy’s family and my family were all strangers to me. The kiss reminded me of a very short relationship I had with

a boy. We kissed on day 5 or 6 after we met and I felt exactly how I felt in the dream: too fast, out of control and full of libido. The phone call reminded me that if we were out with friends, we were always called by our parents and asked if we would be having meals at home. We would feel some freedom if we ate outside with friends. At the last moment of the dream, my feelings were full of disappointments: I felt that the boy was not that into me after we were physically attached, and neither had I found he was the type I wanted. I was not satisfied by the relationship, by what I was, by what the boy was and by how my family or other people connected with me. And I hated that they disliked me at some point.

Conscious Situation: During the day, I read a case study and it resonated with my own experiences. At dusk, I called my grandmother and felt that I did not have enough money to go back home and took my family here to share my growth. I then talked to a very close friend. She felt anxious and insecure about turning into her thirties without having a partner and a promising future. I tried my best to text “solutions” to her. Then I realized they were useless because once I started analyzing I could not stop it, and would neglect her actual feelings. I tried to help her “solve” problems but it made her more disappointed about herself – this was actually the same thing I did to myself many times. This habitual repetition turned into self-condemnation about not gaining enough wisdom throughout the self-study. I then began to look at my own life and felt like nothing. After a while, I was hungry and ate a croissant. I judged my unhealthy eating habit before bed time, and criticized myself about not maintaining the good habits cultivated in the meditation retreat, and about not living up to the quest for purity of action.

Recurring Dream Contents: Obsessed hugs/kisses with a man I have never met in daily life; seemingly happy and lovely beginnings but disappointing endings; observing families.

Common Theme/Possible Question/Underlying Complex: Intimate relationship or sex--what is sex? What is love? What is “me” in them? --- The fear of never feeling enough and not being loved, and being an incomplete person.

Interpretation: This dream was a largely *subjective* interpretation, because the figure was not “known to the dreamer in waking life” (Papadopoulos, 2006, p. 252). My interpretation was that I had a negative attitude towards relationships. Although I craved for an intimate other, I could easily get disappointed about the person once he did not meet my needs. I projected the disappointments about myself onto the person, and found excuses (family reasons, the “suffering nature” of relationships) for not making real efforts to change myself. Deep inside, I was worried that I could never satisfy my mother’s demand for perfection. And I had a tendency to cut off any relationship once I felt bad about myself. The reason was that I did not love others as themselves and me as myself, unconditionally. I believed I would never be loved if I were not good enough. And it was impossible for me to be “good enough” in everybody’s eyes, so I’d rather escape than be present with the imperfect me/other. Taken objectively, the dream clarified that I was not truly in love with the boy I had the only relationship with. In addition, I had a hard time struggling with what a happy life meant to my family (others) and to myself, and I found it difficult to accept that my family’ values were so deeply rooted in the standard of traditional Chinese culture. For so long I had wanted to change everything and everybody but the only thing I could do was to change myself—change what I can change, accept what I cannot, and gain the wisdom to distinguish them.”

As Jun’s analyst I noticed the dream interpretation had both *Reductive impact and Constructive impact* on her—the reason why she was struggling with intimate relationships and her possibility of developing herself psychologically. (“A dream can have different

directions of impact on the dreamer: *reductive* or *constructive*. A reductive interpretation is likely to tell us why we have a particular problem; a constructive interpretation points to a solution or a possibility of psychological development” (Papadopoulos, 2006, p. 252). What’s more, she allowed the dreams to interpret themselves through creative writing, and enjoyed the process of digging out her subconscious. And most importantly, she became more positive about exploring possibilities, expanding space inside herself and has strengthened the mindset to see herself more clearly.

Poetry Therapy

As the therapy drew to the end, I encouraged Jun to write down the words flowing through her mind. When she showed me one of her poems about dreams, I noticed she had an intuitive love for expressions through words. This talent might have originated from an attachment to books while being lonely as a kid. In addition, her grandmother's "stories" gave her a sensitivity to listening to words. She loved Emily Dickinson and one day she saw how Dickinson’s poetic example could help Jun understand her own situation:

I cried at needs- not at loss-
I heard a girl say
“Don’t go”- and the trembling threads in her voice
twine my cravings around the bud

So far I have been away, to myself
It seemed the rare way,
And body, and seed, natural things-
To open me, like a stranger-like me-

To hear “the masculine” wakening
And see “the feminine” tendering
And combine, originally-into competency,
For adult, made of heart—of time—

But not to part, with a desire
-- a thought – a mood—
And on and on and on—had caged us,
had hell held similarly—

I wish I knew where the girl was—
So I could stand in front of her,
To open my being, and pure my eyes
For – ephemerality –and- breath-, I hear her say.

Through writing, Jun had gained a better sense of herself and her Animus. This friendship with her different selves led to better communication with her mother. In the meantime, her capacity to cope with the floods of emotion was strengthened by writing poetry. Poetry created a safe space where she could freely express her anger, loss, grief or depression. Another method was to write letter poems, dialogues or monologues to clarify her thoughts and feelings. Sometimes when Jun was too triggered by her traumatic feelings, I would have her ask questions on paper—unreasonable or irrelevant ones were welcomed. This method had a magic power to calm herself down. There were some other examples about how Jun used poetry as a healing tool: describing traumatic images and the fragments of memories; making up a mantra for herself to recite whenever she feels unsafe; begin every sentence with “I remember”; writing while watching sunrise and sunset.... Jun was obsessed with all these processes and found it was fascinating to play in her inner world. This was what the ultimate goal of therapy should be—to lead the person towards independence and towards finding an authentic path to self fulfilment.

Conclusion

Not only through our sessions has Jun achieved her personal growth, but she has also helped me gain new perspectives on my therapy work. Since working with Jun as a patient, I have started to investigate the relationship between poetry and healing. Based on my own study of the intersection of psychotherapy and meditation, I now consider poetry a form of healing therapy/meditation, and I now consider therapy/meditation as a form of poetry, a poetry therapy can connect the self with the other, and with the world.

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