



Volume 5

Issue 2 *New Writings in Women's Studies: Selected
Essays from the First Women's Studies Network (U.K.)
Association Essay Contest*

Article 5

Mar-2004

An Illimitable Field: A Practice-based Investigation into the Writing Process

Julie Mellor

Follow this and additional works at: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws>



Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mellor, Julie (2004). An Illimitable Field: A Practice-based Investigation into the Writing Process. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 5(2), 40-52.

Available at: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol5/iss2/5>

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

An Illimitable Field: A Practice-based Investigation into the Writing Process

By Julie Mellor¹

Abstract

This essay will be presented in two parts. The first part contains the opening chapter of my novel, *Cork Dolls*. This novel, as yet unpublished, has been written as part of a practice-based PhD looking at contemporary women's fiction. *Cork Dolls* is set in Sicily and focuses on the psychological tensions between Rachel, an English au pair, and Susan, a Filipino housekeeper. Both women are employed by the wealthy Bruni family. As background to the first chapter, it is helpful to know that Rachel has recently had an abortion, while Susan left her daughter, Reetha, in the Philippines some years ago in order to earn money in Sicily.

The second section of the essay is an enquiry into the writing process. I draw on my own work, and that of other women writers, to show how the process involves both conscious and unconscious decisions. Using the theories of C. G. Jung to examine the unconscious side of the process, I will argue that writing can be seen as part of the individuation process. Individuation is the means by which the unconscious can be integrated into consciousness, resulting in greater self-knowledge. I will suggest that this is particularly important to women, whose knowledge of themselves tends to be influenced by patriarchal definitions of the feminine.

Key Words: Jung, women, writing

Part one: the novel

Susan's eyes are black; oval shapes where pupil and iris merge. Cut-outs like the eyes of a carnival mask, so no one knows who or what is behind them. They hold inky secrets, blue black like squid ink, that thin salt-soaked substance she removes with such distaste.

The kitchen is milky with steam. So many things cooking all at once. The steam settles on her face making her cheeks shine. Above, the ceiling creaks and bounces. The boys are upstairs, playing. Signor Bruni has gone to the airport, and the Signora ... who knows where?

Susan goes to the bottom of the stairs and shouts up at the boys to stop fighting, to have a wash and comb their hair.

'I come later. Inspect!' Her voice is shrill as a bird.

Back in the kitchen the peppers crackle and hiss, their skins splitting with the heat. The sound makes her shiver. She doesn't like gas, doesn't trust the flames, the way they pop and splutter, yet the peppers have to be done. She scorches them and peels back their charred skins, yellow juice dripping down her apron, thick and sweet as syrup.

The sweetness makes her mouth water, sets her thinking of sugary tea. Yes, much goodness in tea. But there is not time. This is what you get for being a Filipina; too much work. If she was Ingleesh, like the new girl who is due to arrive today, then it would be different. People don't ask so much of you if your skin is white. Take the last girl; Georgina. *Jor-jee-nah*.

¹ Julie Mellor gained her first degree from the University of Huddersfield in 1996, and her PhD from Sheffield Hallam University in 2003. Her short stories have appeared in the *London Magazine* and *The Nerve* (Virago). She lives in Penistone, near Sheffield, and is currently busy pursuing a PGCE in English and contemplating her next novel, which will be loosely informed by Jungian theory.

Such a long name, Susan could hardly be bothered to pronounce it, so she called her *Jeenah* instead. Surely that was enough of a name for anyone? Georgina hadn't liked it. Susan could tell by the way she twisted her long red curls around her finger, as though she was winding in her anger. All the Signora asked of Jeenah was that she speak Ingleesh to the children. Easy. But one month later she said she wanted to go home. Said she didn't like the food.

Susan stabs her fork into another pepper and holds it over the flame. Now there is a new girl. She cannot remember this one's name, although the Signora has told her twice already.

The heavy slam of the front door, the sound of boots being dumped in the hallway; the Signora. Dirty boots with dust lodged in the creases and filth stuck to the heel. Susan scowls. Another job to do. The boots have to be polished smooth with a little piece of bone, up and down over the leather until they shine.

'*Sono io,*' the Signora shouts. 'It's only me.' Her footsteps on the stairs as she dashes up. At least there is water for her bath.

The ceiling pounds again as the boys hear their mother and race to greet her. Good. They can stay with her while Susan finishes down here. But two minutes later they come marching down, enter the kitchen to a smell of burning. Hot fat and purple smoke.

'Hungry,' says Santino, open mouthed, like a chick in the nest. Not Susan's chick though.

She curses, moving the pan off the ring, burning her finger in the process. The boys press close to the wall as she spits on her hand.

'Chocolate in fridge,' she informs them. She doesn't have time to make them a *panino*. Anyway, children prefer sweet things. Everyone knows that.

There is a fight for the cool block of chocolate. Franco elbows Santino out of the way and Santino yells.

'I trying to cook,' screams Susan, brandishing the fork. Though the mauve steamy haze she looks like a witch from their storybooks, black hair hanging in limp tails round her face. She pulls a grubby cotton scarf out of her apron pocket and winds it round her head to keep her hair back. Now she is a genie. The boys run away in fear, taking the chocolate back to their room.

Rachel stood in a scented cloud of perfume, residue of the Signora's embrace. Beyond it was a smell of burnt fish. Then she became aware of two faces peering between the dark turnings of the banister.

The children came down cautiously. Both had tight little grins on their faces, as though they were trying to stop laughing. Signora Bruni presented the eldest first, Franco. Deep brown eyes and a mischievous smile. He gave a perfect English 'hello' accompanied by a faintly embarrassed giggle.

Then the youngest, Santino. The little boy fidgeted. He had brown eyes like his brother, but softer features, and a sticky smear of chocolate round his mouth. He held out his hand at his mother's prompting, and Rachel took it, charmed by his elegance. After shaking her hand, he seemed confused. He looked up at his mother as if waiting for another prompt, but none came, so he took hold of the hem of his shorts between thumb and forefinger, and Rachel watched bemused as he performed a little curtsey. She held in her laughter, but Franco and his mother both fell about, open mouths echoing each other's sound, their harsh laughter resonating in the hallway. Santino tried to join in, but the loud insistence of his brother, showing off in Rachel's presence, prevented him. His face puckered.

Oh no. Not tears. Not five minutes after her arrival. Rachel took the hem of her skirt, and returned the compliment with a curtsy of her own, low as she dare considering the shortness of her skirt. The little boy smiled.

At that moment, Signor Bruni struggled into the hall with her cases.

'Come on *ragazzi*,' said the Signora, virtually ignoring her husband, 'we will show Rachel her room.'

Rachel followed them up the staircase, a wide sweep of worn marble with a green carpet held in place by brass rods. The boys chattered in Italian, then switched to English, trying to get her attention. She was amazed how good their English was. Behind them came Signor Bruni, weighed down by the cases. Rachel felt acutely conscious of him following her, of him looking at her legs, bare and pale, a dab of sweat making her thighs stick together.

Her room was light, with a tall window, two large wardrobes, and a dressing table with a glass top. The boys immediately jumped on the bed and started to fight with the pillows.

'I think they will be tired later, after all this excitement. They must have a siesta this afternoon.' The Signora's English was smooth and confident. She spoke to the boys in English too, making Rachel feel slightly superfluous.

Out of the corner of her eye, Rachel saw a shadow flit across the landing. A small figure, another child perhaps? But the agency had definitely said only two children. The figure disappeared into one of the rooms.

'Susan, my housekeeper,' said the Signora, by way of explanation.

Housekeeper? thought Rachel; it sounded so grand. How different life was going to be here.

Signor Bruni stopped in the doorway and said something to his wife. He was sweating profusely, and seemed displeased about something. Rachel was convinced it was the weight of her cases. He crossed the landing and knocked on the door through which the shadow had entered. No response. He spoke in rapid Italian and the door opened a little way, a dark tea-stain of a face appearing, timid yet sharp.

'This is Susan,' he said, nodding to Rachel, attempting a formal introduction.

Susan wiped her hands down her yellow-streaked apron and came across the landing, holding out her right hand to shake. Her palm was pinkish, like new skin. 'Ingleesh?' she asked. Her tone was disparaging.

'Yes.' Rachel had never seen anyone with eyes so dark. There was hardly any white surrounding them.

'I show you all things.' Susan's forehead wrinkled up into the scarf around her head, 'but no now. Today much work.' She eyed Signor Bruni defiantly, then retreated, banging the door of her room shut.

Later in the day and things are calmer. Susan sings as she shakes the creases out of the blanket that covers her bed, folding the corners before tucking them in. Her voice is as sharp as glass. She has songs for all types of work; if she sings loud enough, the songs help do the work for her.

There is a chest of drawers in the corner of her room; it bulges with clothes and will not shut properly. She has not worn some of the clothes for years, but she never throws anything away, not ever, for who knows when they might come in useful? On top of the drawers is a wizened apple. She has been meaning to eat it for days, but she has not been in the mood for fruit, not with all this preparation for the new girl. When the Signora announced that she had

taken on another Ingleesh girl, the news made Susan's stomach gripe. The doctor dismisses it as acid, but the pain is like a flame inside, burning, burning. Sometimes, if the pain comes bad, she shuts herself in her room for a day or two. Signor Bruni thinks she is lazy. He thinks all Filipina's are lazy, but what does he know? When the pain comes she cannot speak, for fear that the fire in her throat might come out of her mouth and set the house alight.

She moves the ornaments off the shelf to dust them, but she has left her duster downstairs. It's all this confusion. Always the same when there is a new girl; everything goes wrong. She cannot be bothered to go back down to the kitchen again. All those stairs; too many stairs in this house. So she unwinds the scarf from around her head and uses it in quick flicks that send the dead mosquitoes floating down to the carpet. She treads them in with her sandals, then shakes the scarf out of the window, quick so it cracks like a whip and makes Cesare start to bark. She shouts at him to be quiet, once only, but he understands.

There is a picture of the Pope on the wall, and next to it, a cross made out of a palm leaf, tacked in place with a rusty drawing pin. The palm leaf is dry and crisp, left over from Easter. She will replace it with a fresh one next year and this one will go in the shoe box under the bed. There are eleven crosses in there already, one for each year she has lived here.

She whispers a quick prayer before the cross then genuflects. Right or left first? She can never remember. Anyhow, it is not important. What is important is that He is watching. God. He sees how hard she works, morning until night, cooking and cleaning. He listens to her prayers. Sometimes she asks him to speak to Reetha, on her behalf, to tell her that her room is ready anytime she wants to come. She is grateful to God for delivering these messages, because writing is something she finds difficult to do.

Part two: an examination of the writing process:

Julia Bell says that although writing and academia have not always sat comfortably together, the inclusion of creative writing in university English courses has caused the relationship to change. She suggests that the important question is “not whether writing has a positive effect on criticism, but whether such close proximity to one's own dissection has anything useful to offer the writer” (Bell 2001, p.xii). In this essay, I will show how an engagement with the writing process can enhance an understanding of the writer's work. However, as well as benefiting the writer, a discussion of the writing process can also inform critical theory. Peter Brooks says that the conjunction of literature and psychoanalysis tends to mask “a relation of privilege of one term to another, a use of psychoanalysis as a conceptual system in terms of which to analyse and explain literature, rather than an encounter and confrontation of the two” (Brooks 1996, p.22). By examining the writing process, I believe a third dynamic is being added to this 'relation of privilege', one which could contest the claim to privilege which literature and theory traditionally make.

As readers, we rarely have access to the process behind the fiction. Diaries and journals contain information about the writing process, but these tend to be published as separate volumes, rather than alongside the texts they refer to². One reason there is so little information available is that many writers are wary of engaging with their process. Novelist Lesley Glaister says she is reticent to look too closely at her writing: “I almost feel superstitious about probing into it too much. I feel it might

² For example, the notes to two novels by Michèle Roberts are published in a separate collection entitled Food, Sex & God: On Inspiration and Writing, (1998).

evaporate if I do. I think it's something very close to what happens when you dream" (Glaister 1999, p.11). Similarly, Margaret Atwood says she does not like discussing her writing because:

... I can't remember what goes on when I'm doing it. That time is like small pieces cut out of my brain. It's not time I myself have lived. I can remember the details of the room and places where I've written, the circumstances, the other things I did before and after, but not the process itself (Atwood: 1992, p.80)

Both Glaister's and Atwood's comments seem to indicate that their writing is informed by unconscious processes. Images from the unconscious surface in dreams, day dreams and fantasies. For the Swiss psychoanalyst, Carl Gustave Jung, fantasy is:

..the clearest expression of the specific activity of the psyche. It is, pre-eminently, the creative activity from which the answers to all answerable questions come; it is the mother of all possibilities, where, like all psychological opposites, the inner and outer worlds are joined together in living union (Jung 1998, p.9)

Jung advocates getting to know the unconscious in order to better understand ourselves. Becoming acquainted with the images of the unconscious and integrating them into consciousness is the aim of individuation. I will look at the process of individuation in more detail below, but for now, I want to stress that individuation aims to achieve a balance between consciousness and the unconscious. Jung distinguishes between what he terms the 'personal unconscious' and a deeper layer, the 'collective unconscious'. The collective unconscious has contents which are similar everywhere, in all individuals. It is a vast area, an "illimitable field" (Jung 1996, p.276) and its existence can be recognised by the contents which emerge from it. Jung calls these contents archetypes.

[t]he concept of the archetype ... is derived from the repeated observation that, for instance, the myths and fairytales of world literature contain definite motifs which crop up everywhere. We meet these same motifs in the fantasies, dreams, deliriums, and delusions of individuals living today (Jung 1964, p.449)

The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear (Jung 1996, p.5)

So archetypes are universal patterns which can manifest themselves through the dreams and fantasies of the individual, and are shaped by individual consciousness.

Writing Cork Dolls involved a mixture of conscious and unconscious decisions. On the conscious side, I knew I wanted to write a book about my own experiences in Sicily. I had previously written a novel for my M.A. submission, which was in the first person and focused almost exclusively on a single main character. To move away from this, I decided to write my new novel in the third person. Another conscious decision I made was that the prose should be more lyrical and descriptive than it had been in my previous work. What is interesting is that although I had made these conscious decisions, when I began Cork Dolls, ideas seemed to come to mind without invitation. It was as though they were already there, waiting to be examined. I called my main character Rachel and wanted her to represent myself in the story, but I soon had ideas for her

which were not autobiographical and did not seem to be related to me personally. For instance, Rachel was going to Sicily to recover from a failed relationship and a recent abortion, neither of which are autobiographical details. One of the strongest images that demanded to be written was Rachel's arrival in Sicily, which was very different to my real life experience. As soon as I started to write about it, a host of other ideas and characters crowded in. This uninvited gathering of images corresponds to what Michèle Roberts describes as 'chaos'.

I've begun to see that writing a novel rehearses the process of having a nervous breakdown ... because to write it you not only set out to destroy previous structures of language, and therefore thinking, but you're simultaneously somehow destroying your own psychic makeup ... So you go through a period of complete disintegration and complete chaos and you feel mad ... disintegrating, flying apart. It's terrifying but it's the only way I can write (Roberts 2002, pers.comm.).

Many of the images that came to me as I began to write were out of sequence or seemed unrelated to my original idea, so I wrote them without knowing whether they were part of the novel or not. Rachel's arrival at the airport and her journey to the Bruni's house was something I worked on for quite a while, yet it does not appear in the final draft because later I decided that the novel should start from Susan's point of view.

Despite editing out Rachel's journey, the theme of being a stranger in a new country has remained central to the novel. Both Rachel and Susan are outsiders, trying to make a life for themselves in a country which is not their own. This idea of not belonging, of difference, seemed to dominate much of the writing. It led me to explore both Rachel and Susan's situations, what living in a strange place might do to them, how it might affect their behaviour. I think this theme of alienation can be explained using archetypal theory. The sense of displacement which characterised both Rachel and Susan was a projection of my own experience, even though the actual events which took place during my time in Sicily were very different to the events I described in the novel.

One of the difficulties for the critic is that Jung often blurs the distinction between the archetype and the archetypal image. I find June Singer helpful here:

It seems to me that the archetype in and of itself is an "ideal form" ... and that it is impossible to visualize or imagine the archetype. It is pure form - a vessel into which the contents of a culture may be poured and then appear as a collective image, or into which personal contents may be poured and a personal image thus formed upon which we may project our own highly charged emotional fantasies (Singer 1977, p.60).

So, we cannot know an archetype, but we can read its expression in images, which as Jung says, take their colour from individual consciousness. I believe that my novel contains a series of images which, through conscious development, I have been able to present as a continuous narrative. In the course of this essay I will examine one of these images, the shadow, in greater detail. But first I want to look at the impact of archetypal theory on women.

Naomi Goldenberg identifies two major tendencies in Jung's thinking concerning archetypes. The first, as I have outlined above, separates the archetype from its expression in images. Goldenberg says this separation is detrimental to women because it makes them see archetypes "as ideal patterns 'out there'. Hence, dreams, fantasies, stories 'in here' are inferior copies" (Goldenberg

1977, p.16). The second line of Jung's thinking is the one that she finds more fruitful. If the archetype is linked to the image, greater emphasis can be placed on what is happening in individual psyches. Thus, "[e]ach fantasy, dream, or life story becomes archetypal" (Goldenberg 1977a, p.16). I find this helpful because it validates individual experience. Images of women tend to be shaped by patriarchal thought. If women treat their dreams and fantasies as archetypal, new images can be formed which can question patriarchal assumptions and offer alternatives to them.

The imaginary world I was starting to create through writing about Rachel became more intense when I began to think about how I would characterise the Brunis' housekeeper. I consciously decided the housekeeper would be from the Philippines, as I was trying to avoid any reference to the housekeeper I had actually worked with. I called my character Susan because many of the Filipino housekeepers and maids I met during my time as an au pair had English names. Although I did not realise it at the time, when I decided Susan should be from the Philippines, I was immediately forcing myself to use my imagination in a different way, making myself step inside another skin. It could be argued that I had to do this with other characters too (Signora Bruni for example) yet I found Susan by far the most powerful. I think this power stems from the fact that Susan is an archetypal image, but before I talk about Susan as a figure of the unconscious, I want to say something about the conscious decisions I made relating to her.

Around the time I started to invent Susan, I was reading Flaubert's Parrot (1985) by Julian Barnes. I was surprised to learn that Flaubert changes the colour of Emma Bovary's eyes; sometimes they are blue, sometimes black. After rallying against the critic who makes such a literal reading of Flaubert's work, Barnes then questions the value of describing a woman's eyes at all in fiction.

I feel sorry for novelists when they have to mention women's eyes: there's so little choice, and whatever colouring is decided upon inevitably carries banal implications. Her eyes are blue: innocence and honesty. Her eyes are black: passion and depth. Her eyes are green: wildness and jealousy. Her eyes are brown: reliability and common sense. Her eyes are violet: the novel is by Raymond Chandler. How can you escape all this without some haversack of a parenthesis about the lady's character? (Barnes 1985, p.78).

Although Barnes is being humorous here, it seems to me that he misses an important point. The 'banal implications' do not come from the colour of a character's eyes, but from the cultural assumptions about women upon which these clichés rest. I imagined Susan's eyes would be black, but I did not associate them particularly with passion. Instead I saw her darkness as representative of secrets and pain. She was unfathomable to the other characters in the household, especially to Rachel, and I knew her power would derive from this.

What follows is my first attempt at describing Susan. There was very little in the way of plot holding the writing together at this stage, but as Susan came to life on the page, she seemed to create a tension in the writing which had not previously existed, and which later helped me to develop the plot. Some fragments of this piece remain in the finished novel while others have been left out:

Susan's eyes are black; oval shapes where pupil and iris merge. Cut-outs like the eyes of a carnival mask, so no one knows, no one can ever be quite sure, who or what is behind them. They hold inky secrets. Blue black secrets that stain like squid sauce, *sepia nera*...

Susan's eyes are strong enough to repel, to push away, to send anyone out of her kitchen, including Signor Bruni. They have a strength that is physical. They make up for her body, which is petite, small and neat as a young girl's, yet thin and wiry too. From the back she could be mistaken for an old woman.

Susan's eyes are obsidian. Black volcanic rock, polished so it reflects the light, flashing the sun back at itself. People can't look into her eyes without squinting.

Susan's eyes can answer back, poke fun, pick fault. She could cause real trouble with those eyes one day (Cork Dolls, first draft)

After writing the above, I realised that Rachel's position of importance in the novel was being rivalled. I had begun by making a conscious decision to tell Rachel's story, but suddenly it had become Susan's story too. I wanted to balance Rachel and Susan, to give them equal weight in the narrative, but progress was quicker where Susan was concerned. Areas of confrontation quickly began to develop in the narrative; petty aggressions magnified by the claustrophobic atmosphere of the house. It was these tensions which generated the plot. I hardly knew what was going to happen next until I sat down to write, which is an indication that developments in the narrative were taking place at an unconscious level.

Jung likens our examination of the unconscious to looking into water, or a mirror. "The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely, the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the *persona*, the mask of the actor" (Jung 1996, p.20). I would say that Rachel was, in the early stages of the novel, a mask; I used her to present the side of myself which needed little explanation. However, Jung says that when we look into the mirror of the unconscious, we are not simply looking at ourselves, but beyond ourselves, to discover who we truly are. Susan was much more a figure of my imagination than Rachel yet she seemed far more 'real' to me. This might seem contradictory, but it illustrates Jung's belief that the inner world is as real as the outer world: "All that is outside, also is inside" (Jung 1996, p.101).³

The novelist Christa Wolf says the writer is motivated by the desire to create a fictional double, a double that allows us to experience what real life does not: "The longing to produce a double, to express oneself, to pack various lives into this one, to be able to be in several places at once, is, I believe, one of the most powerful and least regarded impulses behind writing" (Wolf 1993, p.11). I wanted Rachel to represent myself in the novel, yet I was using her to present the side of myself that I wanted people to see. It was Susan, not Rachel, who enabled me to experience another side of myself, to confront elements of my character that I had not previously wanted to acknowledge.

Jung says that the first stage of looking beyond ourselves is characterised by our meeting with the shadow.

The meeting with oneself is, at first, the meeting with one's own shadow. The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well. But one must learn to know oneself in order to know who one is (Jung 1996, p.21).

³ Jung is drawing, as he often does, on Goethe here.

As I mentioned above, I think it is possible to see Susan as a shadow persona. The shadow is a same sex figure, the personification of all the things which we refuse to acknowledge about ourselves. It is the repressed side of the personality and wants to do the things we normally do not allow ourselves to do, which is why it is usually experienced as something negative until it is integrated. Often, during the course of the novel, we see Susan behave in a negative manner (she mistreats the dog, steals small items from the house, and spies on Rachel and the Brunis). I found this liberating, because writing about Susan allowed me to transgress certain boundaries, to become someone else. For example, in the following scene where she punishes Franco for knocking over a pile of ironing, I did not have to think about how she would behave; I instinctively knew.

Susan let out a screech, like a bird trapped down a chimney. *'Vieni quoi. Dai, subito.'*
Franco cowered.

Die? wondered Rachel. What on earth did she mean? But she hardly had time to consider as Susan grabbed Franco's hand and pressed the iron purposefully to his finger. So quick that Rachel could hardly believe what was happening. Franco's cry came right up from his stomach, a yell that made her heart stop. Santino started to wail, but Susan was shouting above it all, *'cat-ee-vo, cat-ee-vo!'*. She put the iron down and smacked Franco as hard as she could on the behind, once, twice, her breath coming huff huff as her hand made contact with him. Rachel wanted to stop her but it was as if an invisible wall surrounded her, preventing her from interfering. 'Susan, for God's sake,' she said, eventually finding her voice (Cork Dolls: p.71-72).

Jung gives the Faust-Mephistopheles relationship as an example of the portrayal of the shadow in literature. However, I would suggest that Susan is not Rachel's shadow (as Jung's example suggests) but my own. She comes from *my* unconscious, not Rachel's. Natalia Ginzburg claims that the dark side of the personality is necessary to writers. She describes her writing as a vocation "which also feeds on terrible things; it swallows the best and the worst in our lives and our evil feelings flow in its blood just as much as our benevolent feelings. It feeds itself and grows within us" (Ginzburg 1992, p.145). If, as Ginzburg is saying, it is impossible to deny the unpleasant side of our lives if we are to write, then perhaps women face greater difficulties than men, because women tend to be perceived as either good or bad in patriarchal society. Michèle Roberts succinctly describes how these either/or categories operate to contain women: "whore/madonna, you've got a body *or* a soul, you've got brains *or* beauty, you can't be a mother *and* an artist" (Roberts 1983, p.66). The recognition of the shadow in women forces us to question these mutually exclusive either/or categories. Therefore, the process of writing can be seen not only a means of getting to know the unconscious, but a means of empowerment because it leads women to question patriarchal definitions of the feminine.

I described Susan as a 'shadow' in the novel before I had read Jung, so it is not the case that Jungian theory influenced my writing. Rather, I have found that Jungian theory has influenced the way I read my work. For instance, I can now see that Susan allowed me to voice the ambiguous feelings I had related to children and mothering. As I have said above, when I wrote the scene where she burns Franco's finger, I felt a sense of release; Susan could do the things I would not allow myself (or Rachel) to do. According to Jung, the shadow often embodies a moral problem. I think

Susan encapsulates the problem of how to be a mother far from home, how to look after children who are not your own, how to fit into a country, and a household, where you are treated as inferior.

It is interesting that not only Susan, but the whole novel, is concerned with shadows. There are shadows in the corners of the rooms, shadows made by the washing as it hangs on the line, even shadows in the imagined darkness when Susan is raped (an incident from her past which is revealed in a flashback). Clouds cast shadows over the villa where Signora Bruni's lover lives, and in Rachel's dream, that same villa casts its own shadow over the Bruni's house. It is possible that Susan, as a shadow persona, was so strong for me that her presence crept into other areas of the writing. However, although Jung says that the shadow belongs to the personal unconscious, it can also be experienced as a collective image, and is therefore archetypal. I think that the preoccupation with shadow imagery in the novel is, like the theme of not belonging, an archetypal pattern, one which is pre-existent of, but shaped by, my own experience.

There is perhaps a difficulty in drawing a link between a dark-skinned character and the shadow persona, but unlike Jung, who has been accused of racism⁴, it was not my intention to make 'dark' equal 'primitive'. Indeed, Susan is much quicker to adapt and take advantage of situations than Rachel is. In part, Susan's behaviour is produced by economic necessity; lack of money forces her to leave her daughter to seek work abroad. Also, it is important to remember that Susan represents part of myself. Therefore, whatever is unacceptable about her behaviour is also an unacceptable aspect of myself. Frieda Fordham (1991) says that the shadow is linked to societal repression, and can be experienced as the devil or a witch. Interestingly, I described Susan as a witch from the first draft onwards: "Through the mauve steamy haze she looks like a witch from their storybooks, black hair hanging in limp tails round her face" (*Cork Dolls*: p.4).

Christopher Hauke, drawing on the work of Warren Coleman, shows how the status of women and the shadow are linked in Western society. Hauke says "what is kept for ego and what is abandoned or despised as other, is not neutral or accidental but arises as a result of what the culture will or will not support" (Hauke 2000, p.133). It is interesting that the issues I address through Susan are specific to women. For instance, developing her character allowed me to explore the complexities of mothering. Abandoning a child may not be socially acceptable yet, in Susan's case, it is economically necessary.

For a long time, the pace of the novel seemed too slow, especially in the sections which concentrated on Rachel. But by writing Susan, another side of myself had been allowed to surface, which I slowly learnt to incorporate into Rachel. Thus I was no longer using Rachel to try and present an acceptable side of myself. I think her initial passivity can be seen as stemming from stereotypical definitions of the feminine. Writing Susan forced me to make Rachel more complex, to present a wider definition of the feminine and therefore challenge patriarchal definitions.

In Jungian theory, individuation is the means by which we can integrate the unconscious into consciousness. Jung uses the term "to denote the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'in-dividual', that is, a separate, indivisible unity or 'whole'" (Jung 1996, p.275). By trying to develop unconscious images and make them fit into a narrative structure, I was integrating them into consciousness. Therefore, I think writing a novel can be viewed in terms of individuation. Indeed, as I have shown, it is possible to identify the first step in the process in my own work: the meeting with the shadow.

⁴ Stanley Grossman (1999) says, '[a]s far as race is concerned it would be more accurate to say that there were some racist components in his [Jung's] thought rather than to characterize its orientation as racist' (1999, 117).

Maggie Gee says “[a]ll writers write to be read, to communicate, to share dreams, memories, visions, jokes” (Gee 2001, p.18). I am sure that the desire to communicate is a factor in writing, but as there are no certainties about being published, I think it is difficult to see this as a major motivating factor. I find Christa Wolf's suggestion that the writer is motivated by desire for self-knowledge much closer to my own experience: “The writer's compulsion to write things down stems from the fact that this may be the only possibility he has of not missing his true self. And this explains the tenacity with which writers cling to their profession even in the most adverse circumstances (Wolf 1993, p.45).

Not only does this assertion reflect my own experience, it also corresponds to Jung's individuation process. In order to find our 'true' selves we must engage with the unconscious; writing provides us with a means of doing this. The encounter with one's shadow marks the very first stage of the journey, yet because the unconscious is an illimitable field, the process of knowing ourselves is unending. There will always be some new aspect to be encountered. Thus, individuation must be regarded as a difficult and on-going process, something we should aim for, but may not necessarily complete.

I have shown that Rachel and Susan can be seen as aspects of myself; Rachel as the conscious aspect, and Susan as the more unconscious aspect which the writing has enabled me to integrate. However, as I have said above, there are always other selves to be explored. Jung says that after the realm of the shadow, we can pass deeper into the collective unconscious. A man's unconscious contains a complementary feminine element, the anima, while the unconscious of a woman contains a masculine element, the animus. Therefore, I might be expected to argue that after I had become acquainted with my shadow persona, I was able to engage in a dialogue with other selves, that this is how Signor and Signora Bruni, and the children, Franco and Santino, came into being. But although this would fit neatly with Jungian theory, it would not be an accurate description of my writing process. The minor characters in my novel exist far more as plot devices than as personas in the Jungian sense, and perhaps one of the faults of the writing is that they are not more fully realised.

I said at the start of this essay that by focusing on the process, the claim to privilege which literature and theory often make might be contested. In my own work, there is one area where the writing seemed to generate something new, and that is concerning the anima. According to Jung, the anima is a powerful force in the psyche of men (not women, whose complimentary opposite is the animus).

[The anima] sits on top of us [men] like a succubus; she changes into all sorts of shapes like a witch, and in general displays an unbearable independence ... she causes states of fascination that rival the best bewitchment, or unleashes terrors in us not to be undone by any manifestation of the devil. (Jung 1996, p.25-26)

Although women should not experience the anima, there seems to be something like a shadow/anima overlap in Susan. She has a very changeable nature which generates both small acts of rebellion and harsh acts of punishment. Many of her actions seemed spontaneous to me, almost as though she was writing herself at times. Although I have attributed this to the shadow, there also seems to be a muse-like quality about Susan, which is something Jung associates with the anima. Perhaps it is possible for women to be lured by an anima figure in the same way Jung suggests men can be. After all, everything the anima touches becomes “unconditional, dangerous, taboo, magical”

(Jung 1996, p.28), which is an apt description of Susan's effect on me. If it is possible for women to experience an anima figure, it could be read as a collusion with the male order that has created the concept, or as confirmation of male assumptions about the feminine. Yet because Susan subverts many of the received ideas about motherhood and femininity, this seems to suggest that women's experience of the anima might be empowering, enabling them to subvert male definitions of the feminine in the same way that becoming acquainted with the shadow can do.

The woman writer has often been perceived as “recluse, sufferer, woman in mauve velvet on a chaise” (Sternberg 1992, p.4). Yet by looking at the writing process I have shown that images from the unconscious can be incorporated into the image women have of themselves. This increased self-knowledge leads us to become what Jung terms “a separate and indivisible unity” (Jung 1996, p.275). For women, this means becoming separate from patriarchal definitions of the feminine. This forces us to widen the definition of individuation, as it involves not only getting to know the unconscious and integrating it into consciousness, but also questioning the patriarchal definitions through which women's identities have been constructed.

Bibliography

- Atwood, M. (1992) “Nine Beginnings” in Sternburg, J (ed.) (1992) The Writer on Her Work, Virago: London
- Barnes, J. (1985 [1984]) Flaubert's Parrot Picador: London
- Bell, J. and Magrs, P. (eds.) (2001) The Creative Writing Coursebook Macmillan: London
- Brooks, P. (1996) Psychoanalysis And Storytelling Blackwell: Oxford (U.K.) &Cambridge (U.S.A.)
- Fordham, F. (1991 [1953]) An Introduction to Jung's Psychology Penguin: Harmondsworth
- Gee, M. (2001) “Have book, will travel” in Mslexia, Spring/Summer 2001, 16-18
- Ginzburg, N. (1992 [1962]) “My Vocation” in Sternburg, J (ed.) (1992) The Writer on Her Work Virago, London
- Glaister, L. (1999) “My life in writing: Lesley Glaister tells Sally Weale how she discovered ‘suburban gothic’” in The Guardian Saturday Review, November 20th 1999, p.11
- Goldenberg, N. (1977) “Feminism and Jungian Theory” in Anima: An Experimental Journal, Vol. 3 (The Spring Equinox) 1977, No. 2, 14-17
- Grossman, S. (1979) “C.G. Jung and National Socialism” in P. Bishop (ed.) Jung in Contexts: A Reader Routledge: London and New York
- Hauke, C. (2000) Jung and the Postmodern: The Interpretation of Realities Routledge: London & Philadelphia
- Jung, C. G. (1998) Psychological Reflections: An Anthology of Jung's Writings 1905-1961 (ed. J. Jacobi,) Routledge: London
- Jung, C. G. (1996 [1959]) The Archetypes And The Collective Unconscious: The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 9, Part 1 Routledge: London
- Jung, C. G. (1964) Civilization in Transition: The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 10, (trans. Hull, R F C) Routledge and Kegan Paul: London
- Roberts, M. (1983) “Questions And Answers” in M. Wandor (ed.) On Gender And Writing Pandora Press: London, Boston, Melbourne & Henley
- Singer, J. K. (1977) “Responses to Naomi Goldenberg” in Anima: An Experimental Journal, Vol. 4 (The Fall Equinox) 1977, No.1, 59-61
- Sternburg, J. (ed.) (1992) The Writer On Her Work, Virago: London
- Wehr, D. S. (1988) Jung And Feminism: Liberating Archetypes, Routledge: London

Wolf, C. (1993) The Writer's Dimension: Selected Essays Virago: London