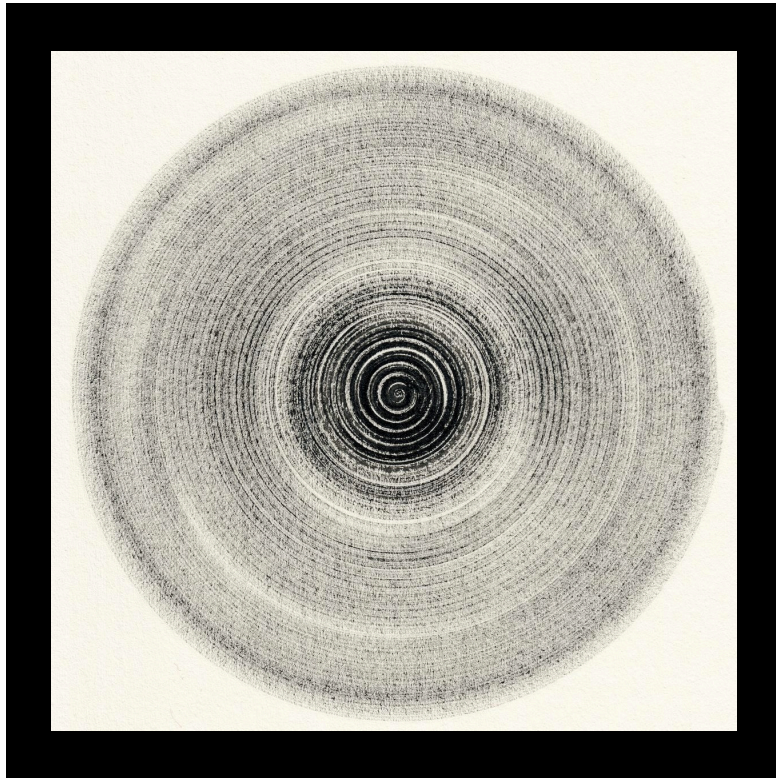


Siobhan Bell
13175149

**FICTIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING AS A METHOD FOR
INDIVIDUATION AND INNER WORK- EXPLORED THROUGH MY MULTIMEDIA
ARTISTIC BOOK 'AMARIS'**



Amaris sat still in the silent, shadowy library and punched the keys of the her keyboard. The sounds of the Academy of Knowledge wafted through the walls of her perception, breaking her imagined peace apart. Students murmuring in anxious whispers about their impending deadlines, the soft whirring of the metallic air ventilators, the turning of pages of old, battered books... there was something inside of her that loved the academic nostalgia of being inside that space. She was a different character when she was there just as she was whenever she journeyed into a new scene of her life. She sat up, straightening out her spine, a version of herself suddenly academic and refined. The raw rubbing out of all her wild artistic edges. She needed to find a way to explain the book she had written to the Academy of Established Knowledge where she studied. But how would she do this? How would she subject her soul to academic scrutiny? To the masculine intellect that demanded her knowledge be transmitted in a form that was cold and comfortable to it? She had lived the life of an intellectual but found it didn't fit. Back in the days when philosophy had been all that occupied her mind and when she prided herself on being able to stand her ground against old men in dusty tweed jackets who seemed unable to take her form of knowing seriously. But she didn't want to just write theory anymore, or to impress these old thinkers by learning how to converse in their eloquent vocabulary. What was the use in eloquent vocabulary and arguments meticulously constructed like old stone castles if only a few people were able to climb their steps in order to reach their parapets? No, in her own book she had attempted to

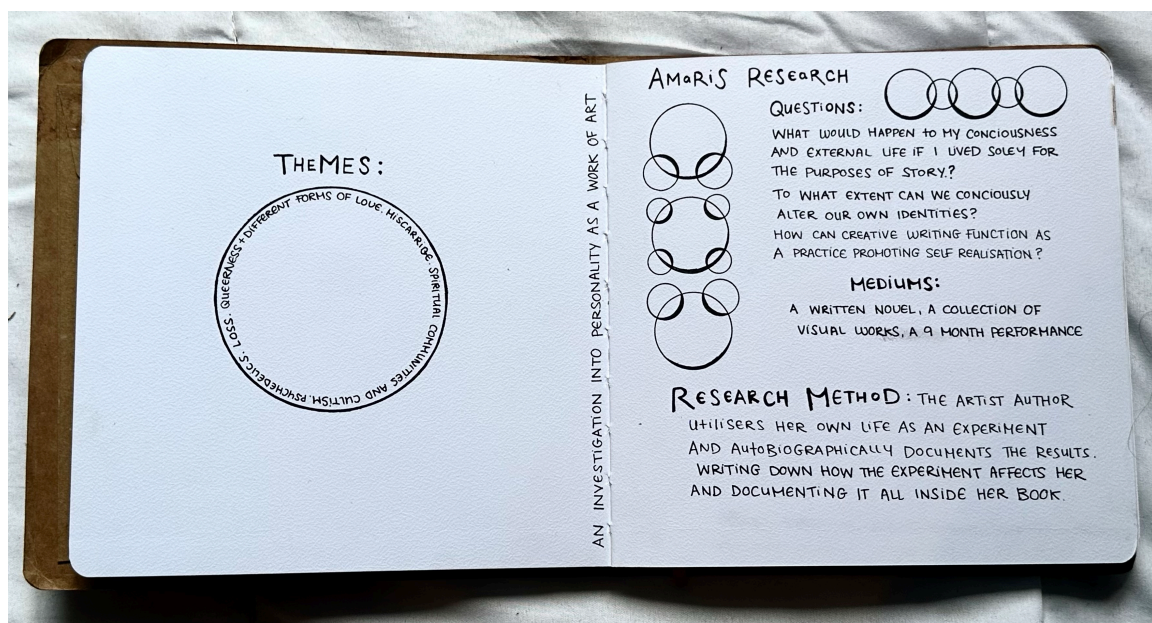
do something different... to put knowledge into the form of narrative, not denying but embracing the subjective as an essential aspect of her own being. She had written this book about Shivan, her sister from another star, as a means of understanding herself and therefore understanding what it meant to be anything at all... what it meant to be human. And in so doing, in weaving together the three strings that tied her down to her own life; writing, performance and painting... she had unwittingly developed a methodology- a means of using fiction as an autobiographical art form. A means of using another character to understand yourself.

WHAT HAS AMARIS BEEN RESEARCHING?

'AMARIS' is an Artistic Research novel; a literary exploration of how the story of who we tell ourselves we are shapes who we come to be.

As part of the 'AMARIS' project over a period of nine months I narrated my own experiences in a third person magical realist novel that mirrored my own life. In externalising all of my emotions and experiences into the main character AMARIS- who I further felt I gained a deep personal relation with- I hoped to gain a greater understanding of my own subconscious and internal narratives. In doing so I attempted to use the fictional medium as a means for me to be completely transparent with myself, aiming to unearth aspects of my own unconscious. I poured my life experience into this character: my pains, my joys, my hidden and secret self... I bore my soul each day in Courier New on a blank page.

AMARIS, however, is a huge project with 110,000+ words, a host of visual images, artistic journals and nine parts- each of which explore a different research question. It has therefore been challenging for me to narrow down the project and present it in a way which is palatable for the institution. Therefore, in this portfolio, I seek simply to further crystallise my methodology so that I might further develop the outcomes and method in the final year of the Artistic Research program.



Initial pages of the AMARIS research book which lays out the method and nine research questions corresponding to each section.

RESEARCH CONTEXT:

Historically Autobiography has been characterised as a mode of non-fiction writing; a categorisation motivated by the prevailing view that rather than being an invention of its author autobiography is a factual documentary report of a given individual's life.¹ This characterisation has therefore set an expectation that for a work to be considered autobiography it must be objective and truthful. I argue that this characterisation of autobiography has prevented the exploration of one of the key strengths within the genre: its capacity to explore and communicate the subjective worlds of individuals. Indeed, according to Genevieve Lloyd, 'it is our inherited ideals of objective knowledge which put severe restraints on the capacity to construct ourselves as fictions.'²

However, as our philosophical understanding of the self shifts, so too does our perception of the role and purpose of autobiography. In recent decades scholarship has increasingly moved away from the Cartesian conviction that the self is a factual and a priori concept and towards the increasing apprehension of the self as fictitious.³ This notion of the self as not a fixed or inherent concept but one that emerges interactively and relationally is implanting the notion of the preformativity of identity across various disciplines, for example through queer theory and figures such as Judith Butler.⁴ Indeed, Sidonie Smith argues 'there is no essential, original, coherent autobiographical self before the moment of self narrating.'⁵ Therefore all forms of self narration are inherently fictitious and cannot be objective. Rather than seeking to find the true story of who we are then, it appears more useful to analyse our personal self narratives in understanding how they have shaped the person we have come to be.

¹ The relationship between fiction and Autobiography: Flohr, Birgitt. "The Relationship Between Fiction and Autobiography." *University of Hannover* (2012): 1-1

² Lloyd, Genevieve. "The self as fiction: philosophy and autobiography." *Philosophy and literature* 10, no. 2 (1986): 168-185.

³ The relationship between fiction and Autobiography: Flohr, Birgitt. "The Relationship Between Fiction and Autobiography." *University of Hannover* (2012): 1-1

⁴ Butler, Judith. "Performativity, precarity and sexual politics." *AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana* 4, no. 3 (2009).

⁵ Smith, Sidonie. 1995. "Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance." *A/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 10 (1): 17-33. doi:10.1080/08989575.1995.10815055

What then is the value of fictional autobiography and how does it contribute to knowledge production?

I argue rather that the value of the genre lies specifically in its subjective nature and its ability to investigate this process of 'self narration'.

I believe the principle use of the fictional autobiographical method relates to its ability to aid individuals in understanding their own psychology. Relating to my psychological approach I take a Jungian view of the mind, believing that identity is based upon both conscious and unconscious, personal and cultural narratives. Jung classified 'inner work' or 'individuation' as 'having to do with raising the paradoxes of the psyche into consciousness and with untangling them, with making motives and part-selves distinct and holding them firmly in the mirror of consciousness.'⁶ I make the argument that this mode of fictional autobiography constitutes a viable method for this 'inner work' or 'individuation' to take place.

Indeed, many psychologists are beginning to acknowledge the essentiality of narrative in relation to our cognition. It is for this reason that the telling of a patient's life story is now being incorporated into the therapeutic process.⁷ I argue then that the telling of ones life story through fictional autobiography serves a purpose not only in therapeutic settings but also for subjects more generally in gaining control over their process of self narration.

My hypothesis was that fiction could be particularly powerful in this process as externalising our experiences into another character allows us to view ourselves in a more objective manner. A process through which the subject becomes the object of its own investigations.

⁶ Stein, Murray. "Individuation: inner work." *Journal of Jungian Theory and Practice* 7, no. 2 (2005): 1-13.

⁷ Fludernik, Monika. "An Introduction to Narratology". Routledge, 2009.

2. CONTEXTUALISING METHOD

The knowledge gained within the AMARIS project is by nature a situated knowledge and therefore I do not make any truth claims through it.

In undertaking this project I principally utilised the Auto-ethnographic method; 'an approach to research that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience.'⁸ Auto-ethnographers work to understand the process of self narration by making themselves the subject of their own research, dismantling the author/represented boundary.⁹

Auto-ethnography thus contrasts the traditional stark dividing line between subjective and objective forms of knowing. Contemporary scholarship, through figures such as Donna Haraway, has begun increasingly to question the validity of any form of totally objective knowledge production.¹⁰ Increasingly it is being made prevalent that imagination informs our knowing through informing the questions we ask and how we go about asking them. As Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis argue, both knowledge and imagination 'are shaped by social positioning'.¹¹ Rather than attempting at objectivity then, the Auto-ethnographic method acknowledges the subjectivity of the researcher and their narrative as being inherently linked to their social positioning. I opted to utilise this method in the AMARIS project as I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of my own subjectivity. And furthermore, in conceptualising the method of the autobiographical artistic and fictional novel, to provide a means for others to do the same.

⁸ Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. "Autoethnography: an overview." *Historical social research/Historische sozialforschung* (2011): 273-290.

⁹ Butz, David, and Kathryn Besio. "Autoethnography." *Geography Compass* 3, no. 5 (2009): 1660-1674.

¹⁰ Haraway, Donna. "'Situated Knowledges: the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'." In *Space, gender, knowledge: Feminist readings*, pp. 53-72. Routledge, 2016.

¹¹ Stoetzler, Marcel, and Nira Yuval-Davis. "Standpoint theory, situated knowledge and the situated imagination." *Feminist theory* 3, no. 3 (2002): 315-333.

EXCERPTS:

I will now include some excerpts from the AMARIS book and accompanying audio/visuals to illustrate my approach and style of writing, before narratologically analysing my own work.

In the AMARIS project I take on a dual identity of 1) artist and 2) researcher; through which the artist creates from an intuitive and instinctual place (in my own case often linked to my spiritual beliefs) and the researcher then later attempts to analyse and contextualise the artists eventual work. Ultimately, the artist began the AMARIS project with the intention of utilising this method of writing to aid in their personal and spiritual growth and the eventual method was therefore informed by these aims.

EXCERPT 1: ON LOSING THOSE YOU LOVE

outlining the writing style, how the method can be utilised to cope with grief and transmitted into vocal autobiography

For as long as Amaris could remember she had felt lonely. Lonely because none of the other children on the playground wanted to talk about the things she did, lonely because no adult would take her seriously enough to do so. Lonely because it seemed like her mind was made from a different mould than everyone else's, youth had been terribly painful.

Isolated on an island of her own creation, she had been convinced it was her against the world and there was no one else who would ever understand her world, her work. But one day a ship came by, sailing so close to her island that she could shout across the crystal blue water and invite the strange old sailor to dock at her harbour. He had come from another identical island, and told her of his journey across the seas, of the disasters and pitfalls and joys. She realised as she listened to his words that she was no longer alone, that she was not the only one who lived and thought like this existing in the world. It was through loving him that she had learnt to love the rest of the world which had always seemed to her to be so cruel.

His name was Taarak and he had been her art teacher, her grandfather, her dearest friend - the only example she had seen growing up of the kind of life she wanted to live. They first encountered each other when she was ten years old and her family had moved away from the mountains to the city. They had lived then in the house of her biological grandparents who had been the friends and neighbours of Taraak and his wife Borneo. Two retired hippy artists who spent their days swimming in the sea, painting in the open air, drinking in the sunlight and dancing bare foot in their living room. They lived with a freedom that made Amaris want to grow older.

She had known from the first time she met Taarak, watching his brush dance across the smooth edge of a canvas, that there was something deep that connected them. It simply hadn't mattered that she was ten and he was seventy-two; in the first moment they met he had become dearest friend, her love to last a lifetime.

But people in her world struggled to understand a connection like theirs. What could they possibly have in common? People would ask as they watched the two figures walking along the beach arm in arm, telling stories to each other. One in an old body, one in a young body, one male, one female, they did speak different languages and look at the world through different eyes... but also they didn't because when they talked about art or nature or the other things they loved their eyes lit up with the same fire and they knew that their souls had been carved from the same stone. And so Taarak had been her first great love, the first one to show her that she was not alone inside this world she had always felt so different from.

For her eleventh birthday he had sent a cryptic message through her letterbox inviting her to come to art classes with him. She had gone to his studio, early one Sunday morning, peering into the spherical space to see Taarak as he always was, behind his canvas, surrounded by a symphony of paints and pebbles and other things he had found along his beach walks. He was always joyful when he was painting, like a monk lost in the depths of deep meditation, sometimes he worked without breathing, without blinking, without eating or drinking. He loved his art more than anything, worshiping it like a god.

"Amaris, come in come in, I have something for you." He said as he noticed the shy eleven year old standing by the door. She tiptoed over and then softly he passed across a wooden box with some obscure markings on it, strange shapes and edges etched onto its surface. "It's a puzzle, see if you can solve it." He said smiling and returning to his abstract dance with brushstrokes. She stared down at the box. Opening and closing her mind for a moment, pressing into its edges and grooves, exploring its curious surface. She can't remember exactly how she opened it now, but somehow or other it eventually swung open, revealing a small chocolate coin.

Taarak, who just a moment ago had seemed so far away, suddenly looked up. Getting up from his chair again he walked over to her with a confused and far away gaze; "I've never seen someone open this so fast before. That is interesting, very interesting."

But Amaris' eleven year old mind was preoccupied with the chocolate coin, hardly registering his words, content simply to have solves this first test. There would be many tests after that, many challenges and experiments which filled up her Sundays every week for the next years. Some weeks they would cut up her flower drawings and drop the petals randomly onto a canvas- learning from their unplanned fluttering about the beauty that could come from chaos. Some weeks they would learn about connecting lines, and connecting your shapes to the dimensions of the canvas because everything in life was connected with everything else. They would talk about the colour wheel and Paul Cezanne, about nature and bliss and bees and

botany. What she didn't realise at the time was that this process was a sharing of Taarak's internal world, of all the knowledge and ways of seeing he had acquired in his seventy-two years of life. She sat and drank it all in like sweet milk that flowed down her throat without a thought; just a child wrapped up inside the wondrous world of someone so infinitely wise. Every moment with him made her heart stand utterly still, made her mind sink into a soft euphoria.

A few years later her family moved away again and she didn't see Taarak so often, but each year when she would go to stay with him for a week and all her teenage worries would fade away. She would drink tea on the garden terrace with him and Borneo, paint with the windows wide open, explore empty galleries and talk about philosophy into the early hours of the morning. Those weeks in their home were a paradise that stood apart from the rest of the world.

The year before he had come to visit her in Amalari, taking a boat all the way across the Red Sea just so they could be together. They had gone to galleries and wondered around the smokey streets, often without saying anything. He was eighty-two by that point and his body was beginning to feel heavier, but still he lived with a kind of lightness that her twenty year old mind could not comprehend. He recited Shakespeare to strangers, went anywhere his heart desired and graffitied 'Taarak was here' on park benches... he knew and cared nothing for the Order of Established Normalcy and other people called him crazy but she called him free.

And now, now it seemed she had learnt to live with some of that freedom that she had always respected in him. In publishing her book, in meeting Shanik and breaking The Order of Established Normalcy without any fear. But suddenly he wasn't here to see it. Her only example of a life she might want to grow up into, her inspiration, her grandfather, her dearest friend, was gone.... He was really gone and life felt like it was collapsing on all sides. Disintegrating into despair everywhere she looked.

She could not breath.

Her heart stopped beating. She ran up the outside steps of the Agoy studio, up through the secret door to the roof that only the employees knew about. Nothing mattered anymore, she didn't care if people saw her and she embarrassed herself, she didn't care if it was freezing cold and she was hardly wearing anything she didn't care about herself at all. She only cared about Taarak and about all the horrible losses of her life. Nothing seemed real except this excruciating pain that tore through her chest. She lay on the cold thatched roof and screamed, a terrible heart wrenching cry of someone who was feeling their existence being broken in a physical way. She thought about throwing herself off of the roof because she did not want to live in a world without him in it.

When they heard her cries, the ladies from the Agoy studio ran up to bring her blankets and tea and begged her to come down. But she could not leave the roof... she could not move or speak or think the pain inside of her was so great. A tsunami of grief flooded her mind, filling up her eyelids with tears that spilled down onto her cheeks.

She could not comprehend what she was experiencing and so eventually Gomulka came to her. Some of the ladies had gone to get him and now this man known for his harshness seemed soft and suddenly concerned; "Amaris I am seriously worried about you. I have never seen you like this and I promised your mother when I met her that I would look after you- that I would be a father to you here in Amalari. And so I'm telling you now go home, forget about the training, forget about your studies at the Academy, forget about everything apart from healing from this intense pain inside of you."

She knew he was right, knew she needed to pull herself together and move even though she wanted to just lay down and die.... And so half in a daze she went home, riding the transportation vehicle back in a half state of shock. When she returned home she booked a journey back to the north, he was right. It was time for her to go and be with her family - there was no other way for her to survive this. She turned off all the lights in her room and cried and cried for hours, replaying her memories of Tاراak over and over in her head and knowing that they would now be the only ones she would have.

Why, why was life- her god- why was it doing this to her? She had trusted life so much, done all it had asked and it had rewarded her with this kind of horror. None of it made sense as she lay there paralysed, unable to do anything but cry.

All she could think was that maybe she had to break, she had to fracture, rip, tear, fall apart. This pain was a purple headed monster, a putrid form of purification. She wanted to escape it, escape the inability to breathe, the pounding in her head, the memories of those she loved that haunted her like lost ghosts. She wanted to escape it so badly... and yet a part of her did not. A part of her that was buried deep down, that she had been unable to hear for many years was speaking once again. Trust this pain, it told her, let it guide you into the new life you are moving towards.

And what other option did she have but to trust this tiny voice of hope and optimism that was the singular sliver of light inside a world so suddenly filled with darkness?

She thought about that week, a week glued to her sofa, unable to move, unable to speak unable to operate as she should. For that terrible week pain wrapped its raw ruthless arms around her and they wept together. She thought of her Dante, of all the years they had spent together and all the versions of each other they had known. She thought of her dog, her dearest Kannah, of the long walks they would take along the beach, the innocent way he would wag his tail when he heard her coming. And most of all she thought of her Tاراak... of how she was only now starting to understand what he had been teaching her and she would never get to show him. All this lost love, all this hurt and sorrow... enveloped the small girl underneath it.

There is perhaps nothing worse than the realisation that you will never again hold the one you love, never again run your fingers through their hair and feel their hot living form against your own. Amaris lived inside this realisation during that terrible week, feeling a loss that was not

just singular but divided between three. And she wanted so desperately to die, to jump out of her window and see her own head smash against the stone floor so she could be there with Taarak and Kannah, so she could hold them just one more time.

But she wouldn't do it. She would learn somehow how to hold her pain, she would put it into her writing so that it might one day come to mean something.

She thought of all her past pains, of how nothing had made sense then just as nothing made sense now. She had to trust. She had to trust that somehow life was still there for her, that it had its reasons for sending her this sorrow even if she wasn't able to understand them yet.

And so for that terrible night before her flight, she lay in a half human state. Then when the sun finally rose and the first light of morning flooded into her bedroom, she got dressed and walked towards the transportation vehicle making her way towards the airport. She was going home, back to her childhood, back to a family who she could mourn these losses with. She had surrendered to her own pain, she could no longer go on surviving in The Red City- so fundamentally broken was she.

SPOKEN WORD AUDIO PIECE: <https://we.tl/t-5bZRVcnpny>

I have increasingly been performing spoken word poetry relating to the themes/methodology of the AMARIS project.

EXCERPT 2: Drawing for the Divine Force

Outlining how the method can inform other areas of Artistic Practice and be transmitted into other mediums of representation.

The soft dance with life went on and she would lace up her boots each morning walking through the winter air and drinking it all in: the trees, the birds, the caress of air against her skin. It was all a form of poetry, peeled back and placed in front of her perception, both real and unreal. One morning the sky was so cold and clear she felt her body might dissolve until it evaporated into the air, merging with the many- lifted from its curse of individuation. But was it really a curse? In her individual limitedness she could serve this force of life she loved so completely; bringing form to the formless through her actions and her art... what greater privilege was there than that? To be able to serve this force, to empty herself enough to give form to the formless. As long as life was speaking to her she would do whatever it told her.

She went home without a thought, without an interruption and sat down, picking up a pencil to stare in front of a gigantic sheet of blank paper: an empty slate of opportunity. Her artistic practice had become her spiritual practice. Before she began any form of creation she always did the poses from the physical agoy series to open up her body. Then the wondrous act itself, putting pencil to paper and trusting in the journey of line and form; that was the most divine yoga of them all; a unity of devotional, intellectual and karmic. She gave everything she could, sitting in front of this sheet for eight hours without stopping, working her mind and body like an Olympic athlete, to give like this was the highest form of feeling. To give, to give to this force with all the youth and strength and steadiness she had. She felt in many ways that her whole life had been preparing her for this.

And when her eight hour meditation with a pencil had finished sat back and looked at her work, if she could call it her work. She was not sure that she really could because it had not really been her that had created it. She had simply stepped out of the way and something else took over. But whatever it was, was living inside of her more and more, and now they were beginning to merge; their paints and pigments mixing to become one. She had erased the harsh black line of separation.

She inhaled sharply and took a few steps back to take in the entire image. She felt finally that she had created something important; something that had been waiting many years to be expressed and which now that she had given this image a form she could die right now with a heart entirely full with joy.



EXCERPT 3: FOR THE LOVE OF LITERATURE

Outlining the method of honesty and self analysis of the main characters emotions needed for the process to facilitate individuation or inner work.

It was all so heavy, and her mind began to scream at her, to freak out, to disintegrate. Because she felt like she was once again losing the identity she had worked so hard for. Losing suddenly her constellation of self image, the Amaris that she had been building all these months. She was losing the version of self that was strong, that others knew they could rely on; the one who put on a positive face and went out to dance with the world. She was losing this version of herself she loved so much to this scared pregnant girl who was too afraid to talk to anyone or leave her room... this girl who felt cornered by evil emotions like shame and fear and dread.

And she did feel it; even though she didn't want to admit it, even though to even write it down on a page was a terrifying thing. She felt like she did at 13 again when she was a fragile abused dying thing and people had tiptoed around her because they were afraid of breaking her. She felt that same shame and dread over encountering her own weakness when for so many years she had cultivated her own strength. Building up so many mental systems just so she would never have to feel that way again, had done everything to protect herself from ever feeling those same emotions. But now, now she did and she didn't know how to get away from it because it was living inside her body. She lay on her bedroom floor, hugging her naked body close to her- the brokenness slipping into her soul. In short gasping sobs she waged war against all that was taking place inside of her. Why... why was this happening?

She was not the kind of person something like this happened to. She was organised and ordered, hardworking, strong, independent... for a long time she had felt the opposite of feminine and now her femininity had come to confront her head on- this long limbed monster she could not run from. Her mind was hurtling into overdrive.

And so Amaris took all that she was feeling and wrote it down, narrating the life she was living, putting all her pain and pleasure into prose so that it might mean something. She had to write, she had to write the same way she had to breathe, because if she didn't she felt sure she would die. So she wrote down all her problems in the life of this other person and when she had finished she could finally be again, the heaviness had lifted.

It felt as if all that she was feeling was occurring just so she could write about it, so she could rip out her raw emotion onto a page for whoever might need to read it. She loved the book she was writing so deeply and intensely, she would feel any pain, bear any suffering if it was for the purposes of that book.

She wrote and wrote for hours, pouring out her pain onto a blank page between the tears and torturous emotion. When she was finally finished she sat back and looked at her word, taking deep shallow breaths and feeling once again tethered to herself, like a ship that had found it's

anchor. She had felt the pain and processed it and she did not need to live inside of it anymore, she could let it go now like a child who releases a balloon up into the sky, watching it float away towards the shores of somewhere else. Because the truth was she woke up the next day feeling better, feeling energy inside of her body and stillness inside of her mind. She was still in the same situation, still pregnant, isolated, confined- but something within her had shifted and it didn't feel as threatening as it had before.

She realised that what was traditionally cast as a negative experience didn't have to be. She had been given a gift in fact; a gift of meeting new aspects of herself she never otherwise would have met, of understanding a new side of what it meant to be human and what it meant to be female. She had been given the opportunity to transcend her own shame and isolation. She had realised through her writing that she could interpret this situation however she wanted, it did not have to be a death sentence; it could also be a blessing.

And so she and Adastrah went to the lake, cycling in silence, side by side against the grey sky. They parked their bikes in the tall grass and walked over to the water's edge hand in hand, taking slow steps, noticing each movement, each moment. They sat by the water and closed their eyes, gazing towards the half hidden sun, welcoming in all feelings and letting the heaviness seep into their bones.

'She would be so beautiful, our child' Adastrah said, as the grey waves lapped against the rocks. They were right of course and Amaris found it easy to imagine, how much she would love her own daughter, the things they would do together, stories they would tell, games they would play. It would be such a beautiful thing to watch this fragment of yourself grow up into a best friend you could love forever and leave behind when you left this world.

'I think a part of me will always miss her.' As she said the words a singular salty tear slipped down her cheek to land on the cold rock.

'She will always be with you, with us. It's like it was with your grandfather, sometimes people don't need to be with us to be with us.' And Amaris listened to their words, knowing there was truth in them and knowing that just like when she had lost Taarak this pain too would pass and make her stronger. They held each other tighter, as if not to hold one another was to die, as if their survival depended on it.

And Amaris knew that they were right, that this beautiful child of hers she could feel so strongly she could almost touch and taste and hold was hers now, even though they would never be hers.

NARRATOLOGICAL ANALYSIS:

Taking these excerpts as examples then, I would like to begin the process of retrospectively analysing my own writing method utilising narratological methods. Specifically, I will analyse how these methods aid in the process of individuation or self-realisation which I outline as the principle aim of this style of fictional autobiography.

In analysing my own writing from a narratological perspective I employ Chatman's broad definition of narrative as a 'conjunction of discourse and story'.¹² This definition encompasses then not only the direct written story but also the visual and performative narratives as representations of the original novel.

'AMARIS' is written principally from the perspective of a heterodiegetic or third person omniscient narrator. This unidentified narrator appears to know everything about what is occurring inside AMARIS' life and consciousness, however acts as a separate entity to her. The narration thus functions as an authorial narration which Guillemette and Lévesque argue is 'particularly suited to reveal the moral strengths and weaknesses of the characters'.¹³ Given this, I view this style of authorial and heterodiegetic narration as the most beneficial for the aims of my style of fictional autobiography, which is to unearth hidden tendencies within the individuals psyche and gain a greater understanding of the self.

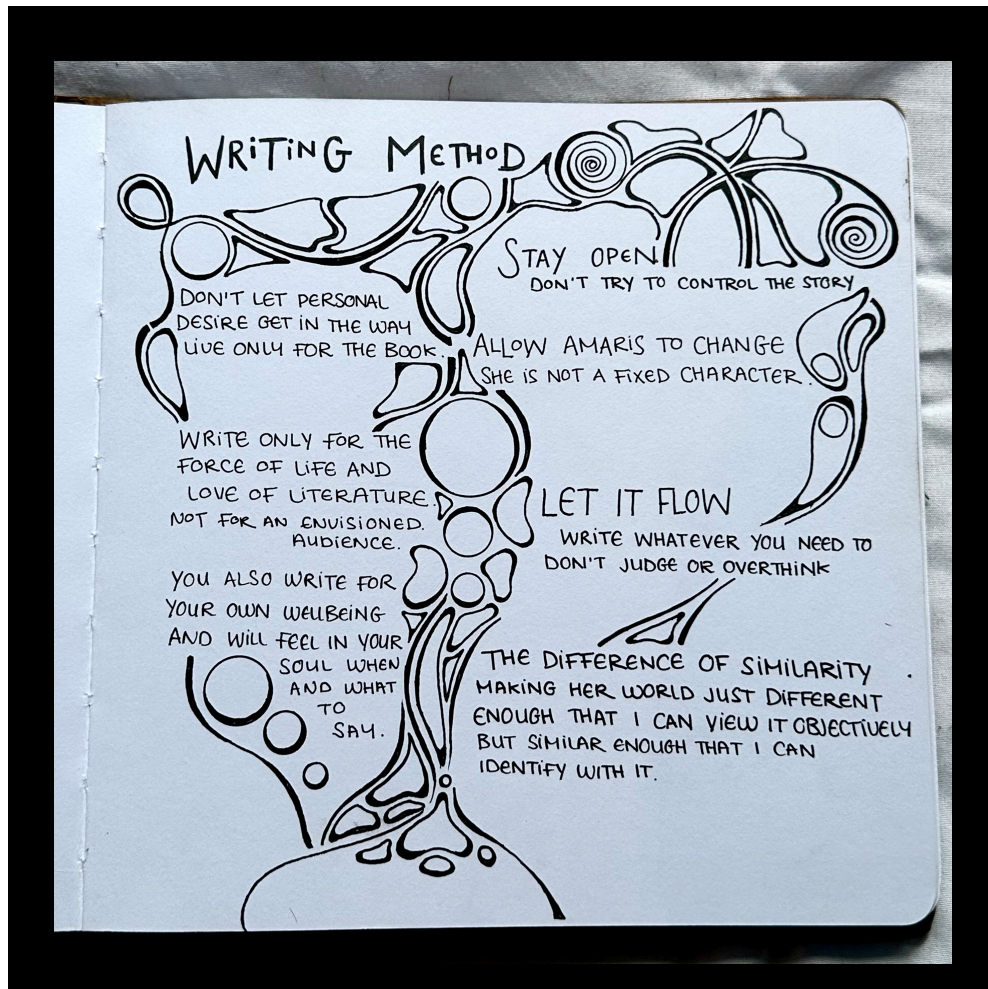
As the primary aim of the writing method is to gain a greater understanding of an individual's psychology it is also then essential to be aware of pragmatic signals (the narrators awareness of an audience). What I encountered through the AMARIS project was that if I felt I was writing for an audience I was unable to be fully honest with myself about what was occurring inside my psyche. Therefore, to fully reap the individual psychological benefits of this form of narrative, I found it to be an essential element to write only for yourself or in my own case 'for the force of life and love of literature'.

Finally, AMARIS can also be seen to be a figural narrative through which the narrator is a 'is a covert heterodiegetic narrator presenting an internal focaliser's consciousness, especially his/her perceptions and thoughts'.¹⁴ This style of fictional autobiography therefore focuses the narrative on the internal world of the subject represented; fleshing out their thoughts and opinions, their fears, doubts and desires. Ultimately, the writer/authorial narrator seeks to gain as deep an understanding of the main character's internal world as is possible. They make the main character the subject of their investigation, peeling back the layers of their psyche and in so doing gaining a richer understanding of themselves.

¹² Fludernik, Monika. "An Introduction to Narratology". Routledge, 2009.

¹³ Guillemette, Lucie, and Cynthia Lévesque. "Narratology." In *An Introduction to Applied Semiotics*, pp. 250-261. Routledge, 2019.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

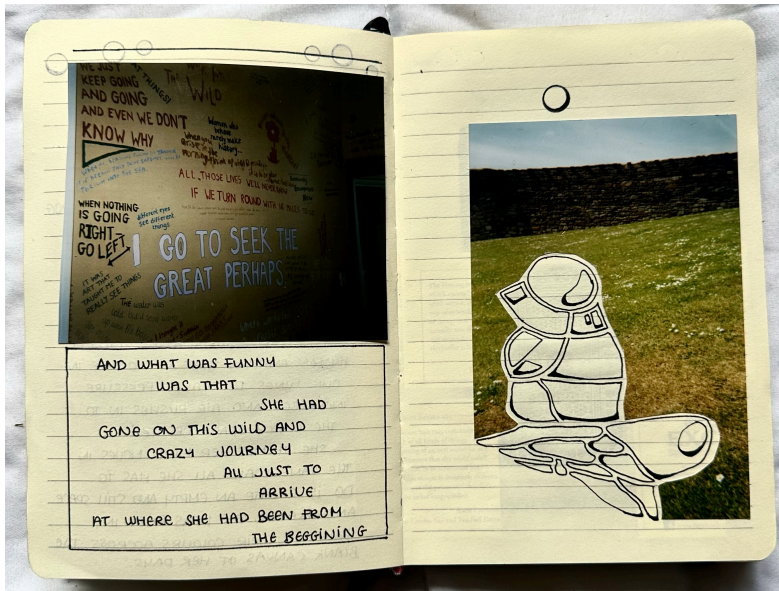


REPRESENTATIVE NARRATIVE MODES:

Practices which I found to be particularly powerful in gleaning the full benefits of 'the fictional autobiography for the purposes of self understanding' were accompanying the written form with other artistic narrative forms. In the AMARIS project I undertook this through preforming as AMARIS and then creating various artworks, journal entires and performance art pieces from her perspective.

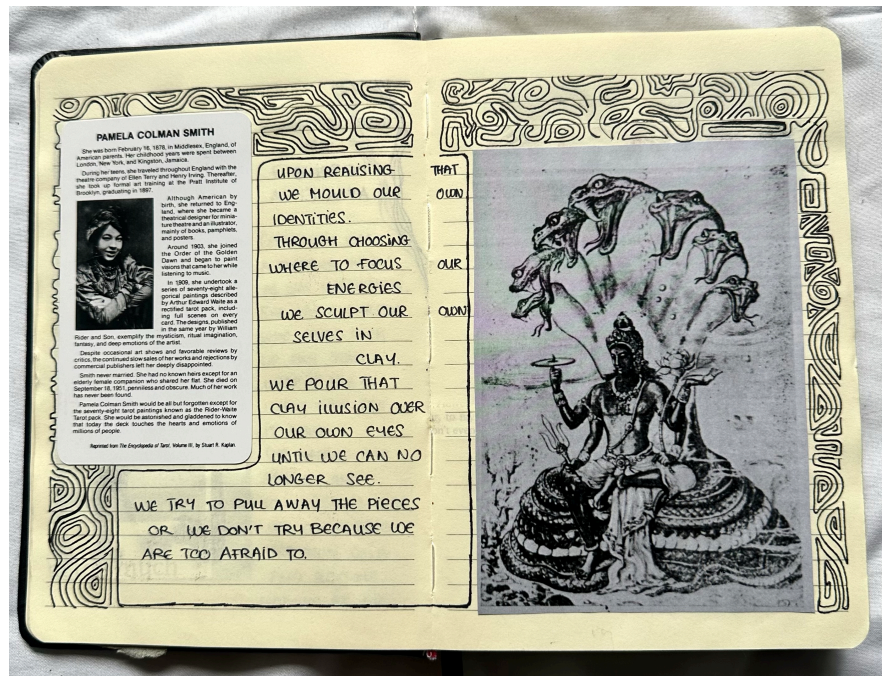
This had the effect of cementing the story deeper into my psyche and also, as with the written method, allowed me to view myself more objectively as I consciously preformed a personality that I both did and did not identify with.

BELOW ARE SOME REPRESENTATIVE VISUAL OUTCOMES OF THE AMARIS PROJECT:



Here, you see some example pages of the AMARIS journal which also worked to document my shifts in consciousness occurring in conjunction with the narrative

I further preformed live several times as Amaris but unfortunately do not have any film footage of these events.



CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION:

Overall, through the AMARIS project I worked to develop a method for fictional autobiography as a means for gaining a greater understanding of the self and aiding in the process of individuation as outlined by Jung.

I argue the fictitious method aids in understanding one's personal narration due to there being no need to be concerned with the truth value of what one writes or says. Furthermore, externalising one's experiences into another character allows for the subject to take a more removed and objective position- regarding themselves without a sense of self-identification.

My own investigations into this method were carried out through Autoethnographic research through the writing of my novel over nine months. Furthermore, I employed techniques from narratology in understanding the most effective narrative techniques for aiding in the process of individuation. What I encountered through the AMARIS project was that the most effective narrative style was that of an authorial heterodiegetic narrator who focuses on the internal world of the main character; seeking to understand their mind, emotions and responses.

In the coming year I would like to further develop the AMARIS project and eventually publish a novel which includes the narrative itself and outlines the methodology of fictional autobiography as a tool for inner work and individuation.

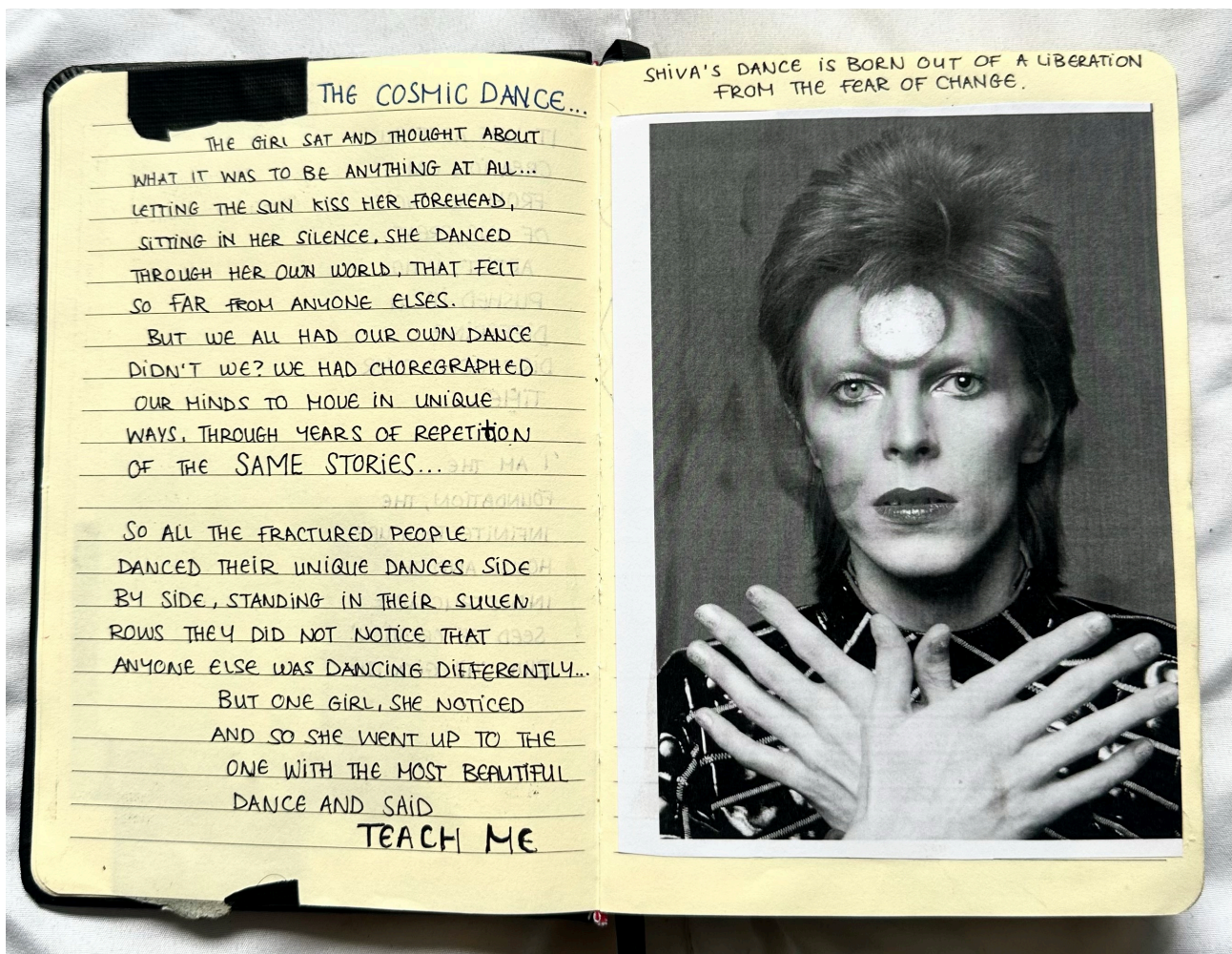
I would also further like to explore other means of representing the AMARIS project such as through vocal autobiography. It is my current belief also that different modes of representation will aid different individuals in gleaning benefits from the method.

Finally, I am interested in understanding how this mode of writing and representing one's self could also be utilised to promote social cohesion. Personally, whenever I had a conflict with anyone in my life I would write about what I felt from the perspective of AMARIS and then send that given individual the text. What I encountered was that this allowed for a new level of honesty, a deepening of my social relations and a reduction in all forms of internal and external conflict. I am therefore interested in teaching this method to others and further researching the impacts it can have not only for myself but in wider societal use.

Amaris smiled inside the dingy white walled library room. She had written something that she believed in and so it did not matter to her now how the Academy received it. Through all these months of peeling back herself so vigorously she had encountered sides of self that she never known where there. Sides that she perhaps would have never encountered had she not undertaken this strange nine month artistic experiment. Sides so beautiful and strange that had lay dreamlessly dormant inside her psyche, like sleeping Cinderellas. That was until her character Shivan, this imagined other self who she had learnt to love so much, showed up to kiss them softly awake.

The mind, she had realised, was an endless mine of materials; dark sometimes and terrifying but for those who were willing to dig down deep enough there was gold to be found at the bottom. She smiled and sat back in her chair blinking under the synthetic electric lights of the Academy. She believed in the research she was doing. She knew how much it had changed her own life, how beautiful and strange it had made her days- how it had brought her back to this way of knowing and loving herself once again. Through Shivan she had been able to construct the story of who she was with intention, carving out the kind of life she wanted just as a sculptor cuts through stone.

What lay ahead was a long summer of possible new directions, and a long life of even more. But for now she was happy to have simply been able to be honest with herself and to have been honest with the Academy of Knowledge in the research she had done. She felt certain her world would be a better place if people could build the ability to be honest; and, like a carpenter, Amaris was fastening together the pieces and the pages of a method that would allow them to do so.



BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Butler, Judith. "Performativity, precarity and sexual politics." *AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana* 4, no. 3 (2009).

Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. "Autoethnography: an overview." *Historical social research/Historische sozialforschung* (2011): 273-290.

Butz, David, and Kathryn Besio. "Autoethnography." *Geography Compass* 3, no. 5 (2009): 1660-1674.

Flohr, Birgitt. "The Relationship Between Fiction and Autobiography." *University of Hannover* (2012): 1-1

Fludernik, Monika. "An Introduction to Narratology". Routledge, 2009.

Guillemette, Lucie, and Cynthia Lévesque. "Narratology." In *An Introduction to Applied Semiotics*, pp. 250-261. Routledge, 2019.

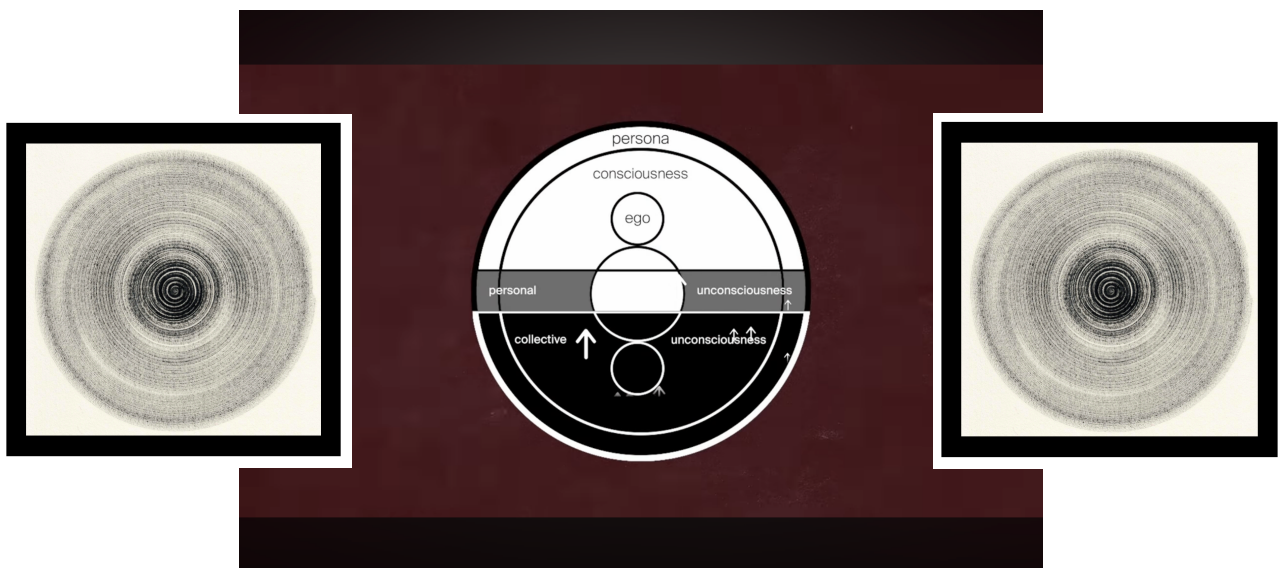
Haraway, Donna. "'Situated Knowledges: the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'." In *Space, gender, knowledge: Feminist readings*, pp. 53-72. Routledge, 2016.

Lloyd, Genevieve. "The self as fiction: philosophy and autobiography." *Philosophy and literature* 10, no. 2 (1986): 168-185.

Smith, Sidonie. 1995. "Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance." *A/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 10 (1): 17-33. doi:10.1080/08989575.1995.10815055

Stein, Murray. "Individuation: inner work." *Journal of Jungian Theory and Practice* 7, no. 2 (2005): 1-13.

Stoetzler, Marcel, and Nira Yuval-Davis. "Standpoint theory, situated knowledge and the situated imagination." *Feminist theory* 3, no. 3 (2002): 315-333.



AMARIS