

Poem

– Dr George Halasz

This is based on my research in-depth interview with a late adolescent and his parents shortly after he had undergone 'top-surgery'. I was devastated at the time as their story unfolded, flooding me as it did with unspoken events, especially as I listened to the family history that included manifestation of severe problems never asked, now unmasked. Unlike before I heard between the lines the impact of a past unspoken suicide in the extended family. My writing the poem is one way to retrace my own vicarious trauma after clinical encounters like this harrowing experience. I simply found the poetry a more intimate way to share the unspoken anguish.

you (he / she / they) and I

we really did try
how I miss your simple presence
as I struggle in between
my familiar home

you and I

here, there, where I offered
solitary solace
mirrored self-same shame,
in safety, many weeks we did try

you and I

we remained mostly disconnected
much of the time, subjective islands
random reverberations
separated by oceanic isolation
barely aware, neither quite alone

nor securely together
in our ferociously buzzing minds
no longer paralysed by shame
you seized my imagination
how did we survive those turbulent times

you and I

I marshalled my scarce resources
from naive indifference
I refocused my concern
turn taking, as I struggled to tame
tainted pride to reframe frozen exposures
to historical shame, unspeakable crime
each visit we struggled more
almost, not quite attuned well-enough
to bear our traumatic triggers, on cue
we remained fatefully
misattuned, misgendered, misaligned

you (she/he/they) and I

between pleated warped time
our efforts redoubled
to make sense in real-time
our nurseries' veiled wounds
those wordless shameful crimes
one moment, through curiosity
we unravelled more reason
unveiled shadows, undefeated
yet suddenly you beat a retreat,
as we held our breaths
overwhelmed

either you (he/she/they) or I

imploded or exploded
truth be told
we disrupted or ruptured each other
much of the time
to make bearable another moment
witness passed suspended time
you revealed layer after layer
less than less care,
being overtaken as you ran
till you were caught and beaten
I exhaled, exhausted
I witnessed your survival

he/she/they and I

suddenly, once more,
beyond perception
I marshalled my scorched care
despite irresistible urges to run away
we managed to reach out
together, instantly reconnected
yet a heart-beat later
we disconnected, again
far, far out of your reach
deadened to your pleas
my masked and muted tears

adrift you (he/she/they) and I

afterwards, once more
dry-eyed I listened again
to register your faintest vibrations
I tried, best as I could
to proceed to decode
shame's sudden salience

was it you, she / he / they

who scarred both our troubled minds
as we forced each other to scrutinise
our sacred sonority of being
eulogised,

you (he / she / they) bonded with I

alone between our togetherness
fleeting complaints echoed each
heart-beat by beat
unsustainable subjectivity,
as we shredded our fragile identity
unshamed we cried

you and I

now our silence bypassed
we did survive
to possess fragments of each others entirety

you and I

in the end
awful power struggles precluded
gaining more foothold in our quest
for elusive tranquility between she / he / they

you and I