

"The Zoo" was a PaR creative writing investigation into the literary aesthetics and "working-through" (Reina Van Der Weil, 2014) of trauma published in the North American journal *Déraciné* (vol.III). It aimed to explore extreme maternal abuse - going beyond the common theme of difficult mother-daughter relationships (Adalsia Giorgio, 2002) to further expand on the largely under-represented experiences of daughters whose mothers might be considered "monsters" (Jeanette Winterson, 2012). Like Winterson's *Oranges Are The Only Fruit*, "The Zoo" plays with the slippage between fiction and autobiography. Where Winterson employs the novel and memoir, "The Zoo" is a further exploration into the little researched area of how the specific qualities of the short story can be an appropriate form to represent and work through trauma? What related literary strategies could be deployed to convey the abnormally cruel mother and the daughter's traumatising? Expanding on Winterson's "shuffling" (2014) of fact and fiction, "The Zoo" further incorporated a porousness between recognisable reality and a subtle otherworldly surrealism, encouraged by the short story's capacity for elision (Susan Lohafer, 1990) and its proximity to the primary process phenomenon (Charles May, 1990). The short form's qualities of brevity and density (Lohafer; May) allowed the narrative to focus on a single event through which less content offered a rich representation of complex issues. "The Zoo's" use of metaphoric symbolisation transposed the story from the realm of the literal into that of the psychological. This helped shed light on the daughter's painful experience of the extremely cruel mother and associated under-explored emotional truths. The result offers both an elucidation of the traumatic fear of total annihilation (Judith Herman, 1992) and strategies for writers wishing to "work through" associated difficult feelings.