



# “As-If” Personality: Imposter Syndrome and Illusions in the Mirror

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## Abstract

The **as-if** person faces a conundrum whether to hide or expose the truth of who they are. Feelings of loss, limitation and curtailment, alienation, and obsolescence are prevalent yet concealed with glitzy persona/imposter images. Intimacy and being emotionally present are difficult. The **as-if** person withdraws into phantasy. Those living **as-if** are estranged from their true selves at the cost of their desire. The relationship to life outwardly appears **as-if** it was complete yet there is a haunting sense of lack and genuineness. Existence is singular. Very possibly we know these struggles as they are part of us. The subjects include the conundrum is the confusion of oneself, cultural influence of social media, the role of the father, transferences and body image. The recognition of the unconscious, a hallmark of Jungian analytical psychology is based on the incorporation of the dissociated personality parts into the self, reflecting the multiplicity of the psyche.

## Descriptors

personality disorders, social interaction, junguian psychology.

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The author states no professional or personal interest that may create a conflict of interests regarding this manuscript.

## Personalidade "como se": Síndrome do impostor e ilusões no espelho

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## Resumo

A pessoa "como se" enfrenta um dilema entre esconder ou expor a verdade sobre quem ela é. Os sentimentos de perda, limitação e restrição, alienação e obsolescência prevalecem, embora estejam ocultados por imagens de uma persona/impositora



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chamativa. A intimidade e a presença emocional são difíceis. A pessoa do "como se" se esconde na fantasia. Aqueles que vivem "como se" afastam-se do seu verdadeiro eu, à custa de seus desejos. Exteriormente, a relação com a vida mostra-se "como se" estivesse completa, mas há um sentimento assombroso de falta e genuinidade. A existência é singular. É muito possível que conheçamos essas lutas, pois elas fazem parte de nós. As questões envolvem o enigma composto por uma confusão a respeito de si mesma, a influência cultural das mídias sociais, o papel do pai, as transferências e a imagem corporal. O reconhecimento do inconsciente, marca registrada da psicologia junguiana, tem como base a incorporação das partes dissociadas da personalidade no *Self*, refletindo a multiplicidade da psique.

#### **Descritores**

distúrbios da personalidade, interação social, psicologia junguiana.

## **Personalidad "como si": el síndrome del impostor y las ilusiones en el espejo**

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#### **Resumen**

La persona "como si" se enfrenta al dilema de ocultar o exponer la verdad de quién es. Los sentimientos de pérdida, limitación y recorte, alienación y obsolescencia prevalecen, pero se ocultan con imágenes ostentosas de persona/impositor. La intimidad y la presencia emocional son difíciles. La persona "como si" se refugia en la fantasía. Los que viven "como si" se alejan de su verdadero yo a costa de su deseo. La relación con la vida parece exteriormente "como si" fuera completa, pero existe una inquietante sensación de carencia y autenticidad. La existencia es singular. Es muy posible que conozcamos estas luchas, ya que forman parte de nosotros. Los temas incluyen el enigma es la confusión de uno mismo, la influencia cultural de los medios sociales, el papel del padre, las transferencias y la imagen corporal. El reconocimiento del inconsciente, sello distintivo de la psicología analítica junguiana, se basa en la incorporación de las partes disociadas de la personalidad al yo, reflejando la multiplicidad de la psique.

#### **Descriptoros**

trastornos de la personalidad, interacción social, psicología junguiana.

Beyond myself, somewhere, I wait for my arrival.

To the doorkeeper there comes a countryman who prays for admittance. But he is told he cannot be allowed in at the moment. Maybe later. Waiting, the man stays until the end of his life. At that time the doorkeeper says no one else was allowed in except the man and now it will be shut (Paz, 1991, p. 171).

## Introduction

**The point is** that the man did not realize the intangibility of what we confront stems not from its concealed essence but from its very accessibility.

This story, "Before the Law" by Franz Kafka (1915/2017) relates the problem of the **as-if** person who does not realize how to manifest what is theirs. They do not tend to go through the door as in the story because they do not know it is theirs. The imposter and what is here called the **as-if** personality is defined by the central question, "Who am I, really?"

The answer will reflect identity with goals, purposes, meanings in life and is reflected in accessing its passions. The phrase 'as if' can be characterized by the narcissism of façade, fragility, fraudulent and vulnerable, bounded by a wall of impenetrability. The person is veiled in an appealing but elusive persona based on precarious sense of self. Distress occurs when the outer accomplishments formerly shoring the personality are used up and the inner reserves collapse, as they are no longer sustainable. The center cannot hold due to the lack of attachment at the core, creating part of the maladaptive life response. The energy is called inward to encounter what feels like the void. A man<sup>1</sup> commented,

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<sup>1</sup> Patient's quotes; his name was changed to preserve his privacy.

The mirror was in a space I had to walk past every day. Though I did not have to look in it, I did anyway and didn't feel good in the mirror regardless of how I looked. Every day I walked pass that mirror I looked at a man who was hurt and confused.

## "As-If" defined

This short statement is typical of the **as-if** personality. It reveals part of the complexity behind the adopted masks and illusions put forward by this personality type. The mask means hiding and disguising identity while the attempted dissimulation works to mystify and deceive oneself and others. This person has an

impoverished and uncomfortable, emotionally and physically, relationship to the world although their presentation is of glitz and shine. One is unable to bear, even momentarily to be seen up close, beneath the skin. They might be perceived to be winners and having made it by others but often are internally empty, disillusioned, anxious, confused, alienated, and most of all, estranged from themselves.

The **as-if** person narrates a story of personal and collective history composed of the secret vicissitudes with which they engage. This person exhibits an elusive, flighty, and often dramatic approach to life, but is driven by an internal abyss. The phenomenon is not usual as many people feel similarly, skimming on the surface and not really living. These people are internally isolated, appearing competent, creative, unusual, with quirky perspectives, but drastically insecure. The personality has a penchant for illusions and poses, an imposter based on inner distress and psychological confusion. One's soul feels wrecked from within forming a swarm of instability and pain of existence.

Underlying is a sense of distrust and lack of confidence in one's place in the world. Filling the emptiness with people, places, and things attempts to compensate the feeling of being unreal. The way of relating to the world is through mimicry and imposter facades, while the adaptation **as-if** comes at the expense of authenticity. One feels as flat as the social media screen, yet they often hide this from themselves and others. The internal division signals being trapped in unconscious personal, cultural, and historical wounds. These include unfinished mourning processes, intergenerational issues, and archetypal anxieties. The unconscious calls to be more deeply known, relationships with self and others open rather than closed, life no longer avoided with emotional distancing, compulsions, or perfectionism.

This personality type, although clever at disguise, is swamped by emotional and psychological distress, haunted by aims and aspirations not yet achieved along with the pressure of nothing ever being enough. These people "defend against aspects of reality concerned with absence and loss that are felt to be intolerable" (Colman, 2008, p. 22). They need the illusions and idealizations of others focused on them so life can seem other than it is. They construct a solid and tight package as a defense. In dreams she might appear inappropriately dressed or insufficiently rehearsed because she does not feel ready for life.

Jordan<sup>1</sup> dreamt the following:

I notice a small door at the bottom of my closet and realize it's been unlocked. I am worried that all this time I've been painstakingly locking the front and back doors

of my apartment and didn't even know this door existed. It's a thin door that separates the wall of my unit to the hallway. I feel vulnerable and lock the door. The lock is only a small hook latch and doesn't feel like it's strong enough to keep me safe.

He seems dream-like, living **as-if**, ethereal, and without feeling he counts for much. Hurt, he tells no one the totality of what he wants and needs. Yet, he is bored by the daily grind and the average because it is not exciting or glamorous. The fantasy world has brighter appeal but also is never satisfied and he always needs more.

Jordan said, "when I woke up the next day, I was faced with the mysterious door I did not know or see previously"<sup>1</sup> For Jung, this represented the encounter with the naked truth and was positive, because the dark side is also part of the whole psyche. Nonetheless, the descent to the unconscious is a **narrow door** (Jung, 1934/1954) whose constriction is painful. It is not easy to take off the mask and enter this terrain.

The dream deeply stirred Jordan emotionally, awakening him to something forgotten or ignored. He was intrigued but also scared as he thought he had been careful and prepared but had missed the door (Kafka, 1915/2017). How did that happen and what could it represent? A single dream, like this one, remarkable for its surprise, power, and simplicity can completely change the mood and intentions for the day, week, and foreseeable future.

"In analysis the reflector is the dream, which can mirror psyche to reality and reality to psyche" (Samuels, 1986, p. 182). As we spoke, Jordan realized he has been defended against aspects he considered shameful. What was excluded from consciousness was unconsciously holding him a prisoner. This is indicated by the insecurely latched door, more upsetting as he did not even know about it. If locked, he felt safe but now what? The dream draws Jordan to access personality pieces needed for the psyche to assist in achieving individuation and a deeper connection with life. The dream positioned at the beginning of his analytical process is leading him into himself (Kafka, 1915/2017).

In fact, he has not adequately formed a secure identity making relationships to self and others a trail of confusing series of mishaps and poor choices. The behavior and ways of relating might include aggressive and self-destructive elements, often hidden from the purview of others. Worried he is behind and cannot catch up, he feels defeated and lost. In the need to be perfect and marvelous, he detests mediocrity, especially his own. He becomes caught in negative thought cycles, self-denigrating to the point of

paralyzing. Due to the internal confusion, an adaptation of mimicry and falsity take over. He becomes an imposter to himself.

His inner discourse is composed of the selves he is not able to face as they lead to addressing the question, **who am I?** There are also various dissociations between mind and body as the personality is crumpled. The inner negative scrutiny makes reality disappointing and fraught with anticipated rejection. He is a spectator of life, keeps a distance from others assuming they are smarter, more attractive, better. He feels separated by a thick curtain he cannot open.

## The imposter

For there is nothing to lay hold of. I am made and remade continually. Different people draw different words from me (Woolf, 1931, p. 58).

There has been a dearth of descriptors and serious attention to the **as-if** or imposter personality in the psychological literature. Most approaches center on 'how to' ideas for fixing behavior but without attention to or inclusion of the unconscious. This reflects a lack of psychological depth or curiosity towards the intricacy of this personality type. The popularized term and descriptions of imposter syndrome does not adequately get at the depth of the distress applicable beyond the borders of culture, social class, status, or economics. Without the symbolic and the unconscious and delving into deeper meanings the totality of a person is inadequately addressed, leaving one stuck in a quandary of distress.

This is a personality trapped in the image, attempting the ideal, without the ability to be one's individual self. The reality of oneself is shame filled for the imposter whose life is based on self-deception. Rooted in the need for protection and self-reliance, the imposter shape shifts the views of themselves to fit the occasion. An imposter does not feel a definitive identity and operates in the absence of a fully knowable self. These often high-achieving individuals apprehend they will be found out or unmasked as incompetent or unable. They can look lively but feel lifeless as a mannequin.

Each day the question arises about which costume to put on. The costume represents an ego/persona or outer image approach to life. The persona will appear intact but underneath the personality is in shreds. The need is to avoid the anxiety, loneliness, emotional losses, and shadow perceived. The encounter with oneself effectively requires an encounter with one's shadow, in which

"man stands forth as he really is and shows what was hidden under the mask of conventional adaptation" (Jung, 1946, para. 239).

The retreat is from reality, so it does not have to be faced as one feels impotent to cope. The creation of alternative worlds prevents access to the interior for the means of self-preservation (Modell, 1996). Identity shifts to please, stand out or fit in, but basically to avoid depth and visibility. The real self has become unavailable, so busy complying with constraints imposed personally, culturally, and socially. The shadow of the imposter has taken over.

Estranged from one's affective core (Modell, 1996) the loss of contact with an authentic self means closing away from others. An independent self or omnipotent self is convinced it needs no others due to the perceived absence of safety. The self is felt as fragile and vulnerable, empty, and dead, as if nothing was there (Modell, 1996, p. 151). The inner darkness, the shadow, potential and energy lies secreted beneath the surface making this person seem brittle, hollow, and false.

## History

This collision between one's image of oneself and what one actually is, is always very painful and there are two things you can do about it, you can meet the collision head-on and try and become what you really are or you can retreat and try to remain what you thought you were, which is a fantasy, in which you will certainly perish (Baldwin, 2021, p. 244).

The **as if personality** was initially described by Freudian psychoanalyst Helene Deutsch (1942, cited by Solomon, 2004) to be without genuineness and basically imitative. In tracing a history of this psychological construct there has been a lack of attention in the psychoanalytic literature. The original description portrays a person with impoverished or absent emotional relationship towards both inner and outer worlds. Deutsch tended to dismiss this personality as superficial, an imposter and without depth. However, Hester Solomon (2004), British Jungian analyst discovered the genuineness hidden within where the sorrows and traumas remained. A depth of emotional lack and grief existed under the façade.

The **as-if** person often feels divided within and cut off from the deeper aspects of the self, especially from the bodily experience (Colman, 2008). One's behavior turns destructive indicating being at odds with oneself. Not registering basic body needs or treating the body as a distant object, the body-self becomes disjointed.

Life is like hanging on a thread, a knot in the throat, frantic they will not get whatever they are after, hounded by insecurities. Such people keep themselves together through routines and schedules to follow rather than relying on natural instincts. One is easily decentered, ungrounded. Unconsciously, one becomes subsumed in the separation from any authenticity and hiding the shadow. The fabrication is an artifice of image as the real recedes to the sidelines. A tension remains between the public and private self.

## Perfectionism

If it were only resistance that he felt, it would not be so bad. In actual fact, however, the psychic substratum, that dark realm of the unknown, exercises a fascinating attraction that threatens to become the more overpowering the further he penetrates into it (Jung, 1953/1968, para. 439).

One of the hallmarks of the **as-if** personality is perfectionism. Anything is excluded that might displease and one aims to avoid whatever could be interpreted as discordant or misshapen. This person is lured by the relief of fantasy, creates images, ideas, events to cover the assumed personality flaws. There is much shame and panic to be hidden and denied. Striving to be perfect, adopting a persona of confidence and surety, one becomes false. Perfection is never satisfied and inevitably turns destructive. Nothing and no one are good enough or lasts long enough. This way of thinking and perceiving the world occurs when one grows up without a foundation of support, safety, or sufficient nurturing. It can be a reaction to childhood trauma, cultural expectations, or unconsciously reactive to transgenerational issues. Appearing perfect becomes a strategy to emotionally survive and cope with the lingering distrust in the environment, self, and others.

The gnawing emptiness signals the lack of a secure identity. One is always uneasy and needs validation and positive evaluation by others. One must be stellar and without any issues or there is the crush of despair and defeat. The sense of solid identity is easily jeopardized in the anticipated abandonment for any infraction. Self-negating thoughts and actions are set up against imagined standards of perfection. In the progressive deadening of the self, one enters a sort of wandering, repeating the original losses while escaping introspection. Relationships are based on disguise and learned inauthenticity. Although social and with the expected presentation, seemingly capable of warmth, emotional depth is stunted when the person feels unable to emerge or be safely seen.



There is also the issue of self-hatred indicating "a basic division between the ego and self when the spontaneous being of the person is always hated, feared and attacked" (Colman, 2008, p. 363). Hatred of self, driven by perfectionism causes one to become frozen, separated from within.

Hatred is paradoxical. It emerges from traumatic origins and involves primitive defence mechanisms of the self... but it manifests itself at a sophisticated level of consciousness where ego fragments have coalesced, albeit in a distorted way, to form a fixed complex (Weiner, 1998, p. 499).

Culturally, social media and superficial focus represents a lack of the search for knowing oneself. The mounting disruption of self is accentuated by a persona set in place for the social media world. This is a perpetual re-impersonation dependent on the judgment of others. Instead, he picks up an identity for a while, becoming the face of the one imagined looking at him. The façade makes it seem he is there when he is not. Air-brushed, tinted, trimmed or reshaped, he becomes an object, needing to hide the vulnerable and sensitive reactions in the search for self-legitimization.

These people are maintained through split selves, partially engaged in relationships but remaining emotionally hidden, mostly to themselves, unable to commit, or to find their depth, meaning or fulfillment. The talents are there, the dedication to individuality curtailed as the virtual substitutes for person-to-person connection. Too much becomes reduced to the general or the trivial as appearance substitutes for being. The reality of the emotions seems muted or wildly uncensored. The passion for self-exposure is stylized for popular consumption. The portrayals, whether true or not, make it seem the idealized and the image is what is sought and lauded.

### The childhood problem of lack

[...] monstrous living body ... the slumbering giant that wakes ... vomiting destruction and then sinking back into somnolence ...flushes the marrow out of your bones and topples your soul (Sontag, 1993/2001, pp. 5-6).

The **as-if** person reenacts aggression against the original lost object and brings "impoverishment of the self and is attributed to the early traumatizing experiences with the longed for and idealized other" (Solomon, 2004, p. 639). When the parental figure is too distant, a person can become inhibited, frightened, and unable to access healthy assertion. This derives from a life-long

script of inferiority and aggression turned inward, caught in self-deception. As Jung commented, "Children are so deeply involved in the psychological attitude of their parents that it is no wonder that most of the nervous disturbances in childhood can be traced back to a disturbed psychic atmosphere in the home" (Jung, 1956/1967, para. 80). Dissociation develops as a survival attempt and there is a need for the illusions to compensate the weight of the depressive anxiety. Beyond an adaptation to the outer world, the **as-if** personality "internalized the absence, emptiness, a lifeless void and blank experience that is without access to the true self" (Solomon, 2004, p. 641).

To compensate, "acts of self-creation occur through a series of identifications and internalizations with other sources of environmental nourishment, which substitute for, and were constructed around, the original sense of internal emptiness" (Solomon, 2004, p. 641). In effect, there is a paralysis of being. This can manifest in various forms of self-attack, despair and narcissistic hatred. It feeds an internalized cycle of oppression from the parental neglect and abandonment. Early on the unfolding of the self "met a blank and hostile environment so misattuned that the person felt unseen and/or noxiously related to" (Solomon, 2004, p. 641). Without the possibility of developing secure self-identity, life is reduced to illusion and cover.

The Inner world is not bearable for the **as-if** person who cannot manage the range of feelings as there was little modeling for this (Zoppi, 2017). There was little opportunity to express feelings or have one's subjective reality recognized. Unnoticed, "as children they were lonely, depressed, and with innate sensitivity" (Solomon, 2004, p. 640). The child experiences the world as negating or trying to destroy their reality leading to feelings of despair and emptiness.

These early wounds can become the central organizing factor in the individual's personality, and one continues to react expecting to be re-wounded. Relating to the world is based on the imaginary and pretend to defend against aspects of reality having to do with absence and loss as these were experienced as unbearable quite early. "The [psychic] retreat then serves as an area of the mind where reality does not have to be faced, where phantasy and omnipotence can exist unchecked and where anything is permitted" (Steiner, 1983, p. 3). One learns to put on a sparkling appeal, a cover usually fostering positive projections, but these are neither seen nor believed. The consistency of self is porous, and the sense of self-value lost to one's purview. The emotional insulation needs be filled with adulation. Although this person is very alone, they cannot easily be alone, and it is difficult to bear any absence, discomfort or lack.

## Imagery of the body

If many remedies are prescribed for an illness, you may be certain that the illness has no cure (Chekhov, 1904/2015, n. p.).

If traditional standards of beauty are the only currency for valuing our bodies, we remain stuck in a paradigm preserving stereotypes and perpetuating the unattainable beauty myth. Appearance and beauty are of import to the as-if personality, expressing the need for applause and appeal, to be alluring but to ultimately remain unattainable in all aspects. There are struggles with weight, body shame and body unease, clothes are changed often as a means of seeking some peace that rarely occurs. Exemplifying defensive mind/body splitting, one's body is devalued, reflecting the lack of corporeal engagement with the world. The as-if person cannot easily find internal coherence or compassion. Estranged from their internal and external worlds, they are often unable to locate their body in space.

For one woman glimpsing herself in mirrors outside her home brings a slight shock and the image is not as good as when safely at home. The mismatch from private to public is a disparity followed by judgement, self-reproach, and accompanied by symptoms of depersonalization and derealization. It is based on shame and self-loathing, difficulty self-soothing, internal conflicts, and body complexes. We could say, the body then becomes a negative complex and as such is a drain on the psyche.

## Identity

Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come out of itself (Hegel, 1977, p. 29).

As-if people are known to develop pseudo contacts substituting for real feeling with others. They behave as-if they have emotional relations, but the emotions cannot get through to the real as this means sharing who one is and revealing true opinions. Too often concern about the consequences of speaking up leave them without voice. They might even be described as frigid meaning avoiding emotions, hiding their insufficiencies, and behaving woodenly as-if they had real feelings and genuine contact with people.

As example, Imani dreamt of women in a pop-up grid on a pornography internet website. She then saw herself in a house that pops up, and then she was in a smaller house, and this scene was repeated over and over. In the next image popping up she is

alone in an even smaller grid or house and there is no obvious way in or out. What does this dream mean? It describes she is encased in a box or a flat square while the spaces get smaller and she increasingly enclosed. "Unable to relinquish the illusion of safety in the way things were or are imprisons and creates a death in life existence" (Samuels, 1986, p. 83). The dream scene takes place on a porn site, and she is imprisoned in something sexual but disconnected and enclosed in the box. She is both the main actress and the observer. The image brings up questions concerning who she really is. The dream portrays her being objectified by herself. And, she is alone in the image, even though it begins with other women also encapsulated, each in a square and not in communication with each other. These could be unrelated aspects of herself, each in an isolated box. The whole image seems fragmented yet enclosed, linear, and mechanically driven, but by what part of her?

Jacqueline Rose (1986, cited by Silverman, 1986, p. 229), British writer and thinker commented on this:

What classical cinema performs or puts on stage is this image of woman as other, dark continent, and from there what escapes of it is lost to the system; at the same time as sexuality is frozen into her body as spectacle, the object of phallic desire and /or identification (Silverman, 1986, p. 229).

Here the body expresses distance, disconnect behind the sexuality set to gain attention but behind a screen. Is this body expressing fragility of self? It might represent "disembodied states of psychic deadness and impacting one's relationship to the world" (Connolly, 2013, p. 636). Disturbance in body ownership and body image, the body is objectified and at cross purposes with the need for the sense of oneself as found through the physical.

As her dream portrays, Imani's body is used as an object to keep people away. Imani walks around wanting to be noticed, better than others, thinner, appearing younger, smarter. No matter what, she is primarily focused on getting attention, but it must be at a distance. She is cognizant no one knows the real her and she is content with this but also at times becomes very, very lonely.

This is a talented woman, intellectually gifted and highly articulate, quick to respond and rebuff. She uses thoughts and words as weapons to defeat and remain removed from others. Quiet in the analytical sessions rarely occurs, as if any potentially reflective space will fill with what she does not know or want to know. She allows little room for commentary as if she must defend against any surprises or enter the unfamiliar to avoid the critique she

cannot tolerate. This indicates a fragile and fearful ego and a person defended against her depth.

In analysis she develops a fusion like mode of relating. Unable to tolerate the space between herself and myself, she denies any separateness, creating an imagined sameness. To feel safe and unthreatened by any other, the reality of the connection between two separate people must be resisted. She does not take in information and defends against any additional commentary to her story.

"Relationship means taking the other in, being seen and vulnerable but this can be overlaid with shame" (Rosenfeld, 1987, p. 274). She enacts what is called manic defense meaning denying the increasing awareness of limitation, loss, ambivalence, and complexity. It is a defense against the fear of destroying the object, meaning the other, and subsequently the self. Imani has no room for the interactive, no pause to allow different reactions. There is no ability to allow for the smallness necessary to take in new information and to not know. Any understanding countered by its opposite means rejection, so she defends and pushes away. In this Imani seems omnipotent and in need of no one else, alone as in the box in the dream.

She seems to lack self-feeling, but this has been unconscious and elusive to her under the well-developed glitzy cover. Does she realize she is in a half-dead existence? The process into her world will not be as simple as she might imagine. The relationship between therapist and client secures trust and evolves dependent on separation and connection between both participants. This process requires the capacity to recognize and gather the multiple personal and collective threads and reconnect them. The transferences could be put to creative use to find a thoughtful and sensitive way for the participants to think, feel and imagine together.

However, Imani has trouble giving genuinely or to respond flexibly and adaptively to any other's behavior. The demise she fears in her mind is different from her presentation of control. She joked away the disregard experienced as a child describing a father she likened to the Russian leader Putin, aggressively taking over, and pushing in, breaking boundaries, what is yours is mine, and leaving no space for Imani. She relayed an image of herself enthusiastically running to father who said Imani was embarrassing in her show of excitement. She recoiled and recalled repeated incidents at family gatherings, drunken brawls, inappropriate touching, crude gesturing, and her father seductive. She often hid in the corner, frightened and unsafe, alone. This father figure gave no support or way to relate to male energy except to be invisible.

From this overbearing father are the themes of insecurity of the self, lovelessness, splintering and disintegration of self and silencing of voice. Frustrated and lost, all looked neat from the outside but inside was the mess of deprivation Imani could not expose. Often there was no food in the home, and in shame she told no one. Abandonment was what Imani knew while she remained engulfed in mother's expectations. Mother taught nothing about the feminine, maternal, or being a person. Both physically and emotionally there was no way either parent could or did confirm Imani in her identity or self-agency.

She was like in the Grimm's fairytale *The Little Match Girl*, out in the winter, snow, cold, the dark buildings she stands between are shut like the parents, lights are out. She becomes colder, more alone, unable to get warm, runs out of matches for warmth, and sadly dies in the end from being forgotten in the cold and people rushing by not noticing her.

Relationships with friends and partners were based on her being the star, an entertainer, dancing fast to blur anyone puncturing her defenses. If she is sufficiently protected by what has become a tightly defensive organization, she does not have to feel. Equally this happens in the analytical work. Myself as the analyst with my presence, availability and questioning is experienced as a danger to her fragile self-cohesion.

The psychological process takes patience when the unmasking of reality connotes threat to the ego/persona so tightly relied upon. Behind the well calculated front portraying innocence and appeal, lay the tender vulnerability she learned to repress. Those who are deprived of recognition suffer and are condemned to harbor grave feelings of invalidation of their personhood and live in virtual aloneness (Mills, 2019). The need for unconditional love, anxiety about expected hostility and being refused has been the norm. The **as-if** person exists in a crisis of sterility and unease. The **as-if** person can be lacking the capacity to cope with complexity, ambiguity, melancholia, disorientation, and disappointment as well as to allow for the feelings of pleasure.

Imani became a *femme fatale*, an *anima* woman, posing, not really knowing love, just garnering attention. All this hid her anxiety about physical and psychological appearance, feeling fragile and vulnerable in the presence of others. In the confrontation with otherness, she becomes entangled in desire and lack, and this initiates a skirmish for recognition. The **as-if** person quickly "intuits their own deficiency, one sidedness, singularity, threat and it seems there is something which although it belongs to its own essence, it lacks" (Mills, 2019, p.7).

The psyche looks to complete itself, to manifest in higher modes of consciousness. The process begins with reflection, time, and inner examination, circling around to find herself. The quest for fulfillment is an organic developmental and relational process making sense of the losses, yearning, needs, anxieties.

However, much of Imani resided beyond her facade and she seemed lost.

She refused to be disturbed by desire as the world needed to be smooth and predictable. Imani remained like her dream of being in the box on the pornography site. Imani wanted to know a bit of herself, but not too much. It was just so she can procure the right words, and sound psychologically aware. Would she continue the façade? She kept having one facelift after another, looking more and more false, signaling increasing distance from self. Perhaps the emptiness has become too solidly internalized. Will she ever allow curiosity about who she really is? It seemed not now.

## Healing wounds

If a man embraces his wholeness, he can avoid 'the unhappy consequences of repressed individuation'. He continues: 'If he voluntarily takes the burden of completeness on himself, he need not find it 'happening' to him against his will in a negative form (Jung, 1951, para.125).

Self and world are disjointed for the **as-if** person. Bewildered, where do they turn? This person is often misread, not understood and in need of gaining access to their inner world. The point of Jungian work and the challenge of the **as-if** personality is to find security and the uniqueness of self, including establishing genuine relationships with others. The **as-if** fragmentation and disunion then function as opportunities for unique re-patterning.

There is a gap for the **as-if** personality between who one is and who one wants to be. This creates an endless series of painful recreations of past troubles and rigid limiting behaviors and attitudes. And it is the opening to the personality.

Analytical and psychological treatment is a place where the chaos and the anxieties absorbed from childhood can begin to become thinkable. The search is for the underlying order, the connection to the self. The hope under all the defenses and layers is to accept the vulnerability, fragility, but at the same time enable belief in and support for the future. Finally accessing this, Jordan expressed,

I feel for years I built up this protection around me. But now I feel like I'm walking without looking down. I feel like I'm open. I was raised to never show weakness but no longer must accept living like that.<sup>1</sup>

We discover, indeed that we do not know our part, we look for a mirror, we want to rub off the make-up and remove the counterfeit and be real. But somewhere a bit of mummery still sticks to us that we forget (Rilke, 2016, p. 194)

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