The Art of Mourning

Exploring the impact of artistic creation upon the psychotherapist

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Abstract

The realm of artistic creation has long captivated thinkers within the psychotherapeutic sphere. A rich lineage of theoretical contributions considers the origin, nature and process of creativity through a psychoanalytic lens. Fewer contributions, however, consider the significance of therapist *as* artist. Through the intimate and experience-near methodology of heuristic inquiry, this study comprises a lived investigation into the interrelationship of psychotherapeutic and artistic practice.

Rigorous self-search methods have enabled contact with new awareness, both explicit and tacit, of the author's experiences as both freelance artist and beginning psychotherapist. These experiential understandings form the raw data of this study, coming into relationship with psychotherapeutic theory in a reflexive examination of the significance of lived artistic process to the psychotherapist.

This research unearths the significance of loss in the creative and therapeutic experiences of the author. Mourning, and the facilitation of integrative inner representations are revealed as processes integral to transformative change in both artistic and psychotherapeutic domains. The development of a personal capacity to tolerate loss, destruction, and change, as well as the nature of resistance to such change, emerge as evident impacts of artistic experience on the psychotherapist.

The understandings generated through this research are examined in their potential significance to the wider psychotherapeutic profession, including implications for training and clinical work. This study offers an embodied proposition: that opening toward loss through personal artistic practice may facilitate a radical recalibrating of self, a process fundamentally resonant with the psychotherapeutic endeavour.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or institution of higher learning.

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Chapter 1 — INTRODUCTION

Beginnings

I have always made things. It has always felt necessary, perhaps unavoidable, to create objects, images, or environments, that rearrange the available world into something new. In a number of conversations over the past five years, those hearing that I was in psychotherapy training would often comment on the "big change"—the apparently vast shift from the freelance dance career that had occupied me for the prior decade. I would often find myself responding to the effect of "they do overlap though". What this overlap entailed was not entirely clear to me. Yet, I seemed to intuit that what drew me to psychotherapy shared something radical with what drew me towards artistic creation. It was true that as a practicing artist and a developing therapeutic practitioner, I was encountering the shared potential of these realms to provide a "meeting ground of the world inside and the world outside" (Ulman, 1975, as cited in Klorer, 2005, p. 87). Yet the particular scope and nature of this meeting ground within my artistic and therapeutic endeavours—and indeed what one might mean for the other—remained mysterious to me.

Initial Apprehension

When the master's dissertation offered up a framework for in-depth exploration, I moved toward this apparent mystery keenly. Formulating a research proposal, however, evoked some trepidation. My question, as initially framed, asked "how might experiences of artistic creation impact upon the therapist's relationship to the depressive position?". Whilst steeped in personal interest—Klein's (1940) depressive position having notably captured my imagination in relation to creative drives—the pre-emptive connection of my query to a theoretical paradigm also seemed to serve as a safety barrier. Assuring me that the exploration of my subjective reality would be kept in 'legitimate' theoretical territory, I inadvertently safeguarded myself from opening more frankly into the uncertainty of my

query—from swimming into the "unknown current" of the self-search endeavour (Moustakas, 1990).

Embodying the vital role of the moderating other within interpretive research (Rose & Loewenthal, 1998), the dissertation assessment panel strongly suggested that I drop the theoretical component from my question. My pronounced indignation at this feedback was conspicuous enough to incite my curiosity about the potential fear that might underpin it. Moustakas's (1990) description of the need to "risk the opening of wounds and passionate concerns" in the heuristic endeavour (p. 14), helped me to consider some of my evident trepidation—the tension between a wish to know and a hope not to. While the interrelation of artistic and therapeutic process deeply intrigued me, I was hesitant to move closer to it. Perhaps some form of wounding—carefully buried or newly anticipated—was putting a foot against the door.

Clarifying the Question

Moustakas (1990) advises that the research question be simple and clear-cut so that the researcher is freed to engage with it wholly. Holding in mind that my first attempt to frame the inquiry may have been crafted in avoidance of painful material, I reapproached my question. Simplifying it to "how do experiences of artistic creation impact upon the psychotherapist?", a spaciousness arose in me: there was room inside the question for what was not yet known. In order to avoid the distortions of "forcing the self into a theory", artist and psychoanalyst Marion Milner (1934) affirms that a self-study must allow "the gradual discovery and growth of a purpose", one unknown at its outset (p. 89). This spaciousness in purpose felt both freeing and terrifying as I realised that I would be approaching my own intimate experience to fill it. I felt I had found a question that would, as Sela-Smith (2002) advises, facilitate a process of "exploratory discovery, rather than testing hypothesis" (p. 58).

Gaps in the Literature

In relation to this research, my positioning as both freelance artist and emerging psychotherapist come to the fore. By nature of this duality, this study attends to something that the literature as a wider body of knowledge appears to proportionately lack—the experience of the psychotherapist *as* artist. Whilst not entirely absent (Milner (1934, 1987, 2004) and Marks-Tarlow (1995, 2014) providing prominent examples of psychotherapeutic authors writing of their own artistic experiences), such analyses of one's own creativity remain proportionately rare. I wonder about the distance between analyst-author and artist-subject created in the more common mode of analysing another's creative practice. Perhaps the vulnerability inherent in direct artistic experiences is attenuated through studying a safely distanced other. Following her early contributions to creative education theory, Marks-Tarlow (2014) reflected that "I had written about creativity partly because I hadn't been ready to embrace my own" (p. 9). Embracing the personal, as this study will strive to do, follows Heidegger's assertion of the importance of phronesis: emphasising the knowledge inherent in our 'being-in-the world' as opposed to detached theorising (Malpas, 2018). In this way I hope to provide an alternative source of experience-near knowledge to the experience-distant authorship of much of the available literature in this topic area.

Another observable trend in the available literature is that the role of the studied artist-other is often occupied by a renowned, dead, male artist. Picasso, Cézanne, van Gogh, Hemmingway, Dickens, Wagner, Proust and Dostoevsky all feature across multiple texts (Ehrenwald, 1967; Freud, 1910, 1927; Greenacre, 1958; Grenet, 2017; Lachmann, 2014; Oliva, 2010; Peña & Rizzuto, 2002; Segal, 1991; Shengold, 1988; Soth, 2006). Whilst perhaps not surprising considering the systematic exclusion of women from the "tales of the greatest artists" within western art history (Gajewski, 2015, p. 1), this palpable bias in the figures congregating in the literature mean that my positioning as a young woman artist grants an intrinsic facet of originality to this study.

My Horizon

Whilst this study's contribution to psychotherapeutic research is indeed driven by an autobiographic interest, "with virtually every question that matters there is also a social—and perhaps universal—significance" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 17). Rather than reducing the applicability of my research findings, I believe that the availability of my subjectivity offers the reader an invitation to engage theirs. My hope is that the study invokes a parallel inquiry into the reader's own relationship to the notions presented. To "find the familiar in the unfamiliar" in this way (Milner, 2004, p. 14), is a mode of knowledge transmission fundamentally in-keeping with psychotherapeutic practice.

In presenting this subjective knowledge, however, I must acknowledge my own horizon: the specific position from which I see the world and so my topic (Gadamer as cited in Malpas, 2018). While my position as a young woman might respond to a wanting gender and age diversity in the current literature, I do not address other absences, such as that of people of colour in the canons underpinning much psychotherapeutic academia. Equally, my particular relationship to artistic experience has been coloured by access to formal arts education, economic security allowing sufficient time to create, and the general social acceptance of artmaking as a valid pursuit by my family and close friends. Whilst enriched by my specific humanity, this research will be simultaneously swayed by it. Situational factors—such as these privileges—undeniably influence the intrapsychic and interpersonal dynamics I will be considering, observing and reporting. The ramifications of my positioning as it intersects with the heuristic approach will be contemplated in my methodology chapter.

Key Point of Concern

Turco (2001) suggests that "art, as with psychoanalysis, represents a recreation of the internal drama" (p. 547). This research is compelled by my sense that accessing this internal drama within the realm of artistic creation may have a fundamental connection to accessing it within my work as a psychotherapist. This potentially significant territory feels largely

unchartered within me, evoking both wonder and trepidation. Through this inquiry I endeavour to enrich my own awareness and in doing so fortify my professional capacity, alongside contributing meaningfully to the collective body of psychotherapeutic knowledge. Thus, my central endeavour in this research is to investigate how my own psychotherapeutic experiences and capacity are coloured by my experiences of artistic creativity, by responding to the question "how might experiences of artistic creation impact upon the psychotherapist?".

Dissertation Overview

Following the introduction of my inquiry in this first chapter, chapter 2 elucidates the theoretical context in which the research sits: reviewing existing psychotherapeutic literature addressing artistic process. Chapter 3 then provides a thorough examination of my research methodology and method: elucidating my selection of this approach, its relationship to my central query, and its potential contributions and limitations in expanding psychotherapeutic knowledge. Chapter 4 lays out my findings: responding reflectively to the illuminations arising from both lived experience and theoretical engagement across the research process. Chapter 5 then offers a synthesising discussion: drawing the strands of my findings together to speak directly to my research query, and considering the implications, limitations and value of the study to myself as clinician and to the wider field of psychotherapy. Chapter 6 presents an image and description that comprise the creative synthesis: the "new whole" born from my total relationship with this research experience (Sela-Smith, 2002, pp. 68).

Chapter 2 — LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In my attempt to review psychoanalytic thinking around creativity, I am aware that I am immediately positioning my gaze. Through both deductive and intuitive processes I have selected which texts are deemed significant, and through this am constructing a particular sense of what artistic creativity means within the research. This process, as much as any, reveals the influence of my subjectivity upon the knowledge disseminated in this study. Whilst I endeavour to capture pivotal contributions to the subject area, to claim a systematic review would be to disown the tacit processes guiding my selections and resonances with the material.

Scope & Focus

Grazing texts that straddled the terms psychotherapy/psychoanalysis and creativity/artistry in my initial engagement with the literature, the need for further delineation of my research area became clear. The texts I encountered attended to a wide spectrum of processes. Some dove into the intrapsychic world of the creator, some into the communicative interpersonal functions of art making, some into the psychic response of a viewer, and others into the meaning of artwork as an entity in-and-of itself. I began to envisage a continuum of processes stretching from artistic creator to artistic viewer, with these various foci banded along it. After respective forays in my reading, Romanyshyn's (2020) suggestion to return to the question "what is this work really about?" (p. 137), reoriented me towards one end of this spectrum—the internal world of the creator. Anchoring my literature review in the experience of the artist most pertinently aids me to consider the impact of my artistic endeavours on me as a therapist. I delimit this area of focus as beginning at the creative impulse and moving outward through the personal experience of making an artwork. I

therefore do not explore audience reception or art interpretation within this review or wider study, other than peripherally where pertinent to the subjective experience of the creator.

Creativity as used in English derives from the Latin term "creare": to make (Runco, 2012). Appearing in the 14th century to indicate divine conception, it's reference to acts of human creation did not emerge until after the Enlightenment (Runco, 2012). Across disciplines, precise definitions beyond this general understanding diverge widely, with Meusburger et al. (2010) stating that over a hundred varying depictions can be found in the literature. My attention in this study is directed toward creativity as it pertains to artistic realms as opposed to other creative fields, for instance scientific or technological innovation, though with an appreciation of inevitable overlaps. Below I review the ways in which artistic creativity is understood within the psychoanalytic sphere, allowing a malleable definition to unfold through this process.

A Privileged Neurosis

As with many psychoanalytic chronologies, the sewing of a gravid theoretical seed can be attributed to Freud in the realm of artistic creation. Intriguingly, this contribution flies against his own reservations around studying creative processes psychoanalytically, having asserted that "whence it is that the artist derives his creative capacity is not a question for psychology" (Freud, 1995, p. 187). Amongst a collection of somewhat fragmented musings on the nature of creativity, Freud (1911) centrally proposes that art allows reality and fantasy to reconcile. Meeting the frustrations of reality yet unwilling to forsake instinctual satisfactions, the artist is able to "mould his phantasies into truths of a new kind" (Freud, 1911, p. 244). Here, Freud (1911) influentially suggests that artmaking allows the sublimation of impulses that might otherwise become neurotic symptoms (symptoms that manifest the unconscious conflict in ways that pose difficulties in one's ability to adapt to life). Freud's associate Kurt R. Eissler furthers this premise in positing that indeed "the production of great art is due to the deflection of a psychosis" (Eissler cited in Dervin, 1975, p. 24).

Freud's view of art as a privileged form of neurosis saw his writing take on a pathographic approach: analysing specific works of art in order to reconstitute the makers' internal world as we see in "Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of his childhood" (Freud, 1910), and "Dostoyevsky and parricide" (Freud, 1927). This even extended to hypothesising about the artists' psycho-sexual development: the navigation of a set of childhood stages of erogenously-oriented pleasure seeking (Freud, 1910). Followers of Freud such as Jones (1973), Pfister (1963) and Sachs (2010), similarly focus on artworks as revelatory of the unconscious conflicts of their maker. I seem to be in company in sensing a lack of clarity or comprehensive theory around Freud's descriptions of sublimation (a mechanism via which socially unacceptable urges are transmuted into acceptable behaviour) in this realm, with Adams (1994) proclaiming it one of the most tenuous concepts in classical analysis. Glover (2011) notes Freud's often distorting identifications with the artists he analyses, alongside a failure, also noted extensively by Rank (1989), to address the true origin of the creative impulse. One is left wondering why particular people are called to sublimate their conflicts through art whilst others become ill with their frustrated phantasies. Freud is not alone in his failure to address this cohesively. Almost a century later Lombardo (2007) laments that psychoanalytic explanations of creativity at large have not yet answered the question of what grants the artist alone the ability "to convert vulnerability into extraordinary vision and beauty" (p. 354).

A Matter of Mourning

A turning point in the conceptualisation of creative impulse was provided by the work of Austrian-British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein. Klein's (1949, 2002) formative concept of the depressive position refers to a developmental location at which a growing capacity to see objects as multidimensional wholes replaces a previous protective splitting of objects into all-good and all-bad parts. Klein asserts that such "vital advances in the infant's emotional and intellectual life" give rise to feelings of mourning and guilt—namely a guilt that one may have damaged or destroyed their objects whilst in the hateful grip of the earlier split (paranoid schizoid) state (Klein, 1949, p. 3). Whilst this concept is deeply pertinent to vast

psychoanalytic territories, the guilt engendered and accompanying need to mourn the supposed loss, are functions said to be fundamental to the capacity to symbolise, and thus foundational to creativity. Furthering Klein's thinking, Hanna Segal (1980) amplified the notion that the creative act ultimately seeks to provide symbolic repair: to "put together what has been torn asunder, to reconstruct what has been destroyed, to recreate and to create" (p. 75). In Segal's (1990) view, an internal world left devastated by depressive realisations drives the artist to create it anew: "this is what every major artist does - creates a world" (p. 86).

Whilst many follow this Kleinian arc loyally, others use it as a jumping off point for alternative renderings. Maizels' (1996) paper "Working through, or beyond the depressive position?" explores the creative process via his conception of a post-depressive "spiritual" position (p. 148). This position is characterised by the capacity for emotional abstraction and a level of "meta-feeling": overarching feelings about one's history of lived feelings (p. 150). Considering this in relation to Klein's theoretical world, he seems to suggest that the loved whole-object might be life itself. Whilst Maizels acknowledges that meta-feeling rests on a foundation of depressive mourning, allowing curiosity about creativity to stop at the purely reparative would, he posits, constitute a "thumbs down" to other manifestations of the creative will (Maizels, 1996, p. 148).

Forming the Self

Authors also stray from the Kleinian lineage in suggesting earlier creative beginnings than the infantile depressive stage. Likierman (1989) proposes that from our earliest days the "initial reaction of our sense impressions to the world" herald our later brushes with beauty and artistic imagination (p. 133). Meltzer (1988) comparably provides an evocative description of the newborn as immersed aesthetically in colour and form, "imaginatively and thoughtfully exploring the world of its emotional interest" (p. 17). These contributions may well draw from Bollas' (1978) renowned theory of personal idiom, in which the infant's experience of the mother's style of care is "the first human aesthetic", laying the foundation for all future

creative acts (p. 386). Akin to Maizels' position, though in more strident opposition of Klein, Oppenheim (2005) is dissatisfied with the theory that art functions only to restore faulty object relationships ("object" referring to the—often human—other), suggesting instead that art primarily serves to both clarify and extend the artist's self-image. Whilst I resonate with her central thesis of art changing the artist by offering one a clearer view of oneself, I can't help but wonder whether it is possible to extricate this self from the instrumental impacts of object relationships—faulty or otherwise.

Furthering the notion of art functioning to build the self, Spitz (1985) aligns with Bollas's (1978) assertions that "unintegrations of self" find integrations through the form of aesthetic objects (p. 386). In placing the aesthetic object between self and world, Spitz perhaps echoes Winnicott's (1953) transitional object: something that feels to be both of-the-child and yet not-the-child. This "covenant between fantasy and reality" helps the child (and I would venture, consequently the artist) to bridge his inner and outer world (Spitz, 1982, p. 62). A focus on the creative act as a transitional one, helping to delineate self and other, brings a more interpersonal lens to creative impulse. Moving beyond Freud's rather more internal, individualistic focus, creativity becomes a "realm in which both inner and outer, self and other, personal past and interpersonal present are lost, rediscovered, and remade in a continuous dialectical process" (Spitz, 1989, p. 137).

A Matter of Life & Death

The literature also brings forth the notion that artmaking can impact our relationship to life and death. Creativity is posited to offer immortalization—a triumph over death that might "turn back the dead into the world of the living" (Rickman, 1940, p. 308). Originally an associate of Freud, Rank (1989) explores this terrain whilst pushing against Freud's conception of the death instinct: the innate wish to return to a state of complete rest. Rank (1989) posits that while such self-destructive internal forces may be present, they are vitally counterbalanced by a spirit of creative overcoming. He sees the human experience as straddling life-fear and death-fear: a fear of individuating and a fear of losing one's

individuality, respectively. Rank (1989) felt that the forward reaching "need to go beyond" quality of creativity allowed one to survive this "ever-expanding and ever-contracting, space between separation and union" (p. 86). In his innovative book *Art and Artist* (1989), he theorises that creative impulse originates in this attempt to harmonize such a "fundamental dualism of all life" (p. xxii). The production of artwork then comes to represent the artist's own transcendence of self-annihilation. As Rickman (1940) expresses, "the artist himself has stayed the course of havoc and has himself made life come out of dust and confusion" (p. 308). Life and death are also frequently mapped onto conceptions of artistic beauty and ugliness within the literature, primarily with the idea that both must be present for a work to have meaningful impact. Whilst aesthetic evaluation is beyond the focus of my research, certain contributions do address the internal world of the creator, such as Stokes' (1955) description of the entwining of life drives (Eros) with death drives (Thanatos) within the artmaking process.

To Dream by Day

"For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses and the mind is no longer in him" (Plato, 1924, p. 502).

Plato's suggestion that invention occurs when the "mind is no longer in" the artist, maps onto the widely held premise that unconscious psychic material holds a central role in artistic creativity. Ernst Kris (1952), an art historian and psychoanalyst, suggested that productive contact with material beyond the conscious mind constituted "a regression in service of the ego" (p. 177). Comparable perhaps to Schafer's (1958) adaptive regression, the creative process is suggested to liberate the artist from the "fetters" of our rational Aristotelian logic (Arieti, 1976, p. 51). This is thought to allow closer contact with unconscious insight, reminding me of Edgar Allan Poe's assertion that "they who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night" (Poe as cited in Galloway, 1986, p.

243). Regression toward unconscious material—something often relegated to pathology—is seen to emerge within the creative process as "an innovating power" (Arieti, 1976, p. 52).

Half a century after Kris's contributions, Lombardo (2007) offers a rich exploration of what may make such regression possible for the artist. He suggests, perhaps counter-intuitively, that it is facilitated by the constraints of convention and rules. Noting that a child's playful "let's pretend" corresponds to the literary convention "once upon a time", art's techniques and structures are seen to facilitate "entries into a special frame of mind" (Lombardo, 2007, p. 365). In such a frame we are assured that there is a separation from reality; we are cushioned from real world ramifications. Kris (1952), Arieti (1976), and Rank (1989), each note in their own way that artistic conventions have this energetically economic significance. The ego: the entity mediating between our conscious and unconscious, is discharged of its vigilance and the energy freed for a state of play with the emerging material.

The need for a supporting artistic frame in which the regression can occur also seems to correspond with Arieti's (1976) reminder that some level of co-ordination between primary processes (primitive pleasure-oriented impulses) and secondary processes (rational moderation of these impulses) is vital to allow creativity, rather than schizophrenia, to result. The incidence of mental illness among creative artists is indeed higher than in the population at large (Jamison, 1996; Richards, 1989). Yet despite this correlation, the literature regularly debunks the idea that madness aids creativity—Chessick (1999) noting that in fact, "creativity requires a relatively intact ego," (p. 19). Whilst a certain permeability between conscious and unconscious awareness might feature in both artistic and psychotic experience, psychotic functioning doesn't support artistry per se. Kubie (1961) passionately lays out the ways in which psychopathology in fact "corrupts, mars, distorts, and blocks creativeness" (p. 142). One could consider Segal (1991) as substantiating this from another perspective, in her idea that the ability to stay connected to the reality of the external world is seen to be "essential to [the artist's] feeling of a completed reparation" (p. 96). To be creative rather than destructive, artistic process requires contact with both fantasy and reality. Accordingly, Niederland's (1976) proposal that the artistic product "albeit rooted in and influenced by the primary process, is oriented toward reality" (p. 189), is echoed by McCully's (1976) assertion that profound discoveries across history have stemmed from the application of rational

thought to a non-rational inspiration. Here the literature seems to converge on a point well-captured in a saying popularised by Jean Cocteau—that art is a marriage of the conscious and the unconscious.

A Collective Source

Whilst the role of unconscious material in the creative process is widely acknowledged, the source of this material seems a hazier concept within the literature at large. While Jung (1975) conceives of one layer of the unconscious mind that resembles that of Freud's (one of forgotten, sublimated or incompatible personal experiences), he proposed an additional layer of less personal material. Moreno (1967) describes Jung's conception of this layer as "universal, collective, common to all men, even though it expresses itself through personal consciousness" (p. 176). It is this layer of collective unconscious that Jung (1975) holds central to artistry. He speaks of the creative urge as "supra-personal", a force that has "soared beyond the personal concerns of its creator" (p. 71).

Many critique Jung's portrayal of this transpersonal unconscious. Mills (2018) suggests that whilst shared humanity may well suffuse individual subjectivity, the collective unconscious is better understood as a metaphor for this process rather than an entity of its own. Defined as a collective unconscious or not, this transcendence of individualism ripples through both Maslow's (1967) sense that an individual becomes self-forgetful during creative encounter, as well as May's (1975) belief that the artistic experience transcends any subject-object split. A notion of collective substance in humans has long been implicit in Eastern thinking, as highlighted by McCully (1976), who suggests that Eastern art forms more explicitly honour this profound connection between "communal sources" and creativity (p. 64). The scope of this research cannot accommodate a worthy reckoning with socio-cultural variances around transpersonal creative forces. However, across diverse cultural contexts it seems there exists an irrefutable sense that art has the power to "yield us to the intuitive conviction that we are part of something greater than our individual selves" (Chessick as cited in Turco, 2001, p. 548).

Conclusion

From a view of artistic creativity as the sublimation of neurotic impulses, to the seeking of symbolic repair, to an innate aesthetic responsiveness, to a means to delineate the self, to a grappling with life and death, to the incarnation of a transpersonal consciousness, psychotherapeutic knowledge has much to contribute to an investigation of the creative process. As I move into a consideration of my research methodology in the next chapter, I elucidate why such a rich lineage might benefit from the addition of my heuristic exploration of artistic creativity and its impact upon the psychotherapist.

Chapter 3   —   METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Before exploring the findings borne from this study, it is necessary to frame the research context in which they arose. In this chapter I consider the pertinence of my selected methodology of heuristic inquiry to both my professional field and research topic. The heuristic principles and methods that I have employed are examined, including their practical and ontological strengths and limitations in generating valuable knowledge.

Heuristic Research

> Almost anybody can learn to think or believe or know, but not a single human being can be taught to feel. Why? Because whenever you think or you believe or you know, you're a lot of other people: but the moment you feel, you're nobody-but-yourself.
> (Cummings, 1972, p. 75)

This study is a heuristic inquiry, unfolding over six distinct yet interlinked phases (Moustakas, 1990). Heuristic methodology explores the nature and meaning of phenomena through the intimate and personal lens of internal self-search processes (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). Whilst this is my first piece of formal heuristic research, as Voegelin (2021) emphasises, constantly seeking to understand ourselves and our environment is a primary condition of being human. Noticing and exploring my experiential relationship to particular phenomena feels ever-present in my sense of being alive in the world. The framework of heuristic inquiry offers form, depth and research rigor to these intrinsic processes.

The formation of heuristic inquiry as a means of investigating lived human experience has various seeds. Amongst these are the work of Buber (1971) who uplifted the notions of interiority and intersubjectivity in his influential book *I and thou*; Merleau-Ponty (1945) who emphasised the embodied, temporal nature of meaning-making; and Polanyi (1974) who

proposed that implicit understanding underlies all other forms of knowledge. Consolidating the influence of such thinkers into a research framework, Moustakas's seminal book *Loneliness* (1961) presented a method borne from investigations into his personal relationship with loneliness and its implication for understanding the phenomenon at large. Sela-Smith (2002) has ardently engaged and contended with Moustakas' (1990) original methodology, fashioning the heuristic "self-search inquiry" to promote further intimacy between the subjectivity of the researcher and their topic of investigation (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 1). In this study I draw from Moustakas' foundational principles and methods as well as incorporating modifications of Sela-Smith's self-search model.

Methodological Suitability

The fundamentally embodied and experience-near nature of the psychotherapeutic endeavour is mirrored in heuristic research. As corroborated by Rose and Lowenthal (2006), the relational quality of heuristic research aptly facilitates an exploration of "the lived experience of psychotherapy" (p. 133). This experiential connection strikes me as extending innately into the artistic realm. Artistic researcher Julian Klein (2017) reports that during aesthetic sensory engagement "perception becomes present to itself" (para. 9). Indeed, while creating I often experience a sort of feeling-my-way from the inside whilst simultaneously witnessing myself from a more exterior vantage point. As Klein (2017) depicts, this ability to see oneself "from outside a frame and simultaneously enter into it", equally describes the therapeutic task (para. 9). My methodology aptly calls me to engage this same meta-awareness—a perception of my evolving perception as researcher.

Creating further intimacy between my research query and heuristic methodology is the living nature of knowledge recognised in each sphere (Polanyi, 1974). This research examines my experiences of artistic creation and psychotherapeutic engagement to date, as well as holding space for experiential shifts as new knowledge unfolds. Growth and change are embraced. Considering the role that observation itself can have in the instigation of transformation, holding space for change within a process of reflection feels vital. The observer effect proposes that something cannot be witnessed without being altered:

"observations are not only detections of what pre-existed in a physical system, but processes that in general can also provoke changes" (Sassoli de Bianchi, 2012, p. 1). The heuristic method recognises that arising data will be pinned to the fabric of my living reality as therapist and artist. The "growing self-awareness and self-knowledge" generated through the process of heuristic enquiry (Moustakas, 1994, p. 16), resonates with a central understanding in my psychotherapeutic and artistic work—that I am unable to meaningfully learn about the craft without learning deeply and reciprocally about myself.

Subjective Knowledge

The perspectival epistemology of heuristic research is antithetical to many western research traditions that stand in proud pursuit of objectivity. The ontological premise of these positivistic research frameworks is that "there exists an actual reality", one untouched by the shifting particularity of a lived moment (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 226). Within such a paradigm, the inherent subjectivity of heuristics (and indeed of therapy and artistry) might unsurprisingly rouse questions of legitimacy in a research context. Psychoanalyst Eglé Laufer speaks candidly of what I feel to be an analogous dynamic in the therapeutic realm, in that if psychotherapists "want to be included in the psychiatric world, we have to prove" (Institute of Psychoanalysis, 2010, 07:55-08:03). Yet, proof as defined within a western scientific paradigm, she notes, doesn't "happen to be applicable" to the psychotherapeutic endeavour (08:14-08:17).

Beyond highlighting the inapplicability of positivistic frameworks to practices grounded in subjectivity, Laufer goes further to suggest that efforts to prove psychotherapeutic knowledge through this frame would indicate that the practitioner was "on, from our point of view, shaky ground- they are leaving out essential bits" (Institute of Psychoanalysis, 2010, 09:15-09:23). In a parallel sense, utilising a methodology distrusting of subjectivity to explore the innately subjective terrains of therapy and artmaking would indeed forgo the essence of the phenomena at hand. Perhaps lying at the heart of these "essential bits" is feeling. As poet E. E. Cummings (1972) reminds us: "the moment you feel, you're nobody-but-yourself" (p. 75). Affect, it seems to me, can be a potent reminder of our experiential particularity. Here I

converge with Rose's (1993) view that thoughts about subjective creative process are indeed only made meaningful "by the coloration of feeling" (p. 504).

Heuristic inquiry leans readily into this emotional territory, surrendering the intellectual self to the "I-who-feels" (Sela-Smith, 2002, P. 63). In doing so, heuristic methodology prioritises tacit knowledge— "the deep structure that contains the unique perceptions, feelings, intuitions, beliefs, and judgments" that determine our interpretation of the world (Moustakas 1990, p. 32). As the origin of intuition, attuning to tacit knowing allows a researcher to access "the underlying pattern of the inquiry" (Kenny, 2012, p. 8). Accordingly, a methodology that impels me to attend to my implicit understandings will, I believe, bring me closer to the crux of my key concern—the underlying patterns that exist between my experiences of psychotherapy, artistic creation and their mutual impacts. As Dante resolved, reason alone is not enough to understand the universe (Alighieri, 2003).

Yet if this research is not attempting to generate what Guba and Lincoln (1989) term "unassailable knowledge", is it simply a solipsistic pursuit? (p. 227). What might it offer to collective knowledge bases within and beyond the psychotherapy discipline? Maslow (1967) writes that the "paraphernalia" of knowledge: "words, labels, concepts, symbols, theories, formulas, sciences", are only useful if one already has a lived experience of what they denote (p. 45). In this sense, the discovery of collective human phenomena and the discovery of one's own experience become inextricable. This is supported by Polanyi (2009) who writes that all knowledge is "either tacit or rooted in tacit knowledge" (p. 144). By researching my subjective experience, I aim to evoke in readers a return to their own particular lived experiences and intuitions: the root of any other knowledge they may come to possess. Simons (1996), in considering the role of any case study, corroborates that indeed the universal only becomes known through the deep and intensive study of the particular.

Ethics

Whilst I do not have external research participants involved in this study, I have ethical obligations to my primary participant: myself. The highly personal nature of the research and

obligation to probe my own responses and limitations in order to ensure its rigor, makes it "an act of faith with emotional consequences" (Ings, 2013, p. 689). Whilst therapy and supervision are spaces in which I can seek interpersonal support in bearing the emotional impacts of this study, it has also been important to frame the relationship between me-as-researcher and me-as-subject with intention. Reinharz's characterisation of the "lover model" holds that the researcher-researched relationship ought to be a relationship between equals, built on mutual respect, dignity, and trust (Reinharz, 1978 as cited in Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 231). Not unlike principles underpinning my engagement with clients or artistic collaborators, these codes have purposefully steered my engagement with my observed-self throughout this study.

Limitations

In her self-study *A life of one's own* (1934), artist and analyst-to-be Marion Milner found that "as soon as I began to study my perception, to look at my own experience, I found that there were different ways of perceiving and that the different ways provided me with different facts" (p. xxxv). As Milner elucidates, the positioning of "the self of the researcher" is critical to the meanings and implications of one's findings (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Rigor in heuristic research thus demands and methodically facilitates an acknowledgement of, and ongoing grappling with, these positionings and their impacts. Whilst I believe heuristic inquiry to be an apt methodology for my professional context and research area, I agree with Bartnæs' (2010) assertion that "awareness of the pitfalls of interpretation is a prerequisite for any interpretive practice worthy of academic interest" (p. 32). In Gadamerian thinking, these pitfalls and prejudices in fact play a vital role in understanding the topic at hand, as I will expand on in my discussion chapter (Malpas, 2018). Yet this contribution relies on a continued commitment to acknowledging, witnessing and questioning them. Below I begin the process of acknowledging limitations within my methodology and their possible implications for this study.

Avoiding Self-Knowledge

As Key and Kerr (2011) highlight, Moustakas says little on the role of the unconscious in the heuristic endeavour. This is remedied to some extent by Sela-Smith's (2002) recognition of unconscious material generating resistance to the self-search process. The notion that tacit knowledge has the potential to be distorted by unexplored parts of the self brings up obvious concerns for the validity of heuristic data. Such distortions have manifested, for instance, in my own disavowal of challenging feeling states at certain stages of this research. Despite the "I-Who-Feels" being central to the heuristic method, it is also, as Sela-Smith (2002) recognises, what most people spend their lives resisting (p. 62). Enculturated by a largely positivistic society in contemporary Aotearoa, academically oriented schooling and scientifically enthusiastic family, my own internalised cynicism around trusting the tacit as a valid source of insight has also emerged. While my attraction to art, psychotherapy and heuristic methodology each reveal a wish to build this trust, certain unconscious attitudes evidently dissent.

Another strand of this unconscious resistance has manifested in my tacit awareness seeking what it already knows. Pre-emptively concluding that certain discoveries simply corroborated known phenomena, rather than allowing them to reveal their own unique data, have evidenced this potential within my process. As Ings (2013) warns, "because autobiographical inquiries affirm the personal, they can sometimes offer a deceptively sheltered environment" (p. 679). Actively employing the quality of focusing— the clearing of an inward space devoid of the "clutter that obscures our understanding" assisted me to make contact with themes of my experience that lay outside of this shelter of the familiar (Kenny, 2012, p. 8).

Reason and Rowan (1981) highlight the importance of supportive others in this process. External contact has been pivotal in my navigation of the aforementioned blind spots, which, as Rose and Loewenthal (2006) suggest, I found myself particularly vulnerable to during the immersion phase. Whilst I am solo in this study, my engagement with my supervisor—a senior clinician and academic with her own rich relationship to the world of artistic creativity—alongside heuristic study group members and psychotherapeutic peers, has encouraged me into unchartered waters. Heuristic methodology carves space for curiosity

about the significance of these potential distortions, as will come to the fore in my findings chapter.

Framing Spontaneous Discovery

Whilst Moustakas (1990) asserts that "the heuristic research process is not one that can be hurried or timed by the clock or calendar" (p. 6), the deadlines inherent in the academic context of this research maintain otherwise. Sela-Smith (2002) cautions that such external time restrictions can deny the researcher a sufficiently immersive experience. Time restraints have indeed acted upon me at both a procedural level ('I need to get on to the next chapter') and process level ('if I fully surrender to this, I won't make it out on time'). The additional restraints of the university context perhaps intensify an already present paradox—conducting an idiosyncratic self-discovery process within the set procedural frame of the heuristic method. Whilst both Moustakas (1961) and Sela-Smith (2002) articulated their methods after their lived experience of them, I am attempting to house a spontaneous experience within a predetermined structure. Part of my response to this paradox has been to allow flexibility in the timing, duration and repetition of my phases of research, as I detail in my method description.

Universalism and Objectivity

Rowan (2005) notes that when a research question is felt deeply, boundaries disintegrate and an essence of the researcher is revealed. Such "essences" of human experience have "the capacity to hold master stories or meta-narratives" (Kenny, 2012, p.11). Whilst accessing the universal via the personal is indeed a central aim of heuristic research as I have explored, there is perhaps an embedded risk here of inferring objective truth. In a critique of Freud's writing, Bartnæs (2010) notes that the delivery of observation "becomes problematic when it develops into a rhetorical topos"—a formative element in objective discourse (p. 32).

Yet if sensitivity to context involves high self-reflexivity, proclamations of universal truth might surely also be tampered by heuristic methods. As Kenny (2012) suggests, engaging truthfully with social context "has its starting place in the inner subjective engagement with the timeless" (p. 10). In generating self-understanding through this research, my hope is that

my appreciation of the specificity of my experience will be made more robust, rather than collapsing into presumptions of universality. I aim to provide a frame of reference through which the readers' own lived knowledge may be summoned—be it in resonance or discord with my own. Akin to "disclosing the self as a way of facilitating disclosure from others", the reader's subjective experience is beckoned—inclusive of its own particularities (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 50). Perhaps, in this sense, the lines I write may help the reader to, as phrased by poet David Whyte, find those "already written inside" (Psychotherapy Networker, 2009, 02:09-02:20).

Method

Six distinct but interrelated phases guide the heuristic process (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). Whilst shaped by these phases, any heuristic study is a unique "creative challenge", requiring that the method meet the particularity of myself my topic (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 42). Below I outline my personal navigation of this method.

Initial Engagement

The initial engagement phase contains the selection of an area of passionate interest, one both personally and societally significant (Sela-Smith, 2002). My sense that the relationship between my therapeutic and artistic practices had a yet-unrealised importance to me was equalled by a sense that it might have implications beyond myself. Despite my query's personal origin, I noticed the temptation at the initial engagement stage to reach for established theory in place of, rather than in conversation with, my own experience. Building a crutch of theoretical validity into my research question (as described in my introduction chapter) threatened to disrupt the heuristic imperative that: "if one is going to be able to discover the constituents and qualities that make up an experience, one must begin with oneself" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 3). Whilst drawing deeply from the literature throughout the research process, this early experience encouraged me to reflexively monitor its potential to veil my own internal data.

Immersion

The immersion phase invited a deepening into dialogue with myself in relation to my query. Free-form personal reflection notes allowed my internal responses, curiosities and felt senses to percolate free from pressure to pre-emptively align with theoretical concepts. In this I found the "critical beginning" of self-dialogue (Moustakas, 1990, p. 3). Creating my own artwork and collecting found imagery expanded this dialogue beyond the written word. Kenny (2012) writes that the immersion phase is an invitation to "stay fully with the experience of the phenomenon in whatever form it takes". This was aided by the quality of indwelling: the intentional process of gazing inward to more deeply comprehend a facet of my experience (Kenny, 2012). I found that my ability to "stay fully with" the phenomena in the immersion phase was dependent on carving adequate space in my contested schedule for regular contact with the research.

Incubation

The active curiosity of immersion was balanced by incubation periods scattered throughout the research process. By "retreating from intense and focussed attention on the question" (Kenny, 2012, p. 8), the emerging phenomena was able to digest on an unconscious level. Alongside my own intuitive and cyclical retreats from the research every few months, disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in November and December of 2020 becoming an enforced incubation period. Whilst unplanned, this gifted me a particularly influential illumination as will be further explored.

Illumination

Despite illuminations being the fourth stage of the heuristic method, the "breakthrough into conscious awareness" of new realisations was scattered intermittently throughout my study (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). This pattern resonates with Sela-Smith's (2002) suggestion that illumination "may take place in a single moment or it may take place in waves of awareness over time" (p. 67). Bringing to mind Rose's (1993) suggestion that dissolves and reconstitutions of knowing are a "crucial aspect of intellectual or aesthetic vision" (p. 504), emerging fragments of new awareness seemed to re-order and re-contextualise each of my

preceding illuminations. I endeavoured to track these shifts of understanding within my personal reflection notes, whilst remaining open to their continual movement.

Explication

This phase saw my implicit awareness externalised into a more explicit form. I began making sense of the layers and vertices of meanings that had emerged through an active examination and classification of key themes within my data. As described by Sela-Smith (2002), new meanings were now able to "take up residence in the researcher" (p. 68). Though I attempted to stay close to my lived experience by building the spine of my findings from my personal reflection notes, the pursuit of "intuitive clues and hunches" was initially crowded by rational ordering processes (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). I seemed to have encountered what Sela-Smith (2002) warns of when utilising the heuristic method for a master's thesis—that the story's 'whole' might be lost in the academic write-up. The incubation period in November and December of 2020 clarified this tension and allowed me to proceed with a re-instated balance of implicit and explicit knowing. The process of re-approaching my findings explication from this angle in itself held crucial data, and so is tracked and discussed in depth at the outset of the following findings chapter.

Creative Synthesis

As a "new whole is born" from this accrued experience, reflection and calibration, the creative synthesis stage offers a culmination of the heuristic research process (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 68). Speaking with my supervisor in February 2021 as I came toward the end of my explication phase, we considered that the creative synthesis had yet to present itself. Awaiting it with curiosity, a helpful parallel emerged. When creating a choreographic piece, it is not until I have sat with the (near) whole of the work, rearranging and consolidating how each moment links into the wider matrix of meaning, that the final moment can be choreographed. Moustakas (1990) also reminded me that "knowledge of the data and a period of solitude and meditation" are essential preparations for enabling creative synthesis" (p. 32). Immersed in a sustained contemplation of the data, an image of a particular choreographic moment rose to mind. Locating a photograph of this moment, I glimpsed a "new whole" of my research findings (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 68).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have contextualised my research endeavour within the framework of heuristic inquiry. I have characterised the offerings and potential limitations of this methodology and explored its suitability for examining my experiences of artistic and therapeutic engagement. I have outlined the methods undertaken in generating the understandings that will now be presented in my findings and discussion chapters.

Chapter 4   —   FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter offers a rendering of the data generated through my research inquiry. Through reflective analysis of the personal documents used to capture my lived experience and theoretical engagement across the study, an initial layer of conceptual connections is presented. As Maizels (1996) endorses when attempting to articulate many intertwined concepts, my findings may be seen as branches from which the "somewhat intangible 'trunk' be revealed implicitly" (p. 3). In this sense, whist offering associations between discoveries, I also allow the reader an element of autonomy in their perception of the accumulating whole. Again, I find myself guided by Rose's (1993) assertion that creative vision crucially involves the "dissolving wholes into parts and reconstituting new integrations again and again, to discover the strange in the midst of the familiar" (p. 504). In order to honour this movement between the strange and the known, I offer the content of my findings alongside portrayals of their pathways of discovery and evolution—the reconstitutions that birthed them. As themes emerging from the data repeatedly spoke to a duality of experience, each subheading in this chapter introduces a dyad—a dialectic between two facets of the notion at hand. This chapter attempts to walk alongside my unfolding awareness, allowing an intimacy with the emergent knowledge before the discussion chapter steps back to take hold of these threads and lace together a broader scope of understanding.

In Focus / Out of Focus

My first attempt at bringing together this findings chapter involved a two-month process of elaborate categorization. I began by working methodically through the personal reflection notes amassed across the research—revisiting the meandering, open-format reflections and tracing key themes. Employing my personal reflections as the backbone of my explication felt congruent with my heuristic approach. Yet, as I dissected the content into around fifty

subheadings, each linked to respective theoretical findings, something began to tighten in myself and seemingly in my data. Knowing that something was missing, and fearing time restraints, I employed the familiar strategy of doubling-down and working harder. I rearranged data, wove in further depictions, and mined the literature. An auspicious incubation period over December 2020—spontaneously emerging from a rescheduled dance project—returned me to my findings chapter at a distance. From here I recognised the absence undeniably: a sort of experiential meagreness despite swathes of laboured content. The subjective truths that my raw reflections carried were here muted, subjugated to the bigger picture, rather than revealing it.

Sitting with my writing in the wake of this realisation, my mind moved to a noted experience across the early research phases.

> A sense that there is something important here and having no idea what it is...but it's moving. There is a strange urgency in that moment to keep going, to not stop and think, to not intervene. It feels like knowing that if you look directly at a glow-in-the-dark star it will disappear from sight—you've got to look at it peripherally to see it glow. Maybe that's what it feels like, a need to look peripherally. Otherwise, what's happening will disappear, what's moving will stop.
> - Personal reflection notes, 19th August 2020

Perhaps my dogged organisational focus had disrupted the mobility of something vital in my data. Could the tacit awareness glowing at the fringes of my understanding have disappeared when I stared it down with a pre-emptive desire to make sense? This struck me as a strange wondering considering that focussing is proposed by Moustakas (1990) to be one of the key qualities of the heuristic endeavour. The quality to which he refers, however, is one of an inner attention—a sustained dwelling with the central meanings of an experience (Moustakas, 1990). This sustained and expansive gaze seems akin to the psychotherapeutic "evenly suspended attention": an "undirected but somehow actively receptive state of mind" (Snell, 2013, p. 1). I was instead wondering about the presence of a more blinkered manifestation of focus—a narrowing into the knowable, toward the controllable.

As an artist-psychotherapist, Marion Milner's writing has accompanied me aptly across this dissertation. Whilst grappling with this question of focus, a passage came to mind in which Milner (1987) links her own experience of a "wide focus of attention that made the world

seem most intensely real and significant" (p. 195), to Ehrenzweig's concept of depth mind. Depth mind is capable of things that surface mind is not—particularly of embracing a complexity of interconnections. Ehrenzweig sees this capability as an unconscious sense of form that can "only be reached by the diffused, wide stare" rather than by the "narrow focus of ordinary attention" (Ehrenzweig as cited in Milner, 1987, p. 195). This diffuse gaze brought to mind a recent reflection I had in the rehearsal room while attempting to fit the pathways of different dancers together with both one-another and the music. Finding a depiction of it in my personal notes, it seemed to uncannily instruct me in the task that now lay before me as I re-approached my findings explication.

> To 'work it out' logically would be some sort of convoluted mathematical undertaking. Instead, without knowing the rationale, I feel a fleeting and peripheral inclination to make certain decisions. On a 'good day', I can give full agency to these seemingly unwarranted directions even though I can't exactly justify them to the dancers. Then, when we run it with the music, it all fits. It's as if there was in fact some part of me that was holding all of the parts together all along… that knew their relationship, that could see a whole. It feels in those moments that if I close one eye to the bits of information (the counts, the facings, the length of phrases) I have a better chance of letting myself hear the total answer.
> - Personal reflection notes, 9th October 2020

Looking at creativity from a Gestalt perspective, Arieti (1976) believes that the creator always perceives some qualities of the finished whole from the beginning of the process, though it cannot be reached linearly. It seemed I needed to draw upon this evident potential give agency to my tacit awareness, here an awareness of the totality of my findings—one that I had failed to access through an industrious juggling of the parts. This chapter holds my effort to embark with this widened-gazed upon the ways in which my findings speak to one another.

Grasping On / Slipping Away

I began the process of beginning again. Reapproaching my findings meant dismantling the original writing that was so laboured over. I felt a startling sense of loss. It seemed somewhat fitting, however, to encounter this feeling during the explication stage considering that loss had emerged as a notable refrain in the creative endeavours that I was attempting to

explicate. In that moment it registered viscerally that this state felt somehow fundamental to the research as a whole. The role of loss in the creation of the new had emerged as a newly orienting central thread.

Navigating the immersion phase near the start of my process, it seems I was already experiencing the threat of loss entailed in the research, writing that;

> Trying to hold all these ideas feels wild…It's like there's fruit hanging for me to grab and then I'm swung around and I'm in a different landscape and I don't have the type of fruit I thought I was gathering, and there's something else to collect…. I don't want to drop the fruit, but I have to stash it somewhere to free up my hands. I try to stash it in columns of my Excel sheet, or points in my word docs, terrified that I'll forget it's there.
> - Personal reflection notes, 31st March 2020

This hope to grasp and retain every encountered concept acutely reminded me of certain anxious stages of choreographic process. Rather than allowing ideas to arise and subside, each new thought is met with a panicked jotting down, resulting in bulging pages of fleeting, often uninterpretable, inspirations. There seems a fear of losing essential parts—as if I could protect myself from the pain of loss by disallowing anything out of my sight. I was reminded too of a recent session with a client who was expressing her own fear that if she didn't notate everything from our sessions precisely, the insights would simply evaporate—our time together reduced to a sort of nothingness. Her comment had stirred a curious dread in me and brought to mind the propensity for my own client note taking to become overworked, as if some insight or wondering might slip away if I don't fasten it into the chronological terrain of my notes.

Yet another part of me—a growing part that catches and questions this grasping—understands that the nature of knowledge isn't this brittle. If moving out of our immediate awareness, an idea may be resting in another crevice of the psyche. In *The interpretation of dreams* (1899) Freud seems to suggest something similar, that "in the unconscious nothing can be brought to an end, nothing is past or forgotten" (p. 576). My own experience of illumination certainly follows a sort of shuffling in and out of availability—insights arising and becoming obscured again, not quite lost but perhaps submerged as they shift to a new position in a changing whole. Within this research, the concept of mourning and its deep

significance to my query seemed to slide, in this manner, in and out of explicit awareness—striking me almost anew each time it arose (as I depict later in this chapter). As with Rose's (1993) description of "reconstituting new integrations again and again" (p. 504), the illumination phase of heuristic research has accordingly occurred for me as a cyclical phenomenon, in which old understandings have often emerged as if new, and fresh discoveries felt as if they were always known.

Bad Apple / Good Apple

A few months into the research I was beginning to recognise how often my reflections on creative process swung between buoyancy and gloom. One day's notes might celebrate the unfettered joys of making work, and the next lament my lack of capacity to create anything worthwhile. Whilst this dynamic was not unfamiliar to me—both in myself and as witnessed in artist peers—having these shifts attentively traced was confronting.

Around the same time that this pattern was materialising, I listened to Marion Milner's self-study, *A life of one's own* (2018), on audiotape. My choice to listen to the text circumvented a noted tendency to become entangled in attempts to analyse, log and categorise themes on my first read. In narrated form, Milner's ideas washed over me at their own pace, leaving traces and impressions uncontrolled by highlighters or margin annotations. Revisiting my personal reflection notes at the outset of consolidating my data, I found an entry from Easter Sunday 2020, simply stating: "Milner: listen again 4 hrs 42 min". Finding this point in the recording, she reads;

> In addition to this inability to see all the facts, blind thinking also showed a tendency to distort those facts it did see. I found that its judgements were hardly ever moderate. It like 'either-or' statements, wanted everything to be all good or all bad. Gradually I became aware how frequently it tried to bolt to extremes. I would find myself assuming perhaps that my work was very good, and then plunging to the opposite attitude as soon as I came up against an inevitable fact showing me that it was not perfect. (Milner, 2018, 4:42:20)

In this description of her fraught relationship to her writing, Milner captures the same jarring flip between assurance and insecurity, the cleaving apart of good and bad, that cut sharply

across my own artistry at times. This 'blind thinking' also seemed to meet inherently with Klein's (1940) notion of the paranoid schizoid position in which benevolent objects and persecuting objects are kept protectively distanced in the mind. This universal experience in which "aggression is contained in the hateful relationship with the bad breast, safely distanced from the loving relationship to the good breast", is initially occupied in our first few months and returned to continually throughout life (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 94).

Sitting with this familiar theoretical notion amidst the new context of this research, an experience came to mind from tertiary dance training a decade ago. After receiving some pointed praise at the beginning of a particular choreographic project, I became strangely tunnel visioned—ignoring obvious issues in the pacing of the piece and clinging to a felt invincibility in my decision making. On receipt of constructive feedback from peers about these problems, a disproportionate devastation ensued. The feedback implied that the work was basically good with room for improvement, yet I could no longer see any merit in it. In retrospect it seems it was too difficult for me to tolerate the idea that the work, and by extension me as its maker, could be both worthy and flawed—good and bad at once. As Milner's passage continues on to describe, "in the moment of swinging over I felt a gnawing empty fear, a terrified giving-up and sinking into lifelessness because I was that other thing, a failure, no good" (Milner, 2018, 4:43:34).

Reimagining my experience alongside Milner's (2018) blind thinking and Klein's (1940) paranoid schizoid split, it seemed to me that again there might be a loss being avoided. The phrase "one bad apple can spoil the bunch" rose spontaneously to mind. I then recalled that upon first hearing this phrase around age 7, I had become gripped by the notion that one of the apparently peaceful apples sitting in the fruit bowl might in fact be a defector threatening the ruin of its whole community. Whist I'd encountered enough worm-riddled cartoons to know that apples could go bad, there was something particularly striking about imagining them silently interloping with the good ones. As Canale (2016) suggests in her exploration of ambivalence: "the split between the good and bad is still there, but they are now in the same arena, not cut off and unaffected by one another" (para. 6).

Thinking back to the 'flipping' I had been noticing in relation to my own creative work it seemed that, just as the proverb prompted, I feared the ruinous potential of allowing one bad apple a place in the bowl. To have accepted that the aforementioned choreographic project was worthy but flawed would have been to allow the successful parts and faulty parts to be acknowledged together—co-existing in both the work and by extension myself as its creator. And, if indeed one faulty part has the potential to ruin all, what I apparently stand to lose in allowing this co-existence becomes evident. Thinking of my response to the critique of my peers, I am reminded of Symington's (2003) assertion that "disapproval only has an effect on those untamed elements in me that I have not embraced" (p. 16). But how to embrace something that apparently puts at risk all that is good?

Preservation / Commemoration

> There is also an awareness of confused chronologies, owing to the several interlocking but separate histories: the story of the experiences; the first recording of them; the later understanding of them or their representation; the story, now, of all the other sequences put together. (Bowlby as cited in Milner 1934, p. xxvii)

Here Bowlby speaks of Milner's (1934) extensive self-study of the conditions of her own happiness. Whilst this sense of "confused chronologies", of divergent experiences of self, could be speaking to my own experience across this research, it also resonates directly with how I have felt my selfhood seemingly scatter, proliferate or recompose within a creative work. In August 2020, myself and a close collaborator worked on a short film translation of a dance work that lost its live season to a COVID-19 lockdown. The film saw us occupy amorphous characters inhabiting different aesthetic worlds. Realising afterwards that I felt notably fortified, I tried to unpack what might have been reviving about the project.

> It's as if I got to inhabit myself existing in other places. Not just physical places but places of meaning- be a symbol, I suppose, moving around in different contexts. "I" can't really disappear because I'm mobile, re-applicable to lives beyond my own. I am me in the films, but dispersed out into different realities. I guess then there's less chance of getting lost… there's lots of places to remain alive.
> - Personal reflection notes, 20th August 2020

As many of my usual creative, social, and professional domains of self-experience were lost to the pandemic, it seems I found myself building multiple selfhoods into our choreographic worlds. This notion of art as a means through which to seemingly preserve aspects of self reminded me of Estes's (1992) accounts of making aesthetic objects as talisman. Her evocative rendering of this process evoked a sort of embalming of distinct personal experiences. Recognising this in the context of these findings, I initially felt I was witnessing in myself another manoeuvre to deny loss—a claim that I could hold on to, indeed mummify, all parts of me.

Yet I also knew that the experience of this project felt far from the split world that I encountered in the earlier described choreographic assignment. Whilst that attempt to evade losing the good had felt limiting of who I was permissible to be, this project had felt consolidating and allowing. Alongside this sense, another quandary arose at the idea of this being simply another loss avoidance strategy. What would it mean for me to utilise symbolic manifestations of self in order to avoid loss, when the very capacity to symbolise is built upon the bedrock of loss acknowledgement? As Segal (1952) states, "every situation that has to be given up in the process of growing, gives rise to symbol formation" (p. 203). Symbols are born as stand-ins for things lost in reality. My ability to create and manipulate symbols when creating artworks—and indeed to play verbally with imagery in the therapy room—has stemmed from a previous letting go. Returning to Estes's (1992) accounts of her talisman, her framing of art's importance as "commemorating the seasons of the soul" helped me with this (p. 13). In commemoration you are not attempting to preserve the original. Instead, it is a reminiscence, a memorialisation—proclaiming the significance of a recognised absence.

Mourning / Making

Perhaps, in this way, creative projects help me to commemorate self-experiences that I can no longer access. Turning this idea over, the word "commemorate" suddenly felt too cognisant. Reflecting on my state going into the film project, I could not have named the frightening loss of self-experience I was encountering in lockdown. I did not yet know it consciously. What if the project wasn't a compensation for a recognised loss, but rather the

process of recognition itself? This question took my mind to another recent choreographic process which had prompted the reflection;

> "It's not that I am designing melancholic material to depict a particular sadness... it's almost as if I am looking to the material to tell me what sadness I might need to own, to locate something."
> - Personal reflection notes, 20th August 2020

I tried to make more sense of this by turning the thought "creation as loss-location" over in my mind. The word "mourning" presented itself simply to me. I had found my way back to familiar theoretical terrain. Revisiting the gathered excepts labelled "mourning" in my original draft, the following passage now leapt out.

> Mourning is not simply a form of psychological work; it is a process centrally involving the experience of making something, creating something adequate to the experience of loss. What is "made" and the experience of making it—which together might be thought of as "the art of mourning"—represent the individual's effort to meet, to be equal to, to do justice to, the fullness and complexity of his or her relationship to what has been lost. (Ogden, 2000, p. 66)

I was moved to find that something familiar had been reached afresh, returned to through another door. Despite having read Ogden's (2000) eloquent rendering of the art of mourning multiple times before, I now met it experientially anew. Indeed, it was both the product (here, the film itself), alongside the lived process of its creation, that had contained my attempt to "meet" the complex loss that was occurring for me.

I felt the arising sense that allowing loss to be known to myself was an acknowledgement that the good and bad apples will inevitably be intermingled. The universal difficulty of this task is perhaps evident in the very existence of its own apple-laden proverb. This difficulty, as Klein (1940) reminds us, is due to the arising of depressive anxiety: essentially, "distress about impending loss" (p. 126). Even within spheres of ego-psychological critique of Kleinian thinking, clinical experience informs a general agreement that the struggle between love and hate leads to depressive fears (Kernberg, 1969). Klein (1940) more ardently frames these fears as ones of self-induced abandonment—pushing away the good part-object because of one's own schizoid hate toward the bad. The characteristic guilt of the depressive position (induced by such an acknowledgement of one's own destructiveness) is itself centralised in Winnicott's (1954) alternate conception of the position as "the Stage of Concern" (p. 264). In

this respect, engaging with the art of mourning seems to demand that I acknowledge not only the presence of the bad apple, but that it is my retaliatory hate toward it, rather than its own presence, that might just spoil the bunch.

Love / Hate

I began to wonder how I had seemingly gone about clearing this anxious hurdle repeatedly in a career of artistic projects in which I have indeed created something new—have evidently manifested symbols to meet my losses. To allow objects to be whole despite the corresponding anxiety, Klein held that "the child must believe that her love is stronger than her hate" (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 95). Some level of concern around my own destructive potential might be an expected, even necessary, experience when creating, in that such guilt indicates an "increased capacity to relate to complete or whole objects" (St. Clair, 2003, p. 43). Yet I must then on some fundamental level believe that this destructive potential is able to be moderated by a creative force—to be offset, as Klein (1940) suggests, by love. I considered the interloping imagery of violence and care that I had noted appearing within my choreographic work.

> It's often there, some delicate line between support and persecution. I ask the dancers to move ambiguously between romantic embraces and strangle holds, to hit one another, but with beautiful flowers. They offer apparent affection to a vulnerable body, but with unnecessary force.
> - Personal reflection notes, 10th December 2020

Perhaps here I am grappling with guilt—manifesting the psychic violence of which I am both concerned about and capable of. Peters (1961) asserts that "the artist externalizes the hostility into a work of art" (p. 135), or as I might reframe it, the work allows me to meet with the hostility within me. And yet there is another force present—a mitigating care that keeps the imagery on its ambivalent knife edge.

Opposed / Superimposed

> We, this people, on this small and drifting planet
> Whose hands can strike with such abandon
> That in a twinkling, life is sapped from the living
> Yet those same hands can touch with such healing, irresistible tenderness
> That the haughty neck is happy to bow
> And the proud back is glad to bend
> Out of such chaos, of such contradiction
> We learn that we are neither devils nor divines
> (Angelou, 1995)

As well as mapping onto the dialectic of imagery I was noticing in my artwork, this excerpt of Maya Angelou's (1995) poem roused a feeling that I had noticed peppering my research process to date. Throughout the study I was encountering varying shades of a sort of emotional 'double vision'—conspicuously conflicted in my feelings towards the research, a theoretical premise, an artwork, or myself.

> That feeling that comes up, as in the diminishing heat of an argument with someone you know well, that there isn't an answer per se. That you momentarily grasp them, and yourself, as being on both the right and wrong side of it, all at once. And then the sides themselves shift onto each other like one image in double vision. It's somehow exhausting and relieving. Sad but soft.
> - Personal reflection notes, 20th July 2020

Differentiating this duality from that of the paranoid schizoid split is a core divergence—here the contrasts are seen at once, superimposed. Born in the realm of psychoanalysis, the term ambivalence has been diluted somewhat within everyday language. As Rycroft (1995) points out, in its original characterisation ambivalence denotes the co-existence of directly opposing or conflicting emotions stemming from the same source. Essayist Emily Pine speaks of ambivalence as a location of possibility—a crossroads at which point all options are potentials. Pine feels it should be the writer's aim to remain in this challenging yet "very generative space" (O'Connell, 2020, 06:47). I was reminded of the common reference in choreographic spaces to "generating material": producing new movement that is raw and alive, not to be shaped until later. This is not a very comfortable stage for me—staying with material that is yet to be understood, moulded, contextualised, or proven useful. And yet it is

the point where the new arises. Seeming to parallel my experience of the heuristic methodology guiding this study, ambivalence asks me to tolerate the generative absence of certainty as I swim in the motion of process.

Complete / Incomplete

What feels so engagingly realistic to me about Klein's (1949, 2002) thinking is that the imperfectability of the self and the world is mirrored in one's negotiation of the depressive position itself. The transition away from parts to wholes that mourning offers cannot be entirely accomplished—even in a facilitative holding environment. As Ogden (1993) notes, there is no unilinear development from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive, instead these positions operate as a dialectic. It seems that the acknowledgement of loss and the avoidance of loss that I have been grappling with across this research might both have a place. I find it curious that authors such as Balint criticize the comparative unwillingness of the Kleinian group to acknowledge therapeutic failure (Balint as cited in Kernberg, 1969), when Klein's ideas have directly encouraged me to grapple with my own inevitable failings.

If the importance of a love/hate dialectic in the creation of art is mirrored in the imperfectability of the depressive position, I would venture that it is reflected again in the heuristic process. I have caught instances in my research process in which I seem to deploy Moustakas as a punitive team member for my superego. My response to his paragraph below perhaps illuminates this best.

> If I am investigating the meaning of delight, then delight hovers nearby and follows me around. It takes me fully into its confidence and I take it into mine. Delight becomes a lingering presence; for a while, there is only delight.
> (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11)

"This doesn't seem to be the case for me", I note,

> I am not just followed by a mature relation to my depressive anxieties. I am flung from a deepening tolerance of ambivalence into a schizoid kickback, a push away from the vulnerability that the research is engendering. I sweep from a joy in revealing inner impressions through images, be it in movement or words, to recoiling in almost paralysing fear.
> - Personal reflection notes, 18th June 2020

Yet, across the research process a growing part of me has recognised these apparent slips as vital to the research phenomena at hand. That my engagement at every stage of the heuristic process will not be complete, whole or unwavering, is revealing of the nature of the very experiences under investigation. What Milner (1934) describes as "doubts, delays, and expeditions on false trails" (p. xiv), seem an inherent component of the perpetually unfinished business of moving toward the depressive position—towards wholeness.

Pretend / Real

If making an artwork allows me to externalise conflicting inner feelings—forming the conflict into tangible and malleable symbols—it seems to simultaneously to allow the social impropriety of some of those feelings to be borne. Displays of violence or indecency, greed or grandiosity, feel more immediately bearable within a choreographic frame. In wondering what about art in particular might convince me to permit aspects of my destructive potential to be exposed to the gaze of myself and others, I revisited Lombardo's (2007) thinking around conventions. The "entries into a special frame of mind" that he suggests are akin to a child's "let's pretend" (p. 365), bring the scaffolds of my own practice to mind: the bounds of the studio space, rules of style and genre, relationships with forerunning artistic lineages, adherence or subversion of familiar techniques, conventions of the theatre space, etc. Each of these framing elements indeed marks a separation from everyday life, reassuring me that emerging truths are nested inside a sort of fiction.

Kris (1952), Arieti (1976), and Rank (1989), all attest that such conventions free up a certain psychic vigilance—this energy then available instead for a state of play with the newly permissible material. Perhaps this elucidates my felt flexibility within artistic spaces. Freed to recognize potentially disturbing feelings and granted a protected space to relate to them, a malleable collection of symbols can be newly juxtaposed and thus newly understood, without the feared 'real life' ramifications of enacting them or announcing them over dinner. Considering the function of artistic convention in this way brought to mind the role of the

therapeutic frame—the boundaries and conditions of the therapy encounter that distinguish the "play space" of the therapy from the "reality world" outside (Stern, 2016, p. 128). As with artmaking, access to something experientially true is facilitated within the therapy by a suspension of immediate reality. As Winnicott writes in *Playing and reality* (2005), the very fact that a symbol of the breast is not the breast itself "is as important as the fact that it stands for the breast" (p.6). In the same sense, the fact that the therapy is not the client's real life is essential in allowing it to effectively stand in, symbolically, for the client's real life.

Sitting with this I realised that I seemed to have returned full circle to my earlier intrigue around loss being required to stimulate the creation of the symbol. Perhaps the temporary loss of the real (through the 'as if' or 'let's pretend' of therapy or art) necessitates the rich creation of symbols to reform this lost reality—symbols which then allow a malleable reworking and reconsideration of previously concretised experience. It struck me that this malleability of the symbol—it's potential to gather, condense, merge, differentiate and layer multiplicit meanings—might comparably underpin the transformational re-arrangements that therapy and art can provide. Paralleling creative and therapeutic conventions in this way seemed to breathe new life into my understanding of Winnicott's (2005) assertion of the essentially paradoxical nature of the analytic encounter: it being both real and illusory.

Despite the necessary unreality of a creative process, my data affirmed that in the wake of one, I feel more real. My personal reflections are peppered with reports of feeling more in possession of myself, more aware of my own actuality, amidst a creative project. Following a project in mid-2020, I noted "It's like waking suddenly—I'm here". Linking Bion and Winnicott's stances, Eigen (2004) emphasises that for something to feel real, it must undergo unconscious processing. Perhaps the unconscious dream-like logics of artistic process, counterintuitively, are then founding this sense of 'realness' in me. Symington (2003) offers the evocative metaphor of painting pictures inside the self as a means of coming to know one's experiences. From the chaotic impulses and sensations within us "we create a series of pictures that we dare to call our mind" (p. 13). Perhaps in making art I am adding paintings of long denied loss to the gallery of my mind, resourcing myself with palpable representations of what has already been painfully encountered, making those encounters— my embodied experience—real.

Knowing / Not Knowing

Another trait of the artistic play-space that was becoming more evident under my heuristic reflexion, was a diffusion of the need to know. During the early devising stage of a dance work in September 2020 I reflected, "the urge to understand exactly what the unfolding ideas mean or where I am taking them disappear behind what feels like an intent openness—a loitering in unformed possibility". Akin to Schafer's (1958) concept of adaptive regression, perhaps the artistic frame excused me, temporarily, from the "fetters" of my rational, certainty seeking mind (Arieti, p. 51). This state seems to map onto the notion of negative capability—made familiar to me by Wilfred Bion (1995) and Jessica Benjamin (2004), but aptly originating from a poet, Keats—who describes it as being "capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (Keats as cited in Hebron, 2014, para. 2).

The experience of seeking a hospitable relationship with uncertainty, of attempting to hold doubt with the same care as understanding, bridges my experience of sitting with an artwork and sitting with a client. In both settings the necessity of this state has been apparent, holding space for what might emerge, uncluttered by a pressure to understand. Yet this description feels deceptively calm—it seems hard to recollect the true challenge of this state. Assurances (from both psychotherapeutic and creative theory) that such free-floating uncertainty is part of the plan, might indeed be forgone alongside other "reason", once immersed in the unknown. The conviction that the boundless doubt invited in negative capability is distinct from impotence, from simply being barren, can feel doubtful. Swimming in this unknown can feel, at times, like drowning.

Halfway into this research process, in the wake of a rehearsal in which nothing seemed to work, I challenged myself to sit with the experience of being unsure. I noted the subsequent arising of "a strange feeling of slight sickness, a fear of the exposure that there's nothing really there—meaninglessness. I might be empty, have no edges or certainties". In noticing my description of this fear of uncertainty as akin to a sort of depressive anxiety, I wondered if I was intuiting that uncertainty too might threaten loss. Perhaps it was the content of my own mind that I feared losing—the rational thoughts that I have been trained throughout my

life to recognize as myself. However, akin to my response to my client's fear of losing the content of our sessions, I felt on some level that the apparent threat was misleading. Ehrenzweig (as cited in Milner, 1987) suggests that the creative state indeed appears as an emptiness of consciousness, but only because its fluid content cannot be gripped by the fixed perceptions of the surface mind. As Milner (1987) attests, the depth mind—the tacit understanding that I set out to prioritise in this research—can only be accessed by this sort of "absent-minded watchfulness" (p. 195).

Broken / Reformed

"Ring the bells that still can ring

Forget your perfect offering

There is a crack, a crack in everything

That's how the light gets in."

-Lyrics from "Anthem" by Leonard Cohen.

In a rare example of Cohen commenting on his song writing, he spoke to these lines.

> There is a crack in everything that you can put together: Physical objects, mental objects, constructions of any kind. But that's where the light gets in, and that's where the resurrection is and that's where the return, the repentance is. It is with the confrontation, with the brokenness of things. (Cohen as cited in Werber, 2016)

Bringing to mind the Japanese art of Kintsugi in which broken ceramics are reassembled with gold, Cohen seems to gesture toward the same potential revealing itself in my findings—that the embracing of breakages might be a holistically resuscitating force.

With loss as one fundamental breakage that I seek to move toward through my artistic endeavours, I notice myself curiously sheepish of Oppenheim's (2005) critique of those viewing art as primarily attending to faulty object relationships. Yet I don't agree that the drive to represent painful experience, to recognise cracks, need restrict creative forward-reach or the "metamorphic spirit of Life", as these critiques imply (Maizels, 1996, p. 10). In fact, it seems to be the very moment in which I "execute the painting of my loss, my handicap, my crime" (Symington, 2003, p. 5), that indeed "the light gets in" (Cohen as cited in

Werber, 2016). After watching the first full run of a recently completed choreography, I reflected that;

> The scenes and transitions that initially, during the process, seemed faulty and dysfunctional, that felt stumbly or disappointing, have somehow found their purpose. They are even small glowing highlights, delightfully true human fingerprints. It brings to mind therapeutic rupture and repair—the mistake becoming the best way of discovering something… something unseeable if things were entirely smooth.
>
> - Personal reflection notes, August 14th 2020

My experience across this research has reinforced, however, that embracing these cracks, painting the internal picture of what is broken, cannot be consciously demanded. As Symington (2003) writes, "the painting, the image, arises spontaneously out of myself" (para. 15). As I come towards the end of this chapter, I reflect on my wide-gazed re-orientation to explicating these findings for the second time. Whilst I indeed could not force my tacit findings into explicit form, it seems that facilitating my own surrender of control, grappling with my resistances to depth mind and so softening my clutch on the explicit, has carved vital space to begin to picture—and so language—something experientially true.

Conclusion

This findings chapter has surveyed the ways in which my experiences in the realm of artistic creation map onto and illuminate my intrapsychic landscape and experiences of therapeutic engagement, as well as the lived experience of the research process itself. The themes that have emerged in this nexus have included the significance of focus – both wide and narrow, the fear of losing one's own thoughts, the polarising either/or of "blind" paranoid schizoid thinking, the threat of a bad apple and it's relation to ambivalence, the arising of a symbol as a commemoration of loss, the role of mourning as an act of creation, the possibility of love enduring the presence of hate, the tolerance of incompletion and imperfection, the role of a play-space in accessing truth, representation as a path to the real, and the resurrection of the whole through embracing what is broken. Each of these themes has arisen in relation to the question 'what is the impact of experiences of artistic creation upon the psychotherapist?' In

the following discussion chapter, I will broaden my gaze upon these findings in order to draw connecting arcs that consider the implications and success of this research in answering that very question.

Chapter 5 — DISCUSSION

Introduction

My experience as artist, therapist, and researcher have mutually shaped the data conveyed in my findings chapter. These strands each offer understandings that intrinsically interlink as they come into relationship in the following discussion. In this chapter new themes emerging from the synthesis of my findings are explored, before bringing these themes together to respond directly to my research query. This chapter also considers the assets and limitations of this piece of heuristic research in generating new knowledge, and the potential implications of this knowledge for the wider profession of psychotherapy.

Transformation

A primary experience across this research—one that perhaps comprises its greatest limitation and its greatest revelation simultaneously—has been encountering my evidently ambivalent relationship to transformation. As Sela-Smith (2002) describes of the heuristic method, "once access is made through feeling experiences, wholes that were formed out of limited or flawed awareness can be reconstructed" (p. 62). Through this reconstruction, the meanings underpinning our experience can be transformed. The initiation of profound change through facilitating access to affect is also a notion central to the realm of psychotherapy. Jung (1933) famously stated that in the meeting of two personalities, akin to that of two chemicals, "both are transformed" (p. 49). As the therapist's involvement in the intersubjective field of psychotherapeutic work has become increasingly acknowledged within analytic theory, it has become even clearer that meaningful therapeutic process affects the analyst as well as the patient (Jaenicke, 2011). As a psychotherapist I am opening myself to being changed by my clients.

This study has brought to the fore the significance of this same principle in the context of artistic creation. My findings offer that through creative process I am not just expressing self-experiences but engaging in the continued modification of these. Alongside allowing something of myself to be seen (for instance the interloping of destructive and loving forces within me), the art-making process also appears to be acting upon these qualities (for instance refashioning the tension of these interloping forces via the formation and manipulation of symbols). Perhaps this modification process is what Turco (2001) refers to when he says that in art making the "contents of the inner world interpenetrate the reality ego" (p. 547). Put simply, the creative act changes the artist by giving them a clearer view of themselves (Oppenheim, 2005). To me this evokes the psychoanalytic concept of the intersubjective third: a triangular space between therapist and client unconsciously occupied "for the purpose of freeing themselves from the limits of whom they had been to that point" (Ogden, 2004, p. 189). It seems that my relationship to my artwork involves a similar third dimension: a space in which the meeting of I-as-subject and me-as-object might facilitate change in the self. This is further supported by the alignment of the intersubjective third with Winnicott's (2005) notion of potential space: a space of play and imagination that innately connects to the creative endeavour in mapping onto the crucial 'let's pretend' offered by the frame of artistic convention.

Ogden (2004) asserts that the process of having oneself "given back" via this third dimension is "not a returning of oneself to an original state; rather, it is a creation of oneself as a (transformed, more fully human, self-reflective) subject for the first time" (p. 189). The hope of this transformation seems central to my engagement with both art making and therapy. It is the hope of finding new ways of being: new ways of bearing loss, and indeed embracing loss in the welcoming of the new. As I move towards the close of this research process, I recognise in hindsight this very hope in my selection of methodology 12 months ago. In placing the self of the researcher at the centre of the heuristic inquiry, research discoveries are fundamentally self-discoveries. As Moustakas (1990) writes, "while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge" (p. 9). Conversations with my supervisor at the outset of the project also made clear these potential personal impacts of undertaking a heuristic self-study, priming me

for the likelihood of locating "new regions of myself" through its methods (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11).

And yet, as much as this research has elucidated my hope for transformation, it has equally revealed my evasion of it. Flights into intellectualisation and pre-emptive control that pledged to keep me in the known, the unchanging, intervened at various stages of the process (for instance in the dense first drafting of my findings). My personal reflection notes capture distinct moments in which I seem to reject possible newness. Evoking the image of a baby refusing to let in food, in January 2020 I wrote: "reading the first few lines of the article, there is a burning interest that turns my head, literally, away from it". Even the initial wrestle with my research question revealed an impulse to turn away from the personal impacts of my inquiry by recruiting theory in place of my own experience. Yet despite the potential to impede my engagement, this tension within the research process itself has also served to augment a central theme of the emerging data. My lived experience of therapy and artmaking appear to be fundamentally connected by the same dialectic: the paradoxical hope for, and fear of, change.

Catastrophic Change

Scanning through the blog of printmaker Sybil Archibald, I was caught by an evocative red and purple monotype titled 'Windows'. Under the artwork on her blog Archibald had mused "is this a sunrise or sunset? I wasn't sure until I realized it is both. One way of being is ending as another is coming into form" (Archibald, 2020). It struck me that the peaceful nature of Archibald's language: "one way of being is ending", felt at odds with the distress that can arise in me when a change of my own is in motion. And indeed, a rather more chaotic sense of destruction features heavily in the psychotherapeutic literature around change and creation. A notable letter from Winnicott to Klein in November of 1952 brings their thinking closer than ever in this area, with Winnicott making reference to the "irreducible link between destruction and creativity" that Klein herself vehemently fostered (Winnicott as cited in Groarke, 2003, p. 486). I find Peters' (1961) contributions in this area particularly evocative in his depiction of artistic creation as destruction by incorporation, comparing the

destruction inherent in the creative act to that of eating—food violently destroyed and yet assimilated into oneself (p. 131).

Contemplating my subjective data in relation to these theoretical offerings has brought an additional consideration. Beyond the essential fact of destruction: the necessity of making room for the new via the demolition of the old, I have found that my particular orientation to this demolition matters significantly. My presence to the act of destruction, my capacity and position in bearing witness to it, impacts the nature of the change that it heralds. Bion (1984, 1995) and Goldberg's (2008) thinking seems to corroborate this noticing, in their suggestion that the process of grappling with change is an indispensable aspect of psychic growth. With loss being inherent in change as I have laid out, this grappling with change might equally be considered a grappling with loss. This connection returns me pointedly to the mourning process that has emerged instrumentally within my own findings. Levine's (2016) assertion that "at the moment of change, you look into the abyss" substantiates this link (p. 36), in evoking the—indeed abysmal feeling—unknowns that mourning entails. Connecting transformation and mourning in this way perhaps elucidates Segal's (1980) observation that depressive negotiations bring a "radical alteration in [ones] view of reality" (p. 73).

I posit that it is this radical alteration that is simultaneously dreaded and courted within my therapeutic and artistic pursuits. Winnicott's (1974) notion of fear of breakdown and Bion's (2014) notion of catastrophic change both highlight this dread of encountering emotional truth: truth that might disastrously alter the self. Though "catastrophic" is contended by some as overly dramatic, I feel the word aptly captures the "real dangers" of the existing personality intersecting with "some mysterious unknown force which may be either developmental or destructive" (Harris Williams, 2012, p. 3). In Maizel's (1996) description of catastrophic change as a "quivering" between paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, mourning is again implied as a key component of radical self-alteration (p. 7). In as such, it is not surprising that the inextricable connection of mourning and creativity is paralleled in the relationship between catastrophic change and creativity, with Harris Williams (2012) asserting that the "capacity to think creatively is the same as a capacity to tolerate catastrophic change" (p. 2). I find myself wondering if indeed they could be conceived of as different conceptualisations of the same phenomenon: catastrophic change viewing as an

event what mourning sees as a process. Or might catastrophic change name a particular transformative moment embedded within the wider transformative process of mourning? This wondering feels a somewhat lofty stroke in the context of this research—the scope of the study limiting its sufficient interrogation—yet my repeated return to this relationship perhaps suggests a fertile avenue for future research.

Beauty

In probing the relationship of catastrophic change and artistic creation, notions of aesthetic beauty step into the picture. A compelling wondering has arisen in me around whether the very risk of catastrophe, the proximity to upheaval, might be in itself beautiful. My own artistic interests seem to support such a link in my aesthetic enjoyment of choreographic language that sits on a knife-edge of known and unknown, indeed "quivering" between the two, to borrow Maizel's (1996) expression (p. 7). It also corresponds to clinical moments in which the holding of a marked emotional dialectic has registered, sensorially, as beautiful to myself and my client. Whilst this personal noticing seems to resonate with some of Harris Williams' thinking, such as her "beautiful internal combined object" (2012, p. 6), I find it at odds with other contributions. In her work with Meltzer (2018), their interpretation of Bion posits that it is ultimately the new that its beautiful: newness providing an "emotional experience of the beauty of the world and its wondrous organization" (p. 20). Whilst this aligns with Segal's (1952) sense that beauty is of the life instinct and ugliness of the death instinct, it controverts my own experience of aesthetic beauty as holding both. Yet intriguingly, Segal (1952) also suggests that beauty contains "the desire to unite into rhythms and wholes" (p. 207): wholes that I would argue must by definition integrate the duality of experience, and in so include death. Whilst this is one area that I find Segal uncharacteristically unclear on, perhaps our positions meet in the idea that—whether the outcome is deemed beautiful or not— "giving the fullest expression to the conflict and the union between those two" (life and death) is indeed the central endeavour of the artist (Segal, 1952, p. 207).

What do these emerging syntheses offer in response to the question: how do experiences of artistic creation impact upon the psychotherapist? As Cooper (2016) notes, how therapists experience and work with "our own sense of incompleteness, our own grief" during the therapy is essential to its progress (p. 3). This research has revealed my artistic processes to be arenas in which I test and develop this essential ability to face into my own grievances and fallibility. As the primary vessel of both therapeutic and artistic work is the self, I carry these capacities between spheres: the extent to which I can embrace transformation in my artmaking corresponding with my ability do so in my role as psychotherapist.

The findings of this study suggest that the artmaking process mirrors the therapeutic process in the provision of a third dimension that facilitates me being 'given back' to myself. In both spaces this 'giving back' has proved to involve change: a recalibration of aspects of the self in response to emotional truths revealed by the third perspective. Such change, even when growthful, fundamentally involves the integration of loss: a mourning process that can feel catastrophic in the movement from known to unknown. Reflecting closely on these processes in my artmaking clarifies my motivation and orientation towards my therapeutic work by revealing a similar hope: to embrace growth in the self (mine and the client's) by coming into closer relationship with the mourning it requires. In this sense, reflecting on experiences of artistic creation has clarified my personal relationship to my profession of psychotherapy.

A specific therapeutic capacity that my findings suggest is honed within my artistic practice, is the ability to symbolise challenging experience. As a developing therapist I am endeavouring to grow my proficiency in signifying the affect moving in the interpersonal field between me and my client. Segal (1952) makes clear that to create art the artist too must learn to symbolise depressive experience, necessitating that they "accept the reality of death for the object and the self" (p. 206). Alongside the process of symbolising, the therapist must develop the ability to contain the psychic content of the other. This process of allowing the mind to expand without being destroyed is one which Harris Williams (2012) believes is also developed by learning to "tolerate the aesthetic conflict" in artistic creation (p. 6). In this sense I feel that processes of artistic creation assist me in developing a flexible, robust

container for both myself and my clients' psychic contents, and the potential to come to know these contents through the symbolic function.

Whilst certainly an area requiring further research, I venture to suggest that the differing parameters, pressures, freedoms and opportunities of the therapeutic and artistic spheres allow me to experience this ongoing grappling with death, conflict, destruction, or loss, in divergent ways. With each sphere calling for the involvement of the self as the primary tool, moving between these two spaces innately transfuses the distinct embodied knowledge generated in the other. I would be intrigued to investigate further my speculation that one's overall relationship to mourning might, as a result, become uniquely multifaceted by this specific cross-pollination of therapist-as-artist/artist-as-therapist.

Whilst experiences of artistic creation evidently have meaningful impact upon me as a therapist, it feels important to distinguish that it is not the artwork per se that makes this impact. I am not suggesting that the act of making dance material, for instance, is in itself innately strengthening of negative capability or the capacity to mourn. The outer artwork alone cannot integrate splits in the internal world, rather it is the inner artwork, the internal representation, that integrates. My findings evidence that the conventions of the outer artwork aid a facilitative and freeing suspension of reality that may foster such a representation, a symbol, to manifest. Yet it is this tacit image, rather than the framing conventions, that symbolises the loss—that allows it to be represented in the self. As Symington (2003) writes, "at the moment when a representative image is created the pain is embraced" (p. 14). This understanding reinforces my sense of the role of the therapeutic frame in my work as a psychotherapist—technique and convention may be fundamentally facilitative yet change itself arises from the internal objects of myself and my client (Harris Williams, 2012).

This study frames the impact of artistic creation upon me as psychotherapist as facilitating the integrative inner artworks "which we dare to call our mind" (Symington, 2003, p. 13). Levine (2016) writes about how "a mutual survival of destructiveness" can be a source of passionate and creative change for therapist and client alike (p. 36). This study has affirmed that my acknowledgement, representation of, and survival of such destructiveness might

itself underlie my creativity in my artistic and therapeutic practices. Facing into the disaster and the hope that catastrophic change heralds, appears crucial to the moments of creative transformation that I seek in each sphere.

Research Implications

An Imperfect Relationship to Imperfection

Perhaps the inevitability of imperfection revealed in both the content and process of this study in itself holds a value for the body of psychotherapeutic literature. Whilst the field of psychotherapy upholds ambivalence and uncertainty as vital aspects of the endeavour, I feel my study assists in illuminating a lesser discussed layer of this relationship: that the therapist's relationship to imperfection and uncertainty may in itself be imperfect and uncertain. While negative capability is indeed a vital quality to cultivate in the therapist, this study presents a lived experience of the imperfectability of this capacity. The idea that an ideal level of negative capability might be attained presents a paradox that surely undermines the notion itself. And yet drawing from my own experience as a beginning therapist, this very paradox can become easily enlivened, appearing as a felt pressure to become perfect at tolerating imperfection: to have found the answer to not needing to find the answer. I feel that such a pressure—one perhaps easily projected onto supervisors, tutors and authors—has the ironic potential to revert the practitioner, via a super-ego injunction of sorts, to a paranoid schizoid realm. Through a transparent grappling with the flaws and limitations of my process, I hope this study offers a relatable venture towards negative capability that realistically highlights the innate and necessary failure to reach or retain it in an ideal form.

The Training Therapist

This research suggests the potential for core therapeutic capacities to be developed within the artistic experience including the negotiation of depressive anxieties, furthering of self-knowledge, ability to contain and symbolise material, and fostering of negative capability. In my experience of psychotherapy training within the sole post-graduate psychotherapy

training environment in Aotearoa, the development of these capacities was fostered almost entirely within talk-based individual or group environments. Beyond the absence of artistic or other non-talk-based spheres for generating embodied psychotherapeutic competencies in the curriculum itself, my experience of the density of academic demands and assessment processes meant that space for personal artistic engagement was often meagre. This seems concerning considering that empirical research has shown academic components, whilst important, to be distinctly secondary to experiential learning in their value to the developing therapist (Orlinsky, Botermans & Rønnestad, 2001). Considering the solo sample size of this study, I am not proposing that this research strongly indicates that specific artistic engagement should be mandated within psychotherapeutic training. I do feel however that offering both time and encouragement for trainees to engage with their own extracurricular creative modality would likely see these become invaluable adjunct spaces to further the embodied learning that is deeply relevant to trainees' emerging clinical capability.

Clinical Work

All self-knowledge acquired by the therapist has an inevitable impact on their therapeutic work. Jung (1933) viewed it as the most critical aspect of the therapeutic relationship. As such, whilst any self-knowledge generated in this research process will have some bearing upon my work as a clinician, the particular understanding generated around my own relationship to change seems potent in its relevance to processes likely occurring in my clients. Many clients I have worked with have arrived to therapy hoping for change in their lives and yet often work, on varying levels of consciousness, to disallow such a change to take place. Theorists going back as far as Freud describe patients' tendencies to both desire and resist change, with Strupp (1982) reiterating that undesirable ways of being indeed have their own convincing "raison d'être" (p. 250). The likelihood that my clients will themselves be navigating a conflictual relationship with self-alteration increases the importance of my own self-knowledge in this sphere. The potential, as therapists, to become strongly identified with a conscious belief in the beneficial possibilities of change, perhaps impairs our recognition of our own trepidation of it. An increased awareness of my resistance of transformation surely allows me to better navigate, mitigate and make meaning of the potential impingements of this upon my attunement to the client's own relationship to change.

Research Limitations

Wavering Gaze

As mentioned in my methodology chapter, the tacit knowledge emerging in this research process has the potential to be distorted by unexplored parts of the self (Sela-Smith, 2002). Encountering resistance to the self-learning inherent in the heuristic method was usefully revealing of some of the investigated phenomena, however, such resistances also need to be considered in relation to the overall rigor of the research. Moustakas (1990) writes that "through an unwavering and steady inward gaze" we can reach deeper regions of our own human experience (p. 13). Whilst I feel this steady inward gaze was inhabited often and with increasing trust across the research process, "unwavering" it was not. Dawning awareness has at times been disconcerting enough to fundamentally shake, if not avert, that gaze.

I have found it helpful to focus upon Moustakas' (1990) assertion that the heuristic process "requires a return to the self" (p. 13). Like an instruction to return to the breath in meditation when the mind wanders, the need to return implies that some form of straying might be inevitable. Returning to the self throughout this study has meant a commitment to recognising that I have wavered off the path: have shut my eyes to incoming awareness. I propose that it is my dedication to this return to self-knowledge that bolsters the rigor of this research, rather than any disingenuous claim of an unwavering openness to it. Owning the inevitability of my missteps does not make me immune to bias but does, I believe, avoid the super-egoic temptation of tidying those missteps away: a disavowal that would surely offer the greater distortion of my data. Somewhat paradoxically, whilst Sultan (2018) writes that self-reflective research aims to comprehend experience "profoundly and holistically" (p. 27), as this study has revealed, part of my holistic self-view is that my holistic self-view itself will always be incomplete. Etherington (2004) supports my conviction that this is not incompatible with valid research process, in asserting that transparency around this inevitable incompleteness is in fact essential to the rigour of reflective research.

Part of this imperfect self-view has been evident in the experience of losing certain discoveries, of 'forgetting' difficult self-truths throughout the research process. Whilst this potential to repress previous illuminations means I cannot claim that this research presents a

perfectly complete picture of my self-experience, it also seems an innate aspect of the expanding relationship to change that this study has engendered. Goldberg (2008) suggests that "the way to live in a catastrophically changing world is to become adept in the ways of catastrophic change. In analysis, this involves the emotional experience of making (and losing and re-making) meaning" (p. 5). The losing and reconfiguring of understanding that I have encountered across the research is thus perhaps an indication not of a problematic avoidance of meaning, but of the process of meaning making itself.

Seeking the Known

Acknowledging potential bias has included recognising that my tacit awareness may seek the familiar in avoidance of more challenging, disowned, aspects of the self. I have attempted to mitigate this potential distortion of my findings by actively engaging with the key heuristic quality of focusing: clearing an inward space of the "clutter that obscures our understanding" (Kenny, 2012, p. 8), to allow contact with themes that both do and do not fit my pre-existing sense of self. This has been significantly aided by my engagement with other minds. In soliciting dialogue with clinical peers, supervisors and artistic collaborators around my emerging findings, I follow Rose and Loewenthal's (2006) assertion of the importance of external contact in navigating blind spots. The quality of focusing has also aided me in staying attentive to my bodily responses toward emerging data. As promoted in the research context by Key and Kerr (2011), this awareness aligns with Eugine Gendlin's experiential psychotherapy approach in generating trust of the internal felt sense (Ikemi, 2005). Within this study, this has meant attuning to physical feelings of discomfort or unease in response to possible untruths, such as in my experience reading back my initial drafted findings and feeling—indeed viscerally—their experience-avoidant quality. The research process has fortified my sense of the significance of paying attention to what I encounter on an embodied yet unformulated level (Stern, 2010), whether that be in a therapeutic session, a rehearsal, or in heuristic reflection.

Future Inquiry

Strands of this research rouse pronounced interest for future investigation, including, as I have mentioned, the conceptual intersection of catastrophic change and mourning, and the ways in which one's embodied relationship to mourning might be made distinctly multilateral by developing capacities for it in contrasting contexts. These queries—indeed personally invested inquiries with possible universal significance—seem befitting of further heuristic study (Moustakas, 1994). Alongside these specific future tangents, I feel that the phenomena probed in this research could expand and recalibrate perpetually if not bound by the time restrictions and word limits provided by the academic framework in which this study sits. I imagine that indeed an informal heuristic study will continue around these themes across my lifetime. Symington (2003) writes that when a painting is made, each new part modifies the other parts until "finally all the elements come together to form a unity that the person beholding the scene can apprehend as a unity" (p. 13). I feel I have come to a satiating point of unity in the synthesis of this research. And yet, there are undoubtedly further wholes to be found. Sela-Smith (2002) believes that illuminations integrate dissociated aspects of the self. This being true, the perpetual incompleteness of my negotiation of the internal landscapes traversed within this research process indicates that there will be room, and indeed need, for future illuminations to act upon and continue to integrate my lived understanding of the relationship between my artistic and therapeutic endeavours.

Conclusion

"One has to posit I think that there is something in the personality that surges to represent, to paint a picture, of the sensations which bombard us both from within and from the outside." (Symington, 2003, p. 12). I feel that in my life I have responded to this urge to represent sensation via both artistic creation and therapeutic engagement. Whilst my discovery of the psychotherapeutic process has emerged in the last decade, and artmaking run alongside me as long as I can remember, at the culmination of this research I see them sitting in an interrelated and mutually informative relationship. Perhaps this dissertation

might equally have asked "what is the impact of therapeutic work on the creative artist?". The enhanced understanding of parallel resistances, hopes, and challenges across each sphere has itself offered integration: allowing me to bring together these apparently separate pursuits into a more holistic sense of my way of being in each space, and in my wider life. While the work of integration is never done, therapeutic and artistic practice constitute major pillars of my "sustained and yet never completed effort" to accept the wholeness of things and the transformative potential of loss (Arieti, 1976, p. 182).

The mind, said Oliver Wendell Holmes (2015), once "stretched by a new idea or sensation…never shrinks back to its former dimensions" (p. 266). Whilst indeed a radically destabilising process, opening toward ambiguity through my artistic practice offers the potential of a radical recalibrating of my internal relationships: the very stuff of psychotherapy. Just as the process of seeing oneself anew through an artistic or therapeutic process not only reveals but changes the self, this study has done exactly that. From the tacit inkling of the interrelation of my artmaking and therapeutic practices that prompted this research, I have come to an articulated and embodied understanding of the growth-oriented and growth-resistant tensions that make each space significant to my development as a human being. I am entering my burgeoning psychotherapeutic practice with my eyes open to the fertile potential of my artistic endeavours, and with the hope that these continue to birth vital curiosities within my work as a psychotherapist.

Chapter 6 — CREATIVE SYNTHESIS

Gently but firmly holding the essence of my research in my mind, like a physical object under my gaze, an image arose that I soon realised wasn't purely imaginary. It was a diaphanous rendering of a moment from a recent choreographic work—one I presented in 2020 during the December incubation period. Whilst its creation and performance pre-existed the explicit understanding generated and reported through my findings and discussion, I recognised that its imaginal language carried much of this knowledge. Pulling up a photograph of the particular moment that had presented itself, I felt the differentiated arcs of my research drawn inward towards the singular mise-en-scène. I realised that it too was the last, synthesising, moment—the photograph taken seconds before the final black out.

To help digest my instinctive resonance with the image, I wrote the following;

Each has come apart, exertion pulling at the structure—the pink skins are off.
Those swept under the awnings of the collecting vessel, interchanging, have steadied—
rearranged.
Shoes and coats mark the places that used to be people, or moments.
Holding the tent newly above, it is a boat or a coffin—
a transparent shadow of what has been given over,
the filmy body of something new.

Figure 1: Ending Moment

From Daybreak Estate as presented in Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa 2020. Choreographer: Jessie McCall. Performers: Rosa Strati, Terry Morrison, Liana Yew, Sharvon Mortimer. Photographer: Jinki Cambronero.

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