Hiding and Seeking: A heuristic self-inquiry into concealment, discovery and peek-a-boo.

Kate O'Rourke

A dissertation submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Psychotherapy

Faculty of Health and Environmental Science

Department of Psychotherapy (Child & Adolescent)

2022

Supervisor: Dr Emma Green

Abstract

Early childhood games of concealment, such as peek-a-boo and hide and seek, have featured in psychoanalytic literature since the 1920's. Sigmund Freud identifyed the symbolic nature of these games by postulating that they allow the child to experience the absence or presence of the loved object, predominantly the mother or primary caregiver.

Although strongly rooted in Western culture, concealment games such as peek-a-boo are recognised within diverse cultures around the world. In psychoanalytic literature there is an emphasis on the role of mutual gaze, mirroring, containment and how games like peek-a-boo strengthen the infant's social relationships and ego development within the first year and a half of life, as well as the resulting pathology in its absence.

The aim of this research is to explore how the game of peek-a-boo presents beyond the developmental expectancy of early childhood, physically and emotionally, by examining the subjective experience of connection and disconnection, past and present through the eyes of a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist. The question asked is this: What is the psychotherapists' experience of peek-a-boo? Exploring physical and emotional concealment and how this may limit or benefit self-expression, identity and creativity, both personally and within a psychotherapeutic context is at the heart of this research. An interpretivist approach drawing on the heuristic methodology of self-inquiry has been employed to delve into the theme of visual retreat experienced throughout the authors life.

Table of Contents

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 submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Kate O'Rourke
September 2022

Acknowledgement

Chapter One - Introduction

Beginnings and abrupt endings

I can't remember a time when I didn't dance. As a young child I would spend hours listening to my parents record collection in the cosy, windowless study at the bottom of our house. Barbara Streisand's "Guilty" (1980), Jean-Michel Jarre's "Oxygene" (1976) and Jeff Wayne's terrifying musical version of "The War of the Worlds" (1978) were some of my albums of choice. A goat's skull sat at the top of the bookshelf which tormented and enthralled me in equal parts. Its toothy grimace and empty eye sockets looked over me with an unwavering, empty gaze. The room scared me with its darkness but when the music played, and I began to move, I was transported into another world where anything was possible.

I filled my spare time creating and enacting stories with the support of my steadfast dance partner whom some may have described as a floor to ceiling support beam, but I knew better. This basement room was my sanctuary, a warm and protected space where time stood still and allowed me to effortlessly free fall into my imagination - so long as the door was shut.

Thinking about my private cocoon at the bottom of the house and my desire to keep it sealed reminded me of Wittenberg's (2014) description of the infants' entry into the world as "both a beginning and abrupt ending" (p.32). Leaving the fluid containing environment of the womb, and adjusting to a cold, foreign space without boundaries can provoke a sense of helplessness and terror in the infant that can only be communicated through a cry of protest as she inhales the world for the first time.

For reasons unknown to me, I couldn't tolerate anyone looking at me when I danced and if I caught my siblings or parents peeking through the louvred door I would fall to pieces. When the seal broke, and the cold light of day spilled into the room the magic dissipated and a deep rage within me erupted. Their intrusion left me feeling exposed, embarrassed, and terrified.

When I moved the world shifted, space opened and what was once frightening no longer existed. Dance served as an adhesive binding, a "second skin", that

prevented my apprehensions from spilling out and overwhelming me (Bick, 1968, p 486). Similar to the skin serving as a boundary distinguishing inside from out, movement and imagination helped me to manage internal fears too difficult to put into words.

According to De Peyer (2016) to be fully present or absent in any given moment is not possible and the sensations of oneness and separateness are captured in the "tensions between privacy and boundarylessness" (p. 203). This led me to consider the shame I experienced when I knew my family were covertly watching me dance for they were, in fact, the people I was dancing *for.* At the time, privacy was essential as my creative stories of loss and disconnection didn't feel ready to be witnessed. Especially themes involving the death of my mother. Anxiety was not acknowledged when I was young and worries were not openly discussed. Lonely tears were shed in private and separateness, isolation, and concealment became an established narrative throughout my life.

My desire to express and create but remain in the shadows became intrinsically bound in my formative years. At seventeen years old I was accepted into the New Zealand School of Dance. While considered technically proficient I felt I lacked 'presence'. The passion flowing through my veins remained shrouded in shame. As a result, I believed that my work lacked authenticity.

According to Claid (2008) the dance artist without a performing presence will struggle to engage with their audience. This was confirmed by my tutors who labelled me cold, unreadable, and unsuitable for a career in the performing arts – until such time that a choreographer walked into the studio and saw something in me that no one else had.

With a mutual love for children's literature and sense of wonderment in beasts, beauties, and mythical creatures he introduced me to a way of working that established space between myself and the audience, simply by covering my face. What resulted was twenty rewarding years on stage and screen working with masks, prosthetics, and puppets.

Boo-a-peek, what is it I seek? The birth of a question

I believe my life experiences have led me to where I am today, a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist completing the final step of her master's journey. As therapists' we hide behind a professional persona and very rarely disclose our past, let alone put it in print. Within the therapeutic relationship Freud (1912) advised to "reflect nothing but what is shown" (p. 331) but how does this neutrality, still encouraged within Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy, relate to my work with children in Aotearoa, New Zealand? Reflecting on the theme of visual retreat and the averted gaze throughout my life led me to wonder if my physical withdrawal from the world was a form of communication in its own right? How might the exploration of this personal phenomenon inform my work as a psychotherapist and enable me to make sense of the common themes I see within a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service?

I spend my days with children and teenagers who often struggle to articulate their experience through language alone. Moustakas (1994) stated that "with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social - and perhaps universal - significance" (p. 17). This led me to wonder if my own experience of concealment could inform my understanding of those around me. It was with this realisation that I finally understood that in order to help the young people I treat I needed to step up and ask something of myself first. The inherent desire to be known rather than seen led me to the following question:

What is the psychotherapists' experience of peek-a-boo?

I wouldn't say that I *chose* to embark on a heuristic self-enquiry but was rather propelled towards it. I had initially settled on a hermeneutic approach as I thought this would be a good fit with the interpretative and circular nature of psychodynamic understanding, but my supervisor felt I had a story to tell and encouraged me to consider a heuristic methodology. In all honesty I was terrified of self-revelation and doubted that my subjective experience could matter to anyone. To put into words what had been hidden in my mind for so long seemed insurmountable yet there was also a glimmer of recognition that this was precisely what I sought to understand.

Through my eyes: the position of the researcher and the limitations of her gaze

According to my mother I was referred to as 'the baby' for more than a month after I was born. Paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1957) famously stated "[t]here is no such thing as a baby... A baby cannot exist alone but is essentially part of a relationship" (p. 137). The title eventually gifted to me was surprisingly plain considering the time spent coming up with it. My name is Kate. I'm the youngest of three and the only female on my paternal side for three generations. Unlike other members of my family, I don't have a middle name to represent or honour generations past. It was my parents' wish that I had a name strong enough to stand on its own. A self-fulfilling prophecy perhaps as I have always prefered a solitary existence. Today I am middle aged and although this will change in time I will forever identify as a middle class pākehā female of English, Irish and Greek heritage, born and raised in Aotearoa, New Zealand. I am a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist working full-time for Te Whatu Ora, Health New Zealand. Prior to this I was a professional freelance dancer, actor, and classical ballet teacher.

I am embarking on an exploration of personal significance as an individual but also as a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist. Heuristic research is limited to subjective experience and with that comes personal bias that draws the researchers' eyes to literature that speaks to their inherent understanding of the world. Moustakas (1990) linked this to the heuristic process of intuition, suggesting that the nature of the inquiry "draws on clues" that determine a "pattern or underlying condition" (p. 23) that is deemed significant to the researcher.

It is my understanding that early life experiences profoundly influence emotional growth and the development of an individual's personality and ability to communicate. In this chapter, I have shared my personal narrative of childhood memories and how they have shaped my life and fuelled my curiosity about the role of concealment and the phenomenon of peek-a-boo. These themes will be explored and expanded on through a view of psychoanalytic literature in Chapter two.

Chapter Two: Falling forever and going to pieces: A Literature view

In keeping with the heuristic nature of my dissertation this chapter explores the characteristics and meaning of peek-a-boo through a view of the literature. It is not a systematic review and critique of *all* the literature but rather an elucidation of peek-a-boo in relation to my own experience. As peek-a-boo is generally considered a game for two the literature view starts at the beginning of life, exploring the first interactions between infant and (m)other, with particular focus on the role of mutual gaze and mirroring. I then delve into the function of the skin and how it begins to separate and define self from others before examining peek-a-boo from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Contributing further to Winnicott's iconic statement, Flannigan (2016) suggests that a baby cannot exist without being profoundly influenced by the attitudes and realities toward ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and class. Flannigan (2016) also suggested that developmental growth is influenced by the political and economic values of the country the child is born into. With this being said, there is no scope in this dissertation to fully examine these and other important factors, including early adaptations required between caregivers and children who cannot rely on sight, sound, or touch.

The psychoanalytic literature I have explored throughout this dissertation resonate with a Eurocentric ontology due to the foundations of my profession. Although psychoanalysis has travelled beyond its central European origins and evolved into a multi-facetted body of knowledge (Bondi, 2007), it is important to acknowledge the historical and cultural context of the theories and authors included in this study all of which originate from the northern hemisphere.

Recognising the gaps and potential bias in these theories are essential when employing a psychotherapeutic approach to my clinical work in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Taking a critical stance helps me to avoid rigid and incongruent assumptions and encourages me to choose aspects of child development and psychoanalytic understanding that resonate with my clients, their whānau and my own professional philosophy.

To see and be seen

In the first year of life, the caregiver's facial expression, tone of voice and physical proximity are extremely important for the infant but, according to Hymer (1986), nothing is more significant than eye contact. The infant takes hold of the world through her eyes rather than hands, which remain predominantly fisted for the first eight weeks (Gesell, 1949; Hymer, 1986). Etymologically, the terms for sight, seeing, looking, and gazing are concerned with taking in knowledge or understanding (Harper, 2021). This is reflected in the writings of Riess (1988) who described the power of the eye woven into the monuments, religions, and myths of mankind's' creations for millennia. Winnicott (1967) wrote about the earliest responses between (m)other and infant as a way for selfhood to be forged through looking, being looked at and what is reflected and recognised through the mirroring gaze of the good enough (m)other. An attuned (m)other is able to sensitively reflect back and metabolise the infant's primitive terror following birth through a state of maternal preoccupation (Winnicott, 1965). The interplay between maternal reverie and that of the child suggests the mind of the (m)other can act as a psychological container for the mental states of the infant (Bion, 1962). Winnicott believed that the first awakening of identity stems from looking into the eyes of the (m)other and seeing oneself reflected; "When I look, I am seen, so I exist" (1967, p. 134).

Lacan's (1949) mirror stage differentiates from Winnicott's belief that an infant is dependent on reliable and accurate parental mirroring in order to creatively identify self from other (Colloms, 2012). Contrary to Winnicott's emphasis on the embodiment of togetherness and presence to confirm and evolve a sense of self, Lacan (1949) argued that the infant's body is experienced as a series of fragmented, dislocated parts that can only be consolidated through his own reflection.

Lacan's (1949) mirror stage revolves around the child's ability to recognise absence (between the ages of six and eighteen months) and forges a clearly articulated boundary between self and other resulting in a state of alienation in which the infant's reflection, in any form, provokes a sense of disconnection and a lifelong external search for identity (Luepnitz, 2009). What I take from Lacan's mirror stage is that the fractured condensation of the reflected self leads to a form of object seeking

similar to that of peek-a-boo but without any resolution or pleasure associated with reconnection.

Inside out: To know and be known

Rhodes (2002) describes the infant as seeking early containment through the symbiotic relationship between self and object until such time that the (m)other's skin can mark the boundary between them. Winnicott (1949) proposed that a lack of maternal holding can provoke unthinkable anxiety in a small child leading to a sense of 'going to pieces' or 'falling forever' that is echoed in Esther Bick's (1968) rich description of the function of the "first skin formulation" (p. 485). Bick (1968) maintained that the skin serves as a boundary distinguishing inside from out, yet if the infant is exposed to a lack of parental containment a powerful external shell described as "a second skin" can manifest to protect the baby from "transitory states" of fragility and disintegration (p. 486).

According to Freud (1923) "the ego is ultimately deduced from bodily sensations chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body" (pp. 25-26). Winnicott's (1965) concept of a 'holding environment' goes further and suggests that identity is found by physically and emotionally merging with the (m)other until such time that separation is possible (Wright, 2009). During my child and adolescent psychotherapy training there was an emphasis on how an infant takes possession of their body and mind with a focus on un-ravelling the ties that bind them to the primary caregiver. The essential precursor to strengthening the ego and developing a sense of self is described in various metaphors in European and American psychoanalytic literature however these ideas were developed during an age when the nuclear family was highly valued and considered the epitome of family existence. This is reflected in the literature of that time with an intense focus on the mother-baby relationship in an extremely limited family structure. Ultimately seen through a western lens where autonomy, independence and identity are highly valued these concepts are not always reciprocated in other cultures (Blum, 2004).

Peek-a-boo I see you

Hiding games have attracted attention in psychoanalytic literature since the 1920's and the symbolic nature of absence and presence has remained strongly rooted in Western culture (De Oliveira & Fux, 2014). Theorists have suggested many meanings in this phenomenon, but the fundamental assumption revolves around object relations, the despair of losing and the excitement and joy of rediscovering the loved object (Ascher Dunn, 1993).

The game of peek-a-boo, evolving over the second half of the first year of life, highlights the infant's developing awareness of a separate self from others by "permitting, limiting or shutting off vision" (Kleeman, 1967. p.260). In a secure environment peek-a-boo can make the de-stabilising possibility of disconnection into a playful experience of reconnection but may also activate the most primitive defence of fight or flight when the cues of this game are missed or misinterpreted (Wagner, 2015).

Ascher Dunn (1993) gave examples of what she described as "aberrant peek-a-boo" (p.334) in which the adult player deviates from the original intent of the game due to their own structure of personality and experience. These aberrancies, according to Ascher Dunn (1993) include:

1) Unpredictable vocalisation or not vocalising at all, which can confuse the natural response of the child.
2) The affectless play of the depressed (m)other that makes playing the game peek-a-boo redundant.
3) Peek-a-boo played with an averted gaze typical of a distracted or flustered carer.
4) Repetition of the game, overstimulating and raising anxiety within the child without reducing tension through a resolution.
5) Unsympathetically using peek-a-boo to upset and shock the child, eventually disabling the ability to approach and contain any form of distress that might be communicated.

Freud (1920) introduced "fort-da" (p. 14) play in which he described his grandson throwing a wooden reel, connected with thread, beyond his crib and gradually

returning it back to his grasp. Freud (1920) suggested that the boy was compensating for the absence of his mother by enacting the disappearance and return of objects within reach. Blake (2008) remarked that peek-a-boo serves to master anxieties relating to separation and loss, while at different times anxiety of strangeness, separateness and frustration may be at the fore (Mahler & Furer, 1963).

By turning a "painful experience into a pleasurable one" Kleeman (1967, p. 260) describes the infant's ability to test the stability of early self-image and relationship through the controlled restriction of "part of oneself" (p. 241) through vision. This is also illustrated through the tossing, hiding, and retrieving of objects that could be interpreted as an active limitation of sensory intake in which the infant becomes the master of one's own sensory deprivation (Kleeman, 1967). Twenty years on from Freud's discussion Melanie Klein (1940) distinguished the defensive processes against pain from those designed to foster growth and overcome depression. This led Anne Alvarez (2012) to question a child's inner state of object relations in regard to peek-a-boo. Was the child playing in order to deny the loved objects absence or, more importantly, their significance? Or were they playing to overcome the absence and gain some control and make the experience more bearable? Furthermore, was it possible that the child in fact had no qualms about either the object's significance or absence but used the experience to learn more about the symbolic possibilities of what was no longer there at whim?

Winnicott (1967) described the young child's desire to establish an uncommunicating "private self" yet "wanting to communicate and be found" at the same time (p. 186). "It is a sophisticated game of hide and seek in which it is a joy to be hidden but a disaster not to be found" (Winnicott, 1967, p. 186). De Oliveira et al (2014) went on to suggest that a child's greatest wish is to hide in order to be discovered with the fear that they are not found, or even recognised as lost.

The quotes above stirred long forgotten childhood memories of hiding in my wardrobe with the door shut, waiting for someone to realise I was missing and find me. They never did, and eventually I would leave my hiding place and return to the

world as if I had never left. The theme of hiding has continued throughout my life. A journal entry, an integral element of this heuristic inquiry, recorded the following:

> "I ignored a message reminding me of a video conference to be held on Sunday. I turned my phone off and reassured myself that the organiser, a friend of mine, wouldn't mind or even notice if I was there or not. I mentioned this lifelong tendency to 'ghost' people and events with my therapist who had also experienced my occasional, unexplained absence. I vehemently denied the confronting suggestion that perhaps I longed to be missed, to be thought about, to leave people wondering where I am or evoke concern by the space I left behind. But now I wonder..." (Journal Entry: March 2022).

My therapist offered an intriguing notion that I have continued to ponder throughout this research. Was my retreat a re-enactment of my younger self hiding in the wardrobe and waiting for someone to notice I was missing?

Echoes of the past

In his work 'Remembering, Repeating and Working through' Freud (1914) conceptualised the power of actual or symbolic repetition to work through past conflictual events that fall outside of conscious awareness. Freud wrote, "the patent yields to the compulsion to repeat, which now replaces the compulsion to remember" (1914, p. 151) and he suggested that these re-enactments can occur during any stage of the life cycle. Fairbairn (1986) shared a similar view that repetitions were an effort to continue or repair an interrupted relationship, whilst Winnicott (1955) considered them a failed attempt of personal healing.

The psychoanalytic concept of re-enactment led me to an article by Cramer, Osherson and Hatcher (2016) who explored the developmental context of peek-a-boo beyond early childhood. The re-enactment of peek-a-boo in teenagers is thought to be more complex and less transparent that the enacted 'fort-da' of the small child due to the adolescent's propensity to test limits (Cramer, et al, 2016). There is a "dangerous edge" that manifests through "to the brink behaviours" as young people

place themselves in risky situations "only to pull back at the last minute" (Cramer, et al, 2006, p. 124). Indeed, this scenario is seen all too often in the young people I treat.

Peek-a-boo is more ambiguous in later life with the expression of individuation and separation conflicts emerging through greater disguise than that of the young child or acting out teenager (Cramer, et al, 2016). Frustratingly, the case studies offered for middle to late adulthood in this article were vague and didn't enhance my understanding. I experienced similar disappointment when reading Ascher Dunn's (1993) description of "reparative peek-a-boo" (p. 337) seen in male exhibitionism and teenage runaways. Ascher Dunn described these behaviours as a form of perverse object seeking behaviour that deserved further in-depth exploration not possible in the current literature (1993).

What is missing? Gaps in the literature

The literature on peek-a-boo is primarily focussed on the first eighteen months of a child's life and there is an array of psychoanalytic papers concerning the symbolic nature of this and the bridging game hide and seek in older children, yet there has been little exploration of how the phenomenon manifests in adulthood or, specific to my research question, through the subjective lens of the therapist. There is also a plethora of psychoanalytic literature on the fundamental role mutual gaze has on strengthening the infant's social relationships and ego development as well as the resulting pathology in its absence. However there is very little written about the averted gaze and its therapeutic potential that may be utilised within the clinical space when working with children and adolescents.

What did I find?

My initial engagement with the literature on peek-a-boo provided me with a strong theoretical foundation in understanding the nature and meaning of the phenomenon from a psychoanalytic perspective yet it left me wanting more. During this process I

found myself frequently veering off track in search for the 'ultimate' article that spoke to my own experiences.

I did not come across any writings that encapsulated peek-a-boo from a personal psychotherapeutic viewpoint, however after my literature view was captured, I entered a period of illumination that offered a new perspective on the texts I had gathered. I realised that eye contact, mirrors, skin, and the developing identity during early childhood, so very briefly examined in this chapter, were the starting point for ideas that would soon combust in ways I never anticipated.

In this chapter I have introduced the infant's entry into the world with an emphasis on visual, verbal, and bodily interactions. I have also explored the function of peek-a-boo from developmental beginnings. The phenomenon, beyond the early stages of life, is briefly indicated in various writings but lacks a robust investigation into how peek-a-boo manifests in later stages of life. This indicates a gap in the literature that I wish to fill. In the following chapter I introduce Moustakas' heuristic methodology and how this process has informed and shaped my self-inquiry.

Chapter Three: Method/ology

This chapter outlines the philosophical origins of phenomenology, explores the principles, methods, and phases of the heuristic process, and concludes with an analysis of my own creative process within this self-searching inquiry.

Why heuristics?

My dissertation is a heuristic self-inquiry (Sela-Smith, 2002) that delves into my personal experience of peek-a-boo and the relationship between concealment and discovery. My research has evolved through six unique, yet interwoven phases drawn from Moustakas' (1990) original heuristic principles and methods. However, I have also incorporated Sela-Smiths' "self-search" model to entice a deeper level of subjective understanding (2002, p.1).

The game of peek-a-boo is considered a typical developmental milestone reached during early childhood with an indication that the quality, meaning and features of the game are seen across a number of diverse cultures (De Oliveira, 2014). Through this heuristic journey my curiosity in the shared human experience of peek-a-boo has developed and grown. The game, initially the core of my inquiry, has in fact served as a portal guiding me to areas of personal consideration I had not anticipated. My study aims to explore the relationship between concealment and discovery from a subjective perspective "rather than testing hypothesis" or seeking a universal truth (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 58). I came with "fore-understandings"(Orange, 2011, p. 14) and initial hunches of what might be unearthed during my inquiry however the heuristic process generated a "growing self-awareness and self-knowledge" far greater than any of my expectations (Moustakas, 1994, p. 16).

At its core I ask of myself this: What is the psychotherapists' experience of peek-a-boo? The question is constructed in a way that gives impetus for the conceptual framework I have chosen for this study. Seeking knowledge through a subjective exploration is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm which is fundamental in my work as a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist. My inquiry aligns with a qualitative theoretical framework to examine and illuminate the lived experience. I have chosen

a phenomenological position that reflects my understanding that a person's view of the world is constructed by the "senses, perceptions, beliefs and judgements" that surround them (Moustakas, 1990. p.2). Although I reflect on general themes arising from my clinical work as a psychotherapist, I am not interviewing clients or other therapists. I am curious to explore the nature of peek-a-boo through my own responses and reflections therefore I believe that a heuristic self-inquiry is an appropriate methodology for my chosen topic of interest.

It is my aim to enhance this area of study for my own personal and professional understanding when working with children and teenagers which may, in turn, prove to be socially and clinically of interest for other Child Psychotherapists who are likely to share commonalities in their own work.

Initial hesitation

'Objective, hard, cold, scientific, accurate…difficult…' these words, amongst others, were used by a group of psychotherapists to describe their associations to 'research' in an informal word associative study conducted by Darlington and Scott in 2002 (Midgley, 2004). The group was then asked how they related to the word 'practise' which resulted in descriptions such as "subjective, soft, warm, people, messy, flexible…difficult" (Midgley, 2004, p. 90). The psychotherapists spoke my language, with 'difficult' being the common denominator. How did any of this fit with the subjective, often nonverbal communication seen in child psychotherapy? What did I know? What did I *want* to know? And how on earth did I go about knowing it? In unpacking these questions, I realised how my own personal insights were leading me to where I needed to be. By questioning my basic assumptions of how I see the world, querying what I wanted to know more about and how to go about it, I was uncovering ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Philosophical underpinnings: the groundwork of understanding

Heuristics, derived from the Greek word heuriskein meaning "to discover or to find" (Moustakas, 1990, p.9), falls within a qualitative theoretical framework that seeks to examine and understand the lived experience as opposed to a quantitative approach

that looks to measure and find a singular truth. Philosophically heuristic research dwells within an interpretivist paradigm that explores "what it is to be human and what meanings people attach to their lives" rather than seeking certainty from one unified point of view (Grant & Giddings, 2002, p. 16). Heuristics draws primarily on the beliefs and understanding of phenomenology, introduced by German philosopher Edmund Husserl [1859-1938] at the beginning of the 20th Century. Husserl was interested in understanding the lived experience, a term now synonymous with phenomenological research (Roberts, 2013).

Seeking to shine light on the general and essential aspects of the human phenomenon, Husserl considered this a return to "the thing itself" and described the essential nature of phenomenological philosophy as a "science of origins" (2012, p. 166). A scientist himself, Husserl believed his own discipline had become disconnected from the reality of human existence and sought to establish a science rigorous enough to decipher the true lived experience (Roberts, 2013). Husserl focussed on the perception of experience through a descriptive, transcendental approach described by Findlay (2008) as a "dance" between reduction and reflexivity, that involved the "bracketing" or suspension of preconceived thoughts and biases to avoid influencing the interpretation (Roberts, 2013, p. 215). This is where Moustakas and Husserl's paths diverge.

While Husserl's phenomenology attempts to create space between the researcher and the research phenomenon investigated, Moustakas places the researchers' subjective experience at the forefront of the process. Heuristics, as defined by Moustakas, seeks to understand, and retain the essence of the phenomenon within the context of the researcher and the transformative nature that can occur through this exploration. (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Sela-Smith, 2002).

The rules of the game: principles and methods of heuristic research

Tacit knowledge is an implicit and dynamic form of understanding often elusive to conscious thought, observation, or description (Moustakas, 1990). Polanyi (1983),

acknowledged by Moustakas for his contribution to tacit understanding, observes that "we can know more than we can tell' (p.4) and it is with this appreciation that tacit knowledge has become the heart of heuristic research. Stern (1985) considers the relationship between the life lived and its verbal representation as "a double-edged sword" that splits aspects of experience into parts "less shareable with self and with others" (p. 162-163). Quatman (2015) uses the term implicit memory to describe the etching of preverbal emotional, behavioural and somatic experiences that form an "unworded background of understanding and prediction" (p.147). This led me to think about the powerful work of Bollas (1987) and his reference to "the unthought known" (p. 32) established during the early internal and external experiences that occur before expressive language dawns. According to Bollas (1987) these experiences become the history of a person's self, felt in a way that is familiar without ever consciously thinking or knowing what that really means and resonates with my understanding of tacit knowing.

In my youth I felt that language never captured what I could communicate, express, and interpret through my body. Music flowed more richly than any sentence I could create, and some things just didn't have a name that I could attach to my representation of feeling. Knoblauch's reflection that "speaking is a different register than what we feel" (p. 809) captivated me and stirred thoughts regarding my thrice weekly psychoanalysis and the initial struggle I experienced to verbalise what had once been expressed silently during my creative and performing life.

Exploring aspects of knowing in and through the body, Fraleigh (1987) highlights that dance is a skill acquired through knowledge and verbal interaction but also involves "kinaesthetic intelligence" and the capacity to express an aesthetic intent and imagery through "bodily lived (experiential) knowledge" (p. 26). I understand this to mean that the artists' body can become the object of visual attention and be known through the eyes of the spectator, but it is the dancers subjective *lived* experience and the ability to connect, express and interpret, that transcends the performance and speaks implicitly to the audience, evoking body felt sensations that may be experienced as goosebumps, shivers, or tears.

To seek a deeper comprehension of human experience the heuristic researcher is required to turn inward and explore their own relationship with the phenomenon in question that requires patience and reflective processing. This indwelling process allows the seeker to "go deeply into an image, sensation or realisation and pause to explore its meaning" (Moustakas & Douglas, 1985, p. 47).

According to Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist Monica Lanyado (2013) it is necessary to 'dwell' in a state of emotional holding when working with children. Lanyado's descriptions of holding, residing and "staying a while" with young patients in order to slowly detoxify "ghosts of the past" (2013, p. 128) draws strong parallels with the heuristic process. Every interaction I have with a client is a form of research in the sense that no matter what is happening in the room, a deeper level of understanding can be gained through the experience itself (Aveline, 2016, p.3). It took a long time for me to apply this level of understanding to my inquiry and at times I would lose faith that the heuristic process would ever lead me to where I needed to be. In these moments I felt so lost and alone that I would attack myself with mean taunts:

> "Who cares what I think? I don't know anything and I can't see the end. I am sick of myself already." (Journal: 8.10.21)

Yet at other times, in the third person, I could offer gentle reassurance:

> "Sssh. It doesn't feel OK but it is not the end. Trust that you are where you need to be, even if that means dancing in the mud for a while. Remember that you can't find something until it is recognised as lost." (Journal: 5.02.22).

And so it begins: Initial engagement

Like a game of peek-a-boo, the initial engagement of heuristic research begins with an outward connection that reverts to an inward gaze. It relies on an internal frame of reference that invites an autobiographical, indwelling, and intuitive approach (Moustakas, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2002). My interest in concealment, and how hiding or revealing our body self may communicate more than language can convey has been

culminating for many years. My question began to percolate in late 2019 and was loosely framed in the following journal entry:

"I am interested in ways children can connect with their internal experience and their bodies without inhibition. Masks that help rather than hinder in the playroom. Channelling and exploring unacceptable or disruptive impulses and emotions through different guises. When young children cover their eyes, they believe they've disappeared. As adults we often cover our eyes when embarrassed or ashamed in the *hope* we can disappear." (Journal entry: December 2019)

As I embarked on formulating my research question, a flood of long forgotten memories reached out and caressed my mind. Piecing together my personal narrative breathed life and relevance into my work and the heuristic process started to take shape.

Entangled Immersion

The immersion phase requires the researcher to live and become intimate with the question; moving from inner experience to external focus and back again to draw out the essence and general aspects of the phenomenon (Sela-Smith, 2002). For me, the immersion phase didn't feel like a phase at all but rather a prolonged, painful, and incredibly suffocating state of reality. I began to associate the word immersion with violent imagery of plunging and drowning. Living a solitary existence through a world-wide pandemic and exposed to repetitive lockdowns evoked a sense of entrapment and loss of self. I posted the picture below on social media with the caption 'level 4 reality checks, suspicions of existence confirmed by sunset shadow'.

Figure 1: Confirming my existence.

My experiences during isolation were captured through doodles and scribbled descriptions on whatever paper was on hand then promptly lost under a pile of notes dedicated to my clients whom I was seeing virtually from my kitchen table. Anna Freud (1967) dedicated an entire paper to the subject of losing things and being lost. Freud (1967) symbolically linked body parts with material possessions and suggested that "the unconscious desire to discard something which consciously we wish to retain" (p. 9) may pertain to the "dawning differentiation between the self and the object world" in infancy (p. 11). For me there was no differentiation between home and work, inside from outside, personal reflections and professional musings. It is no wonder I kept losing things, including myself, as research, work, and personal life became increasingly entangled. Everything sat under the same roof and demanded my attention with no reprieve. The unexpected 'blending' of my life instigated a line of thought considered during my initial engagement and literature view but not deemed significant at the time. Skin.

Themes arising in my clinical work began to intuitively connect to personal experiences past and present, albeit in different forms. Thoughts about the function of the skin to decipher internal and external realities led me to ponder the confronting display of emotional distress written on the body of my clients who self-harm. The skin, similar to the mask and other 'coverings' I sought to perform under, can also act

as a canvas to communicate differing states of mind, and I began to wonder what its significance was to my inquiry. However, it wasn't until mid 2021 that the function of skin became a leading role in my research. It was at this time that I was plunged deeper into the well of immersion. My piqued interest in somatic representations and communications of the body took an unexpected turn of re-enactment. On a random Tuesday in June my body decided to take my skin hostage and attack the nurturing vessels that nourished my outer shell, displacing my sense of self even further. It doesn't escape me that I use the metaphor of a water well to depict my descent into 'unwellness'. This experience is explored further in chapter four.

Incubation or hibernation?

Unwavering eye contact can result in the need to avert one's gaze to regain equilibrium. When overly stimulated by social interactions the infant learns to self-regulate by closing their eyes, looking away or becoming glassy eyed (Stern, 1985). Similarly, the incubation period of heuristic research is a retreat from the intense focus of the previous phase; "the seed undergoes silent nourishment, support, and care that produces a creative awareness [and] creative integration" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). The preoccupying inward reflection is replaced with an external involvement that encourages unexamined or evasive thoughts to surface without immediate awareness; thus, creating a new level of understanding.

Walking away to process or reorganise my thoughts after a period of writing or following a session with a client has been part of my creative process for as long as I can remember. I had anticipated that detaching from an immersed state and engaging in creative pursuits within a wider social context would ease the tireless and sometimes intrusive internal dialogue of such deep, explorative work, however COVID-19 had a different plan for us all. The fantasy of revisiting the expressive communication of movement, art, music, and live performance was rudely halted. Reoccurring periods of isolation and social restrictions left me feeling like I was going around in circles. The frustration was reflected in the entangled, heavy pressured circles I drew at this time.

Figure 2: Going around in circles.

"I can't sit still. I stand up mid-sentence, walk away from the screen. Up and down, back, and forth. I swap one word for another then step outside, pull a weed, check the letterbox and return. I sit back in my chair, delete the paragraph. The kitchen floor needs washing." (Journal: 10.08.21)

Losing the plot

Throughout this journey I have clung to the concept of peek-a-boo and its relevance to my research, almost as if it gave me 'permission' to write from a subjective lens as a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist. But I began to falter. How could the theme of peek-a-boo take centre stage in my working title if it only had a walk on part at the beginning of the show, both in early life and in the early stages of this project? As I swung back and forward between immersion and incubation, I realised that I carried a tremendous amount of shame about my chosen methodology due to the intense focus on myself. I felt I had exhausted the literature available, and the phenomenon of peek-a-boo slipped from my mind. My journal entries and conscious thoughts during this period supported new ideas that had emerged for consideration such as the mask, the skin and the mirror and eclipsed the notion of peek-a-boo completely. It was around this time that I too disappeared, emotionally, physically, and academically.

I have always drawn spontaneously and never plan what might trip off the nib of my pen. It was only in hindsight that I began to connect my emotional states with the pictures and doodles I created. Looking at the image below takes me back to the fog that I was under during this time. What was once considered a random scribble can now be seen as an articulation of what I could not encapsulate in words.

Figure 3: Peek-a-boo? Where on earth are you?

In early 2022, ready to step out of the shadow of a prolonged immersion and incubation period I took two weeks annual leave to focus on my writing from what I had anticipated to be an illuminated perspective:

"I've taken time off work to find myself, yet I've never felt more lost. I am trying to move into the process, not away, but I seem to be creating the very opposite effect. The further I seek the more my ideas retract."
(Journal: 03.02.22)

The indwelling nature of the heuristic method literally untethered me. I was so immersed in the struggle to find and connect my thoughts, that I lost sight of what it was I was wanting to know and failed to see that I was in fact living and breathing my

question in that very moment. Embodying my younger self, I closed the door and retreated.

> "I haven't left the house in over a week. I try to find eloquent words to describe my exile but there is nothing beautiful about my situation. I sit in front of my computer and my thoughts empty out – almost as if they were never there to begin with. My mind is usually full of colour. I have always dreamt vividly and freely associate while driving, walking, listening to music or washing the dishes yet the playful collisions that populate my private world manifest through imagery not text and it is an ongoing struggle to make the words concrete. My thoughts only come to life in the presence of others. On the phone to those who enquire, or to my therapist, I speak fluently and passionately about themes and findings, connecting them with current struggles and possible implications for further study. But when alone, I have nothing. My page and thoughts remain empty and colourless. I haven't listened to music in weeks." (Journal: 13.02.22)

Essentially, I had been playing a solitary game of hide and seek for longer than I wanted to admit. During this period not a soul, including myself, realised how lost I really was. I had distanced myself from everyone around me, my friends, family, supervisor, and therapist. My internal dialogue reiterated that this suited me 'just fine'. I reassured myself that I didn't need any support and that I could write this dissertation 'on my own'.

I see you! Illumination

The illumination phase of heuristic research could be thought of as the great reveal, the 'there you are!' moment of peek-a-boo. Similarly, the word eureka, described by Moustakas (1990) as the "cousin word of heuristics" (p. 9), exemplifies the sudden 'penny drop moment' when new meanings and awareness are connected with old assumptions that may help to reorganise and amalgamate meaning into a fresh experience of understanding and discovery.

I came to realise that illumination cannot be forced and that moments of clarity leading to new understanding occur in their own timing and are not always

communicated through an overt 'eureka' moment. I was reminded of the uncertainty experienced during my infant observation training when I frequently questioned what I was witnessing between mother and child. I took solace in the words of Esther Bick (1962) who maintained that "one may have to sit with children for a long time completely in the dark about what's going on, until suddenly something comes up from the depth that illuminates it" (p. 329).

I learned to recognise subtle shifts that expanded my awareness but didn't always lead to an integration of conscious understanding in that particular moment in time. Those tenuous glimpses of illuminated understanding would often find me with more clarity when I was looking in another direction and "a new discovery of something that has been present for some time yet beyond immediate awareness" would finally come home to roost (Moustakas, 1990, p. 30).

Explication

The in-depth examination of the themes and components that have been made conscious during the illumination phase occurs during the explication process in order to make sense and "fully examine" the various layers of meaning (Moustakas, 1990, p.31). Moustakas (1990) described explication as a culmination of thoughts, perceptions, experiences and other data that the researcher is then required to sift through, detangle and fit together into themes that hopefully create a whole. I came to realise that this supposed 'whole' did not mean having a concise answer, nor did the sum of my 'whole' dictate right or wrong as there had been no assumption of what I might discover. As a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist there are never any absolutes and I forever find myself asking "what's going on here?". Similarly, during periods of explication I had to stop and really think about what I was experiencing as the phenomenon of peek-a-boo began playing its own game and started to present itself in different guises.

> "Today, after a week of not wearing make-up to work I painted my face,
> brushed my hair and put on some nice clothes. A colleague acknowledged my

effort commenting that I looked very 'put together today'. "You should see what's underneath" I laughed." (Journal Entry: 21.4.22)

"I've been looking in the wrong direction. The façades I hide behind still exist but no longer take the same shape I started with. My explicated experience of hiding and seeking has unfolded to such a degree that it has almost become unrecognisable." (Journal Entry: 28.4.22)

The explication process guided and influenced my findings chapter as I sought to refine, shape and articulate my data with more clarity. This, in turn, paved the way for a deeper understanding and a merging of ideas that led me to the final act of this solo show.

Creative syntheses

The final stage of heuristic research is the synthesis of core themes and components gathered through personal reflexive writing, poetry, doodles, self-dialogue, and tacit diminutions. Themes and depictions gathered over the heuristic process are woven together to form a whole. It is only when one has thoroughly explored and become familiar with the data that this phase can occur yet this is when I hit the wall - again - and questioned everything I thought I knew.

"I have exhausted all of my resources. I've run out of time and minds to guide me through to the end. So I find myself here again, waiting alone in the dark behind a closed door that won't open unless I lean against it and allow some light to shine though." (Journal entry: 20.07.22)

For so long I wondered what my creative synthesis would look like. Despite initial misgivings I trusted that my findings would eventually come together and deliver a succinct amalgamation of my experience of peek-a-boo. Sela-Smith (2002) described creative synthesis as a story shared through a form of communication that resonates between the researcher and audience and creates an authentic sense of connection and understanding between the two. My ability to convey and synthesise

what had been gathered during previous phases of the heuristic journey moved further out of reach as I gravitated towards the end. The closer I got to completion the more I lost touch with what I thought I knew and lost faith in my ability to reach an end. I likened this to the despair and frustration experienced during the incubation and immersion phase and therefore knew that if I sat with the uncertainty for long enough something of value would eventually unfold.

In this chapter I have discussed the fundamental philosophies, principles and methods of heuristic research and my rationale for choosing this methodology. I have endeavoured to encapsulate my heuristic journey from initial engagement in 2019 to creative synthesis in 2022 however the process has not been linear, and it has been a challenge to succinctly share the long journey I have been on. Traversing a winding path of immersion, incubation and back again, for longer than expected, has led to a volume of writing disproportionate to the other phases.

Chapter four explores the main themes explicated from my heuristic process including the mirror, the mask and how the skin serves as a boundary between inside and out.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter is a story of my personal peek-a-boo experience. At its heart it is a story of loss and disconnection interconnected with a desire to communicate and reconnect through the guise of the mirror, the mask and the skin. These three themes have emerged throughout my research process, and have been explicated from the raw data captured through my journaling, drawings, indwelling reflections and unexpected life events.

The Mirror: Do you see what I see?
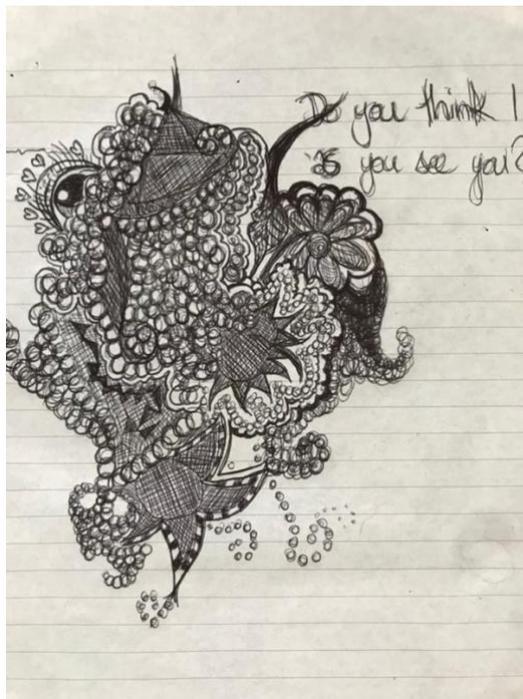
Figure 4: The unexpected frog.

It is with trepidation that I begin this chapter with a doodle. I created this image during an online workshop for eating disorders. I did not realise my squiggles looked like a frog until someone pointed it out and now I cannot unsee it. I am reminded of the following quote by Jacque Lacan, "This picture is simply what any picture is, a trap for the gaze. In any picture, it is precisely in seeking the gaze in

each of its points that you will see it disappear" (2004, p. 89). I am not a student of Lacan's writing nor is there scope in this research to re-explore his work in detail, however two memories were evoked during my literature view regarding his depiction of the 'mirror phase' that I deemed significant to my inquiry. Lacan's (1949) apparent distrust of visual connection and his view that it evokes a lifelong search for identity led me to ponder my complicated relationship with the mirror and how I made sense of myself through my own explorative processes.

When upset, my mother would hold me up to the mirror to show me what I looked like when I cried. I don't believe her intention was punitive but rather a way to manage her own anxiety. Nestled in her arms I remember seeing her smiling face next to my flushed, wet skin and the confusion I felt as she pointed her finger in the direction of my messy reflection. Light-heartedly she would ask me what I could see. Although unsightly, it wasn't my own distress I remember, but that of my mother whose anguish I saw reflected in her eyes. I eventually learned that certain emotions must be kept out of sight and only visited in private due to their ugliness and propensity to hurt others.

My second recollection is that of an older child, maybe six or seven? It is hard to be sure. I remember standing in front of my wardrobe mirror, my gaze resolute, no blinking allowed, as I stared into my own eyes. The trick you see, for I did this frequently, was to stare for long enough that my focus blurred and my face became unrecognisable.

These regular ventures into the looking glass captivated me. It was like unzipping my skin, stepping out, and looking back through a different pair of eyes. Similar to an arm that has fallen asleep from lack of circulation I was curious to know and experience myself from a disembodied perspective or, as Lacan described it, "seeing oneself see oneself" (2004, p.74).

My endeavour to capture my dislocated self was hurried along with an internal chant of 'not me' that I would eventually link to Winnicott's (1953) theory on transitional objects forty years later. I began to ponder my relationship with mirrors

and how I was drawn to a career so dedicated to being 'seen' when I was so intent on hiding.

In the dance studio my reflection served to show every imperfection, yet once concealed in a costume I felt confident and free to explore myself from the outside in, finding bodily forms that could communicate my internal dialogue. Eigen (1981) observed that "the mirror or visual me, the actor for an audience, comes to be used as a defence against authentic body feelings, especially one's vulnerability and insufficiency" (1981. p. 420). However, I experienced the complete opposite.

Viewing myself from a mirrored perspective meant that the critical eye of both myself and others was foisted on me every minute of every day and it was a gaze so strong and powerful that I felt its presence even when alone. Yet once veiled, I felt free from judgement, and the critical eye of the mirror became a guiding hand that gave me access to un-named memories that defied verbal comprehension. It is possible that my retreat into disguise was not an escape from reality or a defence against painful realisations at all, but rather a plunge into the depths of the human experience that allowed me to develop a form of expression understood by every spectator, regardless of their native tongue.

Kazuo Ohno, a founder of the Japanese dance form Butoh in the 1950s, maintained that in order to dance freely one must relinquish the notion of self and revert back to "the original memory of the body" (as cited in Masson-Sekine & Viola, 1988, p. 22). Having attended performances in New Zealand and Japan, I have experienced the unlimited power of raw human expression Butoh evokes without dependency on any particular style, dance technique, or language (Taylor, 2012).

According to Taylor (2012), Butoh is a highly conceptual dance form used to explore taboo topics and is characterised by dancers with shaved heads and covered in white body paint in an attempt to mask individuality. However, to me this aesthetic suggests a purity and childlike representation that symbolises a primal state of infancy where unthinkable anxieties originate and are palpably communicated through the body.

Associating my own need to separate myself *from* yet remain identical *with* the characters I portrayed on stage led me to I wonder if I had been seeking to create a new shape outside myself or was I trying to return to the original object from whence I came? The word 'from' is often associated with a departure or moving away, while 'with' indicates an intention to be near or moving toward (Harper, 2021). Had my artistic career essentially served as an outlet for individuation?

As a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist mirroring, reflecting, making sense of nonverbal expressions, finding meaning in symbolic play or lack thereof and staying present within the transferential relationship are important aspects of my work. So too are developmental considerations regarding attachment and a need to individuate and separate from the loved object. Yet everything I thought I knew was thrown into complete disarray when COVID-19 hit our shores.

Cracks in the digital mirror

Zoom became a familiar tool for me and my clients as we scrambled to adjust to a foreign landscape of connection during the first two years of the pandemic. Video conferencing became our only way to meet and created the perfect storm of uncertainty and vulnerability for us all. My clients used virtual backgrounds, communicated via text, and turned off the camera on a weekly basis and once again the inherent communication of hide and seek consumed my world. The young people I worked with seemed to be engaging me in a cat and mouse pas de deux and I found myself embodying their emotional experience through virtual disappearances which, at times, resulted in a sense of bewilderment and rejection. I live alone, a bubble of one, and was deeply affected by the enforced isolation and how this manifested in my professional and private world. My own therapy was interrupted by the pandemic, and I was suddenly faced with a very different way of connecting. The warm sanctuary of the couch and the averted gaze of my therapist was quickly replaced by face-to-face contact through a cold blue digital light.

The image below was created following a particularly difficult session held over the phone with a client. I had worked with this teenager extensively prior to the enforced lockdown but telecommunication proved too much for us both.
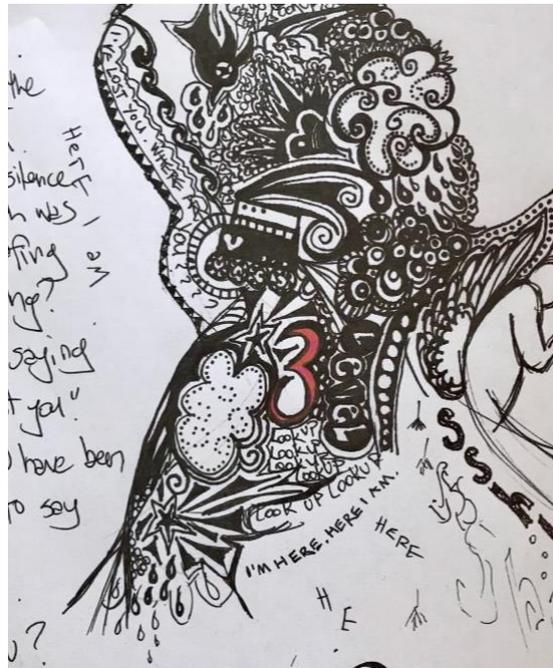
Figure 5: Pandemic pandemonium.

"I morn the quiet of level 4 but L's silence on the phone was more deafening than any noise outside". I kept saying 'I've lost you'. Why didn't I simply say, 'I am here... where are you?'". (Journal Entry, 2020)

Revisiting this drawing several months later I became curious about the text within the imagery - "I am here, here I am", "look up". My associations led me back to the wardrobe, hiding in the dark, waiting to be discovered. Why did I keep returning to this memory? And then it dawned on me...

The classic tale of "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" by C.S. Lewis (2001) was a story I adored as a child. The hidden world of Narnia, accessed through a wardrobe and devoid of any adult involvement, captivated me. Decades on I would find myself standing beside a stone table recreating a pivotal, yet distressing scene

of loss in a feature film depicting this classic tale. At the movie premiere I struggled to identify myself on the screen due to the prosthetics covering my face. If it wasn't for my name appearing in the closing credits, one may question if I had been there at all.

Figure 6: Hiding in the wardrobe.

The Mask: Disguise or revelation?

The origin of the mask is associated with concealment, disguise and the use of such to hide something from view or give a false impression (Harper, 2021). Alternatively, rather than hiding what is within, a mask may also serve as barrier or protective covering that shields us, keeping out external threats that may annihilate our very existence.

In his work exploring the psychological dimensions of masks Khan (2020) writes: "we are never all that we would like to be or feel that we could be. On most days we feel we are the steadiness of a singular identity" (p. 209). Khan goes on to describe the many faceted beings that we can become through the imagination of the mask and how, for the modern person, the façades we hide behind are an unconscious yet direct path to reveal a hidden truth (2020, p, 209).

True or False?

I consider my sense of self to be interwoven with my sense of identity but for a variety of reasons this has often been difficult for me to show. Naturally we all have

aspects of ourselves we would rather not share, so we remain hidden. But for some, the distortion of truth can lead to a sense of life long alienation and unhappiness (Lacan, 1949). Winnicott (1960) developed the concept of the 'false self', a psychosocial function responding and accommodating to environmental demands rather than from an internal truth or spontaneity. When threatened with the total exposure, a split can occur in the ego (the false self) to avoid shame and narcissistic pain (Pines, 2010).

As mentioned previously, it is Winnicott's (1947) view that we can't experience who we are alone, that it is only through relationship that our sense of self can truly develop, therefore it is essential that the small child's primary carer is capable of seeing her for who she is. According to Loetz and Müller (2021) responding effectively to the spontaneous and primitive gestures of the infant can either confirm or diminish their existence and sense of identity, but recognising and attuning to an individual's unique qualities is not always easy. For some parents not all traits in their child are welcome, recognisable or considered acceptable. Therefore what the child perceives as an intuitive and natural part of themselves can be internalised as wrong and unacceptable and an assimilation of the personality occurs to right the wrongs imposed on by the responses of others (Loetz, et al, 2021).

Developing a false self is often considered a necessary developmental and social achievement (Eckler-Hart, 1987). Khan (2020) suggested that "we need to have a persona, as we cannot afford to let the entire world share our every thought" (p. 198). Stern (1998) describes the persona as "a close wrapping around the side of the ego that faces out into the social world" (p. 114) but for some this distortion goes to such lengths that what is projected outwardly eclipses any understanding of what lies within.

In his research paper "True and false self in the development of a psychotherapist" Eckler-Hart (1987) describes how threatening and anxiety provoking it can feel to reveal spontaneous, creative and possibly unacceptable aspects of ourselves and that the false self will often take over to protect the vulnerable 'true self'. This resonates with me deeply.

As a child I adapted my behaviour and hid my feelings beneath a constantly changing coat of armour. I was a chameleon, adjusting my actions and responses to match those around me. Like so many, my journey through childhood and adolescence resulted in the acquisition of a false (or social) self that protected me from experiencing the shame evoked by recognising my own self-expression.

Or somewhere in-between?

Winnicott emphasised that it was through play and creativity that the 'true self' can emerge and although hesitant to offer a thorough definition of what the this true self entailed he wrote:

> "Psychotherapy takes place in the overlap of two areas of playing, that of the patient and that of the therapist. Psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together. The corollary of this is that where playing is not possible then the work done by the therapist is directed towards bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play." (Winnicott, 1971. p. 51).

My psychotherapeutic practice lies at the heart of Winnicott's description. Through the shared pleasure of playing, an intermediary space of connection is formed between the child and therapist allowing a source of personal creativity and truth to be discovered.

During my early and mid-adulthood, I discovered ways to sublimate my internal experiences and emotions through dance, puppetry, and mask work. In the words of artist and psychoanalyst Marion Milner (2011), "my sole concern at that moment was to borrow forms, no matter from where, by means of which my own obscure preoccupations could declare themselves" (p.81). Others were given the opportunity to see and emotionally feel what I portrayed through 'not me' characters, and, in turn, I could express myself in ways that felt too dangerous to show through my own skin. These reflections led me to consider Winnicott's (1971) concept of transitional objects and potential space.

For Winnicott (1971) the potential or transitional space is an area between the individual and environment that separates the experience of "nothing but me" from "objects and phenomena outside of omnipotent control" or 'not me' extensions (p.135). This transitional space helps to regulate anxiety, particularly of the depressive type, and may serve as an invaluable source of comfort during the predominantly tumultuous period of toddlerhood (Davis & Wallbridge, 2014). Winnicott (1971) defines this transitional phenomenon as an "intermediate area" or "resting place" (p.3) that allows the child to hold internal experiences and external reality in balance until such a time that reality can be faced, and depressive states can be tolerated by oneself. Similarly, Wright (1991) described the developing separation or gap between mother and child as a looking space or space of consciousness that allows the infant to see and be seen as a separate self where differences lie. Sitting in the wardrobe as a child, the only thing between my internal reality and the external world was a door. This led me to wonder if the masks I wore on stage symbolised a transitional area of sorts that connected two worlds through an intermediary façade.

Illusion, embodiment, and illumination

In the following passage I present a poem that I wrote about my masked experience on stage with a live audience. As I collated my data from this time, I noticed repetitive webs depicted in my doodles and my descriptions began to take on new meaning:

> "I speak to you from beneath this sheath,
> illuminated yet blinded
> by a wall of light.
> Sitting in the shadows, you wait on the other side.
> Whispers caught on the edge of music tell me you are there.
> My staccato breath reverberates within my private cocoon.
> Ah yes!
> I am here too.
> Caught between the tension

of illusion and embodiment,

we unite in a strange duet."

(Journal: November 2021)

I was reminded of a spider retreating, waiting patiently for something to 'land' following the intense process of creating her web. And there it was. My own incubation process woven through my musings in a thread so dark on the page yet so translucent in my awareness that, on another day, in a different light it may not have been seen at all.
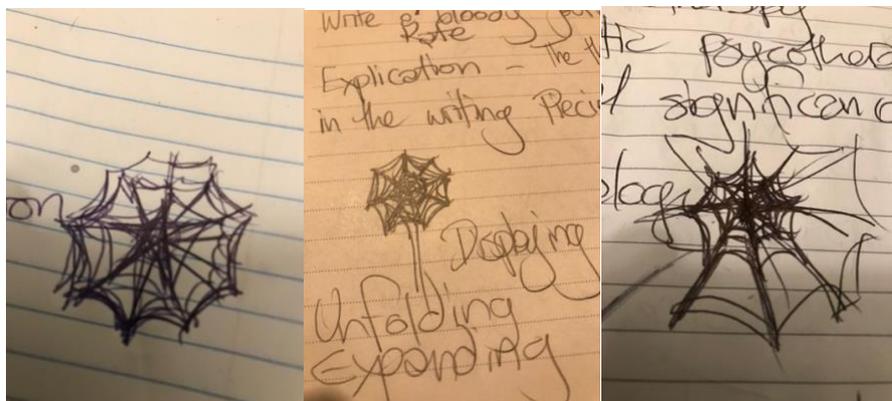
Figure 7: Incubating a web.

Not me. The invisible mask

On an online platform Neil Gaiman (2019) shared the tale of a shy, clever, autistic boy who met with David Bowie in the 1980s during a special screening of the "Labyrinth" (Henson, 1986) - an enchanting and adventurous film featuring puppets, goblins, fantastical songs, and an eccentric hobgoblin king who kidnaps a baby. The boy, who didn't do well in crowds or in the presence of strangers, recalls meeting with Bowie in a private room and it was there that he learned about the stars invisible mask:

"'He took it off his own face and looked around like he was scared and uncomfortable all of a sudden. He passed me his invisible mask. 'Put it on,' he told me. 'It's magic.'

'And so, I did.'

'Then he told me, 'I always feel afraid, just the same as you. But I wear this mask every single day. And it doesn't take the fear away, but it makes it feel a bit better. I feel brave enough then to face the whole world and all the people. And now you will, too.'

'I sat there in his magic mask, looking through the eyes at David Bowie and it was true, I did feel better... I felt incredibly comfortable. It was the first time I felt safe in my whole life'". (Gaiman, 2019)

It can be an excruciating experience working with children who are unable to play and struggle to communicate. Disconnected from the world and their own internal experience, their rigid presentation evokes such a feeling of despair and lifelessness that I have sometimes experienced my own vitality start to dissipate. There have been occasions when I have simply wanted to 'disappear' rather than sit with the emptiness conveyed by the little person in the room with me.

Gaiman's depiction of the unseen mask reminded me of a child I once worked with who could not play, barely spoke, and appeared totally detached from the world around them. They came to see me so I might understand the extreme rage expressed towards their parents. Week after week for more than a year I sat with this little one who left nothing behind at the end of the session except a deep aching emptiness within me. I found it difficult to correlate the empty shell and lifeless eyes I saw before me with the angry and destructive tyrant the parents described. Well into the therapeutic process I began to notice that my own energy dimmed when in the room with this young person and realised that I needed to keep alive what this child could not. The very next session changed the course of our work together.

The child painted a perfunctory picture of the family cat. When asked how the cat was feeling they told me that it was hungry. How does the cat ask for food I enquired. To my surprise they let out a forlorn meow. The room suddenly came alive. Tentatively I asked how the cat might let me know if it was frightened? The response was heartbreakingly timid, small, and quivering. We both kept our eyes on the

painting, I didn't dare break the spell by shifting my gaze. The questions began to instinctually flow. What if the cat is angry? A loud roar and hissing ensued. Confused? The upward inflection said it all. Lonely? Sad? Each sound uttered became an inherent link to this small child's emotional experience that could be safely communicated through an averted gaze from a 'not me' object.

I chose to share this encounter, with all recognisable features changed to protect confidentiality, as I believe that this young person and many others I have worked with, like me, find it more bearable to explore and express uncomfortable or distressing internal experiences by readjusting and assimilating them into an external form.

The Skin: Written on the body

I began this section on what would have been my late mother's 78th birthday and it seems fitting that I started to weave together my thoughts and findings on the subject of skin with her in mind. The day my mother brought me into this world she held me in her arms, our symbiotic relationship established through skin-on-skin contact as she nursed, bathed, cuddled, and soothed me. Thirty-nine years later I held my beloved parent in my own arms as she drew her last breath - the circle of life seemingly complete.

I believe that our history is inscribed in the living memory of our body that can be traced back to infantile patterns of relating through physical and gestural communication (Resnik, 2005; Lemma, 2010). As a child I experienced recurring bouts of eczema. Not much was thought about it. There was no cause for concern as my itchy irritations usually resolved with some ointment. Several decades later the inflammation returned. Through therapy I came to realise that these flares were a barometer for my internal conflicts, particularly during periods of separation. Following the death of my father I flew to the UK for work. While disembarking from the aircraft I noticed that something wasn't right. My skin began to erupt in hot, painful wheals. They became so severe that my joints swelled, and I was unable to walk which led me to seek treatment at the local hospital.

One year on, following the traumatic death of my mother, a break in therapy, the completion of my Graduate Diploma and a pending trip to Japan, the rash reignited. Another visit to the emergency department ensued, medication was issued yet no diagnosis was made. In June 2021, six months after my thrice weekly psychoanalysis ended, and the enforced isolation from the world-wide pandemic finally relaxed, I became gravely ill and was hospitalised for two weeks. The welts returned but this time they covered every inch of my body and poisoned my system.

After a particularly bad night on the ward, I wrote:

> "I am a curiosity. My skin is like nothing they have seen before. The specialists don't know what is wrong or how to relieve my suffering. Instead, they gather around me in a huddle, peering, prodding, ordering blood tests, circling my body with an indelible marker and ask how I am feeling. Look at me! How do you *think* I am feeling? I can't recognise myself in the mirror, all that is left of me is a hot, angry mess. Last night my sternum and neck became so inflamed that I tore at my flesh until I drew blood, and I didn't care. I have never felt such rage towards my own body. I wanted to scream. It was late, the hospital doors were locked but I had to get out. A kind nurse allowed me to leave and promised to keep an eye out for my return. Outside, the cold winter air served as a soothing balm to my inflamed skin, and one thought circulated in my mind as I wept. I want my mum." (Journal: 19.06.21)

What I didn't record was being locked out of the ward. The nurse had forgotten that I had vacated the building, and I sat on a bench outside the unit in my dressing gown and slippers until such time that an orderly passed by and let me in. I had never felt so alone. Sleep was elusive due to the high dose of immunosuppressants I had been prescribed. A registrar finally visited my bedside in the early hours of the morning and reassured me that, while he couldn't make me feel better, he had the ability to knock me out. And that he did.

I was eventually diagnosed with a rare auto-immune disorder that medical and skin specialists still know little about. In her evocative book "Theatres of the Body" Joyce McDougall (1989) examined the unspoken language of the skin communicated

through somatic attacks on the body in an attempt to bypass any awareness of internal conflicts, thoughts, or phantasies. Thinking about the skin as a form of communication led me to wonder about many of my adolescent clients who, unable to articulate their internal experience, communicate frightening and drastic measures via cutting, scratching, and burning of their skin or other somatic symptoms including eating disorders and suicidal ideation.

Mary Brady (2015) explored the relationship between bodily symptoms and emotional disconnection, using the term "psychic isolation" to describe the loneliness, estrangement, and a sense of differentness frequently experienced during adolescence (p. 170). Brady (2015) suggested that the second wave of separation and individuation during adolescence leaves many teenagers feeling "cut off from internal and external containing objects" (p.180). With no access to their affect or inner experiences, the disconnection from oneself and from the minds of others can result in chaotic emotions that are played out on the body (Brady, 2015).

Working in an Acute Focused Team for six months I saw a staggering number of rangatahi in crisis each day, usually in the emergency department, with the majority of them engaging in some form of deliberate self-harm or suicide attempt. It was a stark and confronting contrast to my work in the playroom with younger children. Initially I struggled to find my place as a psychotherapist on the frontline where the focus was on crisis management and safety planning.

With my knowledge of the adolescent state of mind and how tumultuous this stage of life can be, I felt frustrated and saddened that the symptoms evoked more attention than the cause. I began to wonder if the disturbances expressed by these youngsters had a more developmental underpinning rather than reflecting a greater mental health disturbance. Attacks (or threats) on the body are not necessarily a suicide attempt or a cry for attention but rather a way to seek *connection.* Self-harm can be a form of communication that contains within it a message that all is not well and a wish that there will be a response (Motz, 2010). This brought me back to hiding in the wardrobe, waiting, and wondering if anyone would find me. Do you see me? Do you miss me? Do I matter?

Freud (1923) recognised that the very young child is body-centred, and that successful ego development is built from the initial foundation of body ego (Horne, 2019). Krueger (2001) elaborates further stating that the child's development of the body self is equally as important as the psychological self as "it is often the narrator of feelings they cannot bear to hold in conscious thought much less express in words" (p. 239). Through physical enactments the skin can be used as a screen to project inner experiences when words fall short. Motz (2010) links Winnicott's (1956) description of the anti-social tendencies, to the self-harming culture of adolescence and suggests that these behaviours are sign of hope. In anticipation that there may be a reaction, the distress communicated through the body acts as a dialogue that draws the audience in and fulfils an unconscious need or desire to be understood.

Bruises as badges

I bring this thought of skin in conjunction with the young people I work with every day and wonder how self-harm, eating disorders and other attacks on the body play out in communicating experiences of disconnection and limiting contact. This led me to consider the acknowledgement of effort and stoicism worn on my own skin as a result of my dancing.

Lake (2005) asserts that dance is an art form that many associate with passion, expressivity, freedom, and creative abandon, yet behind the scenes it was a very different story. The "veneer of protectiveness" (Lake, 2005, p. 3) that has kept secret what the dance world could not afford to unmask unveiled authoritarian and abusive teaching methods that followed me throughout my training and employment as a freelance artist.

Negotiating pain is an intriguing aspect of a dancer's life that I had not questioned until now. From very early on I was taught that pain nourished success and pleasure (Claid, 2006). I remember exhibiting my injuries with pride as I felt it was a sign of strength, a badge of honour, proof of my dedication to the art form and to those who taught me.

The sado-masochistic relationship between student and teacher has a long pedagogical heritage (Claid, 2006; Lakes, 2005). Calid noted that pain is not imposed upon the dancer by the teacher but the unattainable desire for perfection and success drives the 'no pain no gain' incentive that equates self-inflicted pain with "power, which brings success" (2006, p. 40). In hindsight my malnourished body, dark bruises, floor burns, torn ligaments, stress fractures, blisters, broken toenails, and my stubborn determination to carry on regardless, probably elicited concern from outsiders rather than the admiration I imagined.

Thinking about my need for 'permission' in order to share my personal experiences during this research led me back to somatic representations and how the sufferer may be seeking 'permission' through external wounds to accept nurturance and care that can't be emotionally taken in through other means. I have had many adolescent clients who have apologised when they report 'good news' during a session as if my care is unwarranted if they don't have something terrible to show or tell me. My own experience of an extended hospitalisation forced me to consider the disturbing comfort I experienced from the institutionalised routine while 'sick':

> "It's like a return to infancy. I lie here passively. Taking my medicine when I'm told, eating the food put before me, and waiting for the nurse to run my bath. I long to go home but there is something strangely comforting in hearing the muffled chatter of the nurses during handover. It reminds me of drifting off to sleep on my mother's lap. Lulled by the gentle vibrations of her voice." (Journal entry: 22.06.21)

Throughout this study I have observed a dialectic relationship between the themes of concealment and discovery, truth, falsity, and the somatic connection between internal distress and external exhibition. At times these opposites have left me wondering where I am heading. Milner (1987) indicated that there are two different thought processes "the kind of thinking that makes a separation from subject and object, me from not-me, seer from seen, and the kind that does not" (p. 227). This line of thought led me to consider my experiences throughout this heuristic process and what sense I have made from the conflicting nature of my findings. I have

oscillated between both lines of thought described by Milner and conclude that both have had a place within this research.

This is my experience of peek-a-boo.

In this chapter I have explored my relationship with the mirror, the mask and the skin and connected my subjective experiences with the façades my clients use to permit or deny self-expression and connection with others. My findings have produced many threads, some of which will be woven into the tapestry of my discussion chapter and creative synthesis. Others will be put to one side for future consideration.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In this final chapter I reflect back over the course of my heuristic journey as a whole and how my findings have informed my understanding of peek-a-boo. I offer a personal perspective on how my research may contribute to psychodynamic understanding, its relevance for future training within the child and adolescent psychotherapy pathway and the support it may offer to services within the community. To conclude I outline the strengths, limitations and challenges faced throughout my process and consider potential areas of interest that may benefit from further exploration in the future.

What did I find? Tensions between hiding and seeking

Communicating a desire for connection or expressing a sense of disconnection can be shared in ways that can be difficult to recognise. By exploring the use of external mirror's, internal mask's and the skin that differentiates inside from out I have discovered that all three themes have the potential to help *and* hinder personal expression and identity.

According to Winnicott (1971) the precursor to the mirror is the (m)others face, allowing the infant to experience a physical and emotional sense of self through the eyes of an/other (Waddell, 1998). Self-identity, initially absent during the symbiotic period of infancy, begins to form as the child gradually becomes aware of the space that separates herself from the (m)other. Through eye contact, physical touch and verbal interactions the small child begins to cloak herself in the reflections and expressions of others that may or may not align with a true sense of self.

While exploring my own ambivalent relationship with the looking glass as a child, dance artist, and psychotherapist, I began to recognise the evolving perception of my reflection through the eyes of others and how I used the mirror during different stages of my life. At times I have experienced the reflection of my emotions and body as ugly, intolerable, unnecessary and overwhelming for both myself and others. This led me to wonder if my search for 'all of me' from a 'not me' Winnicottian perspective started with my unblinking gaze into the mirror situated on my wardrobe door. Was

this the passageway that linked inside from out as I tried to integrate disembodied aspects of myself that I was ashamed to embrace?

A wardrobe is a handy feature in any corner of the mind as it has the ability to tidy up and hide what is inside. For some, the closet represents secrecy and privacy within a confined space (Harper, 2021). Behind the closed door of a wardrobe, chaos or order may ensue but the reality of such will never be known unless the door is cracked open and its contents is revealed. However, some content is simply too unbearable for the mind to hold so the body stores what we cannot allow ourselves to know (Quatman, 2015). I relate this to my findings of the mask *and* the skin and how both can disguise and reveal emotions depending on how one views the contents of its communication.

Following episodes of separation, endings and the grief that ensued, especially the death of both my parents within an eighteen-month period, my body expressed this unbearable and unthinkable pain as a physical expression of distress. With the guidance of my therapist I began to understand how the suffering of my body traced back to a psychic pain that required visibility in order to receive the care and concern I couldn't ask for. Through weekly therapy I learned to look at myself through the eyes of an/other who could stay with me, decipher the braille written on my body and translate what I was experiencing through interpretation, understanding and care. Acknowledging that my skin was an indicator of internal disorganisation connected me, carefully, to the young people I work with and how their cross stitch of scars may represent sensitive and raw aspects of their souls waiting to be understood.

I began this study by sharing childhood memories that emphasised my retreat from reality. Behind closed doors I attended to internal experiences through my body, away from the gaze of others. Milner (1987) deduced that the descent into one's own body did not equate to a withdrawal from the external world at all, but rather an attempt to open the deepest part of oneself to another. Milner's description and my research as a whole has captured the essence of what it is I have been seeking throughout my life.

As a very young child I hid my creativity from the eyes of others because I felt exposed and vulnerable due to my longing for connection and the fear that this connection would not be possible. During latency I continued to hide but *wanted* to be found, however there was no-one available to acknowledge my absence or receive the message I wished to convey. As a performing artist I finally discovered an audience ready to accept the façades I offered and were willing to engage in a game of hide and seek. And now, in my work with children and adolescents, I have become the seeker I once longed for.

Throughout the years my inherent desire has been to connect with an/other and invite a deeper, unarticulated, and tacit realm of psychic re/union that takes place in a suspended area between two worlds. This is echoed in Douglass and Moussakas' (1985) view that tacit knowing "shrouds discovery in mystery" (p. 49) through an understanding that transcends language, time, or space. This epitomises my experience of dance, puppetry, music and working with masks that also ties in with my work as a psychotherapist and the transitional or potential space described by Winnicott (1971).

Presence or absence is never absolute but rather a tension between internal and external experience (De Peyer, 2016). I have come to the realisation that neither hiding *or* seeking can truly be felt without the other. Similar to peek-a-boo, the game requires two minds to confirm the existence of the other and the acknowledgement that the empty space observed was once filled with an important object. This object must first be noticed as relevant to one's world in order for it to be missed and searched for.

The undulating dance between two opposite states reminds me of the long and arduous heuristic process I have engaged in. My tacit knowledge, something known yet missing from consciousness, declared itself through moments of recognition and discovery yet disappeared from view the moment I tried to focus on what it was I thought I knew. It stirred implicit memories of experiences cut free from their original context and sewn into the seams of the here and now (Quatman, 2015). In psychanalytic theory symbols are recognised as a thing in themselves but also that of something else (Dickson, 2021). According to Milner (1987) the 'not-me' objects

used to externalise and work through separation anxieties during childhood are only considered helpful when not identified or spoken about. Milner (1987) suggested that once voiced, the process stops and the fused state between self and other is lost. This reminds me of the symbolism I recognise and think about yet very rarely draw attention to while observing a child play. It is my belief that two minds can hold a separate yet familiar thread of knowing that can be woven into a new form of understanding and relationship by simply being together. This is my experience of peek-a-boo.

Implications: Psychotherapeutic understanding

This research has helped to consolidate my understanding of the young people I treat through an auto-narrative exploration into my own history. I have connected psychodynamic literature concerning child and adolescent development with personal reflections and recollections that have highlighted the paradoxical nature of the lived experience. The desire to hide, to seek, to be known but unrecognisable, understood without words, yet heard through bodily protest, resonate with the frequently tumultuous and confusing emotional states that children and adolescents experience. Considering the role of the mask, mirror and skin as a way to communicate unspeakable longings has enhanced my clinical understanding through subjective recognition . It is my belief that the themes I have identified during this study are fundamental concepts of psychodynamic psychotherapy masked through the guise of peek-a-boo.

In my work with young people I offer a contained, intermediary environment to gather up the parts and pieces of my clients acquired knowing's and together we explore and try to make sense of their internal and external world (Quatman, 2015). Sometimes this occurs through play but with others, internal distress is symbolised physically, and requires careful interpretation and understanding. It is my understanding that in order to loosen a state of fusion, yet strengthen the ability to connect and communicate adaptively, one must be able to tolerate the oscillation between separateness and togetherness. My exploration into the phenomenon of

peek-a-boo has led me to believe that neither can exist without the other and that conflicts between the two continue to play out over a lifetime.

Therapists in training

In my first year employed as a psychotherapist in a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service one of the most difficult aspects of my work was managing my own anxiety regarding the self-inflicted scars, burns, self-destructive and often suicidal behaviours I saw on a daily basis. I initially found these displays extremely confronting and doubted I had anything to offer that might promote change.

My analysis of self-harm in the young people I work with and the experiences I have encountered through my own skin have helped me to recognise that some of the most frightening and disturbing displays through our "external container" (Bick, 1966, p. 484) can in fact be interpreted as a sign of hope (Motz, 2010). Making emotional distress visible sends a clear message that something is not right and urgently needs to be understood, not feared.

During my training deliberate self-harm was not explored in detail and I believe that what I have uncovered through my research could be of benefit to student psychotherapist's, especially those wishing to work within the public health sector where these presentations are all too common.

Undertaking a heuristic self-inquiry can be an extremely challenging but highly rewarding process. It is my hope that this body of work encourages other Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy students to acknowledge the relevance of self-knowledge and how personal experience can enhance clinical practise and help to identify parallel processes that may be occurring in the clients they treat.

Broader significance

I believe that my work may offer some insight and reassurance to parents, caregivers and whānau trying to make sense of their child's emotions, and the

varying ways connection is sought and needs are communicated. We don't need to implicitly understand what is occurring emotionally for young people all of the time. However, remaining curious about the emotions hidden behind the behaviour may promote a more informed and sensitive appreciation of the internal world of our tamariki and rangatahi. This study may also benefit other professionals working with children and adolescents including, early childhood educators, primary and secondary school teachers, and school guidance councillors.

It has been my intent to amalgamate my findings into a digestible, personal narrative that reaches beyond the academic sector and speaks to people from all walks of life. Those who stumble across my writing may be in search of recognition of their own personal experience or seeking reassurance and guidance to support the young people they care for. Either way, I believe my study caters to both worlds.

Strengths and limitations

This study is a unique piece of work of personal importance. It captures the demanding and challenging process of a heuristic self-inquiry that, at times, felt insurmountable due to the peek-a-boo nature of the phenomenon I sought to understand. It offers an original and descriptive perspective of one woman's search for authenticity through different guises. This in itself confers some limitations regarding the relevance of my work. As the researcher and sole participant of this inquiry the potential for personal bias is high and may influence my findings (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010). The synthesis and interpretation of the themes explicated in my research are relevant to my personal circumstances, personality, values, socio-economic positioning, and life experiences and as such are not necessarily universal.

In saying this, I believe that my work touches on a collective human desire to connect and be known. My exploration into the trepidation evoked when seeking and communicating one's truth and whether we will be accepted within our skin or without our masks may be familiar to many, whatever their context.

The heuristic journey is never complete, there is no end-point due to the evolving nature of knowledge and discovery which could be viewed as both a strength *and* a limitation to the heuristic process (Sela-Smith, 2002). This also echoes the circular principles of hide and seek that have grounded me throughout my inquiry. I have found it difficult to reconcile that I have reached the end of this study. There are so many threads left lingering in my mind and I wonder where they may have led me if time wasn't of the essence. In saying this, I am also relieved that time limited boundaries *were* in place as without them I may have never emerged from my hiding place to synthesise my findings.

Sela-Smith (2002) proposed that in order to "live the question" the researcher must surrender to the heuristic journey and become "intimately involved... during the immersion process" (p.65). I took this to heart and held a rather romantic notion of Moustakas' (1990) idea that "everything [in the researcher's life] becomes crystalised around the question" (p. 28). As I yielded myself to the process, I also had to contend with fulltime employment managing extremely high-risk young people. Fully submerged in work and a heuristic self-inquiry took its toll on my emotional and physical wellbeing. Trying to find a balance between the role of researcher and psychotherapist proved very challenging and left little space for a life beyond these two identities.

Despite the limitations described I whole heartedly believe that my personal exploration into the experience of peek-a-boo has opened up an area of knowledge that appeared to be missing in the literature. It is my hope that this evokes curiosity for further investigation and helps others to consider and feel less confronted by the variable and sometimes graphic ways seeking connection can manifest.

Future wonderings

In regard to psychotherapeutic research, I believe the possibilities for future investigations are extremely broad. I feel that the phenomena I have explored, bound by time restraints and word counts within academic requirements, requires further expansion and recalibration. This is likely to occur organically within my day to day

experiences for the rest of my life but, due to the possible universal significance of the themes I have introduced, further heuristic investigation may be indicated (Moustakas, 1994).

Having navigated a worldwide pandemic as a fledging psychotherapist the pertinence of my interest in the mask, the mirror and the skin is undeniable. To explore the Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist's experience in Aotearoa, working online and face to face with masks is of particular interest to me.

Final thoughts

"She immediately stepped into the wardrobe and got in amongst the coats... leaving the door open, of course, because she knew that it is very foolish to shut oneself into a wardrobe. " (Lewis,1950/2001, p.13)

As I draw this chapter to a close the symbolic and metaphorical meaning of the childhood wardrobe, emerging through different stages of this heuristic journey, has remained constant. Over the years I have acquired an array of protective coats that have both distorted and revealed a true and original sense of self. Exploring the relationship between the body, mind, and the external world I have come to understand that all three are intrinsically connected yet are frequently experienced in isolation. This study has revolved around the theme of peek-a-boo and my personal experience of the phenomenon yet, at its heart, it is a story of loss, separation and a lifelong search for self-expression, connection and identity. There is so much more that I want to understand so I will keep the door ajar.

References

Alvarez, A. (2012). The Thinking Heart: Three levels of psychoanalytic therapy with disturbed children. Karnac.

Aveline, M. (2006). Psychotherapy research: nature, quality, and relationship to clinical practice. In D, Lowenthal., & D., Winter. (Eds.). *What is psychotherapeutic research?* (pp. 3-28). Taylor & Francis Group.

Ascher Dunn, M. (1993). The Peek-a-Boo Game. Psychoanalytic Review. 80(3):331-339.

Bick, E. (1968). The experience of the skin in early object relations. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 45: 484-6.

Bion, W. R. (1962). *Learning from experience.* Heinemann.

Blake, P. (2008). Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy. Karnac.

Blum, H. P. (2004). Separation-individuation theory and attachment theory. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 52*(2), 535-553. https://doi.org/10.1177/00030651040520020501

Bollas, C. (1987). *The shadow of the object: Psychoanalysis of the unthought known.* Columbia University Press.

Bondi, L. (2007) *Psychoanalytic theory,* online papers archived by the Institute of

Geography, School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh.

http://hdl.handle.net/1842/1894

Brady, M. (2015). Unjoined persons: psychic isolation in adolescence and its relation

to bodily symptoms, Journal of Child Psychotherapy, 41:2, 179-194.

https://doi.org/10.1080/0075417X.2015.1048126

Davis, M., & Wallbridge, D. (2014). *Boundary and Space: An Introduction to the work

of D.W. Winnicott.* Routledge.

Dickson, E. (2021). 'Redeeming the body': Embodiment and the 'other' in the work of

Marion Milner. *Critical Quarterly.* John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Djuraskovic, I., & Arthur, N. (2010). Heuristic inquiry: A personal journey of

acculturation and identity reconstruction. *Qualitative Report*, *15*(6), 1569-

1593. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol15/iss6/12

Carroll, C. S. (1950). *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.* Geoffrey Bless.

Claid, E. (2006). Yes? No! Maybe... Seductive Ambiguity in Dance Theatre

Performance. Routledge.

Colloms, A. (2012). 'Reflections on Mirrors'. In A, Horne., & M, Lanyado. (Eds).

    Winnicott's Children. (pp.60-76). Routledge.

Cramer, M., Osherson, S., & Hatcher, S. (2016). Re-enactments in their

    developmental context. *Psychodynamic Practice,* 22:2, 120-130.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/14753634.2016.1162108

De Oliveira, H. M., & Fux, J. (2014). Psychoanalytic considerations on hide-and-seek

    games: From puti to peekaboo. [Considerações psicanalíticas sobre os jogos

    de esconder: Do puti ao esconde-esconde], 17(2), 255-269.

    http://doi:10.1590/s1516-14982014000200007

De Peyer. J. (2016). "Presence" and "Absence": Kaleidoscopic Hide and Seek: Reply

    to Commentaries. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues,* 26:2, 198-205.

    http://doi.org/10.1080/10481885.2016.1144982

Douglass, B. G., & Moustakas, C. (1985). Heuristic inquiry. *Journal of Humanistic*

    Psychology, *25*(3), 39–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167885253004

Eigen, M. (1981). The Area of Faith of Winnicott, Lacan and Bion. *International*

    Journal of Psychoanalysis. 62: 413-433.

Eckler-Hart, A. (1987). True and false self in the development of the psychotherapist.

    24(4). 683-62.

http://ovidsp.ovid.com/ovidweb.cgi?T=JS&PAGE=reference&D=ovfta&NEWS=N&AN=01745798-198724040-00001.

Fairbairn, W. R. D. (1986). Repression and the return of bad objects (with special reference to the 'war neuroses'). In P. Buckley. (Ed.). *Essential papers on object relations.* (pp. 102-126). University Press.

Findlay, L. (2008). A Dance Between the Reduction and Reflexivity: Explicating the "Phenomenological Psychological Attitude." *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology,* 39, 1-32. doi: 10.1163/156916208X311601

Flanagan, L. M. (2016). Object Relations Theory. In J. Berzoff., L. M. Flanagan., & P. Hertz. (Eds.), *Inside out and outside in: psychodynamic clinical theory and psychopathology in contemporary multicultural contexts.* (pp. 123-165).

Freud, A. (1967). About Losing and Being Lost. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child,* 22: 9-19.

Freud, S. (1914). Remembering, repeating, and working through. In J. Strachey, (Ed.). *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud,* (Vol, 13, pp. 145-156). Hogarth Press.

Freud, S. (1920). Beyond the Pleasure Principal. In J, Strachey, (Ed). *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, (Vol. 18, pp. 7-61). Hogarth Press.

Freud, S. (1923). The ego and the Id. In Strachey, J. (Ed). *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, (Vol. 19, pp. 3-59). Hogarth Press.

Fraleigh, S. (1994). Good intentions and dancing moments: Agency, freedom, and self-knowledge in dance. In U., Neisser. (Ed.). *The Perceived Self: Ecological and Interpersonal Sources of Self Knowledge.* Emory Symposia in Cognition. (pp. 102-111). Cambridge University Press https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511664007.007

Gaiman, N. (2019). *A David Bowie Story: Here's as mask. It's magic. Invisible. Put it on.* https://www.headbutler.com/reviews/a-david-bowie-story-heres-a-mask-its-magic-invisible-put-it-on/

Gesell, A. (1949). Infant and child in the culture of today. In *Child Development.* Harper & Row.

Grant, B., & Giddings, L. (2002). Making sense of methodologies: A paradigm framework for the novice researcher. *Contemporary Nurse, 13*, 10-28. doi:10.5172/conu.13.1.10.

Harper, D. (2021). *Online etymology dictionary*. Retrieved from https://www.etymonline.com

Henson, J. (1986. *Labyrinth.* TriStar Pictures.

Husserl, E. (2012). Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology. Routledge.

    (Original work published 1931).

Hymer, S. (1986). The Multidimensional Significance of the Look. Psychoanalytic

    Psychology, 3(2): 149-157.

Jarre, J-M. (1976). *Oxygene* [Album]. Disques Dreyfus/Polydor.

Khan, A. (2020). In Pursuit of the Connotative Truth: The Mask and its Psychological

    Dimensions in Girish Karnad's Havavadana. *Kashmir Journal of Language*

    Research, 23(1), 194-212.

Kleeman, J.A. (1967). The Peek-A-Boo Game – Part 1: its Origins, Meanings, and

    Related Phenomena in the First Year. Psychoanalytic Study of the Child. 22:

    239-273

Klein, M. (1940). 'Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states'. In M. Klein

    (1975) *The writings of Melanie Klein, Vol. III*. Hogarth Press.

Knoblauch, S. (2005). Body Rhythms and the Unconscious: Toward an Expanding of

    Clinical Attention, Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 15:6, 807-827

    https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2513/s10481885pd1506_2

Krueger, D. (2001), Body Self. *The psychoanalytic Study of the Child.* 56:1, 238-259.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.2001.11800675

Lacan, J. (1949). The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience. In A, Sheridan (Trans). Écrits: A selection. Norton, 1977.

Lacan, J. (2004). *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*,. Alan Sheridan (Trans). Karnac Books. (Originally published 1973)

Lakes, R. (2005) The Messages behind the Methods: The Authoritarian Pedagogical Legacy in Western Concert Dance Technique Training and Rehearsals. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 106:5, 3-20. https://doi.org/10.3200/AEPR.106.5.3-20

Lanyado, M. (2013). Transition and change: An exploration of the resonances between transitional and meditative states of mind and their roles in the therapeutic process. In A, Horne., & M, Lanyado. (Eds). *Winnicott's Children.* (pp.123-139). Routledge.

Lebeau, V. (2009). The art of looking: D.W Winnicott and Michael Haneke. *Screen,* 50(1), 35-44*.* https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjn083

Lemma, A. (2010). *Under the Skin: A psychoanalytic study of body modification.* Routledge.

Loetz, C., & Müller, J. (Hosts). (2021, April 24). "*How one becomes what one is*" On

  the False Self (No.11) [Audio podcast episode]. In "Lives of the Unconscious:

  A Podcast on Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy" (S. Lawrence, Trans.)

Luepnitz, D.A. (2009), Thinking in the space between Winnicott and Lacan. *The*

  International Journal of Psychoanalysis,90: 957-981.

Mahler, M., & Furer, M. (1963). Certain Aspects of the Separation-Individuation

  Phase. Psychoanalytic Quarterly. 32:1-14.

Masson-Sekine, N., & Viala, J. (1988). *Butoh: Shades of darkness.* Shufunotomo.

McDougall, J. (1989). *Theatres of the body: a psychoanalytic approach to*

  psychosomatic illness. Norton & Company.

Midgley, N. (2004). Sailing between Scylla and Charybdis: Incorporating qualitative

  approaches into child psychotherapy research. *Journal of Child*

  Psychotherapy, 30:1, 89-111.

Milner, M. (1987). *The Suppressed Madness of Sane Men: Forty-four Years of*

  Exploring Psychoanalysis 2: 216-233. Retrieved from https://pep-web-

  org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/browse/document/NLP.003.0216A

Milner, M. (2011). *An experiment in leisure.* Taylor & Francis Group.

Motz. A. (2010). Self-harm as a sign of hope. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy,* 24:2, 81-92. https://doi.org/10.1080/02668731003707527

Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications* (1st ed.). SAGE Publications.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods* (1st ed.). SAGE Publications.

Orange, D. (2011). *The suffering stranger: Hermeneutics for everyday clinical practice.* Routledge.

Pines, D. (2010). *A Woman's Unconscious Use of Her Body: A psychoanalytical perspective.* Routledge.

Polanyi, M. (1983). *The tacit dimension.* Peter Smith.

Quatman, T. (2015). *Essential Psychodynamic Psychotherapy: An acquired Art. Routledge.*

Reiss, A. (1988). The power of the eye in nature, nurture, and culture – A Developmental View of Mutual Gaze. Psychoanalytic Study of the Child. 45: 399-421

Resnik, S. (2005). *Glacial Times: A Journey Through the World of Madness.*
Routledge.

Roberts, T. (2013). Understanding the research methodology of interpretative
phenomenological analysis. *British Journal of Midwifery,* 21(3), 215-218.

Rhode, M. (2002). Whom does the skin belong to? Trauma, communication, and
sense of self. In Briggs, E. (Ed.). *Surviving Space: Papers on Infant
Observation: essays on the centenary of Esther Bick.* Karnac.

Sela-Smith, S. (2002). Heuristic research: A review and critique of Moustakas's
method. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *42*(3), 53–88.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167802423004

Stern, D.N. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant. A view from psychoanalysis
and developmental psychology.* Basic Books.

Stern, D.N. (1998). *The interpersonal world of the infant. A view from psychoanalysis
and developmental psychology.* Karnac.

Streisand, B. (1980). *Guilty* [Album]. Columbia records.

Taylor, S. (2012),"Butoh: a bibliography of Japanese avant-garde dance", Collection
Building 1:31,15-18. http://doi.org/10.1108/01604951211199137

Waddell, M. (1998). *Inside Lives: Psychoanalysis and the growth of the personality* (2nd ed.). Karnac.

Wagner, D. (2015). Polyvagal theory and peek-a-boo: how the therapeutic pas de deux heals attachment trauma. *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy.* 10:4, 256-265, https://doi.org/10.1080/17432979.2015.1069762

Wayne, J. (1978). *Jeff Wayne's Musical Version of The War of the Worlds* [Album]. CBS Records.

Winnicott, D. W. (1953). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena: A study of the first not-me possessions. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 34, 89-97.

Winnicott, D.W. (1955). Meta psychological and clinical aspects of regression within the psychoanalytic set-up. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 36, 16-26.*

Winnicott, D. W. (1956). The anti-social tendency. In *Collected Papers: Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis.* Hogarth press.

Winnicott, D.W. (1957). Further thoughts on babies as persons. In J. Hardenberg (Ed.), *The child and the outside world: Studies in developing relationships* (pp. 133-140). Tavistock Publications Ltd. (Original work published 1947).

Winnicott, D.W. (1960). Ego distortion in terms of true and false self. In *The maturations processes and the facilitating environment* (1965) (pp. 140-152). International Universities Press.

Winnicott, D.W. (1965). *The maturational process and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development.* International Universities Press.

Winnicott, D.W. (1967). Mirror-role of mother and family in child development. In *Playing and Reality.* Routledge Classics edition, 2005.

Winnicott, D.W. (1971). Playing and Reality. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Wittenberg, I. (2014). The transition from home to nursery school. In Simonetta, M., Adamo, G., & Rustin, M. (Ed.). *Young child observation. A development in the theory and method of infant observation.* (pp. 29-41). Karnac.

Wright, K. (1991). Vision and Separation: Between Mother and Baby. Free Association Books.