

# THE PUPPET, THE CLIENT AND ME IN THE SPOTLIGHT: A HEURISTIC STUDY OF THE ROLE OF A PUPPET IN DRAMATHERAPY

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Professional thesis / Završni specijalistički

2021

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Akademija za umjetnost i kulturu u Osijeku**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:251:963142>

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-03-04**



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MAJA ŠTIMAC

**LUTKA, KLIJENT I JA POD REFLEKTOROM:  
HEURISTIČKO ISTRAŽIVANJE O ULOZI LUTKE U  
DRAMATERAPIJI**

Završni rad poslijediplomskog specijalističkog studija

Osijek, 2021.

## The Puppet, the Client and Me in the Spotlight: A Heuristic Study of the Role of a Puppet in Dramatherapy

### **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study uses a heuristic model to investigate the relationship between the dramatherapist, the client and the puppet during the Dramatherapy sessions, as experienced by the researcher. The aim of this study is to demonstrate how the researcher's subjective experience informs and can support the therapeutic relationship in Dramatherapy. The paper contains a literature review about the Dramatherapy, play and puppetry. Puppet as a projective technique is applicable in numerous therapeutic procedures, such as psychotherapy, play therapy, expressive arts therapy, psychodrama and Dramatherapy. The approach where the principles and techniques of art therapy, Dramatherapy, play therapy and psychodrama are combined is known as therapeutic puppetry (Arnoff, 2005;117). The puppet helps the client to distance oneself from one's own emotions and to explore them. Through six stages of heuristic research described by Moustakas, the researcher has undertaken autobiographic internal exploration of her personal enthusiasm with puppets (Moustakas, 1990; 27). This research aims to describe the experience of a dramatherapist who uses puppets in her work with clients. The nature of the relationship between the dramatherapist and the puppet is more than that of a projective technique, because the dramatherapist is, by using the puppet, involved into creative processes. Through the medium of the puppet, the relationship between the dramatherapist and the client gets a new dimension while playing and acting together. This paper could be most relevant to those working with clients using methods of therapeutic puppetry because it may lead to better understanding of processes during the Dramatherapy sessions between the dramatherapist and the client.

Keywords: heuristic study, dramatherapy, puppetry, play, therapeutic puppetry

## SAŽETAK

U ovom kvalitativnom istraživanju istraživač koristi heuristički model kako bi istražio odnos dramaterapeuta, klijenta i lutke tijekom dramaterapijske seanse. Cilj istraživanja je prikazati kako istraživačevo subjektivno iskustvo može podržati terapijski odnos u dramaterapijskom radu. U radu je prikazan pregled literature iz područja dramaterapije, igre i lutkarstva. Lutka kao projektivna tehnika primjenjiva je u brojnim terapijskim postupcima, poput psihoterapije, terapije igrom, art terapije, psihodrame i dramaterapije. Pristup u kojem se kombiniraju principi i tehnike art terapije, dramaterapije, terapije igrom i psihodrame poznat je kao terapijsko lutkarstvo (Arnoff, 2005;117). Lutka pomaže klijentu u distanciranju od vlastitih osjećaja kako bi ih lakše analizirao. Prolazeći šest etapa heurističkog istraživanja koje je opisao Moustakas, istraživač provodi autobiografsko istraživanje osobne očaranosti lutkama (Moustakas, 1990;27). Ovim istraživanjem želi se prikazati iskustvo dramaterapeuta koji koristi lutke u radu s klijentima. Odnos dramaterapeuta i lutke ne predstavlja samo korištenje lutke kao projektivne tehnike, već i kreativni proces u koji je dramaterapeut uključen korištenjem lutke. Odnos dramaterapeuta i klijenta kroz medij lutke dobiva novu dimenziju tijekom igre i zajedničkog rada. Ovo istraživanje može biti primjenjivo u radu s klijentima gdje se koriste metode terapijskog lutkarstva jer pruža mogućnost boljeg razumijevanja procesa koji se odvijaju tijekom dramaterapijske seanse između dramaterapeuta klijenta.

Ključne riječi: heurističko istraživanje, dramaterapija, lutkarstvo, igra, terapijsko lutkarstvo.

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## 1. Introduction

### VUK VEGETARIJANAC

*Ne želim više  
biti dežurni krivac,  
strašilo za djecu,  
vječni negativac!*

*Obukao sam spavaćicu,  
prevario Crvenkapicu,  
progutao nju i baku,  
bile su u mraku....*

*Stavio sam šapu u brašno -  
zar je to tako strašno?  
Pa kozliće sam mazio:  
kad sam ih gutao,  
jako sam pazio.*

*Radio sam svinjarije,  
što nimalo lijepo nije,  
a prasci su meni rep palili  
i vrućom me vodom zalili.*



*Svi su me zezali,  
trbuh mi rezali,  
kamenjem ga punili  
i sasvim me zbunili.*

*Zato posve mijenjam  
hranidbeni lanac  
i od danas ja sam  
vegetarijanc.*

*Ivanka Borovac (Borovac, 2006:22)<sup>1</sup>*

This poem was the beginning of contact of the puppets and me as an adult. I decided to create the wolf from that poem. This decision made me explore a part of myself that had been dormant for years, and has become the underlying theme of this research.

As a student of Dramatherapy I have made the heuristic research of the role of the puppet in Dramatherapy for my dissertation. The aim of my dissertation has been to explore how I, as a student of Dramatherapy, have experienced the puppet and what the healing potential of working with puppets in Dramatherapy sessions might have been. I was engaged at child-care institutions where I was able to explore the use of puppetry in working with children. The research was carried out during the practical part of the studies in a private counselling centre.

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<sup>1</sup> Wolf, the vegetarian

I don't want to be the main culprit any more, a scarecrow for kids or the eternal villain!

I put on a nightgown, tricked the Little Red Riding Hood, swallowed her and her grandma,  
they were in the dark...

I put my paw in the flour - is that so scary? Well, I pampered the goats: when I swallowed them, I was very careful.

I used to do bad things, which is not pretty at all, but the piglets burnt my tail and they poured hot water on me.

Everyone made fun of me, everybody cut my stomach, they filled it with stones and they confused me completely.

That's why I'm totally changing the food chain and as of today I am a vegetarian. (translated by Ivana Marinić)

This research has explored themes, suggested some answers and raised further questions that emerged from the conduct of the therapy sessions with a client, using the puppets.

During my childhood I had a rabbit puppet and spent a lot of time playing with it. The puppets and the book about puppetry were a Christmas gift from my parents. My sister got a girl puppet and I got the rabbit puppet. I have rich memories of the playtime with puppets between me and my sister. We spent hours playing with the puppets, taking the roles and entering the world of imagination. During the play everything was possible, the puppets transformed into other creatures and had some special powers. These memories have given me a rich field to explore the experience of playing with puppets in the therapeutic space.

It was a challenge for me as a paediatrician to attend Dramatherapy classes because I perceived that play is a powerful activity that can impact the state of mind. Dramatherapy is different from the conventional medicine which I had learned, but it also has a therapeutic purpose. I wanted to learn more about different ways to help people and to try to merge these approaches. The knowledge about puppetry and the personal experience which I drew from the courses I attended have helped me understand the potential of using puppets with children in a therapeutic way.

In this heuristic study I explore the role of puppet in Dramatherapy sessions which I conducted with a client during the practical part of the studies in a private counselling centre. There were 10 sessions and during two of them I used the puppet. This research is a heuristic exploration of the relationship of me as a dramatherapist with the puppet and the client, and the data is drawn from the above mentioned two sessions with puppets.

## **1.1. Research background**

### **1.1.1. Dramatherapy and play**

Dramatherapy is a form of therapy that uses theatre concepts and techniques for healing purposes. It is applied to wide range of clients to solve their problems and achieve therapeutic goals. By using the dramatherapeutic techniques, the dramatherapist motivates clients to express their feelings and discuss their problems and to deal with various forms of disorders.

The roots of Dramatherapy reach back to the ancient Greece where a theatre was a place of purification and catharsis for the audience. Although therapeutic use of theatre was recognised at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century by Evreinom, Iljne and Moreno, Dramatherapy as a term was used for the first time in the UK by Peter Slade in the 1930's describing his method of

working with adult patients with mental disorders. Lindkvist and Jeninning contributed to further development of Dramatherapy as a profession in the UK (Langley, 2006:11).

In Croatia the formal education in Dramatherapy was provided as a postgraduate specialist study of creative therapy by the Academy of Arts and Culture in the 2016. Prior to that, Dramatherapy did not exist in Croatia as a profession, however at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century the psychiatrist Bastašić Zlatko, a pioneer of Dramatherapy in Croatia, started to use puppets in psychotherapy. He used the self-made wooden dolls and it seems that he was the person that introduced the dramatherapeutic work with puppets in Croatia. He used puppet play to deal with the prevention, diagnostics and treatment of emotional disturbances in childhood. Among others, one of his success was that he treated primary nocturnal enuresis in a child using the puppet play.

Play and toys are important elements of the development of human race. At the very beginning of civilisation, toys were made of stones, bones or wood and probably of other materials such as textiles, for which we have no evidence. Besides their use for play and amusement, toys also had a ritualistic function of communication between the gods and people (Arnoff, 2005:117). Dolls were found in graves of children and adults, which also indicates how important they were. It can be speculated that they were buried with the child or the adult as a part of the burial rite or to indicate the parental love for the child. It can be assumed that the doll is a companion on the way to another world, like a transitional object. In Winnicott's theory of human development, a toy or an item is a transitional object which facilitates the child's separation from the mother (Winnicott, 2004:5).

Although thousands of years have passed, the relationship between the child and toy play is still important. Playing with a toy and taking different roles during play are important for emotional and relational development of the child. It seems that in today's digital technology era the influence of toy play in childhood has become even more important for the healthy child development. Every day in my office I see parents trying to calm their child down by giving them the smartphone to watch a cartoon or listen to a song. It is evident that the child is used to that kind of entertainment and that smartphones are used for calming the child down. Imaginative toy play facilitates children's development, development of language, self-regulation and social-emotional development (Weisleder, 2016). The increase in screen time in the youngest population leads to the decrease in active play time. The electronic media exposure can adversely affect the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth and have consequences in adulthood (Healey, 2019).

In Croatian language there is a single word “*lutka*” for the English words “*doll*” and “*puppet*”. According to the Croatian dictionary the word “*lutka*” is defined as “a toy for children and a figure of adult torso which is used as a tailor model”. It also has an allegorical meaning to denote a manipulated person. It can be used to refer to a female young beautiful person (Hrvatski jezični portal).

Although the word “*lutka*” in Croatian language is used for both a doll and a puppet, there is a difference between these two types of toys. Primary significance of puppet is that it is a toy which is animated by the user who “brings it to life”. Other toys can be animated and cast into roles but the puppets are designed to be animated.

Looking back at the Croatian tradition and cultural heritage, it is evident that childhood play was recognised as an important part of child’s life. In the northern part of Croatia there is a tradition of the production of wooden toys. The toys represent horses, butterflies on a stick, dancers on a stick, airplanes, trains, trams, hackney-carriages with coachman. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the villages produced and sold the wooden toys co-operatively at town fairs (Biškupić Bašić, 2012). It looks as if the parents were aware of the importance of toys in childhood. Historically, toys also helped children in the process of learning about themselves, others and about the environment and were an essential part of growing up and forming a child’s personality, even if the parents did not know that.

#### 1.1.2. Traditional object and events in Croatia

Although there seems to be no evidence of the existence of Dramatherapy roots in Croatia, there are some universal principles and concepts similar to principles of Dramatherapy in the cultural heritage. They can be found in the traditional events and the use of traditional objects where the intentional use of various objects had the purpose of achieving catharsis, change or some kind of relief.

In Croatia there is a tradition of religious processions where the special kinds of wooden statues representing saints from Bible are exposed as a part of the eucharistic liturgy. The most popular is the statue of Virgin Mary at the pilgrimage sanctuary Marija Bistrica. The statue of Virgin Mary is carried outside of the church during the procession on special occasions, such as the assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On occasions like that, the statue of Virgin Mary and Jesus have different kinds of clothes. The pilgrimage to the statue of Virgin Mary is done in order to fulfill the vow, to pronounce a prayer or to thank for the

already received grace. This tradition of worshipping the statue of Virgin Mary has a healing effect to the people in need.

Within these religious traditions, the objects which are sanctified with healing powers are projective objects. There is also the social dimension of these experiences such as processions and rituals, whereby feelings can be expressed and shared with others which is akin to the communality of the shared theatrical experience. This public sharing can also provide a space of 'transference' whereby feelings associated with another experience such as grief or worry can be expressed within the containment of the ritual. In these religious gatherings and events there are possibilities of experiencing a holding and containing environment, described by Winnicott and Bion, which is crucial in the therapeutic context and healing process (Winnicott, 1960; Bion, 1959).

Croatia is also known for a long tradition of carnivals, traditional Christian celebrations which mark the beginning of Lent. The carnival begins when the town mayor hands over the keys of the city to the Carnival master who then proceeds to take control of the city and declares it a free zone of debauchery, satire and criticism of public figures. During the period of carnival masked parades are held, and in many parts of the country parades have traditional masks. The most known are *Zvončari* (bell ringers), who wear white trousers, striped blue and white t-shirts, sheep skins, red bandanas and bells. They are hidden behind animal masks and sheep skins welcoming the spring and exorcising evil spirits. The last day of the carnival is celebrated by burning the straw man *Fašnik*, a personification of every trouble the community has had in the past year, and by burning him they burn those troubles away (Bonifačić Rožin, 1963:10).

The carnival tradition exists in many countries and it can be connected with Dramatherapy metaphorically. In the period of carnival there is a "stepping outside" of everyday life allowing all suppressed emotion and thoughts to come out. It is allowed to take other roles and to make them live, there is a "license" given to dress up and embody different ways of being which are outside of the normal.

Looking back at the past, it is found that in Croatia the traditional events and use of wooden statues of saints, masks and other objects had a potential role in achieving cathartic experiences. The catharsis is defined as a process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from strong or repressed emotions (Oxford English Dictionary). It means that one experienced release and purification of emotions by using the statues and objects during the traditional

events, which brought one the spiritual renewal. These rituals within the Croatian tradition may be interpreted as giving over responsibility for oneself to a higher being, which results in the feeling of liberation, since the individual is 'freed from the responsibility for the self'. Through the review of these traditional events and objects in the Croatian tradition I tried to identify the intentional use of different object for the purpose of healing. Dramatherapy is a new form of creative therapy in Croatia, but the evidence of the traditional events and the use of different objects as a part of these events suggests that the engagement in these events and the experience in action were recognized as therapeutic and had a healing effect.

## **2. Literature review**

In the literature review, the themes of Dramatherapy, play and puppetry are explored because they are connected and intertwined.

During play, different kind of toys and objects are used for the purpose of taking role of something or someone. In puppetry, the puppeteer gives life to puppets or some objects and they become alive. By using puppets in the Dramatherapy the dramatherapist and the client may create or re-create different experiences and events for the purpose of healing.

In the literature review of Dramatherapy the emphasis was put on the available literature written by the founders and theorists of Dramatherapy, such as Sue Jennings and Phil Jones. Furthermore, play as a natural activity was explored within the theories by Winnicott, Froebel, Montesorri and Csikszentmihalyi. In the section about puppetry the works by Majaron, Pokrivka and Kroflin were explored. The section about therapeutic puppetry was explored the works of Arnoff, Bernier and Bastašić. The works of all those authors have been a significant part of the research in terms of the questions the researcher asked and the processes she explored.

Play can be described as a parallel existence of reality and fantasy and it is very powerful when it is located in the therapeutic space because it provides an insight into the problem and contains the cathartic activity (Bastašić; 1990). Play is a basic element of Dramatherapy. It is an important part of taking roles in Dramatherapy and it allows the distancing of oneself from reality (Langley; 2006). In real life, it is difficult to imagine children's play without toys, dolls and costumes. Children can turn anything into a 'toy', e. g. during play, the living room furniture becomes a scene and costumes are made of household cloths. In play, any object can become a living character with name and personality. It is important to note that in play the

child has control and ownership over the material universe. Such projective play enables the projection of feelings through the used object. This projective technique is used in Dramatherapy with children and adults, as well. Puppets as a projective technique can be applied in Dramatherapy and they have therapeutic purpose for children and adults.

## **2.1. Dramatherapy**

### 2.1.1. Definition of Dramatherapy

Dramatherapy is a form of expressive therapy where the involvement in drama has healing effects. It is an active, experiential approach which incorporates the use of story, role, improvisation, embodiment, and metaphor to enable relief of symptoms, emotional and physical integration, and personal growth.

The British Association of Dramatherapists (BADth) defines Dramatherapy as the method that “has as its main focus the intentional use of healing aspects of drama and theatre as the therapeutic process. It is a method of working and playing that uses action methods to facilitate creativity, imagination, learning, insight and growth” (BADth).

According to the definition of North American Drama Therapy Association “Dramatherapy is systematic and intentional use of drama/theatre processes and products to achieve the therapeutic goals” (NADTA).

Jones defines Dramatherapy in this way: “Dramatherapy is involvement in drama with healing intentions. Dramatherapy facilitates change through drama processes. It uses the potential of drama to reflect and transform life experiences to enable clients to express and work through problems they are encountering or to maintain a client’s well-being and health.” (Jones, 1996:6).

### 2.1.2. History of Dramatherapy

Aristotle, as the first theorist of theatre, concluded that the function of tragedy in the ancient Greek theatre was the release of deep feelings which led to purification of the senses and the soul. (Jones, 1996) Audience in the theatre would become involved in the play by their attention. At that time Aristotle highlighted that this emotional purification and move from isolation to involvement, had therapeutic effect (Mann, 1996).

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century the development of the psychology and experimental theatre brought a new understanding of the changes in people produced by drama and theatre. Iljine's „Therapeutic theatre”, Evreinov's „Theatrotherapy” and Moreno's „Psychodrama” made a large contribution to theatre as therapy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Langley, 2006).

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the UK, changes occurred in the theatre where the idea of theatre for everyone and the fact that theatre could be used to create change was a part of the broader political context. Peter Slade, Billy Lindkvist and Sue Jennings made individual efforts to promote the effects of Dramatherapy and the foundation of related organisations, societies and trainings (Jones, 1996). The professional associations started to gather experts and contributed to the establishment of Dramatherapy. The British Association of Dramatherapists (BADth), the professional body of Dramatherapists in the United Kingdom, was established in 1977, and The North American Drama Therapy Association was established in 1979. They spread the knowledge and centralized the research in the field of Dramatherapy.

### 2.1.3. The Processes in Dramatherapy

Dramatherapy aims to provide clients with positive behavioural changes and to help them to achieve emotional and physical integration and healing through role play and dramatic activity. The purpose of Dramatherapy is to support the clients to achieve positive changes in their lives and whereas ‘cure’ is not always possible, the therapy gives clients a possibility to live more successfully with the issues they are managing and to move towards healing. It can be applied and used in different institutions such as hospitals, prisons, schools, etc.

In Dramatherapy the relationship of client and therapist must be safe and containing, and the environment must be holding.

The basic processes in Dramatherapy are dramatic projection and transformation. Dramatic projection refers to the emotional and intellectual involvement of the client into the dramatic problem. “Projection involves the placing of aspects of ourselves or our feelings into other people or things.” (Jones, 1996:129). The client externalizes inner conflicts by dramatic projection of own experience into dramatic material. During the dramatherapeutical session different projective devices can be used, such as objects, masks, dolls and puppets. Jones (1996) explains that there is a difference between the projection in psychotherapy and Dramatherapy. While the projection in psychotherapy is regarded as defence mechanism, in Dramatherapy it helps the client to project the problem out onto the dramatic material. The transformation happens because of the dramatic projection and includes the change of the client’s experience of the expressed problem (Jones, 1996).

Dramatherapy session contains elements of play. The play is a natural activity of every child. Many developmental theories emphasize the importance of play experience for the full-potential development. Jennings described Embodiment-Projection-Role (EPR)



developmental model within the play therapy. EPR techniques can be integrated into any psychological model or therapeutic practice. Ideally, all humans during the early childhood develop the basic “dramatic skills” and stages are completed by the age of 7 (Jennings, 1992). In this period, children naturally learn about the world around them through imitation and dramatic play. The Embodiment stage happens in the first year of life when the child develops “the body-self” by learning about relation between the body and mind and all environment. During that stage the infant explores the surrounding world and gains the first experiences of the sensory world. The infant learns about the world around him/her by using their hands and mouth, by exploring their own body, by making sounds, or by imitating movements. The Projection stage starts when the child starts to play with a transitional object, which has been described by Winnicott; the child then progresses to more dramatized play with stories and more objects. During play, the child starts to use and explore different toys and objects. The symbolic play starts when the child is able to use an object with the idea that the used object represents another object. The Projection stage includes other activities such as sculpting, drawing and painting. The Role stage refers to the dramatic play and the children pretending to be someone else by taking different roles. It begins with the second transitional object which is usually a symbol of the authority like a magic wand or sword. In the dramatic play, the child takes roles from stories or improvises using the object as a scene for playing (Jennings, 1992). During play, the child is an actor and a director of the play (Jennings, 2017). All these developmental stages of play are implemented in dramatherapy. The client embodies the dramatic action by movement and vocalisation, the dramatic action is projected into images and dramatized, and at the end the client takes on a role of someone or something.

Jennings says: “My own work has taken me extensively into the use of developmental dramatic stages that parallel normal human development. The three stages of EPR have proved a safe and useful paradigm and basis for dramatherapeutic intervention. They enable participants to develop a range of artistic skills in movement and voice, to develop the imagination and to have choices about the scenes, scenarios and stories that they may wish to explore. Within this process I see myself as a guide/director who can wait at the dramatic threshold, or in the wings of the therapeutic stage, until people wish to go further.” (Jennings et al., 1994:100).

Metaphors are used on numerous occasions in the Dramatherapy process. Srivastva defines metaphor as “an invitation to see an object as if it were something else” (Srivastva and Barrett, 1988:60). Metaphor is used to overcome resistance and facilitate learning. The concept of using metaphor through action leads the clients to the state in which they are free

for their associations. Using metaphor in Dramatherapy introduces a different perspective of the problem being encountered by the client. Metaphor gives the opportunity to client to distance oneself from the existing real-life problem. Through the embodiment of metaphor, the client is able to make dramatic exploration and to create a new perspective of the problem. These processes help the client to bring to light the conflicts from unconscious part of personality and to understand them (Mann, 1996). Campbell said that „for the therapist, metaphor plays a crucial role in the development and effectiveness of the therapeutic alliance with clients. The role of the therapist is to invite and lead the client to explore areas of experience which are beyond full and immediate expression and awareness. Metaphor is a means and a context for therapist and client to communicate with each other as well as a means of self-exploration within the group.” (Campbell, 1990:4). Metaphor brings the client to the world of fantasy and by the embodiment of metaphor client enters a dramatic reality. The function of metaphor and symbol is similar to that of imagination in a child’s play (Campbell, 1990).

Milioni describes ‘embodied metaphor’ as representation of emotions, issues and dilemmas in the body of client. The client embodies the metaphor by taking a physical position in space (such as ‘statues’, ‘fluid sculpts’ and other dramatic forms) or by personification of aspects of self (e. g. moving in a particular way, posture, role, gesture, displaying a particular characteristic, shape/form, pace/rhythm, dimension in space, character/personality, etc.) (Milioni, 2007). Using different projective objects, such as masks and puppets, the embodiment of metaphor may become accessible more easily. This means that the client uses projective play for the embodiment of metaphor.

## **2.2. Play**

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb „to play” as “engage in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose” (Oxford English Dictionary).

However, the most credible definition of play may be the one by the Play Therapy UK, the UK Society for Play and Creative Arts Therapies. They define play as „a physical or mental leisure activity that is undertaken purely for enjoyment or amusement and has no other objective” (PTUK).

In Croatian language the word *play* means “*igra*”. In Croatian dictionary the meaning of the noun “*igra*” is “the spontaneous intellectual and physical activity of a child which is a part of

growing up and development of personality” (Hrvatski jezični portal). It is also described as “a form of recreation with the sole purpose of entertaining”.

Researches in the field of psychology and education suggest that play is an important mediator of learning and socialization and an important stimulus to the overall development throughout life. Many authors have discussed the influence of play on child development.

Although play has existed since the beginning of mankind the importance of it was recognized in the 19th century. The pioneers of the theories that emphasize the importance of play in the development of child were Froebel and Montessori. Froebel created the original kindergarten method in which all elements of natural play which he observed in the children of German peasants were used as a medium for learning. According to Froebel, the child should be enabled to valorise his own knowledge and to build his own experiences within play (Froebel, 1887). Maria Montessori was a physician who developed her educational method and materials from observations of the play activities of children. She introduced “Children’s house”, a kindergarten and school where all the equipment and furniture were adapted to children and their needs. She wrote about her method and educational philosophy: “The success of these results is closely connected with the delicate intervention of the one who guides the children in their development. It is necessary for the teacher to guide the child without letting him feel her presence too much, so that she may be always ready to supply the desired help, but may never be the obstacle between the child and his experience.” (Montessori, 1964:77). Children’s play is a way of learning and they learn by themselves: “The aim is an inner one, namely that the child trains himself to observe; that he be led to make comparisons between objects, to form judgments, to reason and to decide; and it is in the indefinite repetition of this exercise of attention and of intelligence that a real development ensues.” (Montessori, 1964:33).

Dewey introduced the Progressive kindergarten movement that supported the child-centered approach and play was recognized as a vehicle for learning. His methodology recognized the value of dramatic play of children during which a child pretends to take on the adult roles and tasks (Saracho, 1995).

According to Freud (1920) and his psychoanalytic theory, play is a form of an ego activity that is trying to deal with the low level of anxiety that arises from external pressures and conflicts. Repeating the unpleasant situation during play, the child becomes the master of that situation and actively overcomes anxiety or conflict situations, leading to tension reduction.

Winnicott, a paediatrician and an independent psychoanalyst, suggested that children, as well as adults, are able to realize their creativity only during the playtime. Through play one can reach his own authenticity, a part of personality known as the “true self” and that can reflect on the whole lifetime. Winnicott implemented play in his work with children, so he concluded: „It is good to remember always that playing is itself a therapy. To arrange for children to be able to play is itself a psychotherapy that has immediate and universal application, and it includes the establishment of a positive social attitude towards playing.” (Winnicott, 2005:67). He also introduced the terms “transitional objects” and “space”. The child uses various objects, such as thumb, blanket, or a toy, as transitional objects that symbolically represent the link between child and mother. When symbolization is established the child is ready to see difference between the inner and the external object. Transitional objects lessen the stress of separation and soothe the infant. Play takes place in the transitional space, the interspace of experience between fantasy and reality. During play the connections of inner reality with an individual relation to external reality are established. In adulthood the entire cultural life, such as art and religious experiences, takes place in this transitional space (Winnicott, 2005).

The important part of the definition of play is the purpose of “enjoyment and amusement”.

Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of *flow* describes the feeling which also emerges during playtime. He defines *flow* as “a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience is so enjoyable that people will continue to do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990:4). This definition may as well be applied to many aspects of life: arts, business, sports, etc. The flow is the state of mind when person is completely involved in what he is doing, and thoroughly focused on the present. That state is achieved when ratio of skills and challenge is optimal, e. g. the challenge and skills are of an average level.

### **2.3. The puppetry**

Puppetry as a form of theatre has been present in different cultures from ancient times. Various kinds of dolls and puppets are found in ancient civilizations such as Egypt, India, and China and they had a role in religious rituals and celebrations or they served for fun. Different forms of puppets have been used throughout history, such as shadow puppets, rod puppets, marionettes, hand puppets, Java dolls and Bunraku puppets. In the Medieval Europe the main role of puppetry was social criticism and entertainment of people. The performances were done on markets, fairs and streets with the intention to ridicule the rich and powerful.

Each region in Europe had performances with traditional characters that entertained audiences, such as Punch and Jude, Petrushka, Pulcinella and Jan Klaassen (Kroflin, 2013). In the 19th century the puppet shows started to be played for children. At that time the first puppet theatre was founded, and in the 20th century in Europe puppetry experienced its flourishing period.

In Croatia, the puppet scene revived at the beginning of the 20th century with the amateur gathering of the Deželić family and enthusiastic puppeteers and their first performance. Following the example of German theatre, the first Marionette Theatre was founded in Zagreb. The first performance “Petrica Kerempuh i spametni osel” was performed in 1920. The choice of the satirical text that criticises the political and economic events has caused great public interest (Bogner-Šaban, 1986). In Croatia, puppetry was institutionalized by founding of puppet theatres in all major urban centres in the middle of the 20th century. The themes of puppet show included fairy tales, fables and contemporary themes related to the problems of childhood.

All children, playing with the doll or teddy bear, can be in the position of a puppeteer. In the hands of a child the toy can become alive and have its own life. For the most children in all parts of the world the very first “puppet play” happened in parent’s lap while playing the traditional finger plays. The parent touches the child’s fingers one by one, saying or singing a song. Meanwhile the tiny theatre appears on the palm of the child. According to Cvetko, these plays between the parent and the child are for the sake of playing and on the palm-stage each finger has its own place and the role. That play, besides creating attachment between parent and child, gives the child a feeling that “world is safe and well despite all the nuisances which normally occur in life.” (Cvetko, 2010:66). The message of the plays is that everybody has his own place in the world because everybody is important.

Whether child meets the puppet in a theatre as a member of the audience or as a player, the puppet brings joy and excitement to the child. Kroflin says that "the child is used to play with the toy and recognizes the puppet as a friend who is ready to play or, if necessary, to provide comfort and understanding" (Kroflin, 2013:211). During play the puppet has a role of some other living being, it is their substitute, and through the game the child has the possibility to manipulate the puppet, in different way than in reality. Then the child has the opportunity to renew, combine and transform their experiences (Pokrivka, 1980).

While playing with the puppet the child is provided with a kind of cover and by hiding behind it, it finds the courage to express its own emotions and secrets. During play with a puppet the

child communicates with adults more frankly and without restraint. Majaron said that “the puppet is an authority selected by the child himself” (Majaron, 2012:11).

According to Pokrivka, the play with a puppet “leads the child to the state of ecstasy, excitement and playfulness. The puppet drives its thoughts, fantasy and emotional world and enables the child to express its richer and more complex intimate experience of the world.” During play the child goes through all situations the puppet goes throughout and identifies itself with the puppet. When the play or the puppet show is finished, the child is enriched because “the puppets don’t have their lives only during the play. They continue with their lives within the children’s intimate world just as much as they influenced it.” (Pokrivka, 1980:44).

The puppet is primarily used in theatre, which can be both for children and adults. There are many other possibilities for the implementation of a puppet in different parts of real life. As Union internationale de la marionnette (UNIMA), the international puppetry organisation, and Puppets in education, development and therapy (EDT) Commission recognised, the puppet can be useful as a medium for communication, education, development and therapy. The systematic use of dialogue with puppets creates a favourable environment for children's self-expression and creativity (Kroflin, 2011). In her research of puppet’s function in communication in the learning process, Korošec found that the puppet functions as a mediator in communication and improves it. The communication between children and their teacher is indirect and enabled by the puppet. The puppet helps the child to overcome fear, establish contact and improve communication with other children and the teacher. In communication, the puppet represents a shield for the child. Korošec said that “a puppet in the hands of a teacher seems to give relief. The child is relieved of his/her fear of authority and can easily establish contact with the environment.” (Korošec, 2012:34). Kroflin established that the inclusion of puppet in teaching a second or foreign language was a powerful device. During puppetry workshops, the puppet was an integrating element for the group and had a role of motivator and eliminator of fear and inhibitions (Kroflin, 2012).

Puppetry as a form of theatre offers many possibilities for children and adults. Whether the person is a member of audience or a player, the puppet opens the door of imagination and leads one to the world of fantasy. It can be said that the actor and the spectator are involved in the aesthetic illusion, described by Langer as otherness from reality and detachment from actuality (Langer, 1953). This “virtual reality” is also known as aesthetic distance, surplus reality and play space in Dramatherapy terminology (Lištiakova, 2015).

## **2.4. Dramatherapy and puppetry**

In his master thesis about the history of puppetry use for therapeutic purposes, Bernier (1983) stated that Bender and Woltmann had been the first to use puppets in children's psychotherapy in year 1935 at the Psychiatric Division of Bellevue Hospital in New York. In their work they mostly used hand puppets because hand puppets are direct in their actions and allow children to express their feelings and thoughts.

Puppets can be used in numerous therapeutic procedures such as psychotherapy, play therapy, expressive arts therapy, psychodrama and Dramatherapy. Different kinds of puppets can be used in the sessions, such as hand puppet, finger puppet, marionettes, rod puppet, shadow puppet. Also, any objects can be used as puppet if it appears to be alive (Czereova, 2016:3). When puppets are used in Dramatherapy sessions, clients can choose some of the puppets which are provided for them or they can create their own puppets. The information about the chosen character of puppet and the role they play aids in psychological assessment of clients. For that purpose, Bastašić used puppets made of wood without face expressions, so that the client is the one who decides what kind of mood the puppet has. He also had puppets with two expression on the face, e. g. one side of the head being a smiling face and the other side being an angry one (Bastašić, 1988). When clients are engaged in their own puppet making, puppets are made as an extension or representation of the self, parts of self or aspects of others. The approach where the principles and techniques of art therapy, Dramatherapy, play therapy and psychodrama are combined is known as a psychopuppetry (Bernier, 2005:110). Arnoff uses the term therapeutic puppetry and defines it as "the use of puppet theatre arts in therapy" (Arnoff, 2005:117).

Bastašić (1988) states that the use of puppet for therapeutic purposes improves the therapeutic processes. Puppet play enables a better flow of unconsciousness between the child and the therapist because "between an adult patient and a therapist apparently there is an empty space for play with words, and between a child's therapist and a child there are toys, drawings, unstructured materials" (Bastašić, 1988:37). Jennings explains that through the developmental EPR paradigm: "Puppets also have a key place in the transition children make between the projective stage and the role stage. Puppets are rather like masks that are not directly on the face and they have the same varied properties. Puppets and masks both conceal and reveal and enable the safe exploration of themes and feelings that would otherwise be internalized." (Jennings, 2017:133). During play with a puppet or another object, through projection, the

child distances itself from his own emotions, unconsciously analyses them and is able to explore them (Pokrivka, 1989).

Viklund made an international web-based research among clinicians about the application of puppets in psychotherapy. In the research, almost all clinicians used hand puppets. She explained that the clients “benefit least from only making a puppet and not playing with it or from only using ready-made puppets and not making some of their own.” (Viklund, 2017:14). Her research suggested that it was important for the client to go through the complete process, from puppet making to play. The puppet protects the client and play is a safe place of exploration (Viklund, 2017).

Landy said: “In playing with puppets, dolls, and objects, the therapist is working through a subtle dialectic that informs all creative action in the theatre. The actor on stage is actual and fictional at the same time. He is person and persona. He exists in a space that is both a real room and a series of flats and two dimensional backdrops. He handles objects that appear real, but that are props, fakes. The notion that the puppet is real and fake at the same time is the distancing factor necessary for the therapeutic dramatization to occur. The therapist will help the child increase or decrease that distance in order to move toward catharsis and understanding” (Landy, 1984:79-89)

The Dramatherapy session with the puppet gives the client a possibility to speak on behalf of the puppet and to explore one’s own problems and conflicts.

### **3. Methodological considerations**

In this research about the role of the puppet in Dramatherapy the qualitative heuristic approach is used.

In the scientific research there are two different methods of collection and interpretation of the data and considering the methodology the research can be qualitative and quantitative.

The quantitative approach is based on numerical and measuring concepts and is focused on facts. The researchers use the quantitative approach to determine causality and fundamental laws. The qualitative method is focused upon meaning and interpretation of the data (Gibson, 2004). Qualitative research methods are more applicable for research that describes individual experiences and beliefs contrary to quantitative research methods which focus on describing the characteristics of a population. Qualitative research may use semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. Questions in qualitative research are open ended such as what, how, who, why, when and where (Denzin, 2011).



The quantitative research uses highly structured methods such as questionnaires, surveys and structured observation and these quantitative methods are inflexible for the exploration of experience and meaning.

Although these two approaches are applied in various scientific fields they can be combined together to widen and complement the knowledge generated in research using only one of these methods (Pathak, 2013).

For the research and exploration in Dramatherapy the qualitative method is more suitable because it gives a researcher more complete understanding of experiences, attitudes, behaviour, interactions and people's beliefs.

Heuristic method is described by Moustakas in 1990, when he determined phases of heuristic inquiry. Through his own exploration of the phenomenon of loneliness, Moustakas developed an organized and systematic form to investigate human experience.

“Heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one’s self and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social- and perhaps universal-significance.” (Moustakas, 2009:15). His work helps researchers in their internal exploration, collection and interpretation of data. The phases of heuristic inquiry are: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and creative synthesis (Kenny, 2012). During the initial engagement the researcher meets his questions for the first time and realizes that the questions need the answers. Immersion is the phase in which the researcher, through the collection of data, continues to deepen the self-reflection and self-awareness. The third step, the incubation phase, is the period in which the researcher is engaged in other activities and resting from the exploration and unconscious connections are made. Illumination is the phase where the researcher, through a different perspective, comes to self-discovery. In the fifth phase, the explication phase, the researcher analyses the meaning of the answers that emerged in the previous phase, which leads him to the last phase, the creative synthesis, where he makes conclusions.

In the heuristic research the personal experience of the researcher is the main focus. By using self-dialogue, self-investigation and self-discovery the researcher is able to analyse and to understand the meaning of the phenomenon.

### **3.1. A personal reflection**

I think that heuristic method has helped me reach creative conclusions about the questions that I tried to answer. Heuristic method has helped me explore my relationship with puppet while working with the client and to find answers to internal and personal questions. According to Moustakas' inquiry, I had an opportunity to conduct an investigation of myself and to explore my own experience of the role of a puppet in Dramatherapy when interacting with the client (Brisola, 2016). I chose heuristic method for this research because it explores in the reflective way the relationship between the client, the puppet and me. For that purpose, the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interview would not be appropriate. The qualitative heuristic method used for the exploration of my personal experience of interaction between the client, the puppet and me guided me in the process of investigation and deepening of the knowledge about the role of puppet in Dramatherapy.

### **3.2. The research questions**

This research is a personal heuristic exploration and its purpose is to explore the role of puppets in Dramatherapy and to explain why I have chosen the puppet and what puppet play has brought to me. The research will explore the experience of working as a dramatherapist with puppets:

1. What is the role of the puppet in Dramatherapy in relation to a client and to the dramatherapist?
2. In what way does working with puppets impact the dramatherapist?
3. What are some wider perceptions and possible applications of puppetry in therapeutic work?

## **4. Methods**

To describe and to bring into this research my own experience and reflections, I used observations and notes from my perception diary, as well as notes from supervising sessions and personal therapy. I also used my notes from lectures which I attended while studying Dramatherapy.

For the purpose of describing the client's and my experience, I used observations and clinical notes from the Dramatherapy sessions. These personal observations are a part of heuristic process and they contributed to self-dialogue and self-investigation. The observations and

notes from my perception diary helped me in the reflective processes of exploring the emerging questions.

As far as the literature is concerned, I gathered knowledge from literature, including scientific journals, textbooks, books and digital media. I used several sources to collect data. I used online databases including ResearchGate and PubMed.

## **5. Ethical considerations**

I followed ethical code of practice of The Academy of Arts and Culture Osijek and the research was carried out according to instructions of ethical code of practice. Since in Croatia there is no national association of dramatherapists, I followed the BADth Code of Practice (BADth). According to the Code of Practice of BADth dramatherapists, in their work they “have moral and ethical responsibilities towards clients and must ensure that they practise with integrity. Respect for clients should be maintained in verbal and written reports and notes.” The section about confidentiality emphasizes that “information received from the clients must be treated as privileged and confidential both during and following the completion of therapy”. All the clinical or research findings must not be distorted, misrepresented or misused by the dramatherapist.

Dramatherapists have a legal obligation to protect children who are at risk from physical, emotional and sexual abuse or neglect and should inform the relevant institutions about that. The adherence to the Code of practice is vital for the appropriate relationship between the client and the dramatherapist.

The heuristic approach enables the researcher’s own process to be regarded as research data. The subject of the research is researcher’s clinical practice and the topic is dramatherapy with puppets in clinical practice with the child. Therefore, for the purpose of heuristic research, the written consent of the parents of the child was obtained for describing the vignettes.

The parents were informed that the research is heuristic. The meaning of the term “heuristic exploration” was explained to them. They were informed that in this heuristic research I focused on my internal process, rather than writing about client. It was well known to them that anonymity is guaranteed.

For the purpose of confidentiality of data, all personal information about the client were anonymised through the use of pseudonym. All the materials produced by the client were secured and unavailable to others.

Regarding that in this heuristic research I considered my own feelings and reflections, I had several ways of support during conducting research. Therefore, I had sessions with clinical supervisor and weekly personal therapy.

All these ethical considerations have to be respected to preserve and promote the highest standards of professional Dramatherapy practice.

## **6. Data and the analysis**

As a student of Dramatherapy I decided to explore in heuristic way the role of puppet in Dramatherapy. I tried to find answers to the questions about the role of puppet in Dramatherapy and about the impact of the puppet on the dramatherapist. The wider perceptions and possible applications of puppetry in the therapeutic work were also analysed. The reason for choosing that for dissertation research was the magic of working with puppet.

As a child I had a hand puppet, which represented the rabbit. During my childhood I spent many hours playing with the rabbit. I grew up and became a medical doctor and specialized in paediatrics. As a paediatrician I “grew up” and became a neonatologist. During these years of my education, I forgot the feeling that overwhelms you during play. During lifelong learning course of puppetry, I experienced that feeling again after many years and realised that I had found something known but forgotten. I felt like I had found the lost treasure. This feeling of dedication to play was so powerful that I wanted to implement that in my everyday practice. This seemed impossible until the postgraduate study of creative arts was announced.

I became the student of Dramatherapy. During my clinical practice, I took the chance to work with puppets any time I had one. At the end of my postgraduate study of creative arts I chose the puppet again for the dissertation.

All this made me ask myself: Why do I focus my mind on the puppet?

### **6.1. The puppets on my mind**

“The puppet is having a hard time being a puppet. Therefore, it needs a puppeteer. Only with the puppeteer the puppet becomes a scenic being. The puppeteer is also having a hard time being a puppeteer. Without the puppet he is an ordinary man. Only with the puppet he becomes something more. One should be aware of that.” (Paljetak, 2007:15).

I tried to apply these words to the dramatherapist and the puppet in Dramatherapy. It may be interpreted as if the dramatherapist and the puppet form a unity in Dramatherapy sessions. They make each other wealthier.

My first reunion with the puppets happened during the 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday party of my daughter Dora. It came to my mind suddenly when I tried to attract the attention of children. I improvised a puppet show with the stuffed toys within few minutes. I took the text from a book about puppetry that I got as a child. The children were sitting and waiting for me to prepare the puppet show. They were excited. The action of the story took place on the meadow where some animals had found the mirror and every animal thought that mirror was his own photo, so they argued about that. The show was great and they laughed a lot. I was excited after the show and I was happy that I made it for them. In the years after, I prepared more birthday puppet shows for my daughters. The children were always happy and I felt this excitement every time after the puppet show. I felt that work with puppets brought to me new feelings which I enjoyed.

I found an advertisement for the lifelong learning course about the puppets with open movable mouth. There was something interesting in that advertisement that I could not resist. It seemed unusual that a medical doctor, a paediatrician, a neonatologist, should attend that course. Nevertheless, I decided to attend the course. The professor told us that we would have a chance to make a puppet with open movable mouth, like puppets from the Muppet Show. During that course I made three puppets: the wolf vegetarian, the little red riding hood and the king. I was so proud of their appearance and I fell in love with them.

During the process of creation and animation of puppets I realised that a new feeling of excitement is so strong and good. I realised that there is something different from my ordinary everyday life, and that brought me the feeling of happiness. It was like my eyes opened after many years of medicine.

I made my own puppet show “The tooth from the fairy tale”, with the help of my daughters. We performed it in school, kindergarten, library, at birthday parties, at the institution for children without parental care. Every step of the puppet show preparation was a very exciting experience, from story making, creating the puppets and scene, to performing. That was the confirmation that puppets have a special meaning for me. At that time, I did not ask myself why I am in love with puppets.

As a paediatrician I was invited to a primary school to have a lecture about puberty for children aged 10 to 11. I knew that the lecture would be very interesting for children because I intended to use puppets. During the lecture with the PowerPoint presentation I used my puppets, the wolf and the king. They interrupted me with silly questions about puberty. The

children were laughing and they also asked questions. After the lecture I felt that the puppets were my helpers.

This good experience solved my dilemma about studying Dramatherapy.

As a student of Dramatherapy I started to do clinical practice with different groups of clients. I worked there with children aged 3-13 and in our sessions we used puppets. I found myself in play with puppets again. During the sessions I used dramatherapeutical tools and techniques from different areas of creative arts. Whenever I had a chance, I implemented puppetry into my sessions. Near the end of Dramatherapy studies, I realised that I have puppets on my mind all the time. I asked myself why I chose the puppets.

## **6.2. The puppet, the client and me in the spotlight: The six phases of heuristic research**

At the beginning I must admit that it was not easy for me to write the dissertation in English. The personal reflections that emerged from my mind have been translated from my native language.

In my research I followed 6 stages of heuristic research and two vignettes of my work with the client at private counselling sessions are presented to describe the session and to provide insight into the relationship between the client, puppets and me.

### 1. The initial engagement:

Until a few years ago I worked as a neonatologist. Taking care of premature babies whose weights were about 600 g was a challenge for me. I was happy and proud at the same time when the patient, the very tiny child, was able to leave the hospital with his parents.

The moment when I decided to attend the lifelong learning course about puppetry changed my life. I met the puppet and I started to look at the world through different eyes. The first time I animated the puppet, it made me cry, but I did not know the reason. I was ashamed for my tears. After few weeks, when I created the puppets and the scene for my own puppet show I felt the flow for the first time. The feeling was so overwhelming and I didn't want to stop working. At that point, for the first time, the questions that were impossible to ignore arose in my mind. I asked myself what was going on and why I chose the puppet and what the play with puppet meant to me?

### 2. Immersion:

When I thought about this relation of puppets and me, the first thing that came to my mind was that I was still a child trapped in the body of a woman. The next question was about other persons who work with puppets. Are they also children trapped in bodies of adults?

I knew that it was not the truth. I had to explore the reasons for my fascination with puppets. At the beginning of my Dramatherapy studies, I was still asking myself whether the paediatrician can work as a dramatherapist. At the workshops during the studies I heard the sentence “Trust the process” so many times and I never knew what it meant. The process started, and I knew that I was on the journey but I did not know what the goal was. The feeling of anticipation of the work with puppets, which I knew was a part of the study programme, was the confirmation that I was on the right way.

*Vignette 1:* As a student of Dramatherapy I was engaged by a private counselling service to work individually with a boy, Ivan, aged 13, who was dealing with behavioural problems. I prepared my work programme for the first sessions containing warming exercises for getting to know each other in a way that would build trust and confidence. At the first session I asked him what he thought about puppets. He said that he thought that the puppets were for babies. He was not interested in puppets. For the one of the next sessions I brought the puppets made by students of the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek. The puppets were not nice like puppets from the nice stories for small children. They looked ugly and weird. I asked Ivan what he thought about them and if he would like to use some of them. He changed his mind and decided to use them in the monomyth which we made. When I realised that he had taken the puppet and that the play started, I felt proud and happy and ashamed at the same time. I asked myself if it was appropriate to use the puppet as a technique in clinical practice if I knew that the client did not like it. My insecurity lasted just for a few seconds until I saw Ivan’s interest in puppets. I felt that, by offering the puppets to Ivan who does not like puppets, I stepped outside my comfort zone and I pushed him to step outside his comfort zone. We met in the zone unknown to both of us and the puppets were there for us to keep us working together. I knew that the puppets were good for conversation and that the puppet in monomyth will help him create his hero and accompany him on his journey. The hero became alive in his hands and they went together through all the difficulties, struggles and at the end they tasted victory. At the end of the session I felt that I gave him a chance to embody and meet his hero with the puppet.

*Vignette 2:* I brought to the clinical practice all the materials needed for making the puppet. My intention was to make unusual puppets of socks, so I bought socks with separated fingers. After warming exercises, I told Ivan that we were going to create our puppets. He was not very happy about that but he was curious about the things I brought to this session. I explained that we had to design a puppet from the sock, which means we had to put eyes,

nose, and mouth to the sock. He started to combine different materials and made a very interesting puppet. He was excited, he spoke all the time. I made my puppet, too. Then I told him to put on the sock on his feet, with the puppet facing us, e. g. its face being on the upper side of his foot. I also put the puppet on my foot. We lay down on the floor and put our puppet-legs on the bench. We started to play. It was amazing and funny. At some point I felt uncertainty because I did not know in which direction our play was moving. We had a really good conversation, about relationship with friends, parents, unacceptable behaviour. He brought his puppet home to show it to his parents. After the session I was thinking if I was a good facilitator for deciding to work with puppets although he said that he didn't like puppets. "Is this the case of a holding environment?", I negotiated within myself. That was one point of view, me bringing the material for puppets and asking him to create his own puppet. But on the other side, he found a role for the puppet. I realised that I had helped him explore his relationship with parents and friends while he played with the puppet. At the end I concluded that the holding environment was created and that my relationship with him was containing, otherwise he would not have used the puppet.

Cattanach said that a therapist is "the facilitator of children's explorations who helps them develop their internal model of the outside world and a clear sense of their identity in that world." (Cattanach, 1994:56). The therapeutic effect comes with the transformation and change. Winnicott introduced the idea of "holding environment" as an important part of therapy, representing the way a loving mother holds and contains her baby. He also introduced a term of "a good-enough mother". In therapy the relationship of clients and therapist must be safe and containing (Winnicott, 2005).

My feeling of uncertainty was the sign that I lost control of the play for a while. Bernier explains that "the therapist must allow for some degree of loss of control in the creative process, while at the same time providing adequate structure and limit setting to encourage a productive and satisfying outcome as well as self-growth." (Bernier, 2005:129). After reading this I felt much better. I realised that I just have to "Trust the process".

It is not easy to evaluate the Dramatherapy session. According to Listiakova and Valenta, evaluation of dramatic activities differs from reflection. Reflection represents client's emotional experience and interpretation of the session. Evaluation represents the process of examination of the effectiveness of the dramatic activity and whether the client's needs and therapeutic aims have been met (Listiakova and Valenta, 2015). These authors have created a self-evaluation tool for therapists in a dramatherapeutic process. In the context of that tool, I



thought about skills and tasks which I as a dramatherapist should fulfil during the sessions: empathy, emotional engagement, professional distance, congruence, authenticity. I should also select the programme and be able to change the programme according to the situation. Regarding the components of sessions, my tasks were to create trust and to establish a relationship. By offering interesting topics and allowing topic exploration the dramatherapist should facilitate individual transformation. In this self-evaluation it seemed that the puppet helped me achieve these tasks easier, with humour and in the relaxed atmosphere.

### 3. Incubation:

At the end of the second year, there were only 9 sessions of clinical practice. I decided not to finish with these sessions for a little while. My intention was to take a break and to put aside all the experiences with clients. This time break gave me the possibility to let my impressions rest for a while. These 9 sessions were done after few months in a different institution.

I started to prepare for the exams and I had a lot of work to do. I started to search for the literature for puppetry as a projective technique in Dramatherapy. I felt like I was floating in the ocean of books and articles. The period of searching for literature was the period where my knowledge was growing and the perspective was spreading.

At the same time, I had to decide about the theme of my dissertation. From the beginning I knew that it would be about puppetry. I knew that for the dissertation research the heuristic methodology would be appropriate.

At that time, I wrote a poem for a puppet. The poem describes my emotions and thoughts in the moment when I used the puppet for the first time as an adult.

#### *A POEM FOR THE PUPPET*

*When we met for the first time*

*I was a kid with a smile.*

*Many years have passed by,*

*I grew up and a smile flew away.*

*Suddenly I stumbled upon you*

*and my eyes saw a new truth.*

*You reminded me of the games we used to play,*

*so I decided to play with you and stay.*

*Every problem is easier with you as we smile,*

*you lift me up to the sky so I can fly.*

I was thinking about creativity. The creativity is powerful in any segment where it is applied, whether it is in art, medicine, architecture or science. The fact of making something new and different makes the creator proud and satisfied. The produced change is a proof to the creator that there is a way to make things different. For me the moments of creativity are really precious. During the process of creating a puppet or a scene I play like I used to in childhood. The feeling is so good, like in childhood when you don't want to stop playing. This feeling for me is "the flow". I want to share it with others.

#### 4. Illumination:

I was thinking about the puppets and I saw that the characters of guignols and marionettes are very different. When I compare them, it seems that the guignols are funny and mischievous and the marionettes are majestic, glorious and gentle. If I think about them in the context of Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality, the guignol would be the id and the marionette would be the superego (Freud, 1923). I prefer to use the guignol and it seems to me that the guignol represents my id. During the sessions, when the client and I used the guignols, we had some fun. With the guignol I felt relaxed and the client was also relaxed. There were four of us in the therapy room, the client and his guignol, and me and my guignol. I can imagine that each guignol in the therapy room represented its owner's id.

The puppet is a powerful tool because with the puppet the client is able to express the deepest feelings not even realising how much he has uncovered himself (Bernier, 2005). All the suppressed feelings and thoughts are suppressed by the superego. Through the puppet, the id is able to speak and scream, to smile and cry.

I like to use the guignol in Dramatherapy sessions. During the session and play with the puppet, the goal is not a perfect show but the growth and development of a child/puppet-player (Korošec, 2012). During the play between the client and me and our puppets we improvise and pretend to do something. I can say that we are in the "as if" mode (Stanislavski, 1989). Although the play is in the Winnicott's transitional space, somewhere between reality and fantasy, the feelings and the thoughts are very personal and they belong to the puppeteer, whether it is the client or the therapist.

My opinion is that my feelings and thoughts that emerge during play with the guignol are uncensored by the superego and that authentic and primordial part of myself is able to come out and be expressed.

As a therapist I should be focused on the client's needs and it is important to give the client control (Bernier, 2005). I believe that with a puppet in Dramatherapy sessions I give the client an opportunity to meet his id. The id is the one that makes us happy and the superego is the one that makes us proud.

### 5. Explication

During the period of studying, I wrote the personal development profile and here is the passage which I find important for me:

“Is it possible for a person to be happy and enjoy his work? Or do you have to look for happiness and fulfilment in your leisure time? Who can answer the questions?”

I started to study Dramatherapy. The work with puppet inspired me and I wanted to follow that feeling although I didn't know where I was going. In the first lessons I heard others answering my question with the phrase “Trust the process” and I didn't know if I had to trust them and why I should trust them. I felt like a little frightened bird that was let out of the cage. The bird was afraid of the environment which it had discovered because it believed that the cage offered her safety and protection from the outer world which was very dangerous. After some time, the bird got to know the environment and the freedom.

The time I spent at lectures at the Academy of Arts and Culture influenced my attitudes. I really enjoyed to work with children. The Dramatherapy connects my profession and my fascination with the puppet. Now at the end of the studying the phrase “Trust the process” has been given a new perspective. The new possibilities are emerging. I still don't know where I am going, maybe I will never know, but I am going without any fear. I learnt that I have to get out of the comfort zone and let things happen.”

I asked myself during this exploration: What is going on with me during the Dramatherapy session? As a dramatherapist with a puppet I have multiple roles during the session. At the same time I am the therapist, the actor directed by the client, the audience and me. All these roles are united in me during the dramatic play with the client. The therapist gives control to the client; thus, the client becomes the director and the therapist becomes the actor. At the same time the therapist is the puppeteer and the puppet because all the action is imposed. I have to ask myself: Am I the puppet master or the puppet that somebody manipulates with?

During the play with the client I felt out of control but I knew that I have to “trust the process”. At the same time, I had fun with the client, we laughed during play. It seems that it is important for me to have a relaxed relationship with my clients. The creative part of the play with puppets offers playfulness and therapy to the client. It seems that for the dramatherapist it is easier to work with the puppet because the puppet is the one who is fun

and not serious, the puppet can make mistakes and behave inappropriately. The relationship between the client and the dramatherapist gets a new perspective. The client changes his perception of the dramatherapist through the play with puppets and the dramatherapist becomes the person made of flesh and blood.

#### 6. Creative synthesis:

At the end of my Dramatherapy education I was given a task to make a short dramatic piece representing my journey, and the audience consisted of the professor and a colleague. The time was limited to 5 minutes. I decided to present the vegetarian wolf puppet. That was a part of my exploration of the relationship with puppet. Playing the wolf seemed easy because I had made that wolf, and I felt like I had to present a part of myself. My thoughts were bounded in that puppet. I knew its feelings of rejection and a strong will to change itself.

*The piece started with the music background of a heartbeat sound. I came to the stage, put the white coat and gloves on. I turned my back to the audience and washed my hands but my hands got full of blood. I looked in the mirror and felt dirty. I took off the white coat and put on the black leather jacket. I tousled my hair. I transformed into the wolf. At the beginning I was a mad and evil wolf and I scared everybody. I moved my head very close to each head in the audience and made growling sounds. They moved their heads away from me. I did not feel good in that role when I saw their frightened faces. After a few moments of watching them, I changed the dangerous behaviour to gentle and tame. I was calm and asked them and myself the questions: "To be or not to be? To be different or not to be different?" I knew the answer, because the wolf is me and I am the wolf.*

The process of making a puppet is beneficial for the client (Viklund, 2017). During that process, the client makes connections with the puppet and the puppet gets its own life. When playing with the self-made puppet, the client feels familiar to the character of the puppet, so the play is more intense and realistic. During that process the dramatic distancing occurs.

For the end of my education for a dramatherapist it was appropriate to make a small dramatic piece. It felt like closing the circle; I started by making the wolf puppet and I finished by taking the role of the wolf puppet. I asked myself why I had chosen to create the wolf from that poem. It occurred to me that I recognized something known and close to me in the wolf from the poem.

The wolf is known from many fairy tales and it is always to be feared. At the beginning I was in my natural role, I was a doctor – neonatologist resuscitating a premature baby. As a doctor I had the role of a God, I was responsible for the outcome of the life of a tiny baby. When I looked in the mirror I found myself full of anger. In this power shift I embodied the wolf, and the wolf is an evil monster. As a wolf, I had legitimacy to express strong feelings such as anger and madness. An unknown wild aspect of myself was released and I had the chance to

choose again „the gentle and polite“ aspect of me. I connect these feelings with my last working place where working relationships and environment were negative and full of conflicts. I was dissatisfied and unhappy and decided to change my working place. Taking the role of a bloodthirsty wolf gave me the opportunity to explore my feelings about my former workplace. I did not regret leaving that workplace. Nowadays I work in a calm and polite environment and it is very important to me.

## **7. Results and discussion**

When I started to explore the role of a puppet in Dramatherapy I found many articles and textbooks about the theme, but I did not find any of the heuristic research about puppetry in Dramatherapy. The goal of this research was to explore the relationship between a therapist, a client and a puppet.

As a neonatologist I attended the lifelong learning course of the use of puppetry. The creation of the puppet and the play took me to the Winnicott transitional space (Winnicott, 2005). During the course I was fascinated by the puppet and overwhelmed with the feeling of flow described by Csikszentmihalyi (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). For many years, the experience of play and flow was repressed in my everyday life while I, a medical doctor, was chasing the residency and the fellowship and experiencing the motherhood of three daughters. Freud, in his 1907 lecture about creative writers and day-dreaming said that „the opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real“ (Freud, 1908:144). During my early adulthood I was set in reality all the time, without any leisure time. During the working hours I had the role of a neonatologist and during my free time I assumed the role of a mother of three daughters. At that time I did not realise that play is important in the adulthood, too. Borchert in her heuristic research about the relationship between play and mental health said that play is seen as an activity of childhood and that in the adulthood the only acceptable forms of play are recreational sports or board games (Borchert, 2017). According to her play reminds us to enjoy life and any amount of play that is incorporated into our lives can have a beneficial spill-over effect.

I was led by the flow to the postgraduate study of Dramatherapy. In Dramatherapy sessions with the client I chose a puppet. My feelings for working with the puppet were influenced by the flow I had experienced. I was not sure if it was acceptable to use the puppet because I enjoyed the process of creating and using it. In this heuristic research I explored that dilemma. The puppet has multiple roles for me as the dramatherapist.

When I started to explore my personal experience of the use of puppet in Dramatherapy sessions, the first answer which came to my mind was that I used the puppet in Dramatherapy because there was at least one more “person” in the session. The puppet was the one who was responsible for the communication with the client. While I was searching for the literature I found Czereovas' research about the use of puppets in Dramatherapy. In the discussion she had similar thoughts like me: “I don't know what is happening with the therapist in the process of using puppets (or dolls, objects, or figures). From my experience I felt that the statements about clients fit to me as a therapist. The puppet allowed me to access my “inner child” and I had better imagination on how to communicate with the client. I was freed from the responsibility to behave as therapist. I mean the responsibility of every word, of being seen all the time. I had an opportunity to hide myself behind the puppet. I don't want you to understand that I lost my competences but I played with object and this object could make mistakes and could do everything in this space.” (Czereova, 2016:13). I discarded the idea because I had the profound connection with the puppet.

At the end of my heuristic research I realised that the puppet in Dramatherapy sessions had multiple roles. The role of the puppet in Dramatherapy as a part of the relation between the client and the therapist is described in many articles, books and textbooks. The benefits of using the puppet in Dramatherapy for the client originate in the possibilities to express the feelings and thoughts “covered” by the puppet.

The purpose of my heuristic research was to explore the relationship between a dramatherapist and a puppet during the Dramatherapy session with a client.

According to the Winnicott's theory of the transitional object, I believe that the puppet can also be a transitional object to me as a therapist (Winnicott, 2005). Transitional object facilitates child's development to make a distinction of „me” and „not me”.

In that context I asked myself a few questions and answered these questions.

Do I feel strong enough to create a containing and safe environment for the client? Yes, I feel strong enough to to create a containing and safe environment for the client.

Can the puppet help me in the realisation of these preconditions for a Dramatherapy session? Yes, the puppet makes this easier. The creative therapies take place in the Winnicott's transitional space. During the session with the client my mind is also in the transitional space and that is the reason why having the puppet makes me feel like I am playing.

I also think that the puppet has a role of the transitional object for me in the context of switching my professional direction from being a paediatrician to being a dramatherapist.

Bernier explains that the puppet in therapeutic puppetry sessions has a role of an intermediary object to gain the attention of the client and to improve communication between the therapist and the client (Bernier, 2005). Abel wrote about the intermediary object as a projective medium that changes during the course of psychotherapy and named that change „the intermediary object-gradient”. An intermediary object can be any person or inanimate object and is „employed by the ego in its attempts to satisfy, regulate, and control the needs of the organism” (Abel, 1960:691). During the therapy the client modifies his feelings toward the intermediary object and the meaning of that object for the client shifts. At the same time the client changes his relationship to the therapist and the client is able to express feelings easily and directly to the therapist without protection of the intermediary object. If I think about the puppet as an intermediary object of mine, I see the shift within my relationship to the puppet. At the beginning the purpose of the relationship was only amusement and now it is an application of tool in Dramatherapy sessions.

The third role of the puppet is the role of my id. At the beginning of the lifelong learning course I worked as a neonatologist. With the puppet on my hand I found happiness of a child while playing, doing something funny and not so serious, without any reason except for amusement. My id came out covered by the puppet and told me that it was time to enjoy life. After few months I decided to change my workplace and now I work as a general paediatrician.

When I thought about the reasons why I chose the puppet, I asked myself why I used guignol. It occurred to me that the best known guignols from the history (Pulchinella, Punch, Kasperl) were wild and violent characters. That character is a representation of id, with very impulsive reactions without any self-control. Marionette or a string puppet, was used in history for the representation of Virgin Mary coming from above and the name originates from the French word little Mary. The character of marionette is exalted and can be a representation of super-ego. By pulling the strings of the marionette the client’s distancing is highlighted more than by using the guignol on the hand. These characteristics of the guignol and marionette can be implemented while choosing which puppet to use in Dramatherapy. My opinion is that the guignol could take out some representations of id and suppressed wishes and help the client express the conflicts between id and ego and that the marionette would be more suitable for learning self-control and strengthening the ego. I did not find any research about this difference in application of guignol and marionette in therapeutic puppetry nor any research about it being useful in practice.

At the end I asked myself why I made the puppet of the wolf from the poem and why I expressed myself by playing the role of the wolf puppet. I suppose that the reason for choosing the poem and making the wolf was in recognising the similarities between the wolf and me by mirror neurons.

Rizzolatti discovered mirror neurons 1996. He described them as “a particular type of neurons that discharge when an individual performs an action, as well as when he/she observes a similar action done by another individual” (Rizzolatti, 2005:419). The function of mirror neurons is the action understanding, imitation, intention understanding, and empathy. The system of mirror neurons discharges even if the person observes the static image of actions (Urgesi, 2006). Freedberg (2007) wrote about the empathy in an aesthetic experience, in the particular visual art. He supposed that the mirror neurons' function in empathetic responses to actions in real life does not differ from responses to actions that are represented in paintings and sculptures. The feeling of empathetic engagement with the observed action of other in pictures and sculptures is produced by mirror neurons. Berrol found that „the psychotherapeutic implications of mirror neurons have enormous clinical relevance for the creative arts therapies, and in particular, dance/movement therapy” (Berrol, 2006:302).

Winters (2008) confirmed in her research that the theory about mirror neurons is applicable in dance and movement therapy. Dramatherapy, by using techniques from drama and theatre, uses „mirror neurons to explore, through imitation and re-enactment of the perceived dramatic circumstances, the next, deeper level of self-perception” (Chasen, 2014). Aziz-Zadeh (2006) found that mirror neurons can be activated not just by observing some action, but also by hearing and reading the text describing that action.

Now I can say that “mirroring” is the process that is active in every aspect of life. When we look at the world around us we “mirror” all the time. As Chasen said: „We become able to deeply understand others through mirroring because it is the reciprocal and ongoing process through which we come to understand ourselves.” (Chasen, 2014:66).

My mirror neurons recognised the wolf from the poem as someone similar to me. I was resonating with the wolf and that is the reason why I chose the wolf. I am the paediatrician who chose the puppets and Dramatherapy and therapeutic puppetry.

## **8. Conclusion**

This heuristic research has given answers to the questions that emerged in me while I did the clinical practice as a student of Dramatherapy. My occupation involves working with children



and I have always liked the puppets. Play is an important part of human life, it is not reserved for childhood only. It is preferable to practice certain types of play in adulthood, such as hobbies or sports. It does not mean that play is childish. Play leads the adult into a transitional space, between reality and fantasy. During this research I realised that puppet is a “partner” in my profession and that when my work is touched with the hand of puppet, it has more playfulness. Winnicot’s transitional space is the place where Dramatherapy happens. The role of a dramatherapist is to create a safe place and a holding environment for the client. The puppet brings joy and relaxation to that space. By choosing the puppet I offer my client the opportunity to distance himself and to get insight into his problem. With the puppet I enter the transitional space during the session. At some point of the session I may feel like I have lost control over the play. The therapist does not control the session completely. These moments are very precious for both the client and the dramatherapist. It is the moment of common creativity of the client and the therapist during which they build confidence and respect towards each other in their relationship.

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