

**Not One of Those Girls: An Existential-Phenomenological Exploration of My
Relationship with Eyeliner**

by

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Abstract: This is a phenomenological exploration of my relationship with eyeliner. I draw parallels between the loss of possibilities in Heidegger's being-towards-death and the cutting off of the possibility of wearing eyeliner through illness. I discuss Sartrean and Kierkegaardian views of the self and how, through illness, self can become Other.

Key Words: Self, other, illness, cosmetics, ritual, being-towards-death, meaninglessness

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When I was at school, I was a goth. What that meant was that I wore pale foundation and dark eye makeup, dyed my hair black, read *Kerrang!* and *Metal Hammer*, and listened to bands with names like 'Jack Off Jill' and 'Most Precious Blood'. I felt like being a goth was a part of my identity that was at least as important as any other sociocultural markers. Both of my parents had been punk rockers; they had met at a Siouxsie and the Banshees concert, and had nearly named me Siouxsie. It felt as important to me as my ethnic background, my first language, my religious beliefs. I would hazard a guess that many of my goth friends felt similarly. Our goth-ness was a choice, yes, in that we could have chosen to dress in other ways, but in a sense it was not: if we had decided to dress differently, it would have felt stifling. We held it as an intrinsic part of our identities that we *had* to wear on the outside — in a different way from how some of us wore our races or socioeconomic statuses, but in a way that felt equally important, at least to me.

And yet we refused to extend the courtesy of the same assumption to the group we called 'the popular girls.' When I put my hands on the keyboard to type the next sentence, the words that immediately came to mind were: 'You know the ones. Every school has them.' And that is interesting, because the way we viewed 'the popular girls' was very similar to how we worried other people would view us: a homogenous mass of external identity markers devoid of any deep meaning. Yet when I started to describe goths in the previous paragraph, I had no such thought, even though goths in high schools in the early 2000s were not exactly rare. The more I explore about myself during therapy training, the more I learn that prejudices I have held throughout my life, which I have worked to challenge myself on, are deeply embedded and often still held outside of my awareness.

The 'popular girls' were tanned, even in winter, sometimes from holidays abroad and sometimes from a bottle; like we were pale, even in summer, sometimes from staying indoors and sometimes from a foundation compact. Their hair was uniformly blonde, like ours was uniformly black. They wore several layers of eye makeup, like we did, but the colour palettes they used were lighter, and so we thought them shallow. They read *Just Seventeen* and *Cosmopolitan* and listened to bands with names like 'Sugababes' and 'Girls Aloud.' We thought their music was less deep, because the songs they listened to had lyrics like 'Baby I'm too lost in you,' in contrast to our music, which had lyrics like 'The things you love, they will destroy you,' even though looking at those two phrases now, they no longer seem so far apart.

We assumed that their choices were meaningless in the same way we assumed ours were meaningful. When I read Kierkegaard for the first time, I was captivated by his emphasis on the importance of being an individual; of stepping outside of the expectations of the majority and into a more authentic way of being. 'The crowd is untruth' (Kierkegaard, 1993, p.132) became a kind of mantra; I took his individualistic philosophy to mean that, in not aligning myself with the predominant fashion of the day, I was living how one should live: like a knight of faith (Kierkegaard, 1985).

This was based on a flawed understanding of Kierkegaard's philosophy. I had failed to appreciate that I was still within my own crowd, albeit one that set itself apart from the mainstream. I had also failed to understand the nature of the knight of faith: the point is not that an individual ought completely to dismiss social norms and act only in alignment with their own needs and desires. Rather, one should be aware of one's own motivations, so that when choices are made, they can be made authentically; that is to say, with acknowledgement of the real reasons behind them and a willingness to take responsibility for the choices one is making. In this aspect Kierkegaard's philosophy aligns closely with Heidegger's, although for Kierkegaard a crucial step in the journey towards authenticity is the leap of faith (Kierkegaard, 1985) which brings an individual closer to God. Heidegger, taking a secular view, discusses how the very nature of Dasein gives rise to the possibility of making authentic choices. The being of Dasein is a being that can self-reflect: one that can use a personal pronoun, one whose 'mineness' means that it has the capacity to take into account its temporal position and make a decision on how to act (Heidegger, 1962). Heidegger is careful to point out, however, that inauthentic living is no less valuable than authentic living. Most of us

spend most of our time living inauthentically; it would be impossible to do otherwise (Mulhall, 2005).

As a teenager, all I understood with regard to the above was that I felt like I was setting myself apart from the crowd, and expressing something important, by wearing gothic makeup and listening to rock and metal bands.

Nowadays, the makeup I put on has become habitual, and I have found little reason to examine my motivations for wearing it until recently. In February 2021, during a period of illness, I was unable to wear eye makeup. This caused me more distress than I would have expected, and prompted me to think about what my makeup choices mean and why my sudden inability to wear eyeliner had such an impact on me.

Makeup and Culture

Around the world, people align themselves with one another by virtue of their cosmetic and sartorial choices, and have done for centuries. During the Incan empire, Peruvians used makeup to enhance their appearances and to demonstrate their statuses within groups (Stahl, 1993). In British Victorian society, makeup played a similar role, demonstrating women's social class and standing (Beaujot, 2008). For present-day Western adolescents, cosmetic choices serve to bolster a feeling of belonging to a group, while also representing the move from childhood to adulthood (Brzezińska & Piotrowski, 2013; Gentina et al, 2012). And makeup not only aligns us with our chosen groups, but can also situate us in our temporal and spacial contexts. In Himba culture,

for instance, women paint themselves with *otjize*, which reddens their skin, to align themselves with the colour of the Namibian ground they live on (Eldridge, 2015).

As cultures change, makeup styles change too, adapting traditional norms to align with modern tastes. For example, the Oromo of Ethiopia have replaced facial scarification with makeup that gives a similar effect (Klemm, 2009). And many Western teens align themselves with online subcultures using dramatic makeup looks which are shared on social media, where they find others with similar tastes (Kale, 2019).

As for my own cultural context, I spent the first half of my childhood living in a Romani community. The Roma people began travelling from India hundreds of years ago (Kenrick, 1995) and there are still many similarities between Indian and Traveller cultures. One of these is a belief that outlining the eyes in dark kohl gives protection against the 'evil eye.' Although I am not sure I ever believed this, I did look at the Roma women around me as a child and wished I could look like them, with their long black hair and heavy eyeliner. When my mother and I moved away from the Traveller community, I dreamed of one day realigning myself with my Romani roots in some way, and when I was fourteen I began to dye my hair black partly with this in mind. I wonder whether the eyeliner I chose was another, more subtle, way of realigning myself with the time in my childhood when I felt the most at home. The move from black hair dye and black eyeliner to a full gothic look happened quickly, and aligned with the music I had begun listening to. I began emulating my almost-namesake, Siouxsie Sioux, and quickly felt like I had found the way I wanted to look.

As I got older, I toned down my makeup to be less overtly gothic, aligning myself with what I felt was a more socially acceptable makeup look for an adult. This in itself could be an interesting avenue for exploration: what happens to goths as they age? Do they just stop enjoying gothic makeup, or is the shift more socially prompted? Research by Hodkinson (2011) suggests the latter, although there will not be space to explore this in more detail here.

However, makeup is not only a communal or social ritual: it is also a private one. Makeup application usually takes place in a private space, such as a bedroom or bathroom, and has a deeply personal feel (Gentina et al., 2012). My own makeup application process is no exception.

Eyeliner as Ritual

When I put on makeup in the morning, what is going on? I am standing in front of the mirror in my bathroom, looking at my face. I take my makeup bag down from the shelf. I do my eyebrows first: ticking motions with a skinny brow pencil. Then I apply my eyeliner: black kohl around each eye — right first, then left — followed by a cat-eye flick with a liquid liner. If the liner looks even, then today will be a good day.

These initial steps are the same every time. I do not have to think about them: they have become habit, become 'knowledge in the hands' (Merleau-Ponty, 2006, p.166). Now it is time to add eyeshadow. I take out my palette, which has twelve colours to choose from. Always, I go for the black one first: colouring in the crease above the

liquid line. Now I pick a second colour to blend with the black. This changes depending on the mood of the day: green is my go-to most of the time, but if it is sunny outside I might choose a golden-orange shade, or if I am feeling tired and despondent, a dark blue. I blend these together, on my eyelids and along the bottom of my eyes, to give a smudged effect. This feels more like a choice than the step before it. I put on foundation, run a mascara brush across my eyelashes, and then it is done.

The whole process rarely takes more than five minutes, but it is an important part of my day. It feels ritualistic, almost spiritual. Gentina et al. (2012) discuss the ritualistic nature of makeup application among teenage girls, but for me it has never stopped having this feel to it. And it has a divinatory feel, too: if I get the liquid eyeliner to align evenly, this is a good omen. Some days it just does not look right, and then I go out into the world feeling unready, unprepared, un-me. While planning this essay I spoke to some friends about their experiences, and they reported similar themes of feeling not like themselves if they did not have the right makeup on.

What is this feeling of 'not like myself,' though? What is it pointing to? If I walk past a mirror and catch a glimpse of myself without eyeliner on, for a moment I do not recognise my own face. A non-existential take on what is happening might describe this as depersonalization, a symptom common in women with post-traumatic stress disorder following prolonged severe abuse in childhood (King et al., 2020). Likewise, my reading of the evenness of my liquid eyeliner as a positive or negative omen for the day could be understood as an obsessive-compulsive symptom. Both of these interpretations stand up to scrutiny: I do have a history of prolonged severe childhood abuse, and I

have had symptoms of post-traumatic stress. In the past, I have been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder, of which day-to-day superstitions are a common symptom, especially for people who feel like they do not have as much control over their external environments as they would like (Moulding & Kyrios, 2006).

I question, however, whether pathologising my makeup application process is helpful. I could frame my superstitions and ritualistic behaviour as diagnosis-related, but what would this offer me? In clinical practice, some of my clients have expressed desires to be diagnosed with conditions that could help them to explain some of the less comfortable elements of their experience. One client wants to understand why images of people dying in horrible ways enter her mind when she feels anxious; another wants to understand why she sometimes feels unsure that the world around her is real. I too have always striven to understand the ways in which I experience the world, but although I have sometimes found my own diagnoses useful in terms of getting access to the help I needed at the time — for example, my OCD diagnosis meant that I was given therapy more quickly than otherwise would have been the case — I did not feel that the diagnoses themselves helped to explain what was going on.

'I ascribe divinatory meaning to my liquid eyeliner application because I have OCD' or 'I do not recognise myself in the mirror because I have PTSD' do not point to what is actually happening. Even uncovering the aetiology of a diagnosis — 'I have OCD because I feel a need to control my environment,' 'I have PTSD because I was abused' — does not say much about what is going on beneath the surface. Why do I have some symptoms of a diagnosis and not others? Why do I care about the order in which I put

on my shoes (left foot first, then right) but not whether I put my top on before my trousers? What about my symptomatology is specific *to me*? That feels like the central question: why does this specific thing matter to me in particular, at this time in my life, in the space I am currently in? This question can be asked without an experience being held within a diagnostic framework at all.

Wrapping up people's actions and emotions within diagnoses could also be argued to remove responsibility from the individuals concerned. If I have PTSD, I am helpless. I do things because of my PTSD: I have no choice in the matter. I might receive treatment, which might ease the symptoms, but what this means is that the treatment has worked, not that I have personally prompted a shift in my way of being. It externalises the locus of control and allows any relapses to be blamed on the treatment not working, rather than looked at within the wider context of my self, my life and my environment. Taking an existential view means taking responsibility for my own actions, my own choices: learning to own even those parts of my past that are difficult to think about, and to acknowledge the possible futures into which I am projecting myself, in order to situate myself in an authentic relation to the present (Lakmaier, 2019).

Depersonalisation and Being-Towards-Death

So how could the moment of non-recognition in the mirror be understood existentially? Perhaps I am simply used to seeing myself with eye makeup on, but it feels like more than that: like the makeup is capturing something essential about my subjectivity and projecting it outwardly, so that when I see myself without it on I feel like what I am

seeing is not the whole of who I am, as if I were to look in the mirror and notice that I was suddenly missing an arm. For Merleau-Ponty, an onset of illness or disability pulls us outside of our motor habits and rends our familiar subjectivity, pulling us momentarily into a heightened awareness of the embodied nature of our existence (Merleau-Ponty, 2006). When I unexpectedly catch sight of myself in the mirror without eyeliner on, I experience a moment of alienation from my face, followed by remembering that this is what I naturally look like. However, for me this seems to inhibit, rather than heighten, my awareness of myself as an embodied subject.

The onset of illness as the catalyst for not wearing eyeliner undoubtedly had its own impact on my reaction to myself in the mirror. I was worried about my health, unsure what was going on, what the possible impact on my future would be. For a deeply worrying fortnight, the doctors thought I had ovarian cancer, which has one of the lowest survival rates of all cancers (Cancer Research, 2021). My preoccupation with not being able to wear eyeliner may have come up in place of the fear of death because the latter is less palatable: unconscionably large in its finality.

Heidegger describes death as 'the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein' (Heidegger, 1962, p.294). Not being able to wear eyeliner did not by itself force me starkly into a consideration of the impending absolute impossibility of my existence, but the death of the possibility of putting on eyeliner did represent something important. If 'care is the basic state of Dasein' (Heidegger, 1962, p.293), then Dasein is because it cares. Because Dasein cares, it experiences death as a threat (Hoffman, 1993).

In German, the phrase reads 'Als Grundverfassung des Daseins wurde die Sorge sichtbar gemacht' (Heidegger, 2006, p.250). The verb form of 'Sorge,' the word for 'care,' is 'sich sorgen,' a reflexive verb which implicates the carer in the process. Caring is not something that comes out of me towards the object of my care: it is a process that affects me, the one who cares, too. 'Sich sorgen' can also be translated as 'I worry about,' which is easier to analogise in English: 'I worry myself about X' or 'I concern myself with X.' In German, 'to care about' has the same feel: I do not just care about something, with me as the subject doing the caring, and the thing I am caring about being the object of my care. Instead the care is an ongoing state within me, all the time that I am caring about something: although it is directed at an object, it also remains inside of me the whole time. So Dasein, as both carer and cared-about, cares about its own existence in a constant recursive process, and since this is the 'Grundverfassung,' or foundational state, of Dasein, anything that threatens this capacity to care rocks the very foundation of the state of being itself and brings Dasein face to face with the possibility of its own impossibility.

By contrast, anything Dasein does to demonstrate this foundational state of caring about itself to itself serves an important purpose. It comforts Dasein, pulls it away from the recognition of the possibility of impossibility and allows it to cover over the groundlessness of being, giving an illusion of everyday at-home-ness that, when removed, leaves an 'uncanny' feeling (Heidegger, 1962, p.233), or in German, a feeling of 'Unheimlichkeit' (Heidegger, 2006, p.189), literally 'unhomeliness.'

One of the ways I show myself that I care about myself is by putting on eyeliner, a process which feels like externalising my subjectivity: taking something important about who I feel I am and representing it on the outside. This is backed up by the literature around beauty and makeup choices. Participants in a study by Rao and Churchill (2004) reported 'self-recognition' as one of the main reasons for wearing makeup, and a recent study by Tran, Rosales and Copes (2020) demonstrated a high correlation between internally motivated makeup choices — i.e. people who decided to put on makeup that they felt had some kind of meaning to them, rather than thinking about how others wanted them to look — and higher self-esteem. The latter study had its limitations: for example, the participants were all beauty influencers on YouTube, meaning that their makeup choices would have a direct impact on their incomes, and so extrapolating these findings to the general population may not be realistic. However, it rings true for me, at least: seeing myself with my chosen style of eyeliner on makes me feel at home with myself.

In looking at myself in the mirror and seeing myself without eyeliner, I had a moment of recognition of the groundlessness of one of my habits, which made me face up to my facticity. Immediately, my thoughts began to race forwards: for how long would I not be able to wear eyeliner? Would there be other cosmetic changes? My hair, for example, is usually a noticeable part of my physical appearance: I wear it in a voluminous style that takes just under an hour a day to maintain. What if I had to have chemotherapy, and my hair fell out? As it happened, I did not have cancer, but I was for a while so unwell that I also did not have the energy to maintain my usual hairstyle, and this loss felt similar to the loss of eyeliner.

While my thoughts were racing forwards, projecting into possible futures in which I could not wear eyeliner or braid my hair, they were also racing backwards, to the time when I had started to wear gothic makeup and volumise my hair. When had that begun? What had the choice meant at the time? The moment of recognition of my thrownness — my in-the-moment facticity — was so uncomfortable that I immediately began projecting myself backwards and forwards, hurling myself through the temporal vortex in a bid to not have to face up to the moment I was in (Lakmaier, 2019).

Self-as-Other and Self-as-Relation

Svenaesus (2009, p.62) states that 'to fall ill is to fall victim to a gradual process of alienation,' and this speaks to the feeling that I had while I was unwell. Every new symptom meant that my life somehow changed, and I experienced all of these changes as cutting off possibilities. At one point I was sitting on my sofa trying to decide what I could stomach for dinner. The only thing I wanted was roasted tomatoes on toast, but I did not have tomatoes in the house, and although there is a greengrocer's shop two minutes' walk away, I knew that I had only enough energy either to walk to the shop or to chop a tomato and roast it, but not both. I pulled a blanket around myself and cried, not because of how much I wanted to eat a tomato, but because I felt like my world had become so much smaller. I could no longer do something that would usually take no thought: I felt alienated from possibilities that usually were open to me. And I felt alienated through the medium of my body, while also feeling alienated *from* my body.

Discussing Sartre's (2003) concept of being-for-others, Svenaeus talks about how in times of illness one's own body can become the other through whose gaze one is turned into an object: 'It is thus not exclusively the otherness of the other, but the otherness of my own body — displayed in a painful way in illness — which lends facticity to my existence' (Svenaeus, 2009, p.58). There is a separation that happens when my body no longer behaves in the way I expect it to: in that moment the oneness of self and body are ripped apart and I am not just me, a cohesive whole, but instead I feel like I am a separate entity from my body, trying to control it. I want to put on eyeliner, but my body does not: when I put it on, my eyes swell up and run until the eyeliner is no longer there. It feels like my body is working against me, and I am more aware of how, when I try to put on eyeliner 'for myself,' I am separating myself into subject and object: I am the subject who is putting on the eyeliner, but also the object for whom it is being put on. This differentiation is brought to the fore when object becomes subject: when I cannot put on eyeliner for myself, because the self I am putting it on for cannot cope with having it on her eyes. Thus there is a clash of subjectivities, both of which are my own, and yet they feel distinct.

This reminds me of Kierkegaard's definition of the self: 'The self is a relation which relates to itself, or that in the relation which is its relating to itself. The self is not the relation but the relation's relating itself to itself' (Kierkegaard, 2004, p.43). When I feel a distinction between I and my self, in which I feel pulled in different directions, I notice that my selfhood is precisely this relating of self-to-self. I am the person who wants to wear the eyeliner, and the person for whom I am putting on the eyeliner, and I am also the person who cannot wear the eyeliner, and the person who does not want to

because it hurts. It is in the relation between these subjectivities that I am found: I am at once all of them, and the experience of their interrelation. The self-alienation that happens when I suddenly cannot do something brings me more starkly into relation with myself.

This relation is going on most of the time, outside of my awareness. Although the lack of ability to wear eyeliner makes me recognise that I am attempting to synthesise myself as subject with myself as object in a single eyeliner-wearing entity, this process is still happening when I am merrily applying my eyeliner without having to think about it. And perhaps the importance of eyeliner was already more in my awareness than it would normally have been this year due to the ubiquity of Zoom meetings, in which I am constantly looking at a little rectangular representation of my head and shoulders on the screen.

In recent months I have often felt what is colloquially termed 'Zoom fatigue': the feeling of exhaustion that comes from spending extended periods of time on video calls. Explanations for this range from eye strain, to the physiological arousal that occurs when a person knows they are being stared at, to the increased number of behavioural and verbal cues people have to give and receive when communicating via video call (Bailenson, 2021). But staring at my own face for so long must also be having an impact. Prior to the pandemic, I would put my eyeliner on, leave the house and go about my day. Unless someone commented or I caught sight of myself in a shop window, I would have no idea what my eyes looked like on an ongoing basis. In 2020

and 2021, by contrast, once I had put my eyeliner on I then sat and stared at it for hours on end.

My reaction to losing the ability to wear eyeliner also spoke to a deeper discomfort with feeling out of control during lockdown. I had no control over the pandemic, or over the government's regulations; and when the rules were put in place, they applied not only to public spaces but also to my home. I could no longer have friends over whenever I wanted to; when I could have people over again, the numbers were restricted. I could, of course, have broken the rules as a way of taking back control. I did not. And so, as the world shrank, the amount of control I felt I had shrank alongside it. Situating my lack of eyeliner within this context, it seems unsurprising that I reacted so strongly to not having a choice over makeup either.

Meaning and Meaninglessness

In exploring my relationship with eyeliner over the last few months, the theme of meaningfulness kept coming up. When I spoke to friends they, too, discussed their makeup choices as meaningful to them. *How* these choices are meaningful varies from individual to individual, but *that* they are perceived as meaningful does not. Like the distinction I made as a teenager between my group of goth friends and the 'popular girls,' it is easy for me to ascribe meaning to my own choices while neglecting to acknowledge how meaningful other people's choices might be to them. If we are 'meaning-making beings' (Spinelli, 2015, p.36), then although there is nothing inherently

meaningful in anything we do, we will still find a meaning if we look for one, if only to distract us from the uncanniness of the groundlessness of being.

A few weeks into my experience of not being able to wear eyeliner, one of my clients spoke in our session about her lipstick collection. She has a huge array of lipsticks, in shades from neon orange to shimmering pink, and she spoke about how she stands in front of them each morning, deciding which one to wear by thinking about 'who I have to be that day.' I reflected that I had never noticed her wearing lipstick in our sessions, to which she replied, 'Yeah, well, I don't have to *be* anyone when I'm with you.' Exploring this comment, she elaborated that in each of the other relationships in her life, there is a kind of person she feels she has to be. She chooses her daily lipstick based not upon a subjective sense of how she is feeling, but on an objectified sense of who she has to be, which in turn is defined by the people for whom she is being that object. In therapy, her task is to be herself, and so the lipstick is not necessary.

In Sartrean terms, the lipstick she wears represents her anticipation of the objectifying gaze of the Other, whereas in therapy she is subjectified, by herself and by me as her therapist, so that she does not have to choose a self to project at me and instead can situate herself where she is. It would be naïve to assume that she is fully inhabiting her subjectivity all the time in our sessions, and that she never projects an image of the person she thinks I want her to be — even her statement that in therapy her task is to be herself discloses that there is a task in the first place — but this feels like a different kind of task from the tasks for which she has to wear lipstick.

In the course of our discussions about her lipstick collection, we have come to face up to the dizzying terror of the realisation of meaninglessness. Out of this, however, has also come a recognition of the task of making her own meaning out of the circumstances in which she finds herself, and of the call to authenticity: the 'choosing to choose a kind of Being-one's-Self' (Heidegger, 1962, p.314). This has made me consider which other elements of my clients' presentations I have been neglecting to explore in depth. If I had not been having my own experiences with regard to makeup, I might not have picked up on her comment about lipstick and started exploring the meaning she attributes to it.

Conclusion

In writing this essay, I have found countless avenues for exploration about my relationship with eyeliner, most of which I have had to jettison for reasons of space. For example, Gentina et al. (2012) speak about Western teenage girls' makeup choices as analogous to rites of passage into adulthood in tribal societies, and discuss how makeup provides a safe way to rebel against one's parents in an ongoing process of separation and individuation. In my case, I chose a style of makeup that my mother had worn when she was a young punk rocker, which she had stopped wearing when she became a member of a religious cult. Perhaps my choice of gothic makeup was a *hiraeth*: a nostalgia for a home I never had. If so, this speaks to a theme that has run through my life: a longing for my childhood to have been different, to have had parents who loved and nurtured me, and a simultaneous pulling away from the reality of my

family, a radical individuation which feels necessary, exciting, pleasurable and painful all at once.

All of this goes to show that something as apparently simple as eyeliner might be a much riper topic for phenomenological exploration than it initially appears. I remember once complaining to my therapist about not having anything to talk about in my session, and her replying 'Everything is something to talk about. We could make a whole session out of discussing the colour of the carpet.' At the time, I thought this an odd comment, but in the process of writing this essay I have come to understand what she meant.

As existential therapists, we explore our clients' selves and worlds with them, looking at how they relate to themselves, to others, and to us. We explore questions of meaning and walk up to the edge of the dizzying abyss of meaninglessness — or, as one of my clients likes to call it, the 'vortex of terror.' My experiences over the last few months of being unwell, not being able to wear eyeliner, and discussing makeup choices with friends and clients have shown me what richness lies within the most apparently superficial of choices. I hope this is a lesson I continue to remember as I move forward in my journey as a therapist.

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