Casting the couch – some discussion of its role in shaping the place of encounter

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Abstract

Analysis occurs when the space of meeting becomes the place of encounter. This place is no ordinary place, it is a place dedicated to the analysand appropriating her/his own, authentic possibilities of being. The place and process which is analysis is evoked in several ways: by the presence of analyst and analysand, the 'rules' which guide the process and the ambiance of the setting. The last of these includes the use (or not) of the analytic couch.

Drawing on qualitative research into several analysts' lived experience of having an analysand use the couch this paper discusses the role of the couch in constituting intersubjective privacy and some of the ways in which the couch contributes to a particular way of being-together-with, bodily attunement, the emergence of an analytic third, and reverie.

Introduction

Analysis occurs when the space of meeting becomes the place of encounter. Analysis is created in several ways: through the way analyst and analysand are present, through the 'rules' which guide the process, and through the ambiance of the setting. The last of these includes the use (or not) of the analytic couch (Freud, 1913/2001, p. 133). Freud did not himself wholly stick to the use of the couch nor did he expect others to do so (Roazen, 1975; Stern, 1978). He was known to conduct analysis whilst out walking (Jones, 1961/1964; Gay, 1988/1989) as well as to invite an analysand to walk through from his consulting room to his study to make an interpretation inside the metaphor by alluding to a meaningful image without direct reference to the analysand's material (Bergmann, 1989).

Gill (1984) argues that there are two sorts of criteria which 'define' psychoanalysis: intrinsic and extrinsic criteria. Intrinsic criteria relate to the development of a working alliance, transference, and the analysis of resistance. The extrinsic criteria include such features as the constancy of the setting, and the number, frequency and length of sessions. Usually, the use of the couch is regarded as an extrinsic criterion and psychoanalysts generally see it as an extrinsic technical aid to creating and maintaining the analytic process (Cooper, 1986; Eigen, 1977).

This paper explicates the analyst's experience of having an analysand use the couch and the couch's role in shaping the place of analytic encounter. How do we cast the couch and how does the couch cast us (analyst and analysand)?

At the outset it may need to be said that this is not a polemical account. It is not an attempt to valorize the use of the couch. All the participants of the study, including the first author, consult with analysands both face to face and on the couch. This does mean that they all possess a basis for making a natural comparison in their experience. This natural comparison at times helps generate a sense of how we cast the couch and how it casts us.

In an attempt to address the general question (of how we cast the couch and how it casts us) the authors use what is effectively a phenomenological method. This method combines an extract (and commentary) on a segment of analysis conducted by the first author using the couch with material drawn from a larger phenomenological study (Camic, Rhodes and Yardley, 2003; De Koning, 1979; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, and Bertsch, 2003; Giorgi, 1975; Giorgi and Giorgi, 2003; Kruger, 1986; Malcolm, 1995; Schōn; 2000; Stones, 1988; Thorpe, 1989) of the analyst's lived experience of using the couch (Milton, 2003). In this paper we shall discuss the role of privacy and some of the ways in which the couch contributes to a mode of being, reverie and the gathering and wording of an analytic third.

Although this paper accents the role of the couch as positive, facilitative, constructive and of assistance to analysis this is not always so and neither the participants nor the authors seek to valorize the couch over and above working face to face. The couch may be simply unhelpful, contraindicated, used as part of a defense and abused for various reasons, such as power (Adler, 1966; Anthony, 1961; Balint, 1965; Bellak & Meyers, 1975; Brody, 1973; Byerly, 1992; Deutsch, 1980; Dewald, 1978; Fairbairn, 1958; Freud, cited in Bernstein, 1975; Gellner, 1993; Goldberger, 1995; Greenson, 1969; Jung, 1935; Lomas 1994; Meerloo,1963; Robertiello, 1967; Samuels, 1985; Schmideberg, 1948; Stern, 1948; Teitelbaum, 1994; Wexler, 1971; Wolf, 1995). Important though these factors are they fall outside the scope of this paper.

Case material

As it is helpful to give a lived sense of the way in which the couch shapes the place of analytic encounter what follows is a presentation of a vignette of the primary author's experience of the couch's role in the conduct of an analysis and particularly the protection its privacy provides.

Matthew is a single man in his mid-twenties. He entered analysis after a break-up with a girlfriend. He wanted to get over this and resolve what he felt were problems in all his relationships. In addition he wanted to use analysis for personal development. Loss was deeply rooted in Matthew's life as his mother had died when he was a toddler, and he was raised by his father and a nanny. Both related to him ambiguously, sometimes helping him and sometimes letting him down.

Matthew was in analysis for a little more than three years. During much of that time

he came three times a week on consecutive days and used the couch. The clinical material is drawn from a session in the second year of the analysis.

When Matthew enters my room he briefly looks about, then crosses to the couch and lies down. Seated at the head of the couch (out of Matthew's sight, and with him almost completely out of my sight) I experience a settling silence fall over the room. We are together but alone in a shared private place. Matthew starts to speak. I listen to his words with evenly suspended attention. My mind is simply drawn along by his words, their rhythm, his silence. His presence evokes my own thoughts and feelings, sensations and intuitions. I surrender to the drift of this material sponsored by my own unconscious. My experienced response forms a wake from the prow of his associations. Matthew's presence on the couch shapes my subjectivity. I feel that we enter a shared space. It is a place of coming together for Matthew and I, a place that feels as if it is formed from our joint presence. For me it has the quality of an altered state of consciousness but it is a 'shared separate reality' that feels very real. I feel an increase in the availability of my feelings, the flexibility of my thoughts and my sense of Matthew. I can easily register, consider, weigh and try out the experiences presented to me. More importantly I am able to allow Matthew's subjectivity to occupy my body-mind. Something like a third subject forms in the space of associations. From my sense of this third subject I assay a particular interpretation (the details of which are now lost), which is an attempt to explicitly access and articulate the place of encounter with Matthew.

His subjectivity both shaped and provoked by the interpretation Matthew is moved to associate further. He says that when he was a child he was very fond of gluing model aeroplanes together. He says that he was not very good at this and would often get into a mess. Sometimes when this occurred he would ask his father for help. His father would help but would then become engrossed in the task and take it over from Matthew. When his father was finished making the model he would say something like: 'Didn't we make a nice plane?' Matthew, however, was acutely aware that he had not himself made the model. I track this from my position of evenly suspended attention. At first I find myself empathizing with Matthew as a child who felt misunderstood and unhelped, then I feel emotionally moved by his account and a little protective of him. I also find myself feeling as if I were his father and experiencing the difficulty of relating to a child in just the right way. Then I find myself playing with the idea that Matthew is making an unconscious communication. One in which he says that he experiences my interpretation as interrupting and usurping his 'messy', yet creative, work, in much the same way that his father did with the model aeroplane construction. I find myself thinking that maybe he is making an unconscious complaint against a figure who usurped his creative feeling and left him feeling inadequate. Perhaps he has come to doubt his creative capacity. I wonder about speaking. I think that this is too little evidence on which to base an interpretation. I wonder if I do speak if I might not be taking over his work

again. Is there a way to speak without doing this? Has the time passed to speak, has my silence shown something else? Does he experience my silence as supportive or absent or even punitive? Am I being punitive? Was I countertransferentially stung by my assumption that he was unconsciously critiquing my making an interpretation? My thoughts and feelings, senses and intuitions swirl in the analytic space. Aided by the privacy which the use of the couch affords me this movement is easier to engage with, observe, dwell upon and shape. This also helps analytic abstinence. So I remain silent but continue listening in a state of reverie.

Matthew continues associating saying that his great aunt had once done a similar thing. When he was a child she had 'helped' him write a poem by calling out possible lines and asking him what he thought of them. Once constructed this poem was sent off, as Matthew's, to a children's poem-writing competition. Matthew won the competition and a lot of fuss was made about this but Matthew knew, with some embarrassment, that the poem was not his own work.

In the space of association the idea comes to me that Matthew's account of his great aunt usurping his creative potential may be a second unconscious communication about how, with my interpretation, I have taken over his work. Then within the free and sheltered space of the couch's privacy a different, more subtle pattern comes to me. I see that Matthew's communications are not only understandable as someone usurping his creative potential. They may also depict a split 'mentor-usurper' figure. In the intermingling of our subjectivities he is *manifestly* speaking of the usurper figure but the *latent* mentor figure enters my consciousness. I recollect a recent session in which Matthew and I had spoken of the challenges of working together in creative collaboration. Again I puzzle and wonder about speaking, I work at shaping words. Stop, discard, revise, check, reconsider. Then from a moment of silence I speak. I say that maybe there is a parallel between how his father behaved with the model aeroplanes and how his great aunt behaved with the poem. Following my feelings and intuition further I say that neither his father nor his great aunt really knew how to creatively collaborate with him and I wonder if this might leave him feeling quite bothered and frustrated. At this point rapport deepens between us. Then I say that I recalled something similar about our relationship in a previous session. In particular I recall how Matthew had previously asked me to be more interpretive but also to work collaboratively with him and that maybe he is reminding me of this in a complex way. From Matthew's vocal but nonverbal presence, the quality of silence, rhythm, tone and prosody I register that rapport has deepened profoundly. With a kind of relief, almost a sigh, he verbally agrees with me. The session continues.

So we come to the end of this brief vignette which gives not only the possible atmosphere of a session using the couch but also something of the way in which such analysis unfolds.

Research

As noted in the introduction the second component of this paper is drawn from a study of the analyst's lived experience of having an analysand use the couch. This introduces the need for a particular sort of research orientation. With the dawning of the modern era, with the Renaissance, 'science' has been split into the study of the measurable world of matter and energy (the natural world) and the experienced world of being human. The science of the natural world is natural science and because it is definitively measurable it uses quantitative (counting and measuring) methods. The science of the human world is not definitively measurable but is based on understanding (and communicating) human experience. The science of the human world uses qualitative methods which allow us to uncover and report on lived experience. Qualitative methods make use of description (phenomenology) and interpretation (hermeneutics) to gain an understanding of lived experience (Kruger, 1988; Kvale, 1996). Qualitative methods are not, however, restricted to the individual participant but provide generalized statements which enlarge rather than restrict or reduce (as in natural scientific/quantitative methods) our appreciation and understanding of the phenomenon (Edwards, 1998; Kruger, 1988; Kvale, 1996; Stones, 1988).

Giorgi (1970) has traced the origin and development of the notion of 'human science' as opposed to 'natural science' and has cogently argued that psychology is a human science. Human science properly turns towards qualitative methods of research (Camic, Rhodes and Yardley, 2003; Eisner, 2003; Giorgi, 1970; Marecek, 2003; McGrath and Johnson 2003; McLeod, 2001). As such it properly seeks to disclose and articulate experience from the lived world. Giorgi (1975) went on to articulate an approach and method of disclosing human phenomena using the paradigm of human science. This contributed to a particular movement of phenomenological research which, striving to be scientific, was structurally rigorous whilst remaining respectful of human phenomena. In general such 'phenomenological' methods are also implicitly 'hermeneutic', as all phenomena are inescapably interpretively fore-structured. Hermeneutics (which which is the art of interpretation) has come to involve the tracing of a 'circle' (Edwards, 1998) from descriptive 'findings' to the personal, cultural and 'scientific' fore-ground (or context) in which they are embedded, and back again to the 'findings'. In this way one seeks to contextually present, extend and deepen understanding of the 'findings' as well as the framework in which the 'findings' arise. As Heidegger more simply and elegantly puts it: 'What we first hear is never noises or complexes of sound, but the creaking wagon, the motor cycle' (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 207). Practically, hermeneutics respects the embeddedness of a phenomenon in personal experience as well as in history, tradition, values and culture (Addison, 1989; Kvale, 1996; McLeod, 2001; Packer and Addison, 1989; Ray, 1984; Titelman, 1979).

In the study upon which this paper draws, four practitioners (two women and two men) were interviewed about their experience of having an analysand use the couch. The interviews were transcribed and then analysed using a variant of Giorgi's (1975, 1997, 2003) method to generate a phenomenological description of the general structure of the experience. This statement of general structure was then complemented and enriched with aesthetic texture (Todres, 1998, 2000, 2002; Malcolm, 1995) by interleaving the description with enlivening citations from the interviews. Finally concern for intersubjective value and justness was highlighted through a critical dialogue of the structural and aesthetic 'findings' with certain contemporary psychoanalytic notions of critical discourse and intersubjectivity. In the research study several themes were discovered and critically discussed, however, in this paper we shall restrict our comments to a few interrelated elements: the couch and privacy, the mode of being its use facilitates, reverie and the analytic third. These elements are all addressed in Ogden's seminal 1996 paper 'Reconsidering Three Aspects of Psychoanalytic Technique'. Because of that it is useful to review that paper.

It may be important to note that whereas phenomenological/qualitative methods are not comparative in an originary sense, they may involve investigating phenomena which are permeated with comparison (for example in a study of criminal victimization comparisons of the earlier and late stages of victimization (Fischer & Wertz, 1979)) and that any study of the couch implicates a comparison with working face to face.

Review of Ogden's 1996 paper

In his seminal paper, 'Reconsidering Three Aspects of Psychoanalytic Technique', Ogden (1996) refers to the meaning of the couch for both the analyst and analysand. In this paper Ogden clearly calls on earlier work by Grotstein (1995) and by Sadow (1995). He announces his topic by setting up a resonance between analysis and music, likening the analytic mode of being to the space of silence between musical notes. This space is somewhat like a state of mind in the analyst that is empathic, intuitive and rich in phantasy. Ogden links this state to Bion's (1962, 1962/1967) notion of 'reverie' He also intertwines his exposition with reference to the 'intersubjective analytic third' which is 'a jointly but asymmetrically constructed and experienced set of conscious and unconscious intersubjective experiences in which analyst and analysand participate' (p. 884). The notion of the intersubjective analytic third shares something with Sadow's (1995) notion of a 'third entity', formed from the micromerger of the mental activities of analysand and analyst, as well as with Grotstein's (1995) notion of a 'third entity', derived from both the analysand and the analyst in the dialectical state of transference/counter-transference. Ogden suggests that access to the intersubjective analytic third comes through the state of reverie. From here on, Ogden elaborates thinking that goes beyond the springboard provided by the thinking of Sadow and Grotstein. Firstly, he offers an augmented definition of the analytic process. Freud had very succinctly defined psychoanalysis:

Any line of investigation which recognizes these two facts [the phenomena of *transference* and *resistance*] and takes them as the starting point of its work has a right to call itself psycho-analysis (Freud, 1914/2001, p. 16).

Ogden augments this definition of psychoanalysis:

> I would suggest the following elaboration of Freud's succinct statement. Perhaps psychoanalysis might be viewed as involving a recognition not only of transference and resistance, but also of the nature of the intersubjective field within which transference and resistance are generated (Ogden, 1996, p. 885).

This redefinition of the analytic process leads on to defining the role of the couch in analysis. Ogden argues that the couch is instrumental in producing, accessing, developing and using the intersubjective analytic third:

> The problem of defining the nature of the role of the couch as a component of the analytic framework then becomes a problem of conceptualising the role of the use of the couch in the process of facilitating a state of mind in which the intersubjective analytic third might be generated, experienced, elaborated and utilized by analyst and analysand (Ogden, 1996, p. 885).

Ogden constructs the meaning of the experience of the couch for the analyst as providing the analytic couple with an asymmetric but containing 'free and sheltered space' (Kalff, 1980) that sponsors the generation, experience, elaboration and utilization, through reverie, of the intersubjective analytic third.

The notion of a contained, free and sheltered space returns us to the selected elements from the research, first and foremost to the couch and privacy.

The couch and privacy

Freud (1913/2001) indicated early on that a significant intersubjective factor in analysis was privacy. Freud's reference to the use of the couch, in his papers on technique, was, from the beginning, allied to the practical virtues of the privacy afforded by the couch:

> I cannot put up with being stared at by other people for eight hours (or more). Since, while I am listening to the patient, I, too give myself over to the current of my unconscious thoughts, I do not wish my expressions of face to give the patient material for interpretations or to influence him in what he tells me (ibid, p. 133).

The existential analyst Medard Boss specifically implicates the couch in the important provision of privacy:

I say the best way for you to come to know yourself and develop what you really are is this way of being there on the couch for yourself, independent of me. There, you're not influenced by my facial expressions, my gestures and so on. But it's not an absolute law (Boss cited in interview with Craig, 1988, p. 33).

Although these words mostly describe the role privacy provides from the perspective of the analysand the implications for the analyst are clear: as the analysand is freed from the facial expressions and gestures of the analyst, so too privacy frees the analyst to be present bodily in an authentic way. This means that an analyst need not modulate or suppress conscious and unconscious somatic responses to the analysand. So the analyst impinges less on the analysand's emerging psychological life. Many analysts (including Freud) essentially express the opinion that the couch helps shape intersubjectivity so that the analyst's own spontaneous body language does not compromise the privileging of the analysand's authentic presence (Barglow, Jaffe and Vaughn, 1989; Boss, (cited Craig) 1988; Fordham, 1978; Freud, 1913/2001; McWilliams, 1999; Ogden, 1996; Searles,1984/85). The importance of this is less the literal success of the opacity of the analyst (the infamous 'blank screen'), and more the positive way in which privacy helps open up possibilities of being for the analysand.

The experience of Matthew's analysis resonates with these thoughts on privacy. Although the first author did not feel a conscious concern about Matthew's sight of him he recognized a felt truth in Freud and Boss's reflections. The use of the couch helps provide us with a shared private place within which we feel freer. The intersubjectivity that is generated by the use of the couch frees the subjectivities from their respective embeddednesses.

The findings of the research study (Milton, 2003) specifically concurred with this view, namely that *the privacy afforded by the couch makes the most significant contribution to its shaping of a mode of being. In particular privacy shelters the analytic couple from the influence of each other's gaze. It specifically reduces the analyst's anxieties about his/her own body language*. The first participant of the study expressed this meaning of the couch directly: 'the couch as a structure which doesn't require looking another person in the eye is facilitating'. The second participant agreed: 'it's a great relief to kind of not have the dead pan face and to be careful not to respond to things'. Likewise the third participant said: 'I think in a way that's the freedom to sort of sit there and really listen and think in a way that I think might look odd if [I were face to face]'.

There is, however, more to it. It was found that the privacy of the couch both aids the analytic attitude and helps the analyst establish and maintain an analytic state of mind.

We see that the privacy of the couch shelters the analyst from interpersonal pressure

and this helps foster an analytic attitude by supporting abstinence. In one sense this seems problematic, for, by reducing the analyst's urge to respond to interpersonal pressure, it may shelter the analyst from useful, albeit uncomfortable, counter-transference pressures. That having been said, to 'shelter' is not to 'shield', i.e. the analyst is still subject to counter-transference but in a way that is more tolerable and therefore more open to observation and reflection.

Implicit in Freud's statement about disliking being stared at is the insight that the couch helps the analyst sustain an analytic state of mind. Stern (1978) notes how the privacy of the couch permits the analyst to relax and maintain energy and concentration. He also highlights the view that the couch supports the analyst's evenly suspended attention and the associated multiple tasks of attunement to, processing, formulating and articulating of, analytic phenomena. The couch helps the analyst maintain the privacy and autonomy that is necessary for both a centred subjectivity and autonomous thought. The findings of the research study concur, all the participants linked their experience of the couch to relaxation and freedom of thought and feelings. This was also noticed in the session with Matthew. The privacy of the couch helped the analyst surrender to Matthew's presence as well as the drift of the analyst's own unconscious. The analysts feelings were more available, his thoughts more flexible and he was more open to encounter Matthew. He more easily registered, considered and played with the experiences presented to him. Later in the session, within the contained, free and sheltered space of the couch's privacy, the analyst becomes open to a different, more subtle, pattern of understanding than the facile translation of unconscious derivatives . So the density of the analysis was enriched as analyst and analysand played in the field of the intersubjective analytic third.

Both the first author's experience and the findings of the research study showed that there is a significant connection between privacy and the mode of being mediated by the couch which naturally leads to consideration of that mode of being and of reverie.

Mode of being and reverie

All the research participants and the first author found that the use of the couch significantly shapes the mode of being, i.e. the analytic couple's being-together, emotional attunement, thoughts/fantasies, bodily-ness and states of mind. The participants in the study made several statements which relate to these dimensions.

Firstly it was noted that using the couch positively influences intimacy. The first participant said: 'I think one of the things is [the couch] sort of encourages a different kind of intimacy . . . - I don't kind of get too mystical about it and I don't like making things sound gobbledy gookish like if you haven't had analysis you don't know what

it's about - but I think there is something quite particular [that the use of the couch] supports or encourages or promotes in its creative dimension.'

In using the couch analysts may experience stronger emotional attunement to the analysand's associations: The second participant said: 'I often feel . . . intense frustration or I feel like I want to get in and do something. Like somebody who's wife is picking on them then that kind of will rile me on the couch in a way that its doesn't otherwise.'

The analysand's associations are experienced by the analyst as more natural and more available. According to the first participant: 'more often in this kind of analytically inclined work . . . the stuff that dreams are made of, associations and so on . . . tend to be more available'. The fourth participant said about the analysand's material: 'I would think that the free association is more flowing and more often. And my experience, I think, has been that the dreams, the remembered dreams, come out in the course of the hour rather than someone arriving and saying 'I've had a dream'.

Using the couch foregrounds the analyst's experience of his or her own bodily-ness. The second participant said: 'I'm much more closely in tune with experiencing what the patient is telling me in an experiential bodily way than I would be face to face'. So, it can be said that the couch facilitates a certain presence of the body — a bodily communication that may be 'more than words can tell' (Todres, 1999). Its use removes the analysand and analyst from visual connection with each other, which heightens reliance on other channels of communication. Typically, these comprise verbal as well as non-visual sensory forms, such as rhythm of breathing, prosody, intonation, the use of puns, verbal slips and even silences. In the words of the first participant: 'I noticed once a person would be absolutely in tune to my breathing'.

Although designed to reflect the analyst's experience the research study suggested that use of the couch facilitates access to different states of body-mind for the analysand. (This suggestion takes on more value when we consider that analysis is constituted as definitively intersubjective.) In the words of the third participant: 'I think it's possibly easier to get to different states of mind . . . My sense is, it allows earlier states of mind to emerge, but probably not to be completely overwhelming'.

Whilst in the opinion of this analyst the couch offers the analysand access to different states of mind it is clear that the analyst too crosses a portal into state of mind the ambiance and texture of which shape the space of meeting into a place of encounter and analysis. Todres (personal communication, 1990) has suggested that the main thrust of phenomenological research is to best convey the lived experience. He suggests that to do so a piece of 'fiction' may serve best. This view is not inconsistent with the position of Romanyshyn (1982) that 'fact' and 'fiction' mutually implicate each other in the metaphoric nature of psychological life. Following these suggestions, in an attempt to get a phenomenological lived sense of the place of encounter when

using the couch, we shall blend and gloss the first author's own experience and extracts of the research participants' responses into one first person account:

> *Using the couch facilitates a meditative state of evenly suspended attention. Using it I feel much more relaxed and concurrently I have a great deal more space to dwell upon what is going on. I often experience particular intimacy, increased emotional responsiveness and bodily responsiveness. The couch helps me receive the analysand's psychological life. I have greater access to the stuff that dreams are made of, associations and so forth. I can more easily elaborate the narrative contents, sift and metabolize the material. Although I may dwell into the analysand's subjectivity very intensely there is an observing space and I then have the advantage of seeing patterns and intuiting better. Mostly the couch provides me with more mind space and more clarity of mind and I am able to think in novel and creative ways.*

In keeping with this it was noted in the research study that use of the couch facilitates the analyst's freedom and capacity for observation. The fourth participant expressed this explicitly: 'I am able to risk more also. Because there's an observing space'. She also linked privacy to a space for thinking: 'I think one of the first things is that I feel much more relaxed. I don't have to look interested and look concerned and look attentive and concurrently I have a great deal more space to think about what's going on'. More pointedly, it is the quality of this thinking space which is her central experience of the couch: 'cardinally I ... have a thinking space. A better thinking space. That I guess would be the central experience'. The quality of the space is also related to the effect which the couch has on the experience of time. The third participant said: 'you can abandon yourself to this almost different kind of time that occurs in that space'. As the second participant put it:

> *I feel like, what was that fabulous movie – the Matrix – did you see that, you know where the bullet is coming to you and then it slows down and you kind of bend backwards . . . it's that, not in such a dramatic way, but there's space to manoeuvre with the space and I'm actually free to think.*

The second participant also explicitly linked the use of the couch to reverie: 'I have my own *reverie* that's allowable on the couch in a way it's not allowable face-to-face'. This invites us to briefly discuss 'reverie' in a theoretical way.

Reverie

The term 'reverie' was introduced to psychoanalysis by Bion (1962, 1962/1967) 'to refer to the state of mind that the infant requires of the mother . . . to take in the infant's own feelings and give them meaning' (Hinshelwood, 1991, 420). The meaning of this term has been extended to aid understanding of the analytic process by allying it to Freud's injunctions to the analyst to maintain a state of 'evenly suspended attention' (1912).

> *I think the ability to move into the meditative state of evenly hovering attentiveness, to receive and articulate projective identifications, to elaborate the narrative contents through inner free associations, and to follow the analysand's mood in the hour contributes to the psychoanalyst's intuitive grasp of the analysand. Certainly this is what Bion means by the analyst's reverie when he takes the patient's communications, contains them, works unconsciously to transform them into sense, and gradually passes them back to the analysand for consideration (Bollas, 1992, p. 97).*

Ogden sees reverie as of central importance in the conduct of analysis:

> For the analyst, an indispensable source of experiential data concerning the leading unconscious transference-countertransference anxiety at any given moment in an analytic session is available in the form of his reverie experience. Part of what makes the analyst's reverie experience so difficult to work with is the fact that it is not 'framed', as dreams are framed, by waking states. Reverie experience seamlessly melts into other more focused psychic states. The analyst's reveries usually feel to him like an intrusion of his own current fatigue, narcissistic self-absorption, preoccupations, unresolved emotional conflicts, and so on. Despite these difficulties, I find that my reverie experience serves as an emotional compass that I rely on heavily (but cannot clearly read) in my effort to gain my bearings about what is going on unconsciously in the analytic relationship (Ogden, 2001, no page reference).

The outcome of the study reflected that the couch helps the analyst shift into a state of 'reverie'. This is experienced as granting access to different, even developmentally earlier, states of mind. Reverie helps the analyst to automatically track the analysand, facilitates the analyst's reception of the analysand's narrative in an experiential, bodily register, facilitates the analyst's counter-transferential responsiveness, and provides the analyst with ready access to his/her own associations. The first author's experience of Matthew was one of reverie in which his thoughts and feelings, senses and intuitions swirled in the analytic space. The privacy which the the use of the couch affords clears a space of reverie in which this movement is easier to engage with, observe, dwell upon and shape. The fourth participant explicitly linked the privacy of the couch to the creation of reverie:

> *I don't have to look interested and look concerned and look attentive ... I think... [certain clients were] so vigilant ... that if I seemed to be lost or distracted or not paying attention to every bit, they got agitated and when they were on the couch... they were less aware of me and I think that created a reverie state.*

The couch and the analytic third

Several analysts (Grotstein, 1995, Sadow, 1995, Ogden, 1996) implicate the couch as a special 'object' which helps constellate an analytic third. If we return to Ogden's seminal 1996 paper we find that he believes that the task of analysis is to create conditions in which an intersubjective analytic third can be gathered into consciousness and worded.

Phenomenologically, although present, this understanding of Ogden's was the least prominent in the both the first author's own experience and that of the research participants. Possibly this is because the notion is so strongly from within a relatively new form of psychoanalytic discourse. However, the research study did show that the couch helps constellate a third analytic element 'located' within the 'space' between the subjectivities of the analyst and the analysand and 'formed' out of their merger. In fact the second participant clearly implicated the couch in constituting an analytic third saying:

> *[T]here's some kind of a shared possession . . . put into that space . . . between the patient and myself in a way that we kind of become one . . . there is the patient, yourself and the third sort of space and somewhere there's a merging of these two.*

Connecting this with other findings of the research study we can say that the couch sponsors a state of reverie in which the analyst can gather and word the unconscious analytic third.

The experience of analysis with Matthew gestured towards the same notions. The primary author felt that Matthew's presence on the couch shaped both of their subjectivities. In this shaping the analyst experienced entering a state of reverie, an analytic space that felt shared. The idea of a split 'mentor-usurper' figure took shape within the primary author's sense of an intersubjective analytic third. To him it felt as if there was a place of coming together formed from the joint presence of the analytic couple. More importantly, as analyst, he was able to let Matthew's subjectivity occupy his own body-mind, and that something like a third subject formed. In this emergent subjectivity was something which both knew but which needed to be thought and felt. That was the work of the analysis.

Conclusion

If analysis occurs when the space of meeting becomes the place of analytic encounter then what is the role of the couch in generating that place? How do we cast the couch and how does the couch cast us?

Drawing on clinical material and using the findings of a qualitative research study we have traced the validity of Freud's original insight that the privacy afforded by

the couch is of primary importance. This privacy shapes the analyst's experience of intimacy, emotional attunement, bodily-ness, and states of body-mind (such as time and the spatiality of thinking). This in turn becomes a shaping of the space into a place of reverie, which allows for the gathering and wording of an intersubjective analytic third, the place of analytic encounter between analyst and analysand.

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