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How Poetry Leads Theory or the Undoing of a Psychoanalyst

As psychoanalysis has increasingly been willing to theorize, analysis is made up of two subjects and there is now wide spread agreement that the analyst's subjectivity invariably shapes the analysis. What psychoanalysis has not yet done is actually describe the analyst's subjectivity as it shapes the treatment. In particular while we hear of difficult treatments, sometimes even the suffering of the analyst, we are much less likely to actually see what this looks and feels like. The reflective gaze of analytic writing seems to sanitize the raw emotional experience that can be evoked especially working with patients whose self states include unsymbolized material.

Here I present a very difficult treatment with a patient, often silent, in an effort to engage multiple questions about the role of the analyst's subjectivity in a treatment. How does the analyst's own vulnerability actually shape and interact with a patient? What is the role of the patient as healer of the analyst? By bridging the familiar language and form of case history with the less familiar enactment of the treatment experience in clinical writing, I am hoping to engage the listener in the actual experience of the treatment which involved innumerable questions of complementarities and issues of identification. The writing, which uses poetry and prose interspersed with reflective psychoanalytic thought, aims to disrupt the dualistic and hierarchical notion of the patient as the subject of inquiry and the analyst as a superior expert who inquires and ultimately recognizes.

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