The Machine Moves: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Computer Mediated Communication in the Psychoanalytic Frame

A Hermeneutic Literature Review

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work, and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which, to a substantial extent, has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Bede Maclaurin, 9 February, 2023

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Research Question

What does the psychoanalytic literature tell us about the perspectives of psychoanalytic theorists on adopting computer-mediated communication in the psychoanalytic frame? The rationale for asking this question comes, most generally, from the ubiquitous global adoption of computer-mediated communication in recent decades (Yao & Ling, 2020). That change has led to increased discussion among psychoanalytic theorists over the adoption of computer-mediated communication in psychoanalytic practice (Scharff, 2018b).

Over time, that discussion has moved between perspectives regarding computer-mediated communication in psychoanalysis as a relative novelty, easily dismissed as experimental and unconventional, to perspectives regarding its increasing acceptance as common practice (Russell, 2018; Scharff, 2018b; Zeavin, 2021). As a major historical event, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this change, and validated it for some (Scharff, 2020, as cited in Merchant, 2021). However, strong concerns raised pre-COVID-19 remain unanswered (White, 2020).

Much of the debate around computer-mediated communication in the psychoanalytic frame regards philosophical and theoretical discussion of the perceived and experienced impact on psychoanalytic relationships and processes. This leads the research question towards theories and evidence pertaining to embodiment, embodied consciousness, shared presence, potentiality, immediacy, intimacy, and responsibility (Caldironi, 2017; Carlino, 2011; Neumann, 2018; Russell, 2018; Zeavin 2021).

Although these are not framing issues, they relate to changes in the frame. So, addressing the research question involves reference to perspectives on psychoanalytic tradition, cyberspace, virtuality and authenticity, the implications of removing co-presence from the frame, and so on. I note that matters of context, process and technique have been connected to

psychoanalytic framing since Freud (1913/1958), throughout the 20th century (Bleger, 1967/2014; Langs, 1998; Milner, 1952), and into the present (Bass, 2007; Lemma, 2014).

These issues are pertinent to both psychoanalytic and psychodynamic traditions. My intention in this review is to approach understanding of the perspectives surrounding the adoption of computer-mediated communication at this point in history. The aim is to contribute towards deepening the conversation around this fundamental movement in psychoanalytic tradition.

I am not a psychoanalyst. My training and experience, however, is in psychodynamic psychotherapy, the theory and practice of which is significantly influenced by psychoanalytic clinical theory (Fonagy, 1999). Hence, I offer my results to psychodynamic as well as psychoanalytic communities.

My Initial Position

I here discuss my position and prejudices before beginning the review, as is proper to the hermeneutic method chosen (see Chapter Two). I began with the idea that I had chosen a straightforward subject: The psychoanalytic frame seemed a tangible and approachable concept that would naturally contextualise the adoption of computer-mediated communication in psychoanalysis. I expected my review to be informed by my position as an almost-digital-native, being comfortable with online spaces and online media in general. My overall initial position was that, as computer-mediated communication is now pervasive in human relationships, psychoanalysis will adapt for better or worse, indeed it is already.

This position might be regarded as simplistic, however I find it reflected in some of the more pragmatic perspectives in the literature (Merchant, 2016; Scharff 2018a; Neumann, 2018). I also note that, during this review, my position changes considerably given engagement with the literature covered, particularly in recognising the importance of embodied intersubjectivity, and the risks to security with the online frame.

Although I am not a psychoanalyst, my training is informed by psychoanalytic theory. I have regarded psychoanalysis as both intimidating for its doctrinal gravitas, and somewhat self-important in its discursive theoreticality. Although I recognise some antagonism in my position regarding conservative concerns in psychoanalysis, I found myself increasingly sympathetic to those concerns during my research.

I had come to regard the psychoanalytic frame as a reliable concept during my training in psychodynamic psychotherapy, a field which has so often tested my reliance on any secure footing. So, I became interested in the frame as a tangible construct, almost reassuring in its mundanity. Similarly, I saw it as a useful theoretical basis from which to examine the adoption of computer-mediated communication in psychoanalysis.

I thought the frame would not give me much trouble. It turned out that it both did and did not. It was a useful touchstone during my research. However, I noticed my footing on it slipped from time-to-time. That instability led towards notions of flexibility in response to changes in the frame and wider psychoanalytic tradition as caused by computer-mediated communication.

I remember life before the ubiquity of computer-mediated communication. I have also been thoroughly influenced by the changes computer-mediated communication has introduced. Additionally, much of my training in psychodynamic psychotherapy required adapting to computer-mediated communication in psychotherapeutic work due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic. This strongly informed my choice of research question, although the question extends beyond that historic event.

Summary of Chapters

In Chapter Two, I outline my choice of hermeneutic methodology and method, and connect the review to historical and traditional contexts regarding the adoption of computer-mediation in the psychoanalytic frame.

In Chapter Three, I briefly explore the historical development of the psychoanalytic frame, before discussing some perspectives relating to the more recent adoption of computer-mediation in the frame. In Chapter Four, I explore the perspectives of psychoanalytic theorists around that change to tradition, noting polarisation in the literature, and commenting on possible responses to that.

In Chapter Five, I discuss the online frame regarding perspectives on its differences and potential problems arising from its adoption. In Chapter Six, I discuss perspectives on applying the online frame, before turning towards some ethical implications.

In Chapter Seven, I discuss the research process and outcomes, commenting on contributions to psychoanalytic and psychodynamic disciplines, including limitations, implications, and recommendations. I lastly offer some commentary on my overall position as it changed during the research process.

Terminology

I usually refer to computer-mediated communication, but sometimes simplify this to computer-mediation or mediation. By computer-mediated communication I mean specifically the use of computer-networked video-conferencing technology, or video-calls, although I recognise that audio calls, emails, or instant messaging are also aspects of computer-mediated communication.

I refer to the psychoanalytic frame at times simply as the frame. I refer at times to the application of the frame as framing. For the sake of legibility and brevity, I refer to the online frame, where appropriate, rather than to "computer-mediated communication in the psychoanalytic frame."

Chapter Two: Methodology and Method

I will first provide a brief discussion of hermeneutics, particularly regarding theory from Gadamer (2013), aiming to highlight some relevant ideas to methodology for this review. I will then discuss my reasons for choosing a hermeneutic methodology. I will then use the discussion on hermeneutics to describe my method in conducting the research, before commenting on the research process itself.

Methodology

Modern hermeneutics has developed as a qualitative methodology that connects to both ancient and modern philosophical and scholarly traditions. Its focus is on interpretation, understanding, and communication (Zimmerman, 2015). It has often been applied to the interpretation and understanding of text but is not restricted to such.

Hermeneutics has many variations. Here, I will rely on Gadamerian hermeneutics. Gadamer's approach to hermeneutics is ontological, and he contrasts this with positivist epistemological approaches to knowledge, arguing that knowledge first requires simultaneous ontological understanding and revelation (Hekman, 1983). Although Gadamer himself emphasised that to take his philosophy of hermeneutics as methodological would be too narrow, his philosophy has significant implications for hermeneutics as methodology (Hekman, 1983).

Gadamer's emphasis on historical context as crucial to interpretation and understanding has been linked to Heidegger's work on temporality (Palmer, 1969; Hekman, 1983). In hermeneutics, the importance of temporal context extends to the interpreter's life experience, culture, and traditions, regarding their position in history (Smythe & Spence, 2012). Such influences lead to inevitable prejudices.

In Gadamer's view, the interpreter must acknowledge and examine those prejudices, not because they risk causing misinterpretation or misunderstanding if left unexamined, but because the hermeneutic process is dialogic (Gonzalez, 2006; Hekman, 1983). Such prejudices

contain important information about the relationship between interpreter and interpreted, which contextualises their dialogue and is the foundation of emergent understanding (Gonzalez, 2006). To disregard those prejudices, as a positivist approach might, would undermine this.

That dialogue relates to Gadamer's conception of the hermeneutic circle as an iterative interaction, leading to increasingly refined emergent understanding (Smythe & Spence, 2012). Such emergent understanding is represented by the analogy of a fusion of horizons: As well as emphasising investigation of the positions of interpreter and interpreted, Gadamer emphasises the fields of vision given by those positions, the boundaries of which he terms horizons (Hekman, 1983). Understanding requires an intersection, or fusion, of horizons as seen by the interpreter and interpreted (Gadamer, 2013).

These are the principles, then, which I consider appropriate towards hermeneutic methodology here: Acknowledgement and examination of the prejudices in my initial position; understanding of those prejudices as they inform my encounters with the texts in the wider body of literature I review; sensitivity to the intersections of my fields of vision with the horizons of the authors I read; and recognition of, and openness to, emergent understanding as my horizon meets with others.

These principles form the methodological assumptions upon which my method will be based. Philosophically, they relate to principles from Gadamerian hermeneutics. They direct the design of my method towards acknowledging my changing position and horizon in relation to the positions and horizons of the authors reviewed, and towards recognising the historical and traditional contexts through which those horizons meet.

Choice of Methodology

Hermeneutic methodology aligns strongly with my backgrounds in the humanities and psychodynamic psychotherapy. These traditions align with my interest in interpretative understanding as a path to emergent meaning through dialogic inquiry and examination of

historical-cultural positioning. I make this point to observe my position as is proper to hermeneutic methodology itself.

The research topic could be approached from a more analytical, perhaps even a positivist, position, given that many aspects of psychoanalytic framing might be considered from pragmatic and systematic approaches, as may be computer-mediated communication. Regarding this literature review, a different methodology might be applicable, perhaps a systematic methodology.

However, I am interested in the perspectives of psychoanalytic theorists who are facing the changes to the psychoanalytic frame under discussion for the following reasons: The psychoanalytic frame has strong connections to traditional theories and practices of psychoanalytic and psychodynamic psychotherapy. The changes under discussion represent a dramatic historical shift in those traditions, and those changes highlight crucial debates and discussions in psychoanalysis. Such debates and discussions reveal differences in prejudices of, and horizons seen from, each position.

Given the importance of psychoanalytic tradition, historical context, and perspective to the research topic, and given those factors are crucial to hermeneutics, I find hermeneutic methodology appropriate and useful here.

Method

During this review, I was mindful of my historical position and prejudices; of the historical contexts of texts reviewed; and of my movement towards fusion of horizons with each text within the wider body of literature. I noted changes to my positions and prejudices, and to my syntheses of understanding.

I followed a hermeneutic process in an iterative manner, as recommended by Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic's hermeneutic framework (2014), which consists of two nested hermeneutic circles. The inner circle is a cyclical search and acquisition process: searching the literature,

sorting, selecting, acquiring, reading, identifying, refining, and searching again. This inner circle is itself a node in the wider circle, a cyclical process of analysis, interpretation, and synthesis. It was in moving between the inner and outer circles that the broader themes of the review formed.

Searching, Sorting, Selecting, and Acquiring

I initially used key search terms relating to the online psychoanalytic frame. However, I found more general search terms, such as “online psychoanalysis,” or “teletherapy” with “psychoanalysis,” more useful in finding relevant results. Databases searched were as follows: Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing (PEP), ProQuest, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, and Google Scholar.

From that search, I was able to select some initial seminal and highly relevant sources, specifically *Screen Relations* (Russell, 2018), *Psychoanalysis in times of technoculture* (Lemma, 2017), and *Psychoanalysis Online* (Scharff, 2018b). This initial search began the first iteration of the inner hermeneutic circle described above, and so, too, the first iteration of the wider circle.

Reading, Identifying, and Refining

In subsequent iterations, I used snowball sampling to follow the literature towards historical and seminal authors on the psychoanalytic frame, as well as towards contemporary writing on both the frame and computer-mediation in the frame. This, through subsequent iterations, led towards identifying themes in the literature for further exploration: perspectives on changes to tradition; difficulties with the online frame; and working ethically with the online frame.

These themes guided subsequent searches, and often directed me towards rereading and refining my understanding of texts previously covered. Those themes also directed the iterations of outer the hermeneutic circle.

Analysis, Interpretation, and Synthesis

At each iteration of the outer circle, I critically re-evaluated my position, prejudices, and horizon with respect to my understanding of the literature. Interpretation and understanding of each text involved reflection on historical and sociocultural contexts. I followed the perspectives and experiences conveyed by a text with such contexts in mind. This involved dialogue with each author's arguments and orientations within psychoanalytic traditions. I noted my changing horizon and my closeness to fusion with the horizons of the text and the body of literature, keeping a journal to document such movements.

Given the need for reflection, space, and creativity in hermeneutic practice (Schuster, 2013), my research process involved writing essays at each iteration of the wider circle. Each essay aimed to synthesise my understanding and marked an iteration of the review. Those essays informed the chapters below, each covering themes in the literature important to the research question. These are the following:

- The history and evolution of theory on the psychoanalytic frame.
- The present state of psychoanalytic perspectives regarding changes to psychoanalytic tradition resulting from the adoption of computer-mediated communication in the frame.
- The present state of psychoanalytic perspectives on the online frame itself.
- Practical and ethical considerations regarding computer-mediated communication in the online frame.

The final iteration of the review involved reflection on my interpretations and synthesised understanding of previous iterations. This was to offer commentary on the limitations of the review itself, and implications and recommendations around computer-mediation in the psychoanalytic frame to psychoanalytic and psychodynamic communities. This synthesis contributed to the discussion and concluded the review.

The Research Process

It was through essay writing that I synthesised my understanding of the literature reviewed and formed the results offered in the chapters below. I here acknowledge my background in English Literature, and recall the origin of the term “essay” with Montaigne’s writing in the sixteenth century: Essay comes from the French essais, meaning attempt.

My essays were indeed attempts at understanding and synthesis of understanding, and it will be up to the reader to judge the results of such attempts. I take some comfort regarding the incompleteness of my horizon towards the literature by recalling Montaigne’s term, and by linking this to a hermeneutic premise that, while understanding may be unavoidably incomplete, immersion in the process of understanding itself produces its own results (Gadamer, 2013).

Recognising that my method required recognition of my position and horizon as the review progressed, I allowed myself to comment freely as my responses arose alongside the perspectives covered. I allowed those responses to arise from my context in history and tradition outside of my experiences with psychoanalytic theory and psychodynamic theory and practice. Such commentary at times felt uncomfortable, due to a sense of inadequacy regarding both academic and psychoanalytic traditions. However, it was when I could comment from my perspective without such inhibition that some of my results were clarified.

An example is my recommendation in Chapter Seven regarding the importance of literacy in the application of computer-mediation to psychotherapy. Although this result may seem trivial, I think it relates deeply to concerns in psychoanalytic perspectives on computer-mediation, and it comes from recognising my position regarding my generation, my experiences of history and tradition, and the literature itself. I make this point to observe an aspect of my process in following the above hermeneutic method, and the importance of allowing my voice to join the dialogue with the texts reviewed in following that method.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I first briefly discussed Gadamerian hermeneutics, with a view towards choosing foundational concepts that underlie the methodology of this research. I outlined my reasons for selecting hermeneutic methodology, and discussed its relevance to the research question. I described the design and application of my hermeneutic method. Lastly, I offered a commentary on the process of that method.

Chapter Three: Tradition - The Psychoanalytic Frame

In this chapter, I discuss some seminal theories on the frame and note my changing perspective; from regarding the frame as a reassuring aspect of psychoanalytic tradition that should be well defined and constant, to recognising it as a structure that is not quite a structure, not quite a process, that may be flexible in its interaction with relationality and psychoanalytic content. I begin to see the notion of flexibility in the frame as a means to conceptualise changes in psychoanalytic tradition.

Theories on the Psychoanalytic Frame

Although Freud's (1913/1958) comments on beginning psychoanalysis predate the psychoanalytic frame as a concept later introduced by Milner (1952), Freud does refer to key framing issues. He uses the analogy of a chess game, observing that, while openings and end-games in chess may be codified, the middle-game is open to enormous technical variation and creative exploration. This is both to qualify his practical suggestions as suggestions only, and to emphasise the limitations of applying rule-based strategies in psychoanalysis.

Freud's analogy draws a connection between establishing the elements of the frame (the opening-game) and the contents of psychoanalytic treatment, especially free-association and the transference (the middle-game), a connection which has since held true in the literature. Later theorists became interested in the pieces and chess board, so to speak, acknowledging and exploring the importance of those fundamental structures to the processes they facilitate.

Milner (1952) is often credited with making the first explicit references to the frame (Bass, 2007; Goldberg, 2017; Gray, 1994). Milner describes the frame by analogy to art and the creative process, specifically the traditional presentation of a painting within a separately constructed frame. The frame here distinguishes the illusion of the image from the more tangible surrounding world. The analogy to psychoanalysis is that the psychoanalytic frame separates

the illusory processes of psychoanalysis, defined particularly by the transference, from everyday experiences.

Bleger (1967/2014) defines the frame as consisting of specifically those elements of psychoanalysis he terms non-processes. He identifies these as constants upon which the variables of psychoanalytic processes depend. Bleger recognises the tendency for these non-process elements to become processes but argues that the psychoanalytic response to this is to re-establish the frame as a constant, contrasting this with the response to psychoanalytic processes themselves.

Whereas Freud was wary of rule-based strategies for psychoanalysis, Langs (1998) places emphasis on the rules of the frame. Langs approaches his discussion of the frame, and of framing elements (ground-rules, in his terms) he identifies as crucial, by appealing to definitive boundaries and limits inherent in nature and human nature from intrapsychic, relational, sociocultural, evolutionary, and existential perspectives. He considers such boundaries crucial to our development and wellbeing. In describing the ways in which processes are contextualised by boundaries, Langs reaffirms the essential interplay between psychoanalytic processes and the frame.

In the above conceptions, the frame is generally regarded as something constant, fundamental, surrounding, and secure. Although it may be attacked, broken, or undermined, and although these are important events in treatment, it is still to be maintained, repaired, and returned to. I suggest such securing qualities have contributed to the persistence of the psychoanalytic frame as an aspect of psychoanalytic tradition. I certainly find them reassuring, and admittedly they contributed to my choice of subject. It makes sense that some are so protective of traditional aspects of the psychoanalytic frame given such dramatic changes to human relationships and consciousness as follow from the widespread adoption of computer-mediated communication.

The Changing Frame

I am drawn to Bleger's conception of the frame, particularly his elegant and generalisable distinction between psychoanalytic processes and non-processes. However, other conceptions challenge such a general definition: Langs refers to framing elements less easily defined as non-processes, for instance neutrality (1998). Lemma considers framing elements supplied by both analyst and patient (2015), as well as the analyst's body as part of the frame (2014). Zeavin considers the analyst as part of the frame (2017).

I wonder if such variations, unmeasured against a clear conceptualisation, such as Bleger's (1967/2014), blur the lines between framing elements, interventions, and relationality. Hence, the position from which to observe the interactions between those would be undermined, reducing the conceptual power of framing itself. My preference for clarity and generality in defining the frame links to my wish for security as I research these changes to psychoanalysis. This is a response in me, too, to the preferences of critics of computer-mediated psychoanalysis for constancy and tradition.

However, I find in Bass's (2007) work a powerful illustration of flexibility in the frame. Bass draws on Ferenczi's notion of elasticity in psychoanalytic technique (Ferenczi et al., 1928/2018) in arguing for a responsive, relational, and change-accepting approach. Although he does not cite Bleger (1967/2014), he directly challenges some of Bleger's axioms in stating that framing arrangements are variables, not constants; and that the frame is at the same time both structure and process. Where Bleger highlights re-establishing constancy as the frame varies to process, Bass allows the frame to be a process. In doing so, he pays full recognition to the symbiosis of the psychoanalytic frame with psychoanalytic content.

This is relieving as I reflect on the task of synthesising my preference for a clear and general definition of the frame with my sense that one of the stronger ways to respond to the debate in the literature regarding computer-mediation is through principles of flexibility and exploration. Bass's (2007) conception of the frame is as elegant, generalisable, and potent as

Bleger's (1967/2014), and aligns with authors calling for tolerance of ambiguity and openness to change regarding online psychoanalysis (see Caldironi, 2017, Ceccoli, 2017). This leads to the next point, around the plausibility of an ideal frame.

The Ideal Frame

The question of an ideal frame is a sensitive point in the ongoing debate regarding computer-mediation in psychoanalysis (although not often explicitly observed) because more conservative perspectives (Lemma, 2017; Russell, 2018; White, 2020), tend to link conceptions of psychoanalysis to traditional methods both implicitly and explicitly. Such tendencies imply a discussion around ideal, or at least optimal framing technique.

Both Bleger (1967/2014) and Langs (1998) refer to an ideal frame. Langs' ideal refers to an optimal arrangement of framing elements. He supports this by arguing for universality in unconscious structures, which implies the existence of an ideal frame. Bleger (1967/2014) refers to the frame when not problematic to analysis. That is, when it is too-well maintained, unbroken, constant and never variable, it paradoxically becomes problematic. These are different conceptions, but both are pertinent: Langs' because his ideal frame resonates into the strong arguments of critics of computer-mediation in psychoanalysis, and Bleger's because he identifies the ideal frame, the frame that is not a problem, as a problem itself.

In opposition to Langs, I suggest a generalised frame cannot be ideal because the unconscious and the work of psychoanalysis challenge the ideal itself (Mills, 2010). As Bleger demonstrates, the ideal frame is problematic for this reason. More current authors argue rather for the importance of responsive approaches to the idiosyncrasies of given psychoanalytic dyads and contexts (Bass, 2007; Tabakin, 2017; Zeavin, 2017).

Idealising a traditional frame is similarly problematic, as this reduces responsiveness to historical and sociocultural contexts, and hence the capacity to practise effectively. Bass (2007) contrasts his approach to framing with Freud's classical technical analogies between the

psychoanalyst and the surgeon or the mirror, placing their different approaches in context of different points in tradition, neither idealising nor devaluing either. While this applies to many aspects of technique, it is pertinent to perspectives around computer-mediation in the psychoanalytic frame.

The Good Enough Frame

The natural response to questions around ideals and optimisation in psychoanalysis, and the sort of perfectionism that underlies those questions is: Is it good enough? It may sound trite, but that is a pragmatic heuristic with eminent origins (see Winnicott, 1956) that can redirect us away from anxieties over absolutes towards the purposes and nuances of psychotherapeutic work (Bass, 2007). Still, that response is not good enough in itself. The question remains: What is good enough? Here I take some points from the above authors to find some clarification. A good enough psychoanalytic frame:

- Sets the chessboard and opens the game (Freud, 1913/1958).
- Provides a safe and secure boundary between everyday experience and psychoanalytic space and processes (Milner, 1952).
- Includes the maintenance of framing elements as non-processes and their re-establishment as non-processes when they vary to processes (Bleger, 1967/2014).
- Acknowledges the human need for boundaries, identifies them, and interprets them in the psychoanalytic context (Langs, 1998).
- Is responsive to the interplay of technique, psychoanalytic content, and intersubjectivity with the frame, hence the frame may change accordingly (Bass, 2007).

In the further discussion of computer-mediation in the psychoanalytic frame, and in combination with the above discussion, these points are general enough to be flexible and

inclusive, and specific enough to be useful. They will, I think, be relatively uncontroversial. That said, I quote Bass here:

> A patient with whom I recently began to work commented in the midst of some negotiation of the fee that his grandfather, a wise and successful entrepreneur, used to say that a good negotiation is one in which no one is entirely happy. (2007, p. 13)

Chapter Four: Catastrophic Change

This chapter will present results from the review regarding psychoanalytic responses to changes in the psychoanalytic frame caused by the adoption of computer-mediated communication. The title is a quote from Horovitz (2017, p. 254). In this iteration of the review, I found myself increasingly aware of how radical computer-mediated communication is to some in psychoanalysis. I also began to feel that advocates are at times dismissive of some unavoidable concerns. I continued to interpret the discussion in terms of psychoanalytic tradition, but also began to link it to wider sociocultural forces involved with the proliferation of computer-mediated communication.

The Machine: Computers, Corporations, and COVID-19

Over the last century, the world has become radically globalised. In the last 50 years or so, this has taken place through free markets, economic imperialism, and industrial development (McChesney, 2001), all of which are increasingly facilitated and advanced by developing computing technologies. Individuals and communities have faced a sense of becoming disembodied in our relationships (Buongiorno, 2019). Those relationships are increasingly mediated by cheap and accessible computing devices, which are effectively subsidised by internationally exploitative labour practices (Chan et al., 2015).

Connections between globalised economies and societies, networked communities, disembodied relationships to self and other, and efforts towards wellbeing recently converged in the COVID-19 pandemic. We became hyper-aware of certain globalised facts of modern life, and of some fundamental facts of localised, embodied being. Simultaneously, we remained in relationship with others over distances, through computing power and networks that are vast, ubiquitous, and immediate.

The increasing ubiquity of computer-mediated communication in workplaces has led to the tentative adoption of such technologies in psychoanalysis. The pandemic accelerated their

adoption, even though they were, and are still, regarded in general as experimental and by some as sub-optimal (Essig & Russell, 2021; Lemma, 2017; Russell 2020). Russell (2020) argues that the pandemic highlighted the importance and sanctity of directly embodied human encounters, linking this to her strong preference for what she terms co-presence in psychoanalysis.

Computer-mediated communication has broad sociocultural effects. Such effects are discussed in the literature in terms of clinical priorities (see Ceublko, 2018; Dettbarn, 2018; Lemma, 2017; Scharff, 2018a), but I have noted less discussion on the agendas and power structures that control the systems relied upon by computer-mediated communication, and on the ethical implications of depending on them (see Chapter Six).

Our modern computing powers and networks began in universities, were adopted and expanded by various governments, and have been co-opted and increasingly dominated by multinational corporate behemoths since the 1990s (Moore & Tambini, 2018). The agendas and power structures of such institutions are not politically neutral, and they arguably represent neocolonial, neo-imperial interests (Kwet, 2019). The power they now hold is unprecedented (Moore & Tambini, 2018).

I make the above points to offer a view on some historical and socio-political contexts of computer-mediated communication. I observe the tension between globalised computer networks and local relationships, who controls the spaces relied upon in relating online, and the systems in which those spaces exist. What do these have to do with the psychoanalytic frame?

It may not matter to the work of psychoanalysis whether an analyst leases a room in their town or city in which to meet their patients, or a program developed by Microsoft to use on a device sold by Apple. But it seems important to recognise that these facts contextualise the change to the psychoanalytic frame under discussion, and to be mindful of the historical movements influencing, perhaps forcing, such changes.

The Debate - The Changing Frame

Over a century ago, E.M. Forster published a story called *The machine stops* (1909/2021). I first read it in my early twenties, when I was studying Computer Science. I have returned to it from time-to-time since, most recently during lockdown in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in my country, and when my training in psychotherapy was beginning, being largely conducted online that year. The story is a dystopian and strangely prophetic vision of the effects of modern technology on human nature and relationships.

Forster describes a world in which humans live solitary lives in cells, connected by computer-mediated communication which facilitates the only socially acceptable form of interaction. This world is controlled by The Machine, which was created by humans but has become a deity to those who live within it. The people in this world are repulsed by embodied encounters. Their relationships are superficial and largely unimportant, even unsettling, to them.

Forster's story represents the most prominent fears of critics of computer-mediation in psychoanalysis. A certain reading of the story has notably tragi-psychoanalytic undertones: the arc of the main protagonist follows an unsettling and (to the protagonist) vaguely incomprehensible wish to meet his mother in person. He persuades her to visit him, but she dismisses his questions about life as they know it and returns to her cell. Ultimately, The Machine fails, and with it the protagonist, his mother, and civilization perish.

Questioning Change

Here, I highlight the importance of Russell's (2018) highly compelling and comprehensive work in challenging the adoption of computer-mediation in psychoanalysis. At present, hers is perhaps the strongest voice in opposition. Her concerns include the isolation and degradation of human relationships caused by uncritical acceptance of, and dependence on, computer-mediated communication; disenfranchisement from our embodied natures; the privileging of cognitive functioning to the point of compromised states of being; and the

substitution of artificial spaces for the holding and containing spaces ideally provided by parents or psychotherapists.

The above concerns centre on a fundamental point: the removal of co-presence following from the adoption of computer-mediated communication in the frame. Merchant (2016) identifies this as a crucial objection, although he argues that effective online psychoanalysis may be facilitated by mirror neurons, social instincts, and the retention of other elements of the frame. He critiques arguments that the frame is broken by computer-mediation as theoretical and conceptual, with little empirical backing. However, he acknowledges there is little empirical evidence to support online therapy, and so relies on theoretical and conceptual arguments himself.

Horovitz (2017) asks: “How do we cope with change when it threatens to overwhelm us and lead us towards the unknown?” (p. 253). In acknowledging the relevance of the question to the basic task of psychoanalysis, she is willing to hold both sides of the debate. However, she also describes a treatment which, due to the viscerally embodied aspects of the psychoanalytic content, could not, in her view, likely have been carried out using an online frame.

I have frequently asked myself: Why do critics argue so strongly for co-presence in psychoanalysis? I do not question the arguments made, or evidence presented, all of which tend to be cogent and compelling. But it seems that those who argue for co-presence as critical to the frame take a more passionate stance than those who are more curious to explore the possibilities of such changes. This seems appropriate, given the viscerally embodied nature of emotional experience (Horovitz, 2017). I say viscerally, because, although I do not want to imply that the mind is disembodied, I recognise our experience of it is often such.

The issue does seem to point to a splitting of body and mind, recalling the persistence of Cartesian notions of human nature and reality (Horovitz, 2017; Saporta, 2018), even as modern philosophical and scientific findings contradict such notions (Damasio, 2006). Some (Russell,

2018; Saporta, 2018) suggest that those who place less importance on co-presence to the frame have made a Cartesian error.

I wonder if it is those most intently concerned with embodiment and co-presence who in fact make the Cartesian error, while underestimating the potential for our embodied minds to connect our bodies across media (Saporta, 2018). Still, I find it difficult to step past Russell's (2018) strong arguments for co-presence (see Chapter Five).

The frame has been considered at least since Milner (1952) as a structure which demarcates the experiences of everyday life from the reality-changing processes that occur in psychoanalytic treatment. Hence, It seems natural to wish that the frame be recognisable and tangible, qualities which are naturally conveyed by its material elements. It makes sense that anxieties over the changing frame focus on such material elements as the body and the consulting room. I sympathise with concerns regarding the still relatively little-understood interactions between embodied experience and computer-mediated communication, which opens spaces that are experimental, changing, and have body-mind altering qualities themselves.

Responding to Change

More current writing on the frame (see Bass, 2007; Goldberg, 2017) challenges us towards elasticity and responsiveness, pointing to the possibilities of working with change, and challenging us towards curiosity, creativity, and containment. Regarding such challenges, and Horovitz's (2017) question as to how we may approach them, Caldironi (2017) addresses the split described above by appealing to the difference between doctrine and theory. In doing so, he sets the groundwork for theorising about doctrine with respect to the changing frame.

Caldironi's perspective (2017) is that technological change is happening in such radical and irreversible ways that human nature itself is being altered, so psychoanalysis should not avoid such change, nor reactively resist it. Neither should it be uncritically accepted. He asserts

that to witness and address discomforting complexity and change is doctrinal to psychoanalysis, as is to regard them critically. Caldironi considers changes to psychoanalytic space following the adoption of computer-mediated communication as theoretically consistent with established psychoanalytic creative and transitional spaces. He also considers risks such as the removal of optimal frustration regarding separation, overstimulating properties of online spaces, and removal of co-presence, emphasising our responsibility towards criticality in doing so.

Caldironi (2017), among others (Horovitz, 2017; Saporta, 2018), questions whether, or how, we can properly investigate change as it changes us. That question underlies Caldironi's references to Bionian theories of containment, as he suggests it is containment of change that matters most here. In addressing the frame's containing function, he reinforces his assertion that both open and critical responses to changes in the frame must be balanced.

Although I am influenced by Caldrioni's position, I am preoccupied with an apparent inconsistency in his thought. In addressing the discomforting ambiguity in the present intense change, he notes the inclination to "remain kind of suspended above the complexity of what we try to embrace" (2017, p. 237) In one way he avoids such suspension by welcoming complexity through attention to theory and modelling tolerance of ambiguity. However, he remains suspended above the complexity he means to embrace by neglecting to really grapple with embodiment.

In referring to the mind-body, and to Freud's notion of biological bedrock (1937) Caldironi (2017) asks: "Is this, in a way, the actual limit of analysis and even more so in today's context?" (p. 238). He regards the question as unanswerable and welcomes this as useful to the process of containment, later commenting: "the answer is the question's sickness" (p. 241). I do not disagree, but I think Caldironi takes refuge in that position, floating above difficulty and complexity.

Lemma (2015) does not float in such a way. She goes directly to embodiment as it relates to computer-mediation in the frame by highlighting that the limitations of those

technologies reiterate our embodiment. She makes the crucial point that “when in cyberspace we are still embodied” (p. 572). In her view, it is our relationship to embodiment that changes.

This is an elegant avoidance of Cartesian thinking. Lemma explores the potential of online spaces to investigate that relationship, rather than as merely undermining our experience of embodiment. As well, she is wary of how computer-mediation is apt to, or designed to, enable bypassing of embodied experience and related aspects of human relationships crucial to psychoanalysis.

Lemma (2017) outlines clearly that she considers the online frame to be significantly different from the frame with co-presence, and not optimal. She asserts that the differences directly affect the scope of work, that psychoanalysis is not possible in some cases, that it is more difficult for the analyst, and riskier for treatment.

Although Lemma (2017) concedes that psychoanalysis is possible with computer-mediation, she cites Russell (2018) in reiterating that the most fundamental concerns relate to the removal of co-presence. Notably, she refers to the analyst’s loss of control over the setting, regarding this as problematic to the provision of a secure holding environment (see Chapter Five).

Still, if the online frame is functional (if not optimal), this raises a further question: Has the frame ever been optimal, or, to use a different term, ideal? This goes back to the discussion provided in Chapter Three, and is at first answered adequately, if not optimally, by the notion of a good-enough frame. The obvious response, of course, is that a frame may not be good enough if co-presence is removed. Here I acknowledge that co-presence is implicitly assumed by all theorists covered in Chapter Three.

So, we have a possible new condition for a good enough psychoanalytic frame: co-presence. I will explore the implications of this question further in Chapter Five, although I note that even Russell (2018) does not go so far as to argue for this in absolute terms.

Remaining Open

The discussion regarding online psychoanalysis versus psychoanalysis repeats debate over authenticity in psychoanalysis. Migone (2013) observes that the online frame tends to provoke discussion as to what is and is not psychoanalysis, linking the question in doing so to past questions around variation from tradition. This relates to Bass's (2007) discussion of his relational approach to psychoanalytic framing, and his rejection of discourses that dwell on what is or is not psychoanalysis regarding variation from tradition. Such discourses, in his view, are at least unproductive and at worst ignorant of both socio-historical context and the importance of responsiveness to nuance in a given frame.

Regarding perspectives on computer-mediation in the frame, Migone (2013) discusses the risks of a technical approach to psychoanalysis that is ritualised by tradition, and the importance of maintaining a living connection between theory and technique, cautioning in doing so against the potential to mistake technique for theory. He stands aside from the debate as to whether online psychoanalysis is justifiable, asserting that any such conclusions should follow from examination of theoretical consistency.

Migone (2013) does suggest that any application of framing, including traditional applications, will produce noise in the transference that must be sensed and interpreted. Here he cautions against a reactive rejection of variation from tradition and redirects the conversation towards fundamental principles of psychoanalysis: acknowledgement of reality and context, understanding of psychoanalytic processes, and interpretation of those.

Migone's perspective (2013) also relates to Caldironi's (2017) stronger endorsement of a containing approach to computer-mediation in the frame. I here characterise such responses as willingness to remain responsive as change leads us "towards the unknown" (Horovitz, 2017, p. 253). Critics (Lemma, 2017; Russell, 2018) still rely on such responsiveness, even if they regard it as a mitigating factor, rather than as facilitating generative possibilities.

Both Lemma (2017) and Russell (2018) assert that it is key in online analysis to acknowledge and interpret the movement of the online frame as it interacts with psychoanalytic content (see Chapter Six). This seems one of the strongest paths through the debate towards gaining further understanding. It should be uncontroversial to say that acknowledgement and interpretation of reality are fundamental principles in psychoanalysis, and, as counterpoints to fixed tradition, provide the resilience to accommodate and move with variations across time and context.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have provided a brief discussion of historical and sociocultural contexts regarding the adoption of computer-mediation in psychoanalysis. I introduced perspectives of psychoanalytic theorists responding to such changes, particularly regarding variation from tradition. Lastly, I discussed a response to those responses, which is characterised by fundamental psychoanalytic principles of tolerating reality and interpreting experience.

Chapter Five: The Online Frame

In this chapter I will offer my results on psychoanalytic perspectives regarding the online frame, that is, the psychoanalytic frame with computer-mediated communication. I will begin with a brief discussion of relevant perspectives, highlighting some areas for discussion. Those areas include pragmatism; the implications of removing co-presence; and cyberspace in relation to the online frame.

In this chapter, I note my position stabilising between concern and curiosity: concern over the importance of embodied intersubjectivity and the security of the frame; and curiosity about the relative authenticity of the online frame. I link this to points observed in Chapters Three and Four regarding the tension between tradition and flexibility in response to change, and notice my perspective shaping itself to this theme.

Computer-mediation in the Psychoanalytic Frame

Migone (2013) comments that, as some refer to online therapy, they may just as well refer to offline therapy, making the point that such differences contextualise one another, and suggesting that no mode, no matter how traditional, should be considered primary. If the term “offline therapy” (p. 282) seems provocative, this seems intentional. Migone points to strong responses regarding changes to technique and tradition in making such a statement. I note the tendency in the literature to discuss the online frame in terms of what it is not, that is, it is not the offline frame, and wonder what insight such a definition of the online frame in its own terms would bring.

However, it is the difference between the online frame and the offline frame that shapes much of the discussion in the literature. What is the difference? Simply that in the online frame the analyst and patient’s communication is mediated by computers (through video-calls), and in the offline frame it is not.

What, then, is computer-mediated communication in psychoanalysis? It may be regarded as a practical tool to facilitate psychoanalysis and extend its accessibility (Neumann, 2018), as an “uncanny third” presence in the therapeutic relationship (Dettbarn, 2018, p. 15), or as facilitating a seductive trade-off of intimacy for convenience (Russell, 2018). Curtis (2007) equates computer-mediated communication with regressive postmodern cyberspace while Neumann (2018) responds to her concerns with pragmatic recommendations.

These perspectives reflect polarisation between those open to computer-mediation in psychoanalysis and those perturbed by it. Here, the discussion goes toward several areas: Pragmatism regarding the implementation of mediation; questions around the implications of removing co-presence from the frame; and discourse around virtuality and authenticity.

Pragmatism

Scharff (2018a) claims that the differences between online and offline settings are superficial. This claim underlies pragmatic perspectives, as it allows the focus to shift from concern over differences towards elaboration on how the online frame may be used. Such use includes both the application of the online frame, and exploration of the ways in which psychoanalytic content interacts with it (see Chapter Six).

Computer-mediated communication has rapidly become highly important to people of most ages and to much of the global population (Yao & Ling, 2020). The pragmatic approach responds to the fact that computer-mediated communication is ubiquitous in modern sociocultural movements and should be adapted to by psychoanalysis (Caldironi, 2017; Ceccoli, 2017; Scharff, 2018a). Suggested benefits include improved patient access to treatment (Neumann, 2018), and the flexibility and responsiveness that go with following such broad sociocultural movements (Scharff, 2018a).

Neumann (2018) provides a useful commentary on the online frame. She does not offer a definition, however, rather contextualising it as an extension of the offline frame, offering

recommendations around prerequisites (standards of computing technology and networked connections) and ethical matters (security concerns, ethical standards and regulation) in considering various scenarios.

As mentioned, preexisting theory around the frame was formulated with the assumption of co-presence. While I am sympathetic to Neumann's perspective, positioning the online frame as an extension of the offline frame overlooks issues around locality, space and time, and embodiment (Curtis, 2007; Lemma, 2017; Russell, 2018).

Neumann (2018) answers Curtis' (2007) arguments that computer-mediated communication collapses time, space, and location into connections degraded by low quality immediacy by responding that the psychoanalytic situation may be regarded as existing outside of these as they are typically regarded. However, other questions are answered less convincingly by Neumann. In response to Curtis' question as to whether sufficient emotional containment can be offered through mediation (2007), Neumann suggests that this issue resolves with sufficiently powerful technology, sidestepping the importance of embodied intersubjectivity as articulated by Russell (2018).

Implications of Removing co-presence

Looking back to the points at the end of Chapter Three regarding a good-enough frame, two questions stand out. Firstly, does the online frame provide a safe and secure boundary between everyday experience and psychoanalytic space? Secondly, does computer-mediated communication sufficiently facilitate responsive relationships and intersubjectivity?

A Secure Boundary

Although I think we can generally rely on the security of devices, software, and networks, it is a truism in the present age that such security is not given (Churcher, 2018; Ioane et. al., 2021). Regarding surveillance, one observes that any sufficiently interested or motivated party might

physically surveil a private person, or a private consulting room. That, however, applies to both online and offline cases, as people may be physically surveilled while using a networked computer. So, what we have in the online case is still a new layer of insecurity (see Chapter Six).

The issue of safety and security in the online frame may be approached in another way. Wherever the patient is, they are likely to be in some way, at least physically, located in the everyday. Suppose they are at least in a room. Then which room? Their bedroom? The kitchen? It may follow that the boundary between the everyday and the psychoanalytic session is not secure. However, such matters should be addressed in the initial establishment of the frame, and, as Scharff (2018a) points out, may provide material for analysis in the way that movements in the frame have done traditionally. Additionally, the space contained by the frame may exist outside of such everyday locations anyway (Neumann, 2018)

A related issue follows from the fact that in computer-mediated psychoanalysis the psychoanalyst relinquishes a significant amount of control over, and responsibility for, the setting (Lemma, 2017; Russell, 2018; Scharff, 2018a). The level of security provided by the analyst in treatment through the provision and maintenance of the consulting room cannot be offered online. I suggest that this is potentially a major abnegation of clinical hospitality (Orange, 2012).

Russell (2018) points out that, in some cases, patients will not be equipped to develop or maintain the necessary psychically secure environment for themselves simply because unfamiliarity with such security is a major reason for their attendance in psychoanalysis in the first place. On the other hand, Scharff (2018a) addresses the difference in terms of passing responsibility to the patient, with the implication that development of such responsibility is similarly a major task of psychoanalysis. This tension between the provision of security by the analyst and the expectation of responsibility from the patient is a major issue, requiring much more active negotiation and co-creation regarding the frame (see Chapter Six).

Connection and Intersubjectivity

The change of setting relates to concerns raised by Russell (2018) about the importance of co-presence to psychoanalysis, that is, the embodied interaction of both participants in the same room. This introduces two major issues, first of which is embodied intersubjectivity. Being in the same room together allows all the conscious and unconscious sensory and cognitive-emotional perceptions of and responses to one-another to merge and interact (Russell, 2018; Saporta, 2018) in ways that are basically impossible in a setting that communicates only light and sound, and those often inadequately, as anyone who regularly uses video-calls might confirm.

As Russell (2018) persistently observes, results from neuroscience and consciousness studies support the importance of such embodied intersubjectivity to relationships and understanding of one-another. This is a major issue for the online frame, and one that seems insufficiently answered by Merchant's appeal to mirror-neurons (2016), or Neumann's (2018) recommendations around quality of technology.

A second concern raised by Russell (2018) is the compromise in computer-mediation of potentiality. Russell illustrates what she means by potentiality by quoting a patient who referred to the potential to "kiss or kick" in the consulting room (p. 41). The tolerance of such potentiality for enactment, and the restraint from such, is a major factor in the way the offline frame facilitates trust and intimacy. Of course, the potential for other enactments is still present in the online setting, but none so direct or primitive as physical enactments of sex or violence (Dettbarn, 2018). Taken with Russell's points about the potency of embodied intersubjectivity, the loss of such potentiality seems an unanswerable concern.

My only response is to recall Lemma's point that "in cyberspace we are still embodied" (2017, p. 572), and to posit that, since minds and bodies are not distinct (Damasio, 2006), and, as minds connect through computer-mediation, so bodies necessarily will connect too in

meaningful ways. But this is too general a perspective to respond adequately to Russell's points without a great deal more research.

Virtuality and Authenticity

The above point leads towards an examination of what is going on between the screens. Even if we are embodied in computer-mediated communication, something is very different from the co-present situation. Given that difference, it is notable that people adapt so well (Saporta, 2018) to computer-mediation in the psychoanalytic frame, perhaps too well (Russell, 2018).

Such adaptation might be answered by Scharff's (2018a) assertion that the differences are superficial. Merchant (2016) attributes it to mirror neurons, social instinct, and the maintenance of other framing elements. Others characterise this tendency, with greater or lesser concern, in terms of virtuality: "privileging simulacrum over authenticity" (Curtis, 2007), "simulated co-presence" (Russell, 2018), or "consensual hallucination" (Gibson, 1984, as cited in Sand, 2007).

Authenticity

Here, I offer a non-psychoanalytic perspective on what may or may not be considered "real" when it comes to relationships with computing and computer networks. A linguistic trend in some online cultures is to refer to being offline as IRL, an acronym for "In Real Life." Another common acronym is AFK: "Away From Keyboard". Some who inhabit online spaces prefer AFK, as IRL implicitly denies the reality of those spaces themselves (Nelson et al., 2020).

It is a superficial point, of course, that just because something is virtual does not mean it is not real. But it is worth acknowledging briefly because it reveals a lack of consistency in the use of the word "real". "Real" may refer to reality or to authenticity, as in: "real life", "real art", or "real psychoanalysis". However, when Milner (1952) describes the art inside a frame, or the experience inside the psychoanalytic frame as illusory, she does not mean they do not really

exist, nor does she mean they are inauthentic. She means they occur in a realm of fantasy and suspension of fixation on material limitations. Similarly, many who inhabit online worlds might claim both their reality and authenticity despite their virtuality.

Some extend this similarity to make a comparison between online spaces and psychoanalytic transitional spaces (Ceccoli, 2017; Dettbarn, 2018; Sand, 2007; Scharff, 2018a). Russell (2018) contests this by referring to Winnicott's (1975) theory of transitional objects and spaces as facilitating disillusionment with omnipotence. Russell argues that such a process cannot occur online given the lack of an embodied experience of the other. However, Lemma (2015; 2017) points out that online spaces in fact reaffirm our embodied limitations, which, I suggest, goes towards countering Russell's argument.

Regarding authenticity, Milner's (1952) analogy to aesthetics leads me to Curtis' work connecting online virtuality to postmodern aestheticization of "knowledge, geography, and truth" (2007, p. 100). While Curtis does not discuss the frame as such, she takes a strong position regarding computer-mediated communication, and makes key points around time, space, distance, and virtuality that relate directly to the online frame.

Cyberspace

Some describe a sort of collapsing of time and space facilitated by global computer networks and the impressions of spatio-temporal immediacy they offer (Curtis, 2007; Dettbarn, 2018; Saporta, 2018). Curtis (2007) links this to cyberspace, which in her view is characterised by postmodern fascination with media and signs and is facilitated by capitalist and corporate agendas. She argues that, taken together, these degrade the quality of connections between people with one-another, their localities, and their relationships to time and space. Such arguments are generalisable to the online frame and agree with other concerns regarding relational quality in computer-mediated communication (Russell, 2018).

Returning to the pragmatic view, I suggest too much is made of the notion that the online frame intersects with cyberspace (see Curtis, 2007; Russell, 2018). The term “cyberspace” is too broad to be useful in such a specific case as a professionally arranged video call. It is easy to confuse access to cyberspaces (as described by Curtis) with the whole of networked computing. Let us accept, for the sake of argument, the dichotomy between virtuality and authenticity, and accept that computer networks made accessible by computing devices are qualitatively virtual. It does not follow that all networked connections are equally virtual. That is, they may be more-or-less authentic.

Here I posit the relative authenticity of the online psychoanalytic setting. On a basic level, nothing very unreal (or inauthentic) is happening when two people connect their devices through networks to communicate. Further, in psychoanalysis, there is a frame protecting that connection from the “postmodern” realms of cyberspace. As the frame marks the boundary with everyday concerns and analyses their manifestation in treatment, it may function similarly regarding cyberspace.

For example, some describe anxiety that a patient might check a notification (perhaps an email, or an instant message) during a session or describe their own impulses to do so (Russell, 2018). The difference between this and a parallel situation in the offline setting (perhaps one of the parties responds to a notification on their phone) is relatively insignificant. The frame still contextualises such events.

What is a Computer to the Frame?

I here recall a common saying in Computer Science, often attributed to Edsger Dijkstra, but of uncertain origin: “Computer science is no more about computers than astronomy is about telescopes”. This admittedly lacks epistemological and ontological subtlety, and is somewhat condescending to computers and telescopes, but it also comments on their uses regarding what we may perceive through them. (This last statement raises fundamental questions around

perception, truth, and philosophy of science, but those are beyond the scope of this discussion). I might say: Cyberspace is no more about computers than psychoanalysis is about the couch.

The point is to allow a distinction between the virtuality of cyberspace, fantasised and created by the many minds and souls of those who participate, and the computers that facilitate such participation. Those same computers may be used in other instances for communication (here in the psychoanalytic frame), where the devices and networks function mostly to enhance certain senses as does a pair of glasses (or a telescope). Just as one can use a couch for sex or for resting on, one can use it for psychoanalysis. Just as one can use a computer for pornography or for identity play and exploration, one can use a computer as a tool to give a view of what is actually there, in this case, another person met in the psychoanalytic frame.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have narrowed the focus from general perspectives regarding change in tradition towards discussion of computer-mediated communication in the psychoanalytic frame. I have discussed perspectives ranging from pragmatic acceptance of such changes to concerns over the potential compromise of authentic connection implied by the removal of co-presence from the frame. In doing so I have suggested that, while the online frame remains relatively secure as a boundary between everyday life and psychoanalysis, and as a boundary between cyberspace and psychoanalysis, there are significant implications for the removal of co-presence, such as the loss of embodied intersubjectivity, or the analyst's loss of control over the setting, that remain unanswered, and are potentially unanswerable.

Chapter Six: Working with the Online Frame

In this iteration of the review, my position was influenced by Lemma's (2017) points about relevance and transparency regarding computer-mediation in the psychoanalytic frame. These refer to the importance of honesty and integrity not only with patients, but also the importance of transparency with ourselves. This led to a deepening appreciation for ethical requirements: flexibility and curiosity cannot only be pragmatic or expedient responses to seemingly unstoppable global changes but must be balanced with rigorous concern for security and transparency. I tried to be honest and transparent with myself here and noted both my increasing scepticism regarding the generalised application of computer-mediation in psychotherapy, and a contradictory tendency to accept it anyway out of inertia.

Some Clinical Perspectives on Working with the Online Frame

As noted, Lemma (2017) is wary of the online frame. She takes a relatively strong position, regarding it as suboptimal and to be used with caution, but also presents vignettes that show the online frame functioning. I mean functioning in the sense of Bleger's (1967/2014) definition: the frame is tested, that test is interpreted with respect to the treatment, and the frame is reestablished.

Lemma (2017) conceptualises computer-mediated psychoanalysis as working along two axes. First is the embodied presence axis, which is clearly highly relevant to perspectives previously discussed. Lemma asserts that online treatment must compensate significantly for the lack of non-verbal communication in the online frame, arguing that communication must necessarily become more explicit.

Second is the relevance axis. Lemma draws on Fonagy and Allison's concept of epistemic trust (2014) in describing relevance as the extent to which we feel in relational contact with one-another (Lemma, 2017). Epistemic trust results from the repetition of meaningful interventions over time, but Lemma observes that the online frame tends toward epistemic

vigilance. She places management of the online frame in this context, highlighting the analyst's responsibility to maintain boundaries in ways that communicate integrity and trustworthiness.

Lemma (2017) argues the online frame must be explicitly acknowledged, discussed, and related back to psychoanalytic content. Failure to do this communicates a lack of integrity, which undermines epistemic trust. She gives an example of a case in which the online frame facilitated erotic transference from a man attending sessions from a hotel bedroom, which was interpreted in terms of difficulties with intimacy in his marriage, in turn reinforcing relevance.

Lemma shows in another case that her openness to using the online frame was itself experienced by the patient as a lack of boundaries and hence integrity. The analysis again reinforced epistemic trust, and hence relevance. In these examples Lemma shows how movement in the online frame provides insight into unconscious processes before the frame is re-established as a constant. Hence, Lemma's approach is relatively traditional.

Dettbarn's (2018) conceptualisation of computer-mediation similarly facilitates the interpretation of unconscious material but acknowledges a new presence in the analytic relationship. Dettbarn conceptualises the online frame as inhabited by a persistent, at times more-or-less obvious, "uncanny third" (2018, p. 15). Although she characterises Microsoft's Skype software itself as the uncanny third, this third is actually loosely defined, being any aspect of computer-mediation that influences psychoanalytic processes.

This conceptualisation draws on the human propensity towards anthropomorphisation. Detbarn (2018) shows that even apparently independent movements of computer-mediated elements in the frame relate to conscious and unconscious processes of treatment, for instance, how the uncanny third can be an ally to meaningful connection: She describes a heartfelt and tender moment with one of her patients moving her to tears, and a sense of wonder that such connection can happen in the online frame, acknowledging the uncanny third in a facilitating role.

In another case, Dettbarn (2018) describes a sense that the uncanny third takes the side of a resistant and frustrated client against her, as dropped networked connections repeatedly interrupt the session. She describes her frustration and sense of unfairness at this but understands these feelings as conveying emotional insight into her patient's experience.

These examples show that computer-mediation can facilitate analytic processes, even when it apparently frustrates them. This is not so different from the frame as it has traditionally been regarded. However, according to Dettbarn, the element of computer-mediation is different from traditional framing elements in that it apparently has a mind of its own. This reinforces Lemma's (2017) point regarding the importance of maintaining relevance: In the online frame there is another character present. It is temperamental and it always has the potential to interact with the treatment. It must be analysed for the sake of relevance and epistemic trust.

Returning to the traditional setting, Horovitz (2017) describes a treatment which she expressly doubts could have been conducted in a computer-mediated setting. The most obvious reason for this is the strongly embodied nature of the psychoanalytic content. Horovitz describes unconscious processes in her patient in terms of delusions signifying perversity, which manifest in a tendency to vomit on her waiting-room floor. She connects her resentment over this to resentment over having to treat him remotely for a period, during which she buys a new rug for her waiting room, not thinking of his tendency to vomit. Her resentment continues into her anxiety over the realisation that he might vomit on the rug when he returns to co-present treatment.

The rug, it turns out, is understood by her patient as covering her sexuality, represented by the bare waiting room floor. On seeing the rug, he comments anxiously: "*Madame*, you have put your bra on" (Horovitz, 2017, p. 256). He did not vomit in her waiting room again, and Horovitz connects this to progress in his treatment.

It is, indeed, difficult to see how this treatment could have occurred solely online. However, it stands out that Horovitz did treat her client remotely for a period (although over the

telephone and not video-calls). She interprets this period in terms of her resentment towards him, a significant factor in the treatment, which culminated in her anxiety around the carpet, the instalment of which was an unconscious act of covering herself.

I wonder if that period of remote treatment actually facilitated both Horovitz' and her patient's awareness of her sexual autonomy (and its relevance to the treatment) to near consciousness through her purchase of the carpet (without the immediate fear it would be vomited on) and his subsequent confrontation by it. Horovitz asks: "could this analysis … have been conducted by Skype or email?" (2017, p. 256). I ask, could it have been conducted without the period of telephone calls? Obviously neither question can be answered here. I raise my question only to suggest that, even in a case consisting of such viscerally embodied material, some mediated communication may have been instrumental in furthering the treatment.

I turn here to Mizrahi's (2018) discussion of distance and closeness in her experience of treating her clients with an online frame. Mizrahi provides evidence regarding clients who have sought treatment with her because she is Argentinian as they are. From there, she demonstrates the importance of computer-mediation in the frame as facilitating connection through mutual sociocultural understanding.

Mizrahi (2018) uses these examples to respond to questions around distance and proximity that arise naturally when regarding the application of the online frame. Such questions tend to regard computer-mediated communication as collapsing time, space and location (Curtis, 2007; Russell, 2018). Mizrahi shows that such notions may be too reductive when it comes to the meanings of space and location. Her examples illustrate that experiences of space and location are founded in sociocultural memory, and that computer-mediation in psychoanalysis may facilitate authentic connections to place despite the apparent distortion of time and space.

Ethics: Access, Contraindications, Practicalities and Privacy

This last point is of ethical interest too. Despite strong arguments by those who regard the online frame from conservative perspectives, the potential for increased access to treatment is a major draw for its application (Martin, 2018; Neumann, 2018; Scharff, 2018a). As Mizrahi's (2018) perspective shows, the potential for analysts and patients to find a "good fit" between each other is in theory greatly increased. It should be uncontroversial to note that a good fit is significant regarding the outcomes for psychoanalytic treatment (Kantrowitz, 1986).

Lemma (2017) has strong arguments about patient suitability for working in the online frame, providing specific and reasonable criteria regarding contraindications. Specifically, she identifies cases with significant body-image issues; borderline personalities; and limited capacities for representing experience or differentiation from others or reality (i.e., those with a psychotic level of personality organisation (McWilliams, 2011)) as unsuitable. Interestingly, Scharff (2018a) suggests that treatment of psychotic cases is possible with computer-mediation.

As Lemma (2017) herself observes, however, outcomes of mediated therapy are contingent on the conditions of specific dyads. I wonder if increased access to good fits between analysts and patients might resolve some questions around patient suitability. The ethical difficulty, of course, is to decide between offering treatment to patients and assessing the suitability of the online frame in each case. This is not a new problem to psychoanalysis, given that suitability must anyway be assessed in each case. Wallwork (2018) observes that many ethical issues arising in computer-mediated treatment tend to be reiterations of ethical issues faced in co-present psychoanalysis. However, he highlights new ethical considerations too.

Wallwork (2018) notes the increase in co-construction that follows from using the online frame, at the most basic level because framing matters need to be negotiated much more thoroughly and maintained more rigorously given the analyst's lack of control of the setting. He observes the risk of undetectable breaks in the frame, describing a case where he belatedly realised a patient's boyfriend had insisted on being in the room with her when she attended her

sessions. Even in cases of less obviously serious breaks (perhaps a patient is catching up on their knitting out of screen) the fact that they may go undetected is concerning simply because they are unanalysable.

Similarly, Martin (2018) observes the risks of missing important cues (such as a patient's state of personal hygiene, or alcohol on the breath), linking these to more general concerns about compromised non-verbal communication. She points out that much is unknown about the impacts of such in treatment, which reinforces Lemma's (2017) recommendations about discussing the limitations of the online frame to clients.

Martin (2018) goes into detail regarding ethical issues with computer-mediated treatment, from matters of safety and informed consent to data protection and professional oversight. She implicitly argues for the importance of thorough consideration of suitability for the online frame in general and in each case. This, of course, should be a given, but Martin's detailed points imply risks that such due diligence might be overlooked by practitioners due to simple naivety.

Regarding privacy, Churcher (2018) offers a perspective on the fundamental lack of security in computer-mediated communication. He points out the persistence with which connections assumed to be secure by users are violated by surveillance. Regarding a good-enough frame, Churcher refers to an encryption program named PGP, for Pretty Good Privacy. The question here, regarding security, is whether pretty-good is good-enough.

Churcher's (2018) ultimate concern, however, is with how easily such worries are disavowed, pointing to what he sees as a defensive blind spot for advocates of the online frame. I note that, at the start of this review, I was somewhat dismissive of such concerns. I now take Churcher's point very seriously. Such fundamental questions regarding the security of the online frame in an age of ubiquitous surveillance potentially undermine the use of computer-mediation, and hence the online frame, in psychoanalysis altogether, because the ethical principles of privacy in psychoanalysis are so essential.

This last point leads towards serious ethical concerns regarding the ease with which such a fundamental issue with the online frame may be overlooked or dismissed out of defensive pragmatism, or the seduction of convenience, or simple naivety. As that disavowal occurs, I observe a concerning potential illiteracy with computer-mediated communication and its application in psychoanalysis.

I link this observation to Dettbarn's conceptualisation of the uncanny third (2018). Dettbarn notion of the third's uncanniness is technically useful, as noted above. However, I wonder about the implications of characterising computer-mediated communication as uncanny. On one reading, that term may be an (unconsciously) convenient way to dismiss the responsibility to understand more deeply, and to be rigorously literate with, the properties and functions of computer-mediated communication, as well as the political-economic and sociocultural drivers of its adoption.

I am reminded of a response I had to Sand (2007) as she noted her surprise at hearing a patient had searched her name online. I was surprised at the naivety shown by her comment. I am not claiming any special insight here, I only mean to acknowledge my relative position as an almost-digital-native. That position gives me a view of the naivety of Sand's statement, but it also points to a significant level of naivety in myself: I am so comfortable with computer-mediated communication and online spaces that I just assume my name would be searched by a client. Worse, I assume, with a worrying degree of complacency, that I am being surveilled by companies selling data to other companies.

This all points towards the major ethical concern with the adoption of the online frame. It is not that it does not work. As shown, it works, and by some basic heuristics, it may work well enough. The concern is whether it should be applied, and, if so, what are the motivations for its application? A cynical voice in me suspects that it may often be accepted and applied uncritically, with naivety regarding the implications and actual mechanisms of its functioning.

Lemma (2017) comments that mediation in psychoanalysis is not novel, but what is novel is that it is being discussed so intently. I suggest that the level of mediation under discussion is certainly novel and also unprecedented. This change radically alters the psychoanalytic frame, pushes its boundaries all over the world, shifts them dramatically in relation to our bodies and minds, and, despite all the careful, creative, and curious responses that may be offered to face such a shift, we do not really understand what is happening yet, even as we move with it. The ethical imperative and least requirement, then, for integrity in the application of the online frame, is to make all conscious effort to be literate regarding its implications, and to be transparent with patients regarding those implications (Lemma, 2017; Martin, 2018; Wallwork, 2018).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have provided examples as to how computer-mediation in the online frame may be applied. The examples show how computer-mediation may facilitate traditional interpretative technique in psychoanalysis, how computer-mediation may be conceptualised as an “uncanny third” in the psychoanalytic relationship, how even viscerally embodied psychoanalytic content may interact with mediated psychoanalysis, and how computer-mediation may facilitate connection between analyst and patient through shared historical location and identity. I explored some ethical considerations relating to contraindication, goodness-of-fit, and security, finally suggesting that literacy with computer-mediation is important to relevance and integrity when applying the online frame.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

I here discuss my research process and outcomes, limitations, and contributions to psychoanalytic and psychodynamic disciplines. Lastly, I offer some reflection and evaluation regarding the wider topic under discussion.

The Research Process and Outcomes

During my research, I felt tension between my hermeneutic method and my impulse to review the literature from a detached position. I reminded myself periodically that my hermeneutic method was guiding the literature review, and to trust that, as I followed iterations of the hermeneutic circle around the perspectives in the literature, my own perspectives were changing.

I note a parallel between the hermeneutic process of emergent understanding described above and a result that became clearer as I reviewed the literature, which was the importance of critical responsiveness to change in tradition. I take this parallel as an indication of fusion of horizons with the body of literature itself.

I measure the outcomes of the research process by the development of that fusion of horizons. I began my research with a pragmatic and somewhat reductive position on the inevitability of computer-mediation in psychotherapy. During the review, I came to better understand how the frame's structure and functions directly facilitate treatment, to recognise that the implementation of the frame in some respects contributes to the treatment itself (Bass, 2007; Bleger, 1967/2014), and to recognise the potential for flexibility in allowing the frame to change in response to nuances in each case (Bass, 2007).

In researching perspectives on changes to the frame with the adoption of computer-mediated communication in psychoanalysis, I came to better understand concerns regarding change to traditional technique itself. In some views, this changes the very nature of psychoanalytic work (Caldironi, 2017; Horovitz, 2017). This pointed my perspective in two

directions: towards a split in the literature between wariness and responsiveness to change; and the wider sociocultural and ethical contexts in which computer-communication is adopted by psychoanalysis (Churcher, 2018).

My tendency towards pragmatic adoption of computer-mediation as inevitable and necessary was challenged as I encountered arguments regarding the importance of embodied intersubjectivity (Horovitz, 2017; Lemma, 2017; Russell, 2018), as well as the issues with providing secure and hospitable settings to patients with the online frame (Churcher, 2018; Lemma 2017; Martin, 2018; Merchant, 2021; Neumann, 2018; Russell, 2018; Scharff, 2018a; Wallwork, 2018). While I find such concerns convincing, I also regard them as reflective of more general concerns with the ways relationships have been changed so radically by computer-mediated communication.

Limitations and Strengths of the Research

One of the more obvious limitations of this review follows from the methodology. My results are necessarily determined through dialogue with the literature. Regarding hermeneutic methodology, this is by design, and so, within that methodology, my position in this dialogue is not to be regarded as limiting, but as a necessary part of the research process (Gonzalez, 2006; Hekman, 1983).

However, limitations do follow from my singular position (notwithstanding my horizons towards the literature) and my inevitable limitations of perspective. For instance, I am an almost-digital-native, which influences the fusion of my horizon with the horizons in the literature. My familiarity with computer-mediation may impose blind spots as to its risks (see Chapter Six), although I have tried to be sensitive to that. This also clearly relates to my results regarding the importance of literacy with computer-mediation. Again, within hermeneutic methodology, to acknowledge and work with such facts is appropriate. But a different

methodology, perhaps a systematic literature review, or an application of grounded theory, would likely reveal results not discussed here.

Another limitation of this review follows from my research question. I chose to explore perspectives of psychoanalytic clinical theorists regarding computer-mediation in the psychoanalytic frame. So, my results are somewhat discursive as they follow debates over changes to traditional theory and practice. A different research question, perhaps one focussing on the experiences of clinicians, patients, or both, might have given results more oriented towards practical recommendations.

A strength of this review is that my method has allowed exploration of the literature to follow the perspectives of clinical theorists with curiosity and creativity. Such curiosity and creativity, accompanied by appropriate negotiation, critical reflection and ethical action (see see Bass, 2007; Caldironi, 2017; Wallwork, 2018), seem to be among the more promising ways to approach the adoption of such novel practices as computer-mediation in psychoanalysis. Such curiosity and creativity (qualified by rigorous literacy with the technology and its implications) allow flexibility of interpretation and understanding in online psychoanalysis in keeping with fundamentals of psychoanalytic theory.

This latter association between the curiosity and creativity of the hermeneutic process and the results of my research may seem circular. I note that my hermeneutic method is circular by design, or at least cyclical. I do not want to imply that my chosen method has determined my results. Rather, I suggest that the above point reflects synthesis between my position, my chosen methodology, and the body of literature surveyed.

Contributions to Psychoanalytic and Psychodynamic Disciplines

Despite significant concerns in the literature, I saw that even those with concerns do not completely reject computer-mediated communication in psychoanalysis. Rather, they direct us towards issues to be addressed with transparency in its application (Lemma, 2017; Wallwork,

2018). Regarding the contribution of my review to psychoanalytic and psychodynamic disciplines, the above points led me to the view that, for clinicians to apply computer-mediation appropriately, literacy is highly important regarding the ways computer-mediation works practically and with psychoanalytic content, and the suitability of the online frame in each case. Without such literacy, clinicians are not equipped to establish the online frame properly in the first place; will not be able to respond adequately to the variations of computer-mediation in treatment; and may risk applying the online frame in unsuitable cases.

I continue this section by discussing some implications from the review, followed by recommendations to psychoanalytic and psychodynamic practitioners and communities regarding the implementation of computer-mediation in the psychoanalytic frame.

Implications

In Chapter Three, I covered some seminal theories on the psychoanalytic frame and offered some criteria for a good-enough frame (in opposition to the notion of an optimal, or ideal, frame). Those criteria included the importance of the opening stages of treatment (Freud, 1913/1858); of secure boundaries around psychoanalytic processes and everyday experience (Milner, 1952); of understanding and acknowledging the human need for boundaries (Langs, 1998); and ways of working with the frame (Bleger, 1967/2014; Bass, 2007). In Bleger's conception (1967/2014), the latter involves re-establishing the frame as constant as it varies towards process. In Bass's conception (2007), it involves allowing the frame to be a process, and being willing to follow that towards change.

This last distinction relates to another implication of my research, which regards the manner of responding to change, not only to the frame, but to tradition and practice in general. Recognising that adoption of computer-mediation in the psychoanalytic frame is a major variation from tradition points to an aspect of the discussion which is firstly concerned with whether such variation is acceptable; secondly with whether it is good-enough; and, if so, thirdly

with how to respond to it. In general, there is uneasy consensus in the literature on the first two points, that is, the online frame can be worked with.

The third question, as to response, may answer itself: one response is given by the facility towards responsiveness itself. As shown by Bass (2007), this is a powerful approach to variation in the frame. Such responsiveness seems an effective way, too, to approach variation in tradition as follows from adopting computer-mediation in the frame.

Responding, on the most basic level, requires familiarity with the differences between online and offline frames. Such differences centre mainly on two points. The first is the removal of co-presence from the frame, which brings into focus the matter of embodied intersubjectivity and managing the implications of its removal from the frame (Lemma, 2017; Russell, 2018). The second is the loss of the analyst's control over the setting (Lemma, 2017; Russell, 2018; Scharff, 2018b), which brings requirements of increased negotiation regarding the boundaries of the frame; more considered judgement over shared responsibility for the security of the frame from everyday concerns (Wallwork, 2018), and from cyberspace too (Churcher, 2018, Curtis, 2007).

This last point moves into matters of application and ethics. Assuming a relatively well-established online frame, it can be worked with, in the traditional sense, in that it facilitates transferential and associative processes which naturally interact with the frame itself, and can be interpreted effectively (Dettbarn, 2018; Lemma, 2017; Mizrahi, 2018). Additionally, the online frame requires increased levels of co-creation, negotiation, and explicit communication (Lemma, 2017; Wallwork, 2018). This moves the discussion towards ethical implications around honesty and integrity: with patients, as we interpret the movements of the online frame as related to treatment; and with ourselves regarding our motivations for adopting computer-mediation, our competence with its application, and our overall judgement of risk regarding security from surveillance (Churcher, 2018).

Recommendations

As the adoption of computer-mediation in the psychoanalytic frame seems to be increasingly normalised, the below recommendations apply not only to individual practitioners, but should be recognised by relevant regulatory and training institutions, which need to create appropriate frameworks within which ethical and effective computer-mediated psychotherapy can occur.

Firstly, Lemma (2017) gives contraindications for using the online frame with patients having body image issues, or borderline or psychotic personality structures. I would add that, in cases where at least good-enough security (regarding both potential surveillance, and the provision of a psychically secure setting) cannot be established, then working with the online frame is contraindicated.

Secondly, with the online frame, the opening-game, to use Freud's analogy (1913/1958), requires more attention than might be assumed (Martin, 2018; Wallwork, 2018). In the initial stages of treatment, a great deal of negotiation regarding the boundaries of the frame should be conducted. Should the patient be lying down during treatment, or might they wander about their house, provided it is secure? How free is their space from interruption? How good is their networked connection? Should they disable notifications on their device for the duration of the setting? Do they know how? How transparent will they be about their own tendencies to challenge the frame? How suitable are they for such shared responsibilities?

This last question leads back to patient suitability and contraindications (Merchant, 2021). My recommendation here is to be rigorous about the negotiation of such preliminaries. Of course, each case will require its own negotiations.

Such negotiations require literacy both with computer-mediation and with the implications of its use in psychoanalytic treatment. This point matters both technically and ethically. Technically, because the negotiation and co-creation of the online frame will almost certainly have implications for analysis, and these require literacy with the medium, at very least for the sake of working effectively. Ethically, because such negotiation should also include

transparency as to the differences, limitations, and risks of using computer-mediation (Lemma, 2017, Churcher, 2018).

Lastly, such literacy should enable responsiveness to the nuances of the relationship within each given frame. This relates to Bass's elaboration of the frame (2007), and to Freud's middle game (1913/1958). The examples in Chapter Six give some indication as to possible variations in approach, although Freud suggests that these cannot be codified.

What can be recommended, however, is relevance (Lemma, 2017) and responsiveness (Bass, 2007) to movements in the frame, and to the place of computer-mediation in such. Perhaps, as computer-mediation in the frame becomes more established, more understood, psychoanalysis will develop stronger theories around its uses. My best recommendation at present is for literacy, that is, understanding of the situations presented by computer-mediated communication, and capacity to respond to the variations it may present.

Concluding Remarks

My initial position was characterised by pragmatism and scepticism towards what I saw as overanxious criticism of inevitable changes. Now I find myself most preoccupied with two major issues regarding adoption of computer-mediated communication in psychoanalysis. These are: firstly, fundamental impacts on embodied intersubjectivity in the psychoanalytic situation; and, secondly, the extent to which co-creation of the online frame differs from the offline situation.

Regarding the first issue, I have become aware of my own tendency towards Cartesian thinking. I am then inclined to resort to Lemma's (2017) observation that we are still embodied over computer-mediated communication, but I am still concerned with the ways embodied intersubjectivity may be affected. As Martin (2018) observes, such effects are at present little understood.

I wonder if there is at least a partial response to the above issue in the extent to which the online frame is co-created. The online frame requires much greater levels of transparency,

explicit negotiation, and responsiveness to its movements. I wonder about the effects of this on relationality in psychoanalytic treatment. I wonder, too, whether such explicitness might mitigate the apparent loss of some aspects of embodied non-verbal communication.

The above suggestion will likely be unsatisfactory to many, as it is to me, perhaps even heretical. However, the need for more explicit communication over computer-mediation might in turn facilitate intimacy with embodied experience.

I return here to Bass's (2007) concept of elasticity in the frame. As he describes it, such elasticity requires high degrees of attunement, responsiveness, and openness to processes of change. I suggest that his relational model of the frame may be generalised to provide a useful approach to the degree of co-creation and negotiation needed in the online frame.

Overall, I have come to see Bleger's (1967/2014) and Bass's (2007) different approaches to working with the frame as parallels to different positions in the literature regarding changes to overarching frameworks of technique and tradition. The parallel with Bleger's theory is that change (i.e., the adoption of computer-mediation) is something to be worked with towards returning to a sort of traditional status quo. The parallel with Bass's theory is that such change may be allowed to change tradition itself.

Despite my reservations around the impact of computer-mediation in psychoanalysis on embodied intersubjectivity, I note the remnants of my pragmatism regarding the overall issue. What I see from my present position is a historic debate in psychoanalytic theory that reflects radical and global changes in human modes of relating. I see the relational possibilities in such changes, provided we are critically informed about their limitations. My tendency is towards Bass's (2007) approach to elasticity here, although I wonder if the tension in that elasticity may spring back to our embodied natures, and to the importance of being embodied in the same place together.

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