

# TALES OF TRANSFORMATION

A Life in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis

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*To*

*my three analysts*

Seymour Rabinowitz, Steven Hammerman, and Philip Escoll

*with gratitude*

*Even the smallest thing has something in it which is unknown.*

*—Gustave Flaubert*

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# Prologue



Here I am during the early part of my professional journey from medicine to psychiatry and from psychiatry to psychoanalysis. Enamored at first of obstetrics and gynaecology, I soon found psychiatry to be my true love. I graduated from Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Aligarh in 1968 and trained in psychiatry from January 1969 to December 1972 at the highly prestigious Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research in Chandigarh. Training there was rigorous and required a Ph.D.-style dissertation. My research project involved eighty-eight patients of obsessive-compulsive disorder; a paper based on it was published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* in 1975.

## What is not in this book?

- Lies.
- Cute little boxes after each 'tale' explaining its essence.
- The greatest moments of professional joy (e.g. receiving the Sigourney Award, giving plenary addresses at the IPA and the APsaA meetings) and of professional disappointments (e.g. not being appointed the editor of the *IJP* or of the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*). This is because of my belief that such peak experiences teach us less than the ordinary ups and downs of life.
- An explicit statement that all my patients have taught me something and the few clinical vignettes cited in this book do not exhaust the lessons I have received from them.
- Lack of self-criticism.
- An account of the evenings I have spent in conversation with my good friend, Shahrzad Siassi, at Blair's restaurant located midway between Los Feliz and Silver Lake in suburban Los Angeles.
- Names and identifying characteristics of the few analysts who have been negatively portrayed.
- My profound admiration of the four *grandes dames* of psychoanalysis: Marilia Aisenstein (Paris), Rosemary Balsam (New Haven, CT), Maria-Teresa Hooke (Sydney), and Marianne Leuzinger-Bohleber (Frankfurt).
- A Nixon-style list of enemies.

- A dinner on the terrace of Amstel Hotel in Amsterdam when I surprised the Dutch analyst, Engel Dwerkin, by naming twenty-seven cities in her country.
- The ongoing joy I experience in my friendship with the ever-surprising Christie Platt, even though it started with her getting lost while driving me from the Baltimore Psychoanalytic Institute to Union Station in Washington, DC and my losing the opportunity to watch an Eagles football game back at home in Philadelphia. That ‘loss’ turned out to be nothing when compared to the reward of finding a wonderful friend.
- The title of my book that languished for ten years on the publisher’s desk before appearing in print.
- My great surprise and equally strong sense of excitement when the Dutch analyst, Regina van Gelderen, introduced me to C. S. Nooteboom, the celebrated novelist of her country whom I had admired for a long time.
- The regret and remorse I feel about accidentally erasing a paper by the late Eddy de Klerk, losing a set of Julian Stern’s house keys, and declining the invitation to speak at an event celebrating the achievements of Fred Pine.
- Unearned hubris.
- My envy of Stefano Bolognini, Brett Kahr, Gurmeet Kanwal, Eugene Mahon, and Allen Wheelis for their writing skills.
- My lifelong gratitude to Ravi Berry who gave up his psychiatric residency training slot for me. Ravi then trained as an ophthalmologist but after many years of that practice, decided to become a psychiatrist after all. He now practices in Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Gloating over the fact that one of my papers was a ‘required reading’ in a class when I was a third-year psychoanalytic candidate.
- My gratitude to Ted Shapiro for finding a way to get me on the editorial board of the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* after my name had been turned down a number of times by the executive council of the association.
- False modesty.

- My continued grief over the untimely death of George Awad.
- The pleasure of coediting seven books with my good friend Mary Kay O’Neil, and also the warmth shown towards me by her wonderful husband, Fred Lowy.
- The confession that one of my books is entirely due to a ‘countertransference sublimation.’
- The fact that I met the well-known Indian psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar for the first time at our mutual friend John Munder Ross’ wedding.
- My fondness for my long-distance supervisees including Prachi Akhavat (New Delhi), Cemile Gürdal (Izmir), Neha Patel (Chicago), Nina Savelle-Rocklin (Los Angeles), Chandrakala Rai (San Francisco), Asmita Sharma (New Delhi), and Gleb Troscenkovs (Riga).
- The sheepishness I feel at having eaten alligator’s meat (Miami), turtle’s innards (New Orleans), goat’s kidneys (New Delhi), frog’s legs (Washington, DC), and reindeer’s heart (Oslo) at dinners during various professional meetings.
- My wish that I had met the ever-affable Elio Frattaroli long before my capacity to make new friends had begun to wane.
- The great pleasure I felt at visiting the Kolkatta house of Girindrashekhkar Bose’s (1887–1953), India’s first and self-made psychoanalyst. Bose requested Freud to write a Foreword on his 1921 book *The Concept of Repression* and Freud did grant this favor. They subsequently entered into a correspondence that lasted sixteen years and is published in a 1964 issue of the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*.
- My sadness at my friend Roknedin Safavi’s ‘departure’ from the field of psychoanalysis.
- The delightful time I spent with the Israeli psychoanalyst Yolanda Gampel’s nine-year-old grandson, Yonatan, in Pisa. The boy knew no English and I knew no Hebrew but we hit it off anyway. In a competition, we climbed the renowned Leaning Tower while counting the steps on our way to see who gets the number right. It turned out that both of us were slightly off the mark. However, his count was closer to the actual number of 296.
- Photos from my visits to professional meetings in Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Italy, and Norway.

- My affection and enthusiasm for the junior colleagues at my institute whose clinical work I supervised during their psychoanalytic training: Patricia Boguski, Shireen Kapadia, Susan Levine, Jill McElligott, Mark Moore, Barbara Shapiro, Andrew Smolar, and David Steinman.
- A few ‘tales’ that were too harsh towards others or too self-incriminatory or too ‘politically incorrect.’
- My surprise at a fellow analyst’s not knowing exactly where his father was buried.
- The tears I had in my eyes while reading Harry Guntrip’s book on schizoid phenomena in 1979.
- The number of times I read the paragraph about my *Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* in Elizabeth Auchincloss and Else Samberg’s account of their having edited the APsaA’s glossary of psychoanalytic terms.
- An expression of my great fondness for Lois Choi-Kain, a 2002 Jefferson Medical College graduate and currently the Director of Gunderson Personality Disorders Institute and Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School.
- Bullshit.