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[How Freud Worked: First Hand Accounts of Patients: Paul Roazen, Jason Aronson, Northvale, NJ, 1995, 301 pp., \\$30.](#)

Review by:

[Barry Magid, M.D.](#) Author Information

Over 30 years ago, Paul Roazen set out to meet everyone living who had known Sigmund Freud. His contacts eventually included 25 of Freud's former patients, all of whom are now deceased. The first fruit of this oral history project was *Brother Animal* (1969), an account of the tragic life and death of Victor Tausk, a brilliant early disciple who was unable to endure the intense gravitational field of Freud's influence and the swirling vortices of psychoanalytic politics that surrounded him. In the course of reconstructing Freud's role in Tausk's fate, several of Roazen's interviewees also confirmed the truth of a closely guarded secret, namely, that Freud had analyzed his daughter Anna. The controversies that arose around these disclosures led some to assume that Roazen was nothing more than a disgruntled debunker of psychoanalysis. Nothing could have been further from the truth, as three decades of scholarly output has continued to prove. Like Freud himself, Roazen is a believer in the importance of uncovering the truth, and his scorn is reserved for those such as Kurt Eissler who have tried to censor or embargo access to Freud's papers.

Freud's five famous case studies were structured to reveal far more of Freud's theories than of his technique. Only in the case of Serge Pankejeff—the "Wolf Man"—have extensive interviews been published (Obholzer, 1982) revealing how Freud appeared to one of these famous patients, though by now there have been numerous memoirs of Freud by other analysts (e.g., Blanton, Kardiner, and Wortis). The 10 patients included in this volume, nine of whom were also analysts themselves, make no new startling revelations about Freud. Rather, they each provide part of an ever-deepening portrait of Freud's individual, idiosyncratic, charismatic brilliance. Interpretations aren't the sort of thing one brings up in an interview decades after the fact, but over all one gets the impression from these patients that the relationship, the force of Freud's intense interest and their capacity to idealize him, as well as their desire for his attention and approval, were all far more significant factors in their treatment than Freud's theory allowed. Irma Putnam recalled how Freud was so attentive, he made her feel as if she were his "first patient." Albert Hirst said that his attitude toward Freud was that of an Orthodox Christian toward Christ; he viewed Freud as his

- 568 -

"savior," and thought that without him he would have been a failure or a suicide. As Kiersky and Fosshage wrote about Freud's treatment of Ernest Lanzer (the "Rat Man"), whatever misunderstandings arose from Freud's verbal interpretations, "in the nonverbal, enacted sphere, it seems that Ernst did feel understood often enough. In addition, he felt understood by a man he idealized, giving the moments of understanding greater therapeutic effect. The unquestioned force of Freud's personality, his confidence in his work, and his very real affection for the patient probably helped Ernst bridge those areas where he felt less understood" (Magid, 1993). Some of those misunderstandings or misattunements are what stands out in these patients' memories decades later. Many arose from the way in which Freud could be surprisingly directive. He told musician Mark Brunswick, the only nonanalyst in the group, to read the cases of the Wolf Man and Little Hans. He complied, but found it "pure agony." And after beginning his analysis in English, Mark was told to switch to German. (He had had 1 year of German in high school, and was taking lessons while in Vienna). Freud told Mark's brother, David Brunswick, "you must go to medical school." David said that in a subsequent analysis, he almost cried when his new analyst admitted a mistake, so opposed was that to his experience with Freud.

For better and worse, Freud felt free to violate his own rules whenever it struck him as helpful for his patient, but also not infrequently, when he could enlist his patients as colleagues in enterprises that could be helpful to him and his vision of psychoanalysis. Some deviations from "proper" technique described here include treating two patients for free; treating a husband, wife, and brother-in-law at the same time; treating a close friend of his daughter's who was living in their household; and talking about one patient's treatment to another. But overall, the sense of identity derived by these patients from their participation in the whole matrix of the psychoanalytic movement, with all its attendant potential for self-development and affirmation, seems to have overridden the misunderstandings and narcissistic injuries. Eva Rosenfeld

said that just to have known Freud was “enough for a life to have meaning.” To have been accepted into analysis by Freud himself (even if it was only a matter of his need for the dollars of wealthy Americans) remained a badge of specialness many wore throughout their subsequent professional lives, one that helped someone like David Brunswick (who dropped out of medical school and ended up with a Ph.D. in psychology) to nonetheless be excepted by the orthodox psychoanalytic establishment in America.

Inevitably one reads a volume like this with an eye for gossip and anecdote. James and Alix Strachey, in particular, come across as decidedly eccentric; James, at 78 and bearded, looked just like portraits of Freud in his later years.... “As far as I could figure out they lived entirely on tinned food ... she told me that she had not seen the man she had been ordering food from by telephone for the last nine years.”

All of the analysts in this group remained orthodox Freudian loyalists, and one wonders if their subsequent rigid adherence to the rules that Freud wrote down, rather than the ones he practiced, wasn't in part a way of repairing their idealization of him in the face of so many discrepancies. But it is the real Freud

- 569 -

who practiced with real patients that Roazen wants to preserve for history, not some idealized (or whitewashed) image. “The complexities,” Roazen concludes, “of these ten people should, I think, indicate how insufficient it is to cite Freud's most abstract writings as evidence of his most valuable or characteristic modes of thinking.” In 1931 Freud wrote disapprovingly to Ferenczi, who was supposedly allowing his patients to kiss him, “what one does in one's technique one has to defend openly.” Roazen has no doubt that Freud's place in history is secure, and that those genuinely appreciative of his legacy should have nothing to fear from a full account of how he worked.

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