

THE RUPTURE
OF SERENITY
External Intrusions and
Psychoanalytic Technique

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KARNAC

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CHAPTER SIX

Sadistic transferences in the context of ethnic difference: before and after 9/11

Introduction

In each analytic dyad, the analyst and the patient can differ in numerous ways. Even when they belong to similar racial, ethnic, or religious groups, significant differences can exist that sometimes never get talked about. To understand the meaning these dissimilarities have for a patient and how he or she uses them, starting with the most superficial and accessible and moving toward the deepest underpinnings, is one of the tasks of an analysis. In this chapter, I will discuss sadistic transferences expressed toward me by three male patients. These transferences were superficially linked to my ethnicity (a Muslim from Pakistan), their feelings about it, and the difference it created between us. In each analysis, however, the deeper and more personal meanings of this sadism were revealed over time. I will focus both on how *my* analytic functioning changed and deepened in the aftermath of "9/11"¹ (which allowed me to recognise and work with my patients' sadism more helpfully) and how the material *patients* brought into their analyses with me was profoundly affected and altered by the events of 9/11 and the regional and world events that followed—a sociopolitical reality that became woven into patients' expression of personal conflicts.

Let me place this chapter in context. At the 1997 winter meetings of the American Psychoanalytic Association, I presented a paper (Abbasi, 1997) entitled “When worlds collide in the analytic space: aspects of a ‘cross-cultural’ psychoanalysis”, which was based on my work with Mr Brodsky a young Jewish man and recent immigrant to America, who had deep-felt and negative reactions to his “discovery” that his female analyst was also a Muslim. In that paper, I described what Mr Brodsky and I understood about the personal sources of his hatred toward me as a Muslim woman as it related to his early, conflicted relationships with his mother and sister. I also described the poignant similarities we discovered in the midst of our considerable differences: we were fellow immigrants mourning for the motherland and struggling to develop a hybrid identity as we settled into our new country. Further, I wrote about these issues as they manifested themselves in my own analysis with a male, Jewish analyst and a male, Jewish supervisor who was helping me in my work with Mr Brodsky. In 1998, I contributed a chapter (Abbasi, 1998) entitled “Speaking the unspeakable” for *Blacks and Jews on the Couch*, temporarily finding safety in addressing a conflict that was not related to Muslims.

Then, in September 2001, Muslim terrorists attacked America, killing almost 3,000 people and changing, forever, much about the world we live in. For a few years I busied myself writing book reviews. Many years later, I wrote a chapter (Abbasi, 2008) entitled “‘Whose side are you on?’: Muslim psychoanalysts treating non-Muslim patients” for *The Crescent and the Couch: Cross-Currents Between Islam and Psychoanalysis*, in which I detailed the rage, distrust, and terror two female analytic patients had felt toward me, their Muslim analyst, in the aftermath of 9/11. And finally, in 2010, I wrote a paper (Abbasi, 2012) entitled “‘A very dangerous conversation’: The patient’s internal conflicts elaborated through the use of ethnic and religious differences between analyst and patient”, which was based on my recent work with a Jewish man whose most disturbing aspects of himself were brought into the analysis by way of the Jewish-Muslim rifts and differences that made up the news of the day.

To present a comparison of my work with patients before and after 9/11, with particular focus on the patients’ sadistic feelings in the transference, I will present (in condensed form) my treatment of Mr Brodsky, followed by process material from two other analyses.

*Clinical material**Mr Brodsky*

Mr Brodsky, a Jewish man in his thirties, came to see me in the early years of my analytic career and several years before the events of 2001. He reported great difficulty with feelings of rage, which resulted in terrible arguments with his wife. His childhood had been marked by a father who had been successful as a businessman early in the patient's childhood, but then sold the business and failed at all other careers, which was witnessed by Mr Brodsky from the age of ten onwards. He had a younger brother and sister and felt that his sister was his parents' favourite. His mother often complained to him about how inadequate his father was as a provider. Mr Brodsky came to America in his teens, went to college, joined the human resources department of a company, and married a well-educated Jewish woman whose professional development was hindered by her emotional issues, which seemed to concern Mr Brodsky—but also made him feel superior to his wife.

He responded to my recommendation for a five-times-a-week analysis on the couch by citing time and financial constraints and began, instead, a four-times-a-week analysis, sitting up. Over the next few months, Mr Brodsky talked in sessions in a very controlled and controlling way, condescendingly remarking upon my "good work" when I said something that felt useful to him, and wondering how his sitting up was affecting my progression as a new psychoanalytic candidate. He expressed sympathy for the difficult situation I must be in with my supervisor over this matter. In an analytically dutiful way, I asked him his thoughts about all of this but gradually realised that I felt angry, inadequate, controlled, and paralysed as an analyst with him.

I could now point out to him that he seemed to feel that I had more to lose than he did if he was not fully helped in his analysis. What was *that* about? Memories emerged of his being held between his mother's knees when he was six and a female friend of hers giving him a shot in the buttock. "I can't use the couch," he said, "because you want me to." He then told me that when he was a teenager he had tried to physically attack his mother during a fight and had to be held back by two people. In another incident he had pointed a rifle at his sister, and most recently, before coming to see me, he had kicked his wife in the buttocks (the very part of his body where he had been injected by his mother). His recalling these events in this particular sequence allowed

me to share with him my thought that he was afraid that I wanted to humiliate and control him, and was protecting himself by putting me down and controlling the structure of his analysis even if it kept him from using the treatment in the most valuable way. These discussions allowed Mr Brodsky to begin coming five times a week, still sitting up. Now his discomfort about feeling attracted to me and experiencing me as his desirable, dark-haired older sister came into the analysis, with worries that he might feel sexually aroused and at my mercy if he were to use the couch.

The greatest shift emotionally, however, was centred on an external event: the Israeli–Palestinian peace accord of 1993, trumpeted in newspapers all over the world by the image of the historic handshake between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin. On the day this news broke, Mr Brodsky brought it up in the session and then could not speak. We then learned that even though he knew I was from Pakistan, he had not allowed himself to “know” I was a Muslim. All hell now broke forth in the analysis, in a way that ultimately proved to be critically useful. Mr Brodsky shared with me, with great trepidation, that in school in his early years in America, he had been an active member of a Jewish political group and had organised many anti-Arab and anti-Muslim rallies. His favourite rabbi used to call Muslims “dogs”, and he had been raised to believe that all Muslims were anti-Semites. “I must see”, he said, “that we could not possibly work together.”

I found myself feeling intrigued by and curious about his responses, but not particularly disturbed; the war between the Muslims and the Jews felt like a remote and distant problem. What, I thought privately, did I have to do with that conflict, really? I had grown up in Pakistan, entire countries away from the Middle Eastern struggle between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Muslims. Since my patient was struggling with these issues, however, and they were very much a part of his personal experience and history, I would certainly try my best to help him with these matters. In retrospect, *it is precisely this lack of internal disturbance on my part, and my attempts to distance myself geographically and emotionally from the conflicts my patient was describing, that should have alerted me that something was amiss with me.*

Instead, I simply said to Mr Brodsky, quite calmly, that I heard his distrust of me as a Muslim and a possible anti-Semite, his terror of his own hatred and rage, and his fear of mine. But why was it that we could not continue to talk about all of this? He replied thoughtfully

that even though we were so different, he felt that I had always been very decent with him; maybe he would be crazy to stay, but perhaps leaving would be foolish. So we continued, Mr Brodsky and I, external “enemies” engaged in a psychoanalytic process, with the common goal of helping him understand his own suffering.

Sometime after this I changed my car, going from a stripped-down Nissan Centra to a more luxurious Audi. My Nissan used to make Mr Brodsky feel that I must be an unsuccessful physician, just as his father had been an unsuccessful businessman. My German Audi was “a lovely colour, a great car,” he said, “but I would never buy one like that. I call it a Nazi car.” I could now interpret more openly Mr Brodsky’s anxieties about what each of us—a male and a female, a Jew and a Muslim—might do to the other were he to deepen his analysis. He now shared with me that in part, his not using the couch made him feel like he had fooled his wife, whom he felt had coerced him into “going into analysis”. He felt he was avenging himself by paying to see me but not using the couch: “I’m fooling her. She thinks I am really in analysis, but I’m sort of in and sort of not.” I asked, “And how about the way in which you are fooling and hurting yourself?” He said he was only now beginning to see that a little bit. These exchanges between us led Mr Brodsky to use the couch for the first time, nine months into the analysis. The importance of those nine months, the period of gestation, and his wish for me to “carry” him as the good-enough mother he had never had, was not lost on either of us.

In the latter part of the third year of Mr Brodsky’s analysis, I needed to stop working on Saturdays, which was one of the days I used to see him. I talked with him about this to see if we could find another time during the week. His reaction was strong and vivid. There was much curiosity about the change and anger about how inconvenient this would be for him. Gradually, associations emerged about the dark-skinned maid who had worked at his house when he was a child. She cleaned the house every weekday, but never came on weekends. I wondered about the derogatory implication of my being “paid help” and wondered whether this was a way for him to deal with his feelings of helplessness and anger about my unavailability over the weekend. He then told me that he had not had a close relationship with this maid; like his mother, she seemed to prefer his sister and his brothers over him. As we talked about this and its link to his current feelings of feeling unimportant with me, he was able to set up a fifth time with me during the week.

A couple of sessions after this, however, he came in on a Monday and told me that something very upsetting had happened over the weekend. He had a cat, which had been his pet since he came to the U.S., that he kept in the garage because his wife did not like it. He had never had the cat declawed, and it liked to kill small animals and bring them into the garage. Over the weekend, the cat had attacked a small rabbit and brought it into the garage. The rabbit was still alive, even though the cat had bitten a chunk of flesh out of it, and his wife had pleaded with him to kill the rabbit quickly. Mr Brodsky spent quite some time in the back yard deciding how best to do this. Ultimately, he used a shovel to smash the rabbit's head.

As Mr Brodsky spoke, I became aware that his affect seemed to be one of both fear and excitement. I also noticed that in his "debating" the various merits and demerits of the options available to him for putting the rabbit out of its misery, he had, of course, prolonged its agony. Later that night, at the moment he was about to have intercourse with his wife, she suddenly asked him if he was going to get rid of the cat. He had felt very angry with her, he told me, and turned away. He added, "I think my analysis must be helping. At another point in the past I would have been tempted to throw her out of the bed, but I didn't. I just turned away from her." I noted the violently angry feelings he had toward his wife when he felt she was hitting him "below the belt". I noted also the difficulty he had in putting the rabbit out of its misery, thus prolonging its suffering (an act of sadism, I thought privately). I pointed out the context in which these associations had emerged, a context that was connected to my being unavailable to him over the weekend.

Mr Brodsky then began to talk about a Muslim woman he had dated in college in the U.S. He said he had "forgotten" to tell me about this. This was a woman he had known for about a year but never had sex with, because she refused to have a physical relationship with him. He had been strongly attracted to her, but could not get anywhere with her. During the next few days he talked of his concern about my being alone in the office early in the morning when he came to see me. He said he was worried I would be attacked and raped in the parking lot and he described fantasies of how he would save me. I noted his concern for me, but said that interestingly, he was concerned for me in this fantasy after placing me in a position of danger. It seemed he was struggling enormously with his feelings of needing to protect me *and* his feelings of wanting to hurt me. After a pause he said he wondered how my husband

could allow me to come to the office so early in the morning and that perhaps my husband had divorced me because of my professional goals and ambitions. His thoughts then went to being about ten years old and finding love letters written to his father by a woman with whom his father had been having an affair. He had given these letters to his mother, but, much to his surprise, his mother had not left his father, even though there had been tremendous fights at home between them. His mother had been very angry at him for having told her about this. He felt enraged that she did not appreciate what he had done and had not left his father, about whom she was always complaining.

I noted with Mr Brodsky that he seemed to want me to have been abandoned by my husband or to have left my husband because of him—to create a separation in my marriage of the kind that had not occurred in his parents' failed marriage, even after he revealed his father's infidelity to his mother. I noted how important it was to him to be important to me and the lengths to which he had to go in his fantasies to achieve this—how unsure he felt of his position with me.

Further associations now began to include thoughts about an affair he had had with a married woman (a white American) after he had first moved to the U.S. He described her as being several years older than he and living with her husband and children. She had helped him in many ways in the first few years of being in a country that was foreign to him. One day she came to his apartment after a party, and they made love. Afterward, as she was sleeping with her head on his shoulder, he put his arm around her neck and started bending his forearm, trying to strangle her. After a few moments of doing this he felt "shocked and scared". I said, "Perhaps you recognised how close you came to killing her, and how much that troubled you?" He said, with much feeling, "I loved her and hated her. I loved her for everything she was and what she did for me and I hated her because she was never fully mine. She always had her own life." I asked, "Like your mother?" and he responded, angrily and with vigour, "Damn you, yes, and like you. And like my sister."

This conversation led to his telling me in great detail, over time, about his beautiful sister, who was accomplished at everything and had a host of admirers following her around. "I felt," Mr Brodsky said bitterly, "like a little puppy shadowing her." I remembered with a sense of shock that he had told me early in our work that his favourite rabbi used to say that all Muslims were dogs. I brought this up with him, and he said, somewhat self-consciously, but with relief, "So that

makes you just like me, I guess, a puppy, a worthless dog who follows people around." I said, "And perhaps also a bitch?" He laughed and responded, "Thank you—actually, yes, I do feel that way sometimes, especially when you have to change my times or cancel a session."

I reflected with him that he had a constant struggle in his mind, between loving and needing a woman and feeling enraged at not having his needs met by her. This created in him not just a sense of anger and rage, but the urge to kill—like his cat, who lived in the garage and killed little animals. My unavailability to him over the weekend seemed to have precipitated the same feeling: that I did not need him as much as he needed me—like his mother, who had chosen to stay with a violent, unfaithful husband while scolding the patient for having caused problems, and the older married woman who stayed with her husband but maintained a sexual relationship with him. The violent cat, I said, with the sharp claws represented an aspect of him, one that worried and frightened him although he felt he could not survive without it. A few weeks after this he started trying to find a home for the cat, and a few months later he gave it away.

We continued to work together, and from time to time his sharp claws would come out again—when he told me he could not increase my fee, for instance, but was giving money to a Jewish charity, or when he wondered whether I would successfully graduate from my analytic training if he were to quit his analysis. We were more able to relate such sadistic attacks on me to his need to deny *his* helplessness and dependence *and* his satisfaction at feeling he had rendered me helpless or was hurting me. Over the course of the analysis, we came to understand much about how Mr Brodsky's perceptions of me were intricately connected, primarily, to his feelings about his mother and sister, by whom he had felt excluded and hurt and toward whom he felt great rage—rage that was, initially, easier to experience as the righteous, politically determined rage of a Jew towards a Muslim rather than a deep and personally felt rage toward me as a controlling, withholding mother and the sister he loved, wanted, and hated. This, in turn, allowed us to examine his complicated feelings about his father and brother.

How I changed as an analyst after 9/11

To say that the terrible events of 9/11 and their aftermath affected all of us in profound ways does not do justice to the enormity of what

happened. On my part, knowing that Muslims had caused such destruction in my adopted country and killed so many innocent people was shocking and, at first, surprising: how could these be “my people”? Was I really one of “those people”? And who, actually, were “my people”? For the first time since my emigration to the U.S. in 1987, I began to realise that I was both an American and foreign to America. In a tentative way, I struggled to understand more of what this event had evoked in me. External events bring forth different responses from each one of us, responses that are rooted in our personal life histories. The fact that America was connected to a deeply painful, life-altering event in my childhood, and that America was also the country I had adopted as my home in my late twenties—and where I had become a psychoanalyst—took on new and more complex meanings after 9/11. The recognition that my struggle to sort out my alliances and where I belonged was related to childhood struggles—over splits, factions, and divided loyalties in my family of origin—took much longer and is an ongoing effort; as such matters are for most of us.

Then there was, of course, the professional aspect. As an immigrant Muslim analyst of Pakistani origin, my work life took an unexpected turn. My patients started to bring in their intense fear—and hatred—of Muslims, while turning to me, a Muslim, for help with the terror of their own rage toward the terrorist Muslims (and all that they represented). I was put in the curious and difficult position of trying to quickly find my own precarious balance about the events of 9/11 and, at the same time, help my patients find theirs. The devastation caused by the terrorist attacks had breached the necessary boundary between fantasy and reality to a shocking degree, and the “as-if” quality of my patients’ transferences toward me was temporarily shattered. They vacillated between imagining, on the one hand, that I was a reliable analyst toward whom they could have destructive wishes, *feeling* that I might retaliate but at the same time knowing, on a deeper level, that I would not, and on the other, feeling that I was an unreliable and dangerous person who came of dangerous stock, and that their hateful feelings toward me might actually cause me to hurt them: after all, look at what my people had just done.

On my part, the sadism and viciousness of the terrorist attacks made old external experiences and my internal responses to them come alive in a way that was new and useful, but also frightening. The “terrorist” parts of me seemed temporarily too real, and in my mind, the

boundary between what was fantasy and what was reality felt strained, reminiscent of childhood conflicts.

I listened to my patients, knowing that I was not functioning at my best as an analyst, and tried to sort out my own feelings, while also feeling a need to help my patients, who were distressed and frightened. Together we navigated the turbulent seas where prejudice, rooted in the innermost recesses of our minds, reigns supreme and threatens to temporarily obscure the search for meaning. I was forced to become more honest with myself, as I struggled to deal with some of my patients' vitriolic attacks against "my" people. How had I managed to deal with Mr Brodsky relatively calmly, I now wondered, unfazed by his initial attacks on me as a Muslim, only later understanding that they derived from his personal conflicts? I had thought it was because of my great capability to not take things personally. I now realised that it was because I had been what might be best described as the opposite of the "James Bond martini style" of analyst: shaken, not stirred. I had felt stirred, intrigued by, and curious about Mr Brodsky—but, defensively, had *not* allowed myself to be shaken to the core, to be sufficiently disturbed by him. Yet this is a prerequisite for every truly useful analytic process.

In the wake of 9/11, I also questioned my previously naïve belief that another reason Mr Brodsky's attacks on me as a Muslim had not bothered me was because I had never met a Jewish person until I came to the U.S. at the age of twenty six. What was so alive for him—the danger of our differences—was supposedly not a problem for me. Yet how was this possible? I had grown up in a country where the government and the media clearly sided with the Palestinian Muslims whenever the Israeli–Palestinian issue was discussed. The same was true of discussions I heard at home. I had believed I had no shred of anti-Semitism in me—but now I questioned that belief. I began to take a deeper look at my own prejudice, its origins and meanings. Which one of us does not have secret prejudices, often connected to our early experiences, which we compartmentalise into neatly rationalised categories? And wasn't this what many of my patients were struggling to sort out for themselves in the wake of an external reality that had caused extreme damage and loss and reawakened internal turmoil, albeit somewhat differently in each person?

I will now present process material from the analyses of two male patients I worked with after 9/11.

Mr Sullivan

Mr Sullivan, who began his analysis in 2008, was a young and successful financial adviser. One of four children, he had been raised in a Catholic family, having attended parochial schools and gone to church regularly. His father, an attorney, seemed cold, disinterested, and unavailable to Mr Sullivan during his childhood. Worse, the father would at times brutally beat Mr Sullivan and his brother, usually because his mother reported the boys' wrongdoings to their father. His two sisters were spared these beatings, and Mr Sullivan grew to resent and hate them, both because they were protected from the physical violence and because they seemed to get the kind of attention from his mother that he craved. As he entered his early twenties, he moved out on his own and stopped practicing his religion, feeling that Catholicism and the Catholic church were simply reminders of his painfully brutal past. He came for treatment after the second woman he had been engaged to broke off their engagement, complaining that he was very controlling. He decided to consult with me after hearing a talk I gave at a local event sponsored by an organisation that sought to increase awareness about diversity.

I suggested psychoanalysis as a useful treatment for the kinds of issues Mr Sullivan was trying to deal with. He decided to start at three times a week, on the couch, and we began to meet on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. As the material permitted, I continued to explore with Mr Sullivan why three times a week felt better to him, compared to four or five. The Monday session I am describing took place about six months into our work together, after not having met the previous Friday due to a long weekend break.

"I am thinking about stories I have read, about astronauts in space," Mr Sullivan began. "When they're together in close quarters, they often get into fights and have to receive counselling for that." Pause. "Not sure why I thought of that. I've been thinking of this woman, Lizzie, at work, who sends long, overly detailed e-mails about small work-related issues. She's very anxious. She reminds me of women who run the sales offices of apartment buildings. Over the long weekend, I went to a few, because my current lease will expire soon and I've been looking at new places. These women are nice, they say hello, how are you, how can we help you? But they really don't care. Basically, they just want someone to rent their apartments. And Lizzie is like that. The long emails are all about rules, how things should be done."

A pause. He shifted on the couch and seemed to be thinking. "I was having thoughts this weekend that it would probably be better if I saw you more. I missed the Friday session." I noted in my mind that he could not talk about missing *me*, but was aware only of missing "the session". It made sense for him to remain detached in this way, I thought, since he was telling us that people who come too close to each other get into terrible fights. And he obviously didn't feel he could trust me, because maybe all I wanted was for him to rent my vacant hours. At the same time, he was trying to figure out the rules between us. I said nothing and waited.

"But I worry about talking too much if I come more often," he continued. "And you would say, 'So what's wrong with that?'" Silence. "Sometimes, I have images in sessions. Last session, I had an image of you sitting in your chair, relaxed, arms on your sides and then suddenly, a spear pointed under your chin, thrusting your jaw up. I saw myself on a stool by your feet, holding the spear up to your chin. It made me think of movies where somebody is holding a knife to someone's jaw and moving it along the jaw line, up and down." I asked if there was a particular movie he was thinking about. "No, no particular movie; just that it could be dangerous. No skin has been broken yet, nothing's been pierced yet, there's no blood yet."

I felt a sense of shock, of being jarred out of my relaxed analytic listening. "Yet?" I asked. "So it could happen, all of this that hasn't happened yet." I wasn't sure where we were heading, but realised that I had cupped my chin in my hand, my fingers spread out over the side of my jaw, as though to protect myself from the dangerous assault Mr Sullivan was contemplating.

A few moments of silence followed. "I have a friend," Mr Sullivan then said, "who knows a lot about religions. Nabil. We were discussing different religions the other day. He's from Egypt originally. I was telling him about my not going to church, how I feel turned off from Catholicism. He started telling me about Islam, and the Prophet of Islam, Mohammad. He said Mohammad had many wives and he took turns spending a night with each one of them in their rooms. The youngest one, the one he loved the most, he married when she was six and the marriage was consummated when she was nine or ten, sometime after she started menstruating."

I said, "Ayesha." He sounded surprised. "Yes, that was her name!" he exclaimed. "So you've heard about her." Pause. "I mean, here I am, I get worried about having sex even with one woman unless I feel really

committed to her, and I get really stuck when I think of having sex with more than one woman at any given point in my life—” His voice trailed off.

“And there he was,” I said, “the Prophet of Islam, the Prophet of *my* religion, so *my* Prophet. How could he be with a different woman every night? And what about the fact that he married a child, had sex with a nine-year-old?”

He laughed uncertainly, carefully. “Yeah—I feel almost envious. Of the fact that he had a number of women he was sexually involved with. But I also feel, what the fuck? About this child-marriage issue. What was going on? What kind of a crazy custom was that? But this is not easy for me to talk about with you. This has to do with the history of your religion. I mean, it’s so *personal*.”

“And analysis,” I enquired, “should *not* be personal?”

He laughed again, sounding relieved. “Part of me thinks you’ve probably examined and questioned your religion and chosen aspects of it that make sense to you and those that don’t, just as I am trying to do with mine. And I know we’re talking about ancient times. Nabil said that some of Mohammad’s marriages were to strengthen political alliances, and others to set an example of marrying war widows so that women would not be left unsupported if their husbands died, but it still seems so *wrong!* Out of control, pagan! And I think, no wonder this religion has spawned terrorists.” Pause. “I know every religion has strange and contradictory parts of it. Including Catholicism. But as I began to speak about Islam today, and Mohammad, I wasn’t sure how things would go. I mean, I saw you drink wine after that talk you gave, and I saw you were sipping water here in your office during the month of Ramadan, so you weren’t fasting. So you’re not an Orthodox Muslim. But this is about all you must have grown up believing in. And I just wasn’t sure how you would react. Could you hear me out without getting defensive?”

“You’re *still* not sure,” I said. “Can I really be here for you and with you, whatever you might say to me?”

“Yes” A pause. “Nabil also told me that at one point, Mohammad became interested in a woman who was the wife of an adopted son of his. He then said it had been revealed to him [by Allah] that adoption is not allowed in Islam. So an adopted son could never be considered a son at all, and therefore his wife was not off limits. And this woman divorced her husband and married Mohammad.”

"So many revelations," I said quietly, referring both to Mohammad's revelations and my patient's, the stories his friend had told him that he was now "revealing" to me. In his mind, I thought, he was upping the ante. How would I respond to his story of Mohammad's marriage to the child Ayesha, and how would I deal with his announcement about Mohammad's interest in his adopted son's wife? Was there a point at which I might not like what he was saying? Would I try to convince him the stories were not true, or feel personally attacked and defensive, as though I had to defend or explain Mohammad's actions?

"Well, this is sort of about where you *live*," he said. "So I'm thinking now, okay, she's talking to me, she seems to be handling it all right, but how is she really feeling?"

"That," I said, "is a very helpful question. How would you really *like* me to feel?"

"You don't seem put out," he said slowly, almost puzzled.

"And *you* don't sound very happy about that," I responded, a clearer awareness of what was happening now dawning on me.

"How can you say that?" he asked angrily. "How do you know that?"

"It might help to think about the two times you laughed earlier," I said. "You were giving us some clues there that haven't been put into words yet."

He was quiet. Then he said, "It was a kind of anxious laughter. First I was afraid, and then I was relieved. I was afraid you would be upset and I was relieved that you weren't."

"I think you were relieved that when you pointed the spear of your words at me, talking about something you thought I might feel hurt by, and angry about, I could listen to it and still sit with you as your analyst. That we could be in close quarters and not get into fights, like the astronauts. That was good news for you," I said. "But it was also bad news. Disappointing news. Because you also *want* me to feel pricked and prodded, shamed, and helpless. Like *you* used to, when your father would attack you at your mother's instigation. So you take with me the role your mother used to take during your childhood. She was simply reporting things to your father that would get you into trouble. As though *she* wasn't angry at you. Just as *you* are *not at all* angry at *me* today."

There was a long silence. I took a deep breath and sat back in my chair, not entirely sure what would happen next. Finally, he spoke.

"Whoa! You really cut to the chase, don't you?" Another silence. Then sadly, reflectively, he said, "It's true. I *am* mad at you. I'm not sure why. But something about the missed session. Your being away. I thought you must be with your daughter, the little girl I saw in the driveway one day. Doing mother-daughter things."

"Ah," I said, "The kind of things your mother would do with your sisters while you were left alone or left to your father's beatings."

He started crying, the first tears in the analysis. We were quiet together. Then he said, "When I masturbate, I imagine a woman going down on me. I feel that's degrading for women. In real life, I wouldn't let a woman do that because I'd be worried she'd find it degrading. Though I know that actually women find it exciting. In my fantasy though, it *is* degrading, and *that's* what excites me. It's sort of like I'm just fucking these women. Just fucking, banging them. It's not about love. Just sex. Like animals. Throwing her down and just fucking her hard. Like they're used needles, throwing them away." I noticed his going from plural to singular to plural again (them, her, them) and kept it as a question for later (wondering whether he was referring to his mother, me, his sisters?)

"You want to demean women, leave them hurt and degraded," I noted.

"Yes," he acknowledged. "I'm thinking about my remarks about Islam, the terrorists, indirectly about you. I think you've been through an analysis, so you must have worked these things out for yourself. I don't need to worry about you. But for some reason I do. I'm worried about hurting you."

"You don't want to hurt me in a way that would make me useless to you," I ventured.

"Yes, not too badly. But at the same time, I *do* want to hurt you with my remarks. I'd like to fuck with your mind. It's like the spear I imagined pointing at your jaw. I feel that's what my words were like."

"What you *hope* they would be like for me," I clarified. "You hope I would feel degraded, demeaned. And the beauty of it is, you would be able to do that, in your mind, simply by telling me the truth, the facts about the religion you know I was born into, whether or not I practice it. *Just the facts.*"

He began to cry again. "That's what my mother used to say when she would complain about me to my father. 'Why are you yelling?' she would say. I'm just telling him the facts."

“And you, so young and without recourse,” I reflected. “Such a terrible and helpless position for you to be in. The rage you must have felt, the sense of feeling utterly unloved, unprotected.”

After a silence, he asked, “So, are we still on with this idea of my coming more often? Could we plan for that?” I said we certainly could, the next time we met, since we had to stop at that point.

It wasn't until Wednesday, in the relative calm following the stormy Monday session and after we had discussed how to gradually add two more hours to his analytic week, that I realised I had not asked Mr Sullivan what it meant to him that I was the namesake of Ayesha, the prophet Mohammad's child bride. At some point during the session, I asked him about this. His associations led to the idea that maybe her life was planned for her in a way she had no control over, as a child. This reminded him of his own childhood. However, he had been reading about this woman, he said. It seemed that as she grew up, she was very smart, with an inquiring mind, and had a way with words. Mohammad often told people to seek counsel from her. And Mohammad died in her arms, as was his wish.

“He really loved her,” Mr Sullivan said. He added that it made him think somebody must have really loved *me*, to name me after this woman—and that made him feel very envious of me, the idea that perhaps I had been loved so well by someone. This opened up a new and useful chapter in the analysis, that of considering his identification with the young female child who became the dearly beloved wife of a powerful man, a prophet, and his sense of me as a female who must have been deeply loved by someone in the way he felt he had not been and in the way he thought his sisters had.

Writing up this material, however, I am struck yet again that even when I thought I understood what Mr Sullivan was doing and feeling, and believed I had managed to function optimally as an analyst, I can now see more points in this session where my analytic functioning was strained. For instance, I wonder now why, in the image he described, he had placed himself on a stool—and why did he choose my jaw, rather than another body part, to point a spear at? Also, why did he appear “surprised” that I had heard of Ayesha? These would have been useful questions to ask. I believe it was his sadism, and my difficulty with it, that constrained me from thinking and speaking more freely. The stories about Mohammad and my religion were one way of expressing his rage about, at best, feeling neglected and abandoned, and, at worst, abused.

Our extreme external differences made it easy to choose this area. But what was actually going on underneath all the “interesting” back-and-forth about religion—and what was most frightening for both of us—was the sadistic wish to hurt and control, and getting pleasure from it.

Mr Gupta

Mr Gupta was a 30-year-old Hindu man of Indian origin living in Bangalore, India, who worked as an information technology expert. I had evaluated him a number of years earlier, when he worked in the U.S., and at that time, given his childhood history and conflicts about his sexual orientation, I had recommended analysis. He decided instead to meet with me only once a week, citing as a reason that he might be going back to India soon. We met once a week for a year, after which he did indeed go back to India.

I heard from him once after his departure. He asked for a referral to an analyst in India, which I gave him. Ten years later, in February 2009, he called again and told me he had seen a couple of people in the interim period but had not found those treatments helpful, and wanted to begin an analysis. Would I be willing to work with him? And if so, how? I was moved by Mr Gupta’s capacity and need to hold me, and my initial recommendation, in his mind for ten years, and saddened by his prolonged emotional suffering. I told him that I was now doing some analytic work over the phone and would be happy to speak with him. We could then decide how to proceed.

I was curious as to why Mr Gupta had contacted me at this time, and learned that his anxieties about feeling sexually attracted only to men— anxieties he had spoken about as a young twenty-year-old—were still alive and well. So were his profound narcissistic vulnerabilities when he felt ignored. In response to my question, “Why now?” Mr Gupta said that the day before the Mumbai terrorist attacks of November 2008—in which Muslim terrorist attackers invaded India from Pakistan’s seawaters and carried out more than ten coordinated shooting and bombing attacks across Mumbai, India’s largest city, that had killed 164 and wounded 300—he had been feeling very angry at his boss, who was giving preferential treatment to a colleague of Mr Gupta’s. He was also feeling angry that Arjun, a male colleague he was attracted to, seemed to be vacillating between responding to Mr Gupta and drawing away from him. Then came the Mumbai terrorist attacks.

He was glad he did not live in Mumbai and wondered how any human being could behave in the way the Muslim terrorists had. I asked how he felt about reconnecting with me—an analyst of Pakistani origin—a few months after the attacks, which had been traced back to Muslims from Pakistan. He said he had been thinking about me a lot over the last few months and feeling more and more that he really wanted help; he should have started an analysis ten years ago, as I had suggested. I thought that immense terror had been unleashed in Mr Gupta by the combination of his recent mounting anger about being ignored and excluded and the violence and sadism in the terrorist attacks. Did he feel also that I had excluded/abandoned him ten years ago, when he left America to go back to India?

Mr Gupta's childhood history was still fresh in my mind, with its combination of a professionally successful father who was often out of town and a mother he said he felt loved and helped by, but who would often come out of the shower half dressed and change her clothes in the parental bedroom, where Mr Gupta might be watching TV on the bed. Some of his most painful memories had to do with his father ignoring him on family vacations and instead playing cricket with Mr Gupta's cousins and the sons of family friends, or paying more attention to Mr Gupta's younger brother, his only sibling. He thought this had to do with his father's view of Mr Gupta as unathletic and not as funny as his brother.

We now began a telephone analysis five times a week, with the understanding that Mr Gupta would come to the U.S. once a year so that we could meet in person. The following session took place a little more than a year into the analysis. The session was to be followed by a ten-day break on my part, which Mr Gupta had known about for six months. The session below took place on the Friday before my break.

Mr Gupta began by saying that he had seen a movie, *My Name Is Khan*, the day before. The story was about a couple in New York, a Muslim man and his Hindu wife, whose young son had been beaten to death at a local school shortly after 9/11 because he was Muslim. The wife was enraged and felt that their son had died because her husband was a Muslim. She told him to go and prove to the world that not all Muslims were terrorists. So the hero embarked on a journey, during which he uncovered a Muslim terrorist plot, reported it to the FBI, and, ultimately, met the president.

"He went to such lengths to prove his love for his Hindu wife," I mused, "even exposing other Muslims as terrorists." Mr Gupta said, dismissively, that he found the movie preachy and boring. He then went on to talk about a female colleague who wanted to leave the company they both worked for and go to another one, where she thought she might get more perks. He had talked her out of the idea and she was ultimately grateful, because it would have been a self-destructive career move. After a pause, he added that he had played squash that day, which he hadn't done for a long time. His "marker" (the referee's assistant) was happy to see him. "And there's going to be a small party in my honour at work," he added, "to acknowledge how well I have done with this new project."

"It feels good to be wanted and appreciated," I noted. "That makes you very glad."

He laughed and said that it sure did. I wondered about his laughter at this moment. He said, "You said something I was feeling, but could not say. I felt a little embarrassed that you picked up on it—this feeling of wanting to be wanted. How good it feels to be wanted." A long silence followed. He seemed to be thinking, struggling to say something. "I've been reading about this list of fourteen countries," he finally said, "Cuba and thirteen Muslim countries, whose passengers must be scanned by these new body scanners before they can enter the U.S. I wondered if you are an American citizen. But even if you are, you would have to be scanned, especially if you were travelling back to the U.S. from Pakistan. You must go back to visit your family from time to time."

"Perhaps that's where I'll be when I am not here next week?" I asked.

"I did think that," he acknowledged. "I read that some Muslim women in England refused to go through the body scan." Silence. "But then, if they want to get on a flight, they have to allow themselves to be searched. Then the passenger is at the mercy of the authorities. They can even do body-cavity searches, you know." I heard the indirect, ominous threat he was directing against me, his wish for me to be viciously intruded upon and humiliated, disguised as a "helpful" warning from him that I should be prepared for my body cavities to be searched upon my return from the trip he imagined I was embarking on—the trip that was causing a separation between us. I listened.

"India is not on this list," Mr Gupta continued. "And I've been having many thoughts about what you think about the Indian/Pakistani

issue? The enmity. What if your thoughts are different from mine? What would happen to my analysis then? Sometimes, I feel you're a very hot-headed person. Certain things seem to get you all stirred up. I've noticed that sometimes when I talk about someone putting me down and I haven't asserted myself, you start talking to me in a way that makes me think you could get very agitated or angry, and I wonder what you'd be like, if you were very angry." There was a brief pause.

"I'm thinking," he said, "about the Mumbai terrorist attacks last year." I said he had called me, looking for help again, very soon after those attacks. He responded, "Yes, exactly. And I know that the information India finally uncovered was that the terrorists belonged to Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, originally located in Pakistan—that the entire plot was planned in Pakistan. But what if we disagree about where the terrorists came from? What if I insist that they were Muslims trained in Pakistan, and you don't want to see it that way? It's one thing when you get all animated trying to help me assert myself, but what if you get really angry as we speak about these major issues we might think very differently about? I don't want to piss you off. I mean, most of the time, I think this is really cool that I am an Indian Hindu and I have an analyst who is a Muslim and originally from Pakistan, and here we are, working together. That's pretty cool."

"Sometimes it feels pretty cool to you, and at other times, you feel it could be very, very dangerous," I said.

Silence. Then Mr Gupta said, "I've been invited to attend a fundraiser for an Indian NGO [non-governmental organisation]. The President of the NGO is a guy named Bashir Iqbal [a Muslim name]. He hasn't invited me personally. I'm not sure I want to go. I would be someone brought in from the outside, my presence there arranged by our marketing department. But I am not a part of that organisation." A pause. "I snubbed Arjun [the man at work whom Mr Gupta was attracted to, but from whom he was not getting a consistent positive response] today, didn't invite him to join me and a few other colleagues when we were headed out for lunch. He's done that to me at times."

"So much here about inclusion and exclusion," I reflected. "Who's part of the in-crowd, who's invited, who's not, and who gets to be with whom? You feel a sense of great hurt when you feel left out or rejected and you automatically take certain steps to ensure that the tables are turned—that you're the one in control and the other person feels snubbed."

“Oh, I really don’t have a serious problem with these things,” Mr Gupta retorted. “I just dealt with Arjun and made sure that he felt uncertain and unwelcome—”

“Just as *you* felt around *him*,” I interjected quietly. “And yet you don’t *really* have a problem with this *at all*.”

There was a long silence. I wondered if what I had confronted him with made him feel too exposed. When he spoke, he sounded angry and defensive. “I’m just preventing further pain,” he said. “He’s the one who invited me to dinner last year when we were in England and then would send me text messages talking about the great times we’d had there. But then he became distant and I feel he’s not even sincere with me, nor is he really concerned about me.” He was quiet. “Okay, I guess you’re right. I just repeated what you had actually said. But what the hell else am I supposed to do when I feel left out?” I remained quiet. “I wish we could continue talking next week. This is hard to deal with, all these bad feelings I have when I feel ignored or pushed aside.”

“As when I go away and am not here for you,” I said. Silence.

Then Mr Gupta said, “I am wondering how it is for you now in America? Are you being discriminated against? Do people think you might be crazy, like a terrorist? I found myself thinking, the other day, do people even call you to see you for treatment? Or do they feel they don’t want to come to you for analysis because you’re a Muslim from Pakistan?” I now felt the full onslaught of Mr Gupta’s sadistic retaliatory attack—his attempt to regain his narcissistic equilibrium in the storm of feeling belittled by being left. He had tapped into the most primitive anxieties I had felt after 9/11, anxieties connected to my personal history and reawakened by the external events of 9/11 and its aftermath.

I paused, swallowed hard, and asked, “And what might happen to me then?” He responded in a matter-of-fact way, as though he were reading some headlines from the newspaper. “Oh, I think you’d be completely wiped out professionally then. Maybe you wouldn’t get any patients—and then I suppose you wouldn’t have any money, either.”

“And that would serve me right, wouldn’t it?” I asked, finding now more stable analytic ground. “For leaving you. It’s satisfying for you when you imagine I might be subjected to having my bodily orifices intruded upon and violated, or that I might be wiped out professionally—and you speak about it so calmly.”

"I don't feel very calm," he said. "I feel very agitated. Actually, I was thinking just now that maybe that's why you agreed to work with me in analysis—because you wanted to make money, and no one else wanted you as their analyst."

I heard his comment, designed to be hurtful and insulting, but covering over his hurt that I might have agreed to see him for ulterior motives, and his deep disbelief that he could be wanted, or loved, for himself. I said, "Yes, because if that were so, then you'd be my *only* patient, wouldn't you?" I asked. "And very, very special to me. I would really want you. Not like the way you felt with your parents." After a long silence, Mr Gupta spoke.

"All my life," he said, "these difficult, sad feelings with so many people, so many real disappointments and rejections. I do wonder sometimes if I imagine now that people are mistreating me even when they're not, people like you who are actually trying to help me."

A common element in the clinical material

In studying the three cases presented above, as well as two others that I will not detail here, I was struck by a significant common element: the three male patients unconsciously used their awareness of my being "foreign"—and a Muslim—in a particularly cruel and venomous way at a point in the analysis when they were struggling, in the transference, with intense feelings of being forgotten or abandoned. At those times, the differences between us and their knowledge of my being a Muslim was used, in profoundly sadistic ways, to "get even" in an attempt to re-establish a sense of control and mastery—and, beyond that, to establish power and the sense of being one up on the narcissistic seesaw on which they felt precariously balanced. It was only much later in these analyses that my foreignness and my being different could be put to use in the service of my being a forbidden, exotic, exciting woman.

On my part, only after the initial storm had abated could I appreciate that Mr Brodsky experienced me not only as an abandoning mother/nanny/maid or a disappointing or dangerous father, but also as a deeply desired sister/mother with whom he wished to make love—but whom he also wanted to hurt and kill—or that what Mr Sullivan was expressing in his desire to pierce my skin with his spear, linked to the story of Mohammad and Ayesha, was not only his wish to hurt me, but also a profoundly exciting wish and fear about crossing generational boundaries and violating the incest taboo with me. And it was also only

later that I could understand, with Mr Gupta, that his sadistic fantasy of my bodily orifices being viciously searched and attacked had to do not only with his rage at feeling excluded from my life and my body, but also his wish to find a way into me and within me.

Discussion

There is both fear of and fascination with differences and strangeness; this is universal, yet individually determined for each of us. These may include the patient's perception of differences in gender, external appearances, ways of thinking, skin colour, racial background, cultural background, and religion. To understand the individual meanings these differences have for the patient, starting from the most superficial and accessible and going toward the deepest underpinnings, is one of the tasks of an analysis. Can such a task be accomplished in the presence of gross and obvious differences between the patient and analyst that preclude a shared understanding of a common racial/cultural/religious/ethnic background? Perspectives on this issue have varied over time.

Oberndorf (1954) did not think it was possible: "Transference in its most positive form," he writes, "is most likely to be easily established and examined (analysed) between patient and hospital and patient and physician if their psychological biases do not differ too widely" (p. 757). The belief seemed to be that people coming from different racial backgrounds would be too distant "psychologically" to be able to establish a transference in the analysis that could facilitate an understanding of the patient's conflicts:

The fear of the stranger, originating in a young child's feeling of security in the accustomed, and need for protection in the face of the unfamiliar person or place, are [*sic*] almost instinctive [...] the integration of the mentally disturbed individual can best be achieved if he is treated by one of those who understands his motivations rather than by one considered expert in a particular illness. (Ibid. pp. 757–758)

The thinking here seemed to have been that a patient's motivations could only be understood by someone from a similar cultural background.

Between Oberndorf's 1954 paper and the late 1990s, the psychoanalytic literature included only a small group of papers on the impact of cultural, ethnic, racial, or religious differences between analyst and

patient. Yet this has always been an important issue in the U.S., since many early analysts were immigrants. There may be many reasons for this paucity of literature, a discussion of which is not within the scope of this chapter. Its scarcity, however, does not detract from our recognition of its importance. Such differences may have influenced analyses conducted by early immigrant analysts and, later on, as analysts began to write about the experiences of white analysts with black patients, and vice versa. Eventually, other analyst/analysand ethnic combinations attracted attention in the literature as well. This has become even more important today, as the candidate population at psychoanalytic institutes diversifies and more patients from diversified ethnic backgrounds enter psychoanalytic treatment.

In the almost sixty years since Oberndorf presented his paper, the way we think about cross-cultural treatment has evolved. Several analysts have attempted, in detailed, scholarly, and moving papers, to describe their experiences of working in a cross-cultural analytic dyad (Akhtar, 1995, 2006; Goldberg, Myers, & Zeifman, 1974; Holmes, 1992; Leary, 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2007). For instance, Schachter and Butts (1968) presented a point of view quite different from Oberndorf's:

Racial differences between analyst and patient involve issues of unconscious meaning at various levels, analogous to differences in sex between analyst and patient. They must be recognised and utilised, but only rarely do they create an either unanalysable hurdle or a serious obstacle to treatment. (p. 802)

Specific issues requiring close attention come up in analyses that take place across ethnic boundaries. In a 1984 paper, Eva Basch-Kahre, a Swedish analyst, described her work with a black African man living in Sweden. In such contexts, she believes that the analyst's lack of knowledge with regard to the specifics of development, childrearing, values, and conventions of the analysand's background make the "analyst blind to those minimal features which usually alert him that the analysand is approaching conflict territory. I believe that these difficulties cause analysis to proceed at a slower pace, but do not thwart it" (p. 61). I agree, and would extend this to include the fact that particular differences between analyst and patient may cause a kind of "cloudiness" on the analytic horizon, which makes it difficult for the analyst to see things that would be more obvious in other analyses; in such

cases, obvious differences between the analytic dyad and the meanings those differences have for patient and analyst may not carry the same weight.

In talking about interracial analysis, Fischer (1971) writes:

I am suggesting that the black-white difference between the analyst and analysand is a contributing and visible structure upon which the more basic and dynamic infantile wishes are projected. To ignore or overestimate either the manifest structure or the latent projection leads to an incomplete comprehension and working through. (p. 736)

With my patients as well, the obvious difference between us presented a visible structure onto which they could project their feelings of exclusion and devaluation—feelings they had suffered from in their own lives. This projection was made initially through the lens of the obvious differences between us. In this regard, Ticho (1971) writes:

There is no doubt that cultural differences play an important role in psychoanalytic treatment. However, it is the patient who makes his own choice among the many available stereotypes and endows the analyst with certain positive and negative attributes according to his pathology, individual needs and, concomitantly, with the development of the transference neurosis. (p. 315)

Given the increasing numbers of analysts from different ethnic backgrounds, it is essential that close attention be paid to the issue of the developing analyst's comfort or discomfort in dealing with factors related to differences of ethnicity, culture, and religion. The ability to handle this material with patients increases as the analyst better understands his or her own prejudices and conflicts about ethnicity, religion, and culture; this constitutes important work in one's own personal/training analysis. Bernard (1953) made important recommendations with regard to the contribution of the training analysis and supervision in terms of cross-cultural issues. She writes:

We know that the personal and training analysis provides the major safeguard against prejudice, but often the unconscious foundations of prejudice have not been worked with adequately. This may be

due in part to controversies that exist as to the analytic handling of such material and its relevance to the etiology of neurosis [...] If, therefore, an analyst has insufficiently analysed his own unconscious material pertaining to his own group membership and that of others, he and his patient may be insufficiently protected from the interference of a variety of positive and negative countertransference reactions stimulated by the ethnic, religious and racial elements that are present in the analytic situation, the patient's personality, and in the specific content of the patient's material. The supervisory process in analytic training provides a potentially valuable second line of defence for supplementing the personal analysis in regard to these countertransference risks, provided the supervising analyst is himself sufficiently informed and psychologically qualified in these areas. (pp. 258–259)

In a lovely and useful paper, "Anti-semitism in the clinical setting: Transference and countertransference dimensions", Knafo (1999) describes a Jewish man whose parents were concentration-camp survivors and whose most exciting sexual fantasies had to do with "naked women about to die in Nazi gas chambers, at which point he achieved orgasm" (p. 38). Knafo, who was then a doctoral candidate, "inwardly recoiled in horror and fear" (p. 38) and could not work with the patient when she realised that in telling her these fantasies, he was excited by including *her* in the fantasy during the session. In later years, Knafo was able to see that "anti-Semitism can be a valuable means of engaging the analysis of transference reactions" (p. 57), and recognised that negative transference reactions, "when embedded in anti-Semitic terminology, tend to be avoided by therapists and analysts" (p. 58). She writes, "I believe this results from the therapist's inability to move beyond the perception of a patient's anti-Semitism as solely a social phenomenon to being able to treat it as he or she would any other clinical manifestation" (p. 58), and adds, "The great challenge for psychoanalysts, I believe, lies in the capacity to bridge social and psychic reality in order to discover what is most therapeutically useful for the patient" (p. 60). I believe that the same holds true for anti-Muslim sentiments expressed in the analytic setting.

Conclusion

In India and Pakistan, henna (an herbal paste) is mixed with water and applied to the hands of women for certain festive occasions, including

weddings. The henna, which is green in the powder and paste form, is left on the skin for several hours and is then removed; the dye seeps into the skin and colours it. The colour on the skin of one woman can be quite different from the colour on another: on certain skins, the henna is pale orange, and on others it shows up as bright, flame-coloured orange. It is said that on certain hands, the henna “takes” better than on others. It is postulated that the colour depends on some quality intrinsic to the skin.

So it is, I believe, in psychoanalysis: all patients—and all analysts—are “different” from each other, but in each analysis, the use to which the patient and the analyst put these differences is determined by the patient’s needs and conflicts. In some analyses, the differences may not emerge in bright colours; in others, they might present in almost dizzying hues because, for the patient, they serve a critical defensive function. I have presented here vignettes from three analyses in which the ethnic difference between my patients and myself became a vehicle through which their feelings of hurt, rage, and sadism came into the analysis. *This was how the ethnic differences between us were put to use.* I also elaborated on how I could more effectively feel and process my patients’ sadistic attacks on me post-9/11, due to my internally increased awareness of *my own* conflicts regarding rage and sadism during that time.

In the next chapter, I will discuss yet another significant sociopolitical event, the discovery and killing of Osama bin Laden on Pakistani soil by specially trained Americans who flew into and out of Pakistan on a single fateful night. I will present analytic material to demonstrate how this event affected analyses I was conducting at the time and what it mobilised in many of my patients.

NOTES

Chapter Four

1. At this point in the treatment, as Mrs Green and I tried to understand her fantasies of suicide, I felt that her depressive symptoms were severe enough to warrant the use of antidepressant medication. She remained on medication for about ten months. There were multiple direct and indirect thoughts about the meanings of my prescribing this for her.
2. East-West themes and the differences between our cultural and ethnic backgrounds were also stirred up at this time. There was rich exploration of this in our work together—an area of study I have written about elsewhere (Abbasi, 2008, 2012).

Chapter Six

1. 9/11 refers to September 11th, 2001, when members of Al-Qaeda, a Muslim terrorist organisation, hijacked four passenger planes in USA, so that they could be used as weapons of destruction, in coordinated suicide attacks, on that day. Two planes were crashed into twin towers

of the World Trade Center in New York City. A third damaged part of the Pentagon in Washington. The fourth plane, which was also meant to crash into Washington, ended up crashing into a field in Pennsylvania. About 3000 people died in these attacks, and widespread damage and destruction occurred.

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