



Creating Bodies: Eating Disorders as Self-Destructive Survival (Relational Perspectives Book Series)

Katie Gentile

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Amid the welter of clinical studies, memoirs, and other death-defying tales of eating disorders, we remain unclear about the relationships among trauma, anorexia, and bulimia, and about the psychological pathways to recovery.

Creating Bodies offers the gripping story of healing and transformation detailed in one woman's diaries. Hannah wrote 18 diaries between the ages of 14 and 32. In the excerpts reprinted herein, we watch Hannah navigate violent adolescent friendships, descend into anorexia and bulimia, marry an abusive man, struggle to recover memories of sexual abuse, and finally to heal. And we learn of her interaction with Katie Gentile, who analyzed her diaries and met with Hannah to discuss the latter's own understanding of the diaries and of the diary analysis.

Through a close study of both the content and structure of Hannah's diaries, Gentile shows how unspeakable, embodied remnants of sexual trauma become symbolized and how, within this process, Hannah's bulimia functioned as both an act of self destruction and a lifesaving form of resistance. Anchored in relational psychoanalysis and critical feminist theory, *Creating Bodies* provides a uniquely longitudinal account of the development of, and ultimate recovery from, an eating disorder fueled by childhood sexual abuse.

An invaluable contribution to the literature on adolescent and adult eating disorders, it is also a thoughtful meditation on how the act of writing deepens issues of relationality and, over time, promotes cure. Psychoanalysts will be intrigued by the rich process issues embedded in prose journals, notes, and letters - both close to and distinct from clinical process issues - that Gentile uses to understand Hannah's projects of self-destruction and reconstruction.

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