Introduction: Ferenczi’s Turn in Psychoanalysis

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To those who have come under its spell, the history of psychoanalysis is a subject of inexhaustible fascination. The appeal of psychoanalysis as a guide to living stems ultimately from the way that it enables its adepts to think theoretically about their own experiences. It thus functions, as it were, on a meta-level, not removing one from life, but immersing one in it more deeply by adding a dimension of self-conscious reflection to the fluctuating compounds of love and loss, repetition and regeneration, that are the staples of the human lot. In turning to the history of psychoanalysis, then, which inevitably comes down to posterity mainly in the form of written texts, and where we can witness how the personal and professional lives of those who have preceded us are intimately intertwined, we have an opportunity to observe this meta-quality of psychoanalysis in a concentrated form.

By any standard, the longest shadow in the history of psychoanalysis continues to be cast by Freud. However much one may disagree with Freud on certain doctrinal points—his views on drives and female sexuality being two notable areas of controversy—and whatever judgments one may make on his character, it cannot be disputed that psychoanalysis originated with Freud and that he is the leading actor in the drama of its development, which traverses the twentieth century and constitutes one of the guiding threads to its intellectual history. On those who knew Freud personally, of course, his impact was overwhelming. Even now, over fifty years after his
death, he remains an inescapable presence, not only for those who wish to become psychoanalysts or psychotherapists (or scholars who employ psychoanalytic tools in their research), but for the culture at large, as witnessed by the ongoing skirmishes waged over Freud's reputation and the epistemological status of psychoanalysis. For both individuals and the myriad of interested professional groups, moreover, the ideological, economic, and sheerly narcissistic stakes in these disputes are high; and the self-blinding passion with which they are often conducted is the unfortunate counterpart to the prospective rewards to be derived from a theory that raises experience of all kinds to a higher power of intensity and self-consciousness.

Although Freud stands enduringly at the crossroads, one of the most remarkable features of the history of psychoanalysis since its inception is the exceptional caliber of the men and women whom he attracted as disciples and coworkers. And just as Freud's image is contested within and outside of psychoanalysis, so too have the other gifted individuals—each of whom deserves to be seen as a unique being in his or her own right with a destiny and story to tell—who have left their mark on the movement become objects of positive or negative transference by their contemporaries and successors and pieces in the incessant chess game of writing and rewriting the past.

In singling out any of the stars around Freud's sun for particular attention, one has a natural tendency to want to make the strongest possible case for that figure's eminence. It is because something in the precursor's life and work speaks to our own personal and collective conditions that we initially gravitate to him or her. In championing that thinker's point of view, we are then simultaneously advancing our own ideological agendas. In the best examples of psychoanalytic (as of any other) scholarship, however, a healthy idealization of a given person's achievement is balanced by a recognition of limitations and frailties; and the criticisms that are conversely directed against those who are cast as opponents should be tempered by generous doses of respect and empathy.

This volume seeks to pay tribute to Sándor Ferenczi (1873–1933) and to promote the collective reappraisal of his legacy that is already in progress. Ferenczi, the Hungarian disciple of whom Freud wrote in *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement* that he "outweighs an entire society" (1914,
33) and whom he later lauded in his obituary as one who had “made all analysts into his pupils” (1933, 228), is unquestionably one of the most brilliant orbs in the psychoanalytic firmament. Apart from Freud, he is the first-generation pioneer who addresses most immediately the concerns of contemporary psychoanalysts; and, in some respects, he has come to represent not only a complement but a powerful alternative to Freud as well. By the title of our book, Ferenczi’s Turn in Psychoanalysis, we mean to evoke both the radical innovations introduced by Ferenczi into psychoanalytic theory and practice and the renewed interest in his work that makes this his time.

Ferenczi’s rehabilitation in recent years has much to do with his position in the early history of the psychoanalytic movement. Of the four leading members of the Committee that formed around Freud in 1912 to counter the incipient defection of Jung, there is a fundamental dichotomy between the two conservatives, Karl Abraham in Berlin and Ernest Jones in London, and the two radicals, Otto Rank in Vienna and Ferenczi in Budapest. Insofar as contemporary psychoanalysis is characterized by a shift away from classical drive theory and toward a relational paradigm, Ferenczi and Rank (who in 1923 coauthored a book, The Development of Psycho-Analysis) will clearly be more congenial ancestors than Abraham and Jones. Abraham is best remembered for the refinements he introduced into Freud’s libido theory. Jones, the only one of the four to outlive Freud, is renowned for his three-volume biography of Freud, completed in 1937, in which he simultaneously settled old scores with his rivals (especially Ferenczi, who had been his analyst, and Rank) and gave definitive shape to the Freud legend. Abraham’s intellectual gifts were matched by those of Jones as an administrator, but both remained unswervingly loyal to Freud and thus could not mount a challenge to his authority that might provide a point of departure for subsequent revisionist thinking.

Rank stands at the antipodes from Jones and Abraham, since he broke with Freud after the publication of The Trauma of Birth (1924) and, like Jung, became a dissident. As such, however, his influence waned, and his later writings on will therapy and creativity found an audience chiefly among artists, social workers, and cultural critics outside psychoanalysis. By contrast, Ferenczi’s decision to remain within the psychoanalytic fold has
contributed decisively to his revival, since he is revered by members of the American interpersonal tradition and others who consider themselves psychoanalysts but have been excluded from the International Psychoanalytic Association and who seek to establish their legitimacy by claiming descent from Ferenczi. As I have argued elsewhere (1991), the desire to anoint Ferenczi as the "first object relations psychoanalyst" overlooks Rank's dominant influence on their intellectual partnership and his undeservedly neglected work between 1924 and 1927; but it remains true that Ferenczi is a vital presence for many contemporary psychoanalysts in a way that Rank is not.

Central to Ferenczi's career and legacy is, of course, his relationship to Freud. Our understanding of this relationship has been revolutionized in recent years by newly available documents—above all, the Clinical Diary, the private journal Ferenczi kept in 1932, first published in 1985, and the complete Freud-Ferenczi correspondence, publication of which is still in progress as of this writing. The Freud-Ferenczi relationship is extremely complex and will be interpreted in divergent ways by different commentators. Its outcome, in my view, is a tragedy stemming ultimately from the conjunction between Freud's tendency to impose a lethal choice between submission or rebellion on his male heirs and Ferenczi's complementary predisposition to docility and need for approval by authority figures. Throughout most of their long association, Ferenczi sought to find satisfaction in playing the role of Freud's beloved son and resolutely suppressed all murmurs of discontent. Indeed, after Rank's revolt, Ferenczi in 1927 published a scathing review of Technique of Psychoanalysis, in which he reaffirmed his loyalty to Freud by castigating Rank for his divagations. But, as I have previously proposed (1991, 54–55), Rank and Ferenczi can be viewed as together comprising the two sides of a single ambivalent filial relationship to Freud, in which neither the former's rebellion nor the latter's obedience led to genuine autonomy. The public opprobrium heaped on Rank finds a counterpart in Ferenczi's private anguish, recorded in the Clinical Diary along with the criticisms of Freud that he did not dare to voice openly during his lifetime.

One of the consequences of the release of the Clinical Diary and the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence, at least in my judgment, is to show the
tendentiousness of Freud’s reiterated narratives of their relationship. In the first, a testimonial on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday, for example, Freud affirms that Ferenczi, “who, as a middle child in a large family, had to struggle with a powerful brother complex, had, under the influence of analysis, become an irreproachable elder brother” (1923, 268). This may be true as far as it goes, but an elder brother is conspicuously not a father. Freud, who had been Ferenczi’s analyst, omits any reference to his Oedipus complex, which would imply rivalry with himself, and casts him in a favored but still subordinate role. In his obituary, Freud singles out Thalassa as Ferenczi’s “most brilliant and most fertile achievement” (1933, 228). Ferenczi had begun Thalassa, his only book-length monograph, during World War I in close cooperation with Freud, though he delayed its publication until 1924. Freud’s enthusiasm is thus understandable. But Thalassa, like Freud’s Phylogenetic Fantasy, which dates from the same period and was first published in 1985 after having been found in London in a trunk of papers that Ferenczi had bequeathed to Michael Bälint, is a flight of evolutionary speculation based on Lamarckian principles and Haeckel’s so-called biogenetic law that possesses great antiquarian (and literary) interest. Unfortunately, however, it is scientific rubbish with little or no relevance to the contemporary practice of psychoanalysis.3

Indeed, Thalassa, among other liabilities, accentuates Freud’s phallocentric perspective. Ferenczi contends that, with the loss of an aquatic mode of life and the need to adapt to existence on land, both sexes “developed the male sexual organ, and there came about, perhaps, a tremendous struggle, the outcome of which was to decide upon which sex should fall the pains and duties of motherhood and the passive endurance of genitality” (1924, 103). The culturally determined misogyny that skews this view of sexuality, which holds that there is primordially only one genital organ and defines women exclusively as mothers who submit unwillingly to sexual intercourse, will be apparent to a modern reader; and it was so to Ferenczi as well by the time he wrote the Clinical Diary. With hindsight he avowed:

The ease with which Fr[eud] sacrifices the interests of women in favor of male patients is striking. This is consistent with his unilaterally androphile orientation of his theory of sexuality. In this he was followed by nearly all his pupils, myself not excluded. My theory of genitality may have many good points, yet in its mode of
presentation and its historical reconstruction it clings too closely to the words of
the master; a new edition would mean a complete rewriting. (1985, 187)

Freud, of course, had not seen the Clinical Diary when he wrote his
obituary of Ferenczi. He did, however, have access to his later papers—in
cluding the valedictory “Confusion of Tongues” (1933), which at their
final meeting he notoriously urged Ferenczi not to deliver at the 1932
Wiesbaden Congress—in which Ferenczi forged the paradigm shift that
has made him so important to contemporary psychoanalysis. It is thus
revealing that in the obituary Freud depicts Ferenczi’s final period as one of
decline after the “summit of achievement” (1933, 229) reached in Thalassa,
whereas Ferenczi—with complete justification, from a present-day stand-
point—had privately distanced himself from Thalassa because of its “an-
drophile orientation” and excessive devotion to “the words of the master,”
and indicted Freud for his demeaning attitude toward women, which Freud
vehemently defended to the end of his days.

Although both the 1923 tribute and the 1933 obituary are milestones in
Freud’s pronouncements on Ferenczi’s career, it is above all the unacknowl-
edged but transparent “case history” of Ferenczi in “Analysis Terminable
and Interminable” (1937) that shows the defensiveness and unreliability of
Freud’s version of events. Here Freud takes up Ferenczi’s reproach that his
analysis with Freud was inadequate because Freud had not analyzed Fer-
cenzi’s negative transference. This issue is in turn bound up with the crucial
problem of Ferenczi’s marriage and Freud’s role in it. To summarize briefly,
Ferenczi had been involved in a long-standing love affair with a married
woman, Gizella Pálos, when in July 1911 he took her daughter Elma into
analysis because of her romantic difficulties. Then, after one of Elma’s
suitors committed suicide on account of her in October, Ferenczi, in
December, found himself falling in love with her, at which point Freud
advised him to break off the treatment and agreed to take Elma into analysis
himself in Vienna. This analysis lasted from January to mid-March 1912;
Elma then returned to Budapest and underwent additional analysis with
Ferenczi that summer. The situation remained unresolved for over a year,
until Ferenczi definitively broke with Elma and she became engaged in
December 1913 to an American writer of Swedish extraction named Hervé
Laurvik, whom she married and then divorced after a brief period. Ferenczi
and Gizella Pálos were finally married on March 1, 1919, only to learn that her ex-husband Géza had died of a heart attack on the same day!

Even this résumé should suffice to delineate the tragic oedipal entanglements of Ferenczi’s love life. His intimate dilemmas were bound up with his identity as an analyst, and both were mediated by his relationship to Freud. As the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence shows, Ferenczi continually unburdened himself to Freud, and Freud kept Ferenczi apprised of the details of Elma’s analysis. Freud, moreover, made no secret of his strong preference for Gizella over Elma and actively promoted Ferenczi’s decision to renounce the daughter in favor of the mother. The upshot was that Ferenczi could never have children, for whom he longed, or even a fulfilling sexual life: Gizella, despite her formidable virtues, was eight years older than he and unable to bear more children, and she was uninspiring to Ferenczi sexually.

Given all this material, now brought to the light of day, it becomes almost unbelievable that Freud could declare in “Analysis Terminable and Interminable” that Ferenczi’s analysis with him, which occurred in three abbreviated periods in 1914 and 1916 in the aftermath of the Elma debacle, had a “completely successful” result because he “married the woman he loved and turned into a friend and teacher of his supposed rivals” (1937, 221). This, a variation on the theme of Ferenczi as “irreproachable elder brother,” conveniently neglects to mention that Ferenczi’s marriage was a source of abiding conflict to him and that he loved not one but two women. Freud goes on to assert that his relationship with Ferenczi “remained unclouded” for many years, until for “no assignable external reason, trouble arose.” Freud thus places the entire blame for their falling out on Ferenczi’s resentment, which he construes as irrational, and refuses to consider that he himself might have been at fault in some way. This stance of self-righteousness and professed objectivity, inimical to the self-criticism and acknowledgment of his own subjectivity that infuses Ferenczi’s private and public writings, especially in his later years, constitutes a serious failing on Freud’s part. The way these contrasting attitudes are mirrored in Freud’s and Ferenczi’s views of the analytic process and countertransference, moreover, has led many people today to see the future of psychoanalysis as lying in directions mapped by Ferenczi rather than Freud.
An indispensable window on the Freud-Ferenczi relationship is provided by Ferenczi’s correspondence with Georg Groddeck, the maverick director of the Baden-Baden sanatorium and author of the magnificent *Book of the It* (1923), whom he met in 1920 at the psychoanalytic congress in The Hague. Ferenczi and Groddeck soon became fast friends, and Groddeck extended to Ferenczi the wholehearted acceptance that he lacked from Freud. (Groddeck’s combination of massage with psychotherapy likewise contrasted sharply with Freud’s technique of abstinence.) As Bernard This (1982, 25) has pointed out, moreover, Groddeck’s love life fulfilled a fantasy of Ferenczi’s, since in 1923 he married Emmy von Voigt, a young woman who had been his patient, as Ferenczi had longed in vain to do with Elma Pálos.

In two key letters to Groddeck, on Christmas-day 1921 and February 27, 1922, Ferenczi vented his accumulated grievances against Freud. In the former, he anatomized the “Palermo incident,” which took place during a holiday trip with Freud to Sicily in September 1910 and marked the first moment of crisis in their relationship. As Ferenczi reports, in the only extant account, when he and Freud began on the first evening to work jointly on the Schreber case, Freud sought to dictate to him (as to an amanuensis), and he protested that this was no way to collaborate. Freud then demanded, “Obviously you want the whole thing for yourself?” and thenceforth worked alone every evening, relegating Ferenczi to the role of copyeditor, which knotted his throat with bitterness (Ferenczi and Groddeck 1982, 37). In the same letter, he complained to Groddeck of further somatic symptoms—inomnia, loss of breath, cardiac pains, etc.—and connected these to dissatisfaction with his marriage and suppressed love for his wife’s daughter, whom he had been forced to renounce because of Freud’s disapproval. This topic recurs in the letter of February 27, where Ferenczi informed Groddeck of a frank conversation he had had with Freud in Vienna, in which Freud “stuck to his earlier opinion, that the main thing in my case was the hate against him, who (just as the father had formerly done) blocked my marriage to the younger bride (now step-daughter).” “I must confess,” Ferenczi added, “it did me good to be able to speak with the beloved father for once about these feelings of hate” (41). Again, in view of this conversation with Freud in 1922, eight years before Ferenczi first raised in correspondence the issue of Freud’s failure to analyze his
negative transference, Freud's claim in "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" that their relationship "remained unclouded" for "many years" must be deemed a self-serving distortion.7

Ferenczi's relationship with Freud must be set against the backdrop of his early childhood experiences, a deep insight into which is afforded by his letters to both Groddeck and Freud as well as the Clinical Diary. The eighth of twelve children, Ferenczi undoubtedly, as Freud suggested in 1923, had to struggle with issues of sibling rivalry. His father, moreover, died in 1888, when Ferenczi was fifteen. But the decisive revelation of the posthumously published sources is that Ferenczi experienced severe emotional and sexual traumas in infancy at the hands of his mother and other female caretakers. Ferenczi writes to Groddeck on Christmas 1921 that he received "too little love and too much severity" from his mother in childhood (Ferenczi and Groddeck 1982, 36). And in a letter of December 26, 1912, to Freud—an extraordinary piece of self-analysis that goes beyond anything in Freud's correspondence with Fliess—Ferenczi tells of having been caught at the age of three (or earlier) in mutual touching with his sister Gisella by a cook, and then threatened with a kitchen knife by his mother. He elaborates: "As a small boy I had a colossal un . . . . . . . rage against my mother, who was too strict with me; the fantasy of murder (which I don't remember with certainty) was immediately turned toward my own person." (The dots after "un" convey Ferenczi's inability to think of the German equivalent of the Hungarian word tehetetlen, meaning "inhibited" or "impotent," a parapraxis which enacts the inhibition wrought in Ferenczi by Freud's authority.) Linking past and present, he conjectures: "Now, possibly, I hate Frau G. because she (as earlier the cook and my mother) prevented marriage with Elma (earlier touching my sister). I can also impute to her the threat of cutting off my penis." Completing this train of thought, Ferenczi connects Gizella Pálos and Freud as impediments to his marriage with Elma: "My ucs. placed the responsibility for it in your and Frau G.'s hands" (Brabant et al. 1992, 452–54).8

Additional invaluable information about Ferenczi's traumatic experiences in childhood is contained in the Clinical Diary. To condense my reading of this material, which I have elaborated elsewhere (1992), Ferenczi was subjected not only to terrifying episodes of abuse by a nursemaid, but
also to both extreme harshness and a lack of love from his mother, leaving him, in his words, "emotionally dead" (1985, 85). As excellent papers by Christopher Fortune (1993) and Sue A. Shapiro (1993) have shown, the theme of murder—both of body and soul—figures prominently also in the histories of the two most important patients treated by Ferenczi during his final years, the American women Elizabeth Severn and Clara Thompson, code named in the *Diary* R.N. and Dm, respectively. With regard to Severn's repressed memory of having participated during childhood in the murder of a black man, Ferenczi writes of her "incessant protestations that she is no murderer, although she admits to firing the shots" (1985, 107). Shapiro (1993, 165) quotes Thompson's startling explanation in her college yearbook of a decision to pursue a career in medicine: "To murder people in the most refined manner possible." Since both Thompson and Severn were victims of emotional and sexual abuse by their fathers, as Ferenczi was by his mother and nursemaid, the recurrent motif of murder in their lives is tied to their common fate as incest survivors. The breakthroughs Ferenczi achieved during his final period—including his experiment in mutual analysis with Severn—were made possible by his unique capacity to explore in an atmosphere of trust and shared vulnerability the shattering effects of childhood trauma on himself as well as his patients.9

The first volume of the Freud-Ferenczi letters permits me to amplify one point in my reading of the *Clinical Diary*. The complex dialectic whereby Ferenczi enacts a reciprocal soul murder, modeled on his early battles with his mother, with both Freud and his female patients, unfolds throughout his relationship with Freud. Ferenczi's letter of December 26, 1912, in which he speaks of the "fantasy of murder" directed at his mother that he "immediately turned toward my own person," explicitly associates both Gizella and Freud with his mother as agents of castration toward whom he harbors an "impotent rage" (Brabant et al. 1992, 452). Freud, to be sure, is also a symbolic father, but this is not a contradiction, since Ferenczi admits the possibility that "my mother's strict treatment (and my father's mildness) had the result in me of a displacement of the Oedipus complex [mother's death, father's love]" (Ferenczi's brackets). Ferenczi's Oedipus complex, that is, took an unusually "complete" form, with ambivalent feelings of love and hate directed toward both parents; but, in addition
to the customary rivalry with his father, he sought to obtain from him (and from Freud) the affection of which his mother had deprived him, and with whom he experienced violent conflicts. She was the principal cause of his pathology, which was at bottom not oedipal, but—to borrow Bálint’s (1968) salient term—at the preoedipal level of the basic fault. Thus, when his relationship with Freud broke down, Ferenczi reexperienced a dynamic of maternal failure, which explains why he should have done his most probing analytic work with female patients.\(^\text{10}\)

In this same letter, written at the high tide not only of his romantic crisis but also of Jung’s revolt, of which Freud kept him fully abreast, Ferenczi wrestles with the specter of Freud’s authority over his disciples that would haunt him to his dying day. Ferenczi here espouses views antithetical to those he would embrace in the Clinical Diary, but the anticipation of his later formulations is uncanny:

_Mutual analysis_ is nonsense, also an impossibility. Everyone must be able to tolerate an authority over himself from whom he accepts analytic correction. You are probably the only one who can permit himself to do without an analyst... But what is valid for _you_ is not valid for the rest of us. Jung has not achieved the same self-mastery as you... I, too, went through a period of rebellion against your “treatment.” Now I have become insightful and find that you were right in everything. (Brabant et al. 1992, 449)

Ferenczi's readiness to sacrifice his own autonomy on the altar of Freud's approval is pathetic. The closest parallel in the history of psychoanalysis is probably Rank's abject letter of apology to Freud and the other members of the Committee on December 20, 1924, in which he confessed that his recent rebellious behavior was due to his unanalyzed “Oedipus and brother complexes” activated by the news of Freud's cancer (Rudnytsky 1991, 35). But just as Rank soon abjured his recantation and completed his painful separation from Freud, so Ferenczi two decades later in his _Diary_ not only defended mutual analysis, but also indicted himself for having been “a blindly dependent son” and accused Freud of playing “only the role of the castrating god” and wanting to be “the only one who does not have to be analyzed” (1985, 185, 188).

The preponderantly maternal dimension of Ferenczi’s transference to Freud can be seen in two earlier letters. On November 14, 1911, soon after
the death of Elma's suitor and as thoughts of marrying her begin to cross his mind, he writes of longing "to commit a terrible act of violence. Dissatisfied with both parents, I wanted to make myself independent!" Responding to Freud's interpretation of his feelings for him as transferential, Ferenczi reiterates his resolve "to make myself independent," adding that "as a parallel process an apparent detachment of libido from Frau G. was playing itself out in me" (Brabant et al. 1992, 311–12). Still earlier, on October 3, 1910, in the wake of the Palermo incident, Ferenczi again draws a poignant analogy between Freud and his future wife: "Just as in my relationship with Frau G. I strive for absolute mutual openness, in the same manner—and with even more justification—I believed that this . . . openness, which conceals nothing, could be possible between two ψαρ-minded people" (218).

It seems fitting to conclude this argument for why it should now be Ferenczi's turn in psychoanalysis by returning to the Palermo incident and his frustrated desire for a relationship of "absolute mutual openness" with Freud. That the disillusionment at Palermo continued to rankle in Ferenczi's soul is evident not only from his Christmas 1921 letter to Groddeck but also from the Clinical Diary, where Ferenczi asserts that Freud could "tolerate my being a son only until the moment when I contradicted him for the first time (Palermo)" (1985, 185). Ferenczi underwent every vicissitude of emotion toward Freud, including the delusion that Freud was "right in everything"; but his abiding relevance to contemporary readers stems from his courageous willingness to "contradict [Freud] on some essential points" (Brabant et al. 1992, 217), even as he pays unstinting homage to his genius. This last phrase comes from Ferenczi's letter of October 3, 1910, the same one in which he pleads with Freud for complete openness and reviews with him most candidly the Palermo incident of the preceding month.

Every one who embarks on a career in psychoanalysis must come to terms with a transference to Freud. That it is psychoanalytic theory itself that best allows us to contemplate this phenomenon exemplifies the meta-quality of psychoanalysis to which I alluded at the outset. Even now, therefore, we are in a situation comparable to that of Freud's original adherents, although our temporal distance means that we can only know
Freud and the other ancestors through their texts, and we likewise have the freedom to choose among many more potential objects of transference. Essentially, however, our options remain the same as those of the first generation. Do we wish to become dissidents, like Jung or Rank? Or disciples, like Abraham or Jones? Or internal critics, like Ferenczi?

In his October 3, 1910, letter, Ferenczi shares with Freud a dream “in which I saw you standing naked before me” (218). Not discounting his homosexual impulses, Ferenczi interprets the dream as expressing his desire for “absolute mutual openness” with Freud. Asking how he could come “to demand still more—indeed everything” from one who had already given him so much, Ferenczi continues with a passage that speaks for all of us who have placed Freud at the center of our lives and work and at times felt daunted when measuring ourselves against his achievement:

But don’t forget that for years I have been occupied with nothing but the products of your intellect, and I have also always felt the man behind every sentence of your works and made him my confidant. Whether you want to be or not, you are one of the great master teachers of mankind, and you must allow your readers to approach you, at least intellectually, in a personal relationship as well. My ideal of truth that strikes down all consideration is certainly nothing less than the most self-evident consequence of your teachings. I am convinced that I am not the only one who, in important decisions, in self-criticism, etc., always asks and has asked himself the question: How would Freud relate to this? Under “Freud” I understood his teachings and his personality, fused together in a harmonious unity.

So I am and have been much, much more intimately acquainted with you than you could have imagined. . . .

I must come back again and again to the fact that I am aware of the excessiveness of my demands. But I believe that you underestimate much too much the ennobling power of psychoanalysis if you don’t believe that it makes people who have completely grasped its meaning absolutely worthy of trust. . . .

Unfortunately—I can’t begin, you have to! After all, you are Ψτ. in person! (219–20)

The moral of this moving eulogy is not only that it is impossible to separate intellectual from personal concerns in the domain of psychoanalysis, but also that Ferenczi, as Freud’s best reader and most gifted pupil, may paradoxically have understood the lessons of this “master teacher of mankind” more profoundly than he did himself. Ferenczi’s “ideal of truth” is indeed the ideal of psychoanalysis, and nobody exemplified its “ennobling
power" more steadfastly than he. To his credit, he recognized that his
greatest discoveries could also be mistakes, that his creativity and healing
powers sprang from what, in a postscript to the above letter, he did not
scruple to call his "infantile weaknesses and exaggerations." Ferenczi paid
his teacher the ultimate tribute of going beyond him and becoming a
master in his own right. By doing so, he outgrew Freud's filial epithet—
at once honorific yet condescending—of "Paladin and Secret Grand
Vizier," and proved himself to be what each of us must become—"Ψα. in
person"—and our most trustworthy guide to its future.

Happily, this volume cannot claim to inaugurate the revival of interest in
Ferenczi's work, but rather to show the full flowering of his influence on
contemporary psychoanalysis. Among the handful of studies of Ferenczi
available in English, there is one anthology, expertly edited by Lewis Aron
and Adrienne Harris (1993), to which we stand in a sibling relation. But if
the controversies around Freud give no signs of simmering down, those
around Ferenczi are just beginning to heat up; and the lines of inquiry that
have been recently opened will not soon be exhausted.

This collection of essays by fifteen eminent scholars and clinicians from
six different countries is the most comprehensive and, I believe, most
rigorous examination of Ferenczi's legacy yet attempted. Although the
contributors concur in their assessment of Ferenczi's stature, they often
disagree in their judgments about his views, which underwent a lifelong
evolution, and his place in the history of psychoanalysis. For some, he is a
radically iconoclastic figure whose greatest contributions lie in his post-
1930 challenge to Freudian orthodoxy; for others, he is ultimately a classical
analyst who built on Freud's foundations. Thus, in the spirit of Ferenczi's
own tentativeness, the essays in this book constitute a dialogue in which
the questions are many and the answers open-ended.

The anthology has been divided into three parts. The essays in Part I,
"Contexts and Continuities," set Ferenczi against the backdrop of his
political and cultural contexts, assess the history and distinctive features of
the Budapest School of psychoanalysis, and trace the ramifications of his
influence. Those in Part II, "Disciple and Dissident," address in varying
ways the central issue of Ferenczi's relationship to Freud. If, in the end,
Ferenczi was neither a disciple nor a dissident but a psychoanalytic original who defies categorization, it is still between the Scylla and Charybdis of these poles that he had to navigate. Finally, the essays in Part III, “Theory and Technique,” take up Ferenczi’s innovative contributions to psychoanalytic theory and his controversial ideas about technique. Despite the ease with which the essays fall into these clusters, however, their concerns are overlapping. Thus, Ferenczi’s ties to Freud and his views on theory and technique often find their way into Part I; technical and theoretical issues as well as broader concerns of background and influence surface in Part II; and Part III provides a reprise of previously articulated historical and personal themes.

We begin with André E. Haynal’s “Freud and His Intellectual Environment: The Case of Sándor Ferenczi.” As supervisor of the publication of the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence and author of the influential The Technique at Issue (1988) and other books, he is the dean of contemporary Ferenczi studies. Of Hungarian origin, Haynal has used his prestigious positions in both the psychoanalytic and academic worlds, as Ferenczi surely would have wanted him to do, to resist partisanship and bring people together on the common ground of psychoanalysis. In his paper, Haynal, in broad strokes, sketches Ferenczi’s intellectual milieu and his ideas with respect to object relations, countertransference, and unconscious communication. By showing how these originated out of the productive tensions in Ferenczi’s relationships with Freud and Rank, he makes the point that creativity in psychoanalysis is always a collaborative matter.

The succeeding two essays present complementary perspectives on psychoanalysis in Hungary. Michelle Moreau-Ricaud, a historian of psychoanalysis and practicing analyst in Paris, chronicles “The Founding of the Budapest School.” György Vikár, a past president of the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Association and a pupil of Imre Hermann, tells the story from inside in “The Budapest School of Psychoanalysis.” Their accounts contain a wealth of information about the sociocultural reasons for the avid reception of psychoanalysis in Hungary, which until World War I was politically united with Austria, and about the members of the Budapest School that formed around Ferenczi.

The final two essays in Part I chart the vicissitudes of Ferenczi’s fortunes
in America. John E. Gedo is one of this country’s most prolific and distinguished analysts, and in “O, Patria Mia” he surveys from his vantage point on Lake Michigan the panorama of those who, like himself, have come from Hungary to enrich American psychoanalysis. His contribution is at once a scintillating piece of intellectual history and a moving personal memoir. Ann-Louise S. Silver’s “Ferenczi’s Early Impact on Washington, D.C.” reflects her geographical and institutional ties to Chestnut Lodge Hospital. Silver highlights Ferenczi’s visit to Washington in 1927, his analysis of Clara Thompson, the close associate of Harry Stack Sullivan, and the role played by Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, who worked with Georg Groddeck before becoming director of Chestnut Lodge, as conduits between the old and new worlds. In closing, Silver notes the references to Groddeck in Harold Searles’s paper, “The Patient as Therapist to His Analyst” (1972), as an illustration of the ever-widening ripples of Ferenczi’s influence on contemporary clinicians.

Axel Hoffer, together with his brother Peter, translated and introduced Freud’s rediscovered Phylogenetic Fantasy and he has written the introduction to the second volume of the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence. We begin Part II with his “Asymmetry and Mutuality in the Analytic Relationship: Contemporary Lessons from the Freud-Ferenczi Dialogue.” In Hoffer’s work one can observe a liberal-minded, classically trained analyst coming to grips with Ferenczi’s challenge to the Freudian paradigm. Although Hoffer clearly hears Ferenczi’s late pleas on behalf of mutuality in the analytic relationship with sympathy, and argues that the analyst must be able to tolerate the tension produced by this inevitable pull within himself, he does not evade the conclusion that while the feelings produced in analysis are indeed real, the relationship is inherently asymmetrical and should remain that way for the good of the patient. Hoffer’s critique of Ferenczi is deeply meditated, and his comparison of the partners in mutual analysis to Hansel and Gretel lost in the woods should give pause to even his most ardent admirers.

Thierry Bokanowski, our second French contributor, displays intellectual rigor and flair in “Sándor Ferenczi: Negative Transference and Transference Depression.” The nub of Bokanowski’s argument is that Ferenczi as a child introjected a primary depression transmitted by his mother, who, it
Introduction

will be recalled, gave birth to twelve children, and that this replayed itself as a transference depression in his relationship with Freud. Bolstering the views I have outlined above, Bokanowski instances the death of Ferenczi’s sister Vilma at one year of age, when he himself was five, as a further factor that likely contributed to his mother’s depression. Bokanowski does not pathologize Ferenczi, but he does show the origins of many of his concepts in his personal ordeals. A similar stereoscopic focus on the relationship between Freud and Ferenczi and their ideas about theory and technique informs Martin S. Bergmann’s “The Tragic Encounter between Freud and Ferenczi and Its Impact on the History of Psychoanalysis.” Bergmann, whose lifetime of achievement has recently been honored by a Festschrift, The Scope of Psychoanalysis, contends that Ferenczi was neither an extender nor a heretic, but the first psychoanalytic modifier, and pleads for a healing of the tragic split between Freud and Ferenczi through an integration of their complementary models of the analytic enterprise.

Kathleen Kelley-Lainé’s paper adopts a more critical stance toward Freud. Hungarian by birth, raised in Anglophone Canada, and a member of the Paris Psychoanalytic Society, she brings a polyglot sensibility to bear in “Ferenczi’s Mother Tongue.” Concentrating on Ferenczi’s two major papers on language, “On Obscene Words” (1911) and “Confusion of Tongues between Adults and the Child,” Kelley-Lainé proposes that he experienced a “bilingual splitting” between Hungarian, his mother tongue, and German, metaphorically the paternal language of Freud. As long as Ferenczi confined himself to Freud’s theoretical discourse, all was well, but once he attempted to speak in his own idiom, Freud became frightened and turned away. Part II concludes with Christopher Fortune’s “Mutual Analysis: A Logical Outcome of Sándor Ferenczi’s Experiments in Psychoanalysis.” Fortune here pursues his already widely cited research on Elizabeth Severn, the patient known in the Clinical Diary as “R.N.” with whom Ferenczi took the leap of mutual analysis. Carefully weighing the factors that led Ferenczi to resort to this extreme measure, Fortune sees it as having been at once “a hero’s and a fool’s journey,” an immensely productive and illuminating but also dangerous and ultimately impossible experiment.

The essays in Part III exhibit no less diversity than those of the foregoing sections. In “Hermann’s Concept of Clinging in Light of Modern Drive
Wolfgang Berner, a former president of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, argues that Imre Hermann’s early understanding of attachment remains more sophisticated than that of his renowned British scion, John Bowlby. Berner bolsters his contention with case materials drawn from his work with pedophilic patients, and his effort to reconcile attachment with drive theory exemplifies the belief of a classical analyst in the underlying compatibility between the heritages of Ferenczi and Freud.

Because shame is linked to body image, it can reflect anxieties of castration or mutilation. In “Castration and Narcissism in Ferenczi,” Michèle Bertrand, a philosopher and psychoanalyst in Paris, investigates Ferenczi’s understanding of the connections between these two pivotal psychoanalytic concepts. Although in his earlier writings Ferenczi adhered to Freud’s definition of the castration complex as pertaining specifically to the threatened loss of the penis, he came increasingly to emphasize broader concerns of trauma, psychic pain, and narcissistic injury. Examining many of Ferenczi’s papers, including those on war neuroses, tics, and Gulliver fantasies, as well as Thalassa, Bertrand deftly balances his perspective and Freud’s, concluding that castration must be defined more broadly to include all of its avatars.

As befits Ferenczi’s own commitment to psychoanalysis as a means of therapy, even for the most disturbed patients, the last three essays in this volume directly address issues of technique. Like Bertrand, Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch is both a philosopher and a practicing analyst. She is, moreover, one of the coeditors of the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence. Contrary to the widespread tendency to oversimplify Ferenczi by focusing on only one phase of his work, Giampieri-Deutsch’s “The Influence of Ferenczi’s Ideas on Contemporary Standard Technique” attends to each of his major technical experiments—activity, relaxation, and mutual analysis—and stresses the need for historical contextualization. While giving due weight to the originality of Ferenczi’s ideas on transference, countertransference, repetition, and empathy, Giampieri-Deutsch resists any attempt to cast Freud and Ferenczi as polar opposites. The classical temperament of Giampieri-Deutsch, a member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, recalls that of Wolfgang Berner.

By contrast, Rebecca Curtis, a psychoanalyst trained in the interpersonal
tradition, proffers “A New World Symphony: Ferenczi and the Integration of Nonpsychoanalytic Techniques into Psychoanalytic Practice.” With the aid of several clinical vignettes, Curtis defends the blending of psychoanalytic and other therapeutic methods derived from cognitive, encounter, experiential, and gestalt traditions. Agreeing with Giampieri-Deutsch about the dangers of schematization, Curtis invokes Ferenczi to admonish analysts about their own resistances to change.

Our final essay is Judith E. Vida’s “The ‘Wise Baby’ Grows Up: The Contemporary Relevance of Sándor Ferenczi.” A psychiatrist with impeccable analytic credentials, Vida is a founding member of the freestanding Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles. She expounds Ferenczi’s memorable concept of the “wise baby,” heretofore used principally as a pejorative tag for Ferenczi himself, as a metaphor for the premature ego development that results from childhood trauma. After reviewing Ferenczi’s allusions to the wise baby, Vida presents the case history of a patient who both exemplifies Ferenczi’s notion and highlights its possible limitations. If, in the end, Vida accepts the traditional diagnosis of Ferenczi as a wise baby, it is because, like her patient, he has something to teach us that disturbs our complacency and we may still be not quite ready to hear.

NOTES

1. As Louis A. Sass has remarked, the paradoxical concept of human subjectivity as “both a knowing subject and a primary object of knowing” was decisively introduced by Kant, whose self-reflexive focus “had the effect of turning subjectivity into a prime object of study, an empirical entity that would itself be investigated by newly developing human sciences that aspired to specify the nature or explain the sources of these very categories or cultural forms” (1994, 80–81). If, as Sass’s account implies, psychoanalysis has its philosophical roots in the Kantian tradition, it must likewise acknowledge its kinship to schizophrenia, which represents this modern condition of hyper-consciousness in its diseased form. (Freud’s 1910 monograph on Schreber, which forms the backdrop to the “Palermo incident” with Ferenczi—to be discussed later—and harks back to the themes of paranoia and homosexuality in his relationship with Fliess, provides the textual conjunction between psychoanalysis and schizophrenia.) But although self-consciousness has a potentially paralyzing effect, it can, I believe, also lead to health, much in the manner of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, which, as Sass shows, seeks to tread the tightrope of thought in order to restore human beings to the ground of ordinary
experience. The continuity between the philosophies of Kant and Wittgenstein is thus ultimately a variation on the Romantic topos of an "odyssey of consciousness," which, as I have argued in *Freud and Oedipus* (1987), underlies the psychoanalytic enterprise.

2. In English, see above all Haynal (1988), Stanton (1991), and Aron and Harris (1993). Among the works in other languages are Sabourin (1985), Harmat (1988), and Bertrand et al. (1994).

3. The titles by which both these texts are known in English are embellishments of their sober German originals. *Thalassa* is actually *Versuch einer Genitaltheorie*; and *A Phylogenetic Fantasy*, one of Freud's seven lost metapsychological papers, *Übersicht der Übertragungsneurosen*. But given their unscientific nature, the desire of their English translators to cast them as imaginative works is readily comprehensible.

4. A similar score-settling vis-à-vis Rank occurs in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939, 125). In this powerful deployment of public narratives to promote his own view of personal and ideological conflicts, which goes back to the *History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement* (1914), Freud sets a precedent for Jones in his biography.

5. Ferenczi's infatuation with Elma Pálos followed, from Freud's perspective, hard on the heels of Jung's imbroglio with his patient Sabina Spielrein and ran concurrently with Jones's affair with the morphine-addicted Loe Kann, whom he brought to Vienna for analysis with Freud in October 1912. It is not difficult to sympathize with Freud's exasperation at the sexual exploits of his lieutenants. See also Ernst Falzeder's (1994) discussion of Freud's own countertransferential struggles during this period with his "grand-patient," Elfriede Hirschfeld, and her role in his quarrels with Jung and Oskar Pfister in Zurich.

6. In an undated letter to Freud probably from the summer of 1912, Ferenczi states that he has "constantly sought to come to grips with painful insights that have to do with Frau G.'s age and the sexual intercourse with her that is not entirely satisfying physically" (Brabant et al. 1992, 383). There is no reason to think that Ferenczi and Elma ever consummated their relationship. Ferenczi's grief over his childlessness gives an ironic twist to Freud's praise of *Thalassa* as his "most fertile" achievement. Although this appears to be inadvertent, there is deliberate cruelty in Freud's exhortation, in a letter of May 12, 1932, that Ferenczi "leave that island of dreams which you inhabit with your fantasy-children and once again join in mankind's struggles" (Dupont 1985, xvi; see Stanton 1991, 49).

7. This letter to Groddeck also appears to call into question Ferenczi's assertion that Freud had overlooked his negative transference. But although it confirms that his hostility toward Freud came up in conversation between them, and indeed that Freud had evidently alluded to it on at least one prior occasion, it does not contradict Ferenczi's allegation that it had not figured during his three periods of *analysis* by Freud, and that he had rather arrived at this insight independently through self-analysis. Ferenczi's crucial letter of January 17, 1930, and other relevant documents, is quoted by Judith Dupont in her introduction to the *Clinical Diary* (1985, xiii).

8. I have cited only the most salient details of this letter, which consists of an extended exegesis of a dream. Among much else, Ferenczi alludes to an experience
of having been forced to perform fellatio at the age of five by an older playmate and rehearses the same symptoms of breathlessness, insomnia, and chills detailed in the Christmas 1921 letter to Groddeck. Of particular note to Freud scholars, Ferenczi interprets his dream as an attempt to ward off the threat of castration incurred by his illicit sexual desires for Elma by comparing them not only to his father's relations with his mother but also to Freud's voyage de lit-à-lit in Italy with his sister-in-law Minna Bernays. Although Ferenczi dismisses this as "only an infantile thought," it provides an important piece of corroboration for the theory, espoused preeminently by Peter Swales, that Freud engaged in an affair with Minna Bernays.

9. In the Clinical Diary, Ferenczi describes the partners in mutual analysis as "two equally terrified children who compare their experiences, and because of their common fate understand each other completely and instinctively" (Ferenczi 1985, 56). For a critique of this model of analysis, see Axel Hoffer's contribution to this volume.

10. A striking analogue to the multiple levels of Ferenczi's emotional life, in which the mother rather than the father is the chief instigator of trauma, with corresponding (and explicitly formulated) consequences for the theory of the Oedipus complex, is found in the case of Harry Guntrip (Rudnytsky 1991, 115–48).

11. On the eve of his rupture with Freud, Jung, in a letter of March 3, 1912, quoted to Freud an extended passage from Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra, which begins: "One repays a teacher badly if one always remains nothing but a pupil." As I have previously argued (1987, 221–23), had Freud been a better Nietzschean and a more magnanimous soul, he would have issued this warning himself, instead of having it flung at him as a reproach by his heir apparent. The passage likewise glosses Ferenczi's relationship to Freud, and it is ultimately he (and, in a different way, Rank) who best embodies the Nietzschean spirit in psychoanalysis.

REFERENCES


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