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Psychoanalysis

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## FLIGHT INTO SANITY

### JONES'S ALLEGATION OF FERENCZI'S MENTAL DETERIORATION RECONSIDERED

CARLO BONOMI, FLORENCE

*In 'The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud', Volume III, Ernest Jones explained Ferenczi's final contributions as the product of a mental deterioration based on a progressive psychosis. Erich Fromm collected various testimonies by witnesses of Ferenczi's last years, all contrasting with Jones's assertions, and challenged Jones's manner of writing history. However, since Fromm was himself a dissident, and his witnesses were pupils, relatives or friends of Ferenczi's, they were discarded as 'partisans'. The present study aims at reconsidering the question of Ferenczi's insanity on the basis of many unpublished documents. The consulted documents do not support Jones's allegation of Ferenczi's insanity. At the same time, they show that Jones's allegation was not a one-man fabrication, but reflected a shared belief, eliciting many questions about the nature of this belief, the lack of scrutiny that characterised its spreading, and its possible function within the psychoanalytic community. It is suggested that Ferenczi's personality and teaching, especially his emphasis on the need to accept the patient's criticism, contrasted with the dominant conception of psychoanalysis, based on the analyst's infallibility.*

'Freud's flight to sanity could be something we psychoanalysts are trying to recover from' (Winicott, 1964, p. 450).

#### INTRODUCTION: JONES'S ALLEGATION

Horacio Etchegoyen, the former President of the International Psychoanalytical Association, in the introduction to the Roster for 1996/7 included the following unusual lines:

I feel it is necessary to make some amendments to the list of Presidents for the sake of historic accuracy. When I visited Broomhills for the first time, I noticed a glaring omission in the portrait gallery of Presidents—Sándor Ferenczi. The founder of our Association at the Nuremberg Congress (1910) perhaps the first analyst in our history apart from Freud, Ferenczi was indeed President of the IPA. He was elected President at the 5th IPAC (Budapest, September 1918).

Etchegoyen then reconstructed the events that led Ferenczi—here qualified as 'generous and honest as ever'—to ask Ernest Jones to conduct the affairs of the IPA temporarily, in October 1919, and to resign at the Hague Congress, in 1920. While this act of reparation is certainly laudable, perhaps it is not sufficient.

In *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Ernest Jones—who was elected president of the IPA in 1920, 1922, 1932, 1934, 1936, 1938, and held the post till 1949, when he was appointed honorary president for life—explained the third wave of dissension (after Adler's and Jung's), as an effect of the progressive mental deterioration of two members of the Committee that governed the psychoanalytic movement:

Two of the members, Rank and Ferenczi, were not able to hold out to the end. Rank in a dramatic fashion presently to be described, and Ferenczi



more gradually towards the end of his life, *developed psychotic manifestations that revealed themselves in, among other ways, a turning away from Freud and his doctrines. The seed of a destructive psychosis, invisible for so long, at last germinated* (Jones, 1957, p. 47, my italics).

The 'heresy' at the centre of the crisis of 1924 consisted in the emphasis put by Rank and Ferenczi on experience (*Erlebnis*) in the psychoanalytic situation or, as put by Jones, in 'the theory that study of repeating experience could supersede the need for a deeper genetic analysis: that *Erlebnis* therapy could replace psychoanalysis' (Jones, 1957, p. 77). The crisis of 1924 ended with Rank's defection, in 1926, which resembled the defection of Jung, although 'Jung was not afflicted by any of the *mental trouble that wrecked Rank*' (p. 81, my italics). According to Jones, Ferenczi's mental troubles began to become apparent later when, after the disappointment at not having been made president, he withdrew from the concerns of the International Association and 'began to develop lines of his own which seriously diverged from those generally accepted in psycho-analytical circles' (p. 156), thus repeating the errors of Rank. These errors were not only theoretical and technical, but also based on Ferenczi's hostility towards Freud, which having been displaced on to Jones throughout 1929, finally found a direct expression at the end of the year and the beginning of 1930, when 'Ferenczi's mental health was seriously disturbed' (p. 158). Jones was referring to Ferenczi's complaint that Freud had not analysed his 'repressed hostility in the three weeks' analysis fifteen years ago', which was expressed in his letter to Freud of 17 January 1930, and later recalled by Freud in 'Analysis terminable and interminable' (1937). Jones also suggested that 'for some years Ferenczi had concealed from Freud his growing scientific divergencies' (1957, p. 158), and having described some aspect of his 'pathological isolation' and growing disagreement with Freud, presented the illness that caused his premature death, in 1933, in the following way:

The medical treatment was successful in holding the anaemia itself at bay, but in March the disease, as it sometimes does, attacked the spinal cord and brain, and the last couple of months of his life he was unable to stand or walk; this undoubtedly *exacerbated his latent psychotic trends* (p. 188, my italics).

According to Jones, the 'myth of Freud's ill-treatment of Ferenczi', sustained in America by former pupils of Ferenczi, notably Izette de Forest and Clara Thompson, was not only totally untrue, but it was 'highly probable that Ferenczi himself in his *final delusional state* believed in and propagated elements of it' (p. 188, my italics). Since shortly after the Reichstag fire in Berlin, in March 1933, Ferenczi urged Freud to flee Austria in order to escape the Nazi danger, Jones concluded that 'there was some method in his madness' (p. 189). Again Jones stressed that '*The mental disturbances* had been making rapid progress in the last few months' (p. 190, my italics), listing the following elements: his receiving telepathic messages from an American patient, his '*delusions* about Freud's supposed hostility', and his final '*violent paranoid and even homicidal outbursts*, which were followed by a sudden death on May 24' (p. 190, my italics; the exact day was 22 May; on 24 May Ferenczi was buried). The idea that Ferenczi's last period, including his technical innovations and theoretical contributions, was the expression of his progressive mental troubles was again implicated in Jones's conclusions: 'The lurking demons within, against whom Ferenczi had for years struggled with great distress and much success, conquered him at end' (p. 190).

Not everyone accepted these assertions. A few people protested when the third volume of Freud's biography appeared. Michael Balint, Ferenczi's closest disciple and his literary executor, was among the protestors, but judging it impossible to re-establish the truth under the given conditions, proposed to record the disagreement with Jones's allegation and 'trust the next generation with the task of sorting out the truth' (Balint, 1958, p. 66). In the last few years,



the general attitude towards Ferenczi and his work has markedly changed. However, the question of his alleged psychosis has been mainly avoided; and after forty years the *desideratum* of Balint has not yet been entirely fulfilled, despite some important contributions (Lorand, 1960; Hermann, 1974; Roazen, 1975, pp. 366-71; Dupont, 1987; Haynal, 1989, p. 54; Erös, 1989; Aron & Frankel, 1994). The aim of this paper is to make a further step in this direction. I will first outline the complex genesis of Jones's allegation, trying to identify the evidence on which Jones based his statements. In this regard I will briefly reconstruct the Freud-Ferenczi misunderstandings during 1929-1932, the period of Ferenczi's fatal illness (1932-1933), and Jones's views of Ferenczi from the obituary to the publication of *Freud, Volume III* (1957). Then I will turn to the reactions to Jones's allegation, attempting to assess the value of the protests and criticisms addressed to Jones. I will also focus on Jones's defensive line and discuss the question of the anonymous 'eye-witness'. Finally, I will attempt a reading of the possible function in the psychoanalytic community of the belief in Ferenczi's insanity.

#### FERENCZI'S CONFLICT WITH FREUD FROM THE OXFORD TO THE WIESBADEN CONGRESSES (1929-1932)

The letters between Ferenczi and Freud confirm that a main turn in the relationship between the two men was represented by Ferenczi's disappointment at not having been made president of the International Psychoanalytical Association at the Oxford Congress, in 1929. However, it is not true that Ferenczi 'began to develop lines of his own which seriously diverged from those generally accepted in psycho-analytical circles' as a consequence of

such disappointment, since the paper presented at the Oxford Congress was already an expression of this new direction.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, certain aspects of this new direction—such as the idea that the origin of neuroses was to be found in the unkindness or cruelty of parents—might have helped him to work out the disappointment, by facing the unloving aspects of Freud as an internalised father figure.

As Ferenczi later wrote in the *Clinical Diary* (note of 19 July 1932): 'I landed in the "service of love" of a strong man, remaining dependent' (Dupont, 1985, p. 159). The great dependence of Ferenczi on Freud is the basic element to be taken into account, and the one that allows us to see how his last period was conditioned by the effort to become independent. As pointed out by Judith Dupont,

The first time he lost Freud's total support, in relation to the book written jointly with Rank, he was dismayed and quickly tried to find his way back to a full agreement with Freud. But then he realised that he had to find his way out of that childish position. It seems that he had the necessary imagination, creativity, courage and intelligence for that, but not the inner strength (1994, pp. 317-8).

Now, in order to find his way out from his dependence on Freud, he inevitably had to reconsider his analysis with him, and identify the reasons why this experience had not made him free from such a dependence, but had on the contrary made it even stronger.

The answer he found was that in his analysis Freud had not perceived in him 'the partially transferred negative feelings and fantasies and brought them to abreaction' (Ferenczi to Freud, 17.1.1930). Freud expressed perplexity about the existence of such a negative reaction in Ferenczi's analysis, and replied: 'No, I rather

<sup>1</sup> As put by Jones himself: 'In the paper read at Oxford he denounced what he called the one-sidedness of paying so much attention to the phantasies of childhood and maintained that Freud's first view of aetiology had been the correct one: namely that the origin of neuroses was to be found in definite traumas, particularly the unkindness or cruelty of parents' (Jones, 1958, p. 156). The paper read by Ferenczi at the Oxford Congress was originally entitled 'Progresses in psycho-analytic technique'; its enlarged version was renamed 'The principle of relaxation and neocatharsis' (Ferenczi, 1929).



feel, that—probably because of the humiliation experienced by the presidential election—you reactivated the residues of your old neurosis'. Freud also noticed that, by referring to their analysis, Ferenczi had 'pushed' him back 'into the role of the analyst', a role which (he said) he 'never would have taken up again towards a proven friend' (Freud to Ferenczi, 20.1.1930). Ferenczi, in his turn, tried further to define what was happening between himself and Freud, suggesting that it was not 'a question of a reactivation' of his neurosis, 'but rather that a certain degree of inhibition never disappeared' in himself, so that he had to consider his speaking as 'a progress, the beginning of a more free, uninhibited relationship'. Thus Ferenczi considered his disclosures as a step out from his neurotic inhibition, which was constantly present and concerned not only his 'personal feelings', but also 'some scientific opinions'. Similarly, he claimed that he didn't want to push Freud back into the role of the analyst, but hoped for the possibility of an 'analytically free discussion' and 'mutual openness' between them (Ferenczi to Freud, 14.2.1930).

In these letters no evidence is found in favour of Jones's assertion that 'Ferenczi's mental health was seriously disturbed'. As we can see, both Freud and Ferenczi had a different view of what was going on, and each view was rather consistent. Moreover, it seems that Freud did not consider Ferenczi's dependence as a neurotic symptom, but rather as a service to the cause; or, at least, that he was ambivalent on this point, criticising it on the one hand, and profiting from it on the other.

In June 1931, Ferenczi tried to get Freud involved in his research. He explained that the direction in which he was moving was the generalisation of 'the point of view of the mastering of the trauma [*Traumabewältigung*] in sleep and dream' (Ferenczi to Freud, 14.6.1931), and

in September he disclosed his most intimate feelings about his research (Ferenczi to Freud, 15.9.1931). 'At last, again a sign of life and love from you!' Freud wrote in a letter in which he criticised the direction of Ferenczi's research and referred it to Ferenczi's 'third puberty'. He expected that Ferenczi would 'make an about-face' and would correct his errors, and to facilitate this change of direction, he proposed him as the future president of the IPA (Freud to Ferenczi, 18.9.1932). At the end of October, Ferenczi and Freud discussed these problems in Vienna, but failed to reach a mutual understanding. In December, Freud wrote the famous letter to him in which Ferenczi's technical experiments were made equal to a 'kissing technique', which would open the door to an erotic escalation. Ferenczi experienced Freud's comment as the first disagreement (*Nichteinverständnis*) in their relationship, and explained that he aimed at creating a 'mild atmosphere, free from passion' (Ferenczi to Freud, 27.12.1931). A few days later he began to write the *Clinical Diary*, where his experiences and reflections were noted for future readers. Significantly, the first page was dedicated to the question of Clara Thompson's 'kiss', as if the diary was replacing the broken dialogue with Freud.<sup>2</sup>

Freud again asked Ferenczi to accept the presidency in May 1932. This time the proposal was first accepted, but at the last moment Ferenczi announced his refusal. He was engaged in a revision of the principle of psychoanalysis, and didn't feel himself in the role of a president, whose task was to 'preserve' what already existed (Ferenczi to Freud, 21.8.1932 and 29.8.1932). But perhaps this was not the only reason. Ferenczi probably understood that, with the presidency, he would also have accepted the control of Freud. The point is that Freud offered him the presidency as a

<sup>2</sup> In the *Clinical Diary*, Ferenczi discusses the meaning and effect of his 'passivity' in relation to her patient's sexual conduct (Dupont, 1985, p. 2). It is to be noted that, via Jones, Freud's misunderstanding grew into the persisting 'myth' of Ferenczi's position as advocating patient/therapist sexual relations (Kaplan, 1975). As pointed out by Ernst Falzeder (personal communication), 'while it is clear that Clara Thompson boasted that "she" could kiss Ferenczi, the reproach until this day is that "he" kissed his patients'. See also below, note 15.



'forcible cure' for his isolation, evidently because he saw the weakening of the bond to the common cause as an 'illness', and assumed that once he had restored the process of identification, the problems concerning the theory and technique would have been overcome. Indeed, it was this process of identification that Ferenczi actually refused.

Freud was unable to tolerate such a refusal, and experienced the renunciation as the repetition of Rank's betrayal. To Eitingon, he wrote (on 24.8.1932) that Ferenczi's refusal was a neurotic action of hostility towards the father and the brothers, in order to preserve the regressive pleasure of playing the mother role with his patients. At the same time Radó and Brill visited Ferenczi in Budapest, and then reported their impressions to Freud who wrote to Eitingon on 29 August: 'Ferenczi apparently looks awful, chalk pale and deeply depressed. Radó, whose understanding is razor-sharp, thinks he is in an advanced state of sclerotic degeneration. I would prefer to attribute much of the impression to the conflict which is shaking him, its resolution is evidently causing him great difficulties' (quoted in Molnar, 1992, pp. 130-1). Eitingon's reply was that he didn't find 'Radó's diagnosis' convincing; however it was true that Ferenczi was very sick (Eitingon to Freud, 30.8.1932).

On 2 September 1932, Ferenczi stopped in Vienna on his way to the Congress of Wiesbaden, in order to read to Freud the paper 'The passions of adults and their influence on the sexual and character development of children' (later renamed 'Confusion of tongues between adults and the child') before its presentation at the Congress. It was the last encounter between the two men. Freud described it the day after, in a report addressed to his daughter Anna: Ferenczi, who 'exuded an icy coldness', began to read his lecture without 'further question or greeting'. In the paper, Ferenczi had 'totally regressed' to his old aetiological views about sexual traumas in childhood, used almost the same words he used then, and inserted 'in the middle of it all remarks about the hostility of patients and the necessity of accepting their

criticism and admitting one's error to them' (3.9.1932; quoted in Molnar, 1992, p. 131). In short, the paper appeared 'stupid' to Freud. Yet, it was the product of Ferenczi's latest research and its novelty consisted precisely in the assumption of an intimate link between the original trauma and its re-enactment within the analytic relationship. Given the tendency to repeat the trauma within the actual relationship, Ferenczi was saying that the analyst's only way to avoid the patient's re-traumatisation was to accept his criticism and admit his errors to him. Thus, the aetiological views and the 'remarks about the hostility of patients' were not at all disconnected. Had Freud understood this connection, he would not have thought that Ferenczi had simply regressed to his old views. But Freud rejected the possibility that Ferenczi had something new to say, and split off the reflection about the analyst's response to the patient's hostility from the aetiological consideration.

How was it that Freud had not understood the content of the paper? In my opinion, Ferenczi was not only presenting an abstract theory, but was also expecting Freud to behave like the analyst he was portraying. Ferenczi himself was behaving like the patient he was portraying, by showing his 'hostility' to Freud, and by asking him 'to accept his criticism and admit his errors to him'. In a way he was forcing Freud to react to his 'hostility', hoping for Freud's acceptance of it. (I am referring here to a form of hostility that today may be perceived as mild and even healthy, since it fosters criticism and independence, but that could appear intolerable for the society Freud belonged to.) In my opinion Freud understood this underlying personal request, but was not available to accept it. He had no inclination to follow Ferenczi in a direction that implicated a critical reconsideration of himself and a modification of his relationship with Ferenczi. Thus, his failure to understand the paper at an intellectual level was subordinated to his emotional reaction to Ferenczi's request. Yet, this lack of understanding became a sort of catalyst: the rejection of the moderate expression of 'hostil-



ity' had a magnifying effect on it, and Ferenczi's paper about the traumatic effect of misunderstanding itself resulted in a trauma.

Ferenczi was shocked by the way Freud had treated him. In the letter he sent to Freud after the episode, two 'symptomatic' elements are especially stressed: that Freud let a third person (Brill) participate in the encounter in the position of 'witness or helper', and that Freud asked him to refrain from publishing the paper, as if it would damage either himself or the cause (Ferenczi to Freud, 27.9.1932). Ferenczi also told Izette de Forest and Clara Thompson that he was especially hurt by the fact that Freud had refused to shake hands (see below). Moreover, since according to Lévy's report (see below), Ferenczi developed a walking paralysis at the moment of leaving, it seems plausible to link the two facts, and question why Freud's refusal to shake hands had such a shocking effect.

Here one is reminded of the fact that Ferenczi himself refused to shake hands with Rank, after Rank's turning away from Freud, when they casually met in New York in 1926. This episode suggests that the 1932 scene was overdetermined in a way that can be better understood considering a third level of communication. Ferenczi was not only pleading the legitimacy of the patient's criticism within analysis, he was also advocating for himself a critical position within the psychoanalytic movement. That is, beyond hoping for a new type of emotional response, he was also hoping for a new reaction of Freud as leader of the psychoanalytic movement. However, Freud's symbolic abandonment was pushing him into the role either of dissident or of faithful follower. And the point is that Ferenczi, who had no inclination for clear-cut choices, was neither sufficiently insincere to simulate the faith that was lacking, nor sufficiently courageous to think of himself outside of the psychoanalytic movement. Here we touch upon one of the constitutive elements of the trauma: the impossibility of keeping one's previous identity or changing it. Ferenczi's walking paralysis at the

moment of leaving appears to have been a symbol of this impossibility of being.

Jones referred to this situation as the 'myth of Freud's ill-treatment of Ferenczi'. These letters, however, already represent a first indication that Ferenczi had really been ill-treated on the occasion of his last visit to Freud, although the traumatic effect of the visit depended on Ferenczi's personality and history. Moreover, he was probably already ill. At the end of August he appeared sick to Brill, Radó and Eitingon, and again, at the beginning of September, in his report to Freud of the Wiesbaden Congress, Jones described Ferenczi as a sick man, 'also physically', who made a very 'pathetic' impression. In this letter we also find the germs of Jones's later allegation:

In the first place will you allow me to express my sympathy over the difficulty that has arisen with your oldest and dearest analytical friend. I know that you will not be tempted to copy old Kaiser (*'mir bleibt aber auch nichts erspart'*) because your calibre is too tough, and you are surrounded both by affection and by followers whose acceptance of the unconscious is unbreakable. To Eitingon it came as a shock of surprise, to you probably less so. To me not at all, for I have followed F's evolution (including the pathological side) closely for many years, and knew it could only be a question of time before this denouement arrived. Abraham and I drew him forcibly back from the precipice at the Rank time, and lately Rickman's regular reports of his analysis showed me clearly the direction things were going. His exceptionally deep need of being loved, together with the repressed sadism, are plainly behind the tendency to ideas of persecution. My reaction was therefore very simple: first the cause, then everything to keep him with us (Jones to Freud, 9.9.1932, in Paskauskas, 1993, p. 706).

These lines are extremely important for assessing the genesis of Jones's later allegation. We find here the idea of a pathological evolution, which, after the subsequent course of Ferenczi's illness, will turn into the diagnosis of a progressive and destructive psychosis. Which kind of pathological evolution is here in ques-





tion? First of all, we have to consider that it was not the first time that such an idea appeared. We have already found traces of the idea of 'an advanced state of sclerotic degeneration' suggested in August by Radó. 'Radó's diagnosis' was elicited by Ferenczi's poor physical state, but the context within which the physical impressions acquired their meaning was the increasing conflict between Ferenczi and Freud. The function of this context was remarked on by Ferenczi in the *Clinical Diary* (note of 2.10.1932): 'I did indeed also feel abandoned by colleagues (Radó etc.) who are too afraid of Freud to behave objectively or even sympathetically towards me, in the case of a dispute between Freud and me' (Dupont, 1985, p. 212). Similarly, in Jones's report of the Wiesbaden Congress, the reassurance that Freud was 'surrounded both by affection and by followers whose acceptance of the unconscious is unbreakable', besides insinuating the idea that Ferenczi did not accept 'the unconscious', suggests that the main question concerned Ferenczi's estrangement from Freud and from his doctrine. We should also add that, within a group dynamic highly characterised by the expectation of a new 'betrayal'—the repetition of Rank's apostasy—the tendency to pathologise the traitor was enhanced. Within these kinds of expectations Ferenczi's poor physical condition was experienced as evidence of an evolution which finally became pathological also in a physical sense.

Radó, however, in spite of his low poor opinion of Ferenczi's technical research, would not maintain the validity of his 'diagnosis' (see Roazen & Swerdloff, 1995, pp. 106-8), while Jones would keep it and progressively transform the vague idea of a pathological evolution into a psychiatric diagnosis. Indeed, in his report to Freud of the Wiesbaden Congress, he says that he had followed Ferenczi's evolution 'closely for many years, and knew it could only be a question of time before this denouement arrived' (see above). One of the main pieces of evidence of this pathological evolution was Rickman's analysis with Ferenczi: Jones had received regular reports from Rickman about

that analysis, and these reports had showed him 'clearly the direction things were going' (see above). While from today's perspective it is doubtful that the reports of an analysand about his own analysis can be considered an evidence of the analyst's pathology (especially if they are made to a powerful analyst who also is an enemy of the analysand's analyst), at that time the boundaries were much more blurred and abuses more common. However, in this case Jones's behaviour probably was not naïve, since the question of using analysands for spying on an analyst's technique had already been raised in the Secret Committee. Indeed, it was one of the elements that precipitated the crisis of 1924 and the subsequent elimination of Rank.

In the circular letter of 4 January 1924, Rank complained that Mr Moxon, a patient of his who had been in Berlin to study psychoanalysis, had reluctantly told him that many colleagues had enquired about his analysis with Rank and his analyst's technique. Their devaluation of his analyst's technique did not go unnoticed by the patient, and this made him unsure of himself in relation to his studies in Berlin and his analysis. Therefore Rank wrote that he considered '1. this kind of analytic spying [*Spitzeltum*] unfair and 2. irresponsible in relation to someone who has been just analysed' (quoted in Wittenberger, 1995, p. 278), and that he would not send any more analysands to Berlin. Since Abraham was under 'superpressure', the question raised by Rank remained unanswered for many weeks. Finally the answer came from Eitingon, who maintained that the three of them (i.e. Abraham, Sachs and Eitingon) did not know who, among their members, had been moved by the curiosity about what an analysis with Rank was, and assured Rank that what occurred might have lacked tact, but was not 'spying' (p. 278).

The Berliners denied that what had occurred was 'spying' because they had not collected the information. Now, according to the same criteria, Jones's use of Rickman's reports has definitively to be qualified as 'spying'. Thus, these reports speak probably more



about Jones's ethical standards than about Ferenczi's pathology. Yet the problem is that the members of the Secret Committee were committed to the preservation of Freud's doctrine, so that if they were using analysis for spying, it was because they were worried about their colleague's possible betrayal. In other words, Jones was probably convinced that he was behaving in such a way for a noble reason: the same noble reason for which the Secret Committee had been created after the defection of Jung. Finally, we should question if in such a situation the distinction between deviation from orthodoxy and pathological decompensation was still possible. Similarly, we should realise that the slightest signs of deviation could easily be magnified and used for getting rid of the adversaries.<sup>3</sup>

Jones's letter to Freud of 9 September 1932 indicates that he had actively been searching for the signs of Ferenczi's deviation for many years, and that these signs became the core around which the negative impressions were organised into a morbid picture at the time of the Wiesbaden Congress. It also shows that this morbid picture of Ferenczi was shared by an entire group of persons, and that it emerged at the precise moment when Ferenczi lost Freud's protection. In other words, Freud's treatment of Ferenczi in Vienna acted as a prompt and releasing factor for a collective reaction, by which Ferenczi was symbolically banished from the community. Eitingon, van Ophuijsen and Brill wanted to hinder the expression of Ferenczi's ideas, but Jones opposed this solution and Ferenczi was allowed to make his presentation; but the result was nevertheless the same, since his ideas were considered 'a tis-

sue of delusions' (see below). Thus, Ferenczi was not banished from the community in a physical sense, but was ejected from the symbolic boundaries of the community, and located outside of its common sense.<sup>4</sup>

#### FERENCZI'S FATAL ILLNESS (1932-1933)

At the Wiesbaden Congress Jones was elected president. On 12 September 1932, Freud congratulated him, writing that he was 'sorry that Ferenczi's obvious ambition could not be satisfied, but then there was not a moment's doubt that only you [Jones] have the competence for the leadership' (Paskauskas, 1993, p. 708). Such praise is a good example of Freud's capacity for adjusting himself to the interlocutor. Indeed, it was not 'Ferenczi's ambition' that failed to be satisfied, but Freud's plan, since until the very last moment, Freud expected Ferenczi to accept the presidency. Freud's wound, in this regard, is both reflected and denied in the next sentence: 'To be sure, Ferenczi's change is most regrettable, but there is nothing traumatic about it'. It is precisely at this point of the letter, in the explanation why Ferenczi's change was not 'traumatic', that we find the germ of Freud's later diagnosis of Ferenczi:

For three years already I have been observing his [Ferenczi's] increasing alienation, his unreceptiveness to warnings about his technical errors and, what is probably most crucial, a personal hostility towards me for which I have certainly given him even less cause than in previous cases. Except for the fact that I am still here. Unfortunately in his case the regressive intellectual and affective devel-

<sup>3</sup> As pointed out by Zilboorg in his review of Jones's *Freud, Volume III*, 'Freud's loyalty to Jung, to Rank, to Ferenczi, and to others always outlasted the loyalty of Jones and of Abraham to them. Freud defended Rank to the last, was willing to make allowances, while Jones and Abraham were ready to drop Rank much sooner and to discard Ferenczi much earlier' (Zilboorg, 1958, p. 256).

<sup>4</sup> It should also be noted that in the letter of Jones the descriptions of Ferenczi's concrete behaviour show no traces of paranoia. Jones explained that he opposed the solution of withdrawing Ferenczi's paper, since it would have fed his pathological ideas. According to Jones, letting Ferenczi make his presentation was successful 'for Ferenczi, finding himself welcomed and listened to, visibly expanded and day by day identified himself ever more with the interests and plans, business, etc., of the *Vereinigung*; he felt himself one of us ...' (Paskauskas, 1993, p. 707).



opment seems to have a background of physical decline (p. 709).

After the Wiesbaden Congress Ferenczi was very sick, and only one month later it was found that he was affected by pernicious anaemia. In October, thanks to liver therapy, his condition improved. Freud wrote about Ferenczi to Jeanne Lampl de Groot twice, first about the diagnosis (on 8.10.1932) and a second time about the good results of the liver-therapy (on 23.10.1932). In this second letter he added: 'Our relations are broken, but his physician Dr. Lévy keeps me informed'. Lajos Lévy was not only Ferenczi's physician but also a member of the psychoanalytic community. Ferenczi knew that he kept Freud informed (cf. Ferenczi to Freud, 29.3.1933). Two weeks later Freud wrote to Eitingon:

Lévy informs me regularly about Ferenczi's state. The liver-therapy has produced a rapid and wide improvement of the blood-test. I am rightly doubtful whether it will have an effect on his psychic attitudes, as Lévy hopes. I believe that he has gone too far, for finding again the way back. The mere consideration for his patients would not permit it. Moreover, if he wants to publish [the Wiesbaden paper], I cannot see how we could stop him ... (Freud to Eitingon, 3.11.1932)

Significantly, Ferenczi's expected 'psychic improvement' consisted in his finding the way back to Freud, which Lévy was hoping for while Freud was doubting. From these lines it seems that Freud made no distinction between Ferenczi's mental pathology and Ferenczi's attitude towards Freud himself. It was because of this lack of distinction that Ferenczi's willingness to publish the Wiesbaden paper, in spite of Freud's contrary advice, could represent a symbolic break point.

At the New Year, Ferenczi sent his greetings to Freud, as he had done for the last twenty-four years. In his reply, Freud described their

former relationship as a 'fellowship of life, thoughts, and interests' (Freud to Ferenczi, 11.1.1933). On 27 March 1933 Freud received news about Ferenczi's condition, probably through an intermediary of Lajos Lévy (Molnar, 1992, p. 144). Two days later, on 29 March 1933, Ferenczi resumed contact with Freud in order to advise him to leave Vienna as soon as possible and go to England with his daughter Anna, because of the threat represented by the Hitler regime. Ferenczi added: 'Dr. Lévy considers my advice too pessimistic, perhaps he relates it to my generally depressed (pathologic) mood'. Indeed, in the same letter, which had evident traces of his motor impairment, Ferenczi also informed Freud of a new relapse: 'Perhaps you have heard from Dr. Lévy that in recent weeks I have endured a relapse of the symptoms of my previous illness (Anaem. pernic.), but this time less as a worsening of my blood count than as a sort of nervous breakdown [*nervösem Zusammenbruch*] from which I am only slowly recovering'.

During this period Ferenczi was regularly visited by Clara Thompson, who would later write: 'He began to show signs of spinal cord degeneration ... He had difficulty walking, and fell once for no apparent reason. He was worried about it and feared he had general paresis (brain deterioration from syphilis)' (testimony of 5.11. 1957; see below). Thus, what Ferenczi described in his letter to Freud as 'nervous breakdown' appears to correspond to the temporary self-explanation of his motor impairment as caused by syphilis.<sup>5</sup> On 2 April, Freud replied that he would not take flight from Vienna. He did not see any reason for it: it was not certain that Hitler would take possession of Austria, and in any case the regime would not be as brutal as in Germany. This was Freud's last letter to Ferenczi, who, on 9 April, replied: 'Your friendly and empathic letter made a deep and beneficial impression on me'. He also added that his view about the urgency to take flight from Vienna was attenuated, and that he

<sup>5</sup> It should be recalled that syphilis-phobia was one of the symptoms that led Ferenczi to ask Freud to take him into analysis in 1912. See Ferenczi's letter to Freud of 26.12.1912 and Bonomi (1997).



had followed Lévy's and Freud's advice to suspend work.

Though the letter of 2 April was the last one that Freud addressed to Ferenczi, further references to Ferenczi's illness can be found in his correspondence of this period. Thus, on 3 April Freud wrote to Eitingon that 'Ferenczi had a severe delusional breakdown [*wahnhaften Ausbruch*]', which appeared to be overcome according to [*nach dem Zeugnis*] his last letter. Again, Freud referred to Ferenczi's 'delusions' in the letter of 15 April, which was addressed to Jeanne Lampl, after having read Ferenczi's expression of his warm feeling of gratitude and love:

Ferenczi, whose delusions [*Wahnbildungen*] have already reached an uncanny strength (accompanied by the most remarkable bodily symptoms of regression), is returning to sober-mindedness, writes friendly letters, and allows himself to be convinced to leave work for weeks. Perhaps he is only dissimulating (Freud to Jeanne Lampl de Groot, 15.4.1933).

We can see here the way in which Ferenczi's self-description of his relapse as a 'nervous breakdown' was transformed by Freud into a 'delusive breakdown'. It also seems that Freud assimilated this 'delusion' to Ferenczi's worry for Freud's safety and urge to leave Vienna because of the Nazi threat. Freud did not believe that Ferenczi's perception of the danger represented by the Nazis was realistic, but considered it a delusion with 'an uncanny strength'. However, the only 'uncanny' element which is to be found in these letters is Freud's suspicion that, by his friendly attitude, Ferenczi was 'dissimulating' his concealed hostility. Probably Freud considered Ferenczi's idea that his life was threatened, as a disguised expression of Ferenczi's own hostility.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the

question of Freud's perception and reception of Ferenczi's 'hostility' played a crucial role in the whole story. On the one hand, Ferenczi wanted Freud to recognise his own 'hostility', i.e. to modify the image of obedient son that Freud had of him and, consequently, their personal and intellectual relationship. On the other side, Freud oscillated from the tendency of not seeing such hostility at all, to the tendency of magnifying it and considering it totally unmanageable, in a way which, sometimes, raises the question of his own paranoid elements.

Ferenczi died five weeks later, on 22 May 1933. His last letter to Freud consisted of good wishes for his birthday. It was written from bed, and his wife Gisella added a few words on the back to inform him of the seriousness of the situation; she also told Freud that Sándor 'was no more the same as he was before' (Ferenczi to Freud, 4.5.1933)—which also means that until the last months of life Ferenczi *had* remained the same. Indirect evidence of Ferenczi's mental condition is represented by a letter he wrote to Emilia Mayer-Gallin on 17 May 1933. The letter, half a page long, typewritten and signed by hand, consists in the lucid and caring reply to someone who had sent him a manuscript about her self-analysis. The letter terminates with the following line: 'Nothing but a physical illness, which took a rather long time, could have hindered me from sending you my sincere thanks for your writings', informing us that Ferenczi's physical condition went through a transitory improvement in the period before his death, which occurred only five days later. His death was defined as 'sudden' in the letter written by Géza Róheim to Jones on 28 May 1933, informing him of the loss. Róheim briefly summarised the course of Ferenczi's illness: he was unwell at Wiesbaden, picked up in

<sup>6</sup> In 1957 Jones still presented Ferenczi's advice to Freud based on his fear of the Nazis as delusional, in spite of what had happened(!). According to Clara Thompson, Ferenczi's fear of the Nazis originated one year before. She wrote in her 1957 testimony (see below): 'He was very worried about Hitler (this was 1932). He talked of wanting to find an island somewhere to escape. Considering what had happened, he was not too abnormally apprehensive. I know he had been collecting foreign money in Switzerland, certainly not the activity of a madman'.



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Autumn and could work till Easter, when 'he had to give up analysing because he was too fatigued by his illness to concentrate' and was bedridden. Then he began to feel better, when suddenly he died. Also Imre Hermann, who visited Ferenczi a few days before his death, found him in his usual mental state (Hermann, 1974, p. 116). Beside Freud's re-interpretation of Ferenczi's own reference to a 'nervous breakdown', no evidence of a psychotic process is to be found in these documents.

On 22 May 1933 Freud described the contradictory feelings aroused by Ferenczi's departure in a letter to Jeanne Lampl de Groot:

A confused feeling, on the one hand of relief that he has now escaped the terrible decay—in the final weeks he could neither stand nor walk and the delusions were worse than we knew—on the other, only now the pain at the loss of the old, what he meant for us, even though he had withdrawn from us years ago. But there is a particular violence about the conclusive brutal fact (quoted in Molnar, 1992, p. 151).

One week later, on 29 May, Freud wrote the letter to Jones, which has been considered one of the main sources for Jones's later allegations. Indeed, in this letter Freud tends to see Ferenczi's alienation from him, his new psychoanalytic views and his illness as a single morbid process. In it, after having characterised the loss of Ferenczi as 'great and painful', Freud added:

To be sure, the loss was not a new one; for years Ferenczi has no longer been with us, indeed, not even with himself. It is now easier to comprehend the slow process of destruction to which he fell victim. During the last two years it expressed itself organically in pernicious anaemia, which soon led to severe motor disturbances. Liver therapy improved the condition of his blood, but had no effect on the other symptoms. In his last weeks he could no longer walk or stand at all. Simultaneously a mental degeneration in the form of paranoia developed with uncanny logical consistency. Central to this was the conviction that I did not love him enough, did not want to

acknowledge his work, and also that I had analysed him badly. His technical innovations were connected with this, as he wanted to show me how lovingly one has to treat one's patients in order to help them. These were indeed regression to his childhood complexes, the main grievance being that his mother had not loved him—a middle child among 11 or 13—passionately or exclusively enough. So he himself became a better mother, even found the children he needed ... (Paskauskas, 1993, p. 721).

Here Freud is speaking—and leaking—as Ferenczi's analyst. In spite of his unwillingness to being taken up into such a role, Freud had developed a complete theory on Ferenczi's negative reaction, which would be briefly mentioned again in 'Analysis terminable and interminable' (Freud, 1937). Central to this theory was, as Freud pointed out immediately after the Wiesbaden Congress, Ferenczi's 'increasing alienation' and 'personal hostility'. The same experience was now expressed in the idea that the loss of Ferenczi 'was not a new one', since 'for years Ferenczi has no longer been with us'—which means that being 'with' Freud was equal to being; while getting away from Freud was equal to being lost, dead, having trespassed into nothingness. Note that such an attitude makes a process of separation impossible. We might also recognise in this attitude a typical reaction of Freud, which was repeated with Breuer, Fliess, Stekel, Jung, Rank, and others, when some emotional distance and criticism emerged within a relationship previously characterised by an intense attunement. Each time the other was simply dead for Freud, with no possibility of reconciliation, for example the name of Adler was not to be mentioned in his presence. It seems that Ferenczi's withdrawal and isolation evoked this kind of reaction in Freud, which ultimately represents a repetition of a traumatic abandonment. Such a countertransference reaction seems to suggest that 'the analysis of Ferenczi by Freud had never, in fact, been terminated, neither in the analysand, nor in the analyst' (Dupont, 1994, p. 317).



It is impressive to find that the question of the traumatic separation from Freud was central in Ferenczi's representation of his dying as well. In the last note of the *Clinical Diary*, written on 2 October 1932, i.e. immediately after the diagnosis of pernicious anaemia, he portrayed the onset of the 'blood-crisis' as an effect of the abandonment and a 'sinking into the traumatic'.

Further regression to being dead ...

In my case the blood-crisis arose when I realised that not only can I not rely on the protection of a 'higher power' but *on the contrary* I shall be trampled under foot by this indifferent power as soon as I go my own way and not his.

The insight this experience has helped me to attain is that I was brave (and productive) only as long as I (unconsciously) relied for support on another power, that is, I had never really become 'grown up'. ... Are the 'identification' with the higher power, the most *sudden* 'formation of the superego', the support that once preserved me from final disintegration? ...

And now, just as I must build new red corpuscles, must I (if I can) create a new basis for my personality, if I have to abandon as false and untrustworthy the one I had up to now? Is the choice here one between dying and 'rearranging myself'—and this at the age of fifty-nine? On the other hand, is it worth it always to live the life (will) of another person—is such a life not almost death? Do I lose too much if I risk this life? *Chi lo sa?*

... I did indeed also feel abandoned by colleagues (Radó etc.) who are too afraid of Freud to behave objectively or even sympathetically towards me, in the case of a dispute between Freud and me ... A certain strength of my psychological makeup seems to persist, so that instead of falling ill psychically I can only destroy—or be destroyed—in my organic depths (Dupont, 1985, pp. 212-3).

This piece of auto-analysis indicates that Ferenczi would not have rejected Freud's interpretation of his 'process of destruction', but would have enriched it with further meanings, opening new links and perspectives—in conformity with the principle of *mutuality*, as opposed to one-sided analysis. However, if we

go back to Freud's letter of 29 May 1933, we find that his interpretation ultimately turns into a closed statement, which is used for rejecting Ferenczi and his work. Freud mentions the misleading story of the American patient (Elisabeth Severn), who influenced Ferenczi 'through vibrations across the ocean' and 'analysed him and thereby saved him'. In Freud's biography, Jones would repeat Freud's words and present this mutual analysis as evidence of the fact that Ferenczi's 'mental disturbance had been making rapid progress in the last few months' (Jones, 1957, p. 190).

We do not know the source of this misinformation; in any case, thanks to the publication of Ferenczi's *Clinical Diary* in 1985, and the subsequent research prompted by it, it became possible to have the necessary information about this specific experience (Fortune, 1996) and, in general, about the theoretical views that supported the idea of 'mutual analysis'. The fundamental characteristic of this analytic experiment was indeed the fact that it was the logical consequence of Ferenczi's assumption about the analytic productivity of allowing the patient's criticism of the analyst. This experiment was not an extravagance, but the realisation of a project strongly rooted in a theoretical structure. Therefore, it can be debated and eventually even entirely rejected, but it cannot be considered the irrational action of a mad man. Freud, however, experienced these views as the expression of Ferenczi's hostility towards him, as appears from his concluding comment: 'he credited her with the oddest childhood traumas, which he then defended against us. In this confusion his once so brilliant intelligence was extinguished. But let us keep his sad end a secret between us' (Paskauskas, 1993, p. 721).

On 3 June 1933, Jones replied: 'I am afraid that the paranoia is public news'. In his biography of Freud, Peter Gay claimed that Jones's allegation was a literal transcription of the diagnosis made by Freud (Gay, 1988). However, it should be noted that between 'Freud's diagnosis' and Jones's reply a semantic shift occurred. Freud's judgement closely depended on their personal relationship and was essen-



tially construed around Freud's private experience of Ferenczi's 'hostility'. It was subjectively conditioned and it might be basically viewed as a feature of their non-terminated analysis. But in Jones's letter the term 'paranoia' becomes part of a *public statement*, that is of a statement based on public evidence, which is in principle accessible to anyone. Indeed, Jones stated that the paranoia 'was sufficiently obvious to all analysts from his last Congress paper', i.e. the paper 'Confusion of tongues between adults and the child', which was presented by Ferenczi at the Wiesbaden Congress. And to prove this, Jones quotes a passage of a letter addressed to him by Joan Riviere, in which it was suggested that they should not publish Ferenczi's paper, because its scientific contentions were 'a tissue of delusions' that would only damage Ferenczi and discredit psychoanalysis, given that not all the readers 'will appreciate the mental condition of the writer'. However, this letter—if quoted correctly, since Jones's credibility was quite slim in this regard<sup>7</sup>—proves only the persisting lack of distinction between heresy and mental pathology.

FROM FERENCZI'S OBITUARY TO SIGMUND FREUD, VOLUME III (1933-1957)

With this letter and the subsequent withdrawal of the Wiesbaden paper from publication in English, the first phase of the process of pathologising Ferenczi was terminated. It is important to point out that it took place at an informal level, though clear traces of this process were reflected in the obituaries written by Freud and by Jones. Freud concluded the description of Ferenczi's 'slow sliding away', stating that 'signs were gradually revealed of the severe organic process of destruction which had doubtless cast its shadow over his life for years past' (Freud, 1933, p. 299). Jones wrote that

in his still later writings Ferenczi showed unmistakable signs of mental regression in his attitude towards fundamental problems of psychoanalysis. Ferenczi blazed like a comet, but did not shine steadily till the end. In this course he illustrated one of his own most important teachings—the astoundingly close interdependence of mind and body (1933, p. 466).

These two obituaries, and especially the one by Jones, present the division into two parts of Ferenczi's personality and work that will be dominant in the following decades: the leading pioneer of psychoanalysis and trusty friend of Freud, and the falling-down man, impaired by chronic illness. Although it is possible to recognise Jones's later allegation in this view, it was vague and ambiguous enough to permit other interpretations as well. Moreover, the other obituaries did not present Ferenczi's last works as a regression. For example, Radó separated Ferenczi's scientific speculations from his clinical contributions, which were judged 'great and permanent' (Radó, 1933, p. 358), and no criticism is to be found in Paul Federn's Memorial Address—a vast and articulate reconsideration of Ferenczi's work delivered at a special meeting of the Vienna Psycho-Analytic Society (Federn, 1933).

During the next few years, new volumes of the German edition of Ferenczi's collected papers appeared (vols. III and IV of *Bausteine zur Psychoanalyse* were published in 1939). On that occasion Freud, after having received the hitherto unpublished material, 'expressed his admiration for Ferenczi's ideas, until then unknown to him' (Balint, 1969, p. 219). In 1942, Izette de Forest, a pupil of Ferenczi's, summarised his last contributions to the psychoanalytical technique in a paper published in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. De Forest remarked that: 'To use the countertransference as a technical tool, as one uses the

<sup>7</sup> Jones had already reported the words of Joan Riviere to Freud eleven years earlier and, on that occasion, Freud angrily replied (25.6.1922) that Jones was 'insincere', that 'accuracy and plainness' were not his qualities, and that his style was characterised by 'slight distortions and evasions, lapses of memory, twisted denials, a certain predilection for sidetracks' (Paskauskas, 1993, p. 491).



transference, dreams, association of ideas, and the behaviour of the patient, seems to many analysts exceedingly dangerous' (de Forest, 1942, p. 136). Indeed the paper presented a detailed comment on the 'Objections to Ferenczi's technique', which included objections 'to the use of counter-transference as a technical instrument; to the analyst's attitude towards the patient's resistance; to the necessity of reliving early traumatic experience; and to the dramatic tone of the process' (p. 136). An editorial note signalled that the technical procedure described was different 'from that recommended by Freud and generally adopted by his pupils', and that the editors 'hope to be able in a subsequent issue to publish estimates from various points of view of precise respects in which the procedure ... is to be approved or rejected' (de Forest, 1942, p. 120, editorial note). However, the only paper that appeared in the next issues was written by another pupil of Ferenczi, Clara Thompson, who tried to clarify further two main points, the question of 'love' and the use of 'dramatisation' (Thompson, 1943). On the first point, Thompson thought that 'Ferenczi tended to confuse the idea that the patient must be given all the love he needs, with the idea he must be given all the love he demands' (Thompson, 1943, p. 65). This objection is especially significant because it reflects Thompson's own demand for love when she was in analysis with Ferenczi. It is also to be stressed that her comment is close to the position of Balint (1968), who suggested distinguishing two types of regressions (the benign and the malignant), in relation to the different types of the patient's demand for love. Thompson was even more critical about the dramatisation, denying 'the entire validity of the concept' (p. 65).

A few years later, on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of Ferenczi's death, a paper in which his later contributions were re-examined was presented at the British Psycho-Analytical Society by another of his pupils, Michael Balint. And the following year the so-called 'Ferenczi number' of the *International*

*Journal of Psychoanalysis* appeared, in which the Wiesbaden paper was finally published in English, together with papers, annotations and fragments of his later period. In the editorial note, John Rickman wrote that Ferenczi's 'brilliance as a clinician and theoriser is still an inspiration, his mistakes we cannot ignore—if we aspire to be like him these, too, we shall try in fearlessness and in compassion to understand' (Balint, 1949, p. 219, editorial footnote by John Rickman). In the presentation of the Ferenczi number, Balint pointed out that 'Psycho-analytical thinking is now beginning to re-examine Ferenczi's ideas about the paramount importance of the adults' actual libidinous behaviour towards their children in the pre-oedipal times' (Balint, 1949, p. 219).

In 1954, a book by Izette de Forest was published dedicated to the theory and technique of Sándor Ferenczi, which occasioned a polemic with Jones about the last period of the Freud–Ferenczi relationship. Reviewing the book, Jones strongly criticised de Forest because, by presenting Freud's attitude as hostile to Ferenczi, she had given a false report:

The truth of all this is quite otherwise. Freud's feelings for his friend never changed except in the one respect of regret at his withdrawal from him. When Ferenczi almost ceased writing to Freud and was evidently withdrawing into a self-absorbed isolation Freud was naturally distressed and saddened, and on one occasion uttered what Ferenczi in a letter referred to as a 'gentle reproach', adding 'to be quite frank, I was prepared for much worse'. This reproach about Ferenczi not having written to him for an unusually long time Mrs. de Forest thinks was a part of the 'harsh criticism' of his theories. So the only piece of evidence she can quote of *her extraordinary view of Freud's imagined hostility* is based on a misreading of a phrase and ignorance of its context. Apart from this serious criticism one can but extol the part of the book which describes Ferenczi's many virtues and stresses the importance of a sympathetic and positive attitude on the part of the analyst towards his patient (Jones, 1956, p. 488, *my italics*).





It is to be noted that here Jones still attributes to de Forest's 'imagination' the 'myth of Freud's ill-treatment of Ferenczi' that in *Freud, Volume III* will be attributed to Ferenczi's 'final delusional state' (Jones, 1957, p. 188).

In 1955 the English translations of the last volume of Ferenczi's collected papers appeared. Ferenczi's progressive rehabilitation coincided with the enlargement of the conception of psychoanalysis, as becomes apparent considering the review of the *Final Contributions* (Ferenczi, 1955) by Margaret Little. According to Little, Ferenczi's final work was illuminated by Winnicott's latest development. She also pointed out that Ferenczi 'went further than his colleagues in ways they found unacceptable for unconscious reasons' (Little, 1957, p. 123). By the way, Little also criticised Ferenczi for his lack of understanding of ambivalence.

However, just as in this period 'the younger analysts were advised not to read Winnicott because they may be disturbed by him',<sup>8</sup> reviewing the *Final Contributions*, Alexander Bromley wrote that 'the therapy he evolved, led Ferenczi to abandon psychoanalytic technique in favour of what might be described as rapport therapy' (Bromley, 1957, p. 113). The non-analytic works were 'the seven papers, from "The Adaptation of the Family to the Child" (1927), culminating in "Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child" (1933)' (p. 133). As a matter of fact, Balint's hope for a re-examination of Ferenczi's ideas crashed against a new spirit within the psychoanalytic community, which was based on the idea that the only curative factor was the 'exact interpretation', motivated by the need for differentiating psychoanalysis from the other psychotherapies (Friedman, 1978, p. 536). Therefore, Jones's allegation about Ferenczi's mental deterioration, which appeared in the third volume of Freud's biography, on the one hand arrived totally unexpected, but on the other, did not find any opposition within the

psychoanalytic mainstream, because in 1957 Ferenczi's technique was beginning to be viewed as a non-analytic 'rapport-therapy'. In my opinion this new mentality facilitated the formal expression of Jones's allegation about Ferenczi's mental deterioration: Jones knew that he was speaking to a well-disposed audience.

The second phase of the process of pathologising Ferenczi began with the passage from an unofficial to an official level of communication. In this passage, Jones reorganised the story by identifying Ferenczi's 1926/27 trip to America as the break point in his personality and the concrete sign of Ferenczi's spiritual departure from Freud. This narrative also had the function of stressing Ferenczi's similarity with Rank, whose betrayal was symbolised precisely by his trip to America. At the same time, Jones avoided saying that he had cultivated the conviction of Ferenczi's pathology since the period of the collaboration with Rank, that he found further evidence in the analysis of Rickman, and that he considered the Wiesbaden paper as the final proof of Ferenczi's paranoia. In general, he avoided the elements which could have appeared as a too obvious confusion between heresy and mental pathology, and shifted the narrative focus on Ferenczi's final 'outbursts' and 'delusions', which had actually played no part in the genesis of Jones's conviction.

#### REACTIONS TO JONES'S ALLEGATION

Jones's allegations about the mental troubles of both Rank and Ferenczi were accepted by the psychoanalytic community without scrutiny. When the last volume of Freud's biography was published, the main reaction was to rely on Jones's accounts, while only a few persons protested. However, since these persons were pupils, relatives or friends of Rank or Ferenczi, and mainly dissidents themselves, they were identified with 'partisans' of the 'dissi-

<sup>8</sup> Personal communication from André Haynal (letter of 21 January 1998).



dents Rank and Ferenczi', making the value of their testimony equal to nothing.

On 13 October 1957 Lionel Trilling's review of *Freud, Volume III* was published by *The New York Times Book Review*, in which Jones's allegations had been even exaggerated. Virginia P. Robinson, who had an important position at the Pennsylvania School of Social Work at the time when Rank lectured at the faculty (from 1926 to 1937), immediately wrote to *The New York Times Book Review*, protesting against the reviewer's statements that Rank and Ferenczi 'were involved with mental pathology and issued in sordid tragedy' and that the two men 'fell prey to extreme mental illness and they died insane'. The letter was partly published on 17 November 1957, jointly with Trilling's correction, which however 'could not even begin to offset the damage done in his review' (Lieberman, 1985, p. 400).

As pointed out by James Lieberman, Trilling had sent Jones a copy of the review in advance, and Jones had replied, on 11 October 1957: 'I hope you won't get into trouble for saying Otto Rank died insane. Manic depressive insanity is only a psychosis in the medical sense, and only very rarely do certain phases, e.g. acute melancholia, become insanity in the lay sense' (quoted in Lieberman, 1985, p. 446, note 2). Jones also added that Rank's years in New York were highly successful, and Trilling included Jones's recantation in the correction of his review. However this recantation went unnoticed, and Rank continued to be depicted as insane in many psychoanalytic books till the 1980s, so that 'considering the duration and extent of the attack on Rank, it stands out among examples of psychoanalytic character assassination' (p. xliii).

A few days after Trilling's correction, an article by Morton M. Hunt entitled 'How the analyst stands the pace' appeared in the Sunday Section of *The New York Times*, in which Jones's statement, that Ferenczi died after having developed a severe psychosis, was again

reported. This time Clara Thompson reacted by sending a letter of protest to *The New York Times* on 26 November, in which it was stated:

I was living in Budapest at the time of Ferenczi's last illness, and I saw him almost every day until his death. I can assure you that he never showed any behaviour that could be called insane, aside from very occasional slight confusion, which is usually seen in desperately sick people. He certainly never showed any sign of maniac or homicidal activities, nor had I ever heard this suggested until Jones' book was published. Since then a number of readers have accepted this statement as fact.

As a matter of fact, until the very end he showed his usual concern for all those around him, and tried to prepare us for his death.

Michael Balint, Ferenczi's closest pupil and his literary executor, took a similar position in a letter addressed to the editor of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, which had been previously negotiated with Jones.<sup>9</sup> Balint stated that 'despite his progressive physical weakness, mentally ... [Ferenczi] was always clear and on several occasions discussed with me in detail his controversy with Freud' (Balint, 1958, p. 66). The letter might today appear too cautious and overly diplomatic. Yet, Balint astutely proposed simply to record the disagreement and 'trust the next generation with the task of sorting out the truth' (p. 66), thus communicating the idea that his generation did not have a sufficiently strong inclination for the truth. The letter was published in the journal's first issue of 1958, jointly with Jones's comment, which is reproduced here:

I certainly sympathise with Dr. Balint in his rather painful situation. Naturally it would not occur to me to doubt the faithfulness of his memory or the accuracy of his observations. He omitted to mention, however, that they are quite compatible with a more serious diagnosis, since it is a characteristic of paranoid patients to mislead friends

<sup>9</sup> As part of the negotiation, Jones 'had persuaded Balint to strike from his letter any reference to the fact that Ferenczi had analyzed both of them' (Roazen, 1975, p. 370).



and relatives by exhibiting complete lucidity on most topics.

Nor should I expect Dr. Balint to doubt my own bona fides. What I wrote about Ferenczi's last days was based on the trustworthy evidence of an eye-witness.

The varying value of Ferenczi's last writings remains, as Dr. Balint rightly remarks, controversial. I merely recorded my acquiescence in the opinions expressed so firmly by Freud, Eitingon, and everyone I knew in 1933 that they had been to some extent influenced by subjective personal factors (Jones, 1958, p. 66).

If we compare Jones's recantation about Rank with his insistence on maintaining the validity of his claims about Ferenczi, we cannot avoid the conclusion that Jones was really convinced of Ferenczi's paranoia and of the defensibility of his claims. He did not hesitate to state that Ferenczi's 'friends and relatives' did not have the necessary credibility, and that he had based his assertions—or more precisely what he had written 'about Ferenczi's last days'—'on the trustworthy evidence of an eye-witness'. But the point is that Ferenczi's last days were rather uninfluential with respect to the genesis of Jones's convictions. As we have seen, in the Freud-Jones correspondence no mention is made of Ferenczi's last days, and yet Jones claimed that Ferenczi's paranoia was public news, thanks to the Wiesbaden paper—the same one that in Jones's reply to Balint is qualified as simply 'controversial'. The only element that could have been added by an 'eye-witness' was the reference to the 'violent paranoiac and even homicidal outbursts' in Ferenczi's last months of life. This element, however, was not essential for his construction of the morbid picture of Ferenczi, which was certainly not based on 'the evidence of an eye-witness'.

In the following issue of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, a review of the Freud biography, Volume III, also appeared. The author, Marjorie Brierley, did not discuss Jones's allegations but mentioned the 'stories of Rank and Ferenczi' in a way that implied a

total belief in Jones's assertions, while expressing a moderate reproach to Freud for having tolerated such persons (Brierley, 1958, p. 423). Since the 'stories of Rank and Ferenczi' evoked the question of the dogmatic nature of psycho-analysis, the reviewer did her best to emphasise Freud's anti-totalitarian qualities:

However concerned Freud may have been to preserve the integrity of psycho-analysis he did not expect his fellow-workers to accept his views uncritically or waive their right to independent research. Proof of this is given in a circular letter to members of the 'Committee' about Rank and Ferenczi: 'The fact of the matter is this: neither the harmony among us nor the respect you have often shown me should hinder any of you in the free employment of his productivity. I do not expect you to work in a direction to please me, but in whatever way accords with your observations and ideas'. This is, indeed, the only attitude desirable in the founder of a science (Brierley, 1958, pp. 423-8).

An opposite view was offered in 'Psychoanalysis—science or party line?', an article in defence of Rank and Ferenczi written by Erich Fromm. The article first appeared in *The Saturday Review* of 14 June 1958, with the title 'Freud, friends, and feuds. 1. Scientism or fanaticism?' Its starting-point was the consideration that psychoanalysis was not only a therapy and a scientific theory, but also a 'movement', which had 'on occasion and in some of its representatives exhibited a fanaticism usually to be found only in religious and political bureaucracies' (Fromm, 1958, p. 11).

Immediately after the publication of Jones's Volume III, Fromm had led an independent enquiry and had collected various statements by witnesses of the two men's last years, all contrasting with Jones's assertions. Considering this evidence, and pointing out that Jones didn't 'claim any first-hand knowledge nor is any proof or evidence whatsoever offered of Ferenczi's psychosis' (the article was written before Jones's reply to Balint), Fromm came to the conclusion that:



Jones's assertions about Rank's and Ferenczi's psychosis must be judged to be untrue and open to the suspicion that they are the fabrications of wishful thinking, motivated by old personal jealousies and by the wish to spare Freud's name from the criticism of having been unkind and harsh to men deeply devoted to him (p. 13 and p. 55).

Fromm's analysis went beyond this. Rank and Ferenczi were identified as 'the losers' in an 'inter-factional fight', which dated back to the early twenties, and Jones's own reconstruction was qualified as a 're-writing' of history of the Stalinist type, since Jones claimed that Rank and Ferenczi had been psychotic for many years, just as Stalinists were calling 'traitors' and 'spies' those who defected and rebelled (p. 11). Ultimately, according to Fromm, the treatment of Rank and Ferenczi in Jones's work was an expression of a party-line spirit, which manifested itself not only in the 'grotesque, posthumous attacks against men who disagreed with Freud', but also in the fact that 'many reviewers of Jones's book have accepted his data without criticism or question' (p. 11). Thus, this specific question was essentially coupled with the more general question: 'how was it possible that psychoanalysis, a theory and a therapy, could be transformed into this kind of fanatical movement?' (p. 55). Fromm's answer foreshadows the view developed in *Sigmund Freud's Mission* (1959). He focused on the problematic aspects of Freud's identification with a political leader, and accused psychoanalysis of having become 'the substitute for radical philosophical and political interests, a new creed which demanded little from its adherents except learning the nomenclature' (Fromm, 1958, p. 56). In short, according to Fromm, psychoanalysis was governed by a sterile bureaucracy, occupied in petty intrigues and machinations, which inherited little of Freud's greatness and of his real radicalism. Thus, the 'official' myth about Ferenczi and Rank was functional to this kind of bureaucratic leadership, because it served 'to eliminate the only two productive and imagina-

tive disciples among the original group' after Adler's and Jung's defections.

Fromm's article was published in *The Saturday Review*, together with a reply by Jacob Arlow. Arlow acknowledged in a few lines that Jones's claims about Rank and Ferenczi were 'weighty ones' and that, 'if proven unjustified, would constitute grievous errors', regretting that Jones was 'no longer alive to participate in the controversy and to supplement the data which could justify or validate the claims he made' (Arlow, 1958, p. 14). At the same time, Arlow strongly criticised the idea that Jones's assertions about Rank and Ferenczi were the expression of a 'party line', because psychoanalysis couldn't be compared to 'a movement which promulgates a rigid policy line', and because it was ludicrous to regard Jones as the enunciator of a dominant party line, since 'for the past fifteen years Jones has been identified with a small minority group within psychoanalysis, the group which espouses the views of Melanie Klein' (p. 14). Moreover, according to Arlow,

The technical innovations which Ferenczi introduced in keeping with his theory about unloving parents went beyond psychoanalytic concepts. Ferenczi did give his patients more than interpretations. He sat them on his lap and caressed them. This may be effective therapy—but it is not psychoanalysis (p. 14).

Once again, the crucial point is represented by Ferenczi's technical and theoretical innovations. Ferenczi 'went beyond psychoanalytic concepts'—which is undoubtedly true, if we refer to the psychoanalytic concepts of those years. His therapy was not psychoanalysis, which is again undoubtedly true, if we accept that the concept of 'interpretation' divides what psychoanalysis is from what it is not. And yet, it is not true that Ferenczi's therapy consisted in letting his patients sit on his lap and in caressing them—in spite of the fact that Ferenczi might have effectively found himself in such a situation while treating states of deep regression. The point is that presenting a ther-



apy in such a way is presenting it as a form of sexual abuse, as Arlow knew perfectly. So, why did Arlow have the need to misrepresent Ferenczi's therapy? Was Ferenczi really so dangerous for the psychoanalytic movement, that any weapon was good for discrediting him? And didn't Arlow realise that he was acting in conformity with the party line, the non-existence of which he was alleging? I am referring here to the 'interpretation-party' represented by Abraham and Jones, which came out from the crisis of 1924 as the winner over the view, supported by Rank and Ferenczi, that the 'Erlebnis' (experience) was essential as well to the psychoanalytic process.

While most reactions to Jones's allegations were polarised into opposite 'parties', the review of Robert Holt represented an exception, since the claims of both the 'partisans'—of Rank and Ferenczi and of Jones—were questioned:

It is disappointing to see him [Jones] fall so squarely into the psychoanalyst's forensic fallacy: 'analysing' his opponents and discovering that their opposition has neurotic—or, as Jones would have it re Rank and Ferenczi, psychotic—bases. The partisans of Rank and Ferenczi are already indignantly claiming that these diagnoses are gratuitous and slanderous; the disinterestedness of the protestors may be questioned, but by the same token Jones's just as much. One would feel more confidence in Jones's account if he had carefully buttressed his charges with evidence; as it is, besides his word, we have only references to unpublished letters (Holt, 1958, p. 147).

The review written by Holt was one of the few to criticise Jones's tendency to pathologise the opponents and to demand further evidence. This makes the lack of credit given to persons who reacted to Jones's allegations by protesting even more impressive. Even Holt believed that 'the disinterestedness of the protestors may be questioned'. However, being persons close to Rank and Ferenczi, the protestors were the only persons in a position to confirm or reject Jones's assertions. Therefore we

find the following paradoxical situation: Jones made an empirical statement; there were many witnesses who could invalidate the statement, but no use could be made of such witnesses.

#### THE TESTIMONIES OF THE PROTESTORS RECONSIDERED

The testimonies of the protestors merit review. On 22 October 1957, Izette de Forest sent two recent reviews of Jones's *Freud, Volume III* to Erich Fromm, pointing out the inconsistencies of Jones's assertions, and inviting him to write a criticism of Jones's fallacy. De Forest had been in analysis with Ferenczi in 1925-27 and again in 1929, during the period when

he was becoming acutely aware of his dissatisfaction with some of the crucial aspects of the Freudian approach, and was endeavouring to discover a more basic understanding of neurotic needs of the art of uncovering and restoring the underlying inborn personality (de Forest, 1954, p. xi).

Later she had been a pupil of Erich Fromm and considered Fromm's theory of the development of the patient's integrity of personality a continuation of the teaching of Ferenczi. Moreover, she was providing Fromm with information about Freud's life, since through her cousin Dorothy Burlingham, she had been part of the intimate circle of Professor Freud and his daughter Anna. Fromm, who never had the opportunity of meeting Freud, was extremely interested in his life. He had attentively studied the first two volumes of Jones, constantly searching in de Forest's memories for a confirmation of his hypothesis about Freud's authoritarian personality and dependence on mother figures. According to Fromm (1959), Freud transferred on to his pupils his dependence on a mother figure who was loving, admiring and protective, thus experiencing the signs of independence of his closest pupils as a traumatic abandonment and a betrayal. Significantly enough, for Ferenczi also the idealisation of the mother and the impotence



towards her was central to the psychology of Freud (Ferenczi, 1985, note of 4 August 1932). Fromm had met Ferenczi several times in Baden Baden, at Groddeck's sanatorium, and was very impressed by him. In a letter of 20 July 1979, addressed to Paul Roazen, he reported the following recollection:

What I meant to tell you is a scene in which Groddeck, in his masterful and outspoken way, criticised the official psychoanalytic organisation and its training program and tore it to shreds. I was then a young analyst believing in the authority of Freud and the analytic hierarchy, and I remember my shock and surprise to hear all this blasphemy remaining unanswered by Ferenczi. He sat there, listened, and as far as I remember, did not say a single word.

In later years, Fromm would modify his attitude towards the analytic hierarchy. As a consequence of his many disappointments, among which the loss of the IPA affiliation,<sup>10</sup> he began to wish for the creation of a non-bureaucratic psychoanalytic organisation, in which psychoanalysis could coexist with intellectual courage. As he wrote to Clara Thompson on 12 April 1956:

It is only to a certain extent that theoretical creativeness is the result of talent. To quite a large extent it is a matter of character, of courage and of integrity, of being able to see things clearly and to penetrate the surface of public opinion and common sense.

This background makes us understand why, one year later, Fromm immediately accepted de Forest's invitation to write a criticism of Jones's allegation. On 29 October 1957, Fromm proposed to Norman Cousins, editor of *The Saturday Review*, that he should write an article about the totalitarian development of psychoanalysis. He explained that Jones had declared

Rank and Ferenczi 'insane at the time of their defection' without giving evidence for this statement, while 'quite a few people are alive who knew Rank and Ferenczi at that time, and who can testify to the fact that no insanity was observed'. On 31 October, he wrote to de Forest:

I believe the main point is the typically Stalinist type of re-writing history, whereby Stalinists assassinate the character of opponents by calling them spies and traitors. The Freudians do it by calling them 'insane'. I think even Freud would not have approved of this vicious treatment, and incidentally, Jones does not seem to be aware of the disservice he does to psychoanalysis. The picture he gives of the central committee is, then, that two members, and the most trusted ones, became insane. Of one, Dr. Sachs, he says that Freud said he should not have belonged in the first place. Of Eitingon he says that he was not too bright. There remain Abraham and Jones, who were, according to Jones' own testimony, constantly engaged in the pettiest quarrels with all the other members. *A beautiful picture of the group of those who claim to represent the sanity which follows from psychoanalysis!* (my italics).

These lines also appear in a letter addressed to Clara Thompson, which Fromm wrote on the same day to ask her for a written report about Ferenczi's mental state. Thompson replied on 5 November. She had already discussed the question with Elma Laurvik, Ferenczi's step-daughter, and suggested that Fromm contact Alice Lowell and Michael Balint as well. She enclosed a very long testimony, from which the following report is quoted:

On the way to the Wiesbaden Congress, September 1932, [Ferenczi] stopped in Vienna to see Freud. They apparently had a very rough time. When he came on the train that night, he told me it was terrible, that Freud said he could give the

<sup>10</sup> Fromm had become a member-at-large of the International Psychoanalytical Association, after the forced resignation of the Jewish members from the German Psychoanalytic Society. However, in 1953 he discovered that his name no longer appeared in the IPA list, though he was not notified of a termination of his membership (Funk, 1998).



paper in Wiesbaden, but he must never publish it. He wanted him to promise, which I don't think Ferenczi did.

During this time, nobody that I know of thought he was physically ill ... He was very shaken by the Freud interview. When he gave the paper, he looked like death ...

After the Congress 'it was found that his red blood count was below 50% of normal and he had pernicious anaemia'; 'he returned to his practice on the 1st of that November and continued until some time in April. In February he had the courage to dismiss a patient who had bullied him for years, Elisabeth Severn'.<sup>11</sup> In March,

he began to show signs of spinal cord degeneration. It is called combined sclerosis and occurs sometimes in pernicious anaemia. He had difficulty walking, and fell once for no apparent reason. He was worried about it and feared he had general paresis (brain deterioration from syphilis). I have no idea whether he ever had syphilis. Anyway, one day he asked me to test his eyes for reaction to light (one of the tests for general paresis). He said he knew I wouldn't lie to him, but he wasn't sure about his doctor's not lying. I tested him with fear and trembling and—thank God—his eyes reacted to light all right—so I didn't have to lie to him. This must have been in April.

This part of Thompson's testimony is very important, since it gives a possible content to Ferenczi's reference to his new relapse in terms of a 'nervous breakdown'—which was then transformed by Freud into a 'delusive breakdown'. In relation to this point, it should be stressed that syphilis-phobia was a quite recurrent fear in Ferenczi, which also characterised his initial transference to Freud in 1912 (see Bonomi, 1997). During the last three weeks, Thompson further reported:

I went to visit him regularly and we talked, naturally not about deep or disturbing subjects, although he really tried to prepare me for the fact that he was dying. It was I who wouldn't face it. He talked of what I should do in America, and the last time I saw him he kept saying 'Goodbye' and I kept saying, 'I'm coming tomorrow'—but the next day, he was dead ...

What I believe is that in the last two months of his life there was some organic mental deterioration. That is, he showed memory defects and forgetfulness characteristic of organic brain disease, but I think it was minimal and a part of the death picture. To try to push it back into preceding years and explain his thinking by this is to say the least—criminal. I think he was a disturbed man and some of his procedures could be criticised, but I do not believe they were evidence of psychosis, and I doubt if even Elisabeth Severn would subscribe to that explanation. Certainly he was never maniacal and homicidal. To call his belief that Freud was treating him badly, paranoid, is obviously to deny the facts.

Two further reports were sent to Fromm by de Forest on 7 November 1957. One was about her association with Sándor Ferenczi in the period 1925-1933, and—as she explained to Fromm—it was aimed at showing 'how long before his death he began to deviate and he certainly was not mentally or emotionally disturbed then or at any time when I saw him, except for his sadness over Freud's insulting treatment, the last time I saw him'. The second was about Ferenczi's last visit to Professor Freud. It was written as if Ferenczi were speaking, and contained some memory lapses.<sup>12</sup> The report ended with the following lines:

The Professor listened to my exposition with increasing impatience and finally warned me that I was treading on dangerous ground and was departing fundamentally from the traditional cus-

<sup>11</sup> Thompson also writes that Elisabeth Severn 'is one of the most destructive people I know, and there is no doubt Ferenczi was afraid of her. But his reaction doesn't seem psychotic to me'.

<sup>12</sup> The episode referred to the visit on the way to Wiesbaden, but de Forest erroneously dated it as 1931. Only in a subsequent letter to Fromm, dated 18.11.1957, would she correct the year to 1932.



toms and techniques of psychoanalysis. Such yielding to the patient's longings and desires—no matter how genuine—would increase his dependence on the analyst. Such dependence can only be destroyed by the emotional withdrawal of the analyst. In the hands of unskilled analysts my method, the Professor said, might easily lead to sexual indulgence rather than be an expression of parental devotion.

This warning ended the interview. I held out my hand in affectionate adieu. The professor turned his back on me and walked out of the room. I shall never see him again.

According to de Forest, 'Ferenczi's heart was deeply injured by this farewell experience'. On 7 November 1957, de Forest wrote also to Elma Laurvik, informing her about Fromm's intentions, and asking her to write a description of Ferenczi's mental state in his last years. Laurvik was terribly upset by the comments in the *New York Times* and the *Herald Tribune* about Jones's third volume, and thought that something had to be done. She had witnessed the illness of her step-father to the last, but not knowing anything about the medical side of the case, feared that her words could be challenged by Jones. Therefore she urged Michael Balint on 8 November 1957, and through him Lajos Lévy, Ferenczi's doctor during his last years of life, to take an official position on the matter. Fromm wrote to Laurvik 'I feel this attempt at psychiatric character assassination should not be left unanswered' (Fromm to Laurvik, 12.11.1957). She then wrote a one-page statement about Ferenczi's last illness. It was sent to Fromm on 20 November, and it contained the following lines:

We noticed the first symptoms of the disease, which befell him—pernicious anaemia—in spring, 1932 ... His conditions became perceptibly worse during the fall, 1932 ... Yet, after this time he was often depressed and one felt that he was occupied and concerned about himself. But mentally he was as before, alert and keen. ... On February 28, 1933 relatives of ours celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary ... Some of the guests who did not previously know about Dr.

Ferenczi's condition were astonished to find him so pale and weak but **NOBODY** observed any change in his **MENTAL** capacities. This was three months before his death. He worked with a few of his patients up to a month before his passing. He spent the last two weeks in bed and the last days he had to be fed. The food was given to him by a maid whom the doctor liked very much. Up to the last day he joked with her. She asked him if he wants some coffee and he said yes. By the time she returned with the coffee, Dr. Ferenczi was dead.

Sophie Erdős, Sándor Ferenczi's sister, also wrote a one-page statement on her brother's illness, which was sent to Fromm on 25 November. The following lines are part of her testimony:

I remember very well the night when I **FIRST** noticed a change in my brother and realised that something was the matter with him. We celebrated his name-day on March 18, 1933 (2 months before his death) together with several friends and members of the family in a restaurant at dinner. Despite gypsy music and loud chatter all around, my brother Sándor fell asleep. We were all staggered as this never happened before. We immediately broke up the party and accompanied them—Sándor and my sister-in-law Gizella—to a taxi stand. During this short walk Sándor stumbled twice, his knees were weak. Dr. L. Lévy was consulted next day who ordered Sándor to a hospital for general examination. Unfortunately the check up showed that pernicious anaemia effected his entire system to such a degree that neither liver-shots nor other shots could help him anymore ...

I am indignant about Jones's statements. It is quite certain that Sándor was in possession of all his mental faculties to the end. He was weak only in his body. We, who have seen him so often, would have noticed mental changes just as we noticed him falling asleep at that dinner party.

I do hope that Dr. Lajos Lévy will rehabilitate him publicly.

Elisabeth Severn and Alice Lowell, who had been in analysis with Ferenczi until his last months of life, like Clara Thompson, pro-





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vided additional testimonies. The former wrote: 'Up to 2 months before his death, when I had to leave Budapest and return to N[ew] Y[ork] he was in full possession of his faculties with no signs whatever of mental unbalance' (Severn to Fromm, 29.11.1957). The latter pointed out that Jones's statements didn't bear relation to the facts, and concluded her testimony by saying:

There were times, of course, when he was tired and perhaps uncomfortable, but neither at these times, nor at any other was his manner of being, his appearance, and what he had to say at variance with the perceptive, sane analyst and man that I had known for over three years (Lowell to Fromm, 6.12.1957).

Another short testimony was given by Sylvia Grossman, Groddeck's secretary, while Harry Bone, Doris Mode and J. Jessie Taft sent (directly or indirectly) their memories about Rank to Erich Fromm. Harry Bone's letter began with a sentence that expressed feelings common to all these persons: 'I was shocked, hurt and angry when I learned a few days ago about Jones' assertion that Rank was mentally ill' (Bone to Fromm, 19.11.1957). Fromm submitted his article at the end of November; therefore only a part of the many testimonies he had received could be mentioned in it.

What is the value of these letters and testimonies? Are they misleading, as suggested by Jones, since 'it is a characteristic of paranoid patients to mislead friends and relatives by exhibiting complete lucidity on most topics' (Jones, 1958, p. 66)? Are they an expression of partisanship, as feared even by illuminated scholars? Or are they credible enough to lead to the conclusion that 'Jones's assertions about Rank's and Ferenczi's psychosis must be judged to be untrue', as suggested by Fromm?

These letters and testimonies show, first of all, that Jones's assertions about Rank's and Ferenczi's insanity were a shocking surprise to the persons who had been close to the two men.

Already this reaction is a sign that Rank and Ferenczi didn't die insane; otherwise, Jones's statements would not have had an identical effect on so many different people. These people were indignant, and made an attempt to reconstruct the facts, which, according to them, had been ignored by Jones. Relatives, patients and friends of Ferenczi gave their testimonies almost twenty-five years after Ferenczi's death. Such a lapse of time is not favourable to a good reconstruction, and indeed sometimes the temporal coordinates are incorrect. Still, they do not contradict each other, but produce a consistent and integrated picture. Moreover, each testimony contains one or more detailed memory of significant events, creating the impression of a lively and basically trustworthy reconstruction. In conclusion, they are credible and offer a picture of Ferenczi that does not validate the claims made by Jones.

These testimonies were accessible to anyone interested in assessing Jones's assertions. In 1957, moreover, anyone interested in the truth could have collected the testimonies of the still living eye-witnesses. But, apparently, nobody did it except Erich Fromm, who was a dissident. Should we come to the conclusion that, in those years, only the condition of being a dissident permitted access to the truth?

### ORTHODOX WAY TO THE TRUTH: ANNA FREUD AND THE ANONYMOUS 'EYE-WITNESS'

In his reply to Fromm, Arlow regretted that Jones was 'no longer alive to ... supplement the data which could justify or validate the claims he made' (Arlow, 1958, p. 14). Indeed, Jones died in February 1958. However, a few months earlier, the question of the lack of corroborating evidence was privately addressed to him by Alexander Magoun. We don't have Magoun's letter, but we have Jones's reply, dated 28 November 1957:



Dear Mr. Magoun,

I think it is sheer nonsense to talk of my having made an attack on Ferenczi simply because there are people who cannot bear the truth. The same of course applies to Freud, Rank, etc.

I have all the letters Ferenczi wrote to Freud from 1907 till the end. They make most painful reading as displaying a thoroughly unstable and suffering personality whom I personally had always loved. But the evidence of the increasing deterioration is only too plain. Up to the end Freud wanted him to be President of the International Association, though he advised him to keep back the paper he had written for the last Congress since it would harm his reputation. The President of the Congress refused to admit such an obviously psychopathic paper, and it was only at my intervention that it was allowed.

Naturally if anyone attacks me in public I shall have to produce some of the evidence I have taken care to suppress in Ferenczi's own interest.

Yours sincerely,  
(signed) Ernest Jones

Did Jones supplement the data, which could justify or validate the claims he made? He had such an opportunity, but did not seize it because—we read in the reply—he loved Ferenczi and had taken care to suppress the data in Ferenczi's 'own interest'. This means that the evidence possessed by Jones was worse than his public allegation. And since the worst allegation was about the '*violent paranoiac and even homicidal outbursts*', what are we supposed to conclude? Murder?

Alexander Magoun was an intimate friend of Izette de Forest's and gave her a copy of Jones's reply, which immediately circulated among the people who had been close to Ferenczi. Commenting on the letter to Fromm, she remarked:

I think we've got Jones running, don't you? His threat at the end of the letter, e.g. what 'evidence' has he except Ferenczi's letters to Freud? What evidence of his '*homicidal impulses*'? The whole letter, defending himself to a complete stranger, sounds scared! ...

This letter from Jones certainly came at the right moment for your use, didn't it? If he really believes what he says in Vol. III, he doesn't have to defend himself to someone whom he never heard of nor does he have to threaten anyone who publicly criticises him (de Forest to Fromm, 3.12.1957).

Fromm dryly pointed out that Jones's reply was 'a real blackmail' (Fromm to de Forest, 10.12.1957). In reality, what we can see in this letter is the germ of the defensive strategy that would be fully developed by Jones in his public reply to Balint. The supposed 'evidence' threatened in the letter to Magoun, would become the 'trustworthy evidence of an eye-witness', mentioned in the reply to Balint. We might wonder why Jones didn't immediately reveal to Magoun that he was relying on an eye-witness. Or, vice versa, we might wonder why Jones didn't say in the public reply to Balint that he had suppressed the evidence in Ferenczi's own interest. The point is that Jones continuously changed his arguments, adjusting them according to the context and the interlocutor. For instance: he mentions the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence to Magoun as evidence, but not to Balint, since it was inaccessible to Magoun, while Balint knew it (he gave the correspondence to Jones). Moreover, in the letter to Magoun, the Wiesbaden paper is qualified as 'obviously psychopathic'; in the public letter to Balint, it is called 'controversial'.

In spite of Jones's inconsistencies, his allusion to an anonymous eye-witness had the effect of creating, among the persons close to Ferenczi, an atmosphere characterised by suspicion. And at a certain point it was Lajos Lévy, Ferenczi's physician, who became the one suspected of being Jones's eye-witness.

Although Fromm succeeded in collecting many testimonies, he failed in relation to the most important ones: those of Michael Balint and Lajos Lévy. But while Balint wrote the protest addressed to the *International Journal*, Lévy never took a public position, in spite of being the only one who, professionally and ethically, was obliged to take an official position. Fromm elic-



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ited a description of Ferenczi's mental state from Balint on 12 November, and from Lévy on 25 November 1957. However, some doubt about their active engagement was expressed in letters of this period. For instance, Elma Laurvik wrote to Izette de Forest: 'Would it be possible that both Lévy and Balint being foreigners, would hesitate to come out in their host-country, against England's famous psychiatrist?' (letter of 6.12.1957). Ferenczi's family was indeed expecting a clear reaction, as appears from the following letter addressed to de Forest by Laurvik and co-signed by Magda Ferenczi:

I certainly hope that you are right by saying that Sándor's representation as great scholar cannot be impeached by the vicious accusations of Jones! Yet a seed is sown and all analysts, who know the truth about Sándor, ought to raise their voices at every possible occasion. I am looking forward to reading Fromm's article, the first person who speaks up (letter of 23.3.1958).

Yet, differently from Izette de Forest, Clara Thompson, Alice Lowell, Erich Fromm and others, who lived in America, had a position of their own, and as psychoanalysts had no obligations because they were already dissidents. Lévy and Balint, as Hungarian Jews, who were living in England after the Second World War and the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary, depended very much for their living on their good relations with the psychoanalytic establishment in England.<sup>13</sup>

Balint corresponded with de Forest and Laurvik but did not answer Fromm's letter. On 13 November 1957, he wrote to Elma Laurvik that he had already discussed the question with Lajos Lévy several times, that both agreed on the necessity of doing something, but wanted first of all to discuss the whole matter with Anna Freud. A further difficulty was represented by the fact that Jones was, at that time, seriously ill.

Lajos Lévy answered Fromm's invitation on 30 November 1957, in a rather cool way:

Dear Mr. Dr. Fromm,

In case that a careful comparison between my memories of Ferenczi and what Jones wrote in the third volume of Freud's biography convinces me that I should make a correction, I would do it.

Nevertheless, this cannot be done immediately and rashly. Especially because, as you certainly know, Dr. Jones is severely ill. I cannot and will not enter into a polemic with a candidate for death.

Who ever knew Ferenczi certainly has a correct idea of his brilliant personality. The impression that the unacquainted readers of the biography would receive of him can and must wait for a more adequate moment in order to be corrected.

In the letter to Elma Laurvik of 13 November, Balint had written that his and Lévy's project was to write a joint letter to the editor of the *International Journal* to express their criticism of Jones's assertions. However, for unknown reasons, the letter was not co-signed by Lajos Lévy. Since this silence fit in with Jones's assertion about an anonymous eye-witness, Lévy was suspected to be the secret proof threatened by Jones. In May 1958, Balint visited de Forest, who, on 25 May, wrote to Erich Fromm:

Last Sunday Michael Balint and his lovely—really lovely—wife had tea with me at Longfellow House. I was prepared to think him a kind of politician but was relieved to like him very much, and to believe that he wants to redeem Ferenczi in time, when the appropriate time comes. I wonder if you felt this way when you saw him. We talked frankly about Jones and Ferenczi. He said that Jones was extremely jealous and envious of F. in his professional ability, reputation and in his relationship with Freud. Then he asked me if I knew who was with Ferenczi during the last months of his life. I only knew Clara [Thompson] and Alice Lowell and Elizabeth Severn. He then said that

<sup>13</sup> When Balint left Budapest for England in 1939, Jones did not accept him in London, but 'advised' him to go to Manchester. Balint had also lost his parents in the Holocaust, and didn't want to make trouble in the country that gave him asylum and adopted him. Káta and Lajos Lévy were virtually penniless when they left Hungary after the 1956 invasion by the Soviet Union, and though they had a son in London, they were completely financially dependent on Anna Freud for their living there.



Jones told him, when he (B.) insisted that Ferenczi was not insane or homicidal during his last days, that he—Jones—had talked with an ‘eye witness’ but wouldn’t say who it was. Balint is trying to find out who it is. He suspects Lévy but says that he will not confront Lévy with this situation as ‘Lévy is the kind of person who would say anything!’ In other words entirely unreliable ...

Again, in the postscript, it was stressed that Balint suspected ‘that Lévy or someone told Jones that Ferenczi was insane at his death—which was welcome to Jones ...’ Izette de Forest also added: ‘Why didn’t Jones cite “the eye witness” as proof in his book?’

In the Summer of 1958, Anna Freud wrote to Lajos Lévy. I have had the opportunity to read Lévy’s reply to Anna Freud, a second reply Lévy wrote to Robert Wälder (who was writing on behalf of Anna Freud), and Anna Freud’s final reply to Lévy. These three letters permit us to clarify his position and to complete the whole picture.<sup>14</sup>

From the letter written by Lévy to Anna Freud on 8 September 1958, one may have the impression that Anna Freud was exploring the possibility of writing a reply to Erich Fromm’s article.<sup>15</sup> The second letter is Lévy’s answer, on 18 October 1958, to Robert Wälder’s request to confirm or deny Jones’s assertion about Ferenczi’s insanity. Although Lévy began by declaring that he could no longer give an answer based on the ‘medical perception’ of the question, the rest of the letter mainly consists of a long and detailed medical report. Lévy stressed that, before having been affected by

pernicious anaemia, which also often results in memory gaps, Ferenczi never displayed any trace of paranoid manifestations. According to him, for Jones it was sufficient that Ferenczi had a different opinion from Freud or from himself, to consider that a sign of paranoia. After having presented Ferenczi’s medical case history, Lévy repeated again that he had never observed any symptom of psychosis in him. Then the onset and development of his final illness was described.

During his last visit to Freud, before the Wiesbaden Congress, Ferenczi underwent a walking paralysis at the moment of leaving, the origin of which was uncertain. A few weeks later, the diagnosis of pernicious anaemia was made by Lévy himself. Thanks to a strong cure, Ferenczi was able to recover rapidly. However, from the beginning of March 1933, the symptoms of funicular myelitis began to diffuse rapidly. Walking disorders, ataxia of the upper limbs, sight disorders and incontinence appeared, and these symptoms were followed by relational and persecutory delusions (*‘Beziehungs- und Verfolgungswahnvorstellungen’*), which also resulted in attacks against his wife. He died on ‘24 May 1933’ (the correct date was 22 May) of a respiratory paralysis. At this point Lévy explained that paranoid manifestations are frequent in severe anaemia, and that they had to be carefully distinguished from paranoia proper. In his opinion, Ferenczi did not have a paranoid predisposition. Lévy also criticised Jones as a biographer<sup>16</sup> and concluded by saying that

<sup>14</sup> In the meantime these letters have been published by Judith Dupont in *Le Coq-Héron*, no. 149, 1998 (Lévy, 1998). See also Axel & Peter T. Hoffer (1998).

<sup>15</sup> Anna Freud had sent to Lévy the letter which her father had written to Jones, on 29 May 1933, immediately after the death of Ferenczi, asking for his opinion. In the answer, which was not immediate, Lévy said that the letter was a good complement of the reflection made on the same subject in ‘Analysis terminable and interminable’, but he also expressed his reserves about the part of the letter that referred to the ‘strange American patient’ (i.e. Elizabeth Severn), since she was still alive and could provoke further polemics. Furthermore, the source of Jones’s assertion was Ferenczi’s wife. According to Lévy, she could have naïvely said something compromising in the letter that Ferenczi sent to Freud for his anniversary, shortly before his death. Such an hypothesis is not validated, since she only wrote that Sándor ‘was no more the same as he was before’ (Ferenczi to Freud, 4.5.1933)

<sup>16</sup> Lévy noted that the three volumes of the biography contained many false indications and thus many false conclusions, not only in relation to Ferenczi, but also to all the people close to Professor Freud, and that the quantity of errors was a function of the familiarity with Freud.



Jones was totally lacking empathic capacity in relation to Ferenczi, also for racial and national reasons.

On 20 October 1958, Anna Freud wrote to Lévy saying that she had been very impressed by his report. She considered it the first clear and objective description of the situation, and she also appreciated the concluding remark. She regretted the fact that Jones had not consulted him before writing the biography.

How should we judge Lévy's report? Clearly, it does not validate Jones's assertions. Yet, there are some differences between his medical report and the rest of the testimonies on Ferenczi's last months of life. Elma Laurvik and Sophie Erdős pointed out that there had not been any noticeable mental changes, but only physical ones. Clara Thompson, who visited him regularly and was also a physician, observed some organic mental deterioration (memory defects and forgetfulness) in Ferenczi's last two months of life, as part of his illness. But Lévy reported having observed—among the physical symptoms—'relational and persecutory delusions', which also resulted in aggressive actions against his wife. In a way this fits with Jones's assertion concerning Ferenczi's 'violent paranoid and even homicidal outbursts', confirming the hypothesis that Lévy was indeed the 'eye-witness' that Jones had threatened to provide. And yet, we cannot avoid the conclusion that even Jones's 'eye-witness' would not have validated his claims, since Lévy rejected Jones's interpretation and explained the mental symptoms as consequences of the severe anaemia.

Moreover, Lévy did not have all the information. On occasion of the second relapse, when Ferenczi began to show signs of spinal cord degeneration and feared that the paralysis was caused by syphilis, he asked Clara Thompson to test his eyes, because 'he wasn't sure about his doctor's not lying' (see above). Ferenczi did not completely trust his doctor, and relied on his pupil instead. Only to Clara Thompson did he confide his fear of being impaired by a neurological disease caused by

syphilis. Besides being a recurrent hypochondriacal feature of Ferenczi's, the fear of syphilis represented a self-interpretive effort to find a consistent meaning to the depersonalising phenomena that were occurring to him. Evidently, at the second relapse, Ferenczi experienced himself as losing both physical and mental control. Probably the aggression against his wife, referred to by Lévy, were part of this picture. At the same time, he also was profoundly reassured by the result of the neurological test performed by Clara Thompson, to the point that, in a letter to Freud, he openly referred to his fear as a 'nervous breakdown'. The quality of his self-observation and the fact that he was reassured by a neurological test, are clear proof that he was not 'insane' in the sense suggested by Jones. Probably also the fact that he trusted only his analysand and pupil Clara Thompson, represents quite a realistic reaction, once we consider how his fatal illness had been used for performing Ferenczi's 'character assassination'. We might here recall Hermann's retrospective report of his last visit to Ferenczi, a few days before his death: 'He spoke, as usual, in his reflective way he was doubtful about the future of the Hungarian society. He indeed mentioned the name of a member who he could not trust; this mistrust did not derive from paranoia, but it was based on facts' (Hermann, 1974, p. 116).

Since Jones was convinced of Ferenczi's 'pathological evolution' already in Wiesbaden, was completely supported in his conviction by Freud, and considered Ferenczi's 'paranoia' public news, we can speculate that he found a confirmation of his view in Lévy's description of Ferenczi's illness. Moreover, the fact that Jones was so sure about his allegation (in contrast with his prudent recantation in relation to Rank), suggests that he was convinced that Lévy would have confirmed his assertions. At the same time, Jones had also to be aware of the discrepancy between what Lévy had told him and his own reinterpretation; otherwise, as Izette de Forest remarked, he would have quoted Ferenczi's physician as the reliable source of his assertions already in Freud's biog-



raphy. Finally, the fact that Lévy did not make a public statement, in spite of his professional and ethical commitment, may be a sign of his lack of courage. What is certain is that it is a sign of the compliance and submission forced by the group pressure.<sup>17</sup>

### CONCLUSIONS

The documents consulted—the letters of the years 1929-33, the protestors' testimonies, Lévy's testimony—do not support Jones's allegation of Ferenczi's insanity. At the same time, they show that Jones's allegation was not a one-man fabrication, but reflected a shared belief. This belief was originated by the Freud-Ferenczi conflict and spread in two phases.

The conflict concerned the question of the interpretation and management of Ferenczi's 'hostility'. By letting Freud acknowledge and accept his 'hostility', Ferenczi wanted to change the mental image Freud had of him. He was unable to give up the illusion of changing Freud's mind, because he believed that this was the only way he could become himself. Ferenczi's need to be reflected in Freud's mind, the fact that he felt himself prisoner in the image of obedient son, in which Freud continued to keep him, and his stubborn desire to change Freud in spite of Freud, all these are obvious signs of a neurotic incapacity to accept external reality on one side and to cope with internal ambivalence on the other.

Yet, the question is more complex because Freud also was the charismatic leader of the psychoanalytic movement, and therefore by striving for a new position in Freud's mind, Ferenczi was also advocating for himself a critical position within the psychoanalytic movement. Here one could argue that a certain

degree of 'neurosis', that is of incapacity to accept reality and to cope with hypocrisy, is necessary for changing institutions. From this perspective the question of Ferenczi's 'insanity' appears indistinguishable from his renovation of psychoanalysis.

Initially, the belief in Ferenczi's 'insanity' emerged within a small group of people that held a leading position in the psychoanalytic movement. The main elements, which made such a belief possible, were Ferenczi's previous collaboration with Rank (who became a dissident and was banished), his growing isolation and alienation from Freud, and the theoretical and technical divergences from him. The break between Freud and Ferenczi at the end of August 1932 was the immediate prompt for the emergence and spreading of the belief of Ferenczi's insanity at the Wiesbaden Congress. This break was caused by Ferenczi's refusal of the presidency, which Freud offered him as a 'forcible cure'. Or, put another way, it was caused by Ferenczi's refusal of a cure, which consisted in a process of identification with the common cause.

At this stage the belief was still vague, characterised by the lack of distinction between 'mental pathology' and 'paper pathology' (the Wiesbaden paper was especially characterised as 'paranoid'). Moreover, the belief did become official, and did not have formal consequences, except the withdrawal from publication of the English version of the Wiesbaden paper, after Ferenczi's death. Also the rejection of Ferenczi's last contributions remained informal and inaccurate. His later theories and techniques were neither studied, nor made the object of criticism in public discussions or published papers by analysts (with the exception of Franz Alexander who, by the way, later came more and more close to the criticised posi-

<sup>17</sup>There are also minor points of Lévy's medical report that are irritating. For example, he qualifies as a 'rough historical falsehood' [*krasse historische Unwahrheit*] not Jones's heavy statements about Ferenczi's paranoia but Jones's marginal statement 'He [Ferenczi] also told me he was suffering from pernicious anaemia', because it neglected to emphasise Lévy's role: the diagnosis was made by Lévy himself between the end of September and the beginning of October, and Ferenczi could not have told Jones.



tion).<sup>18</sup> In the long run this allowed a process of recovery by means of the publication of his works, which culminated in the so-called 'Ferenczi number' of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, in 1949. On this occasion the Wiesbaden paper too was finally published, without meeting Jones's opposition. In the same period, Gisella Ferenczi and Michael Balint on one hand, and Anna Freud and her brothers on the other, reached an informal agreement about the cataloguing and partial publication of the correspondence between Freud and Ferenczi (Haynal, 1992, p. xxix).

Precisely because of this recovering process, the second phase of Ferenczi's pathologisation was unexpected. This phase was characterised by the shift of the belief to a formal level, and its spreading within the psychoanalytic community mainstream. The means was Jones's Freud biography, Volume III, in which the latest emergence of 'the evil spirit of dissension' was discussed in a chapter entitled 'Disunion' by Jones. Probably, reading the various letters in preparation for Freud's biography reactivated Jones's old envy and jealousy of Ferenczi. However, the myth of Ferenczi's insanity cannot be explained on the basis of Jones's individual psychology. The lack of scrutiny by which this myth was accepted by the reviewers, its rapid spreading, as well as its persistence, suggest that it performed some unconscious function within the psychoanalytic community.

In my opinion, the myth was functional to the 'union' of this community, i.e. to the moral definition of its boundaries and obligations. We should consider that after Freud's death, the doctrinal level became more important for identifying one's respect for and dedication to the community. Moreover, Ferenczi's emphasis on the analyst as a real person was incompati-

ble with the strict conception of psychoanalysis, based on the theoretical rejection of the affective factors, which was becoming dominant in those years. This concept represented a protection against analysts' fear of remaining 'captives of their patient's emotional structures', 'embroiled in their patient's affective net' (Friedman, 1978, p. 538). As pointed out by Friedman, analysts 'wanted to be above it, looking at it. If they were caught inside it, they felt, both patient and analyst would be thrown together in a position designed by the patient's neurosis' (p. 538). Now, if we define this recoiling from being caught in the patient's neurosis a 'flight into sanity', it is easy to see the narrative of Ferenczi's 'falling into insanity' as its mirror image. The narrative of Ferenczi's case history, tragically ended up in isolation, mental deterioration, self-destruction, and blame, represented an admonishment and had a normative value: 'see what happens if you let yourself enter into a relationship with your neurotic (or even psychotic) patients!'

The moral freedom of the dissidents from these kinds of constraints might also explain why it was easier for them to protest against Jones's false allegation. We should be grateful to dissidents such as Izette de Forest, Clara Thompson and Erich Fromm for having collected the testimonies about Ferenczi's fatal illness. The story of Anna Freud shows that, even at the centre of the psychoanalytic orthodoxy, it was possible to check the validity of Jones's assertions. Thanks to the report of Lajos Lévy, Anna Freud came to the conclusion that Jones's allegation was false. Yet she didn't do anything to modify the impression created by Jones. Why? We might suppose that admitting such a weighty error in relation to the person of Ferenczi would have inevitably re-opened the question of Rank as well, i.e. in relation to a

<sup>18</sup> Franz Alexander was the first analyst trained in the Berlin institute. After having criticised the 1924 joint work by Ferenczi and Rank (Alexander, 1925), he again defended the 'classic technique' against Ferenczi's 'relaxation principle', in a 1932 paper originally entitled 'The significance of emotional attitudes in the psycho-analytical situation' (Alexander, 1933). However, precisely the confrontation with Ferenczi's ideas later enabled him to re-evaluate the emotional experience and create the concept of 'corrective emotional experience' (Alexander et al., 1946; Alexander, 1950).



chapter of the history of the psychoanalytic movement that was, if possible, even more miserable. And since Jones's assertions about the insanity of Rank and Ferenczi were not limited to their private lives, but were synchronised with the story of the Secret Committee, the crisis of 1924, and the verdict about their theoretical positions and technical innovations, the admission that Jones's allegations were false would have fuelled criticism of the dogmatic aspects of mainstream psychoanalysis and destroyed the credibility of large portions of Freud's official biography. Therefore, Anna Freud must have come to the conclusion that the preservation of the credibility of the whole, deserved the sacrifice of the part. Precisely this choice represents, as an expression of totalitarianism, a further confirmation that the analysis made by Fromm was basically correct.

As a consequence, the process of rehabilitating Ferenczi promoted by Balint was kept back for nearly three decades. The publication of Ferenczi's *Clinical Diary*, as well as of the Freud–Ferenczi correspondence, was continuously postponed (Balint, 1969; Dupont, 1985; Haynal, 1992), becoming possible only in 1985—a year that represents the beginning of a new interest in Ferenczi, which is well reflected in the increased number of articles dedicated to him.<sup>19</sup> Such an interest has been facilitated by the collapse of a formal and dogmatic defini-

tion of psychoanalysis, the overcoming of an authoritarian (one-sided) mode of interaction, the new respect for phenomena explored by Ferenczi like trauma, countertransference, regression and psychic pain, as well as the new attraction for restless research, and the demand for a better history of psychoanalysis.

The myth of Ferenczi's insanity did not find the necessary elements for surviving in this new mentality, and tends to disappear with the same indifference and lack of scrutiny that accompanied its onset. Thus, in a 1994 article written by the director of the Freud Archives, Harold Blum simply states: 'though traumatised with regressive trends, Ferenczi was not mad nor had his mind "deteriorated"' (Blum, 1994, p. 876). No proofs are given in support of this new view, as if the previous official statements had been a sort of a joke, not to be taken too seriously or too literally.<sup>20</sup> We may finally wonder why Ferenczi was experienced as dangerous, when he had no intention of founding an alternative psychoanalysis, had no interest in power, and as a man was defenceless and extremely vulnerable.<sup>21</sup> In my opinion Ferenczi's critical attitude towards the more and more 'pedagogical' orientation of psychoanalysis was experienced as a threat by the members of a group that was functioning mainly on the basis of the identification with a feared and idealised master. We should take

<sup>19</sup> In the English psychoanalytic journals in the PEP electronic Archive, the name 'Ferenczi' appears in 276 articles in the years 1976–1985, and in 414 articles in the years 1985–1994. Various journals dedicated special issues to the rediscovery of Ferenczi, such as *Le Coq-Héron* in 1987, 1992, 1998, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* in 1988, *Études Freudiennes* in 1993, *Psyche* in 1994, *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* in 1997. Presently, three journals (the *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, *Le Coq-Héron* and *Psyche*) are preparing a coordinated Ferenczi number to be published in 1998/1999. Collective volumes entirely or partially dedicated to Ferenczi also deserve to be mentioned, such as Aron & Harris (1993), Rudnytsky et al. (1996), Haynal & Falzeder (1994), Mahony et al. (1997).

<sup>20</sup> At the same time, in the same article, Jones's allegation of a 'destructive psychosis' is replaced by the view that Ferenczi's mind was split and confused because of the neurological illness and degeneration, which was progressing over the years. And just as the old myth was used for discrediting Ferenczi, this new narrative uses the idea that 'the regression of the dying analyst often leads to confusion and disorganization' (Blum, 1994, p. 872) to explain Ferenczi's isolation, interest in trauma, decline and confusion. Once again, however, no evidence of Ferenczi's confusion was given, and once again the reality is heavily manipulated in order to explain Ferenczi's personal and theoretical withdrawal from Freud by the progression of his illness.

<sup>21</sup> He was indeed so naïve that, when he received roses and friendly lines from Jones after the Wiesbaden Congress, he annotated in his *Clinical Diary*: 'Cannot deny that I was pleasantly touched even by this' (note of 2.10.1932). I wonder if someone provided with the necessary self-defences would have trusted a person like Jones.





into account that Ferenczi belonged to the early generation of analysts who were the first to experience analysis from the analysand's perspective, while having had short, uncompleted, or otherwise unsatisfactory analysis. This situation caused a mixture of painful disappointments and exaggerated expectations, which probably resulted in the defensive idea of the analyst's 'infallibility'. Although Ferenczi was probably the one who had the highest expectations of the possibility of analytic technique adapting itself to the needs of all kinds of patients, he was also convinced that psychoanalysis was developing along a sterile direction precisely because of the more and more crucial role played by the defensive image of the infallible analyst. As stressed by Clara Thompson (1943, p. 64), Ferenczi opposed 'the increasingly popular idea of the passive non-reacting analyst who is only a mirror in which the patient's feelings are reflected', felt that such an attitude 'tended to produce intellectual analyses in which no real change took place', and believed that such a technique was essentially aimed at conveying to the patient 'the impression of infallibility, authority and wisdom', thus repeating one of the typical sources of neurotic disturbances: 'the over-valuation of the power of the parents'.

Ferenczi found this over-valuation of the power of the analyst to be the main obstacle that prevented analysis becoming a living and liberating experience. In other words, he found that 'the analyst' was such an obstacle, and recommended that the analyst should unmask himself and become a person. In this regard Ferenczi's radicalism represented a utopia, rooted in the part of his personality that corresponded to his social role of 'enfant terrible' and private vocation of 'wise baby'. This utopian dimension was reflected in his view of the superego as 'intro-pression' of an alien will, in his refusal to base his technique on an identification with an infallible analyst, in his avoidance of the technical language of psychoanalysis and in his preference for everyday language, by which he communicated a low

opinion of the ritualised means of identification that keep a group together.

Even his restless experimentation, the ups and downs, the forceful pushing of everything beyond limits, could be considered an expression of his utopian direction, in addition to showing the lack of stability associated with the lack of identification. Indeed, in his selfish abandonment of all defences and stubborn research for what is supposed to lie behind the façade, he came close to witnessing the dissolution of selfhood in split-off parts, fragments of thought, emanations of hate, terror, luminous visions, spirits, angels—as in the *Clinical Diary*, which may be considered a glimpse into the world as it would look if deprived of benevolent identifications. Ferenczi's own dissolution occurred when, by refusing Freud's benevolent protection, he decided to enter this world—because identification is a protective device, and Ferenczi deprived himself of it. The real point, however, is that his personality and his teachings were in shrill contrast with the retreat into the appearances of a psychoanalytic community that was becoming a bureaucratic organisation.

Reward: the insane show themselves as healthy; intellectual and symbolic honesty only in 'thoughts', in speech. Honesty is transformed. (Courage to criticise.) (Ferenczi, *Clinical Diary*, 19 July 1932).

#### APPENDIX: ABOUT SCRUTINY THEN AND NOW

The reception of Jones's allegation was characterised by lack of scrutiny. An example of the persistence of this attitude is the recent edition of the complete Freud–Jones correspondence, in which the editor, Andrew Paskauskas, states: 'Some commentators suggest that Jones "concocted" these allegations ... but in fact Jones felt he had corroborating evidence supporting his position, and not just from Freud. Freud's diagnosis ... was actually one of a series of reports which Jones had been obtaining over the years' (Paskauskas, 1993, p. 723, note 3).



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Besides Jones's letter to Freud of 3.6.1933, in which Riviere's opinion is reported, the editor mentions two other letters (number 571 and 595). The most significant element that can be found in the first one is an editorial note by which the reader is sent back again to the note in which the existence of corroborating evidence is claimed (see Jones to Freud, 15.1.1931, note 1). The second one consists in Jones's report to Freud on the Wiesbaden Congress, which I have discussed in detail.

As far as I know, one of the last expressions of this attitude is the 1993 article by Johanna Krout Tabin, in which it was once again said that 'Ferenczi showed the mental aberrations' that are typical of pernicious anaemia, and that 'the last line of Ferenczi's final paper (the one he read at the 12th Congress) demonstrates the mental confusion he was displaying' (Tabin, 1993, p. 295). In this case the statement did not go unanswered, but prompted the reaction of Lewis Aron & Jay Frankel (1994), who wrote such a well argued paper, that no space was left to further objections. If the belief in Jones's allegation is fading away, it is because psychoanalysts today are more ready to accept criticism.

The reception of Jones's allegation was characterised by lack of scrutiny also because of the distrust towards the persons who, like Erich Fromm, tried to preserve a critical attitude. Since both Robert Holt and Jacob Arlow cast doubts on Fromm's criticism of Jones's allegation, I have asked them how they now considered their views of forty years ago. Holt—with whom I had spoken before writing this paper—had sent me the following comment on his review: 'I would add only that at that time, I was quite credulous, still under the influence of my Freud-idolising friends and teachers, and ready to believe a large part of what I now recognise as hagiographic myth' (letter of 8 April 1996). Arlow—to whom I sent the first version of this paper—made the following articulate reconsideration (letter of 12 February 1998). First, he notes that in his 1958 article he has expressed doubt, because he 'had long since been convinced by the evidence that has been more recently available that Jones' characterisation

of Ferenczi's mental state was completely wrong'. Indeed, he was fortunate to have as one of his instructors at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute Dr Bertram Lewin, who

was a great admirer of Ferenczi at least in his seminar ... This was before Jones's biography of Freud appeared, so that Ferenczi's supposed madness and his deviation from the standard technique never came up. It became a point of discussion only after the appearance of the Jones biography.

Arlow also makes the following statement:

As regards Fromm's 1958 characterisation of a 'party line', I would say that it was too broad a sweep, although the spirit was essentially correct. There was indeed a group of vehement partisans surrounding Freud who would brook no criticism or deviation. ... As a matter of fact ... I, too, was a target of that group. As a result, I came to appreciate how the attitude towards psychoanalytic 'heretics' was more than a simple matter of differences of theory that seemingly was indoctrinated in the teaching.

According to Arlow this attitude was 'an outcome of the nature of the psychoanalytic program, particularly the effects of the personal analysis'. He notes that, as he already had pointed out at the *First Three-Institute Conference on Training Analysis*, in 1965, 'in essence an aura of omnipotence and omniscience surrounds the image of the training analyst', which 'readily lends itself to confusion with an archaic ego ideal, or as the locus for projection of infantile illusions of grandeur'. Since 'beyond the training analyst, of course, was the image of Sigmund Freud', Arlow reaches a position similar to the one expressed by Holt. From this perspective the suppression of a critical attitude appears to be the complement of the tendency to idealise and idolise Freud.

I have also asked Robert Wallerstein for his opinion about the effects of this suppression, since he has been especially active in fostering a re-integration of Ferenczi's line of thought with mainstream psychoanalysis (Wallerstein, 1995). He wrote:



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I myself am one of those people who came into analytic training here in America during the decade of the 1950s, when Ferenczi was a totally neglected figure, who had passed into history, so that we never read or discussed any of his contributions in the seminars during my years as a candidate. I also at the time read the Freud biography by Ernest Jones, and had no reason then to disbelieve Jones' allegations about Ferenczi's mental status. Along with lots of others, I've had to totally revise my perspectives in the light of accumulating contributions over these past years of revival of interest in Ferenczi (letter of 29.6.1998).

From other interviews with analysts trained in the 1950s, it seems that Ferenczi was not always a totally neglected figure; usually he was appreciated for his early contributions and ignored for the later ones. Yet Wallerstein makes a good point, saying that one had no reason to disbelieve Jones. This also means that the question of belief or disbelief in psychoanalytic matters tended to be managed as a whole, and that to cast doubt on a part was to cast doubt on the whole, correspondingly to the assumption of 'One Psychoanalysis' (Wallerstein, 1988).

However, a structural change occurred in the last years, which has been described as the passage from 'One' to 'Many Psychoanalyses' (Wallerstein, 1988). This crisis or liberalisation of psychoanalysis was characterised by the loosening of its concrete 'unity'. The enhanced tolerance for criticism was both cause and effect of this change. Structurally this change corresponds to a different type of relationship among the parts, which permits a differentiated distribution of belief and disbelief. Consequently, the view that one can reject a part without endangering the whole is becoming a constitutive element of the new common sense. Furthermore, while before the lack of scrutiny could be functional to the preservation of the whole, today it is becoming dysfunctional to it. Indeed, criticism is today becoming necessary to foster a sense of order out of multiplicity.

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and Robert Holt for having sent me the reconsideration of their 1958 views; and Robert Wallerstein for the description of his change of perspective. For useful information, comments and fruitful discussion. I would particularly like to thank Judith Dupont, Ernst Falzeder, André Haynal, Patrick Mahony, Irwin Hoffman, Nicholas Rand and Paul Roazen. To Ernst Falzeder I also owe the title of this paper 'Flight into sanity'. All translations from German into English are by the author.

### TRANSLATIONS OF SUMMARY

Dans le volume III de *La vie et l'oeuvre de Sigmund Freud*, Ernest Jones explique que les dernières contributions de Ferenczi sont le produit d'une détérioration mentale basée sur une psychose progressive. Erich Fromm avait rassemblé divers témoignages de personnes en contact avec Ferenczi durant ses dernières années, et toutes contrastaient les allégations de Jones, et dénonçaient sa façon d'écrire l'histoire. Cependant, du fait que Fromm était lui-même un dissident et que ses témoins étaient des élèves, parents ou amis de Ferenczi, ils furent écartés car 'partisans'. Le but de cet article est de reconsidérer le sujet de la folie de Ferenczi sur la base de nombreux documents non publiés. Ces documents ne vont pas dans le sens des allégations de Jones sur la folie de Ferenczi. Ils montrent en même temps que ces allégations n'étaient pas le fait d'un seul homme, mais reflétaient une croyance générale, clarifiant bien des questions concernant la nature de cette croyance, un manque d'approfondissement caractérisant sa façon de se répandre, et peut-être sa fonction au sein de la communauté psychanalytique. L'auteur montre que la personnalité et l'enseignement de Ferenczi, tout particulièrement dans son insistance sur le besoin d'accepter la critique du patient, contrastait avec la conception dominante de la psychanalyse, basée sur l'infaillibilité de l'analyste.

In *Leben und Werk Sigmund Freuds, Band III* erklärt Ernest Jones Ferenczis späte Beiträge als das Ergebnis einer seelischen Zerrüttung auf der Basis einer fortschreitenden Psychose. Erich Fromm sammel-

te verschiedene Zeugnisse von Zeugen Ferenczis letzter Jahre, die alle in Gegensatz zu Jones' Behauptungen standen und stellte Jones' Art der Geschichtsschreibung in Frage. Da Fromm aber selbst ein Dissident war und seine Zeugen Schüler, Verwandte oder Freunde von Ferenczi waren, wurden sie als „Partisanen“ abgelehnt. Die vorliegende Studie hat zum Ziel, die Frage von Ferenczis Verrücktheit auf der Grundlage vieler unveröffentlichter Dokumente neu zu betrachten. Die betrachteten Dokumente unterstützen Jones' Behauptungen, daß Ferenczi verrückt wurde, nicht. Gleichzeitig zeigen sie, daß Jones' Behauptungen nicht allein von ihm stammten, sondern eine verbreitete Annahme darstellten. Dies wirft viele Fragen auf zum Wesen dieser Annahme und zum Mangel an Nachprüfung, die ihre Ausbreitung charakterisierten, und zu ihrer möglichen Funktion innerhalb der psychoanalytischen Gemeinschaft. Der Autor meint, daß Ferenczis Persönlichkeit und Lehre, insbesondere seine Betonung der Wichtigkeit, die Kritik des Patienten zu akzeptieren, im Gegensatz zur überwiegenden Vorstellung von Psychoanalyse stand, die auf der Unfehlbarkeit des Analytikers beruhte.

En *Vida y Obra de Sigmund Freud, Vol. III*. Ernest Jones explica las contribuciones finales de Ferenczi como la consecuencia de un deterioro mental, basado en una psicosis progresiva. Erich Fromm recogió algunos testimonios de testigos de los últimos años de Ferenczi, todos opuestos a las afirmaciones de Jones y puso en tela de juicio el método de Jones como historiador. Sin embargo, dado que Fromm fue un disidente y que sus testigos eran alumnos, parientes o amigos de Ferenczi, todos ellos quedaron descartados como personas no objetivas. Este trabajo trata de reconsiderar la cuestión de la salud mental de Ferenczi, basándose en varios documentos inéditos. Los documentos consultados no confirman la opinión de Jones sobre una perturbación mental de Ferenczi. Al mismo tiempo, muestran que tales opiniones no procedían de una sola persona, sino que reflejaban una creencia compartida. Se plantean muchas cuestiones sobre la naturaleza de esas opiniones, la falta de análisis cuidadoso que caracterizó su difusión y su posible función dentro de la comunidad psicoanalítica. Se sugiere que la personalidad y las enseñanzas de Ferenczi, especialmente su énfasis en la necesidad de aceptar la crítica del paciente, contrastaban con una idea predominante en el Psicoanálisis, relativa a la infalibilidad del analista.

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