

***“Infantile Thoughts”*: Reading Ferenczi’s
Clinical Diary as a Commentary on Freud’s Relationship
with Minna Bernays**

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“We should not forget that the young child is familiar with much knowledge, as a matter of fact, that later becomes buried by the force of repression.”

(Ferenczi, 1926, p. 350)

I

To juxtapose Freud’s relationship with Minna Bernays and Ferenczi’s Clinical Diary (1985) might well be described as a metaphysical conceit in Dr. Johnson’s famous pejorative definition of such comparisons as “the most heterogeneous ideas yoked by violence together” (1781, p. 14). For, I must concede at once, the name of Freud’s sister-in-law is never mentioned in the private journal kept by Ferenczi in 1932, the year before his death.

In order to render plausible my ensuing argument, therefore, let me circle back to the beginning of the story and offer some guideposts by way of orientation. I start with the premise that, if Freud did engage in a sexual affair with Minna, four years younger than his wife Martha and his own junior by nine years, the effects of this primordial boundary violation would not have been confined to Freud’s “private” life but would rather have extended to the professional sphere in manifold ways, and would indeed haunt the entire history of

¹ On Ferenczi as a touchstone not only for analysts who identify themselves as relational but also for those who consider themselves Independent – the former being predominantly, though not exclusively, American, and the latter British – see the eloquent paper by Michael Parsons (2009a) and the responses by Anthony Bass (2009), Emanuel Berman (2009), and Warren Poland (2009), and Parsons’s reply (2009b) to these commentaries.

psychoanalysis. By examining the image of Freud fashioned by the Hungarian disciple who has become an inspirational figure for contemporary relational and Independent analysts,¹ we shall gain an inkling of the far-reaching impact of Freud's alleged transgression, which – if proven true – would constitute not simply adultery but also incest in both a psychological and a biblical sense.²

My second premise is that, whatever the role one ascribes to fantasy in psychic life, it makes a profound difference whether or not this affair was consummated in reality. For, by Freud's own theory, it is only to be expected that human beings will entertain forbidden thoughts. To acknowledge such desires in a psychoanalytic context would not be compromising. But if Freud acted on these impulses, especially with a member of his own family, to confess what he had done would have had catastrophic consequences for his reputation and put an end to any hopes of founding a movement to advance his radical ideas about sexuality and the unconscious. Thus, in the scenario I am envisaging, Freud did engage in an affair with his sister-in-law, and this left him with an all-consuming secret – something, in the words that Freud was fond of quoting from Goethe's *Faust*, he could not tell the boys. It was the strain of keeping concealed what he most longed to reveal that caused this conflict arising in Freud's domestic life to disturb his relations above all with Jung and Ferenczi, the two colleagues who sought to know him best, with ever-widening ripples in the pool of psychoanalytic history.

We come now to the bedrock question of whether Freud did enter into a liaison with Minna Bernays. Although I have come to believe that he did, to make that case properly would require book-length treatment and must be deferred to a future occasion. By way of a down payment, however, I can outline why I find the evidence to be compelling. The fundamental point to be grasped is that there are not one but *two* indispensable sources of information concerning this affair, and these are *entirely independent* of each other. Thus, if even one of these sources were deemed to be credible, then the evidence for Freud's affair would already be very strong; but if *both* were to stand up under rigorous scrutiny, then I submit that the case would have been proved beyond any reasonable doubt.

The first source of information is *internal* and comes from Freud's own writings, especially *On Dreams* (1901) and his analysis of the "*aliquis*" parapraxis, found in chapter 2 of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), as well as other passages in the same book, all of which were written in the fall of

² The Book of Leviticus makes explicit the prohibition against sexual intercourse between a man and his sister-in-law: "Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness in her lifetime" (18:18; King James Version).

1900, after Freud returned to Vienna from his summer travels first with Martha and then with Minna. It was on the basis of a brilliant exegesis of these texts that Peter Swales (1982) first advanced the thesis that Freud and Minna consummated their affair in the summer of 1900, following which Freud – like the allegedly recently reencountered but in actuality nonexistent “young man of academic background”³ (Freud 1901, pp. 8-9) who misremembered a line from Vergil’s *Aeneid* – evidently feared he had impregnated Minna and sent her to a sanatorium where she likely underwent an abortion.

The second source of information concerning Freud’s affair with Minna Bernays is *external* and turns on the testimony of Jung, who, in an interview given to the American theologian John Billinsky in 1957, but not published by Billinsky until 1969, reported that during his first visit to Freud in Vienna in 1907, he had learned from Minna that “Freud was in love with her and that their relationship was indeed very intimate” (Billinsky, 1969, p. 42).⁴ Although I have tried elsewhere (Rudnytsky, 2006) to show the essential integrity of Jung’s evolving narratives of his relationship with Freud, the key point for my present purposes, as I have indicated, is simply that these two sources – the *internal* and *external* – are altogether *independent* of one another, and hence there is no sense in which Swales relies on Jung in advancing his arguments.

In view of the highly charged nature of the material, it is not surprising that even distinguished scholars and analysts have lost their bearings in dealing with Freud and Minna. In their annotations to Ferenczi’s pivotal self-analytic letter to Freud on December 26, 1912, for example, the editors assert that “an attempt was made by Peter Swales... to verify Jung’s claim that Freud and Minna

³ The similarity of this description to that of Freud’s interlocutor in “Screen Memories” – “a man of university education, aged thirty-eight” (Freud, 1899, p. 309) – who is universally recognized to be none other than Freud himself, combined with Freud’s statement in the *Psychopathology* that he had “renewed his acquaintance” (Freud, 1901, p. 8) with the perpetrator of the *aliquis* slip, can, in my view, be construed as Freud’s private signal that he is continuing the disguised self-analysis begun in “Screen Memories” in his fictional dialogue with “Herr Aliquis.”

⁴ The published version of Jung’s interview with Billinsky is only the tip of the archival iceberg. In a February 20, 1970 letter to Franz Jung, Billinsky stated, “May I say in all frankness that I gave only excerpts of your father’s remarks and not the whole story as your father told it to me.” In unpublished contemporaneous notes of the interview, Billinsky quotes Jung as having said explicitly, “I learned that Freud was in love with her and had sexual relations with her.” I am grateful to Peter Swales for sharing with me these documents given to John Kerr by Billinsky’s son after his father’s death. Also indispensable is Jung’s 1953 interview with Kurt Eissler, derestricted by the Freud Archives at the Library of Congress in 2003.

Bernays had an intimate relationship" (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1993, p. 455). But, for the reasons I have set forth, this way of putting things is seriously misleading. Even more egregiously, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (1988) derides Swales for presenting "an absurd theory, for which there was no documentary proof, only an old rumor launched by Carl Jung and Swales's strange construal of one of the dreams Freud had analyzed in *The Interpretation of Dreams*" (p. 449). In point of fact, however, *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published in November 1899, *before* the crucial summer of 1900, and Swales does not rely on *any* dreams from that work in mounting his case. Thus, what is "absurd" is not Swales's theory but the attempt of Young-Bruehl – who has confused *The Interpretation of Dreams* with *On Dreams* – to pontificate on a topic about which she is woefully uninformed.⁵

Without claiming to have proved that Freud and Minna had an affair, I hope I have said enough to show why I have come to believe that they were indeed "very intimate." There are two further pieces of historical detritus that also merit consideration. The first is the by-now notorious 1898 Swiss hotel log in which Freud signed in with Minna Bernays as his "wife," which led to a front-page story in the *New York Times* (Blumenthal, 2006) when the article by Franz Maciejewski (2006) reporting this discovery was published in *American Imago*. Although the fact that they shared a room does not mean that Freud and Minna necessarily engaged in sexual intercourse, and I concur with Swales that the relationship was not consummated until 1900, the hotel log incontrovertibly establishes Freud's capacity for duplicity about his domestic arrangements; and surely he and Minna could not have spent the night together as man and wife without at least entertaining the fantasy of being married to one another.

The second piece of unexpectedly resurfaced material is found in Ferenczi's letter to Freud of December 26, 1912, the editorial commentary on which I have criticized as inaccurate. In this letter, Ferenczi broaches for the first time the idea of being analyzed by Freud,⁶ and recounts two dreams – one having to do with a black cat that repeatedly jumps on him, the other with a severed erect penis on a saucer – analyzing the former in depth. As such, these

⁵ Among many others to have engaged in irresponsible Swales-bashing is Elisabeth Roudinesco, who opines: "Taking as a point of departure a confidence that Jung claimed to have gathered from the mouth of Minna Bernays, he utilized it to 'prove' that Freud had had a sexual liaison with his sister in law" (1994, p. 109). But Swales does *not* take Jung as "a point of departure"; and, as with Young-Bruehl's use of the phrase "old rumor," Roudinesco simultaneously misrepresents Swales and casts aspersions on the integrity of Jung.

⁶ "It was and is my intention, if you can grant me time (hours), to go into analysis with you – perhaps two weeks (maybe three) for now" (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1993, p. 450).

dreams may be regarded, in Ernst Falzeder's words, as the "initiating dream[s] of the analysis" (1997, p. 418), though Ferenczi's three "slices" of formal analysis with Freud, amounting to no more than eight weeks in total, did not take place until 1914 and 1916.⁷ As Carlo Bonomi has observed, moreover, this letter also "represents a turning point in the transference relationship between the two men" (1997, p. 159). Partly because of his enmity toward Jung, and partly because he was engulfed in the maelstrom of his personal turmoil, Ferenczi makes the fateful pronouncement, "*mutual analysis* is nonsense," and abjures his desire for reciprocal emotional intimacy with his revered teacher in favor of the wish to be analyzed by Freud, whom he now proclaims subserviently to be "right in everything" (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1993, p. 449).

After he informs Freud about the dream of the black cat, "You and your sister-in-law play a role in this dream," Ferenczi adds in parentheses, "(next to it: Italy, a four-poster bed)" (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1993, p. 451), drawing a sketch not reproduced in the English edition. Ferenczi concludes his analysis of the dream by comparing Freud's relationship with Minna Bernays to his desire for Elma Pálos, fourteen years his junior and the daughter of his mistress, Gizella Pálos, a married woman eight years Ferenczi's senior.⁸ As is by now common knowledge, this triangle was the central roman-

⁷ Falzeder is actually describing not the dreams in Ferenczi's December 26, 1912 letter but the dream of the occlusive pessary, sent as a manuscript to Freud on September 8, 1914, shortly before his first "slice" of analysis, and published as the dream of a "patient" the following year (Ferenczi, 1915). There are many links between the "initiating dreams" of 1912 and 1914. Falzeder connects the dream of the occlusive pessary with Freud's dream of dissecting his own pelvis in *The Interpretation of Dreams*: "In both Ferenczi's and Freud's dreams, there is an operation, performed by the dreamer on the lower part of his own body; in both cases the associations link this operation with self-analysis, resulting in a publication" (1997, p. 423). Similarly, Carlo Bonomi ties the dream of the severed penis back to Freud's dream of self-dissection, noting that the figure of Louise N., to whom Freud presented a copy of H. Rider Haggard's *She* and whose request to read one of Freud's own works instead occasioned the dream, "was very probably Minna Bernays" (1997, p. 162; see also p. 160). (Significantly, Freud cites Goethe's aphorism on not revealing one's secrets to boys in this connection.) In its intertwined layers of public and private meaning, in which Ferenczi figures outwardly as the analyst of someone else but is seen by the initiated reader to be the patient analyzed by Freud, "The Dream of the Occlusive Pessary" replicates what I have termed the "narcissistic formation" of Freud's quintessential self-analytic text, "Screen Memories" (see Rudnytsky, 1987, pp. 76-82).

⁸ In 1912, Ferenczi was thirty-nine, Gizella forty-seven, and Elma almost twenty-five. See the thoroughly researched (and lavishly illustrated) biographical narrative by Berman (2004). Complementing the magisterial work of Bonomi, a comprehensive treatment of the Freud-Ferenczi relationship has been offered by Forrester (1997).

tic entanglement of Ferenczi's life: he had fallen in love with Elma after taking her into analytic treatment in 1911, only to hand her over to Freud when their marriage plans collapsed. Swayed by Freud's unyielding preference for the mother over the daughter, Ferenczi renounced Elma and finally married Gizella in 1919, her ex-husband inauspiciously dying on their wedding day.

In his self-analytic letter, Ferenczi recalls how, at the age of fourteen, in what Bonomi calls an "acoustic primal scene" (1997, p. 182), he had been "terribly shocked to hear that my father, unsuspecting of my presence, had told my mother that so-and-so had married a whore" (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1993, p. 453). Ferenczi interprets the last portion of his dream as "a kind of defiant apology" addressed simultaneously to his father and to Freud. Just as he himself longs for Elma, so his father, by saying the word "whore", had symbolically acted on his illicit desires; but so, too, in Ferenczi's mind, did Freud betray his wife with her sister. Ferenczi makes explicit the analogy between his father and Freud:

Only you have moved to the position of father, your sister-in-law to that of mother. [Father also said [=acted=] "whore". = You once took a trip to *Italy* with your sister-in-law (*voyage de lit-à-lit*) (naturally, only an infantile thought!)] (p. 453; all punctuation in original).

If this "initiating dream" makes manifest Ferenczi's transference to Freud, it does so, as Judith Dupont has remarked, in surprising fashion in that "Freud is in place of the father and Minna (not Martha) in place of the mother" (1994, p. 303). The upshot of Ferenczi's double indictment is the plea that he should be allowed to gratify his passion for his mistress's daughter without fear of castration because both his biological and spiritual fathers are no less guilty than he: "The infantile 'wish-fulfillment' of the dream would thus be as follows: 'I satisfy my forbidden sexual desires; they won't cut off my penis after all, since "adults" are just as "bad" as "children"' (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1993, p. 453).

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Ferenczi does not disclose how he learned that Freud "once took a trip to *Italy*" with his sister-in-law, and indeed he immediately disavows his insinuation that there was anything untoward in their relationship by calling it "only an infantile thought." But if one seeks to reconstruct how Ferenczi in 1912 came to acknowledge harboring even a fantasy about Freud's affair with Minna, it seems likely that the seed was planted during the 1909 voyage to America on which he accompanied Freud and Jung. During their

travels, the three men analyzed each other's dreams; and, as Jung informed Billinsky (1969), when Freud refused to continue with the declaration, "I could tell you more, but I cannot risk my authority," the dreams that caused him to respond so defensively "were about the triangle – Freud, his wife, and wife's younger sister" (p. 42). More specifically, the dreams had to do with Freud's "intimate relationship with his sister-in-law," about which Jung had been informed by Minna two years earlier, though Jung insists that Freud "had no idea that I knew" (p. 42) about this most compromising of secrets.

Neither in his interview with Billinsky nor in his more circumspect public recounting of the same events in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1965) does Jung deign to mention that Ferenczi was also on board the *George Washington* that brought the psychoanalytic plague to America. As a consequence, however, Ferenczi must have been, in Bonomi's words, "cast in the role of a secret listener to Jung's analysis of Freud," that is, the auditor of another "acoustic primal scene" (1997, p. 186) preceding the overtly sexual one in his dream of the black cat. And since Ferenczi was there to witness Jung's unavailing attempts to get Freud to open up about his tabooed love affair with Minna, it does not seem far-fetched to imagine that this preternaturally gifted analyst might well have divined the true nature of the gauntlet that Jung was throwing down to Freud, even if the name of Minna Bernays was never uttered by either of the oedipal antagonists during their *agon* at this crossroads in the history of psychoanalysis.

The reconstruction I have proposed of how Ferenczi came to have his "infantile thought" about Freud and his sister-in-law entails a corollary: after the trip to America, Ferenczi possessed *unconsciously* the great secret about Freud of which Jung was *consciously* aware, although Jung, unlike Ferenczi, was never able to bring himself to speak about it openly to Freud. It is therefore no coincidence but rather a profoundly determined "secret symmetry" that Ferenczi's most radical self-analytic letter, announcing his desire to enter analysis with Freud, was written in December 1912, the same month in which the long-simmering tensions in the Freud-Jung relationship finally boiled over into an irrevocable breach.

Once the reader is attuned to Ferenczi's unconscious knowledge of Freud's relationship with his sister-in-law, various details in their correspondence following the return from America take on an uncanny resonance. As a backdrop, it is important to note the following remarkable parallel: just as Freud's younger sister Anna had married Eli Bernays, his wife's elder brother, so too Ferenczi's younger brother Lajos married Gizella's younger daughter Magda, Elma's sister, in 1909 (Berman, 2004, p. 504). Thus, in addition to being

Ferenczi's patient, beloved, and eventual daughter-in-law, Elma was also – his sister-in-law! What is more, although Freud's triangle involves two sisters and Ferenczi's a mother and daughter, this distinction does not preclude their situations from being unconsciously conflated by both men. Martha was like a mother to Minna while Ferenczi had an elder sister named Gizella, which was also the name of Freud's first love, Gisela Fluss, about whom he wrote at the age of sixteen to his school friend Eduard Silberstein: "it seems that I have transferred my esteem for the mother to friendship for the daughter" (Boehlich, 1989, p. 17; letter of September 4, 1872; see Forrester, 1997, p. 60). In the midst of Ferenczi's vacillations, Freud wrote to Gizella Pálos on December 17, 1911: "his choice is depreciated by the consideration that he is automatically swinging from his mother to his sister, as was once the case in his earliest years" (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1993, p. 320) – thereby positioning himself and Gizella, as John Forrester has elucidated, "as the old father and mother," while casting Ferenczi and Elma "as brother and sister, both abandoning the mother for each other" (1997, p. 59).

Given that Ferenczi was, in his own phrase from the Clinical Diary, a "reverent spectator" (1985, p. 184; August 4, 1932) of Jung's abortive effort to analyze Freud on the trip to America, what shall we make of it when, in a letter on October 30, 1909, he reports to Freud that Gizella had given her "Non-Plus-Ultra" coffeemaker, "which announces *the end of the brewing process with a kind of bird's chirping*," to Ferenczi's brother-in-law, the husband of his eldest sister; and that he had interpreted this to Gizella as a "symptomatic action" through which "she had clearly made known her inclination to give her love to the *brother-in-law*" (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1993, p. 90; underlined in blue pencil in original)? The likelihood that Ferenczi is obliquely alluding to Freud's "inclination to give his love to the *sister-in-law*" increases when we read, in Ferenczi's letter of July 9, 1910, of the "decided progress" in his "analytic association with Frau G.": "As the 'ménage à trois' on the George Washington became a significant experience for me and provided the occasion for unshackling my infantile complexes, so did the visit of a sister from Italy prove to be a ferment for Frau G., which activated her heretofore inadmissible impulses of jealousy, hate, etc." (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1993, p.186).

Here Ferenczi expressly links his "ménage à trois" with Jung and Freud on the George Washington with an erotic triangle involving Gizella – the perennial object of his "affectionate" current – and a female relative. In 1910, it is Gizella's younger sister, Sarolta, and not yet her daughter Elma, who represents the "sensual" object of Ferenczi's polarized desire; but this variation on the oedipal theme brings Ferenczi's libidinal constellation into complete align-

ment with Freud's.⁹ If Ferenczi were unconsciously aware of Freud's love for his sister-in-law, this would help to explain the multiple parallels between his letter about Sarolta and his analysis of the dream of the black cat in his letter of December 26, 1912. Sarolta, like Minna Bernays, is associated with Italy; Ferenczi speaks here of his "infantile complexes," and there of his "infantile thought." Above all, Ferenczi activates "impulses of jealousy, hate, etc." in Gizella by his attraction to her sister, as Freud could not have failed to do with Martha, however stoutly she turned a blind eye to what was going on between her husband and Minna.

We have it on record that Ferenczi did not merely fantasize about Sarolta. As he wrote Freud on November 18, 1916, "I couldn't resist having my way with her, at least manually," during a visit from Sarolta the preceding day; and he recalls an earlier encounter between them that went even further: "That's the way my actual neurosis before the trip to Rome began. I permitted myself intercourse with a prostitute – then with Sarolta –, the syphilophobia came as a punishment" (Falzeder and Brabant, 1996, p. 155). Since Ferenczi and Freud were in Rome together for two weeks in September 1912, and following that trip Ferenczi confessed to a fear that he had contracted syphilis (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1993, p. 412; undated letter probably from October 1912), it seems safe to conclude that Ferenczi had sexual intercourse with Sarolta in September of 1912, only one month after he had "severed the last thread of the connection" to Elma (Brabant, Falzeder, and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1993, p. 402; letter of August 8, 1912).

That Ferenczi lived out Freud's fantasy does not permit us to say anything about what Freud himself may or may not have done with Minna. But once one has been persuaded by the combination of internal and external evidence that she and Freud did have an affair, it becomes fascinating to contemplate not only the homologies between Freud's incestuous triangle and Ferenczi's but also the vicissitudes in Ferenczi's desire for the sister-in-law. And I think it makes eminent sense to hypothesize that what Judith Dupont has called "Freud's uncontrolled countertransference departure from neutrality in his championing of Gizella over Elma" (1994, p. 302) may be connected to his

⁹ Freud's first two papers on love, "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men" (1910) and especially "On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love" (1912), seem to be based in no small measure on the saga unfolding in Ferenczi's letters, as well as on what Freud knew about the antinomies of desire from his own experience. Swales (1982) takes as his epigraph Freud's declaration that "whoever is to be really free and happy in love must have surmounted his respect for women and come to terms with the idea of incest with his mother or sister" (1912, p. 186).

history with the sisters Bernays. Having tasted the forbidden fruit of his desire for Minna, I would propose, Freud was averse to allowing any of his "sons" to emulate the "sexual megalomania"¹⁰ that he believed to be his prerogative alone as the primal father of psychoanalysis; and this is what prompted Freud to behave as unanalytically as he did in relentlessly pressuring Ferenczi to marry the mother rather than the daughter.

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Having completed my long preamble, I come at last to the Clinical Diary (1985) in hopes of vindicating my metaphysical conceit. Since it is clear from Ferenczi's letter of December 26, 1912 that he had learned, probably during the 1909 trip to America, that Freud had gone on a "*voyage de lit-à-lit*" with Minna Bernays, is there any way that the Diary, though nowhere mentioning Freud's relationship with Minna, might nonetheless be taken as a commentary on it, thereby casting light not only on its "psychical reality" for Ferenczi but also on the underlying question of its "material reality" for Freud himself?¹¹

In an extensive entry on March 31, 1932 about mutual analysis, Ferenczi addresses the complications that can ensue when an analyst enters into such an arrangement with a patient who is himself an analyst, and who then chooses to repeat the experiment with his own patients. Ferenczi writes: "when a mutually analyzed patient (himself an analyst) extends the mutuality to his own patients, then he must reveal the secrets of the primary analyst [*Uranalytiker*] (that is to say, mine) to his own patients" (1985, p. 74).

¹⁰ Freud offers this phrase in his January 9, 1908 letter to Karl Abraham as a key to the 1895 "specimen dream" of Irma's injection in chapter 2 of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, adding with respect to the women figuring therein, "I have them all!" and "there would be one simple therapy for widowhood" (Falzeder, 2002, p. 21). As Patrick Mahony pointed out long ago, it is striking that Minna Bernays, whose fiancé, Iganx Schoenberg, died in 1886—and who could therefore be viewed as a widow—"remains the only member of the Freud family who is not mentioned in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and as a matter of fact she does not appear once throughout the Standard Edition" (1979, p. 23). This omission can only be deliberate given that Freud described Minna to Wilhelm Fliess in 1894 as his "closest confidante" (Masson, 1985, p. 72) apart from Fliess himself, and she became a member of his household in 1896. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud states that in the primal horde "the jealousy of the oldest and strongest male prevented sexual promiscuity" (1913, p. 125), adding that the "violent and jealous father ... keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up" (p. 141).

¹¹ On the distinction between "psychical reality" and "material reality," see Freud (1916-1917, p. 368).

In this passage, Ferenczi explicitly names himself as the "primary analyst" whose secrets might be revealed to his patients' patients through, as it were, a chain letter of mutual analyses. But given that Ferenczi was himself not only Freud's patient but also the one who, beyond all others, in Bonomi's words, was "unavoidably attracted by the verbal tombs of the master, and unconsciously driven to excavate them" (1997, p. 161), it could equally well be said to be *Freud* who occupies the position of the "primal analyst," and whose secrets *Ferenczi* is therefore exposing in conducting mutual analyses with his own patients, as well as in writing about these daring innovations in his Clinical Diary (1985).

At the heart of the critique of Freud that Ferenczi offers in the Diary is the conviction that an authoritarian attitude on the part of the analyst has the effect of infantilizing the patient. As Ferenczi writes on May 7, when the analyst becomes unduly "pedagogical," he becomes simultaneously "more and more impersonal (levitating like some kind of a divinity above the poor patient)," and as a result the analyst does not suspect that "a large share of what is described as transference is artificially provoked by this kind of behavior," rather than being entirely "created by the patient" (1985, p. 93).¹²

Because of his own experience of having been traumatized by his analysis with Freud – that is to say, by their entire relationship – Ferenczi identifies with *all* patients who have been mistreated by their parents or analysts. Drawing on his work with a female patient, "B.," he writes on July 23: "It is unbearable for children to believe they alone are bad because they react to torture with rage," whereas adults "always are and always feel they are in the right" (1985, p. 167). Ferenczi then shifts to the first person: "so it is of some consolation when I succeed in making my respected father [*Herr Vater*] or teacher lose their tempers, making them admit indirectly that they are not any less subject to 'weaknesses' than their children" (p. 167). As we have seen, the

¹² That this passage is directed at Freud is clear from the echoes of Ferenczi's March 17 entry, the only time in the Diary where he refers overtly to his experience as Freud's patient: "My own analysis could not be pursued deeply enough because my analyst (by his own admission, of a narcissistic nature), with his strong determination to be healthy and his antipathy toward any weaknesses or abnormalities, could not follow me down into those depths, and introduced the 'educational' stage too soon" (1985, p. 62). In his climactic final entry of October 2, 1932, moreover, Ferenczi casts Freud as an uncaring divinity the loss of whose protection is ultimately responsible for the pernicious anemia that would soon cost Ferenczi his life: "In my case the blood-crisis arose when I realized 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" (p. 212).

desire to prove that "'adults' are just as 'bad' as 'children'" had previously fueled Ferenczi's 1912 dream of the black cat, where he had sought to avoid being castrated for his love for Elma Pálos by citing the (real or symbolic) marital infidelities of his father and Freud. Thus, in reverting to the theme of making his father-figures "admit indirectly that they are not any less subject to 'weaknesses' than their children," Ferenczi is himself commenting "indirectly" on Freud's dangerous liaison with Minna Bernays.

Of all the concepts advanced by Ferenczi during his final period none is more closely identified with Ferenczi himself than that of the "wise baby" (see Vida, 1996).¹³ Near the end of the Diary, Ferenczi writes of a female patient, "G.," who was subjected to a "*sudden* shock (swift, unforeseen) when she observed her parents having intercourse" (1985, p. 202). As a consequence, she underwent a deep regression that led her to declare: "I am so dreadfully alone, of course I haven't been born yet, I am floating in the womb" (p. 202). Ferenczi elaborates:

The patient became terribly intelligent; instead of hating her mother or father, she penetrated by her thought-processes their psychic mechanisms, motives, even their feelings so thoroughly . . . that she could apprehend the hitherto unbearable situation quite clearly. . . . The trauma made her emotionally embryonic, but at the same time wise in intellectual terms, like a totally objective and unemotionally perceptive philosopher. (p. 203)

Everything that Ferenczi says about "G." applies equally to himself, particularly to his relationship with Freud and disavowed awareness of Freud's illicit involvement with Minna Bernays. Like his patient, Ferenczi casts himself in the dream of the black cat in the role of a child whose father, "unsuspecting of my presence," exposes him to a primal scene. Also like "G.," Ferenczi in his final diary entry, on October 2, 1932, after his disastrous last meeting with Freud in Vienna and the ensuing debacle with his paper, "Confusion of Tongues between Adults and the Child" (1933), at the Wiesbaden Congress, describes himself as having experienced a "further regression to being dead" and facing the danger of "not yet being born" (1985, p. 212). And no less than his patient, who is "dreadfully alone," Ferenczi confesses to feeling "abandoned by colleagues" (p. 212) who are cowed by their fear of Freud.

¹³ Originally introduced in a brief communication of 1923, the concept receives its fullest elaborations in Ferenczi's classic papers, "Child Analysis in the Analysis of Adults" (1931) and "Confusion of Tongues between Adults and the Child" (1933), as well as in the *Clinical Diary* (1985).

In his entry of August 17, Ferenczi continues his meditation on "G." by remarking that she is "quite despairing" of his lack of analytic understanding because, in the patient's words, "even he" calls her marriage "happy," even though "nothing could be further from my thoughts"; and after "this reality was forced on me . . . the way to normal development was blocked: instead of loving and hating I could only identify with people" (1985, pp. 204-5). Although Ferenczi never mentions his erotic triangle with Gizella and Elma Pálos in the Clinical Diary, this passage comments implicitly on Ferenczi's marriage to Gizella, a "reality" that had been "forced on" him by Freud, who then insisted on regarding this outcome as "happy" even though Ferenczi continued to chafe at the way it had prevented him from fulfilling his "normal development" with the younger woman who could have borne him children.¹⁴ Indisputably, Ferenczi struggled with an inhibition in his capacity for both "loving and hating," and he rebuked himself in his final entry in the Diary for having chosen the path of "'identification' with the higher power" – namely, Freud – at the cost of having erected his personality on a "false and untrustworthy" foundation, a self-betrayal that Ferenczi believed to be responsible for his life-threatening illness.¹⁵

At the core of Ferenczi's theoretical disagreements with Freud during his final period was his effort to rehabilitate Freud's pre-1897 emphasis on "the traumatic factors in the pathogenesis of neurosis" that, as Ferenczi wrote in "Confusion of Tongues," had been "unjustly neglected in recent years" (1933, p. 156). From his chastened perspective in the Clinical Diary, Ferenczi ruefully judged his long association with Freud – despite all that it had brought him personally and professionally – to have amounted to a massive cumulative trauma (see Khan, 1963). The practical lesson of Ferenczi's renewed attention to the importance of real experiences, whether those of children with their parents or of patients with their analysts, is that one ought to give credence to the perceptions of those who have been abused, especially when the perpetrators compound their original violations by seeking to convince their victims that what has been inflicted on them is only a figment of their overly florid fantasies.

¹⁴ On the tendentiousness of Freud's three published narratives of his relationship with Ferenczi, culminating in his disingenuous assertion in "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" (1937) that Ferenczi "married the woman he loved" (p. 211), see my discussion in *Reading Psychoanalysis* (Rudnytsky, 2002, pp. 112-19).

¹⁵ On Ferenczi's confession of his "impotent rage" toward both his mother and Freud in his letter of December 26, 1912, see again my *Reading Psychoanalysis* (Rudnytsky, 2002, pp. 122-23), where I go on to detail (pp. 133-34) how Winnicott's (1960) concept of the True and False Self epitomizes his affinity with Ferenczi.

In my reconstruction of the history of psychoanalysis, although Freud's relationship with Minna Bernays is rooted in his early experiences with two "mothers" – his young biological mother and the Czech nurse whom he described to Fliess as "his teacher in sexual matters" (Masson, 1985, p. 269; letter of October 4, 1897) – and inevitably laden with unconscious meanings, once he took the irrevocable step from the wish to the deed, their affair became for Freud a radioactive secret, which had at all costs to be encased in lead. This imperative not only shaped Freud's articulation of an analytic persona in both theory and practice but also led to his defensive maneuvers to safeguard his "authority" by repelling the longings of Jung and Ferenczi to get to know him as a human being. But what was a secret in Freud's personal life became for the psychoanalytic movement what Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok (1987) – Hungarian-born analysts whose work is deeply indebted to Ferenczi – have termed a *phantom*. According to their conception, as Esther Rashkin has lucidly expounded:

symptoms in specific patients might not be related to a conflict or trauma which they themselves have experienced and repressed, but could originate with someone else – usually a parent – who had concealed a secret so shameful that its contents had to be preserved intact lest their exposure threaten the integrity of the entire family. This secret, which the parent either repressed or simply kept silent about, would be transmitted unknowingly, and without ever being explicitly stated, through ciphered behaviors, affects, and language, directly from the parent into the unconscious of the child. (2006, p. 378)

As placed in a wider context by Abraham and Torok's compelling theory, Ferenczi's dismissal in 1912 of his awareness of the true nature of Freud's relationship with Minna Bernays as "only an infantile thought" is the effect of the phantom "transmitted unknowingly, and without ever being explicitly stated ... directly from the parent into the unconscious of the child." Or, in Ferenczi's own language from the Clinical Diary, if he, like his patient "G.," is a traumatized "wise baby," "emotionally embryonic but at the same time wise in intellectual terms," this regression to a primitive state of mental functioning – far from invalidating his "fantasy" of what is going on between the parental couple – enables him to discern "their psychic mechanisms, motives, even their feelings so thoroughly" that he "could apprehend the hitherto unbearable situation quite clearly."

On September 27, 1932, in his first letter to Freud following the Wiesbaden Congress, the mortally ill Ferenczi writes: "You can tell by the length of the reaction time the depth of the shock with which our conversation in Vienna before the Congress came to me. Unfortunately, such things are always connected to bodily ailments in me, so that my trip to the south of

France by way of Baden-Baden was and is, actually, a 'voyage de lit-à-lit'" (Falzeder and Brabant, 2000, p. 443). To convey the "depth of the shock" resulting from the trauma of his final encounter with Freud, Ferenczi resorts to the same ambiguous French phrase he had not used since his sublime December 26, 1912 self-analytic letter. In the lexicon of Abraham and Torok, this is an instance of *cryptonymy*, which Rashkin defines as a "new rhetorical figure" introduced by these analysts "to explain how the words constitutive of the unspeakable secret are themselves sealed off from awareness in one generation while they are phantasmatically transmitted to the next" (2006, p. 378). As Rashkin further notes, "the formation of cryptonyms involves a minimum of two steps," each of which must be painstakingly retraced by the clinician or scholar, "and insures the inaccessibility of the secrets they contain even as they are transmitted" (p. 378). Thus, beneath Ferenczi's overt allusion to his own beds of affliction there lies, unbeknownst even to himself, a second level of meaning that summons the phantom of Freud's "unspeakable secret," the exposure of which would indeed "threaten the integrity of the entire [psychoanalytic] family."

Thus, with the aid of the Clinical Diary, we can conclude that Ferenczi's 1912 "infantile thought" about Freud and Minna's "*voyage de lit-à-lit*," in addition to what it reveals about Ferenczi's "psychical reality," may also furnish an unexpectedly credible piece of evidence concerning the "material reality" of this primordial boundary violation in the history of psychoanalysis – Freud's adultery, which also constitutes incest, with his sister-in-law, Minna Bernays.

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