



The following letter, written by Sándor Ferenczi on 6 March 1925 to Elizabeth Severn (mentioned as “R. N.” in his 1932 *Clinical Diary*, and as “queen” and “baroness” in his correspondence with Groddeck) was found in 2004 in a book donated to the Library of the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute by psychiatrists Kathleen Mero Mogul (1927–2017) and S. Louis Mogul (1926–2020). The book was the 3rd volume of the *Selected Papers of Sándor Ferenczi: Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psycho-Analysis*. Kathleen Mero was of Hungarian origin but unfortunately there is no information about the background of the donation or the relationship of the donors with Ferenczi or Severn. To our knowledge, the letter has not been published before. We thank the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute Archives¹ and the archivist Olga Umansky for making the letter available to us, and Judith Dupont for giving us permission for the publication. I also thank Peter Rudnytsky for his valuable information and clarifications regarding the letter and my introduction.

Ferenczi’s letter was apparently a response to Severn’s request for taking her into analysis. By that time Severn (a self-taught therapist herself) had already been treated in New York by Joseph J. Asch, Smith Ely Jelliffe, and Otto Rank. Ferenczi was reluctant to give any definite opinion on Severn being “a case »ab invisis«” (an unseen case) and also to advise her to come to Budapest purely for didactic purposes, “the only real technical study being one’s own analysis”. But he considered her strong motivation as a good sign and was ultimately open to taking Severn into analysis; however, he had no free capacity at that point. In his letter to Freud on 18 April 1925 Ferenczi already mentioned Severn as his patient, so the waiting time was not very long. She was in analysis with Ferenczi from 1925 until February 1933 when Ferenczi’s illness became serious. Then she left to London and in 1939 finally returned to New York. There she continued her therapeutic practice but lived quite isolated from the analytic circles. The therapy with Ferenczi has become memorable, emblematic and widely discussed mainly because in 1932 it turned into a mutual analysis, which was a unique, bold, both dangerous and fruitful experiment in the history of psychoanalysis. It started at Severn’s initiation and proceeded with an intensity of up to 4-5 hours per day, not being suspended even during Ferenczi’s holidays. The process was commented by Ferenczi throughout his *Clinical Diary*. The entries and his following publications demonstrate that the therapy, controversial as it was, led him to significant theoretical and technical considerations regarding trauma, counter-transference and the active technique. The resulting papers were collected in the posthumous volume *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psycho-Analysis* – so his letter had quite an appropriate place in that book.

Anna Borgos

¹ The reference number of the letter: Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute Archives, Assorted Correspondence, MS-N036, Box 1, folder 1.

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Dear Dr. Jellison

apologize for the delay of my answer, ^{it} ~~which~~ was caused by
a short ~~visit~~ in Vienna.

It is of course impossible to give any definite
opinion upon a case "ab in visis", but your strong wish
for finishing the analysis made a rather favourable
impression on me from the therapeutic point of view.

I certainly ~~do~~ never advise to take technical
instruction alone, the only real technical study being
one's own analysis. But the duration of the latter is
always uncertain.

The cases which are now under my care do not
permit me to fix the date of the beginning of a new
analysis; I hope to be in the position to do it in 2 or 3 weeks.

At any rate you could reconsider after these short
informations your plans and write me again; I hope
I can give you then a more concrete answer.

Very sincerely yours

S. Ferenczi

Budapest, 6. March 1925
VII. Kozdísfa u. 3.