Research article

The adventurous emigration of the Ferencziana: Contribution to their history

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Method: From Freud and Ferenczi to Michael Balint. New
Abstract

This article retraces the long winding path followed by important documents on and by Freud and Ferenczi, first crossing the European continent in the flames of war and other horrors, and later being hosted by several cities. Eventually, after Judith Dupont's gift of her Paris archives to the Freud Museum in London in 2013, the collection of papers donated by Enid Balint to the custody of this author and kept for two decades in Geneva was finally deposited in the Archives of the British Psychoanalytical Society, also in London. Some other details and anecdotes of this long trip are also evoked.

Key words: Sigmund Freud's and Sándor Ferenczi's correspondence, Michael and Alice Balint, Enid Balint, Judith Dupont, Ilona Felszeghy.

In January 1939, after neighboring Austria's Anschluss, Michael and Alice Balint and their son John left Budapest, taking with them many of Ferenczi's papers. When they arrived in England, they stored these documents throughout their apartment, along with parts of Michael's and Alice's correspondence with Ferenczi, pictures, out-of-print texts, assorted medical objects, and various other articles. Alice died shortly after they had settled in England, but the various papers remained scattered throughout their apartment and would eventually become one part of the Balint Archives – as we refer to them now. These papers stayed in Michael Balint's house past his death in 1970, and were kept by his then-widow Enid Balint until 1981.

In 1945, after the end of the long and terrible war, psychoanalyst Ilona
Felszeghy crossed the frozen Danube from Pest to Buda on a makeshift Soviet-controlled pontoon bridge to rescue what remained of Ferenczi's papers from the ruins of his house in Lisznyai Street on the Hill of the Sun (Naphegy). It was a time of unbelievable incidents and heroic gestures; in one of them, Felszeghy succeeded in saving the invaluable contents and sent them to Ferenczi's stepdaughter Elma, who during and after the war was working in Berne, Switzerland, at the US embassy.

A parallel line of history has us begin at another starting point in Budapest. Before the war, the Ferenczis, the Balints, and Judith Dupont's family (the Dormándis) lived nearby each other in Buda. In the late 1930s, Judith Dupont's family emigrated to Paris where they – namely, Judith's father László Dormándi, himself a writer – also took the extraordinary opportunity of taking with them some very rare literary pieces written by contemporary central European writers.

After the war, young Judith began to collect the texts of her own family members, some of whom, for example Vilma Kovács, were also psychoanalysts. With the help of Michael Balint, Judith in addition gathered some of Ferenczi's works, which she intended for the French translation of Ferenczi's "Collected works" (Ferenczi, 1955a, 1955b, 1955c). She did the same for Ferenczi's Clinical diary (Ferenczi, 1985), the crown jewel of this bundle, which she published in 1985. Her 2013 donation of nearly all her private historical archives to the archives of the Freud Museum in London included all of these pieces, which are now housed there.

With her publication of the Diary, Judith preceded by six years the first publication of the Freud–Ferenczi correspondence, which I prepared and organized. In Balint's wishful project, the publication of the Correspondence
(Brabant, Falzeder, & Giamperi-Deutsch, 1993; Falzeder & Brabant, 1996, 2000) was to come first, to shed light on understanding the circumstances of the genesis of the Diary. History, however, evolved differently.

What happened? A telephone call changed my life. During a sabbatical at Stanford University, USA, I was immersed in a project on the development of psychoanalytic practice, or “technique” as it was then called, and Ferenczi's important contributions, which were not sufficiently recognized. This became a book – The technique at issue, from Freud and Ferenczi to Balint (Haynal, 1987) – the first book to take account of the correspondence of the two conceptors of this technique.

The telephone call awakened me from my daydreaming: it was the voice of Enid Balint asking if it would be my pleasure to look after the papers, the publication of which was such a concern and had been so close to Michael's heart until his death. Some of the papers had been hidden under her sofa – without doubt, not a place they should remain for all eternity. The material needed a caretaker. Would it be me? The most important article among them was a typewritten copy of the complete Freud-Ferenczi correspondence, but at that moment, I was not to know how many other treasures there would be to discover in the bundle of papers, including the integral protocols of Michael's first historical groups in London, Alice’s personal diary, notes about clinical situations, patients and texts...

I thought of my long relationship with Michael, always so stimulating, first through his publications, later by personal acquaintance, occasional supervisions, and regular participation in the summer conferences for the English-speaking members of the European Society that he had founded and
organized regularly; I thought of the meetings in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, in Sils Maria; on Monte Verita by Ascona in the Italian-speaking part; at Divonne and Annecy on the Franco-Swiss border...all these encounters made me feel close to him, and later to Enid too. His serene and calm personality, and his wit, fascinated me. He did not spare me advice, for example when he told me I should rather swot the Zeitschrift of 1920, 1921, about narcissism instead of reading...(whom? he would not finish his sentence). He also underlined the importance of the historical perspective in the development of psychoanalytic theory and practice, the work of authors such as Ferenczi and Rank (Rank, 1924; Ferenczi & Rank, 1924). He emphasized: that is what is important. I also felt that I wanted to carry on Michael's initial task of publishing the historical correspondence between his masters Sigmund Freud and Sàndor Ferenczi, so I accepted Enid's offer.

I cannot describe the lengthy exchanges, hesitations, negotiations, and persuasions, which lasted for decades and continued to arise until we published the first volume in 1991, as the first completely uncensored, unabridged Freudian correspondence (with the quasi-exception of Jung's [Freud & Jung, 1974] in which only two unimportant changes were introduced).

In fact, historically, the two parts of the Freud–Ferenczi exchange had become the subject of many discussions between Anna Freud and Michael Balint, the literary executor of Ferenczi's estate. Ferenczi's wife, Gizella, had kept the letters written by Freud to her then deceased husband and wanted to get from Anna the letters written by Sàndor as well. Both agreed that this correspondence should be published, but each was also anxious about the intimate character of some parts. Such apprehension would lead to a
censorship to the letters, to which Ferenczi's professional descendants (Michael, Judith, etc.) would not agree.

Organizing a team to prepare the 1246 letters comprising this correspondence for publication was not simple. From the scientific endeavor to fund-raising to issues with permissions: what a huge set of duties I had undertaken! However, with the help and generosity of the University of Geneva and thanks to excellent collaborators like Ernst Falzeder and Eva Brabant, the work progressed persistently.

As I have already mentioned, Michael Balint, the most lively and enthusiastic friend of Ferenczi's work, also left important papers behind. Enid Balint chose as well to entrust me with those documents and objects, which were transferred to Geneva under my custody in 1981. Was it a symbolic gesture, the meaning of which was, however, never spelled out? Was it, in recognition of the relationship and the work I will have to put into the publication of the Correspondence, a mark of gratitude and help? Was it simply out of trust in my capability to look after this precious material adequately, keeping it in an academic environment and away from family feuds or, worse, feuds within psychoanalytic families?

These documents are now back in London, delivered in 2014 as I donated them to the archives of the British Psychoanalytical Society with the help of Judit Székacs-Weisz, Ken Robinson, Jonathan Sklar, and Joanne Halford. As an aside, other parts of Michael's legacy had formerly also been left in the UK at the Archives of the Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex.

As for the original Freud and Ferenczi manuscript letters, the heirs of both sides decided to entrust these documents of fundamental importance to the
Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Austria. The landscape will be completed with the Ferenczi House project in Budapest, spearheaded by Judit Mészáros, which will house an archive of documents concerning important authors in Ferenczi's environment. There, we will find the papers of Imre Hermann, István Hollós, István Székacs, and Edit Gyömrői Rényi, among others.

In addition, let us not forget that this wealth of archives revealing new and sometimes unexpected material has nourished many conferences and publications, for example the Ferenczi International Conferences (I list only the main ones here): New York 1991, Budapest 1993, Madrid 1998, Turin 2002, London 2003, Baden-Baden 2006, Buenos Aires 2009, Budapest 2013, London 2013, and Toronto 2015. Journals have frequently included publications on Ferenczi, as can be found in the American Journal of Psychoanalysis, the International Forum of Psychoanalysis, Psychoanalytic Inquiry, and Le Coq-Héron. And, of course, this material became the inspiration for my own publications – two books (in several languages) and some 30 papers (see www.haynal.org).

The story of the Ferenczi archives ends with the donations Judith Dupont and I made to London and the satisfaction of knowing that this lineage of ideas and experience is now accessible to all for further study and contemplation. Ferenczi's and Balint's memories have found their place alongside Freud's.

Notes

2 Alice Székely-Kovács, the first wife of Michael Balint, was the eldest
daughter of Vilma Kovács, a psychoanalyst of great reputation, especially for studies on countertransference. Judith was the daughter of Olga Székely-Kovacs, herself daughter of Vilma Székely-Kovacs and sister of Alice.