

LACAN AND FERENCZI: PARADOXICAL KINSHIP?*

Yves Lugrin¹

SUMMARY

The kinship between Ferenczi and Lacan can be compared with the phases of an eclipse. Throughout the first period of his teaching, Lacan presents Ferenczi as the most relevant analyst among the first pioneers. It is clear that he hopes to develop Ferenczi's subversive reflections about clinical practice. Surprisingly, in the second period references to Ferenczi seem to disappear, even when he takes on the question of trauma in light of what he calls the register of the Real; he does not cite Ferenczi at all. In a third period, after Lacan's death, certain Lacanians are very critical about Ferenczi, often excessively. Today, analysts open to Lacan's teaching are discovering Ferenczi and the richness of his work, in which Lacan found numerous springheads for his own work.

KEY WORDS: Lacan and Ferenczi; turbulent years in French psychoanalysis; training-analysis; trauma; Lacan's "pass"; "real" and "jouissance"

INTRODUCTION

The relationship of Jacques Lacan, and later of his students, to the figure and work of Ferenczi falls under the curious (and perhaps French?) phenomenon that Wladimir Granoff detected early on: "He is cited and translated here and there, but (only) on very rare occasions [...] he is marginalized" (Granoff, 1958 [2001], p. 74).

In the work of Lacan, another *enfant terrible* of psychoanalysis (Ferenczi referred to himself as the *enfant terrible* of psychoanalysis in his 1931 paper, "Child Analysis in the Analysis of Adults"),² the marginalization³ of Ferenczi's influence has taken the form of an eclipse. Although Ferenczi clearly occupies a prominent role in the beginning of Lacan's teaching (1953–1958), he all but disappears for the next rather long period of Lacan's teaching (1964–1980), only to make an unexpected and paradoxical comeback after his death.

Since 2006, about 30 years after this death the situation has changed, leaving behind the passionate violence that formerly characterized it. The work and place of Ferenczi in the history of psychoanalysis has at last received increasing attention from certain analysts stemming from Lacanian circles. Some read Ferenczi in the light of Lacan's advances, thus holding to a "Ferenczi after Lacan" while others sense that there is always a "Ferenczi⁴ beyond Lacan".

FIRST PERIOD, 1953–1958

At the beginning of his teaching, it seems that Lacan sought to bring Ferenczi out of obscurity, to which he had been relegated by the analytical community since his death in 1933. However, these first interactions with the psychoanalyst from Budapest remain muddled, even distorted, by his "requisition" by the French analytical scene, in the 1950s, and by the relative inaccessibility of his work, due to a lack of French translation (and to poor circulation of Ferenczi's writings).

The French psychoanalytic scene was profoundly affected by the crisis and the split within the Paris Psychoanalytic Society (SPP) in 1953, and by the rise of Lacan as the dominant figure in the new analytic society, the French Society of Psychoanalysis (SFP). Unsurprisingly, at the heart of this fratricidal strife is the question of analytical training, and in the backdrop lies the controversy over both Lacan's teaching

and practice. Within this heated (passionate)⁵ context, Lacan, who was quite isolated from the international scene, sought support from Michael Balint, a major figure of the Middle Group, to whom he early wrote: “You may be assured that I always conduct a significant part of my teaching in the spirit of Ferenczi ...” (Miller, 1976, p. 119).

It seems that, moreover, Lacan’s knowledge of Ferenczi’s work, at this point, is rather fragmentary. It was Ferenczi’s 1928 article “The Elasticity of Psychoanalytic Technique” that clearly caught his interest, more than “Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and Children” (1933), which had been recently translated into French. This “luminous article” (Lacan, 2006a, p. 282), as he described the work, would lead him to consider Ferenczi as the analyst who was the “most tormented by the problem of analytical action” (Lacan, 2006b, p. 512), and “the first-generation author who most relevantly raised the question of what is required of the analyst as a person, in particular as regards the end of the treatment” (Lacan, 2006a, p. 282). However, there is some ambiguity with respect to these emphatic words of praise, and to what Lacan designated as “Ferenczi’s school of authenticity” (ibid., p. 288)⁶ since the desire to have or create a school was never Ferenczi’s, but only Lacan’s.

Thus Ferenczi figured early on as an “involunteer” soldier in what has been called “The Hundred Years’ War of Psychoanalysis in France” (Roudinesco, 1986).⁷ It was, as previously noted, through Michael Balint that Lacan first “discovered” not the entirety of Ferenczi’s work, but only one side of it, namely the one that shows him interrogating and contesting the principle of training analysis (*la didactique* in French). To put things bluntly, Lacan first invokes Ferenczi’s authority as “Freudian” collateral for what he controversially termed his “return to Freud”. Even if Lacan tries to identify himself with Ferenczi, his own “instrumentalisation” of him is clear: the man from Budapest asked the right questions, but lacked the right tools to escape from the snares of the Imaginary and to pave the way for answers. Lacan thought, of course, the solution lay in his own promotion of the Symbolic.

Surprisingly, even if he had known Ferenczi’s “Confusion of Tongues ...” paper, Lacan never mentions the article, nor Ferenczi’s interest in the field of speech and language (Gondar, 2011). In his article on “Obscene words” (1911), Ferenczi examined, perhaps in more depth than Freud in his study of jokes, the linguistic registers of each drive-related age or phase, as “jouissance” infiltrates language. Likewise, when he introduces the major “variation” in his practice, that is, variable-length sessions, Lacan does not refer to Ferenczi’s experiments in technique. We can ask ourselves in hindsight (an example of deferred action, perhaps): is this a misrecognition⁸ of the fact or a deliberate stance?

SECOND PERIOD, 1958–1964

In the first years of the life of the SFP, the new psychoanalytic institution in which Lacan seems to march under the banner of Ferenczi, the polyglot Granoff (1958), also a brilliant and cautious student of Lacan, promoted a more clinical and less fragmented and “political” reading of Ferenczi’s work. Granoff’s more analytical reading privileged the dimension of trauma -the traumatized child- and its return through regression into the ordinary aspects of the everyday practice.

This makes Granoff the first “Ferenczian” analyst in France. Much to Lacan’s humiliation, Granoff (1958) would publicly endorse his alternative reading of Ferenczi at the momentous 1958 Royaumont colloquium, for which the eloquent title of his lecture⁹ maintains, I believe, its relevance today: “Ferenczi: false problem or true misunderstanding?” (p. 73).

In the heated and passionate context of the 1950s, which lent itself to transferential savagery and which constituted a period of conflation between psychoanalysis and politics, Ferenczi featured once again at the heart of profound psychoanalytic disagreement, which led to the disintegration of the new and promising SFP in the fall of 1963. Lacan’s references to Ferenczi faded and critiques became more explicit when in 1964 he founded¹⁰ the Freudian School of Psychoanalysis (EFP).

Contrary to one’s expectations, Lacan does not refer to Ferenczi’s work on trauma, when, at a later point in his teaching, he comes back to the question of trauma to broach the dimension of the Real and

of Jouissance. Even more surprisingly: anguished as much as Ferenczi was by the process of training, how one becomes an analyst, Lacan (1967) proposed a new institutional procedure for the recognition and appointment of psychoanalysts, without ever mentioning Ferenczi, settling instead for an allusion to Balint's (1954) paper on training. This proposition, the "Pass",¹¹ which subverted all the classical standards of accreditation, would go on to tear apart the Lacanian community. Presumably, at this time Lacan keeps his distance¹² more or less deliberately from Ferenczi, who was nevertheless the first to question the analysis of the analyst, and to maintain that there is "No Special Training Analysis!"

Paradoxically, although Lacan seems to be unaware of the whole of Ferenczi's work and/or to hold him at a distance from current debates, the same could not, however, be said of those students of his, who were most engaged in the Lacanian adventure..

THIRD PERIOD 1985 AFTER THE DEATH OF LACAN¹³

In the winter of 1985–1986, the journal *Ornicar*?¹⁴ would dedicate its 35th issue to the odd combination of Ferenczi and Reich. Published during the continuing turbulent emotional climate, its articles, written by advocates of a hard and fast Lacanianism and by supporters assured about the Pass, present a severe indictment against Ferenczi (Klotz et al., 1985). Consider the titles of the following articles in the issue: "The Ferenczi Case", "Ferenczi judged by Freud and Lacan" and "Ferenczi's Parapraxis".¹⁵ But even if it is in the name of Lacan that they condemn Ferenczi, these texts put him at the centre of the current Freudian debate over the training and recognition and certification of analysts, that is, the transmission of psychoanalysis. Whether critical or not, well founded or not, these texts on Ferenczi by Lacanians attest to the retreat of the strange eclipse¹⁶ that had taken root during Lacan's lifetime.

Through his rather distinctive approach of Ferenczi, have Lacan and his followers, used him as a foil or a stepping-stone as (it) has been proposed? In doing so, has Lacan intensified, in his own way, the unfair curse cast on Ferenczi by E. Jones at the same time? The question remains open.

However, another hypothesis presents itself: might not the study of Ferenczi, whose radical importance did not escape Lacan, have simply been left fallow? Might Lacan not have separated himself from an author to whom he felt, vaguely, too close, in order to clear his own path outside of Ferenczi's influence? That is, in order to be able to develop his own theoretical tools independently?

How can we otherwise understand the present-day interest in Ferenczi's contributions among analysts stemming from older Lacanian circles, who seem amazed to rediscover, 30 years later, the relevance and richness of a body of work that has long been excluded from their interests?

CURRENT PERIOD

In May 2006 a number of Lacanians from different affiliations gathered at the French Institute in Budapest for workshops dedicated to Ferenczi. These colleagues, who are all open and loyal to Lacan's teaching, have one thing in common: none of them belong any longer to the hard (and dogmatic?) Lacanian current embodied by the *Ecole de la Cause Freudienne*. For some of these colleagues who hold fast to a "Ferenczi after Lacan",¹⁷ some of Ferenczi's intuitions can only be clarified in light of Lacan's advances. Others ask themselves whether going back to Ferenczi today might not rather allow to "break out of the confinement of our French -that is, Lacanian- circles", and thus to better examine "our relation to Lacan, [...] (and) to the way we use him to block off a number of things ..." (Gorog et al., 2009, p. 245). Overtly, everyone shows sign of their amazement, let us consider two examples.

One colleague who, in the wake of Lacan, has taken a keen interest in mystical experiences is astonished at their proximity to the kind of traumatic experience that Ferenczi talks about, in an original way, in his *Clinical Diary*.

Another colleague expresses his surprise: "I choose to follow Ferenczi through one of his most controversial developments, *mutual analysis*, only to find there, to my great surprise, one of the most elaborate conceptions of psychosis. Lacan would surely have cited it if he was familiar with it ..." (ibid.,

p. 155). From his first meeting with Freud, Ferenczi already had this hope, which, in his Clinical Diary, he articulates as the advent of “a *special group* of truly analysed persons -who have the ambition of knowing more than analysed patients” (ibid., p. 168). This leads our colleague to say that Ferenczi may have intuited “something about the ambition of the Passeur and of the School (Ecole) of psychoanalysis” (ibid., p. 168).

At the same time, another post-Lacanian circle, the Society of Freudian Psychoanalysis (SPF), has also demonstrated interest in Ferenczi. From its inception, this Society has acknowledged the failure of the Pass, just as Ferenczi came to recognize mutual analysis as a last resort. Its publishing house has since published four books dedicated to the work and life of Ferenczi (Sabourin, 2011; Oppenheim-Gluckman, 2010; Lugrin, 2012; Jiménez Avello, 2013).

Recently, Safouan (2013), one of Lacan’s first colleagues and one of the best connoisseurs of his whole teaching, wrote an important book that emphatically recognizes the true kinship between Lacan and Ferenczi. The first 150 pages are dedicated to the analytical richness of Ferenczi’s work (and Rank’s). Safouan clearly explains why he thinks that there are only three great “dissidents” in the history of the analytical movement, Ferenczi, Rank ... and Lacan. The author describes with strong theoretical arguments how Lacan, throughout his entire work, follows new paths first opened by Ferenczi himself.

Is this a real encounter with Ferenczi or a merely temporary and circumstantial interest? Only time will tell what will become of this belated discovery of the whole of Ferenczi’s work by analysts who are still marked by Lacan’s teaching. For my part, I sense here an opportunity for the survival of psychoanalysis itself, though I would prefer a “Ferenczi beyond Lacan” to a “Ferenczi after Lacan”.

To conclude, I will quote the last sentence of my book: “Without the violence of Freud’s desire, psychoanalysis would not exist; without that of Ferenczi, would it still exist?” (Lugrin, 2012)

REFERENCES

- Balint, M. (1954). Formación analítica y análisis de formación. *Revista Internacional de Psicoanálisis*, 35(2), 157–162.
- Chauvelot, D., Julien, P. y Petitot-Cocorda, J. (1978). Freud y Ferenczi. *Analytica* volumen 9, supplément au numéro 14 d’Ornicar? *Revista del Champ Freudien*.
- Dupont, J. (2013). Ferenczi en los jardines de Maresfield. *Revista americana de psicoanálisis*, 73(1), 1–7.
- Ferenczi, S. (1911). Sobre palabras obscenas. Contribución a la psicología del período latente. En *Primeras contribuciones al psicoanálisis* (págs. 132-153). Londres: Karnac
- Ferenczi, S. (1928). La elasticidad de la técnica psicoanalítica. En *Contribuciones finales a los problemas y métodos del psicoanálisis* (págs. 87-101). Londres: Karnac, 1994.
- Ferenczi, S. (1931). El análisis del niño en el análisis de los adultos. En *Contribuciones finales a los problemas y métodos del psicoanálisis* (págs. 126-142). Londres: Karnac.
- Ferenczi, S. (1933). Confusión de lenguas entre los adultos y el niño. En *Contribuciones finales a los problemas y métodos del psicoanálisis* (págs. 156-167). Londres: Karnac.
- Gondar, J. (2011). Las cosas en palabras: Ferenczi y el lenguaje. *Diario americano de psicoanálisis*, 71(4), 329–337.
- Gorog, JJ. et al. (2009). Ferenczi après Lacan [Ferenczi después de Lacan]. París: Hermann.
- Granoff, W. (1958). Ferenczi: faux-problème ou vrai malentendu? [Ferenczi: ¿falso problema o verdadero malentendido?]. En *Lacan, Ferenczi et Freud* (págs. 73-114) París: Gallimard 2001. (Trabajo original publicado en 1961, *Psychanalyse: revue de la société française de psychanalyse*, 6, 255–282).
- Granoff, W. (1958). Ferenczi: faux-problème ou vrai malentendu? [Ferenczi: ¿falso problema o verdadero malentendido?]. En *Lacan, Ferenczi et Freud* (págs. 73-114). París: Gallimard 2001. (Trabajo original publicado en 1961, *Psychanalyse: revue de la société française de psychanalyse*, 6, 255–282)
- Jiménez Avello, J. (2013). L’île des rêves de Sandor Ferenczi, ‘rien que la pulsion de vie’. París: Campagne-Première
- Klotz, JP., Merlet, A. & Soler, C. (1985). Ferenczi et Reich. *Ornicar* (35).
- Lacan, J. (1967). Proposition du 9 Octobre 1967 sur le psychanalyste de l’école. En *Autres écrits*. París: Seuil 2001

- Lacan, J. (2006a). Variaciones sobre el tratamiento estándar. En B. Fink (Trans.), *Écrits: La primera edición completa en inglés* (269–302). Nueva York: Norton, 2006. (Obra original publicada: ‘Variantes de la cure-type [1955]’. En *Ecrits*. París: Seuil, 1966).
- Lacan, J. (2006b). La dirección del tratamiento y los principios de su poder. En B. Fink (Trans.), *Écrits: la primera edición completa en inglés* (489–542). Nueva York: Norton, 2006. (Obra original publicada: ‘La direction de la cure et les principes de son pouvoir [1958]’. En *Ecrits*. París: Seuil, 1966) Norton, 2006. (Obra original publicada: ‘La direction de la cure et les principes de son pouvoir [1958]’. En *Ecrits*. París: Seuil, 1966).
- Lugrín, Y. (2012). Impardonnable Ferenczi, Malaise dans la Transmission. [El inexcusable Ferenczi: La dificultad en la transmisión.]. París: Campagne-Première
- Miller, JA. (1976). (Documents édités par), La scission de 1953. Supplément au número 7 de *Ornicar?* París: Navarin éditeur.
- Oppenheim-Gluckman, H. (2010). Lire Sandor Ferenczi: Un discípulo turbulento. París: Campagne-Première. París: Gallimard 2001. Trabajo original publicado en 1961, *Psychanalyse: revue de la société française de psychanalyse*, 6, 255–282).
- Roudinesco, E. (1986). Histoire de la psychanalyse en France: la bataille de cent ans [La batalla de los cien años del psicoanálisis en Francia]. París: Seuil. [Jacques
- Sabourin, P. (2011). Sandor Ferenczi, un pionero de la clínica. París: Campagne Première. *Autres écrits*. París: Seuil 2001. Número 7 de *Ornicar?* París: Navarin éditeur.
- Safouan, M. (2013). La psychanalyse, science, thérapie - et cause. París: Ediciones Thierry Marchaisse.

Yves Lugrín Ph.D., is an Associate Member of the Société Freudienne de Psychanalyse (SPF), Paris, France.

Address correspondence to Yves Lugrín, Ph.D., Associate Member of the Société Freudienne de Psychanalyse (SPF) 99 rue de Charonne, Paris 75011, France

(*) A version of this paper was presented at “Sincerity and Freedom in Psychoanalysis” conference at the Freud Museum, October 2013.

Published in : The American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 2015, 75, (86–93) © 2015 Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis 0002-9548/15

Volver a Artículos sobre Ferenczi
Volver a Newsletter 20-ALSF

Notas al final

- 1.- Yves Lugin Ph.D., is an Associate Member of the Société Freudienne de Psychanalyse (SPF), Paris, France
- 2.- “It is a fact that I am fairly generally regarded as a restless spirit, or, as someone recently said to me at Oxford, the enfant terrible of psychoanalysis” (Ferenczi, 1931 [1994], p. 127)
- 3.- This relative marginalization has taken place, through different forms and for a long time, in all French psychoanalytic associations whose membership includes both ardent supporters and resolute detractors. Given the potential danger of—unpardonable—psychoanalytic scandal, is Ferenczi fated to be an obstacle to the reconciliation of analysts?
- 4.- And a Freud, of course.
- 5.- “Passionnel” in French
- 6.- Can we understand the meaning of authenticity as freedom and sincerity?
- 7.- This conflict of the Hundred Years’ War took place prior to the excellent editorial work Judith Dupont at Le Coq-Héron, who continued Michael Balint’s work on behalf of Sandor Ferenczi, brought out the Clinical Diary as well as facilitated the publishing of the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence (Dupont, 2013)
- 8.- Lacan, the founder of “short sessions” probably didn’t have clear knowledge of Ferenczi’s risky attempts at mutual analysis and of the “long sessions” involved in those experiments.
- 9.- In 1961, the sixth issue of the SFP’s journal, Psychanalyse, contains works by representatives of the Society’s different psychoanalytic tendencies. One can find here a “Ferenczian” landmark: a French translation of the English version of “Confusion of Tongues”.
- 10.- “Alone”, according to him.
- 11.- Its name, given by Lacan.
- 12.- It’s worth noting that the first volume of the Complete Works had not yet been published at this point. Lacan could not have been unaware of the existence of The Clinical Diary, translated into English in 1969, but he seems not to have consulted it; the French translation would not be published until 1985, four years after his death. Its name, given by Lacan.
- 13.- In 1978, debate over the Pass raged in the EFP, which found itself split between advocates and detractors of the polemical procedure. At this time, contrary to Lacan, two analysts of the EFP (Diane Chauvelot and Philippe Julien) brought Ferenczi to centre stage of the dispute. Regardless of whether they view him favourably, their three articles (published in volume 9 of *Revue Analytica*) do him justice by explicitly situating him at the heart of the latest concerns of Lacan, who would prefer not to cite or name Ferenczi, perhaps even forget him. This unexpected return of Ferenczi’s on the Lacanian scene, from which he seemed to have been excluded, would be confirmed only several years later (Chauvelot et al. (1978). The difficulties encountered by his “Proposition of October 9, 1967”, as well as the failed implementation of his ideal for a new procedure guaranteeing the recognition and appointment of Analysts of the School, would lead him to dissolve his School shortly before his death in 1981. Can it be said then that the failure of the Pass, which Lacan himself recognized in 1978, prompted him to exit the psychoanalytic scene, just as Ferenczi relegated mutual analysis to a last resort (1932)
- 14.- The journal of the Ecole de la Cause Freudienne.
- 15.- “Acte manqué” in French.
- 16.- Let us reiterate: although overtly present from 1953 to 1955, he is thenceforth, we might say, surprisingly left by Lacan in the shadows, only to return to the limelight at the end of Lacan’s last advances
- 17.- The proceedings from this event have been published in *Ferenczi après Lacan* (Gorog et al., 2009)