

Review of

Ernst Falzeder, *Psychoanalytic Filiations: Mapping the psychoanalytic movement*. London: Karnak, 2015.

by Carlo Bonomi

Ernst Falzeder is a very well known historian of psychoanalysis and a highly appreciated editor of the period when the historiography of psychoanalysis experienced a profound mutation, tuning from a partisan into an unbiased enterprise characterized by a new attitude towards the sources. For a long time the publication of Freud's letters were in fact subject to intentional omissions, alterings, cuts, all sort of misunderstandings and a poor editorial apparatus. William McGuire's meticulous edition of the Freud-Jung letters in 1974 marked an important turning point in this regard, since these letters were the first to be published without being previously submitted to a censorship (apart some rude remarks about Bleuler, and, obviously, the patients' names), and with careful annotations. A strong signal that we had entered in a new phase of the Freud studies was given in 1984 by the new edition of letters that had been already made public but in a censored and uncomplete form, as it first occurred with Jeffrey Masson's complete edition of Freud's letters to Fliess. In the ensuing years Ernst Falzeder emerged as one of the most representative scholars of this new "scientific" phase, acting first as chief editor of the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence – a monumental work in three volumes (1993, 1996, 2000, for the English edition) – then producing a new edition of the Freud-Abraham letters (2002), and finally working in the Jungian field as translator and editor (he co-edited Jung's 1915-16 correspondence with Hans Schmid-Guisan, which appeared in 2012). During this period Falzeder has also been a very prolific author, writing about 200 articles. This book is a collection of 16 articles, some of which are very well known, others less. These 16 papers, which stand for themselves and can be read in any order, offer a comprehensive and harmonized view of a series of salient moments of the early history of psychoanalysis. The final result is a book that cannot miss from the library of anyone who is interested in this history. These texts are also written very well. Even though I had read most of them when they originally appeared, I was surprised to enjoy so much reading them again after so many years. I was especially impressed by the perfect blend and balance of their composition.

The three oldest articles are still my favorites. The first "Healing through love?" was published in 1991. It was written together with André Haynal, the father of the "Ferenczi Renaissance". Falzeder's encounter with Haynal occurred when Ernst was working on his doctoral thesis (on Ferenczi and Balint), and was especially felicitous and productive. This article presents an excellent reconstruction of the conflict between Ferenczi and Freud, which is here reframed as a "dialogue," a controversial one for sure, but still a dialogue. This choice to give voice to the opposition, without "bashing" Freud, would also characterize Falzeder's attitude in the years to come.

The second oldest article, "The threads of psychoanalytic filiations," was originally presented at the international conference *100 Years of Psychoanalysis*, which was organized in Geneva, in 1993, by Haynal and Falzeder. It is the most famous one and it gives the title to the entire collection. The term "filiations" was borrowed from the Russian-French psychoanalyst Wladimir Granoff, who employed it in 1975. This term emphasizes the initiatic and performative character of the analytic training system, which, as suggested by Balint, bears a striking resemblance with primitive initiation ceremonies, being aimed at producing a durable identification of the candidate with the analyst, indeed in turning the candidate into a follower. This also was the idea behind the creation of the so-called Secret Committee, consisting in a small group of men which should, as put by Falzeder, "undergo a purification process with the Master himself, an initiation procedure that would enable him to act as a representative of 'pure' theory and 'exact' technique, and to initiate others." (p. 56). However, in Falzeder's irreverent version, the psychoanalytic filiation becomes a pot of spaghetti extremely hard to digest. While tracing the map of who was analyzed by whom, Falzeder realized that most analysts were not satisfied with their first analysis and had a second or a third one. Many training analyses became moreover erotic relationships, and "what we know is only the tip of the iceberg" (p. 67). Even more shocking is the ease with

which, starting with Freud, analysts analyzed their children, or the children of their lovers. The same dark continent is further explored by Falzeder in two other articles which appeared in 1998 and 2000. One of his conclusions seems to me especially important, namely that those analysts who suffered from their analysts' behaviour were prone to "develop a theory of countertransference" (p. 97). Another significant conclusion concerns the "Prussian" institutionalization of the analytic training in Berlin as "a reaction ... to the countless transgression and violations of boundaries that pervaded the early history of psychoanalytic training" (p. 127).

The third oldest article is titled "My grand-patient, my chief tormentor" (1994) and consists in the fragmentary reconstruction of a hitherto unnoticed case of Freud's, a woman "who had meant very much to him and for whose treatment he had made the most extraordinary sacrifices" (p. 19). The analysis of Elfried Hirschfeld (born around 1873) started in 1908. In the subsequent two years and half it became clear that, in spite of Freud's efforts, her symptoms grew worse. In 1911 Freud asked Pfister to temporarily take care of her, and when the treatment had become a regular analysis, she decided to go back to Freud. She had interviews with several other analysts in the following years, among which Jung, Abraham, and Binswanger. In 1920 she tried to re-enter analysis with Freud, who, on his part, spoke about her case at the 1921 meeting of the Secret Committee. According to Falzeder, the difficulties that Freud met in her treatment deeply influenced his theory of countertransference, reinforcing his idea that the analyst had to protect himself by showing "indifference," and marking "a turning point in Freud's evaluation of the curative power of psychoanalysis" (p. 37). Indeed, Freud grew more and more pessimistic.

A further important contribution by Falzeder consisted in rediscovering the role initially played by professor Eugen Bleuler in offering Freud an institutional and academic support. The famous director of the Burghözli clinic, who coined terms such as "schizophrenia" and "ambivalence", introduced psychoanalysis among the young and brilliant psychiatrists who worked in his Klinik (nearby Zurich), or visited it in search of inspiration. In 1905 Bleuler seduced Freud to analyze his dreams by letter. The experiment was a failure, still two years later, in 1907, an open forum for discussions called "Freud-society" was established in his hospital; in 1908 the first psychoanalytic periodic was founded under the joined directorship of Bleuler and Freud; and in 1910 Bleuler took part in the creation of the International Psychoanalytic Association. In the same year he published a strong defense of psychoanalysis. Yet, his conflict with Jung, the elected president of I.P.A., was already blown, and one year later Bleuler left the association because Jung had not allowed one of his (Bleuler's) assistants, who was not a member, to take part in a meeting of the association. This exclusivity did not fit with Bleuler's understanding of the goals of a scientific society. Bleuler found that the psychoanalytic movement was excessively driven by principles which might be necessary in religious communities or political parties, but were harmful to science, as he wrote to Freud on December 4, 1911. His relationship to Freud remained friendly, but he could not accept psychoanalysis "as a whole, complete edifice" (November 5, 1913). Bleuler continued to be convinced that a vast quantity of clinical discoveries of Freud were true, and while dismissing the general superstructure "actually approved of most of the cornerstones of psychoanalytic theory and therapy" (p. 209). According to Falzeder, Bleuler's "separation from the psychoanalytic movement was probably more important for the course it has since taken than those of Adler, Steckel, or even Jung." (p. 220). Psychoanalysis was in fact forced to develop, at least in Europe, outside hospitals and universities.

The contributions of Ferenczi, Abraham, and Jung are also discussed in the many articles of this book, jointly with the personal relationships of these authors with Freud, and in ways that are always challenging and enriching. To bring this short review to a close, I would like to comment on the paradox exposed by Falzeder in chapter seven, "Is there still an unknown Freud?" (2007). It helps us to circle back to our starting point: the fact that the historiography of psychoanalysis entered in a new "scientific" phase. "Today," Falzeder writes, "we know (or *could* know) substantially more about Freud than we did ten years ago, and we will know even more about him in the future" (p. 149). Yet, he also notes that this is counterbalanced by the fact that it becomes ever more difficult to reconstruct psychoanalysis "from 'within'" (p. 150). The early records and documents of

psychoanalysis are in fact similar to speechless infants: we have to learn to understand them “without forcing our own agenda on them” (p. 150). In the rest of his article Falzeder lists with insurmountable erudition the exponential increase of studies and of publication of documents which should make out of the topic “Sigmund Freud” an “historian’s paradise” (p. 171). And yet he is so doubtful in this regard, that he quotes a passage of a letter sent to him by Richard Skues. The latter states: “The amount of rubbish is increasing exponentially year by year. Therefore our non-knowledge of Freud is increasing accordingly” (p. 173). Falzeder’s position is not so extreme. Apparently he still hopes that a truly “historiographical shift” will occur thanks to a more scientific approach, in which the subjectivity of the historian (his/her private agenda) will be dissolved and replaced by a new capacity to put Freud “much more fully into historical context” (p. 174).

While Falzeder is certainly right in emphasizing the importance of the context, I am not so sure that the solution consists in cutting down the subjectivity of the historian. I often have the impression that the “neutrality” of the prudent, passionless, and scientifically correct historian is ultimately an expression of an incurable skepticism which prevents us to understand psychoanalysis “from within”. As a matter of fact, the scientific style of the scrupulous scholar incorporates and utilizes for good a paranoid attitude. Therefore, I sometime wonder if it would not be advisable to go beyond this phase by regaining our lost capacity to fantasize, speculate and dream. In other words, I wonder whether, after the “scientific” and deadlocked phase in the Freudian Studies, we shouldn’t learn to use our countertransference to achieve “from within” a new understanding of the big bang of psychoanalysis.

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