

Aleksandar Dimitrijevic, (2017). Book Review. *The Cut and the building of Psychoanalysis, Volume 1: Sigmund Freud and Emma Eckstein*. By Carlo Bonomi, Routledge, Sussex & New York, 2015, 288 pp. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 77 (1): 87-90.

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In the beginning, there was Paul Roazen and he spread light onto the psychoanalytic community deeply immersed in idolizing Freud. Then historiography of psychoanalysis started becoming more objective and accurate. The invaluable work of Henri Ellenberger was published; Frank Sulloway challenged most of the conceptions we held dear; Louis Breger and Peter L. Rudnytsky showed us clearly that Freud's troubled and unanalyzed personality frequently stood in the way to the further development of the scientific discipline he had founded. And then, upon reading *Revolution in Mind* by George Makari, I felt the field might be exhausted: the history of early psychoanalysis, it seemed to me, could not contain any further significant mysteries.

*The Cut and the Building of Psychoanalysis. Volume 1, Sigmund Freud and Emma Eckstein* disclosed all my naivety. Carlo Bonomi has managed not only to describe an extremely important mystery directly related to the origin of psychoanalysis and offer an elaborated account of it, but he also provided a most nuanced psychoanalytic reflection on the origin of this mystery itself. It was obvious from his previous work (e.g., his refutation of claims that Ferenczi was mentally disordered, published in 2004), that Bonomi's knowledge was vast and his thinking sharp. This time he presents results of more than two decades of research and thinking, which may end up to be nothing short of revolutionary.

Bonomi claims that the historiography of psychoanalysis suffers from “the disappearance of the context from its narration” (which “has served to turn the Freud enterprise into a myth” (p. 58)) and that this context is the then widespread “medical practice of the castration of women and circumcision of girls” (p. 58). And by “castration”, he does not mean a metaphor, or mental representation, or symbolic threat. Although Freud claimed he “had no opportunity of direct observations of children” (1914, p. 18), Bonomi unearthed evidence that Freud had been trained as a pediatrician in Berlin and served as a “ 'children's doctor' who had been directly engaged with nervous and hysterical children in the institute for sick children in Vienna [...] from 1886 to 1896” (p. 39) and must have “examined hundreds of children each year” (p. 32). Just one side of the originality of this book is reflected in the fact that Bonomi reviews mid nineteenth century textbooks and scientific papers about “childhood masturbatory disorder” and revealed that it had been commonly treated by a surgical operation. Thus, in contrast to renowned authors of books on

Freud's self-analysis like Didier Anzieu, who used the term castration sixty times, but never focused on the surgical practice (p. 98), Bonomi claims: “My idea is that Freud himself was confronted with the practice of castration, was deeply shocked by it and, further, that his capacity of staying in the middle of contradiction was the effect of a process of post-traumatic working through” (p. 41).

What I find admirable in *The Cut* is that this layer, the historiography of medicine, is just a foundation for understanding Freud's personality and family history as well as “the birth of psychoanalysis”. And it took Bonomi 200 pages to elaborate all strands of this nuanced and complex understanding, that, sadly, only an independent thinker, not castrated, as it were, by the current publish-or-perish university climate, can develop. To this a review cannot do justice, but merely provide a sketch.

As to the history of psychoanalysis, Bonomi believes that because of the decision to follow the myth of Freud as a hero and not facts of widespread medical practice led to “the effect on [Freud's] followers [...] that, on the one hand, they restlessly fantasized about the psychic reality of castration, while also systematically neglecting, ignoring and denying its material reality. Historians of psychoanalysis have never succeeded in overcoming this split” (p. 38). To confirm the importance of this split we need look no further than at the veto that precluded a part of this book to be published in the “International Journal of Psychoanalysis” (p. 8), maybe even at the existence of this strikingly unscientific procedure of vetoing papers.

The lion's share of the book is devoted to the “Irma's injection” dream and Emma Eckstein, whom Bonomi sees as Freud's most important patient, using therefore her last name as a metaphor (in German “Eck” means “corner” and “Stein” “stone”), and calling her, because she started treating patients, “the first analyst Freud ever trained” (p. 79). Many analysts have already wondered why exactly this one dream was so important for the creation of psychoanalysis and Bonomi reviews their contribution here. He discusses the operation by Wilhelm Fliess on Eckstein's nose and connects it with the childhood castration she had experienced and its influence on the content of Freud's dream of “Irma injection”, in which he examines Eckstein's throat. Bonomi wondered whether a dream can be “read” backward as well as forward, and offered a new interpretation. He also subtly follows various “associations” to the dream: that Fliess operated on Freud as well, that the idea of bisexuality and Eckstein's phallic phantasies influenced Freud's ideas expressed in “The Interpretation of Dreams” and “Totem and Taboo”, that Eckstein's hemophilia, self-harming and later hysterectomy are all related to her childhood surgical trauma that in her psychoanalytic treatment was not overcome but repeated.

Among the basic questions of the book are, again, “How had Emma's trauma, precisely because it had neither been voiced nor acknowledged by Freud, impacted him? How was this unnamed and unnamable trauma embedded in the foundation of psychoanalysis?” (p. 4). To these, Bonomi offers several insightful answers. One is related to Freud's memories of his brother Alexander's ritual circumcision and possible childhood fantasies of their father as a pervert, as well as to Freud's later identification with Oedipus, the phallic hero. Connected to this is the analysis of Freud's feeling that Jacob was a weak father, because of the story about religion-based humiliation, Freud's later decision not to perform religious services upon his father's death and his own death that was induced on the same date (September 23<sup>rd</sup>). The next train of thought is about the birth of Anna Freud. Bonomi reconstructed that the impregnation must have happened at the same moment as the crisis of Eckstein treatment: while she was operated by Fliess and was bleeding heavily, Freud almost fainted, to which she made a derogatory remark about the “stronger sex”, Freud had unprotected sex (connected to the dirty syringe from the dream) with his wife and so Anna was conceived. Furthermore, in view of the fact that Eckstein had an operation as a cure against masturbation in childhood, then the operation performed by Fliess was retraumatization and Freud had the same role Eckstein's father once had. Finally, Bonomi describes “analyst's introjection of the psychic reality of a patient who had been traumatised” (p. 106) and claims that the standard psychoanalytic technique grew up of a reaction formation to the issue of intrusion (p. 97), and was fatal for Freud personally: “It strikes me as obvious that the scar on Freud's jaw only became symbolic of castration for him as a result of the scene which Emma presented him during analysis in January of 1897”.

This is a dense book, full of new historical evidence and challenging thinking, yet written in beautiful English and worth reading more than once. Freud, as we all know, was never analyzed, he would not disclose his dreams to Jung and refused Groddeck's offers to analyze his psychosomatic illness. *The Cut* offers such an intricate understanding of Freud's dreams and personality features, in synchrony with a deeply non-judgmental acceptance of his weaknesses and symptoms, that I can almost “see” him change his mind: upon reading the book, he would go for personal analysis to Carlo Bonomi. We should all eagerly wait for the second volume of this book.

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