

Rothschild, L. (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): 91-96.

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Twelve black and white reproductions may be found in Carlo Bonomi's *The Cut and the building of Psychoanalysis, Volume 1: Sigmund Freud and Emma Eckstein*. One of these, *The legend of the bishop and the devil*, is a painting dated 1854 by Moritz von Schwind that depicts a devil carrying stones to build a chapel while a bishop prays at the chapel's edifice. Bonomi reminds that at a meeting of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Association Freud spoke of identifying with the devil's heavy lifting and rough work of laying stones for the psychoanalytic foundation, and that others, like the bishop had benefited. Heavy lifting may be motivated by trauma (cf., Ferenczi, 1933/1980a), and may subsequently leave traumatic traces (cf., Bion 2015). This book works to further illuminate and contextualize traumatic marks that were previously dissociated. Bonomi's portrait of Freud is one of a traumatized actor that feels similar to Bion in action during world war one. Bonomi's scholarship creates an atmosphere in which the reader may feel how like Bion at war, Freud feels compelled to act heroically while simultaneously struggling with pronounced self-reproach. Bonomi's capacity to think and dream through this psychoanalytic origin story has created a volume that is remarkable in regards to historiography and the sociology of psychoanalysis. Importantly, Bonomi's capacity to simultaneously be one who lifts heavy stones and one who benefits from what others have previously lifted has produced a significant contribution to our contemporary edifice that holds psychoanalytic praxis.

Which war zone?

Much has been written about the war zones in which Sigmund Freud cut his clinical teeth, and Bonomi carefully includes a wide scholarship in his text. Here material on pre-Freudian psychiatry, nosology of disease - particularly hysteria and neurasthenia, gender, social class, sexuality, religion, and Freud's self-analysis is vast, and Bonomi manages to make it lively and accessible by centering his focus on Freud's dream of Irma's injection (Freud, 1900) and via interpretation, its relation to the 19th century psychiatric practice of castrating hysterical women - including Emma Eckstein, the only female in treatment with Freud during his self-analysis. Bonomi writes that prior to the Irma dream, Freud was traumatized in his pediatric encounters in the neurological department of Vienna's Public Institute for Children's Diseases between 1886 and 1896. There a belief that masturbatory play in infancy was a plague related to hysteria and neurasthenia justified procedures such as eliminating a boy's foreskin and a girl's clitoris and/or cutting the labia in addition to removal of women's ovaries. Remarkable here is that Freud was aware of genital mutilation in girls, and wrote of it as significantly worse than male circumcision (Freud, 1918 in Bonomi), yet maintained a gynophobic (Gentile, 2016) focus that includes viewing castration as a fantasy regarding the male genitals that as Bonomi notes were uprooted by Freud and placed "beyond time, history, and culture." (p.77)

Bonomi considers that actual, female castration has been overlooked because it is uncanny, and that the Irma dream holds a key. He considers that the Irma dream of throat and abdominal pain and a dirty injection of trimethylamin is overdetermined, and from a relational point of view, he writes of the Irma dream that "Freud was unable to understand their logic in terms of a countertransference enactment" (p. 105). Enactment is written in the singular here because of Bonomi's focus on Emma Eckstein, yet he also considers other elements that gave birth to the dream to maintain that like any dream, a reductive interpretation would hinder movement.

However, it is Emma Eckstein, who went from patient in two analyses to becoming the first analyst trained by Freud to whom Bonomi applies the logic of enactment via Ferenczi's (1933/1980b) *confusion of tongues* as a key to the Irma dream unlocking the uncanny of female genital mutilation.

Dreaming confusion and other fairy tales

Alongside Ferenczi's work on trauma, Bonomi begins to think that a part of "Emma Eckstein's mind had been imported, like a foreign body, directly into the founding dream of psychoanalysis." (p. 9). It is well known that Emma Eckstein became Freud's patient in 1894, and that Fleiss operated on her nose in February of 1895, a few months before the Irma dream. We also know that the procedure resulted in significant complications discovered in March of that year. Bonomi wonders if encounters with complications between Freud and Eckstein not only led to the Irma dream but to a practice in which a clinician refrains from "offering manipulative or suggestive responses" (p.97).

Ferenczi (1938/2005) wrote that women had adaptive wisdom to male violence, and that hysterics were quite possibly responding to violence from adults who mistook the play of children for the expression of desire by a mature person (Ferenczi, 1933/1980a). In further consideration of traumatic wisdom, Ferenczi suggests (1933/1980a) that in the presence of danger, even in earliest childhood, part of the self can split off and may become helpful beyond age related norms. Bonomi argues that Eckstein and Freud each held this sort of traumatic wisdom that placed them beyond their respective years. Accordingly this volume will be followed by another with the subtitle: "Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi."

The author of both volumes is the founding president of the Sandor Ferenczi Cultural Association, and is chairing the next International Sándor Ferenczi Conference. Carlo Bonomi

writes that this work began over twenty years ago, and he credits the Ferenczian movement and the editorial board of the International Forum of Psychoanalysis for providing supportive environments. Bonomi lives in Florence, Italy where a faculty member of the School for Interpersonal Psychotherapy of the Harry Stack Sullivan Institute. A native speaker of Italian, it is notable that this book is not a translation, but was written in English. Two chapters draw on previously published material. One, on the relevance of castration and circumcision to the origins of psychoanalysis was published in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* in 2009, and the other on Emma Eckstein's circumcision in a 2013 issue of *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*. The Eckstein paper was rejected by the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* for failure to provide verification that Emma Eckstein had in fact been castrated.

In the first paragraph of his introduction, Bonomi writes that the work is both a scientific study and a fairy tale. There are moments in which his poetic license feels acute, and a mistake such as the Hebrew word for Schlomo being written from left to right as opposed to right to left (p. 239) is jarring due to occurring in a context in which poetic claims are built on granular readings. Bonomi's overall granular precision includes a letter dated January 24, 1897 from Freud to Fliess in which Freud writes of a girl's circumcision in which as though receiving a perverted communion following a perverted circumcision, she was given a piece of her labia to eat. Bonomi documents that he is not alone in thinking the girl to be Emma Eckstein. To encounter this evidence and intuitive argument is to wander into the uncanny and like much of psychoanalysis, to wonder how and where poetry and science arrive at empirical coherence.

Self-reproach and other dark continents

From Eckstein's post-surgical complications to the failure of Freud's cocaine project, Bonomi makes a case that Freud built a long list from which to maintain self-reproach. From

this perspective it is interesting to consider Shengold's observation (1993) that Freud wrote of his self-reproach only along oedipal lines regarding the death of his father. Freud's failure to consider self-reproach from a wider, pre-Oedipal perspective may be linked to a failure to represent the vagina in three dimensional space (Shengold, 1991) that is a foreclosure in regard to the representation of mystery, femininity (Salberg, 2010), and generativity (Atlas, 2012, in Gentile, 2016). In contrast, Bonomi considers that Freud may have hoped that nasal surgery in addition to the use of cocaine might stand in the place of genital mutilation, and that Freud's dialogues with Wilhelm Fliess took place in such a context.

Body alteration therapies have also been linked to anti-semitism (cf., Gilman, 2010), and Bonomi considers the intersection of Jewish and feminine identities across his text. In reading, I was reminded of Gilman's (1993) observation that the clitoris was known in the Viennese slang of Freud's time as *the Jew*. Gilman argues that in being considered a truncated penis that it was comparable to a circumcised penis, and that female masturbation was called playing with the jew. Although Bonomi does not make this argument, in reading his book, I began to think that clitorectomy foreshadows genocide in a manner consistent with Plath's (2008) poetry regarding her own sexual abuse where she writes of her father as a nazi and considers herself to be part jew. Central to Bonomi's argument is the observation that Freud's view of circumcision then not only dissociates it from women, but also from the Jewish people (cf., Shengold, 1993).

In a passage in which a tyrannosaurus sinks under the weight of its exoskeleton, Bion (1991) writes of Oedipus as a story that conceals. Bonomi considers that many have considered Oedipus as a way for Freud to dissociate from circumcision as linked to a male Jew, and Freud begins his Moses book by stating that he is not telling the entire story or the most important part (cf., Bernstein, 1998). Like self-reproach, concealing may be considered a protective move that

concedes aspects of the self in order to avoid surrender (cf., Shapiro, 1981). To read this book is to wonder how much of what Freud concealed could he himself tolerate seeing, especially as he saw that circumcision could be used not to mark the end of child sacrifice, but as a weapon against women and children. Bonomi maintains that the fantasy of rescuing a child from sacrifice gave psychoanalysis a mission statement, as “Freud never ceased struggling against the very brutal “Moloch” associated with Emma’s circumcision scene.” (p.166) In a recent paper (Rothschild, 2015), I followed a link between Isaac and Moloch to contemporary issues on gun violence in regard to the murder of children, and there I wrote of the covenant between Abraham and Isaac as a marker of civilization. In regard to female genital mutilation as part of hysteria, language of discontents following civilization seems wry at best, and is indicative of reproach. Vicarious trauma is heart breaking, and Bonomi distills and clarifies this simple fact in an eloquent manner that warrants a wide readership.

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