



Encounters with the Irrational. My Story by André Haynal

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To cite this article: Carlo Bonomi (2018) Encounters with the Irrational. My Story by André Haynal, International Forum of Psychoanalysis, 27:3, 188-189, DOI: [10.1080/0803706X.2017.1384570](https://doi.org/10.1080/0803706X.2017.1384570)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0803706X.2017.1384570>



Published online: 16 Jan 2018.



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Book Reviews

André Haynal, *Encounters with the irrational: My story*. International Psychoanalytic Books, New York, 173 pp, £19.32 (Paperback), ISBN 978-0-9985323-1-8.

This fascinating book of memories of the father of the Ferenczi's Renaissance is an important historical, social, and cultural documentation of a highly troubled period in Europe, and a vivid testimony of repeated traumatic dissolution of pre-existing forms and styles of life, which ultimately forced a young man to a risky and dangerous flight from Hungary after the anti-Soviet demonstrations of 1956, to re-create a new life in Switzerland. It is also the story of an important piece of the reorganization of psychoanalysis after World War II. It was prompted by a long and articulated interview between Judith Mészáros and André Haynal, which was published in Hungarian in 2012 (Haynal & Mészáros, 2012). It has been integrated with various materials, and contains two long chapters on depression and fanaticism, the topics of important contributions that the author made to psychoanalysis, philosophy, and culture (Haynal, 1976; Haynal, Molnar, & Puymege, 1980). Twenty-nine photographs from different periods of Haynal's life enrich the text.

The book begins with the narration of the Transylvanian roots of Haynal's family and the move to Budapest in 1919, after the desegregation of the Austrian-Hungarian empire. The author's father was a medical doctor, and later professor, who was repeatedly in trouble with authorities because of his independence of thought (during World War I, he was reported to the military court as a saboteur because he sent home half the men under his charge, and during the Nazi occupation he saved a number of Jewish people by hiding them in his clinic, receiving for this a posthumous Yad Vashem Award).

Born in Budapest in 1930, André Haynal grew at the intersection of three cultures: Protestant (to which his family belonged), Catholic (he attended Catholic schools), and Jewish (nearly all his father's colleagues were Jewish, and a Jewish uncle lived for many years in his house). After many vicissitudes – the war, the Nazi occupation, the siege of Budapest, the Soviet occupation, and a first failed attempt at flying abroad in 1948 – his student life began. He was able to combine philosophy and psychology,

before switching to medicine. During the anti-Soviet student demonstration and popular upheaval of October 1956, he was elected to the revolutionary committee of medical students, and after the revolt had been crushed, his situation became critical. He had no other choice than to disappear abroad and start a new life.

The hazard – which the author calls “the irrational” – decided that his new life was to be started in Switzerland. In Zurich, he was able to register at the university to complete his medical studies, and to find his first real job in a small hospital. At that point, Haynal writes, “I started getting seriously depressed in my abandonment, in my nostalgia, and in my homesickness” (p. 62). Nine months later, he was enrolled in the university's neurological clinic in Zurich, starting, at the same time, his personal analysis – five and six times a week –with Paul Parin. He also frequented Leopold Szondi, a “Faustian personality,” who was struggling with many difficulties (he did not get a license to practice in medicine in Switzerland), and in addition received a psychoanalytic training at the Zurich institute, from 1960 to 1964, where Fritz Morgenthaler was one of his supervisors. Once he told him that he had to call Lowenstein on the phone about a problem that had come up in supervision! The Zurichers, says the author, appeared somewhat disoriented ... In those years, the axis between New York's “ego psychology” and Anna Freud's group in London:

was perceived as the ‘true’ psychoanalysis. But the ‘truth’ was in fact an analysis of defenses. Naturally this is also something that concerns psychoanalysis, but one no longer loved the unconscious. The unconscious was actually perceived as psychotic, and was not loved. (p. 81).

Under the external influence of the youth movement of 1968, and the rebellion against regulation, guidelines, and social obligations, conflicts and splits developed within the Swiss psychoanalytic society between older analysts and new generations. There was no “Swiss school,” as such. Every Swiss institute was a “unique, eclectic mix of various influences” (p. 107). While the Zurich group was quite autonomous, the atmosphere in the Francophone area was not particularly appealing: the only way to be accepted consisted of going into

“training analysis” with a prestigious Parisian psychoanalysis.

After eight years in Zurich, Haynal spent two years (1964–1966) in Lausanne, working in, at the time, the only Swiss psychiatric polyclinic with psychoanalytic inclinations. He then moved to Geneva in 1966, where the university had appointed a new director of the psychiatric institute, Julian de Ajuria-guerra, an unconventional individual who wanted to open doors to psychoanalysis. Haynal’s qualifications – neurology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis – were highly appreciated, and in 1973 he was promoted to professor. This latest adaptation was not, however, easy. It meant a complete linguistic shift, and moreover, with the notable exceptions of Raymond de Saussure (the “embodiment of tolerance and wisdom”) and Marcelle Spira (who introduced him into Kleinian circles), the psychoanalytic environment was not sympathetic. Surprisingly enough, Haynal discovered that, in the eyes of those people, his training in Zurich counted for nothing. Much more rewarding was the experience of opening up the old psychiatric institutions:

Psychoanalysis sensitized us, as psychiatrists, to *listen* to the patient ... instead of treating them as medical objects, we lived close to them as similar human beings. I am happy to have been part of this great endeavor in Geneva, which transformed psychiatric healing ... with an approach to mental illness that offered support, inclusion, participation rather than exclusion, removal, separation. (p. 104)

Between 1976 and 1979, Professor Haynal also was the president of the Swiss Psychoanalytic Society. In those years and in the 1980s, Haynal went often to London, where he followed the courses at the Tavistock Clinic and became acquainted with, among others, Rosenfeld, Winnicott, and especially Balint, who became his supervisor for a certain period, and introduced him to the work of Ferenczi. Haynal also twice went to Stanford University in California as visiting professor, where he had the opportunity to take up a new analysis, his third, with Emanuel Windholz, an analyst of Hungarian origin suggested by Pető, precisely because of the common language. However, Windholz did not remember Hungarian, and therefore they started the analysis in German, only to realize that [Windholz] no longer spoke German either ... but it was still a significant experience. It also led Windholz to marry for the third time, a marriage that finally lasted in time.

While at Stanford, Haynal received a telephone call from Balint’s widow Enid to ask whether he

would undertake the job of coordinating and editing, with collaborators, the publication of the Freud–Ferenczi correspondence. Thanks to help from Judith Dupont, and the editorial work of Ernst Falzeder and Éva Brabant-Gerő, the first of the three volumes was finally published in 1993 (although it had appeared in France one year earlier). In addition to publishing many articles and two books on Ferenczi (Haynal, 1988, 2002), studying the work of the Hungarian master also led Haynal back to Budapest, to teach seminars on method for ten years.

This experience enabled him to regain proficiency in Hungarian, yet it was no real homecoming. Grown as a cosmopolitan, he was unable to consider a single country his home. A similar spirit was displayed in the psychoanalytic arena, which he came to consider worldwide, in spite of all the parochial groups. Haynal’s life was full of highly significant encounters in many countries, which led him to paths that were always new. Privileging personal encounters and friendly relationships, he was offered the possibility “to *experience* the diversity of the personalities, of lives spent in maturing analytic activity. No uniformity whatsoever, and it was better that way” (p. 132, italic in the original). Many memories of these experiences are narrated in this book. It has been written by a “non-conformist, unconventional, sometime rebellious one who decided to live the life of his own dreams” (p. 166). I strongly recommend it.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/0803706X.2017.1384570>



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