



**The Sándor Ferenczi Society, Budapest  
& the Institute of Psychotherapy, Oslo**

cordially invite you to the final event of the *Seminar Series: Sándor Ferenczi Then and Now*

***Psychoanalytic Psychosomatics:  
From Ferenczi and the Budapest School till Today***

Budapest, May 30–31, 2025

Invited speakers:

Marilyn Charles (United States), Tormod Knutsen (Norway), Judit Mészáros (Hungary)

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FRIDAY, MAY 30, 2025

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| 17.00       | Opening  |
| 17.15–18.45 | Lecture<br><b>Judit Mészáros: <i>The Role of Ferenczi and the Budapest School in Psychoanalytic Psychosomatics</i></b> |
| 19.00       | Welcome drinks   |

SATURDAY, MAY 31, 2025

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| 10.00–11.30 | Lecture<br><b>Tormod Knutsen: <i>The Norwegian tradition of psychomotor physiotherapy and character analysis considering early object relational theories and psychoanalytic psychosomatics</i></b> |
| 11.30–12.00 | Coffee break  |
| 12.00–13.30 | Lecture<br><b>Marilyn Charles: <i>Re – Finding Ferenczi: Embodied Meanings in Psychoanalysis</i></b>  |
| 13.30–14.30 | Lunch break   |
| 14.30–16.00 | <i>Case discussion groups</i>   |
| 16.15–16.45 | <i>Reflections on the seminar</i>   |
| 17.30–18.30 | <i>Ferenczi House guided tour</i>   |

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VENUE:

Headquarters of the Hungarian Psychoanalytical Society  
1086 Budapest, II. János Pál pápa tér 6., 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, first door to the right.  
Dorbell: 50

REGISTRATION:

Registration fees:

for lower income countries: 70 EUR or 28 000 HUF (Eastern European countries)

for higher income countries: 100 EUR (Nordic and Western European countries)

for university students 20.000 HUF

Registration fee includes welcome drinks, coffee breaks, and a light lunch on Saturday.

Please register using the following link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc4T70yym5wXTHLkUcknHofHUIJrV5SxjBDkR93xFLXE4Vgw/viewform?usp=dialog>

Contact: [ferenczihaz@gmail.com](mailto:ferenczihaz@gmail.com)

## *The Role of Ferenczi and the Budapest School in Psychoanalytic Psychosomatics*

By **Judit Mészáros**



From the 1920's onwards, Sándor Ferenczi along with many of his Hungarian contemporaries greatly influenced the psychoanalytic approach to somatic diseases, and played a crucial role in the development of psychosomatic thinking.

Ferenczi viewed the body as a surface rich in symbols whose hidden messages could be decoded through psychoanalysis. Among other contributions, he highlighted the psychosomatic consequences of early mother-child relationship deficits in his paper *The Unwelcome Child* (Ferenczi, 1929), which he linked to conditions such as asthma and cardiovascular diseases. Additionally, Ferenczi's perspective on the body made it possible to detect psychic regression even in the development of severe illnesses. He also considered the potential presence of a connection between his fatally damaged relationship with Freud and his illness, pernicious anemia.

In this talk, I will outline the trajectory of how the psychosomatic thinking of the Budapest psychoanalysts took root and spread across multiple continents—through Michael Balint and his Balint Groups in London, and through Franz Alexander, who exerted his influence via the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute, which he founded in the United States. The lecture will highlight key aspects of the conceptual changes that have been integrated into contemporary psychotherapy and our understanding of the mind-body connection.

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Judit Mészáros Ph.D., professor honoris causa, is a training and supervising psychoanalyst and a key figure in the Ferenczi Renaissance. She co-led the Ferenczi House Project with Carlo Bonomi, culminating in the establishment of Ferenczi's original office for developing the Ferenczi House and Archives (2011). A prolific author and editor, she has curated exhibitions and contributed to Ferenczi-related films. Her works include *Ferenczi and Beyond. Exile of the Budapest School* and *Solidarity in the Psychoanalytic Movement during the Nazi Years*, Karnac, 2014, and the Brazilian editions of *Ferenczi's Preanalytic Writings (1897–1908)* and *In Memoriam Sándor Ferenczi*, INM Editora, 2024.

*The Norwegian tradition of psychomotor physiotherapy and character analysis considering early object relational theories and psychoanalytic psychosomatics*

By **Tormod Knutsen**



The early roots of psychoanalysis in Norway were strongly influenced by the two analysts Otto Fenichel and Wilhelm Reich. They came to Oslo in the early thirties as political refugees from Berlin. They were close friends and colleagues and shared their interests in psychoanalysis, Marxism and the sexual enlightenment and health care of young people. And both were inspired by Ferenczi's understanding of the relationship between the psychic realm and the physical body. Wilhelm Reich created Character Analysis, and Fenichel published papers on the effect of gymnastics, dance and respiration on psychoanalytic therapy.

Reich describes the character armor of the ego as "(...) a chronic result of the result between instinctual demands and an outer world which frustrates it, and represents a definite form of overcoming the Oedipus complex" (Reich 1990, p156). In his analysis of a masochistic man, he concluded that the patient's demands for love were based on a fear of being left alone, presumably in pre-oedipal period (ibid. p 246), but he gave this information no place in his psychosomatic theory. Reich influenced Norwegian analysts by practising and teaching character analysis. The meaning of psychoanalytic psychosomatics in Norway has to some extent been negatively impacted by these historical phenomena.

Just after the WWII. Trygve Braatøy, pupil of both Fenichel and Reich, created a new therapeutic practice named psychomotor physiotherapy along with an orthopaedic physiotherapist. Their aim was to highlight the interplay between psyche and soma by introducing the patient to both a body therapist and a psychotherapist. This ideal arrangement lasted may be some years, but today the physiotherapists specialized in this treatment most often do the talking cure themselves, and body psychotherapies have today developed into various schools, often far removed from the ideas of psychoanalysis. The Reichian tradition in Norway is cultivated at the Institute of Character Analysis in Oslo. Reich's works on Character Analysis are still taught at the two psychoanalytic institutes. Reich's character analysis builds on an ego-psychological theory. The concept of character analysis and its connexion to object relations theory have been discussed since the thirties (Balint 1932, Fenichel 2001, Gullestad 2022), and there have been efforts to tie it to relational psychoanalysis (Sletvold 2014). The paper will end with clinical illustrations from today together with clinical examples from Reichian literature.

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Tormod Knutsen, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst in private practice, Oslo. Training and supervising analyst at the Institute for Psychotherapy and Norwegian Psychoanalytical Association. Supervising residents at Oslo University Hospital.

## *Re – Finding Ferenczi: Embodied Meanings in Psychoanalysis*

By Marilyn Charles



In contrast to Freud's emphasis on a more rational perspective to making sense of patient's communications, Ferenczi took a more embodied approach. In this way, he stood for the more feminine, maternal approach to meaning-making that is so useful when working with those for whom complex trauma has impeded their development. When all goes well, children learn who they are through embodied enactments with caretakers who are sufficiently attentive to the child's signs and signals that this 'reading process' is set into place. The complex trauma that is linked to failed intergenerational mourning, however, impedes this reading process, leading, at best, to third-person conjectures about self and others rather than ideas that are more experience-near. As early as 1924, Ferenczi recognized that neglecting the effects of trauma led to all "too facile explanations – in terms of 'disposition' and 'constitution'" (Ferenczi, 1949, p. 225). Although Ferenczi ran into difficulties with his mutual analysis, his insight into the importance of the analyst analyzing our own resistances has become an important aspect of practice today. Recognizing our internal states, reflecting on them, and making decisions regarding what we might say that might be most useful to the patient, has become a cornerstone of contemporary practice. As we read Ferenczi today, we see how deeply and profoundly he stands for the principle of authenticity in our clinical encounters. It is this authenticity, suggests Ferenczi, that "establishes the contrast between the present and the unbearable traumatogenic past" (p. 227). We can also find a distinction between Freud's emphasis on sexuality, and Ferenczi's recognition of the importance of tenderness in early relationships. In this way, we see him early on marking out territory that continues to be pressing in our current times, when aggression and sexuality seem to be on the ascendency in ways that devalue the importance of tenderness and care. An embodied approach is particularly important when working with psychosomatic disorders, which likely link back to very early experiences that cannot be symbolized, much as Ferenczi (1952) recognized as he imagined back towards the earliest experiences of life. These imaginings can be found in more current theorizings, as in Aulagnier's (2001) primal layer of experience. Failing to recognize how the body speaks can leave us alienated from precisely those individuals who are most alienated from themselves.

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Marilyn Charles, PhD, ABPP is a psychologist and psychoanalyst at the Austen Riggs Center, Co-Chair of the Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society (APCS) and Scholar of the British Psychoanalytic Council. Affiliations include Chicago Center for Psychoanalysis; Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis; Universidad de Monterrey and Harvard Medical School. Marilyn has presented her work internationally, publishing more than 100 articles and book chapters and five books: *Patterns*; *Constructing Realities*; *Learning from Experience*; *Working with Trauma*; *Psychoanalysis and Literature*; and five edited volumes, including *Introduction to Contemporary Psychoanalysis*. Forthcoming from APA Press: *Echoes of Trauma: Meaning and Identity in Psychoanalysis*.