

Marie Bonaparte, her first two patients and the literary world

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Marie Bonaparte (1882–1962) played a critical role in the development of psychoanalysis in France. Her clinical activity is not well known yet she was one of the first female French psychoanalysts. The journalist–writers Alice and Valerio Jahier were Bonaparte's first two patients. She conducted this dual analysis with Rudolph Loewenstein (1898–1976). Alice and Valerio exchanged analysts on several occasions. During his analysis, Valerio began corresponding with Italo Svevo (1861–1928), the author of La Coscienza di Zenò, who imparted his doubts on the therapeutic merits of psychoanalysis. Valerio described his difficult analysis in his letters to Svevo. Bonaparte consulted Freud on the subject, but was not able to prevent Valerio's suicide in 1939. The Princess of Greece encouraged Alice in her vocation as a writer and enabled her to benefit from her connections in literary circles. On the margins of this unpublished story of the two analyses, which is based on archived documents recently made available, we discover the importance of the links which were formed – around Marie Bonaparte – between psychoanalysis and literature. In addition to Italo Svevo, we come across the acerbic writer, Maurice Sachs, as well as the famous novelist, Stefan Zweig.

Keywords: history of psychoanalysis, Italo Svevo, literature, Marie Bonaparte

Marie Bonaparte, who was analysed by Freud and a patron of the French psychoanalytic movement, played a cardinal role in the development of psychoanalysis in France (Bertin, 1982; Mijolla, 1988; Roudinesco, 1990). She participated in particular in the creation and financing of the Paris Psychoanalytical Society (SPP) as well as in the French translation of many of Freud's texts. In her scientific work, she was interested in the therapeutic perspectives of psychoanalysis as well as its applications in diverse domains such as ethnology, sexology, or literature (Ohayon, 1999). She had no university qualifications and supported *Laïéanalyse*, that is, psychoanalytic treatment practised by a non-medical practitioner (Amouroux, 2008). She was also a controversial character, whose biologizing vision of psychoanalysis was at the origin of an *oeuvre* which did not survive her (Thompson, 2003). Her taste for surgery led her, during her analysis with Freud, to theorize and undergo a troubling intervention aimed at obtaining sexual satisfaction (Appignanesi and Forrester, 2000), the interpretation of which is particularly difficult (Moore, 2009).

Valerio and Alice Jahier were Marie Bonaparte's first two analysands. It is rare to have access to the account of the 'first steps' of a psychoanalyst.

¹Translated by Andrew Weller.



These analyses are all the more interesting in that they were ‘supervised’ by Freud himself. Valerio was, moreover, close to Italo Svevo, the author of *La Coscienza di Zeno* (Svevo, 1930[1923]), with whom he kept up an interesting correspondence. A study of the correspondence between Valerio and Italo on the one hand, and the unpublished correspondence between the Jahiers and Marie Bonaparte¹ on the other allows us to form a picture of the practice of psychoanalysis and its links with literary circles in the inter-war period.

Valerio and Alice Jahier

Born in Aoste, in North-West Italy, in 1899, Valerio Jahier was a Franco-Italian who originally came from the Vaudois valleys. At the end of World War I, anticipating the arrival of fascism which was soon to establish itself in Italy, he emigrated to France. Notably, he was an editor at the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, the ancestor of UNESCO, where he was in charge of cinema. Between 1934 and 1939, he contributed to the journal *Esprit*. He wrote more than 30 articles for the cinema section, either under his Gallicized name Valéry Jahier or under the pseudonym Bernard Valdo. In the 1930s, cinema was considered as a minor art. Jahier’s articles were thus exceptional and forerunners of the development of film criticism after World War II (Hughes, 1991). Moreover, he won renown by participating in a collective book entitled *Le rôle intellectuel du cinéma* (Jahier, 1937). Valerio also wrote several novels and plays which he did not publish. He was in psychoanalysis with Marie Bonaparte, which was frequently interrupted, between 1928 and 1934. Valerio Jahier also had some analysis with Rudolph Loewenstein around 1931 and consulted other psychoanalysts of the SPP. We have very little information about the circumstances that led him to commit suicide in 1939. On his death, Emmanuel Mounier, the director of *Esprit*, wrote the obituary himself where he refers to the exchanges he had with Valerio and to the importance of his column on cinema in the journal. But he also mentions the moral wound inflicted on him by World War I:

The wearing effects of the war were aggravated by those of semi-exile far from the Italy he loved and which he did not wish to see again while it was subjugated. These burdens weighed more heavily on him than some may have suspected: when he was in bad shape, he went to ground ... Among all the circumstances that pushed him towards death, we find the merciless inevitabilities of life which we come up against. And the image emerges of hands, already considerably weakened, which let go of the lifeboat too soon. Perhaps we didn’t know how to hold on to them? How terribly helpless friendship can be ...

(Mounier, 1939, p. 654)

Alice Jahier was the author of several articles in different journals. In *Note sur la presse féminine* (Jahier, 1936), published in *Esprit* in 1936, she denounces the mediocrity and frivolity of a certain kind of women’s press. In

¹The correspondence between Valerio and Alice Jahier and Marie Bonaparte is part of the Marie Bonaparte heritage of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) which corresponds to the classification mark NAF 28230. The origin of the letters that do not come from the BNF is stated in the body of the text.

her articles for *Le Flambeau*, 'the Belgian journal of political and literary questions', she wrote short essays of literary criticism, sometimes psychoanalytically inspired, notably on Françoise Sagan (Jahier, 1957, 1959, 1965). Following her husband, she began an analysis, first with Loewenstein between 1929 and 1931, and then with Marie Bonaparte. Her analysis with the Princess took place mainly between 1931 and 1933, then between 1935 and 1937. It is very likely that she subsequently underwent other periods of analysis. Shortly before World War II, Marie Bonaparte helped the couple to obtain French citizenship. Valerio's death made this invalid and the Princess was obliged to intervene once again. In May 1940, in view of her Jewish origins and on Marie Bonaparte's advice, Alice took refuge in England. She worked at the headquarters of the Free French Forces for the department of protocol and wrote a regular column for the newspaper *France*. Her style met with some success and she said that General de Gaulle had invited her to lunch one day. She declined because he had only informed her of his invitation two hours in advance (Mann, 1981). In 1944, she also published a book, *France Inoubliable [France Remembered]* (Jahier, 1944) in which she speaks of her nostalgia for France. It comprises 42 texts, illustrated with as many photos, which treat of places and monuments representing French culture, such as the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame Cathedral, Avignon or Saint-Tropez. This book, published in a bilingual edition, was prefaced by the poet and Nobel Prize winner for Literature, Thomas Stearns Eliot. It is dedicated to Marie Bonaparte, her analyst, with whom she kept up a significant correspondence throughout her life. In fact, she became one of the Princess's 'close relations' and even kept company with Anne Berman for a while. Once she was back in France, she continued to write articles for various newspapers, translated a novel (Ralph, 1958), and worked for the cinema. She attended a few of Marie Bonaparte's courses at the Institut de Psychanalyse in Paris at the end of the 1950s, as well as a psychoanalytic congress in 1957. In 1986, Alice Jahier was interviewed by Michel Collée and Nicole Humbré for the journal *Frénésie* (Jahier, 1986). It was there that Jahier revealed in particular that she and her husband had been in analysis with Marie Bonaparte. She had never wanted to become a psychoanalyst but, at the end of her life, this enthusiast for writing turned her interest towards graphology.

Svevo and the Jahiers

Apart from a few acquaintances in the French-speaking Swiss psychoanalytic world, that the Jahiers seem to have come into contact with psychoanalysis through the work of Italo Svevo. Alice relates that she had become accustomed to reading some of the books that her husband received via the press service:

Among them, I noticed an Italian book by a then unknown author, Italo Svevo, entitled *La Coscienza di Zeno*. Even though I hadn't studied this language much, I forced myself to read it, and discovered a highly talented author. Reading this book made me understand that only psychoanalysis could be of real help in resolving the problems with which I was wrestling.

(Jahier, 1986, p. 118)

1 So Alice recommended it to her husband. Both of them succumbed to the
 2 charm of *La Coscienza di Zeno*. Published in Italy in 1923, this novel was
 3 then translated into French in an abridged version in 1927. After reading it,
 4 Valerio began a correspondence with the author of the novel and they met
 5 in Paris in March 1928. In the first letter that Valerio Jahier sent to Svevo,
 6 he spoke of the shock that reading the novel had had on him:

7 I belong to the generation which the war tore away from studies before abandoning
 8 it subdued and irresolute, almost without prospects, in the midst of a humanity in
 9 which all the values had been turned upside down. After leaving Italy in 1920, I
 10 only returned there for a few weeks per year. Abroad, I looked to other cultural
 11 movements, to other literatures for the spiritual food which I felt I could not find
 12 for the moment in my own country. And with regard to the proposition to intro-
 13 duce the public to modern Italian writers, to translate them, to speak about them, I
 14 sidestepped impolitely, not daring to reveal that I couldn't see any who really
 15 seemed worthy of becoming Europeans. It was with this idea in mind that I had
 16 lived until a month ago, that is, until the appearance of *Zeno* in the French version.

17 (Letter from V. Jahier to I. Svevo dated November 1927 [Svevo, 1978, p. 233])
 18

19 In October 1954, Alice Jahier informed Marie Bonaparte that she had
 20 been asked to write about her encounter with the writer Italo Svevo (letter
 21 from A. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 18/10/1954, BNF). Alice then pub-
 22 lished an article on the subject with a few letters that Svevo had exchanged
 23 with her husband Valerio (Jahier, 1955). The totality of these letters was pub-
 24 lished in Italian in 1978 (Svevo, 1978). In Alice's article, she mainly speaks
 25 about psychoanalysis, but the name of Marie Bonaparte is not mentioned.
 26 She refers again to her encounter with Svevo which she describes fervently:

27 In spite of the tragic facts – my husband committed suicide on June 23, 1939 –
 28 with which ... my memories of Svevo are, for me, inevitably associated, everything
 29 in my memory which relates to him remains unalterably sunny. I will never cease to
 30 be astonished by this and to attribute it all the more to his extraordinary and extre-
 31 mely powerful personal radiance.

32 (Jahier, 1955, p. 26)
 33

34 Italo Svevo, whose real name was Ettore Schmitz, was the author of sev-
 35 eral other novels – including *Una vita* [A Life] in 1892 and *Senilità* [As A
 36 Man Grows Older] in 1898 – which, even more than the one that interested
 37 the Jahiers, went relatively unnoticed by his contemporaries. It was only a
 38 short time before his accidental death in 1928 that his work was recognized.
 39 Real success only came many years later. Svevo was notably the friend of
 40 James Joyce and had even started to translate Freud's *The Interpretation of*
 41 *Dreams* into Italian, but this was never published. A friend of Eduardo
 42 Weiss, he was one of the first novelists to have deliberately drawn inspiration
 43 from psychoanalysis. In France, at the same period, writers like Paul Bour-
 44 get and André Gide were also giving prominence to psychoanalysis in their
 45 novels. Thus Gide immortalized the figure of Eugénie Sokolnicka in the
 46 guise of the doctor Madame Sophroniska in *The Counterfeiters* (1925). In
 47 *La Coscienza di Zeno*, Svevo relates the life of a man, Zeno Cosini, who
 48 decides to undergo psychoanalysis. This treatment failed and Zeno finally

1 broke off the relationship with his doctor. Admittedly, the vision of psycho-
2 analysis developed in his novel can easily be qualified as 'wild' (Ardolino
3 and Druet, 2005), but Zeno Cosini's setbacks were to have an undeniable
4 echo for Valerio Jahier.

5 Can psychoanalysis provide a cure for psychical suffering? Valerio, Zeno
6 and Italo would be led, in turn, to ask this question. Around 1912, Bruno
7 Veneziani, Svevo's brother-in-law, had begun an analysis with Freud which
8 did not have the hoped-for success. "Freud himself," Svevo writes to Jahier,
9 "after years of treatment involving great expenses, dismissed his patient,
10 declaring him incurable" (letter from Italo Svevo to Valerio Jahier dated
11 27/12/1927 [Jahier, 1955, p. 29]). According to Svevo, the latter was suffer-
12 ing from 'benign paranoia' and emerged from the treatment 'completely
13 destroyed'. Bruno Veneziani was equally a friend of Eduardo Weiss. In addi-
14 tion to Freud, he also consulted Viktor Tausk and George Groddeck. All
15 these treatments failed (Weiss, 1970). At the same period, Svevo began a
16 'self-analysis': "It was out of this experience that the novel emerged in
17 which, if there is a character I have created without having had a model for
18 it, it is definitely that of Dr S. ..." (Letter from Italo Svevo to Valerio Jahier
19 dated 10/12/1927 [Jahier, 1955, p. 29]). In the novel, 'Dr S.' is a psycho-
20 analyst. When he published his novel, Weiss told him that it was not psy-
21 choanalysis. If Svevo remained convinced that he had done a self-analysis,
22 he confided to Valerio that he nonetheless regretted not having done his
23 analysis directly with Freud. It is safe to say that the quality of his novel
24 would have been enhanced by it. Yet he was very circumspect concerning
25 the eventual therapeutic virtues of psychoanalysis. Thus, when Valerio told
26 him that he was interested in psychoanalysis, Svevo advised him against it.
27 He seemed much more enthusiastic about suggestion and the work of the
28 Nancy School, about which he spoke to him on several occasions:

29
30 Try autosuggestion. You mustn't laugh at it because it is simple. The cure that you
31 should obtain is simple, too. They will not change your personal 'ego'.

32 (Letter from Italo Svevo to Valerio Jahier dated 27/12/1927 [Jahier, 1955, p. 30])

33
34 The day Valerio confessed to Svevo that he had already done 'sixty
35 sessions of analysis', the latter is said to have replied to him: 'And you are
36 still alive?' Zeno, but also Svevo and his brother-in-law, indeed came up
37 against the therapeutic limits of psychoanalysis. Valerio did, too, but in a
38 more dramatic manner, since he chose to commit suicide. Perhaps Svevo
39 had sensed the importance of the hidden weaknesses in his interlocutor. In
40 their correspondence, Svevo seemed to recognize himself in Jahier's suffer-
41 ings. But, unlike him, he rejected the interest of a treatment which involved
42 'changing the "personal" ego':

43
44 And anyway, why wish to be cured? Really, must we wrench from humanity what is
45 best in it? I firmly believe that the real success which has brought me peace resides
46 in this conviction. We are a living protest against the ridiculous conception of the
47 superman, as they have tried to impose on us (especially on us Italians).

48 (Letter from Italo Svevo to Valerio Jahier dated 27/12/1927 [Jahier, 1955, p. 30])

1 Going against that would, according to him, boil down to reproducing
 2 the scorn of the swan in Andersen's fairy-tale, who thought he was
 3 deformed because he had been hatched by a duck. Svevo distinguishes the
 4 suffering from which one can recover with the help of suggestion from that
 5 which is part of the subject and which nothing – neither suggestion nor
 6 psychoanalysis – can reach. He explains to Jahier that what he admires
 7 about Freud is his sincerity, that is to say, his capacity to speak about his
 8 inner conflicts in a 'contemplative' way. In the same letter, he presents Freud
 9 and Schopenhauer as two masters of literature: "A great man, our Freud,
 10 but more for the novelists than for the patients." He thus expresses serious
 11 doubts concerning Valerio's 'anxious hopes for cure'. Svevo nonetheless asks
 12 him to keep him informed about his 'psychoanalytic experience'.

13 14 15 **A couple on the couch**

16 In a letter to Svevo prior to his meeting with the Princess of Greece, Valerio
 17 lets it be understood that he has already had a good many sessions with a
 18 psychoanalyst from Geneva (Letter from V. Jahier to I. Svevo dated
 19 21/12/1927 [Svevo, 1978, p. 241]). The analyst in question was Charles
 20 Odier, another pioneer of French-speaking psychoanalysis. When presenting
 21 Valerio to the Princess, he took care to summarize the 'case' for her:

22 When I saw him, I suspected a powerful repression of aggressivity in him, but the
 23 negative transference was barely elaborated. Was I mistaken? I thought I had also
 24 discovered, perhaps owing to repression of the *kast-Angst* [sic], quite a strong pas-
 25 sive-anal position, without managing of course to unravel all that from the genetic
 26 point of view.

27
28 (Letter from C. Odier to M. Bonaparte dated 21/04/1928, Container 6, Princess
 29 Marie Bonaparte Papers, Sigmund Freud Collection, Manuscript Division, Library
 30 of Congress, Washington, DC)

31 In January 1928, Valerio was pessimistic. He wanted to take up his analy-
 32 sis again. What psychological troubles was he suffering from then? Odier speaks
 33 of '*Zwangsneurose*'; as for his wife, she describes him as 'cyclothymic' and
 34 refers to several suicide attempts which preceded that of 1939. In his letters
 35 to the Princess, he speaks to her about his 'nervousness', about his 'anxiety',
 36 or again about 'aggressivity' and difficulties in relating with his family. In
 37 his correspondence with the writer from Trieste, he explains that he wants
 38 to overcome an 'inferiority complex' which 'poisons my existence' and
 39 'makes life hell'. He wanted to try analysis again but the derisory salary he
 40 was earning prevented him from doing so:

41 My first visit to a psychoanalyst had a negative result. The price of the treatment
 42 would have obliged me to make a crushing loan and I would never have been able
 43 to find the sum necessary to begin it. [...] I was on the point of giving up the idea
 44 for good – if it is possible to abandon such an idea – when I had the opportunity
 45 of meeting the Princess of Greece. When I explained my case to her, she said she
 46 was ready to take me into treatment.

47
48 (Letter from V. Jahier to I. Svevo dated 03/04/1928 [Svevo, 1978, p. 254])

1 Once again, the Princess's money made the difference. We understand
 2 implicitly in this letter that Marie Bonaparte offered him exceptional finan-
 3 cial conditions. Did she allow him to benefit from this 'reduction' to com-
 4 pensate for her lack of experience as an analyst? She told him in fact that
 5 she still had to do a 'control analysis with Freud in Vienna in the autumn'.
 6 Valerio was not the only one, moreover, to appeal to the Princess's generos-
 7 ity in order to be able to have psychoanalytic treatment. Roland Dalbiez –
 8 who notably published a thesis on psychoanalytic doctrine and method in
 9 1936 (Dalbiez, 1936) – also contacted her about this. A qualified teacher
 10 [*agrégé*] in philosophy, he wrote a letter to her in 1933 in which he explained
 11 that he had spent several years working on psychoanalysis. Not wanting to
 12 write a 'purely speculative' thesis, he had followed several 'neuropaths' who
 13 had 'absolutely exhausted' him. Since then, he had been suffering for about
 14 a year from a 'syndrome of classical psychasthenia' which had led him to
 15 break off the writing of his thesis. He had already tried several treatments –
 16 in particular 'soporifics' and autosuggestion – which had brought him some
 17 relief. Until then Dalbiez had not wanted to begin an analysis in order to
 18 preserve the 'independence' of his university work. He presented himself,
 19 then, to the Princess of Greece as a 'sick intellectual' who, in the last resort,
 20 wanted to start an analysis:

21 The difficulty I fear I will not be able to overcome is a material one. An analysis
 22 generally takes a very long time. If I do it, I will have to stay in Paris during the
 23 whole treatment, while my family remains in Rennes. This already represents a seri-
 24 ous increase in expense. If on top of that considerable fees have to be added for the
 25 psychoanalyst, I will find myself faced with a total material impossibility ... If I do
 26 not succeed, thanks to you, in obtaining special conditions, I will be unable to have
 27 treatment.

28
 29 (Letter from R. Dalbiez to M. Bonaparte dated 04/12/1933, BNF)

30
 31 Like Valerio Jahier, Roland Dalbiez had planned to do an analysis with
 32 Codet and Loewenstein. He met the latter on several occasions (Letter from
 33 R. Dalbiez to M. Bonaparte dated 23/01/1934, BNF). He also stayed in
 34 contact with the Princess of Greece at least until he had presented his doc-
 35 toral thesis in 1936 (Letter from R. Dalbiez to M. Bonaparte dated
 36 09/05/1936, BNF). Did Dalbiez begin an analysis? Did he break it off?
 37 Nothing allows us to answer these questions. Much more precise informa-
 38 tion is available concerning Valerio's analysis. His first session took place on
 39 27 March 1928. In the letter which preceded this appointment, we can read
 40 in the Princess of Greece's handwriting the following inscription: 'My first
 41 analysand' (Letter from V. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 27/03/1928,
 42 BNF). It would seem that she saw him several times a week. This was quite
 43 time-consuming for Jahier who had to fit three hours for analysis into a
 44 time-table that was already very full: two hours for the journey and one for
 45 the session (Letter from V. Jahier to I. Svevo dated 27/06/1928 [Svevo,
 46 1978, p. 257]). This case was to prove an extremely difficult one. Yet every-
 47 thing seemed to go well to start with. Following the experience of her own
 48 analysis, Marie Bonaparte tried to find a screen memory concealing some

1 primal scene which Valerio might have witnessed as a child. Traces of this
 2 quest can be found in their correspondence. On returning from a trip to
 3 Italy, he wrote to his analyst:

4 I have tried to find out about the lay-out of my parents' bedroom during my child-
 5 hood. According to what I have been told, it could be that the constant light that
 6 *cannot be switched off* in my 'big' dreams is quite simply the light from a window in
 7 which, from my bed, I could see the outline of my parents' bed. Another significant
 8 detail is that at the age of 1 I made terrible scenes if in the evenings my father
 9 would not let me rub his bare back with my hand.

10
 11 (Letter from V. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 12/08/1928, BNF)

12 There is a sort of mirroring here of the quest for the primal scene. Freud
 13 demonstrated the role of this type of fantasy in his analysis of the Wolf
 14 Man. In the Princess of Greece's analysis, this scene plays a very important
 15 role. It led her, moreover, to question the eventual witnesses of her indistinct
 16 memories. Having become a 'trainee analyst', she seems to have oriented her
 17 patient in this direction too. In the letter cited above, we are given to under-
 18 stand that, when Valerio was visiting his parents, he questioned them at
 19 length about his childhood. He also tells her about some of his 'anxiety
 20 dreams' which he attributes to the pervasive nature of his castration com-
 21 plex. However, after one year of 'periods' of analysis interrupted by the
 22 Princess's numerous trips, Valerio was in very bad shape. Moreover, he had
 23 to leave to live in Italy. After one of Bonaparte's trips, he wrote to her say-
 24 ing: "I am not sure how useful it would be to continue the analysis, for
 25 I feel it will just be a series of blank sessions" (Letter from V. Jahier to
 26 M. Bonaparte dated 26/04/1929, BNF). A few months later, however, there
 27 was quite a long and unexpected period of improvement which led Valerio
 28 to break off the analysis:

29
 30
 31 I must confess that I often felt some sort of shame towards you for this treatment
 32 which was going on and on without there being the slightest sign of a result either
 33 in the short or long term. I considered this as great impoliteness, as unforgivable
 34 ingratitude which compensated you very poorly for all the time you had devoted to
 35 me.

36 (Letter from V. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 24/07/1929, BNF)

37 It was now Alice Jahier who needed help: "You may know that my wife
 38 has decided to do an analysis and that she has just begun one with Loewen-
 39 stein. It seems to be doing her a lot of good" (Letter from V. Jahier to
 40 M. Bonaparte dated 07/10/1929, BNF). Alice, however, was to keep a bitter
 41 memory of her analysis with Loewenstein which lasted from 1929 to 1931:

42
 43 I did two years of analysis with R. Loewenstein, but it was no use. He said he
 44 understood nothing about a woman like me, and as for me, I understood nothing
 45 about a man like him.

46 (Jahier, 1986, p. 118)

47 These difficulties led her to change analyst. There are several conceivable
 48 versions. Even if, as it seems, she had already met Marie Bonaparte, as one of

1 Valerio's letters suggests (Letter from V. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated
 2 20/10/1929, BNF), Alice Jahier has written elsewhere that she had consulted
 3 the Princess via her husband (Jahier, 1986, p. 118). In any case, she was
 4 referred to Marie Bonaparte. Alice kept a much better memory of her 'second'
 5 analytic treatment. This one involved successive periods – sometimes spaced
 6 out by pauses of several years – between 1931 and 1937. After the war, there
 7 were most likely other periods. When she was in France, Marie Bonaparte
 8 received her for one hour, several times a week, and sometimes every day.
 9 Alice Jahier also tells how she would often stay to dinner after the sessions. So
 10 the two women gradually developed an original form of friendship. Alice con- **6**
 11 sidered herself as 'M.B.'s analytic daughter' (Jahier, 1986, p. 119). More than
 12 100 letters were exchanged between 1929 and 1962. They bear precious testi-
 13 mony to a therapeutic relationship which gradually turned into one of friend-
 14 ship and whose tone resembles a personal diary. Unfortunately, we do not
 15 have the Princess's replies. Alice Jahier herself wonders on many occasions
 16 about the status of their correspondence: "Are these letters the remains of
 17 transferences or just the cumbersome signs of my very grateful affection for
 18 you?" (Letter from A. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 'Saturday' 1946, BNF).
 19 In the interview that she gave for *Frénésie*, she tells how her analysis ended:

20 By common agreement. The end of the analysis was absolutely triumphal. We
 21 understood that I had a very strong attachment to my mother and M.B. ... or
 22 rather my mother resembled M.B. enormously. When one puts two photos side by
 23 side one understands better. I really loved my mother entirely. But I was M.B.'s
 24 analytic daughter ... My mother was a completely uneducated and cold person;
 25 there was no bond between us, whereas with M.B. I had very deep bonds. **7**

28 Valerio, Zeno and Marie

29 In 1931, Valerio contacted the Princess of Greece. He was once again in
 30 extremely bad shape. So she took him back into analysis for a while, but
 31 then referred him to someone else. But how did this come about? We have
 32 the precious testimony of Alice on this subject:

33 Before undertaking the treatment, his psychoanalyst [Marie Bonaparte] consulted
 34 Freud: he didn't believe that a total cure was possible; she, however, placing great
 35 hopes in the very real gifts of her patient, did not let herself be discouraged.

(Jahier, 1955, fn. 1, p. 27)

36 At the end of 1931, however, Marie Bonaparte referred him to Loewen-
 37 stein because she was convinced – had she asked Freud for his advice here
 38 too? – that "a few sessions with a man" (Letter from V. Jahier to M. Bona-
 39 parte dated 05/12/1931, BNF) would do him a great deal of good. The
 40 'exchange' of patients between analysts was quite common at the time, it
 41 seems. Accordingly, in 1933, René Allendy wrote to the Princess of Greece
 42 asking her to take into analysis one of his analysands who "was giving him
 43 great difficulties with regard to resolving his transference" (Letter from
 44 R. Allendy to M. Bonaparte dated 22/08/1933, BNF).

45 Alice Jahier kept the Princess informed about the progress of her hus-
 46 band's treatment. Things then went from bad to worse: "My husband has
 47
 48

not changed. He is still floating between life and death without taking sides” (Letter from A. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 28/01/1935, BNF). Like his wife, Valerio did not benefit from his analysis with Loewenstein. It seems that subsequently he had some more sessions with Marie Bonaparte. She obtained some success and continued to be ‘supervised’ by Freud:

I imagine that you have spoken to the wise man from Vienna about me. I regret that you were unable to speak to him about many more documents and obsessions, because the last time you saw me I was just beginning to come back to life again.

(Letter from V. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 15/08/1935) **8**

Alongside these different periods of analysis, Valerio consulted a large number of other therapists. Many years later, in 1946, his wife wrote to Marie Bonaparte to tell her about an astonishing discovery she had made in her husband’s papers. In his 1934 diary, she discovered that her husband had not only seen Marie Bonaparte once a week but had had very many appointments with a large number of the members of the SPP: René Allendy, Charles Odier, Michel Cénac, René Laforgue, Georges Parcheminey, Rudolph Loewenstein, John Leuba, Eugénie Sokolnicka, Sophie Morgenstern, Adrien Borel, Paul Schiff, Sacha Nacht and Blanche Reverchon-Jouve!

I apologize for asking you this indiscreet question, but did my husband really go and see all those people? This seems so crazy to me, so desperate, that I am horrified and filled with immense pity, terrorized pity, if you like.

(Letter from A. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 05/07/1946, BNF)

She also recalled a meal in London during the war during which Blanche Reverchon-Jouve had asked her if she was related to ‘a certain Italian writer who had killed himself’. At the time she thought there must have been some confusion, and had been unable to accept the invitations received from the Jouvés thereafter. All this suggests, however, that ‘Valerio’s’ case must have been relatively well known at the SPP. We do not know precisely what happened then to Valerio. Apparently things went from bad to worse and he committed suicide shortly before the outbreak of war on 23 June 1939. This failure seems to have saddened the Princess profoundly. But she never wrote anything on this subject. We can imagine, however, that it was difficult to see her first patient kill himself. In an interview cited earlier, Alice Jahier had this to say on the matter:

I know that M.B. has almost never spoken about it because it was a terrible blow for her. And the last time I saw her she said something to me which I believe is true: I think my husband wanted to seduce her, and he did not succeed.

(Jahier, 1986, pp. 122–3)

Alice retained no ill feelings towards Marie Bonaparte, quite to the contrary. She was convinced that, thanks to the treatment that he began in 1928, the remaining years of his life had been much better as a whole than they would have been without psychoanalytic intervention.

Literature plays an important role in this story. In fact, writing is at the centre of this 'double analysis'. Valerio Jahier himself said he had a strong affinity with Zeno Cosini:

I too I had an analysis that was left high and dry ... And I have been living for a very long time with the belief that only success of a practical kind can save me and give me the moral security, the balance to which I aspire: Zeno Cosini's cure resulting from the effects of his commercial triumph could not fail to touch me.

(Letter from V. Jahier to I. Svevo dated 10/12/1927 [Svevo, 1978, p. 237])

In Svevo's novel, it is indeed not Zeno's analysis but the success of his business venture which helps him recover his health. Valerio Jahier, too, hoped to achieve professional success which would enable him to overcome his difficulties. Like Svevo, he was interested in psychoanalysis, but not for the same reasons. The author of Zeno certainly regrets not having done an analysis with Freud. He thinks that it would have helped him write a more 'complete' novel (Letter from Italo Svevo to Valerio Jahier dated 27 December 1927 [Jahier, 1955, p. 30]). But Svevo remains doubtful about the therapeutic virtues of the Freudian method. As for Valerio Jahier, he considers that psychoanalysis is foreign to art. Yet he nonetheless pursued his analysis relentlessly:

Basically, our positions are quite characteristic: you believe in the literary value of psychoanalysis and not much in its therapeutic value; I believe more in the therapeutic value and not in the literary value.

(Letter from V. Jahier to I. Svevo dated 25/01/1928 [Svevo, 1978, p. 245])

Valerio is not always so categorical. The Jahiers were, moreover, particularly sensitive to their psychoanalyst's interest in literature. On numerous occasions, they both attest that, as an analyst and writer, she gave considerable support to their literary creativity. Valerio referred to his literary tastes in his correspondence with Bonaparte. He thus suggested that she read Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and *The Fox*, "a short English novel by Lawrence" (Letter from A. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 12/08/1928, BNF). He told her that this last book was one of the rare cases in which psychoanalytic knowledge had been well employed by a writer. Naturally, Jahier also invited her to read *La Coscienza di Zeno*. But notwithstanding Valerio's intense liking for the book, Marie Bonaparte did not appreciate it. After Svevo's unexpected death, he wrote to his analyst about this:

About three weeks ago, I learnt of Svevo's death. I think this was the biggest sorrow of my life. The blurred impressions [sic] of psychoanalysis that are contained in *Zeno* probably prevented you from sensing the full importance of this work.

(Letter from A. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 10/10/1928, BNF) **9**

In a letter to Svevo's widow, Livia Schmiz, he wrote that he even had the impression he had lost his father (Gatt-Rutter, 1988, p. 359).

Valerio Jahier also discusses his wife's texts with the Princess. He is particularly enthusiastic for a short story that she has written which is called *The*

1 *Bath*. In the story, Alice takes a literary approach to the bodily relations
 2 between a mother and her child at wash time. Valerio also discusses with his
 3 analyst the progress of his wife's analysis: "I think that this text is equally
 4 very significant at the level of the analysis that has been done. It is perhaps
 5 the first experience of analysis in action in a work of art" (Letter from V.
 6 Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 04/06/1934, BNF). In this correspondence,
 7 psychoanalysis and art are interwoven to such a degree that they end up
 8 being confused. Marie Bonaparte had a large part to play in this because
 9 she gave Alice advice on some of her short stories and even suggested titles
 10 for them to her (Letter from A. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 03/11/1934,
 11 BNF). She sent her patient all her publications, including the most personal
 12 ones such as her *Cinq cahiers* (Letter from A. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated
 13 03/01/1940, BNF). The Princess of Greece also put Alice in contact with
 14 her editor friend, John Rodker (Letter from A. Jahier to M. Bonaparte
 15 dated 06/01/1945, BNF) and the writer Paul Morand (Letter from P. Mo-
 16 rand to M. Bonaparte dated 11/04/1935, BNF). In Valerio's and Alice's
 17 letters, the question of the 'desire to write' is mentioned on several occa-
 18 sions, a desire that comes and goes with the ups and downs of analysis.
 19 Alice's admiration for Bonaparte nonetheless had its limits. In the interview
 20 for *Frénésie*, she says that, even if the Princess of Greece was a very interest-
 21 ing person and in love with science, she was never a great writer. Another of
 22 Marie Bonaparte's female patients, Bethsabée de Rothschild, also sent her
 23 literary writings on several occasions to her analyst in order to have her
 24 opinion (Letter from B. de Rothschild to M. Bonaparte dated 1951, BNF).

25 The question of the relations between psychoanalysis and literature was in
 26 fact of particular interest to the Princess of Greece. In 1933, she published
 27 *Edgar Poe, sa vie, son oeuvre: étude analytique* (Bonaparte, 1933), which may
 28 be considered as her major work. It was certainly the book that had the
 29 most impact on her contemporaries (Amouroux, 2006). Stefan Zweig, for
 30 instance, wrote to the Princess to say that he had particularly liked this
 31 book:

32
 33 The book is absolutely convincing: we understand Poe's disaster as a necessity and
 34 not, as the Americans always want to portray it, as a case of misfortune.

35
 36 (Letter from S. Zweig to M. Bonaparte dated 20/06/1933, BNF)

37 Marie Bonaparte's interpretations, then, seem to have helped Zweig
 38 understand more clearly the reasons which led the genius Poe to sink into
 39 alcohol and madness. The writer Maurice Sachs, who spent some time on
 40 Allendy's couch, also seems to have been particularly receptive to this text.
 41 We are familiar with his terrible destiny (Raczimov, 1988). A writer who was
 42 close to Jean Cocteau and Max Jacob, Sachs had the reputation of being
 43 venal in character and not someone to associate with. He did not enjoy real
 44 literary success in his lifetime. As a 'Jewish collaborator', he emigrated to
 45 Germany in 1942 and became an agent of the Gestapo. He was finally
 46 imprisoned in Fülßbuttel and shot by the S.S. in April 1945. A few months
 47 later, one of his novels, *Le Sabbat* [The Sabbath] (Sachs, 1946) was
 48 published by Corrêa and became a formidable bookshop success.

1 In 1937 he wrote a long letter to Marie Bonaparte in which he expressed
2 his deep admiration for her. The story of the life of the American poet by
3 Marie Bonaparte resonated with certain aspects of his own history. In a
4 long letter, Sachs explained how he discovered in her text on Poe an almost
5 exact description of the periodical return of nervous troubles from which he
6 himself suffered:

7
8 Between these two terrible circles of dipsomaniac cyclothymia and one's own lack
9 of success, where one can know where is the cause and where the effect, how does
10 one live? How does one break the bad spell and find success, which is there but *out-* **10**
11 *side*? How does one even finish the book one has begun? Sometimes, I tell myself
12 that it is the present lack of success which brings about those withdrawals of despair
13 in which posthumous success is elaborated.

14 (Letter from M. Sachs to M. Bonaparte dated March 1937, BNF)

15 Sachs asked Marie Bonaparte what psychoanalysis could offer by way of
16 an answer to his own self-destructive madness. The mention of cyclothymia
17 may well have reminded Marie Bonaparte of her failure with Valerio Jahier,
18 who was to commit suicide two years later. Moreover, was not Jahier's experi-
19 ence of reading Zeno and Sachs's experience of reading Poe what Freud
20 called the *Unheimlich*? This uncanny feeling of strange familiarity in reading
21 literary works went as far as to seal their destinies. Valerio Jahier did not
22 benefit from his analysis any more than Zeno did, and Poe's descent into
23 hell very much inspired Maurice Sachs. Was it a case of one of those 'self-
24 fulfilling prophecies' of the performative power of the literary work or sim-
25 ply the attraction exerted by certain life-stories when they seem familiar? It
26 is difficult to know. At the very most, all we can say is that Marie Bona-
27 parte was a first-rate interpreter of the suffering of some of her contempo-
28 raries. When Sachs sought information about his disorders, his cyclothymia,
29 she asked her secretary to advise him to see a psychiatrist who was 'more
30 competent' in this domain (Letter from M. Bonaparte to A. Berman dated
31 30/04/1927, BNF). At that time, the Princess was still a 'young analyst'
32 whose fingers had been burnt by the difficulties encountered with Valerio Ja-
33 hier. She nonetheless offered to see him but he did not take up the offer. At
34 this period, things could not be going worse for him and he had the feeling
35 he was sinking into madness. Allendy sent him to a nursing home where he
36 was treated for alcohol addiction for several months. Three years later, he
37 wrote again to Marie Bonaparte, explaining to her why he had not been able
38 to visit her and asking her for help:

39
40 ... I don't know which resistance to everything that might have done me some good
41 prevented me (as strongly as chains) from accepting the audience that your Royal
42 Highness had kindly offered me. Since then, I have been getting by as best I can,
43 but have felt a bit calmer. [...] Mobilization and military life made me fall back
44 into my old ways. To drink or not to drink; to write or not to write; horror of one-
45 self; the pursuit of a soul about which one feels that the core is in the grips of a
46 horde of demons, etc. ... [...] It is at the end of a long period of despair that I am
47 writing to you, Madam. Can one ever escape the cycle? Escape falling back into the
48 worst aspects of oneself? I think you know what the true remedies are because you
are familiar with the misfortunes.

(Letter from M. Sachs to M. Bonaparte dated 08/01/1941, BNF)

In another letter, he sent her the manuscript of *Le Sabbat*, his future successful novel, in which he once again describes the ‘terrible circles’ of failure and alcohol. It would seem, as is suggested by a letter from Alice Jahier (Letter from A. Jahier to M. Bonaparte dated 24/06/1947, BNF), that she never read it. He was mobilized in Caen but then discharged on health grounds with the help of a medical certificate established by Allendy for ‘acute psychasthenia’, whereupon he returned to Paris. This time, he went to the appointment fixed for 8 April 1940 by the Princess of Greece. His correspondence with Marie Bonaparte ended at this date.

Conclusion

The analytic treatment of the Jahiers by Marie Bonaparte, a figure of the French movement, raises many questions. There is something troubling in this ‘couple’ analysis, in which Marie Bonaparte and Rudolph Loewenstein, who themselves were lovers, exchanged their patients under Freud’s supervision – and assent? And what are we to think of the fact that the Princess of Greece’s money not only permitted her to finance the movement but also – admittedly, to a much lesser extent – the treatment of her first ‘analysands’?

Marie Bonaparte’s analysis itself was not a model of orthodoxy either. Her very great closeness with Freud and his family, her taste for sexual surgery and her extraordinary destiny led her to be an ‘unconventional’ psychoanalyst. The rules for conducting analysis were, moreover, not completely fixed for the first disciples of the movement. These elements thus bear witness to the extraordinary diversity of practices amongst the first Freudians. Beyond the technical aspects, these fumbblings also show how much the enthusiasm of the pioneers of the movement was sometimes sorely tested. Marie Bonaparte, Valerio Jahier, Maurice Sachs – and even Zeno Cosini to a certain extent – were all confronted, more or less violently, with the therapeutic limits of psychoanalysis.

Translations of summary

Marie Bonaparte, ihre beiden ersten Patienten und die Welt der Literatur. Marie Bonaparte (1882–1962) spielte in der Entwicklung der Psychoanalyse in Frankreich eine entscheidende Rolle. Ihre klinische Tätigkeit ist wenig bekannt, jedoch war sie eine der ersten französischen Psychoanalytikerinnen. Die Schriftsteller Alice und Valerio Jahier waren die ersten beiden Patienten Bonapartes. Sie führte diese doppelte Analyse zusammen mit Rudolph Loewenstein (1898–1976) durch. Alice und Valerio tauschten ihre Analytiker bei mehreren Anlässen. Während seiner Analyse begann Valerio eine Korrespondenz mit Italo Svevo (1861–1928), dem Autor von *La Coscienza di Zeno*, der ihm seine Zweifel am therapeutischen Nutzen der Psychoanalyse mitteilte. Valerio beschrieb seine schwierige Analyse in seinen Briefen an Svevo. Bonaparte konsultierte Freud zu dieser Problematik, war aber nicht in der Lage, Valerios Selbstmord im Jahr 1939 zu verhindern. Die Prinzessin von Griechenland ermutigte Alice, ihren Beruf als Schriftstellerin auszuüben und ermöglichte ihr, von ihren Beziehungen zu literarischen Kreisen zu profitieren. Am Rande dieser nicht publizierten Geschichte der beiden Analysen, die auf kürzlich zugänglich gemachten Archivdokumenten beruht, entdeckten wir die Bedeutung der Verbindungen, die um Marie Bonaparte herum zwischen der Psychoanalyse und der Welt der Literatur entstanden. Außer auf Italo Svevo stießen wir auch auf den beißenden Schriftsteller Maurice Sachs sowie den berühmten Romanschriftsteller Stefan Zweig.

Marie Bonaparte, sus dos primeros pacientes y el mundo de la literatura. Marie Bonaparte (1882–1962) jugó un papel esencial en la evolución del psicoanálisis en Francia. Su actividad clínica no es muy cono-

cida, pero fue una de las primeras psicoanalistas francesas. Los periodistas y escritores Alice y Valerio Jahier fueron los dos primeros pacientes de Bonaparte. Ésta llevó adelante este doble análisis junto con Rudolph Loewenstein (1898–1976). Alice y Valerio intercambiaron analistas en varias ocasiones. Durante su análisis, Valerio comenzó a escribirse con Italo Svevo (1861–1928), autor de *La Coscienza di Zeno* [La conciencia de Zeno], quien le expresó sus dudas acerca de las bondades terapéuticas del psicoanálisis. En sus cartas a Svevo, Valerio describió su difícil análisis. Bonaparte consultó con Freud acerca de este paciente, pero no pudo prevenir el suicidio de Valerio en 1939. La Princesa de Grecia alentó a Alice en su vocación de escritora y le permitió beneficiarse de sus conexiones en los círculos literarios. En los márgenes de este relato inédito acerca de los dos análisis, basado en documentos de disponibilidad reciente, descubrimos la importancia de los nexos que se formaron – a través de Marie Bonaparte – entre psicoanálisis y literatura. Además de Svevo, nos encontramos con el mordaz escritor Maurice Sachs y el famoso novelista Stefan Zweig.

Marie Bonaparte (1882–1962) a joué un rôle capital dans le développement de la psychanalyse en France. Son activité clinique est quant à elle totalement méconnue. C'est pourtant l'une des toutes premières femmes psychanalystes françaises. Les journalistes et écrivains Alice et Valerio Jahier furent ses deux premiers patients. Marie Bonaparte mena cette double cure avec Rudolph Loewenstein (1898–1976). Ils s'échangèrent en effet Alice et Valerio à plusieurs reprises sur leurs divans respectifs. Pendant son analyse Valerio entreprit une correspondance avec Italo Svevo (1861–1928) où l'auteur de *La Coscienza di Zeno* lui fit part de ses doutes sur les vertus thérapeutiques de la psychanalyse. Valerio lui décrivit en retour le déroulement de sa cure qui se révéla particulièrement difficile. Bonaparte consulta Freud à son sujet, mais ne put l'empêcher de se suicider en 1939. La princesse de Grèce encouragea Alice dans sa vocation d'écrivain et lui fit bénéficier de ses relations dans les milieux littéraires. En marge du récit inédit de ces deux cures qui s'appuie sur des documents d'archives récemment mis à jours, on découvre l'importance des liens qui se tissent – autour de Marie Bonaparte – entre psychanalyse et littérature. Outre Italo Svevo, on y croise l'écrivain sulfureux Maurice Sachs ou encore le célèbre nouvelliste Stefan Zweig.

Marie Bonaparte, i suoi due primi pazienti e il mondo letterario. Marie Bonaparte (1882–1962) ebbe un ruolo complesso nello sviluppo della psicanalisi in Francia. La sua attività clinica non è ben conosciuta, tuttavia ella fu una della prime psicanaliste donne. I giornalisti–scrittori Alice e Valerio Jahier furono i primi due pazienti della Bonaparte. Ella condusse questa doppia analisi con Rudolph Loewenstein (1898–1976). In diverse occasioni Alice e Valerio si scambiarono gli analisti. Durante l'analisi, Valerio iniziò una corrispondenza con Italo Svevo (1861–1928), l'autore de *La coscienza di Zeno*, che gli rivelò i suoi dubbi circa i meriti terapeutici della psicanalisi. Nelle sue lettere a Svevo, Valerio gli descrisse la sua difficile analisi. In merito, la Bonaparte consultò Freud, ma non fu in grado di impedire il suicidio di Valerio nel 1939. La principessa di Grecia incoraggiò Alice a seguire la sua vocazione di scrittrice e le permise di trarre vantaggio dalle sue conoscenze nei circoli letterari. Ai margini della storia inedita di queste due analisi – storia basata su documenti d'archivio recentemente resi disponibili – veniamo a conoscenza dell'importanza dei legami che si formarono intorno a Marie Bonaparte tra psicanalisi e letteratura. Oltre a Italo Svevo, c'imbattiamo nello sferzante autore Maurice Sachs, così come nel famoso romanziere Stefan Zweig.

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