

Zsafia, Szekely

EDITORIAL – WHAT DOES THE MOTHER WANT? Imágó Budapest
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In this issue, we pursue the theme of perinatal psychoanalysis. Interestingly, when we begin to talk about mothers and maternal experience, the intense period around the birth of the child is very strongly represented - the understanding of the maternal experience cannot be separated from the initial mother-baby unit. The question 'what does the baby want' is as relevant as the question 'what does the mother want' - of course we cannot always talk about both at the same time, so let us immerse ourselves in understanding the mother experience. For at least a hundred years psychoanalytic thought has been preoccupied with the question of what the woman wants, following the legacy of Freud, but we never seem to have asked the question, 'What does the mother want? In this issue, we paraphrase Freud's famous question and try to explore the mother's perspective in psychoanalysis.

An important starting point is the issue 2022/4 of Imágó Budapest, in which we explored the topic of birth and childbirth², and now we will try to continue the reflection started then. A little history is also part of the theme of this issue. At the 2018 Ferenczi conference in Florence³, we met Julianna Vamos and Ornella Piccini, two of the authors of this issue. In three different places, with three different psychoanalytic interests, we turned to the same topic: the psychoanalytic understanding of the perinatal period. Our lecture panel was successful and attuned to each other, without us having known each other before - we were bound together by our passion for the subject and our own experiences of motherhood. We therefore agreed to continue. One of the most important connecting threads was clearly the work of Sándor Ferenczi, so in January 2019 we held the first meeting and discussion of the Birth Study Group⁴, hosted by the Ferenczi House

¹ <https://imagobudapest.hu/2024-1/> for English summaries see <https://imagobudapest.hu/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/12-Summaries.pdf>

² <https://imagobudapest.hu/szules/> for English summaries see <https://imagobudapest.hu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/11-Summaries.pdf>

³ <https://www.sandorferenczi.org/conferences/past-international-ferenczi-conferences/> for all the late conferences see <https://www.sandorferenczi.org/conferences/past-international-ferenczi-conferences/>

⁴ Other participants were Andrea Andrek psychologist, Júlia Frigyes psychiatrist, Ágnes Geréb midwife, obstetrician-gynecologist, psychologist, Zsuzsa Formanek psychologist, perinatal counsellor, Julianna Novák

in Budapest, thanks to the kind offer of Judit Mészáros. We had a lot of questions, which are reflected in the texts included in this issue:

We consider it very important to link psychoanalysis and birth, at the broadest hermeneutical and at the narrowest individual levels. This idea provides the common knowledge and starting point for our contribution to research, discovery and understanding.

The writings and work of Sándor Ferenczi: his theories and practice influence our thoughts and working experiences of birth and childbirth.

Our attention was caught by the contrast between theoretical ideas and raw reality, as if it were forbidden to think about issues related to physical reality, but at the same time there is the other extreme: the danger of overthinking, over-analysing, of forced philosophy.

It is important to define what birth trauma is (for the newborn and the mother) and can life begin without trauma?

We are committed to putting thinking about birth into the context of social processes. It is important to bear in mind that when we study modern, civilised, western man, we are only 'studying ourselves' - as being modern, civilised, western man - but nature 'knows something'.

With a thousand activities, a thousand interests, the small group picks up again and again the thread to approach and understand the birth period, to think about the problems and questions in a sensitive way. As time has gone by, a new name has emerged, perhaps a better one in psychoanalytic circles: we can define ourselves as perinatalists, perinatal psychoanalysts.

So in this issue we continue the enriching collaboration of perinatalists - for want of a better word, perhaps *perinatal psychoanalysts* - and in this spirit we have created the 'What does the mother want?' issue. Our intention was to create a welcoming, nurturing environment for innovating, inspiring thinkers with different experiences, different interests, different perspectives - whether they were pioneering fresh ideas in the past - Sándor Ferenczi, György Hidas, Jenő Raffai - or are doing so in the present. In the papers, the notions of attachment and our relationship to trauma recur, different perspectives emerge, and interesting contributions are made to their role in perinatal psychoanalysis.

doula, perinatal counsellor, Ferenc Erős social psychologist, Maria-Lucrezia Gazdia psychoanalyst (Florence). Carlo Bonomi, representing ISFN, heartily supported the initiative.

In our Essays column, we present three fascinating psychoanalytic reflections. Ornella Piccini, a psychoanalyst from Florence, deals with maternal pleasure, illustrating her therapeutic experience with a case vignette. She reaches a thought-provoking conclusion about the psychoanalytic conception of motherhood: *"The mother's physical pleasure thus plays a role in her relationship with the infant, without necessarily being a narcissistic trait or a substitute for the missing phallus."* Following in Ferenczi's footsteps, she also raises important therapeutic questions: *'Is motherhood just a matter of internal conflicts, fantasies, identification processes, etc.? Or do we need to broaden our perspective and consider that motherhood has many real obstacles to overcome?'*

Mariann Ita's study tries to explore maternal ambivalent feelings from a new perspective, which is also a long known and discussed topic in psychoanalysis. *"The problem statement is deliberately provocative in that it argues that the early, school-forming theorists of psychoanalysis were unable to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding maternal ambivalent feelings because they themselves were caught up in the reproductive cycle of idealising motherhood in a variety of socially imposed patterns."* Of particular interest in this study is the work of Rozsika Parker, a psychoanalyst who is perhaps little known in our country. Among psychoanalysts, she was the first to recognise the connection between maternal ambivalence and the idealising logics and ideologies of motherhood. According to Mariann Ita, Rozsika Parker's work represents a pioneering theory that goes far beyond her time and is still valid today.

The third study, by Victoria Clarke, looks at mothers in a specific situation, the two-mother family. In this study review, we read that psychological research on lesbian mothers has, until recently, remained completely immune to feminist concerns; however, the majority of research on lesbian mothers outside psychology shows a strong feminist influence. At the same time, the majority of feminist research on motherhood continues to assume a generic heterosexual woman, and lesbian mothers rarely occupy even a token role. This article (combining feminist and psychological research) provides a feminist critical psychological reading of the psychological literature on lesbian motherhood and traces the development of the category of 'lesbian parent' within psychology.

In our Workshop column, you can read two in-depth and exciting texts, a lecture and a psychobiographical study. Both texts allow us to follow the personal reflections of the author, and offer eloquent examples of psychoanalytic thought,

understanding and experience. Julianna Vamos's paper, presented at last year's international conference celebrating Ferenczi's 150th birthday⁵, provides a (re)interpretive reading of Thalassa (1924). The author clarifies some important misunderstandings in her lecture, and considers it important to reinterpret psychoanalytic notions of trauma, helplessness, language disorder in the light of perinatal clinical experience. She stresses the importance of "*calm, peaceful and thalassic oceanic states*". Her reflections are supported by artistic means, and a short video installation allows us, as readers, to immerse ourselves in the psychoanalytic experience of the mother-child unit:

*"In the aquatic world of Antonella Bussanich, these babies enchant us, we can immerse ourselves in the beauty of their movements and their eyes. Freed from gravity, all their senses awake, so to speak, these babies show us a tolerable lightness (of being), tolerable precisely because it reminds us of the original fetal life."*⁶

The presentation has the further merit of linking Emmi Pikler's work as a paediatrician with psychoanalytic knowledge.⁷ Emmi Pikler, like many of her contemporaries, started from her observations of infants and makes a very simple but all the more important point: she considers it of paramount importance that the infant should discover as much as possible about the world and him- or herself on his/her own. The infant who discovers him/herself and the world through independent experimentation will acquire radically different knowledge from the infant who is given a ready-made solution. This reflection colours our way of thinking about the mother's position, her role and even her identity.

Psychologist Enikő Nagy analyses the life and paintings of Egon Schiele, specifically through his relationship to motherhood. The author also attempts to show the multiple determinate networks of femininity and the relationship with women in relation to motherhood. The relationship and conflicts with the mother, as well as the resolution of these, the separation and the relationship with the couple, are crucial moments in all our lives and are therefore recurrent themes in psychology and psychoanalysis. The research question is: "*How did the portrayal of the mother in Egon Schiele's work evolve from late adolescence to his death?*"

⁵ <https://ferenczisandor.hu/en/final-program-available-ferenczi150-conference/> and https://ferenczisandor.hu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/FINALprogram_Ferenczi150_A4-2.pdf

⁶ <https://www.antonellabussanich.it/premier-regard/>

⁷ <https://piklerinternational.com/fr/> and <https://www.pikler.hu/pikler-emmi> (Hungarian)

In our Archives column we remember Jenő Raffai, on the 70th anniversary of his birth, with the help of Dr. Ágnes Somkövi, the most important representative of the school of relationship analysis, mother-infant relationship analyst and trainer. In her translation, we introduce an unpublished lecture by Jenő Raffai, originally delivered in German and later published in a German-language perinatal textbook. Jenő Raffai's clinical experience has led him to discover interesting connections and, as a good theoretician, he has introduced new concepts that greatly facilitate our understanding of the complex and intricate system of the mother-child unit. *"Some mothers, who were dependent on their parents, experienced bleeding following a parental conflict, but not others. We needed a more differentiated approach. We looked at the psychodynamics of bleeding mothers and mothers without complications. Substantial differences emerged, and at the same time we formulated a major discovery in relationship analysis, which we called the multigenerational intrauterine space. This means that the baby lives in the womb in a complex system of relationships, influenced not only by its parents but also by its grandparents, sometimes directly, sometimes not. Their influence can be stronger than that of their own parents."*

The legacy of György Hidas is carried on by his students, Jenő Raffai shared his thoughts and questions with him, both of them were very interested in the pre- and perinatal period, and together they developed the mother-fetus relationship analysis⁸. Both of them have become important figures in the Hungarian pre- and perinatal scientific life. The task of the preventive method based on analytical principles, as we read in the interview, is *"to screen the soul of the mother-to-be, to help her to resolve any conflicts and problematic relationships related to her pregnancy. Help her to establish, develop and harmonise her natural relationship with her unborn child and her womb, and help her to prepare both the foetus and the mother psychologically for the birth."*

Dr. Ágnes Somkövi (doctor, mother-fetus relationship analyst and trainer, heir to the legacy of Dr. Jenő Raffai) and Dr. Éva Hadházi (psychologist, mother-fetus relationship analyst and trainer, Hidas student), were interviewed by Dóra Kelecsényi in an exciting and enlightening interview.

In our Reviews section, Vera Békés gives a book review of Lilla Krász's recent book – Birth and Motherhood in Hungary between the 16th and 20th centuries. Among other things, she seeks to answer the question "How did women of the past centuries live the elementary experiences of conception, pregnancy,

⁸ The work of György Hidas was commemorated in the Birth Issue. <https://imagobudapest.hu/szules/>

childbirth, childbed, breastfeeding and feeding? What concrete and mysterious signs and bodily changes did they perceive and how did they interpret them? How and under what circumstances did they give birth to their child?" A very enlightening and inspiring perspective on our subject, an interdisciplinary approach that further enriches our knowledge of motherhood.

How interesting that the closed world of the womb reflects the vastness of a whole universe, but this interconnectedness does not disappear with the coming of the world, it remains a feature of the mother-child unit, at least during the first year of life. Perinatalists, psychoanalysts and relationship analysts have been researching the nature and changes of this ecosystem, which was initially primarily biological and later became increasingly psychological. They become participant-observers of the situation, and the whole universe of the patient (not to mention that of the analyst) is turned around in the closed micro-environment of the psychoanalytic space.

Our intention was to seek reflections on the maternal experience not from the outside, but from the inside, understanding it in relation to itself, and we have composed the issue accordingly. The mother's own -unique- story, her personality, her joy, her reverie, her ambivalence are part of her subjective experience: one could say that we are discussing the phenomenology of motherhood, without focusing on the function of motherhood. Our collection of contributions is also intermodal - video installations and paintings help us to enter into the experience of motherhood through the mediation of different participants - children, men (sons, fathers and knowledgeable men). It is not by chance that psychoanalysis is linked to art and cultural anthropology - it is interested in everything that is human, as the study of human art opens up new possibilities for interpretation. The articles themselves are of different genres - beyond the studies, we can gain insights into the minds of psychoanalysts, explore with them the issues that interest them, and perhaps incorporate new and enriching experiences into our own relationship with our own motherhood – with our own mothers.

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The author is health psychologist, assistant professor at ELTE University Budapest, holds a PhD in theoretical psychoanalysis.