



Representations of mother-child relationships in Adolf Fényes' (1867–1945) paintings

Hungarian Educational Research Journal
2017, Vol. 7(2) 192–208
© The Author(s) 2017
<http://herj.lib.unideb.hu>
Debrecen University Press



Renátó Támba⁴⁴

DOI:10.14413/HERJ/7/2/12

Abstract

In the Hungarian pedagogical literature only few studies deal with the pedagogical analysis of paintings whose theme is childhood, except for Béla Pukánszky's (2001), Katalin Péter's (1996) and Orsolya Endrődy-Nagy's (2010, 2013) studies. In this study I make an attempt to follow these researchers' approach as the subject of my article is the representation of mother-child relationships in Adolf Fényes' (1867–1945) paintings. My aim is to demonstrate the concept and perception of children in archaic peasant societies by highlighting main motifs, sentiments, attitudes, and ideas (Panofsky, 2011, pp. 254–257) in the paintings, presenting several aspects of everyday life (Goffman, 1999) for analysis. My conclusions verify the theory of "archaic love" (Bálint, 1941), the mother-child relationship as a sociobiological category (continuity theory – Pollock, 1998, pp. 176–210), the idea of a "protector, guardian mother," and the perception of the "helpless child".

Keywords: Child-rearing, concept of and perception of children in archaic peasant societies, mother-child relationship, iconography and iconology, visual sociology, Adolf Fényes

⁴⁴ University of Debrecen, Hungary, trenato87@gmail.com

Introduction

The present study examines the concept and perception of children in the peasant society of Adolf Fényes' paintings. The paintings express the nuances and very sensitive micro-moments of everyday life and mentality at the turn of the 19-20th century. Consequently, the visual representation of childhood differs from the image and perception of childhood, which is shown by ethnographic literature. This difference is due to artistic partiality and individual vision from aesthetic viewpoints, and these are manifested by compositional aspects. Because of the relation between the aesthetic, stylistic, content, and ideological approaches, the compositional analysis (the preiconographic description – see: Panofsky, 2011a-b) contributes to expressing the forms of social consciousness, ideas of a society or community, and educational attitudes. In my paper I emphasise modalities of the presentation of everyday life and a micro-society with the help of visible forms of artistic expression, therefore I analyse Fényes' artworks on the basis of the Panofsky-model [1955] (2011a-b) from the physical and expressive range to the iconological interpretation (synthesis).

The aim of my wider research is to identify and interpret the concept of children, child perception, and ties between mothers and children in the later period of dualism in the representations of children of the Alföld School (Art Colonies in Alföld, especially Szolnok and Hódmezővásárhely). My intention is to examine the typical forms of social consciousness and experiences in everyday life, the ideas and ideals about humans, the social aims and values in education of this age in peasant societies. Through my research I wish to create a more differentiated and nuanced picture about the childhood and concept of children of this period, since I believe this endeavour can shed light on some sensitive micro-moments of mentality and ideas of a given epoch through picture analyses.

The analyses of the historical iconography of childhood, pedagogical conceptions, and child ideological effects (influences) behind the surface of social interactions render interpretation and identification possible; this is an important novelty in the history of childhood. In this discipline, researchers have analyzed pictures for the purpose of certificating a created theory, but in my research the picture is only the starting point, and my aim is to arrive at textual contexts carried by the image from the sight of the painting. In my thesis, I attempt to establish, form, and apply the basic concepts of children and child perception and in my analysis I use the systematic guide and summary table in my dissertation of iconographic analyses in childhood history, but in my paper I do not show that because of length limits. Furthermore, I integrate ethnographic information into educational research and that is a new tendency, too. The representation of mother-child relationship and mother's love is more typical in paintings than in literature and we cannot recognize the discipline of educating to harsh life, which is a typical category in ethnographic literature. At the same time, I recognize many parallels between these ideas about motherhood of Fényes' paintings and

anthropological features of Madonna-iconography, which is a new direction in my research.

Methodological frameworks

Artwork is a medium for contemplation that inspires one to admire it and our world but at the same time it incessantly makes one ask questions. Consequently, the viewer is not just a viewer, but also the reader and interpreter of drawings, paintings, or sculptures. We dwell upon the work of art, and we move away from the commonplaces and our preconceptions; so contemplation enables reflective thinking and self-reflection (Gadamer, 1997). During the reading of a painting we are trying to establish the meaning of the artwork, the painting penetrates our mind, and this process puts our perspectives, beliefs, attitudes, literacy, and patience to the test (Gadamer, 1997).

Reading and interpreting pictures is active work, which includes colorimetric analysis, collecting motifs and – especially – assortment, and because of this, the viewer selects the main aspects and viewpoints during the process of analysis and interpretation. Thus, reading a picture is more complex than simple content description or formal analysis, as it also includes interpretation and during this process, we transplant the complex meanings of the artwork in our language. In the research, the focus is the history of childhood and the results are set within the scope of the discipline.

As stated above, according to Gadamer, the analysis of an artwork is like reading, since if we want to understand a painting or a drawing, first of all we need to spell it out, and after that we get closer and closer to capturing the essence of the artwork (Gadamer, 1994). During this research we apply an improved version of the *Panofsky* model by Ulrike Mietzner and Ulrike Pilarczyk (2013). In this variation the first level is the pre-iconographical (formal) analysis, which entails the definition of the elements of composition (e.g., line, shape, form, space, colour, light, repetition, point of view, texture). The second level is the iconographical description, which means the identification of the theme, subject, date of creation, technique of the image and we review the relevant biographical information. The third level is the iconographical interpretation, when the definition and systematization of the deep-rooted motifs, symbols and the image, the conceptions which influence the creation process are interpreted. During this process we need to survey, explain, and interpret the confessions and opinions about the artwork – or an artistic period – which are written by the painter of the image or the painter's acquaintances or contemporary and later art historians, critics, aestheticians. The fourth level is the iconological interpretation (or iconological synthesis), which entails understanding of essence of the image, and the allegorical meanings also need to be interpreted (Mietzner & Pilarczyk, 2013). Respectively, iconography includes description, classification (sorting), systematization and analysis (Marosi, 1985), examination of the theme and subject of the painting (Réau, 1986), but iconology means we take (interpret) the picture as a document, which is part of the social consciousness, thus sentiments, attitudes, forms of behaviour, ideas in the

image (Géczi, 2010) can be recorded and identified. The aim of iconology is to define the intellectual history, mentality and socio-historical context and meanings (etc.) of the artworks, therefore we can get closer to the history of civilization, the history of ideas, religious sentiments, social, cultural and political structures and realities, the history of mentality, everyday life or childhood (Marosi, 1985). Accordingly, we take the painting as a medium of the forms of social consciousness and experience as well as a product of a long learning process for the artist, which is not free of artistic, social and moral traditions and conventions (Schneider, n. d.).

Our method can be complemented with the analysis criteria of *Piotr Sztompka*, which are concerned with social life (everyday life). These considerations make our analyses more articulated and relevant to our childhood history research. According to Sztompka, observes the characteristics of the human individuals (body language, facial expressions, posture, gestures, costume elements, coiffure), children's activities (rituals, routines, ceremonies), social interactions (relationships, contacts, chat), the aspects of children's activities (the partners' spatial location, status, social competencies), communities and community actions (aims, rhythm of activities) and the manifestations of a culture (financial goods, symbols, the characteristics of using space, the iconographic signs of prohibitions and commands) (*Sztompka, 2009*) in the images. This method is for photo analysis, but it can also be used to analyse paintings and we use his standpoint in our analysis. Nevertheless, our method includes some reconsiderations of the dramaturgical concept of Goffman (1999); visual communication, visual anthropology and hermeneutics.

In the following, I will analyse Adolf Fényes' paintings. In the socio-historical analysis, I will also emphasise the aspects of visual communication because these often highlight the iconographic meanings.

Mother-child relationship in the archaic peasant society

In the archaic peasant communities people remembered their childhood with love and nostalgia. The mother often sang, told her baby rhymes, lulled the child by telling a tale or rocking him or her. Therefore the child felt safe and taken care of. Although the parents saved on love, especially in case of older children, according to the principle of "*raising for harsh life*", the child knew his/her mother loved him/her, namely her gestures, moves, motions, kisses and praises suggested love and care (Csekő, 2000).

The connection between mother and her child was really strong in the first years, which, as a result, is named the period of "*archaic love*" by Alice Bálint (1941). At this time the mother and child were attuned to each other by their instincts and needs. At the same time the mother could not be with her baby all the time (because of her agricultural working duty), but she could carry her child to the field and she could take her child to the "*ringafa*" ("*rocking tree*") or another apparatus, where the child was safe.

The signs of maternal love and care, the protective, vindicatory attitude were the superstitions and beliefs, which were connected to the period of the first months after birth; these are really instructive for researchers of the childhood history, concerning the concept of children. Women were worried for their children, they kept their babies by their side because they wanted to care for and defend them from witches and wicked ghosts (Tátrai, 1997, Fügedi, 1988). For instance, in Padrag, in Veszprém county, the baby was to stay on his/her mother's side in bed, until the christening because the mother wanted to defend her baby from maleficent powers and demons, which vitiate children. The peasants confirmed the maternal protection by much superstitious practice; for example, they stitched a chaplet to the swathing and above the mother's bed, red tape or pearl knitting on the baby's wrist kept away the demons from children too, so demons could not harm the baby (Lackovits, 1980, see also: Vasas, 1993). These peasants also sanctified the bed until christening every evening, after birth they curtained the windows to stop the "bad" (ghosts and demons) (Lackovits, 1980). There was an interesting superstition (or "rule") in Kalotaszeg, which warned against sitting on the bed of the mother lying in, otherwise her milk will dry up ("*they take her milk*" – see: Vasas, 1993). Nevertheless many superstitions verify that peasants took childhood really seriously and they realised its value, therefore they tried to create and grant the safety and the well-being of the baby's life (see also: Vasas, 1993).

As stated above, mother and child were attuned to each other, but after the child became "omnivorous" and stronger, the period of the separation started. This separation was not easy. The mother put a brush on her breast and the brush stung the child's nose. During this time she warned him/her: "*The banka⁴⁵ is there, it bites you*" (Gazda, 1980).

The mother hastened the separation because she was occupied with agricultural work (Gazda, 1980, p. 35) but sometimes breastfed her baby until her breast-milk dried up, since peasants thought that breast-milk made babies stronger (Bodovics, 2011). Nevertheless, after separation the mother could not always stay with her baby, therefore an elder sister/brother or the grandparents took care for him/her (Csekő, 2000, Sz. Morvay, 1956). Sometimes the mother took her baby to the field, sometimes she carried her baby on her lap or in a sheet that was fixed on the mother's back, like in *Városlőd* (Lackovits, 1980).

In archaic agricultural societies, mothers lived in a more secure and calm environment than urban mothers, therefore their children were more tranquil and they cried less than urban kids in towns (Vasas, 1993). On the other hand, adults regarded the child as a passive factor (regarding the peasants' concept of children); in this way, movement restriction (close swathing, lashing in the cradle, "*ülcsi*", "*állóka*" – "*resistant chair*") was widespread, so cooperation with children was not typical in the peasant communities (Fügedi, 1988). In this regard changes were not implemented before the 1930s (Lackovits, 1980). Mothers covered their new-borns with soft clothes, kitchen aprons

⁴⁵ *Banka*: imaginary monster, kidnapper creature in Hungarian folklore (Gazda, 1980).

and sheets in order to prevent the baby from disturbing them (Lackovits, 1980). Nevertheless, in Esztelnek a six-week-old child was sometimes restrained during the night but sometimes it was limited for eight months (Gazda, 1980).

As mentioned above, in the archaic peasant society it was typical to educate children for the harsh life; the early separation and the lack of expressing love served an educational purpose. Ethnographic literature does not emphasize the importance of love but refers to concerns about babies (superstitions and beliefs) and makes the power of love-connection clear. The mother's love is not presented directly but the visual representations of the mother-child relationship make emotion in contrast to the discipline of educating for the harsh life clear (see ethnographic literature). In the following, I examine Adolf Fényes' paintings which show the mother's love. My aim is to explore the pedagogical attitudes of mothers and the main ways of how children are conceptualised and perceived through these images.

Representation of mother-child relationships in Adolf Fényes' (1867-1945) paintings from 1898 to 1903

His acquaintances knew *Adolf Fényes* as a reserved and lonely man but he was also communicative and deeply humane. He kept himself away from excitements, agitations and socialist thinking but he was interested in the representation of peasants and agricultural workers even before he left the academy (e. g. „*Bickering*” – „*Cívódás*”, 1896) (Bálintné Hegyesi [ed.], 1992). In 1898 he began to paint a cycle, entitled „*Poor People's Life*,” with great masterpieces, such as. „*Day labourer*” („*Napszámos*”, 1900, oil on canvas, 100 x 80 cm) and „*Lunch*” („*Ebéd*”, 1902, oil on canvas, 138 x 165 cm). *Munkácsy* painted the „*Strike*” („*Sztrájk*”, 1895, oil on canvas, 159 x 251,5 cm), *Károly Kernstok* created the „*Agitator in the canteen of the factory*” („*Agitátor a gyár kantinjában*”, 1897, oil on canvas, 169 x 220 cm). *Imre Révész* made the „*Panem!*” („*Kenyeret!*”, 1899, oil on canvas, 184 x 225 cm) and *Sándor Bihari* painted the „*Programmbeszéd*” (1891, oil on canvas, 75 x 127,3 cm) (Oelmacher, 1970) in this period.

In these pictures the rhetorical phrases of social movements of the age can be recognized and these artworks arouse compassion for poor people. We can feel the atmosphere of destitution and deprivation in this dark, dramatic, gloomy atmosphere through passive-meditative paintings (Végyvári, 1952). At this time, Fényes' painting was inspired by *Mihály Munkácsy*, but the seventeenth century Dutch and Spanish painting also influenced his pictures (Révész, 2014, Németh, 1972). In this way, his style was born with a humane approach, but the „*Arme-Leute-Malerei*” and naturalism (*Zorn, Bastida*) also influenced his artworks (Hornyik, n. d.).

Family

Fényes said about himself that he created his own pictures more like a human than an artist, and he wanted to shake up the conscience of the wealthy public (Németh, 1972). With his artworks he demanded respect and appreciation for the poor and he showed the burden of the exploited. The public received Fényes' images appalled and alarmed but some critics presented and cheered him as a master of combatant socialism, like apropos of the *"Family"* (*"Család"*, 1898; figure 1). According to Károly Lyka, this painting opened the series of paintings for which critics presented Fényes as a *"socialist apostle"* (Lyka, 1905). However, in this image the emphasis is on the drawing and colour, and the proletarian is not in the focus, as the aim of his painting was to express something briefly, concisely and succinctly (Lyka, 1905). The *"Family"* is a dark interior-picture with brownish tones and red base; the warm tints and the chiaroscuro are important stylistic details too, like in the painting of Velázquez, Rembrandt and Hals, whom Fényes followed.



Figure 1. Adolf Fényes: *"Family"* (*"Család"*), 1898

We are in a closed, muggy peasant room with subdued light (Lyka, 1905) that highlights the mother's face, hands and the baby's cranium, which makes the characters more statuesque and emphatic. The characters are outlined and accentuated by *"soft stages of the shadows and half-shadows"* (Lyka, 1905). This picture is calmer and more moderate than *"Bickering"* (*"Cívódás"*, 1896) or *"Why do you live?"* (*"Miért éltek?"*, 1900), which are influenced by the effect of the academic genre-realism of the turn of 19-20th century; the moves and gestures of characters are less vehement, the proportions are less excessive and the characters are authentic, true and restrained. Nevertheless, we can feel the conflict that rests in the air, bitterly stifled but we can feel calmness too, which stems

from the love that the child feels towards his/her mother (Lyka, 1905). The mother's character extends to the foreground, thus it looks monumental. In this way the problem of motherhood comes to the front. The mother is rocking and cuddling his baby, who is muffled and maybe she is singing him/her to sleep. The father is sitting on a chair; he is folding his hands and watching his wife inquiringly.

We can set this picture against the "*Proletarian Madonna*" ("*Proletár Madonna*", 1938) by photographer, *Károly Escher*. What *Károly Escher* said about his own photo, can be claimed about this painting too: it is like an "*indictment*" "*against the unconscionable people and irresponsible society*" (Albertini, 2002). In these pictures the mother cherishes, guards her baby as key to the future; elemental emotions and ancient instincts connect mother and child to each other. We can associate it with the theory of Linda Pollock (1998), which argues that the mother-child relationship is not a historical but a biological category, since the defenceless baby needs help in everything, and his/her parents care for their infant. But regarding the "*Family*" we can refer to the statement of *Margaret Mahler*, since according to her, in this period the mother and the child are in a "*dual union*" with each other (Vajda & Kósa, 2005).

In the "*Family*" humaneness, love and togetherness dominate the family instead of deprivation and misery; these factors make the peasant families and communities stronger and indestructible. The picture shows a fragment of the family's life and because of that – and the *chiaroscuro* – this artwork is a great example of the "wise silence" and proverbial terseness (Lyka, 1905). This fragment of life does not explore the injustices of society in detail like the realists but the image expresses the atmosphere of deprived people provocatively and tragically. In any case, the aim is not editing-related, continuous stories like in realism but drafting a "*piece of life*" in detail and objectively like in naturalism, expressing the instincts of the indigent people (Czine, 1979). However, Adolf Fényes did not realize the bare documentarism and extreme objectivism of *Émile Zola* (Zoltai, 1997, Zola, 1979) because he was a humanist, who expressed his sympathy and empathy on his paintings. Nevertheless, this painting is influenced by the effect of the "*Arme-Leute-Malerei*" and French and Belgian naturalism but we can also recognize and state the compositional elements (*chiaroscuro*, technique, colorit, brushwork, quiet and emotionally charged composition) of the 17th-century as well as contemporary Dutch realism (*Rembrandt, Joseph Israëls*) and the Spanish instantism (or realism – *Velázquez*) (Révész, 2014).

When talking about childhood, the historical analysis of the examined picture tells us that according to the artist's suggestion the mother is protecting and patronizing her child like a proletarian Madonna, and due to this parallel, the mother's love (see: Pollock, 1998) is independent of ages and eras, and in this case the Madonna-parallel confirms the universal life motive. The child is surrounded by concerns about his fate and well-being while he is about to face hardship too. The mother's love is manifested and intertwined with agony, emotional stress, misery and a source of conflict, all of which is

presented on the canvas. Thus, we feel the stress caused by poverty but the family's love can overcome it.

We do not know much about Fényes' upbringing or childhood. He grew up in a wealthy bourgeois family, therefore he had no experiences regarding poverty but his lonely humanism suggested painting life of the poor. Anna Oelmacher said that deep and sincere love was the main aspect of life in Fényes' family but this statement could be a typical socialist phrase (Oelmacher, 1970). Fényes was a quiet, solitary, contemplative man whose inclination to observation was associated with his sensitivity, acquired through his lonely lifestyle, which evolved into social sensitivity and maybe his humanity that he learned by his family. This kind of humanism is presented in the painting "*Mother*," too. That picture is starker and more pessimistic than the "*Family*", but the law of the mother's love is identifiable in this image too; it is associated with the anthropological features of Maria Humilitatis (an iconographical type of image) the mother's attitude towards children.

Mother

"*Mother*" was also painted in Fényes' dark, gloomy period (1898-1903; 1901, oil on canvas, 131x134 cm, MNG, figure 2) (see: Révész, 2014), which is a typical instance of an attempt at making types of peasant society and poor people noticed. In this picture we can see a 5-6-year-old boy, who is clinging to his barefoot mother, depicted in black clothes, and the woman is clasping her son tightly to her breast. The mother's dirty feet and her round shoulders express that she is a broken woman but her son is wearing shoes and his clothes are clean. Therefore the question arises in our mind: has the mother got back her son only a few minutes ago or have they become paupers just now? – However, we are unable to answer this question. In any case, the mother's bare foot and her broken, tormented soul refer to her ability to sacrifice. Because of this anthropological feature the "*Mother's*" figure resembles the type of Maria Humilitatis and her proletarian properties (e.g. tattered costumes, signs of poverty on clothing) refer to Luca Cambiaso's Madonna-figures (see: "*Madonna and the Child*", around 1564, oil on canvas, Dayton Art Institute; "*Madonna with Candle*", oil on canvas 1570-1575; "*Madonna with the Child*", oil on canvas, 1575-1580, Museo dell'Accademia Ligustica di Belle Arti, Genova), since Cambiaso's Madonna is a prototype of the nineteenth century Peasant Madonna, who is a worried, care-worn, poor mother character with her average-looking baby without symbols referring to being Christ (e.g. apple as the symbol of domination over the world) (read more about this: Támba, 2016).



Figure 2. Adolf Fényes: "Mother" ("Anyá"), 1901

In this picture we can feel the atmosphere of agonizing poverty and interdependence. The child's white figure marks out from the baleful black dash of colour of his mother, all the same the pair of mother and her son is coherent by inward gestures and postures. Mother and child are clinging to each other as if they took shelter in each other from judgement and the abusing eye of the outside world; these interlacing figurines are *"pervaded by the single light of everyday life, the belonging"* (Oelmacher, 1970). The dark, neutral background and the gloomy black tones are the base of the passive-meditative style of the artwork and psychological expressiveness. In this picture we feel the artist's sensitivity and humanity, the atmosphere of need and interdependence (Oelmacher, 1970). The artist attempts to present the integrating power of the mother's love and her emphatic educating, protecting and guarding attitude despite the discipline of educating for harsh life (Jávör, 2000), which is presented in literature, e.g. Barbarians by Zsigmond Móricz. Hence, the statement of the picture is the following: the main features of mother-child relationships are intimacy and dependence, which counteract with the social problems which afflict mothers and their children.

To quote Károly Lyka's study, we can say that this image is an abrupt, wise composition, whereon we feel chiaroscuro and statuesqueness. The dark, neutral background and the lack of factual (material) details (e. g. still-life elements) make this picture more concentrated (in a psychical sense). In the centre we can see a woman in frazzled clothes who is cuddling his son as a key to the future or a treasure of everyday life. Their social-economic status is marked by their clothes and the barefoot mother. The viewer looks at the pair from above, from the giver's high-handed position and this also highlights their vulnerability, dependency and submission. Following from the point of view (and perspective) the mother's face is inconspicuous and for that reason we can feel a distance from this character and because of that we cannot feel commiseration (Révész, 2014). The dark, gloomy tones of this picture express the misery, need and poverty of the characters in addition to the cumbrous silence which is from pauperized social

actors. In this image the poor people's inhuman, relentless life comes to life by the thick, fatty brushstrokes and vibrant brushwork; the plastic surfaces of figurines and deep browns express the earthy atmosphere of the poor peasant life and this draws attention to the "fate" of poor people who are on the periphery of society (Révész, 2014). This picture is haggard (lean) and calm, however that is temperamental (Lyka, 1905); the agitation and provocation of the picture also come from the artwork's repressed vehemence of style and that is not from the objectively descriptive style (and not from the academic realism or naturalism) (Révész, 2014). The agitating force of this picture comes from quietness and the repressed vehemence of painting technique, and not from the objective, intangible description of poverty (Révész, 2014). All in all, this recapitulatory fate-picture suggests stereotypes about poverty and togetherness through the narrative of the poor child and the guardian mother, like *"Family"* (1898) or *"Rocking cradle"* (1902).

Fényes concentrated on his work and subject as Bródy formed his characters, who lived day after day; thus, he created his paintings carefully and attentively. Therefore in this picture the narrative techniques of naturalism (Zola) can be identified, such as observation, fragmentation, and the effort to highlight some life situations, like state of being (Németh, 1999, Zola, 1979). At the same time, in the image the effort to express instincts (*"animal in the human"* topos) can be detected and the concept of social determinism (Zola, 1979). Nonetheless, this image is far from the naturalist tendency in painting and the conventions of action-genre-realism, since this artwork is a still (state picture), like *"Day labourer"* (*"Napszámos"*, 1901) or *"Lunch"* (*"Ebéd"*, 1902). Furthermore, this picture is influenced by Zorn's, Rembrandt's and Israëls' paintings but parallel can be drawn between this painting and László Mednyánszky's vagabond-themed paintings because of the picture's psychical saturation and the *"animal in the human"* topos.

As Mednyánszky said, he looks for the animalistic and brute features in his characters and it is the basis of the character that is to say, he paints the other layers of character on these layers (Gyergyádesz, 2007). Consequently, the artist exceeds (surpasses) the crudity of naturalism by humanism and psychological expressiveness. In this regard the *"animal in human"* topos also works in the case of Fényes' picture, since he also painted the layers of humanity on the bestial which is inside people.

Due to the gloomy pessimism, which is typical in Fényes' art, the pessimistic atmosphere can be felt in his works, and this atmosphere reminds us of Sándor Bródy's stories and Schopenhauer's pessimism which emphasize the subjection to the instinctual human nature. Nonetheless, we can also find effects of the *"Madonna in mantle"* type because of the sitting figure on the floor and protection but this picture can also be compared to *"Madonna with Child"* (1575-1580, oil on canvas, Museo dell' Accademia Ligustica di Belle Arti, Genova) by Luca Cambiaso and *"Maternal kiss"* by Amédée Guérard (1861/1865, oil on canvas).

As stated above, the characters of this picture are prisoners of their own mentality, way and view of life but the white shirt might be the symbol of innocence and defenceless of childhood or it could be the symbol of faith and trust in the future. If it is true, the child personifies the desire to escape from the mindset of archaic peasant society and semi-feudal monarchy. So, in this image childhood can be viewed as the key to hope and faith in social rejuvenation, according to the artist's inclination. This conclusion makes a stronger parallel between the *"Mother"* and the *Maria Humilitatis*, since this image presents the narrative of the child as the pledge of continuity and narrative of the mother who protects the future of humanity or poor people.

Rocking the cradle

"Rocking the cradle" (*"Young mother"*, 1902, oil on cardboard, 57x45cm, figure 3) is from the first cycle of the period of *"Poor People's Life"*, like *"Family"* (1898) or *"Mother"* (1901). This picture shows motherhood and childhood amid poverty and destitution but permeated with love, like the previous images. This picture is a reticent, succinct status-picture (or fate-picture – *"állapotkép"*), which is far from the detailing, "gossiping", "talkative", genre-realism, that is rich in detail but because of its ability to create tension, that picture is far from the agitated and socially sensitive naturalisms as well. Nevertheless in this picture we can recognize the peasant themes, consequently we can find the influence of *Mihály Munkácsy*, but because of the brushwork and colorit the influence of *Isræls*, *Rembrandt* and *Velázquez* can also be detected. Although in this period *Fényes'* paintings are also influenced by *Zorn* and *Bastida* (Hornyik, n. d.) in this artwork we feel stronger effects of the Dutch realism. Despite all of this, some elements of naturalist conception, for example social determinism (see: Zola, 1979) and fragmentariness (*"the aesthetic of imperfection"* – see: Tuffelli, 2001) work in this painting, since the characters are taken from everyday life, which highlights their instincts and the vulnerability to these instincts (see: Schopenhauer & Störig, 2006). Their being determined by instincts is emphasized by the carapace motive, which was used to illustrate several phenomena, for instance, rocking or bathing the child, coffin or meat storage, therefore the *"teknő"* alludes to the circle of human life and casting into existence, like the transfiguration of carapace in *"Taxidermia"* by *Pálfi György* (2005 – see: Hirsch, 2006). In this film the Huge Folk Carapace is used as the placement of newborns, for washing purposes and it also functions as a pig slaughter. As a result, the transfiguration of the carapace carries an important and valuable (ethnographic and hermeneutic) remark: the carapace refers to the process in which the child turns into the circle of life which is a typical naturalistic association.

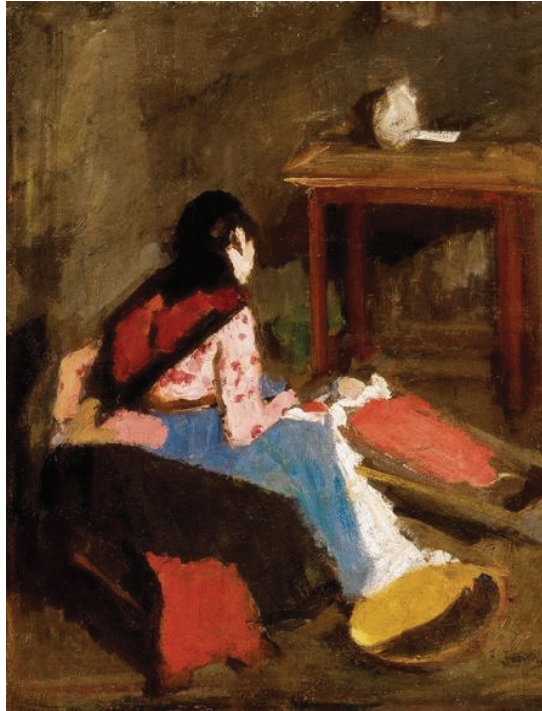


Figure 3. Adolf Fényes: "Rocking the cradle" ("Bölcsőt ringató"), around 1902

In the foreground of this picture we can see a young mother sitting on a stool and guarding her little child, who is sleeping in the carapace. The infant who sleeps peacefully does not feel anything from the hard, worrying circumstances that the mother has to tolerate at the moment. The deep brown and red background eventuates a dramatic mood, like the mother's red shawl, the environment with few objects and a few pieces of furniture (stool, little bowl, carapace, little table with bread) leads to the expression of the indigent's hard life. The dramatic atmosphere and psychical saturation of this picture is also enhanced by the thick, fatty brushstrokes. But at the same time, the mother turns away from us, and this position makes compassion, sympathy and involvement more difficult, maintaining tension in the viewer (Révész, 2014).

The brownish tones of the wall – as the colour of earth – express poverty and resignation while these earthy colours could allude to the cultivating people's endurance and persistence; what is more, these colours express the safety of the mother's lap as well (see: Pál & Újvári, 2001). The light blue skirt brings peace and brightness into the picture, and the presence of the mother eases the tension and agony of everyday life of the family. The blue of the woman's skirt expresses the stoic optimism of poor people who are hopeful even in misery, need and deprivation. The blue of the skirt alludes to some meanings of Madonna-iconography, for example love, hope, peace, chastity and moral innocence. Consequently, based on what the image seems to suggest and the parallel with Madonna-iconography, the picture indicates that these values were very important in the everyday life of peasant society, in connection with the puritan ethic of rural world.

The woman's gestures and postures convey care and endearment, expressing the notion of the protecting, guarding, and vigilant mother contrasted with the helpless, shiftless but lovable child who needs taking care of. These moments express the guardian-producing mother concept of archaic rural society. Because of the motifs of screening and childcare the child acts as a key to future, the pawn of the family continuity. The picture presents the narrative of the guarding, protecting, providing, unselfish and poor mother, which retains the continuity with the convention of Madonna-iconography, especially from the anthropological point of view. The accentuation of poverty presents motherhood more commendable or praiseworthy. As stated above (regarding "*Family*", 1898, 1.), it can be concluded that Fényes' painting became an important source for socialist realism, in turn, the painter wanted to mediate aesthetic values depicting and "interpreting" the archaic peasant culture, so, the genre-topic is just the base on which the artist painted his vibrant, brilliant colours (Hornyik, n. d.).

Summary

The analysed paintings of Adolf Fényes' convey the human commitment to the peasant fate, thus the representation of love and connection is intertwined with the representation of the order of peasant life, living conditions and life experiences. The images express the narrative of the protective, guardian, selfless mother (like an ideal about motherhood) and the beloved sensitive child (perception of children). In these pictures the mother has a loving, protective role (Pollock, 1998). The child is a pledge of folk continuity (so the child personifies the adults' hope, faith and truth in future; this statement corresponds to the statements of ethnographic literature) and victim of vegetative functions or his/her fate (like in the naturalist literature, e.g. É. Zola or S. Bródy).

In ethnographic literature discipline is an emphasized motive of childhood, but in Fényes' pictures we cannot find examples for the representation of childhood, since in these works there are toddlers and the mother-child relationship as a topic does not call up the presentation of discipline. In addition, the painter did not want to depict the acting mother, but he wanted to illustrate the idea of the peasant mother. The Madonna of everyday life is presented in these pictures, which is a depository of love for humanity through the love for her son or daughter.

The pictures I examined fit the theme of Peasant Madonna of nineteenth century with the presented features of mother, and these images refer to the problem of social inequality. The artist said he created these artworks as a human in order to disturb the conscience of the wealthy, but art historians praised these masterpieces for their aesthetic quality. These works were created in order to act against the sense of comfort and convenience of citizens by the representation of the life of deprived people and their children, which is permeated by a web of love and togetherness.

References

- Albertini, B. (2002). Budapesti szociófotók – Világháborútól világháborúig [Budapest socio photos – From World War to World War II]. *Budapesti Negyed*, 2002(1–2). Retrieved from <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00003/00027/AB.htm>
- Bálint, A. (1941). *Anya és gyermek* [Mother and child]. Budapest: Pantheon Kiadó.
- Bálintné Hegyesi, J. (1992). *Fényes Adolf festőművész munkássága 1867–1945* [The works of Adolf Fényes painter 1867–1945]. Szolnok: Versey Ferenc Megyei Könyvtár.
- Bodovics, É. (2011). Gyermekélet és gyermekhalál a paraszti társadalomban [Children Life and death of a child in peasant society]. *Zempléni Múzsá*, 11(1), 5–19.
- Chevalier, D. (1981). *Picasso kék és rózsaszín korszaka* [Picasso's blue and pink period]. Budapest: Corvina Kiadó.
- Csekő, Cs. (2000). A gyermeknevelés néhány aspektusa hagyományos falusi közösségekben [Some aspects of child rearing in traditional village communities]. In K. Kéri (Ed.), *Ezerszínű világ: mozaikok a nevelés történetéből V* [Thousand-colored world: the mosaics of the history of education V]. Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem – Tanárképző Intézet. Retrieved from <http://vmek.oszk.hu/01800/01887/html/ezersz05.htm>
- Czine, M. (1979). *A naturalizmus* [Naturalism]. Budapest: Gondolat.
- Endrődy-Nagy, O. (2010). Gyermekkép a 16. századi Németalföldön idősebb Pieter Brueghel művein [Children's picture is the work of older Pieter Bruegel in the 16th century in the Netherlands]. *Iskolakultúra*, 20(7-8), 137–147.
- Endrődy-Nagy, O. (2013). Középkori gyermekkép-narratívák? [Medieval childrens narratives] In T. Kozma, & I. Perjés (Eds.), *Új kutatások a neveléstudományokban. A munka és nevelés világa a tudományban* [New research in educational sciences. The world of work and education in science] (pp. 267–288). Budapest: MTA Pedagógiai Tudományos Bizottság – Eötvös Kiadó.
- Fügedi, M. (1988). *A gyermek a matyó családban* [A child in the matyó family]. Miskolc: Herman Ottó Múzeum.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1994). *A szép aktualitása* [Its pretty topicality]. Budapest: T-Twins Kiadó.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1997). A kép és a szó művészete [The art of the image and the word]. In B. Bacsó (Ed.), *Kép, fenomen, valóság* [Image, phenomenon, reality] (pp. 274–284). Budapest: Kijárat Kiadó.
- Gazda, K. (1980). *Gyermekvilág Esztelneken* [Children's world in Esztelnek]. Bukarest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó.
- Géczi, J. (2010). Ikonológia-ikonográfia mint a történeti pedagógia segédtudománya [Iconology as an auxiliary science of historical pedagogy]. In J. Géczi (Ed.), *Sajtó, kép, neveléstörténet – tanulmányok* [Press, pictures, history of education] (pp. 203–213). Veszprém – Budapest: Iskolakultúra.
- Géczi, J. & Darvai, T. (2010). A gyermek képe az 1960–1980-as évek magyar nevelésügyi szaksajtójában [The image of the child in the Hungarian education press of the 1960s and 1980s]. *Új Pedagógiai Szemle*, 60(3–4), 201–237.
- Genthon, I. (1970). Ferenczy Károly [Károly Ferenczy]. In L. Fülep, D. Dercsényi, & A. Zádor (Eds.), *A magyarországi művészet története* [History of Hungarian art] (pp. 455–462). Budapest: Corvina Kiadó.
- Goffman, E. (1999). *Az én bemutatása a mindennapokban* [My presentation in everyday life]. Budapest: Pólya Kiadó.
- Gyergyádesz, L. (2007). „Csavargó”. *Mednyánszky László élete és művészete* [“Vagabond”. László Mednyánszky's life and art]. Kecskemét: Print 2000 – Bács-Kiskun Megye Önkormányzat Múzeumi Szervezete.
- Hirsch, T. (2006). Taxidermia. Hét bőr – Három elátkozott generáció, három epizód a nagy zabálás, a test diktatúrájának világtörténetéből [Taxidermia. Seven Skin - Three Cursed Generations, Three Episodes of Great Entertainments, Body Dictatorships World History]. *Filmvilág*, 49(11), 12–14.

- Retrieved from http://www.filmvilag.hu/xista_frame.php?ev=1995&szam=06&cikk_id=8763.
Last check: 2015.11.22.
- Hornyik, S. (n.d.). *Fényes Adolf: Bölcsőt ringató* [Adolf Fényes: Rocking a crib]. Kieselbach Galéria és Aukciósház. Retrieved from http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:NRAIdv1g1j0J:www.kieselbach.hu/alkotas/bolcsot-ringato_6506+&cd=9&hl=hu&ct=clnk&gl=hu. Viewing: 30.11.2014.
- Lackovits, E. (1980). Adalékok a falusi gyermekek életéhez Veszprém megyében, 1868–1945 [Additions to the life of village children in Veszprém County, 1868–1945]. In S. K. Palágyi (Ed.), *Veszprém Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei 15* [Veszprém County Museum Publications 15] (pp. 237–272). Veszprém.
- Lyka, K. (1905). Fényes Adolf [Adolf Fényes]. *Művészet*, 4(6), 353–361. <http://www.mke.hu/lyka/04/353-361-fenyesh.htm>
- Marosi, E. (1985). *Bevezetés a művészettörténetbe* [Introduction to Art History]. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó Vállalat.
- Mietzner, U., & Pilarczyk, U. (2013). Képek forrásértéke a neveléstörténeti kutatásban [The source value of images in educational history research]. In J. Hegedűs, A. Németh, & Z. A. Szabó (Eds.), *Pedagógiai historiográfia. Új elméleti megközelítések, metodológiai eljárások* [Pedagogical historiography. New theoretical approaches, methodological procedures] (pp. 31–50). Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó – Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem.
- Németh, L. (1972). *Modern magyar művészet* [Modern Hungarian art]. Budapest: Corvina Kiadó.
- Németh, L. (1999). *A művészet sorsfordulója* [The turn of the art]. Budapest: Ciceró.
- Oelmacher, A. (1970). *Deák-Ébner, Bihari, Fényes* [Deák-Ébner, Bihari, Fényes]. Budapest: Képzőművészeti Alap.
- Panofsky, E. (2011a). A képzőművészeti alkotások leírásának és tartalomelemzésének problémájához [The problem of describing and content analysis of fine works of art]. In E. Panofsky (Ed.), *A jelentés a vizuális művészetekben. Tanulmányok* [The report in visual arts. Studies] (pp. 218–233). Budapest: ELTE BTK Művészettörténeti Intézet.
- Panofsky, E. (2011b). Ikonográfia és ikonológia: bevezetés a reneszánsz művészet tanulmányozásába [Iconography and Iconology: Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art]. In E. Panofsky (Ed.), *A jelentés a vizuális művészetekben. Tanulmányok* [The report in visual arts. Studies] (pp. 252–274). Budapest: ELTE BTK Művészettörténeti Intézet.
- Péter, K. (1996). *Gyermek a kora újkori Magyarországon* [Child in early modern Hungary]. Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete.
- Pollock, L. (1998). A gyermekekkel kapcsolatos attitűdök [Attitudes to children]. In Zs. Vajda & B. Pukánszky, (Eds.), *A gyermekkor története – szöveggyűjtemény* [The History of Childhood - a collection of texts] (pp. 176–210). Budapest: Eötvös József Kiadó.
- Réau, L. (1986). Az ikonográfia meghatározása és alkalmazása [Definition and application of iconography]. In P. József (Ed.), *Az ikonológia elmélete* [The theory of iconology] (pp. 266–290). Szeged: József Attila Tudományegyetem Összehasonlító Irodalomtudományi Tanszéke.
- Révész, E. (2014). *Fényes Adolf* [Adolf Fényes]. Budapest: Kossuth.
- Schneider, N. (2014). *Művészet és társadalom: a társadalomtörténeti megközelítés* [Art and Society: The Social History Approach]. Retrieved from http://www.renyiandras.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=207&Itemid=193
- Störig, H.-J. (2006). *A filozófia világtörténete* [The world history of philosophy]. Budapest: Helikon Kiadó Kft.
- Sz. Morvay, J. (1956). *Asszonyok a nagycsaládban. Mátraalji palóc asszonyok élete a múlt század második felében* [Women in the big family. The life of Mátraalja Palóc women in the second half of the last century]. Budapest: Magvető.
- Sztompka, P. (2009). *Vizuális szociológia. A fényképezés mint kutatási módszer* [Visual Sociology. Photography as a research method]. Budapest-Pécs: Gondolat Kiadó – PTE Kommunikáció- és Médiatudományi Tanszék.

- Támba, R. (2016). Az anya-gyermek kapcsolat festői ábrázolása [Pictorial representation of the parent-child relationship]. *Mediárium*, 10(1), 60–70.
- Tátrai, Zs. (1997). Falusi gyermekélet Magyarországon [Rural childhood in Hungary]. *História*, 19(5-6), 40–43.
- Tuffelli, N. (2001). *A XIX. század művészete* [The XIX. Century art]. Budapest: Helikon Kiadó.
- Vajda, Zs., & Kósa, É. (2005). *Neveléslélektan* [Educational Psychology]. Budapest: Osiris.
- Vasas, S. (1993). *A kalotaszegi gyermek. A személyiségfejlődés hagyományai Kalotaszegen* [The Kalotaszegi child. Traditions of personality development in Kalotaszeg]. Budapest: Kráter Kiadó – Colirom Rt.
- Végvári, L. (1952). *Szolnoki művészet* [Szolnok art]. Budapest: Művelt Nép.
- Zola, É. (1979). A kísérleti regény [The experimental novel]. In M. Mihály (Ed.), *A naturalizmus* [Naturalism] (pp. 174–185). Budapest: Gondolat.
- Zola, É. (1979). Naturalizmus. Az 1880. évi Salon [Naturalism. In the 1880 Salon]. In M. Czine (Ed.), *A naturalizmus* [Naturalism] (pp. 171–173). Budapest: Gondolat.
- Zoltai, D. (1997). *Az esztétika rövid története* [A short history of aesthetics]. Budapest: Helikon Kiadó.

Picture index

- Family. 1898, oil on canvas. – Lyka, 1905. <http://www.mke.hu/lyka/04/353-361-fenyves.htm>
- Mother. 1901, oil on canvas, 131,5x134 cm; MNG. – Krén & Marx (ed., w. y.). <http://www.hung-art.hu/frames.html?magyar//f/fenyves/muvek/1/index.html>
- Rocking the cradle (Young mother). Around 1902, oil on cardboard, 57x45 cm, indicating right and bottom: Fényes A. – Kieselbach Galéria és Aukciósház. http://www.kieselbach.hu/alkotas/bolcsot-ringato_6506