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Elsa First, July 1936- February 2018...A Memorial Statement

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With warmth and great sadness, The *Journal of Infant, Child and Adolescent* extends our condolences to those closest to Elsa First, her dear daughter Shoshana First and her sister, Gail Farber, extended family, as well as friends, colleagues (nationally and internationally), students, and former patients, for whom Elsa was a profound, recognizing presence and generous guiding light. Elsa was a member of the editorial Board of this journal (JICAP), since our inception, an esteemed colleague, important supporter of our mission, a mentor and friend to many of us.

Elsa First was a psychoanalyst, who studied with Anna Freud, in the 1960s at the Hampstead Clinic (now the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families), in London. Upon her return to the United States, her presence in New York City, as an exquisitely attuned British trained child psychoanalyst rapidly brought her teaching and speaking invitations from numerous psychoanalytic training programs, with which she remained affiliated for decades. Along with this recognition came a steady stream of requests for clinical consultation and supervision, as her sensitivity and capacity to use psychoanalytic developmental understanding to grasp the subtleties of clinical work with children and adults provided valuable insights to those with whom she worked...and always in a deeply respectful manner.

Among her many professional affiliations, Elsa First was a full member of the International Psychoanalytical Association as Training and Supervising Analyst for adults and children (New York Freudian Society); a member of the faculty and supervisor in the Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy Training Program at the William Alanson

White Institute, Associate in Clinical Psychiatry and faculty member in the Parent Infant Psychotherapy Program of the Columbia Psychoanalytic Center as well as an Adjunct Clinical Professor in the NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis, where she supervised and taught a course on Contemporary British Kleinian Psychoanalysis, and seminars on childhood trauma in the Trauma Specialization.

A lifelong child advocate Elsa used her psychoanalytic developmental perspective in the service of understanding and addressing the effects of war and violence, (both structural, social and interpersonal) on children and adolescents in her native New York and around the world. Joining international psychoanalytic efforts initiated in the Southern Cone of South America, she made valuable technical contributions supporting efforts led by families, communities and global organizations to help children grow up well, in the face of life-long assaults on their ability to do so.

In perhaps her last professional publication, she (First, E. 2015) reflected upon the experience of two adolescents who had lived in Gaza during its protracted state of siege (2008-2012). First had interviewed these two adolescents four years apart seeking to understand the impact living under siege had had upon their development and capacity for resilience and going on being. This article, was completed several years after Elsa sustained a debilitating stroke, which compromised her expressive language ability, and the interviews had occurred several years prior. With the assistance of friends and colleagues, Elsa's active engagement in her life's work as a psychoanalyst and social activist on behalf of children was able to continue, as it was vital to her to remain a productive contributor, long after she was physically unable to continue seeing patients, or actively teaching.

Elsa published both in the psychoanalytic literature and was sought out by the mainstream media as a reviewer of books by prominent psychoanalysts. In

1978, " her review in the New York Review of Books, entitled "The Good Doctor " brought to life, *The Piggie: An Account of the Psychoanalytic Treatment of a Little Girl* by D.W.Winnicott, (edited by Ishak Ramzy).

In speaking of this review of "The Piggie" , Jessica Benjamin a close friend, upon whom First's thinking clearly had a significant influence noted... "You will find so many essential ideas about implicit relating, two-person experiencing with the therapist as a form of healing, recognizing the patient's experience rather than interpreting it, the analyst knowing that "his response was helping him to recognize something in the patient", (Benjamin, 2018) . These ideas were later to find their voice in the work of many prominent contributors to the development of a newly evolving Relational Psychoanalytic tradition in the United States. [1]

Elsa First's contribution in this regard is insufficiently recognized. Her mentoring of many in New York, her British Psychoanalytic training , rooted in the contributions of Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, indeed, all of the British Object relations analysts and of course, Anna Freud, , brought a depth of understanding of this work to the thinking of those in the United States who had been intensively exploring the similarities and differences between various American Schools of psychoanalysis (Interpersonal Psychoanalysis, Self Psychology, Aspects of Ego Psychology) and the British School.

The Journal will be working with colleagues of Elsa First, to compile her written works, with the intention of publishing a collection in her honor.,

As an initial step, we are re-printing here, a commentary which we feel will give you a perspective of the richness of her approach to child clinical work, and the essence of her sensibility.

The following Commentary by Elsa First, appeared in a Special Issue of the Journal of Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy,

(2010), Guest Edited by Christopher Bonovitz, Hey Toy Man: Multiple Perspectives on a Case of Dramatic Play, 9:1. Elsa First's contribution, - Playing Who We Are Together: Commentary on Henry Kronengold's "Hey Toy Man" follows.

Benjamin, J (2018) Unpublished eulogy for Elsa First, March, 25, 2018, NYC

First, E. (2010) -Playing Who We Are Together: Commentary on Henry Kronengold's "Hey Toy Man" *Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy*. 9, (1) 25-32. Taylor and Francis

First, E. (2015). Siege: Marwan and Sahar, Four Years After the 2009 Gaza War. *Psychoanal. Inq.*, 35(7):733-743. Taylor and Francis.

First, Elsa (1978). *The Good Doctor*, *The New York Review of Books*. August, 17, Issue 1.

Ghent, E.(1992,2015) Foreword in Skolnick, N and Warshaw , SC *Relational Perspectives in Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, London.

Skolnick, N and Warshaw, SC, Eds. (1992,2015) *Relational Perspectives in Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, London

[1] Emmanuel Ghent, (1992, 2015) in his extensive Foreword to an edited book *Relational Perspectives in Psychoanalysis*(Skolnick, N. and Warshaw, SC.,1992,2015) described the historical backdrop, social context, and theoretical roots of what eventually evolved into a new Psychoanalytic tradition..."Relational Psychoanalysis". The contributions of Jay Greenberg, Stephen Mitchell, Emmanuel Ghent, Philip Bromberg, and Bernard Friedland , all Founding faculty of the New York University Postdoctoral Program "Relational Track", were noted, as well the intellectual atmosphere of the university, which led to an intense exploration of the similarities and differences between various American Schools of psychoanalysis (Interpersonal Psychoanalysis, Self Psychology, Aspects of contemporary Ego Psychology) with the British Schools of thought.

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