

Elizabeth Ann Danto and Alexandra Steiner-Strauss (eds.), *Freud/Tiffany: Anna Freud, Dorothy Tiffany Burlingham and 'The Best Possible School'* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019; xv + 108 pp.); reviewed by D'Maris Coffman

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Many psychoanalytically-minded Londoners, to say nothing of those further afield, will be familiar with the Anna Freud Centre, recently renamed the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families. But for the initiative of the Freud Museum, which hosted the 'Freud/Tiffany and "The Best Possible School"' exhibition in early summer 2017, few would have any inkling of its intellectual and institutional origins in the Heitzing School, founded in interwar Vienna by Anna Freud and Dorothy Tiffany Burlingham. During the opening symposium, held in mid-May 2017, the contributors to this volume presented, with one substitution (Paul Werner replacing Nick Midgley in the volume), the papers upon which their chapters were based.¹

In the introduction, Elizabeth Ann Danto recounts the symposium's purpose, which was to locate the personalities and the project of these 'Austrian-American pioneers in psychoanalysis and education under one roof' (p. 12). In doing so, Danto underscores the Heitzing School's aim, which was to respect the children's autonomy and to promote their independence of thought against a backdrop of growing authoritarianism. In the first chapter, Michael John Burlingham examines his father's experience at his grandmother's 'Matchbox School' (p. 19), noting above all the commitment to forging a path to adulthood that privileged interiority and self-reflection. The Heitzing School in Vienna comes across in this chapter as similar to a 'progressive' version of the many dame schools operating in London at the time.

In Chapter Two, Michael Molnar picks up on a common word play, a faux-cockney rhyming slang in which 'psychiatrist' is rendered as 'trick cyclist', to organise his exploration of Bob Burlingham's schoolboy photos of the schoolmates and teachers. Molnar's descriptions of the

spirit of the school are more evocative today of ‘unschooling’ rather than ‘home schooling’ so familiar to those with experience of Covid-19 lockdowns, but the ambivalent playfulness of the adults and children rings true. In Chapter Three, Elizabeth Ann Danto elaborates on many of the same themes, locating the school’s reformist tendencies within the traumatic school experiences of its founders and the links between ‘psychologically aware education’, anti-fascism and progressive thought.

In Chapter Four, Thomas Aichhorn takes up August Aichhorn’s legacy to Heitzing, alongside those of Freud, Burlingham, Peter Blos and Erik H. Erikson, who pronounced it the ‘best possible school.’ As with the first chapter, this is a deeply personal essay, which evokes the painful intimacy of this milieu. No doubt the voluminous correspondence on which it draws can be used to answer different research questions. In Chapter Five, Inge-Martine Pretorius shifts focus to the Hampstead War Nurseries, depicting a ‘natural bridge’ between them and the Heitzing School (p. 91). Anna Freud’s commitment to experimentation and innovation proved successful, and it does seem plausible that she had drawn on her experiences at the Jackson Nursery in Vienna and at her Heitzing School to provide her charges with a compassionate ‘residential upbringing’ (pp. 109-110).

In Chapter Six, Florian Houssier sets out to rehabilitate Anna Freud, at least as she is perceived in France, and to present her as a major figure in the ‘theorisation of a psychoanalytic understanding of the adolescent’ (p. 113). In this chapter, the Heitzing School is presented as a place for the ‘psycho-pedagogical study of the adolescent’ (p. 114), as well as a school for clinical training (p. 116). Houssier concludes by arguing that Anna Freud gave psychoanalysis as a discipline the tools for engaging with adolescent patients (p. 125). In Chapter Seven, Nellie L. Thompson and H el ene Keable explore Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham’s seminal contributions to *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*. They offer a brief treatment of an important subject; their discussion of Burlingham’s work with blind children is both moving and helpful to understanding her larger contributions.

In Chapter Eight, Paul Werner offers a biographical sketch and family history of the young Dorothy Burlingham. The closing paragraphs on perception, blindness, vision and occlusion, in which he argues that Burlingham mounted a ‘powerful criticism of vision as a defining structure in culture’, take him to Diderot and Ric eur (p. 162). This reviewer wishes that he had taken the time to unpack those thoughts further. Alexander Steiner-Strauss in Chapter

Nine ends with a return to the traumatic historical backdrop against which the Heitzing School flourished and the subsequent quest for a new Austrian identity.

In editing this collection, Elizabeth Ann Danto and Alexander Steiner-Strauss have given us a fitting tribute to the Hietzing School and the intellectual and cultural achievements of Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham. Bordering as it does on hagiography, it was clearly a labour of love, and will be useful to historians of psychoanalysis, particularly those working on Anna Freud and on the intersection of psychoanalysis and education. Although this collection lacks in rigour and coherence, it offers tantalising glimpses of valuable archival material and suggests many avenues for scholars to explore. Routledge's commitment to publishing a conference volume is admirable, as these essays help to contextualise the origins of the Anna Freud Centre, and in doing so shed light on an under-studied but formative moment in the histories of psychoanalysis and early childhood education, one with resonances which can still be detected in modern practice.

ⁱ The original symposium can be found at: <https://historypsychiatry.com/2017/04/27/exhibition-and-symposium-freudtiffany-and-the-best-possible-schoolfreud-museum-london/>