



Freud, Anna (1895-1982)

by Geoffrey W. Bateman

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A pioneer in the field of child psychoanalysis and the youngest daughter of Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud neither conformed to conventional heterosexual expectations nor identified herself explicitly as a lesbian. Even though it is impossible to know whether Freud was homosexual, it is relatively easy to conclude that she was decidedly not heterosexual in any typical sense.

Anna Freud's primary relationships were with her father, with whom she lived and cared for until his death in 1939, and two close female friends, Lou Andreas-Salome and Dorothy Burlingham.

Burlingham became Freud's life partner and companion, although the sexual nature of their intimacy remains unclear. Burlingham moved to Vienna in 1925 to begin her work in psychoanalysis. She lived with the Freud family in their apartment at Berggasse 19, which at that time included Sigmund Freud, his wife Martha, her sister Minna Bernays, and Anna Freud. She and Anna Freud became close friends and began their life-long collaboration on developing children's therapies and psychoanalysis. They worked and lived together for the rest of their lives. Freud helped raise Burlingham's children from a previous marriage.

Freud was born in Vienna on December 3, 1895, the last of her parents' six children. As the youngest child, she often felt left out of their activities, and in turn, she developed into a bit of a mischievous child, earning her the nickname "schwarzer Teufel" or "black devil" from her father, who found her "Unartigkeit," or naughtiness, endearing.

Freud also grew up in the shadow of her older and more beautiful sister Sophie, whom she both adored and envied. Never noted for traditional feminine traits, Freud cultivated an active fantasy life at an early age, and worked hard to be the intelligent sister in contrast to Sophie's more obvious charms.

Unlike other young women of the Freud family's social circle, Anna Freud did not prepare for a university education. While female friends of Freud's in Vienna attended the more rigorous and classically oriented Gymnasium, her parents sent her to the Lyceum or high school that allowed her to prepare for a teaching position, one of the more traditional routes of employment open to Viennese women at the time.

After completing high school, Freud began her apprenticeship as an elementary school teacher at the age of 18 and taught for the next five years. During this time, she became increasingly more interested in psychoanalysis, and in 1918, uncertain of her professional future, she began psychoanalysis with her father. She hoped that by undergoing analysis she would know better if she wanted to continue teaching and develop a psychoanalytically informed pedagogy or become a practicing psychoanalyst herself.

Ultimately, Freud chose psychoanalysis but drew on her experience as a teacher to develop psychoanalysis as a tool to help children, especially those who had experienced severe trauma in their lives.

Her biographers see Freud's choice as a reflection of her intense attachment to her father, as well as a way



Anna Freud (right) walking with her father, Sigmund Freud. Image © 2003-2004 Clipart.com.

to maintain some sense of professional independence from his powerful influence. The only child of Sigmund Freud's to pursue a career in psychoanalysis, Anna Freud became his intellectual heir, and she worked her entire life to further her father's ideas.

In 1922, Freud published her first psychoanalytic work, an article entitled "Beating Fantasies and Daydreams," which is often read as modeled to some extent on her own psychoanalysis under her father. In this essay, she describes her subject's masturbatory fantasies of being beaten and her unsuccessful attempts to remake them into nicer daydreams. It is not until the subject turns to writing fiction that she is able to break the autistic cycle of her self-absorption. Through its consideration of audience, writing becomes a social activity for Freud's subject and rescues her from unhealthy regression and intellectual inhibition.

This paper signaled Anna Freud's own successful overcoming of professional inhibition and marked the beginning of her extremely productive career. In 1936, she published what has become her best known work, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of the Defense*, again working on material closely related to but quite distinct from her father's work.

She continued to live and work with her father and Burlingham in Vienna until 1938, when they left their home for London following the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany. After her father's death from cancer in 1939, she and Burlingham founded Hampstead Nurseries in London.

Both women spent the rest of their lives and careers working together with children and developing psychoanalytic tools to better their lives. They also worked tirelessly to promote psychoanalysis and defend it from its detractors.

Burlingham preceded Freud in death by three years, and her absence from Freud's life was extremely difficult for the surviving partner. After suffering a stroke on in early March of 1982, Anna Freud died on October 9 of the same year.

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