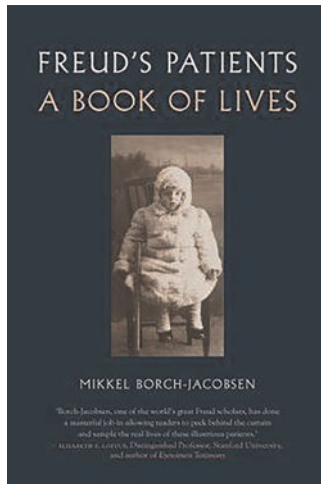


Book review

Edited by Allan Beveridge and Femi Oyeboode



Freud's Patients: A Book of Lives

Edited by Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen.
Reaktion
Books Ltd. 2021. £20.00 (hb). 304 pp.
ISBN: 978-1789144550

A model casebook for all psychiatrists and every medical library – beautifully printed and sensitively illustrated; replete with clinical, cultural and historical background detail; illuminating the origins of psychoanalytic currents in the opulent decay of *fin de siècle* Vienna and Austro-Hungarian environs, New York, and London. Thirty-one of the 38 vignettes were published in French in 2011 as *Les Patients de Freud: Destins*, they have been augmented, updated and smoothly translated by Andrew Brown.

Freud's cures were largely ineffectual, when they were not downright destructive, is the qualified conclusion that can be drawn from these informal follow-up case studies, drawn from the primary and secondary sources currently available, according

to Borsch-Jacobsen, Professor of Comparative Literature and French at the University of Washington, Seattle, a philosopher by training, and a veteran combatant in the Freud Wars.

Freud emerges as an unreliable narrator. Fastening to archival facts, documents and testimonies, the collection comprises those of Freud's patients for whom there is thought sufficient information for a biographical note, albeit a sample that 'should allow the reader to get an idea of Freud's actual clinical practice, over and above the fabulous narratives he himself drew from it'. Not flattering.

Bertha Pappenheim ('Anna O'), treated by Breuer, not Freud, albeit the latter presented her 'talking cure' as the origin of psychoanalytic therapy; Herbert Graf ('Little Hans'), aged 4 years, the first child psychoanalysis in history; Ida Bauer ('Dora'); Ernst Lanzer ('the Rat Man'); Sergius Pankejeff ('the Wolf Man'); Margarethe Csonka ('Young Homosexual Woman'); Pauline Silberstein threw herself from the fourth floor of Freud's residence; Carl Liebmann's troubles started the day he realised that his mother had no penis; Bruno Walter the conductor. Freud hypnotised his wife (Martha Bernays, his first case history) and analysed his daughter, Anna. All wry tragi-comic human life is here: antisemitism, authors, artists, bankers, betrayal, cocaine, drug addictions, falsification, high fees, infatuations, jokes, musicians, Nazism, nobility, pansexual variations, poets, poisoning, politicians, revolution, riches, satanism, suicides, tax avoidance, titillation, trauma, women's rights ...

In the Biblical book of lives the dead are judged according to their works. The evidence on Freud points to differing judicial inferences: Ernest Jones – 'The life and work of an 'immortal sire'; Lionel Trilling – 'The effect that psychoanalysis has had upon the life of the West is incalculable'; Italo Svevo – 'A great man, our Freud, but more for novelists than for patients'; Frederick Crews – 'Freud. The making of an illusion'.

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