

Education, art and exile:

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Education, art and exile: cultural activists and exhibitions of refugee children's art in the UK during the Second World War

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You are going to see an International Children's Art Exhibition. War, as seen by such little victims of the Fascists' barbarity as were lucky enough to find hospitality in England. Most of the little folk fled from the Continent...It shows how the spirit of true democracy unites children of different nations, and educates them not only to understand each other but to respect each other. Therefore I would like to salute this group of children-artists as a working model for an ideal human society of the future.¹

This was how the exiled, expressionist artist Oskar Kokoschka welcomed visitors to the opening of an exhibition entitled *The War as Seen by Children* at the Cooling Galleries, New Bond Street, London on 4 January 1943. Organised in aid of the Refugee Children's Evacuation Fund the exhibition provided a platform for refugee children's impressions and experiences of war and displacement through their art whilst at the same time raising awareness and financial support for the Fund. Like many episodes in refugee histories, archival evidence for this particular 'adventure' in learning through culture is sparse and fragmentary, and almost nothing is known of the past or futures of the child artists who were at the centre of the story.² Much of my information is pieced together from the two exhibition catalogues which provided the starting point for this paper, augmented by newspaper reports, the texts of art educators, and surviving records of refugee schools. Like the stories in van der Eyken and Turner that initially inspired this special issue, it represents an exercise in the archaeology of an educational intervention, in this case an intervention which also had political and therapeutic objectives.³ It is intended as a contribution to countering the 'silence' that still surrounds the experiences of refugee educators and children, immigrants and other minority groups within the history of education.⁴

I will begin by exploring the development of the exhibition with a focus on the aims and motivations of the main protagonists and their supporting network of British educators and cultural activists. The emphasis will then shift to consider the exhibition as both an

¹ Refugee Children's Evacuation Fund, *The War as Seen by Children* (Refugee Children's Evacuation Fund London, [1943]), 8.

² Willem van der Eyken and Barry Turner, *Adventures in Education* (London: Allen Lane, 1969). On some of the problematics of refugee histories see Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

³ van der Eyken and Turner, *Adventures in Education*, 8.

⁴ Kevin Myers, "Immigrants and ethnic minorities in the history of education," *Paedagogica Historica* 45 (6), 2009: 801-816.

example which illustrates the importance placed on art and cultural learning by refugee educationalists who arrived in Britain in the 1930s, and as a therapeutic experiment in the context of contemporary discourses and related interventions in the well-being of refugee children in the UK during the Second World War. I will argue that *The War as Seen by Children* embodied a belief held by its organisers, and their fellow displaced artists and cultural educators, in the transformative potential of cultural self-expression and creative learning as a vehicle for addressing trauma, for re-imagining collective democratic futures, and for supporting and sustaining personal and collective identities in exile. This article draws on a concept of personal identity as relational, defined in dialogue with an 'other'.⁵ It subscribes to the theoretical position that identity is not a fixed or unified concept, but multiple and fluid, and engaged in a constant process of transformation and development described by Stuart Hall as a 'process of becoming rather than being' which is 'produced in specific historical and institutional sites.'⁶ Large scale displacements of people such as that which occurred during the Second World War, and of which this article narrates a small vignette, provide a site in which to explore the influence of space and place on this process of plurality and reformulation.⁷ The role played by schools, institutions recently described by Kevin Myers as 'factories of identities', and specifically in this context German refugee schools in exile in this process will be discussed.⁸ The article will conclude with some reflections on the significance of the fragmentation of the archive in relation to my ability to narrate this episode of refugee history, and on the legacy of this particular experiment in therapeutic pedagogy.

Children's Art from All Countries

The War as Seen by Children had its origins in a smaller exhibition entitled *Children's Art from All Countries*, co-ordinated by the Vice-Chairman of the Refugee Children's Evacuation Fund (hereafter RCEF), Johann Fladung, which was exhibited at the clubhouse of

⁵ Chris Lorenz, "Representations of Identity: Ethnicity, Race, Class, gender and Religion. An Introduction to Conceptual History", in Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz (eds.), *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 24-59.

⁶ Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?", in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996): 1-17, 4.

⁷ Christopher Tilley, "Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage", *Journal of Material Culture* 11(1/2), 2006: 7-32.

⁸ Kevin Myers, *Struggles for a Past: Irish and Afro-Caribbean Histories in England, 1951-2000* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015) 38.

the Free German League of Culture (hereafter FGLC) at 36 Upper Park Road, Hampstead, London, between 16 August and 10 September 1941. The aim was to raise money and awareness for the RCEF whilst also promoting peace, international understanding and in Fladung's words 'a better world after the war.'⁹ A prominent communist, journalist and former member of the Prussian Parliament, Fladung arrived in England in 1938 following his release from Oranienburg concentration camp.¹⁰ In the same year he was one of the founders of the FGLC alongside fellow refugees including the artists John Heartfield and Oskar Kokoschka.¹¹ Described by its historians Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove as 'the foremost cultural, social and political organization representing German anti-Nazi exiles' in London, the FGLC had 1,500 members at its height.¹² Based initially at the Hampstead home of the painter Fred Uhlman and his British wife Diana Croft, it moved to the clubhouse at 36 Upper Park Road in 1939.¹³ The clubhouse was also the registered address of the RCEF, in which Fladung collaborated with the educationalist Johannes Georg (Hans) Siebert, the RCEF's Honorary Secretary, who was also a high profile member of the FGLC.¹⁴ Although many of the FGLC's leading members were communists, its main political impetus appears to have been as an anti-Nazi and anti-fascist organisation, a fact which enabled participation by non-communists such as Kokoschka, the organisation's president from 1941 to 1946. As the British Government had placed strict limitations on the political activity of refugee organisations, cultural expression became a conduit for the FGLC to disseminate its message.¹⁵ It was structured within cultural sections including art, music, and drama, and had an associated youth wing, the Free German Youth, which organised a wide range of cultural activities with a particular interest in promoting Anglo-German understanding among young people.¹⁶ In contrast to other London based refugee organisations such as the

⁹ Refugee Children's Evacuation Fund, *International Exhibition. Children's Art from All Countries*, [London] 1941, British Library, 7801.aa.6, Introduction.

¹⁰ Biographical information from Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove, *Politics by Other Means: The Free German League of Culture in London 1939-1946* (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010).

¹¹ Jutta Vinzent, *Identity and Image. Refugee Artists from Nazi Germany in Britain (1933-1945)*, (Weimar: VDG, 2006), 37.

¹² Brinson and Dove, *Politics by Other Means*, 1.

¹³ Vinzent, *Identity and Image*, 36-8, 73-74.

¹⁴ Siebert married the British artist and political activist Priscilla Ann Thornycroft, who returned to Germany with him at the end of the war. Subsequently Siebert was Director of the Deutschen Pädagogischen Zentralinstituts, Berlin 1949-50, and later the Pädagogischen Instituts, Dresden, 1960-75, see http://www.digiporta.net/pdf/BBF/Siebert_106326705.pdf accessed 3 January 2017.

¹⁵ Brinson and Dove, *Politics by Other Means*, 5, 16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 134-5.

Austrian Centre, the FGLC was open to non-German members and boasted a number of high profile British supporters including the writer J.B. Priestley, the actor Sybil Thorndike, the scholar and internationalist Gilbert Murray, the zoologist and philosopher Julian Huxley, and the composer R. Vaughan Williams.¹⁷

Children's Art from All Countries included drawings, paintings and handcraft work by children of 12 different nationalities. In response to an appeal by Fladung over 500 works were received from schools, refugee children's hostels and local refugee committees, and the exhibition also included work by pupils from British progressive schools such as Bedales, Summerhill and Dartington Hall.¹⁸ In the exhibition catalogue Fladung described the children as being 'of all ages, of all classes' and specified that although some had worked under adult guidance others had not. He drew a vivid portrait of the child artists' backgrounds, and emphasized their shared legacy of fascism, displacement, and their need for support:

This child's father is at Lichtenburg Concentration Camp, that one's mother was fired at and wounded while trying to escape across the Czech-Polish frontier; nobody knows where she is to-day. This one's father had been taken to Australia, the mother is "somewhere in the south of France", that boy's father fell in fighting Fascism in Spain.¹⁹

The works selected for exhibition were arranged in the clubhouse's rooms and the catalogue reads as a journey through the house, in which the refugee experience is articulated visually as the reader is led through each room in turn. It begins with a description of works by two distinct groups of children, those interned with their mothers on the Isle of Man and children living in the 'Children's Republic Edmond Castle'. Edmond Castle in Hayton, Cumberland, opened as a home for Czech refugee children in June 1940 and in the catalogue they were described as 40 children who had lost their parents through death or separation, and who had experienced 'the most daring escapes from Germany and Austria to Czechoslovakia, later to Poland and finally to this country.'²⁰ The inclusion of artwork by interned children was a means of raising awareness of the plight of 'enemy aliens'. Members of the FGLC had themselves been interned from June 1940, and the organisation was at the forefront of campaigns to counter the increasing mistrust of German speaking refugees in Britain and to articulate a German alternative to fascism.²¹

¹⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁸ *The Times*, 22 August 1941, 6.

¹⁹ *Children's Art from All Countries*, 7.

²⁰ Ibid., 9.

²¹ Vinzent, *Identity and Image*, 40-48.

This vocal display of agency demonstrated their ability to construct a space in which to express their own political beliefs and aspirations in contrast to the passivity which is usually assigned to refugee groups in the historiography.²²

The remaining works were grouped in four age groups - children up to six, children seven to nine, ten to 13, and 14 to 16. The cheap reproduction used for the catalogue precluded the inclusion of illustrations of the artwork and consequently the only reproduction I have is the image used on the cover. The drawing 'Parents and Child' by Peter Neuschul, a six year old Sudeten German child, shows a small boy standing between his mother and father in front of their home and was presumably selected to evoke the children's pre-war lives and their current displacement from home and family. My understanding of the content of the artworks is therefore reliant on the brief descriptions included in the catalogue. It noted that the war was most obviously reflected in the work of the seven to nine age group with a larger proportion of images of 'air raids, aeroplanes, warships etc.' Children between ten and 13 were described as being old enough to choose their own themes and 'Boring Afternoon' and 'Reflexion' are mentioned as subjects chosen. The 14 to 16 age group were noted as being particularly interested in poster and propaganda art, and displaying more national differences than other age groups. A work entitled 'Vive la Republique' showing a French Tricolore and a drummer beating reveille, and the 'wall-newspaper of the Basque children' were noted as deserving of special interest.²³

The exhibition was opened on the 16 of August 1941 with an event chaired by Vivien Ogilvie of the New Education Fellowship which boasted an impressive line-up of speakers testifying to the many overlapping webs of connections between its supporters. Jan Masaryk, Foreign Secretary of the Czech Government in exile, and Julian Huxley both addressed the gathering, and the British Member of Parliament Eleanor Rathbone and Kokoschka were also due to speak.²⁴ The opening event also included a performance of Shakespeare in German reflecting the broad cultural interests of the FGLC.

Following its London opening the exhibition toured the UK promoted by local refugee organisations. In December 1941, for example, it appeared at Glasgow High School

²²Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013),9, 20.

²³ *Children's Art from All Countries*, 11.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, invitation bound with catalogue.

under the auspices of the Scottish Refugee Centre. The newspaper account described 'some hundreds' of pictures ranging from a five year old's 'crayoned row of simple flowers' to 'many war pictures of 'planes, ships, soldiers, anti-aircraft guns, and bombed buildings.'²⁵ In January 1942 the exhibition was seen in Birmingham displayed in Lewis' department store under the auspices of Birmingham Council for Refugees. To ensure maximum local interest the exhibition was supplemented by art work by local school children showing the effects of air raids on Birmingham.²⁶ The local press attention publicized the work of the RCEF and expressed sentiments similar to those in the exhibition catalogue, the *Birmingham Mail*, for example, quoted the Lord Mayor's view that 'it was through such exhibitions of international art that the march towards the world we sought might begin.'²⁷

In total, the exhibition visited some 45 British towns and cities and a complementary exhibition also toured the USA, visiting Boston, New York and San Francisco, selected by a committee of allied artists chaired by Herbert Read, the art critic and author of *Education Through Art*.²⁸ Read was involved in the compilation of other international exhibitions of children's art including a touring exhibition which he coordinated for the British Council and which he described in an article in *Picture Post* in April 1944 where he extolled the innate internationalism of children's art:

Out of a war-distracted world, these drawings seemed to come like emblems of peace and sanity, and they expressed, not the ideology of the warring nations, but something universal, international and creative.²⁹

He ascribed the change from peaceful childhood to warring adulthood to 'some fundamental defect in all the educational systems of the world'.³⁰ Read's response as discussed by Grosvenor and Pataki in their article in this special issue, was to formulate an alternative concept of 'aesthetic education'. Although it is not clear if the British Council exhibition was directly related to the initiatives under consideration here, Read's sentiments articulated in the *Picture Post* article echo those expressed by Hans Siebert and Oskar Kokoschka in the catalogue published to accompany the 1943 exhibition *The War as Seen by Children*.

²⁵ *The Glasgow Herald*, 26 December 1941.

²⁶ *Birmingham Post*, 21 January 1942; *Evening Dispatch*, 20 January 1942; *Birmingham Mail*, 20 January 1942.

²⁷ *Birmingham Mail*, 20 January 1942.

²⁸ *The War as Seen by Children*, 6; Herbert Read, *Education Through Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1943).

²⁹ Herbert Read, "Children's Drawings: Are they really good?" *Picture Post*, 1 April 1944, 16.

³⁰ *Ibid.*.

The War as Seen by Children

The success of the 1941 exhibition prompted the organisers to expand their vision. Reflecting on *Children's Art from All Countries*, Siebert explained that 'it soon became apparent to those concerned, and to the great number of Allied educationists who had seen the exhibition, that its value was much greater than had at first been anticipated.'³¹ A meeting of 'representatives of the Allied Governments and the Free Movements' was convened by Professor Patzak from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Education and delegates representing Greece, Denmark, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Luxembourg, Spain, Belgium, Austria, Norway, Unites States, France, India, and Free Germans attended. Following the meeting offers of assistance were also received from representatives from Poland, USSR and China.³² On 4 January 1943 *The War as Seen by Children* exhibition was opened at the Cooling Galleries in New Bond Street, London by Oskar Kokoschka and Lady Elizabeth Winifred Clark, society hostess and wife of art historian and patron Kenneth Clark. The catalogue was more elaborate than that produced for the earlier exhibition and was originally intended as the first in a series of 'Modern Educational Booklets' entitled *Our Children Today and Tomorrow* edited by Fladung. The proceeds were to contribute to the upkeep of the school for refugee children at Theydon Bois, described in the catalogue as 'Solely dependent on voluntary contributions'.³³

The RCEF's collaboration with a broad range of refugee and child welfare organisations is illustrated by the number of agencies that are listed in both catalogues. They included Professor Norman Bentwich of the Central Council for Jewish Refugees, Dr. Margarita Comas Camps of the Basque Children's Committee, Edward Fuller of The Save the Children Fund, Dorothy Hardisty of the Refugee Children's Movement, F.H. Loeffler of the Youth Relief and Refugee Council, and representatives of the London Republic of Czech Trust Fund, and the Czech Trust Fund's Children's Section. In addition to these agencies, a

³¹ *The War as Seen by Children*, 2.

³² *Ibid.*, 6.

³³ *The War as Seen by Children*, 24; on Theydon Bois and refugee schools generally see Hildegard Feidel-Mertz, "Integration and Formation of Identity: Exile Schools in Great Britain," *Shofar* 23, no. 1, Fall 2004: 71-84. Feidel-Mertz describes Theydon Bois under the directorship of Hans Schellenberger as concentrating on preparing young German and Austrian refugees to return home and therefore providing a knowledge of German language and culture. Siebert also had a keen interest in German educational reconstruction after the war which is reflected in his pamphlet, J.G.Siebert, *The Remaking of German Youth* (London: I.N.G. publications Ltd., [1944]).

wide range of well-known political, educational and cultural activists are listed as patrons of the RCEF including the Duchess of Atholl, Vernon Bartlett M.P., Vera Brittain, Fenner Brockway, Walter de La Mare, Julian Huxley, Susan Isaacs, A.S. Neill, Vivian Ogilvie, Hermon Ould, J.B. Priestley, Edith Pye, Sir Michael Sadler, Vita Sackville-West, Margaret Storm-Jameson, and Dame Sybil Thorndike.

The 1943 catalogue reproduced the text of Oskar Kokoschka's address at the opening event. Kokoschka had come to Britain in October 1938 under the auspices of the Artists Refugee Committee.³⁴ His work had been included in the 1937 *Degenerate Art Exhibition* in Munich and of all the exiled artists who came to the UK during the war it was his work that was most affected by the Nazi cultural persecution.³⁵ Whilst living in exile in Britain Kokoschka undertook a number of political paintings and involved himself in refugee organisations, primarily the FGLC and the Austrian Centre. In 1945 he launched a poster campaign 'In memory of the children of Europe who have to die of cold and hunger this Christmas' in London underground stations to raise awareness of the need for transnational assistance for children affected by the conflict.³⁶

The 1943 catalogue also included reproductions of some of the children's work. Photographs of the gallery showing works mounted on the walls and images of the opening event are reproduced (Figure 1) together with 20 individual works, presumably selected for publication by Fladung and Siebert because of their quality and their visual and emotional power. They are captioned with a title and, in most cases, the name, nationality and age of the artist. The published images include work by French, German, Austrian, Polish and Chinese children together with that of British children, reflecting a desire to promote a sense of solidarity and common childhood experience of war, and the latter specifically to attract a British audience. Although they do not provide a sufficient sample for us to undertake a systematic analysis of their representativeness, or draw firm interpretations about the children's emotional or psychological state from their content as has been undertaken with children's art of the Holocaust and the Spanish Civil War, they give a

³⁴ Vinzent, *Identity and Image*, 32.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

³⁶ Oskar Kokoschka, *My Life*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 168-9.

flavour of the paintings and drawings that were on display.³⁷ Taken together with the text they provide powerful and evocative illustrations in support of the political, educational and humanitarian messages that the authors wanted to convey to their audience. A city in flames is portrayed in 'Incendiary Bomb being put out by two Firemen' by George Herzog, whilst 'Terror' by Karin Glaser shows a screaming female figure. 'New Order' also by George Herzog depicts an execution by firing squad, and 'In Poland Now' (Figure 2) by an un-named Polish child shows the devil and a skeletal grim reaper flying over houses whilst the moon and the stars look on weeping.

Reading the texts by Fladung, Siebert and Kokoschka in the catalogue it becomes abundantly clear that they and their wider circle of supporters recognised that exhibitions of children's art provided an effective means of making a political, educational and humanitarian intervention in the discourses surrounding refugees, and refugee children in particular. The active role played by exhibitions as a technology for disseminating educational and political ideas and practices has been recognised by a number of historians of education.³⁸ Both of the exhibitions studied here can be seen as part of a tradition of exhibiting children's art to raise political awareness and money for humanitarian causes.³⁹ A few years earlier, for example, exhibitions of art by children from Republican educational colonies had appeared in Britain and the USA during the Spanish Civil War to elicit political and humanitarian support and raise money for Spanish relief.⁴⁰ These earlier exhibitions display a shared understanding of the effectiveness of children's drawings as polemical tools, together with a shared belief in children's creativity and cultural expression as a means of bringing about change. They capitalised upon a growing interest and appreciation

³⁷ See for example Nicholas Stargardt, "Children's Art of the Holocaust," *Past and Present* 161 (Nov 1998): 191-235; Anthony Geist and Peter N. Carroll, *They Still Draw Pictures: Children's Art in Wartime from the Spanish Civil War to Kosovo* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

³⁸ Eckhardt Fuchs, "Educational Sciences, Morality and Politics: International Educational Congresses in the Early Twentieth Century," *Paedagogica Historica* 40 (5 & 6), 2004: 757-784; Ian Grosvenor, "'Pleasing to the Eye and at the Same Time Useful in Purpose': a historical exploration of educational exhibitions" in Martin Lawn and Ian Grosvenor, eds., *Materialities of Schooling: Design-Technology-Objects-Routines* (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2005), 163-176; Margaret H. White, "Exhibiting Practices: paper as a site of communication and contested practice" in Lawn and Grosvenor op. cit., 177-199. Siân Roberts, "Exhibiting Children at Risk: child art, international exhibitions and Save the Children Fund in Vienna, 1919-1923," *Paedagogica Historica* 45 (1 & 2), 2009: 171-90; Karin Priem and Geert Thyssen, "Puppets on a string in a theatre of display? Interactions of image, text, material, space and motion in *The Family of Man* (ca. 1950s-1960s)," *Paedagogica Historica* 49 (6), 2013: 828-845.

³⁹ See Siân Roberts, "Exhibiting Children at Risk: child art, international exhibitions and Save the Children Fund in Vienna, 1919-1923," *Paedagogica Historica* 45 (1 & 2), 2009: 171-190.

⁴⁰ Geist and Carroll, *They Still Draw Pictures*, op.cit.

for children's art that had developed during the early twentieth century, and which was associated with modernist artists in particular, and the search for a new visual language through which to express the cataclysm of the First World War in which several artists, including Kokoschka, had served.⁴¹

The predominant political message that emerges from the texts written by Fladung, Siebert and Kokoschka is the importance of international co-operation, both to counter fascism and as a basis for future peace. The powerful language used by Siebert in his foreword to the 1943 publication leaves the reader in no doubt of his opinion of the evils of fascism and of the crimes of the Nazi regime in particular. His opening sentence referring to 'suffering children who have been haunted and persecuted by the merciless child-hunters of our age – the Fascists' set the tone for the remainder of his text.⁴² Siebert interpreted the children's art work as displaying the young artists' hatred for fascism and war and their love of humanity, and the exhibition was promoted as a vehicle to communicate their opinions.⁴³ The intention was to reflect the following headings from the child-artists own perspectives:

- 1) How the child sees the present struggle
- 2) How refugee and evacuated children rediscover and rebuild life and their national culture
- 3) How the refugee or evacuated child sees its new surroundings
- 4) How the children of the United Nations feel united in a common purpose
- 5) How they see the future.⁴⁴

The organisers fully recognised that the political and educational messages aimed at their audience would be all the more effective if they were 'brought home to us by the children themselves'.⁴⁵

The children are repeatedly represented as having firm opinions about the war borne out of their own experiences and their innate humanism and internationalism. For Kokoschka the children's art work contained an artistic authenticity and essential truth. Unspoilt by modern industrial civilisation, in contrast to adults the children possess an innate ability to grasp the true meaning of the crisis and depict it in their art. As a humanist and a follower of Jan Comenius, he believed that the war and its atrocities demonstrated a failure of European education on a mass scale, a failure he ascribed in part at least to a lack

⁴¹ Sue Malvern, "The Ends of Innocence: modern art and modern children", *Art History* 23, (2000): 627-32; see also Gordon Hughes and Philipp Blom, *Nothing but the Clouds Unchanged: Artists in World War 1* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2014).

⁴² *The War as Seen by Children*, 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

of creative education:

As grown-ups are responsible for the education of the little ones it follows, that something must have been generally wrong with the European system of education to national ends, as it has allowed two world-catastrophes to happen inside twenty years. Our education has not taught us creative work and it was mainly based on words.⁴⁶

Elsewhere in an essay on Comenius he maintained that the answer to the world's plight was to remove 'education for national ends', thereby facilitating a more collaborative, cooperative and peaceful future.⁴⁷ It was the children's willingness to work collaboratively that provided a model for adults of 'an ideal human society of the future.'⁴⁸

This message of post-conflict renewal through children, specifically the children of the 'United Nations', was also made explicit in Siebert's introduction:

The children of the United Nations feel a noble hate for everything that is insincere and inhuman, selfish and ignorant, and a great love for the human qualities in life. On account of that their paintings are deeply moving and inspiring for adults. By expressing the contents of their lives, the children have rid themselves of what repressed them and have produced in their paintings a message of hope and encouragement for the future. By working together for the common purpose of these exhibitions, they have strengthened a friendly and comradely spirit amongst themselves which will be a most important asset for future international co-operation.⁴⁹

The children were represented as active agents of future peace and international co-operation who were to play their part as the carriers of 'the spirit of true democracy' in the post-war world.⁵⁰

The therapeutic benefits of cultural self-expression

Enabling the children to express their impressions and experiences of war through creativity was closely connected to another of the exhibition organisers' educational aims, addressing trauma through self-expression and subsequently supporting readjustment and future development through cultural learning. The drawings were repeatedly referred to as documentary evidence of the psychological effects of conflict and displacement on the children, and part of the impetus was to utilise the therapeutic potential of art to address psychological problems or 'war damage'. In his opening paragraph in *The War as Seen by*

⁴⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁷ Kokoschka, Oskar, "Comenius, the English Revolution, and our Present Plight," in Benes, Eduard, ed., *The Teacher of Nations. Addresses and Essays in Commemoration of the visit to England of the great Czech Educationalist Jan Amos Komensky 1641-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942), 61-9.

⁴⁸ *The War as Seen by Children*, 8 -10.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 4-6.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 10.

Children Siebert articulated the need:

When the outbreak of the war brought the possibility of rescuing children almost to a standstill, we realized that – although no effort should be spared to save as many child victims of Fascism as possible – greater attention should be paid to the recuperation and rehabilitation of those children who had found a refuge in this country.⁵¹

He repeatedly stressed the need for the children to express rather than repress their experiences as part of their emotional rehabilitation:

...such an exhibition could have the greatest educational value towards the immediate object of readjusting children who had undergone an interruption in their normal development and had been forced to pass through cruel and unusual experiences which lent themselves to inhibitions, repressions and distortions of growing-up processes... Child life and child art are of necessity inseparable. They interact closely upon each other. Once their lives have been disturbed, art helps them not only to find an outlet for repressions, to readjust themselves, but to express truly those finer and nobler qualities which they had to develop prematurely in defence against the onslaught of their frightful enemies.⁵²

These sentiments reflect the growing interest in the value of therapeutic cultural expression during the Second World War. It was during the war and the immediate post-war period that art therapy emerged as a profession driven by the need to rehabilitate injured soldiers and building on earlier work with sufferers of tuberculosis. Indeed the term ‘art therapy’ was reputedly coined in 1942 by the artist and tuberculosis sufferer Adrian Hill and it was advocated by key figures involved in child art such as Herbert Read in this period.⁵³ Beyond Britain art as a means to express traumatic experiences had been used with children in educational colonies during the Spanish Civil War, and drawing and other forms of cultural expression were utilised in Theresienstadt by the Austrian artist Friedl Dicker-Brandeis.⁵⁴

Once past trauma had begun to be addressed cultural learning was a significant factor in the emotional readjustment of the children, and the formation of new lives :

Once they had begun to settle down in their own national schools, homes, hostels and with foster parents, the readjustment of their characters and their adaptation together with education and vocational training emerged as new tasks.⁵⁵

This approach can be seen in practice in German schools in exile founded in the UK after

⁵¹ *The War as Seen by Children*, 1.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁵³ Susan Hogan, *Healing Arts: The History of Art Therapy*, (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001), 290, 307-8.

⁵⁴ See Anne D. Dutlinger, ed., *Art, Music, Education as Strategies for Survival: Theresienstadt 1941-45* (London and New York: Herodias, 2001); Stargardt, “Children’s Art of the Holocaust,” *op.cit.*; and Geist and Carrol, *They Still Draw Pictures*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ *The War as Seen by Children*, 1.

1933. The refugee schools placed great emphasis on the cultural education of their pupils and the part played by culture and creativity in helping them adapt to new lives. In 1933 the staff and about 70 pupils from the progressive Herrlingen School, originally founded in 1926 by Ana Essinger, transferred from Germany to a manor house near Faversham. It became the New Herrlingen School, subsequently renamed Bunce Court School from 1936 until its closure in 1948.⁵⁶ Essinger was later asked by the Refugee Children's Movement to assist at Dovercourt Camp where the Kindertransport children were placed temporarily in 1938 and where she initiated a programme of learning.⁵⁷ Essinger's school was followed by Dr. Hilde Lion's Stroatley Rough, a coeducational school which moved to Haslemere in Surrey and which, like Bunce Court, had a close relationship with the Religious Society of Friends (also known as Quakers) and its humanitarian relief work.⁵⁸ Although born in Germany, Essinger had come into contact with Quakers whilst living in America where she attended the University of Wisconsin from 1913, and she subsequently undertook relief work with the Quakers in Germany in 1919.⁵⁹ Both Bunce Court and Stroatley Rough aimed to facilitate the children's adaptation to their removal from their home countries and their adjustment to their new circumstances. Hildegard Feidel-Mertz has argued that although there were slight differences in emphasis, the work of both schools was rooted in three fundamental elements - preserving the children's German language and cultural heritage, helping them to acquire English language and culture, and communicating and reinforcing their Jewish heritage and identity through the history and traditions of Judaism.⁶⁰ Bunce Court, for example, taught modern Hebrew with a view to possible emigration to Palestine.⁶¹ This interest in Jewish heritage is in accordance with the findings of studies of refugees in this period, and both Marion Berghahn and, more recently Angela Davis, for example, have

⁵⁶ Feidel-Mertz, "Integration and Formation of Identity," 71-2, 75; see also Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain, 1938-1945* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2012), 29-30.

⁵⁷ Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 30, 116. Other schools included Dr. Kurt Hahn's Gordonstoun, The Beltane School of Ernst and Ilse Bulova of Berlin, and Camp Hill House, Aberdeen, founded on Steiner principles by Karl Koenig, see Feidel-Mertz, "Integration and Formation of Identity," 72-3; Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 31-32.

⁵⁸ Feidel-Mertz, "Integration and Formation of Identity," 72, 75; Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 30-31. See also Barbara Wolfenden, *Little Holocaust Survivors and the English School that Saved Them* (Oxford/Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood World Publishing, 2008).

⁵⁹ Uta-Elizabeth Trott, "Essinger, Anna (1879-1960)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/58720> accessed 2 January 2017.

⁶⁰ Feidel-Mertz, "Integration and Formation of Identity," 75.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

emphasised the significance of a renewed interest in their Jewish identity for refugees.⁶²

Most of the children at Bunce Court were German with smaller numbers of Czech, Polish, Austrian, Palestinian, Hungarian and British pupils.⁶³ In addition to the support of the Quakers, the school benefitted from similar networks to the FGLC exhibitions described earlier and Norman Bentwich of the Central Council for Jewish Refugees, for example, gave the address at the school's first open day in 1933.⁶⁴ Cultural learning played a significant part in the life and pedagogy of the school. The *Bunce Court Messenger* from 1938 includes reports of various performances of music, opera and drama together with a report of an exhibition of the children's work comprising of 'a large collection of paintings, drawings, and handicrafts.'⁶⁵ Later in the same year Archibald Ziegler, an artist based in London, gave an introduction to modern painting, and another display of art and handwork was exhibited at the School's open day:

The exhibition contained more this time than ever before. Not only were the classrooms dedicated to the arts, but all the available walls of the main house glowed with the paintings which had been produced under the direction of Mrs. Hoffer. In the Gym Hall plenty of fine examples of handwork could be seen: work in wood, leather, textile, etc.

For the first time, too, the exhibits were put on sale, as we need money for the equipment of the new laboratory. They met with great approval, and a considerable sum of money was thus collected. As many as five pictures were purchased, works by Nina Ziegler, Margaret Yardley, Mirjam Mehl, and Gerhart Keller.⁶⁶

In her brief history of the school Essinger described its cultural life which included the promotion of extra-curricular music, drama (including Shakespeare in German), drawing and painting lessons, a course on the history of art and, until the war intervened, visits to galleries in London. She also outlined how culture contributed both to supporting the children's German identities in exile and to their adaptation to their new home in England. :

There was a two-fold aim: to make the children feel that human values had not changed in spite of everything that had happened; and that their cultural background was worth cultivating even though they were removed from their natural soil. On the other hand, they had to learn to look forward to living in a foreign country, to appreciate the people with whom they had to live and communicate, to dig up new ground for themselves. It was found necessary to help the children find a new attitude

⁶² Marion Berghahn, *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007); Angela Davis, 'Belonging and 'Unbelonging': Jewish refugee and survivor women in 1950s Britain', *Women's History Review* 26 (1) 2017: 130-146.

⁶³ Anna Essinger, *Bunce Court School 1933-1943*, Wiener Library, London, 00492 S3b091, 15.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁵ *Bunce Court Messenger: A Journal for Friends of Bunce Court School*, No. 1 May 1938, Wiener Library, London, PO3248.

⁶⁶ *Bunce Court Messenger: A Journal for Friends of Bunce Court School*, No. 2 August 1938, Wiener Library, London, PO3248.

towards life, to teach them to live together, to plan together, and to do things together; to develop into all-round human beings and to respect other human beings, no matter how different they were; to respect their own work and that of the others; to be able to appreciate things worth while, and to do without all the trivial and small things that many city children were accustomed to accept thoughtlessly – these were the aims of the life in the School. Many free activities helped to stress these facts; we were fortunate in having inspiring teachers not only for the scientific subjects but also the artistic ones.⁶⁷

Similarly Stootley Rough had a lively cultural programme and was ‘very keen at teaching our pupils Arts and Crafts’.⁶⁸ At this stage, without further research I have no way of knowing how successful, or not, the schools were in supporting the process of adaptation and acculturation to an English way of life. Although it is important not to assume a homogeneity of refugee experiences based on limited testimony, the historiography of displacement suggests that many refugees, both adults and those who arrived in Britain as children, suffered from long-term feelings of anxiety, loss and alienation despite the pressure from society, schools, and the Anglo-Jewish community to assimilate; a situation that contributed to the development of complex personal identities that Phyllis Lassner has characterised as ‘hyphenated’, or in-between.⁶⁹

Although no drawings from these two schools are known to survive in archival collections The Imperial War Museum holds a collection of drawings and essays by Czech children housed at Plas-yn-Green, Denbigh, and Edmond Castle (one of the homes represented in the 1941 exhibition) which illustrate similar aims.⁷⁰ The majority originate from Plas-yn-Green and show signs of having been mounted for display at some point. They depict domestic scenes, harvest, sport, and special days such as Easter and mother’s day. A number refer directly to the war and illustrate campaigns to save paper, aid collections for Russia, and the Czech and German armies. There are depictions of Hitler and of ‘Viki’, a Czech soldier who appears to have visited the children.

This use of art with refugee children reflects similar initiatives by British progressive educationalists and other practitioners concerned with the welfare of children in this period. Michal Shapira and John Stewart have both recently argued for the decisive part played by

⁶⁷ Anna Essinger, *Bunce Court School 1933-1943*, Wiener Library, London, 00492 S3b091, 10-11.

⁶⁸ Minutes of the Council and Board of Governors, 1934-59, 26 May 1937, LSE Archives, Stootley Rough School/1/1.

⁶⁹ Phyllis Lassner, *Anglo-Jewish Women Writing the Holocaust: Displaced Witnesses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 12. See also Berghahn, *Continental Britons*, op.cit.; Davis, “Belonging and ‘Unbelonging’,” op.cit..

⁷⁰ Imperial War Museum, London, collection reference 2985.

the Second World War in advancing psychological approaches centred on children, with an increasing emphasis on discourses of family separation and the mother-child relationship.⁷¹ The introduction of mass evacuation of children within the UK as a result of air raids on British cities had prompted a growing interest among educationalists and psychologists in attempting to measure the effects of war on children on the home front, and of displacement and separation from their families. Several of the supporters of both the 1941 and 1943 exhibitions were progressive educationalists with an interest in child psychology, the child study movement, and the use of education as a tool for promoting peace and international understanding, and who turned their attention to the effects of displacement on children during the war.⁷² These included Vivian Ogilvie of the New Education Fellowship, William Burnlee Curry of the progressive boarding school Dartington Hall, the progressive educationalists A.S. Neill and Sir Michael Sadler, Elsie Parker, former President of the National Union of Teachers, and the psychologist Susan Isaacs. In March 1940 Isaacs published an article entitled 'The Uprooted Child' in *The New Era*, in which she analysed the effects of displacement by evacuation on children removed from English cities through a reading of essays written by the children.⁷³ In it she argued for the importance of self-expression by the child:

We cannot give the children what they need, however, without some understanding of what this great experience has meant *to them*; what they felt like when they were suddenly uprooted and taken away from their parents to entirely new surroundings, and had to learn to live with new people. We need to realize what these experiences mean to the child himself, with his limited knowledge and understanding of life, and his feelings of dependence, his need for affection and his proneness to anxiety.⁷⁴

Although the strategy employed to record and comprehend the child's viewpoint here was the written essay, the aim was similar to that of Siebert, Fladung and Kokoschka.

Shapira also draws attention to the significant role played in the development of child psychology by refugee practitioners who settled in the UK during the 1930s.⁷⁵ The best known is probably Anna Freud who, in addition to the war nurseries with which she is most

⁷¹ Michal Shapira, *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); John Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918-1955* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013).

⁷² See for example Dorothy Burlingham and Anna Freud, "The Young Child in Wartime," *The New Era*, April-May 1942, 57-85.

⁷³ Susan Isaacs, "The Uprooted Child," *The New Era*, March 1940, 54-59.

⁷⁴ Isaacs, "The Uprooted Child," 54.

⁷⁵ Shapira, *The War Inside*, 3.

frequently associated, also worked with six orphan Jewish survivors from Theresienstadt at a house named Bulldogs Bank in West Hoathly, Sussex.⁷⁶ The aim was to assist the children, who were aged about three and had no knowledge of life outside a camp setting, to adjust psychologically and develop positive relationships with adults. Similarly, like the organisers of the exhibitions considered here, other refugee cultural educators in Britain were influenced by psychological approaches and had turned their attention towards art therapy. The artist Arthur Segal left Germany in 1933 and developed his ideas on painting as psychotherapy at his art school in Hampstead from 1937.⁷⁷ He moved the school to Oxford in September 1939 but returned to London in 1943.⁷⁸ He worked in partnership with the Quaker founders of Hawkspur Camp, a therapeutic environment for young offenders established in 1936, and three young men from the Camp attended his school. Although he had an interest in psychology and knew a number of psychological practitioners, his practice was based in art rather than psychological theory, and for Segal it was the process of engaging in emotional expression through art that was therapeutic.⁷⁹ Although we have no evidence that Segal worked with refugee children his practice and his publications were undoubtedly influential in this period and may well have influenced another émigré artist and teacher Marie Paneth.

Paneth was born in Austria on 15 August 1895 and like Dicker-Brandeis studied art at Franz Cizek's Viennese children's art class.⁸⁰ Her father in law Joseph Paneth was a friend of Sigmund Freud's whom she met in 1920. Paneth travelled widely during her life but spent most of the war years in England.⁸¹ She was a teacher who worked with children in air-raid shelters and with young 'delinquents' in the Branch Street Schools in London during the war. The outcomes of her work were published in 1944 under the title *Branch Street: A*

⁷⁶ Shapira, *The War Inside*, 77-83. When the children arrived at the house they demonstrated profound anxiety, very aggressive behaviour towards adults, and significant emotional dependence on each other. After 10 months at Bulldogs Bank they were reintegrated into a wider group of rescued children in Surrey.

⁷⁷ Imogen Wiltshire, "Painting as Psychotherapy: Arthur Segal's *Painting School for Professionals and Non-Professionals (1937-1944)*" MPhil(b) University of Birmingham, 2013.

⁷⁸ Wiltshire, 2013, 16.

⁷⁹ Wiltshire, 2013.

⁸⁰ For an account of the use of the drawings of Cizek's art class in an exhibition to benefit The Save the Children Fund see Roberts, "Exhibiting Children at Risk," op. cit..

⁸¹ Catalogue of Marie Paneth Papers, Library of Congress, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009279> accessed 13 May 2015.

Sociological Survey, a text which influenced a number of subsequent art therapists.⁸² Although Paneth is not listed as a patron of our exhibitions it is difficult to believe that she was unaware of them as she moved in Austrian refugee and aid circles in London.⁸³ In July 1946 she published an article on her work with young survivors of concentration camps in the journal *The New Era*.⁸⁴

Paneth's article described her work at the camp established near Lake Windermere for the children and young people brought to England at the end of the war. The reception camp opened in August 1945 and among the staff were the psychoanalyst Oscar Friedman, and a former employee at Freud's Hampstead Nursery, Alice Goldberger.⁸⁵ Paneth writes of the 300 or so children who arrived in the first group, the majority of whom were Polish with some German, Czech and Hungarian children included as well. Most were over the age of 15 with the exception of about 20 who were under ten, and 'a handful' aged between ten and 14.⁸⁶ By the end of the first week Paneth ensured that there were opportunities for them to draw and paint as well as undertake their other lessons in English. A room was set aside with choices of poster and powder paint, chalk, crayon, brushes and paper laid out 'in an attractive array'. Paneth stressed that the activity was entirely voluntary and that she was careful to offer 'no suggestions for their work from me, nor any criticism ever', other than comments of approval whatever the standard.⁸⁷ Paneth was adamant that she was not teaching them how to paint but offering an opportunity for self-expression, and was conscious that it was many years since they had the opportunity to be creative. Although the artistic quality of the work was not high, she maintained that the important aspect for her was the young artists' enjoyment of the activity and the opportunity it afforded of expressing feelings, 'wishes and fears' and for 'release' in a 'non-verbal way':

It is obvious that children who have suffered emotionally may profit from using a medium which, like music and drama, is especially suited to express and release emotional tension.⁸⁸

⁸² Marie Paneth, *Branch Street: A Sociological Survey* (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1944); Hogan, *Healing Arts*, 290-301.

⁸³ Paneth was involved in relief and educational exchanges through the Anglo-Austrian Society, see Frederick Scheu, *The Early Days of the Anglo-Austrian Society* (Anglo-Austrian Society: London, 1969).

⁸⁴ Marie Paneth, "Notes on Drawing and Painting with Children from Concentration Camps," *The New Era*, July 1946, 179-182.

⁸⁵ Shapira, *The War Inside*, 78.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 179.

She was particularly struck by the change in their behaviour and demeanour, and the fact that whilst painting they were much quieter and calmer than usual.

In all 66 of the children took the opportunity to use the art materials. Although she does not analyse the content of their work in detail, Paneth draws certain psychological inferences and maintained that the paintings became more expressive as time went on, 'telling in bolder language of the emotional life of the child.'⁸⁹ Commenting on their choice of subject she expressed her surprise at how many began by drawing a Star of David - 25 pictures in total done by 17 different children, 15 boys aged 10-17 and two nine year old girls.⁹⁰ The majority of the other works were of houses, 'all surrounded by huge fences'; a number portrayed burning houses and towns, and several depicted the concentration camp or ghetto. She contrasted the drawings with those of the British children in war-time shelters with whom she had worked previously, and concluded that the camp children were 'painfully accurate and neat, with a severe restraint which is oppressive.'⁹¹ She also concluded that they were more apt to attempt to factually reconstruct actual experiences than the British children in the shelters. Of the 2,500 drawings produced by some 350 shelter children with whom she worked, very few depicted life in the shelter or aspects of the blitz. She ascribed this contrast to the fact that although the shelter children's lives had been disrupted by events, unlike the camp children their experiences 'had not shaken the fundamental structures of their lives'. Consequently, she theorized, their experiences 'did not prevent them from expressing their emotional life in the normal way through the symbols used at their respective ages.'⁹² The camp children in contrast could not use these conventional symbols when they began drawing. Although she described some of the artwork as 'documentary evidence of the emotional state they are in' and therefore of some diagnostic value to those responsible for their well-being, she ascribed the primary importance of the exercise to a release of emotional pressure achieved through 'the chance painting gives these children to express through a medium other than words, things which cannot be said in words.'⁹³

⁸⁹ Ibid., 179.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 180.

⁹¹ Ibid., 181.

⁹² Ibid., 181.

⁹³ Ibid., 182.

Conclusion

Drawing and painting are amongst the favourite educational activities, and whereas the first spontaneous sketches done by the children on arrival show the part played by scenes of horror in their conscious or unconscious lives, one can notice that later work progressively depicts calmer and more peaceful scenes as the psychological care advances.⁹⁴

This extract describes a visit to a children's house at Pestalozzi Children's Village (Kinderdorf Pestalozzi) which took place during the International Conference of the Directors of Children's Communities held in Trogen, Switzerland in 1948. The conference focused on the 're-educating of homeless children suffering from serious psychological disturbances' and made recommendations for the most beneficial model of education for displaced children.⁹⁵ Several of the contributions to the conference referred to the importance of self-expression, and to its connection with the children's psychological well-being, emotional security, social integration and future development. Director Bourguet of the children's community Rayon de Soleil de Pommeyrol in France, for example, testified that 'Art is a great means of self-expression which often affords release to the children' and cited their drawings, clay models and the patterns they cut out as evidence.⁹⁶ Like the authors of *The War as Seen by Children* the report's authors provided visual evidence of the psychological damage suffered by the children, in this case starkly illustrated in one of the many powerful photographs chosen to illustrate the document. The image shows a small girl drawing a mass of abstract scribbles in chalk on a blackboard, and is captioned a 'tangle of scrawls on the blackboard, a look of remembered horror in her eyes: this little girl of Warsaw tries to draw her home.'⁹⁷ This was a vision of education to enable psychological recovery and emotional well-being through self-expression and creativity that was shared and anticipated by Paneth, the cultural activists of the FGLC, and the educationalists in the refugee schools of the 1930s-1940s.

In my exploration of this particular educational adventure I have argued that the exhibitions discussed provided a space in which the adult members of the Free German League of Culture could express and sustain their identities in exile. Through their cultural,

⁹⁴ Thérèse Brosse, *Homeless Children: Report of the Proceedings of the Conference of Directors of Children's Communities* (Paris: Unesco, 1950), 25, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001337/133713eb.pdf> [accessed 19 February 2016]

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, between pp 32-33.

educational and political interventions, they articulated and promoted an anti-fascist, internationalist refugee perspective and sought to influence the views of the society in which they came to live. Supported by a broad network of British humanitarian, educational and cultural figures, they engaged in an emerging discourse about the utility of art as a therapeutic practice with children suffering from the consequences of war and displacement. Creativity and cultural expression was encouraged as a means of sustaining the children's original identities in refugee schools whilst at the same time enabling adaption to new environments and the potential development of new identities in the UK. Art and culture were promoted as vehicles to enable both adults and children to make meaning of their displacement, and imagine a different future. However, as will be apparent to the reader, many questions remain. Some of these questions relate to the need for further research, both into the educational experiences of refugee children and young people who arrived in Britain in this period and into the roles and pedagogical practices of refugee educationalists in exile. Although refugees active in British art, architecture, and science in the 1930s-50s have received some scholarly attention, there has been no similar assessment for refugee practitioners in education.⁹⁸ Other questions relate to the fragmentary nature of the archival evidence available, and to the silences within it, a common problem which as Kushner has argued has to be recognised by any historian attempting to narrate refugee histories.⁹⁹ The silences within my sources relate in particular to the voices, feelings, and experiences of the refugee children and young people. Who were they and what happened to them? How successful were the German schools in exile in facilitating their adaptation to new surroundings and circumstances? How did the child artists perceive of the inclusion of their artwork and their stories in the exhibitions and the texts which accompanied them? Would they have agreed with the interpretations of their drawings, motivations, and opinions put forward by Fladung, Siebert and Kokoschka? Indeed would they recognise my interpretation here?

Despite the many differences of context and circumstances, the current focus on the fate of displaced children in Europe and beyond, their education and present and future wellbeing provides an unavoidable resonance. In 2014, over 70 years since Fladung, Siebert

⁹⁸ See for example Jean-Michel Palmier, *Weimar in Exile: The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America*, translated from the German by David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2006) and Vinzent, *Identity and Image*, op. cit.;

⁹⁹ Tony Kushner, *The Battle of Britishness: Migrant Journeys 1685 to the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 7, 41.

and Kokoschka produced *The War as Seen by Children*, the humanitarian organisation War Child Holland published *Coloring My Future* [sic], a booklet of children's drawings, quotations and short stories in which children from Syria articulated the five human rights that meant most to them.¹⁰⁰ Described by the organisers as an attempt to 'share children's voices and raise awareness about their daily reality' the small but powerful publication contains several echoes of the earlier initiative.¹⁰¹ Articulating their practice the War Child organisers explain how creativity forms a fundamental part of their approach, facilitating children and young people to express their emotions and encouraging agency and resilience.¹⁰² The project forms one of many similar initiatives in the use of creativity and cultural approaches with children currently displaced in theatres of war. Further exploration in the archaeology of creative therapeutic approaches to learning with refugee children in British educational settings, an area in which there has been relatively little historical work to date, has the potential to inform our understanding of the development of the aims, motivations and practices inherent in this legacy.

¹⁰⁰ War Child Holland, *Coloring My Future. Drawings from Children in Syria* (War Child Holland, 2014), available for download from <http://www.warchildholland.org/coloring-my-future> accessed 19 February 2016.

¹⁰¹ War Child Holland, *Coloring My Future*, 6.

¹⁰² <http://www.warchildholland.org/our-approach> accessed 19 February 2016.