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General Editor: Alessandra Lemma

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# Donald Winnicott Today

I am asking for a kind  
of revolution in our work.  
Let us re-examine what  
we do.

Edited by

Jan Abram

PUBLISHED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS, LONDON

## Donald Winnicott Today

What in Winnicott's theoretical matrix was truly revolutionary for psychoanalysis? In this book, the editor and contributors provide a rare in-depth analysis of his original work, highlighting the prominence he gave to early psychic development, and how this revolutionised the theory and practice of psychoanalysis.

Including re-publications of selected Winnicott papers to set the scene for the themes and explorations in subsequent chapters, the book examines how he expanded on Freud's work, and how his discourse with Melanie Klein sharpened his thought and clinical innovations. Divided into three sections, it covers:

- Introductory overviews of the development of Winnicott's theoretical matrix
- Personal perspectives from eminent psychoanalysts of the influence of Winnicott on their own work
- The extensions of Winnicott's late work on contemporary psychoanalysis

Drawing on her own extensive knowledge of Winnicott and the expertise of the distinguished contributors, Jan Abram shows us how Winnicott's influence is fundamental in understanding how psychoanalytic practice and theory is continuing to develop. As such, it will be an inspiration to experienced psychoanalysts, psychotherapists and students alike.

**Jan Abram** is a psychoanalyst in full time private practice in London and Fellow of the Institute of Psychoanalysis. She is currently Visiting Professor, Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies, University of Essex and a member of the 'Paris Group' – a Working Party of the European Psychoanalytic Federation.

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## THE NEW LIBRARY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

General Editor: Alessandra Lemma

The New Library of Psychoanalysis was launched in 1987 in association with the Institute of Psychoanalysis, London. It took over from the International Psychoanalytical Library which published many of the early translations of the works of Freud and the writings of most of the leading British and Continental psychoanalysts.

The purpose of the New Library of Psychoanalysis is to facilitate a greater and more widespread appreciation of psychoanalysis and to provide a forum for increasing mutual understanding between psychoanalysts and those working in other disciplines such as the social sciences, medicine, philosophy, history, linguistics, literature and the arts. It aims to represent different trends both in British psychoanalysis and in psychoanalysis generally. The New Library of Psychoanalysis is well placed to make available to the English-speaking world psychoanalytic writings from other European countries and to increase the interchange of ideas between British and American psychoanalysts. Through the *Teaching Series*, the New Library of Psychoanalysis now also publishes books that provide comprehensive, yet accessible, overviews of selected subject areas aimed at those studying psychoanalysis and related fields such as the social sciences, philosophy, literature and the arts.

The Institute, together with the British Psychoanalytical Society, runs a low-fee psychoanalytic clinic, organizes lectures and scientific events concerned with psychoanalysis and publishes the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. It runs the a training course in psychoanalysis which leads to membership of the International Psychoanalytical Association – the body which preserves internationally agreed standards of training, of professional entry, and of professional ethics and practice for psychoanalysis as initiated and developed by Sigmund Freud. Distinguished members of the Institute have included Michael Balint, Wilfred Bion, Ronald Fairbairn, Anna Freud, Ernest Jones, Melanie Klein, John Rickman and Donald Winnicott.

Previous general editors have included David Tuckett, who played a very active role in the establishment of the New Library. He was followed as general editor by Elizabeth Bott Spillius, who was in turn followed by Susan Budd and then by Dana Birksted-Breen.

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General Editor Alessandra Lemma

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Edited by  
Jan Abram

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**For JvR**



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Lecturer for the Psychoanalysis Unit at University College London and Honorary Research Fellow the Anna Freud Centre. She was director of the Squiggle Foundation (1996–2000) and Honorary Archivist of the Winnicott Trust (2002–2011). Amongst her publications, *The Language of Winnicott: A Dictionary of Winnicott's Use of Words* (1996 1st edition; 2007 2nd edition) was awarded Outstanding Academic Book of the Year in 1997. She is currently a member of the 'Paris Group' – the Working Party for the Specificity of Psychoanalytic Treatment Today of the European Psychoanalytic Federation. Her current research, linked with the 'Paris Group,' involves a continuation of the themes related to psychic survival in clinical psychoanalysis (see [Chapter 14](#)).

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Zeljko Loparic has a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Louvain (1982), and a post-doc from the University of Konstanz. He is full professor at the Department of Philosophy at UNICAMP. He was Director of the Center for Logic, Epistemology and History of Science (CLE) of the same University (1983–1985), and founder and first president (1989–94) of the Brazilian Kant Society. In 1999, he founded a journal for philosophy and psychoanalysis *Natureza Humana*. In 2004–2008 he presided over the Brazilian Society for Phenomenology. In collaboration with Elsa Oliveira Dias, he founded the Brazilian Winnicott Society (2005), which offers a professional training course on Winnicottian psychoanalysis. He authored *Heidegger Defendant* (1990); *Ethics and Finitude* (1995, 2nd ed. 2004); *Heuristic Descartes* (1997); *Kant's Transcendental Semantics* (2000, 3rd ed. 2005); *On Responsibility* (2003) and *Heidegger* (2004), as well as numerous papers published in national and international journals on the general philosophy of science (Mach, Carnap, Kuhn), history of philosophy (Descartes, Kant, Heidegger), and philosophy and history of psychoanalysis (Freud, Klein, Lacan, Winnicott).

**Marion Milner** ([Chapter 6](#))

Marion Milner (1900–1998) was a distinguished British psychoanalyst whose work in the cultural and educational field preceded her becoming a psychoanalyst. Her well-known early books explored the nature of art, leisure and education. In 1950, she published 'On not being able to paint,' which is an autobiographical account of her voyage into the unconscious in her effort to reach the 'prelogical'

area of the mind. In 1969 she published ‘The hands of the living god’ which is a painstaking account of her analysis of a severely disturbed patient. She was a well-respected Training Analyst of the Institute of Psychoanalysis and a contemporary of Donald Winnicott. Her own distinctive contribution to psychoanalysis, clinically and theoretically, can be seen in her major works – *The Suppressed Madness of Sane Men* and *The Hands of the Living God*.

**André Green** (Chapter 7)

André Green was a psychoanalyst who lived and worked in Paris. He is Past-President of the Paris Psychoanalytical Society and was Vice-President of the International Psychoanalytic Association. He was co-editor of the *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse*. He also wrote numerous books, including *On Private Madness*; *The Work of the Negative*; *The Fabric of Affect in the Psychoanalytical Discourse*; *The Chains of Eros*; *Life Narcissis*; *Death Narcissism* and *Key Ideas for a Contemporary Psychoanalysis*. His most recent publication is *Illusions and Disillusions of the Psychoanalytic Work* published by Karnac Books.

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Haydée Faimberg MD is a Training and Supervising Analyst, Paris Psychoanalytical Society (SPP) and Argentine Psychoanalytical Association (APA). She is a former Vice-President of the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA). She currently works in private practice in Paris.

She created what came to be called ‘the Haydée Faimberg “listening to listening” method for clinical discussions’ – using a concept she coined initially in the context of psychoanalytical listening during sessions. This method is used in the ongoing Forum of the European Federation, International Psychoanalytical Congress (IPA), Latino American Federation (FEPAL), NAPsac (North America) and in some psychoanalytic institutes. Since 1993 she has been co-chair, with Anne Marie Sandler, of the ongoing Annual Clinical Meeting of British-French psychoanalysts. She also created and chaired a Conference on Intra-cultural and Inter-cultural Psychoanalytical Dialogue (IPA) (Paris, 1998), where the essay included in this book was presented.

Transmission of the narcissistic mode of solving conflicts between three generations is a main focus of her research, for which she coined the concept of ‘Oedipal configuration and its narcissistic dimension’; identified the functions of ‘appropriation and intrusion’

which regulate narcissistic object relations; developed the concept of ‘telescoping of generations’ and the alienating narcissistic unconscious identifications where three generations are condensed; and defined the function of ‘listening to [the patient’s] listening’. She has conducted research on the ‘psychic consequences of Nazism in psychoanalytic patients’ (her first study on the telescoping of generations was presented at the first congress of the IPA held after the war in Germany). She has written papers on Lewis Carroll and Italo Calvino and is a contributing author to 15 books (18 chapters). She received the ‘Haskell Norman International Award 2005’ and delivered the 44th Annual Freud Lecture, at the Psychoanalytic Association of New York (PANY) in 2009. Her main book is *The Telescoping of Generations: Listening to the Narcissistic Links between Generations*, 2005.

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René Roussillon is a psychoanalyst and Training Analyst and Supervisor of the Société de Psychoanalyse de Paris. He is a Professor at the University of Lyon and was awarded a PhD in clinical psychology in 1988. In 1989, he was appointed Professor of Clinical and Pathological Psychology in the University of Lyon-II. From that point onwards, he has been the head of the clinical psychology department in Lyon University and of the research team focusing on ‘the subjectivation process in borderline states.’ He is also the director of the clinical ‘psycho-hub’ of the Rhône-Alpes region in France, a facility that he founded in 2007. In 1991, he became a Full Member of the Paris Psychoanalytical Society and of the Lyon/Rhône-Alpes Psychoanalytical Group; he is a former president of that association. He has published several books in French on psychoanalysis, as well as a significant number of articles (which have been translated into English, German, Italian, French, Portuguese, Russian, Turkish, Greek, Romanian and Bulgarian). In 1991, he was the recipient of the prestigious ‘Maurice Bouvet Award’ for his book *Paradoxes et Situations Limites de la Psychanalyse* [*Paradoxes and Borderline Situations in Psychoanalysis*]. The main topics of his research work in psychoanalysis have to do with psychical trauma, the analysing situation, and the various forms of transference that may prove problematic within that setting.

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Christopher Reeves PhD is a retired child psychotherapist and former Principal of the Mulberry Bush School. After studying psychology and philosophy at Oxford he trained at the Tavistock Clinic in the course of which he attended seminars run by Donald Winnicott. He completed his doctorate in Philosophy at London University in 1979 with a thesis on models of the mind in the early writings of Freud. He is a former President of the Medical Section of the British Psychological Society and a former editor of the *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*. He was Director of the Squiggle Foundation (2009–2011), an organization dedicated to promoting the knowledge and application of Winnicott's ideas.

**Nellie Thompson** (Chapter 17)

Nellie Thompson PhD is an historian and member of the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, where she serves as the Curator of the Brill Library's Archives and Special Collections. Her research interests include the role of women psychoanalysts in the psychoanalytic movement, both as institutional actors and contributors to

psychoanalytic theory and clinical work. Among her publications are: 'Early Women Psychoanalysts', 'Helene Deutsch: A Life in Theory,' 'Early American Women Psychoanalysts, 1911–1941,' 'A Measure of Agreement: An Exploration of the Relationship of D.W. Winnicott and Phyllis Greenacre,' and 'Karl Abraham in New York: The Contributions of Bertram D. Lewin'. She is co-editor, with Peter Loewenberg, of *100 Years of the IPA: Centenary of the International Psychoanalytical Association, 1910–2010, Evolution and Change* (2011), London: IPA Publishing, and is currently working on a study of Phyllis Greenacre.

**Lisa Farley** (Chapter 18)

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**Anne Patterson** (Glossary)

Anne Patterson is a psychoanalyst practising in London and a Member of the Institute of Psychoanalysis. She is Assistant Editor for the New Library of Psychoanalysis. She also works as consultant psychiatrist in psychotherapy in the NHS. Her special interests include psychoanalysis and literature, French psychoanalysis and, within the NHS, teaching and training.

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# Preface

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Winnicott's writings amount to well over 600 published papers as can be seen in Knud Hjulmand's *Complete Bibliography 2007*. In addition there is an uncalculated amount of unpublished material in the Winnicott archives in London and New York (see the [Appendix](#) for more information on the publications and archives). In the past few years there have been many interesting findings in the Winnicott archives as will be seen in this volume (see [Chapters 14, 17 and 18](#)).

My aim for this volume is to focus on the revolutionary nature of Winnicott's theoretical matrix. Each paper presents a rare in-depth analysis of Winnicott's conceptualizations. The core themes in each chapter, including Winnicott's own, highlight the prominence of early psychic development, both internal – *intra-psychic*, and interpersonally – *inter-psychic*. It is this prominence that constitutes a revolution in the theory and practice of psychoanalysis and thus advances the Freudian project.

In the Introduction the main arguments of each paper are woven together to show how each author examines Winnicott's writings in original and generative ways. The chapters are grouped into three sections and each part begins with a re-publication of a selected Winnicott paper to set the scene for the themes and explorations of the subsequent chapters:

## **1 Introductory overviews**

These four complementary introductions illuminate the evolution of Winnicott's work and together offer a comprehensive panorama of the theoretical matrix.

## **2 Personal perspectives**

The seven chapters in this second section are written by analysts who have made significant contributions to psychoanalysis. While each author's perspective is grounded in Freud's work, many of their own original developments, as seen here, have been inspired by Winnicott's innovations.

## **3 Late Winnicott studies**

This section begins with one of Winnicott's final formulations written just before he died. The subsequent chapters were written for this collection by colleagues I have been corresponding with for many years.

This book has been gestating for many years. I have learnt an enormous amount from the process of selecting and editing the papers and working with all the authors. This volume fills a gap in the Winnicott secondary literature and I hope the reader will find the collection as illuminating and as inspiring as I do.

Jan Abram, London 2012

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## Acknowledgements

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## Donald Woods Winnicott (1896–1971)

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Donald Woods Winnicott was a paediatrician and psychoanalyst for both adults and children. He was a Training Analyst of the Institute of Psychoanalysis and its President on two separate occasions (1956–1959 and 1965–1968). His contribution to child development has been internationally acknowledged since the 1960s when his most popular book was published by Penguin Books *The Child, the Family and the Outside World*. The full realization of his radical contribution to the development of psychoanalysis is increasingly receiving acknowledgement.

### **D.W. Winnicott chronology**

The following chronological information on Winnicott's life and work is presented according to the evolutionary phases of Winnicott's work as seen in [Chapter 3](#). This chapter was first published for the Education Section of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (Abram 2008) and adapted from the following chronologies: Davis and Wallbridge 1981; Kahr 1996; Phillips 1988; Rodman 2003.

### **Birth and education**

1896 – Born on 7 April, third child and only son of John Frederick Winnicott and Elizabeth Martha Woods, in Plymouth, Devon  
1910 – Leaves home to board at The Leys School in Cambridge

- 1914 – Pre-medical course University of Cambridge, Jesus College  
1917 – Surgeon-probationer in the Royal Navy – medical officer on a destroyer at the end of World War I

### **Foundations (1919–1934)**

- 1919 – Looking for a book on dreams, because he became aware that he was not remembering his dreams on returning from the war, he discovers Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and Pfister's *The Psychoanalytic Method* (1915)  
1920–1922 – Qualifies in medicine and becomes a full member of the Royal College of Physicians and begins to specialize in paediatrics  
1923 – Two hospital appointments: Assistant Physician at the Queen's Hospital for Children in Hackney where he also works as Physician in Charge of the London County Council Rheumatism Supervisory Centre until 1933; Consultant Paediatrician at Paddington Green Children's Hospital until retirement in 1963  
1923 July – Marries Alice Buxton Taylor  
1923 – Begins analysis with James Strachey  
1924 – Sets up in private practice and his father receives a knighthood  
1925 – His mother dies  
1926 – Melanie Klein moves to London and becomes a member of BPaS  
1927 – Registers as a candidate at the Institute of Psychoanalysis (IPaL)  
1929 – Begins to attend Scientific Meetings of the BPaS  
1931 – First publication *Clinical Notes on Disorders of Childhood*  
1932 – Reads Klein's *The Psychoanalysis of Children* (1932) and chooses her to supervise one of his training cases  
1933 – Finishes analysis with James Strachey  
1934 – Qualifies as a psychoanalyst

### **Phase One: The environment-individual set-up (1935–1944)**

- 1935 – Qualifies as a child psychoanalyst and becomes the first male child analyst.

- Becomes a full member of the BPaS with his reading in paper ‘The manic defence’ (1958)
- 1935–1941 – In consultation with Melanie Klein on his analytic child cases
- Around this time he starts analysis with Joan Riviere (which will last for five years). Treats Melanie Klein’s son Erich but refuses her wish to supervise the work
- 1939–1962 – Begins broadcasting talks on the radio to mothers at home with their newborn babies
- 1940 – Appointed as Psychiatric Consultant to the Government Evacuation Scheme in Oxford where he meets Clare Britton (later to be his wife)
- 1941 – The beginning of the ‘Controversial Discussions’. Named by Melanie Klein as one of the five Kleinian Training Analysts (King and Steiner 1991)
- 1942 – ‘Dropped’ by Melanie Klein due to not preparing for meetings enough in advance
- 1944 – At the conclusions of the ‘Controversial Discussion’ chooses, with the majority of psychoanalysts, not to align with either Mrs Klein or Miss Freud.
- Appointed Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians

### **Phase Two: Transitional phenomena (1945–1960)**

- 1945 – Presentation of first seminal paper ‘Primitive emotional development’ to the BPaS. Publishes his second book *Getting to Know Your Baby*, a collection of six radio talks
- 1947 – Presents his second seminal paper ‘Hate in the countertransference’ to the BPaS
- 1948 – Father dies and he has his first coronary shortly afterwards. Presents ‘Reparation in respect of mother’s organised defence against depression’ to the BPaS
- 1949 – Separates from his first wife. Suffers a second coronary. Presents ‘Mind and its relation to the psyche-soma’
- 1951 – Marries Clare Britton. Presents ‘Transitional objects and transitional phenomena’ to the BPaS
- 1954 – Presents ‘Metapsychological and clinical aspects of regression within the psychoanalytic set-up’ to the BPaS
- 1956 – Becomes President of BPaS for three years and is involved with the negotiations concerning the Paris split. Presents ‘The

anti-social tendency’ and ‘Primary maternal preoccupation’ to the BPaS

1957 – Two new publications: *The Child and the Family: First Relationships* and *The Child and the Outside World: Studies in Developing Relationships*. Presents ‘The capacity to be alone’

1958 – Publication of first collection of psychoanalytic papers, *Collected Papers: Through Paediatrics To Psychoanalysis*

### **Phase Three: The use of an object (1960–1971)**

1960 – Publishes ‘Theory of the parent–infant relationship’ and writes ‘Ego distortion in terms of true and false self’. Melanie Klein dies

1962 – Presents ‘The development of the capacity for concern’ and ‘Morals and education’ to the BPaS

1963 – Retires from Paddington Green after 40 years. Presents ‘Communicating and not communicating leading to a study of certain opposites’ to the BPaS. Probably writes ‘Fear of breakdown’

1964 – Publishes *The Child, the Family and the Outside World* for Penguin Books

1965 – Becomes President of BPaS for a second time. Publishes *The Family and Individual Development*, and prepares an Introduction for a book on 16 psychoanalytic sessions with a small child. *The Piggle* is eventually published posthumously in 1977

1967 – Publishes ‘Mirror-role of mother and family in child development’

1968 – Awarded the James Spence Medal for Paediatrics. Presents ‘The use of an object’ to the New York Psychoanalytic Society. Is subsequently seriously ill and hospitalized in New York (see [Chapters 3, 14 and 16](#))

1969 – Writes on and around ‘The use of an object’ paper and prepares for the publication of *Playing and Reality* and *Therapeutic Consultations*

1970 – After five years of heavy campaigning as Chair of the Freud Statue Committee, the statue is unveiled on 2 October. Writes more on the themes of creativity

1971 – Prepares for the 27th IPA congress to be held in Vienna – ‘The psychoanalytical concept of aggression: theoretical, clinical and applied aspects’ – where he is invited to present on a panel for child analysis. In January he makes a reservation at the Hotel

Sacher Vienna for a week in July (see [Chapter 14](#)) but dies on 25 January. Later that year *Playing and Reality* and *Therapeutic Consultations* are published

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# Introduction

*Jan Abram*

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I am asking for a kind of revolution in our work. Let us re-examine what we do.

(Winnicott 1971: [Chapter 14](#): 321)<sup>1</sup>

The principal aim of this volume is to demonstrate that Winnicott's contribution constitutes a major revolution in psychoanalysis.<sup>2</sup> A sense of self rooted in the newborn's primary relationship is at the heart of his theoretical matrix.<sup>3</sup> Subjectivity, therefore, is inscribed with the m/Other – the primacy of the 'environment-individual set-up' (1958).

Close examination of his theoretical advances reveal that the foundations reside firmly with Sigmund Freud. For Winnicott, psychoanalysis is a theory of emotional development and human nature which can only be examined through the lens of Freud's scientific clinical methodology with its therapeutic aims (1945).

Winnicott's formulations on early psychic development – 'creating the object' and the 'essential paradox of the conception-perception gap' – are inextricably linked with an articulation of the transference-counter transference matrix. This forges an expansion of the analytic setting and creates fertile ground for the recognition of the 'analyzing situation',<sup>4</sup> in which the analyst and analysand engage in 'co-thinking' and 'co-creativity'<sup>5</sup> in the context of the *après coup*.<sup>6</sup>

Winnicott's psychoanalytic clinical investigations led to his view that aggression is a benign force in the newborn infant. These formulations extend Freud's concept of *hilflosigkeit* through a concept that recognizes different stages of dependency in the infant related to the early holding

environment (1965d).<sup>7</sup> While Winnicott's final theory on aggression – the survival of the object – links with the concept of helplessness as well as the *idea* of a self-preservative instinct, at the same time it constitutes a divergence from Freud's late tentative concept of the death instinct.<sup>8</sup> The outcome of these new psychoanalytic extensions on Freud's work, as seen across the whole of Winnicott's work, results in a distinctive psychoanalytic approach that today is understood as a continuation and deepening of the Freudian project (Green 1996).

The consensus of this volume, in the final analysis, argues that Winnicott's canon presents an original psychoanalytic theoretical matrix which creates a major advance in the concept of subjectivity (Ogden 1992).

## Part One: Introductory overviews

Freud's development of psychoanalysis as a 'method of investigation' was Winnicott's true starting point.

. . . as soon as I found Freud and the method he gave us for investigating and for treatment, I was in line with it. This was just like when I was at school and was reading Darwin and suddenly I knew that Darwin was my cup of tea.

(Chapter 1: 33)

In this informal talk, re-published here as **Chapter 1**, Winnicott offers an autobiographical account of his own view on the evolution of his ideas. The 'methodology of investigation' refers to the analyst's position *on* the couch, as well as the analyst's experience *behind* the couch and Winnicott relates how he was 'tremendously helped' by his experience of analysis – first with James Strachey and secondly with Joan Riviere. The insights he gained from analysis initiated his conceptual advances ' . . . it was only through analysis that I became gradually able to see a baby as a human being.' (p. 48). This revelation is due to the mobilizing of unconscious infantile states of mind through psychic regression (cf. **Chapter 3**: 89). This early insight was a defining moment for Winnicott; from then on his focus was on how to understand the earliest stage of development in relation to the psychic environment. At that time this was an area of the mind that psychoanalysis had not yet addressed.

[Chapter 1](#) – D.W.W. on D.W.W.<sup>9</sup> – is the transcript of a talk Winnicott gave to the 1952 Club<sup>10</sup> in January 1967 – nearly fifty years after he had discovered psychoanalysis,<sup>11</sup> and four years before he died. The awareness that the baby is a human being led to a further realization that ‘there’s no such thing as a baby.’ These interconnected discoveries of the human condition were psychoanalytically radical in those early days of psychoanalysis and led to Winnicott’s formulations on the determining role of the environment.<sup>12</sup> In this way Winnicott was in the process of extending Freud’s incorporation of the environment’s impact on the ego in the structural model (Freud 1923) (Sandler et al. 1997: 170), although Winnicott laid a stress on the primacy of the environment-individual set-up related to the infant’s complex journey of becoming a person (1970). Conversely, while Melanie Klein did not ignore the mother’s part in human development, her formulations do not emphasize its power to the same extent (see [Chapter 3](#): 83).<sup>13</sup> The impact of the psychic environment on the infant’s states of mind is a formulation that is tied in with the argument against the Kleinian development of the death instinct. Briefly – for Klein the death instinct was innate in the newborn and a manifestation of hate, sadism and envy. For Winnicott the biological life force was akin to primary creativity and he saw the affects of hate, sadism and envy as developmental achievements. He thought that the idea of an innate death instinct was equivalent to the religious notion of original sin. These themes are explored in more detail especially in [Chapters 1, 13, 14, 15](#).

The evolution of Winnicott’s formulations on the early environment, alongside his experience of analysis, was amplified by his observations during the Second World War, when he was posted to Oxford to attend children ‘difficult to billet’ during the evacuation. He became preoccupied with the causes of the antisocial act and the roots of delinquency. Much later, in his paper – ‘Providing for the child in health and crisis’ – he classifies the environment with an emphasis on the infant’s changing needs at each stage of dependency (Winnicott 1965d). The parental environment’s responsibility for the individual’s mental health never ceases to be important in Winnicott’s theories, but, at the beginning, for the infant’s future mental health, its ‘good enough handling and holding’ is absolutely paramount (cf. Winnicott 1965c).

This early discovery led, amongst others, to his concept of ‘subjective objects.’ This term relates to a category of internal objects that

originate from the baby's merger with the mother at the beginning of life. The concepts of 'transitional phenomena' and the 'essential paradox' are overlapping formulations that are intrinsically part of the infant's journey from absolute dependence to relative dependence to 'towards independence'. These formulations account for a distinctive theory of symbolic thinking (Chapters 6, 11) and the 'fate of aggression' (Chapters 13, 14).

Winnicott completes Chapter 1 with his view on psychoanalytic technique and the value of Freud's method of 'free association'. Here, as two years later in his paper 'The use of an object,' Winnicott stresses the value of silence and waiting in the analytic setting. This focus on technique reverberates with his concept of 'object presenting', i.e. facilitation, which in turn reinforces the classical Freudian technique of free association. Although not spoken about directly in this chapter, Winnicott's thesis carries a critique of what he deemed 'over interpretation' of the transference (Chapter 3: 95–96). This should not be misconstrued as a stance that is anti-interpretation, on the contrary, it is a perspective that views interpretation as something that should arise in the 'ripeness of time' in the analytic process – otherwise, he once wrote, it was no more than indoctrination (1971: 51).<sup>14</sup> Chapter 1 is an important autobiographical statement that highlights the inseparability of Winnicott the man and his thought.

That Winnicott's work constitutes a psychoanalytic revolution is matched by the argument that Melanie Klein's contribution also resulted in radically 'reshaping the psychoanalytic domain' (Hughes 1989). While it is important to recognize that the basic assumptions of Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott are significantly different there are, nevertheless, areas of agreement. Thomas Ogden's analysis, in Chapter 2, focuses on the context of the intellectual debates of the BPaS – commonly known as the 'controversial discussions' (King and Steiner 1991). Throughout this paper Ogden argues that 'Although Winnicott's thinking developed in a direction different from that of Klein, he never denounced Kleinian thinking . . .' (p. 46). To some extent this view is confirmed in Chapter 5 by Winnicott himself in which he writes an appreciation of Melanie Klein's contribution highlighting his respect for her innovations. While Ogden's focus is on how Winnicott's contributions ' . . . thrived in the medium of intense debate between the classical Freudian and the Kleinian groups,' he argues that ' . . . it was not until Winnicott that psychoanalysis developed a conception of the mother as the infant's

psychological matrix'. This chapter emphasizes the dialogical in Winnicott's theories and how the scientific developments in the BPaS, in particular his discourse with the Kleinian development, sharpened Winnicott's thinking and led to a significant and different psychoanalytic development.

**Chapter 3** offers a linear evolutionary outline and distils the seminal conceptions. This survey proposes that there are three specific chronological phases in which major theoretical advances were established: 1. 1934–1944 The environment-individual set-up. 2. 1945–1959 Transitional phenomena. 3. 1960–1971 The use of an object. The paper traces the development of the two complementary parallel lines of Winnicott's work: psychoanalysis and paediatrics that both illuminate the evolution of his formulations. The key publications are indicated for each phase.<sup>15</sup>

The claim that Winnicott's work constitutes a scientific revolution is substantiated by Zjelko Loparic in **Chapter 4**. Drawing on Thomas Kuhn's theory of the 'structure of scientific revolutions' this perspective offers a clear and convincing argument that shows how Winnicott adds to Freud's oedipal paradigm with the 'baby-on-the-mother's-lap paradigm'. Loparic suggests that this was a solution to Winnicott's scientific 'crisis' when he realized that babies really could be ill (see **Chapter 1**: 34, **Chapter 3**: 80). Loparic demonstrates that Winnicott's different theoretical outcome from Freud's is related to their different starting points. While Freud's oedipal paradigm emerged from his work with the hysteric, Winnicott the paediatrician and child analyst was faced with the problem of the ill baby on the mother's lap:

This is, in essence, the paradigm change which accounts for the difference between the Freudian Oedipal, triangular or three-body psychoanalysis and Winnicott's mother-baby, dual or two-body psychoanalysis.

(**Chapter 4**: 146)

To amplify the different basic assumptions between Freud and Winnicott, Loparic argues that Freud's philosophical underpinning was essentially Kantian, which meant that he allowed himself '... a number of speculative auxiliary suppositions to formulate his metapsychology . . . '(ibid.). Winnicott built on Freud's clinical methodology, and focused on the subjective experience of his countertransference as will

be developed in some of the chapters in [Part Two](#) (see [Chapters 8](#) and [10](#) especially). This emphasis on clinical experience concurs especially with Winnicott's later arguments as seen in [Chapter 13](#) (and explored in [Chapter 14](#)), and highlights the reasons for his particular disagreement with Freud's 'speculative' notion of the 'death instinct'.

Loparic comprehensively addresses the distinctiveness of Winnicott's revolutionary investigations and completes his critical survey with an address to the critics of Winnicott (as well as those who romanticize his work). He stresses that, following both Darwin and Freud, Winnicott was foremost a scientist who was loyal to the scientific method. To illustrate this point Loparic cites the invaluable methodology of Winnicott's therapeutic consultations which exemplify his dedication to scientific investigation.

## **Part Two: Personal perspectives**

Winnicott always valued travelling abroad to discuss his ideas and when he was 66 he gave a talk to the candidates of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society in 1962. A transcript of this talk was selected by Winnicott himself to be included in his second volume of collected papers – *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (1965a).<sup>16</sup> This same paper – A personal view of the Kleinian contribution (1965b) – is selected to start [Part Two](#) and [Chapter 5](#) (similar to [Chapter 1](#)), is an autobiographical commentary with a focus on his perspective of the psychoanalytic innovations of Melanie Klein. Winnicott comments on the 'Melanie Klein–Anna Freud controversy' and, with little elaboration, he conveys his view that the 'Melanie Klein–Anna Freud controversy . . . hampers free thought' in the BPaS. In 1954 Winnicott had written to both Anna Freud and Melanie Klein to request that they initiate a dismantling of the group system for the 'health of the British Psychoanalytical Society' (Rodman 1987: 71). This is another example of Winnicott's desire for analytic openness and neutrality in the interest of scientific endeavour.

Winnicott's use of the squiggle game in his diagnostic consultations resonated strongly with Marion Milner, whose own original contribution to psychoanalysis was contemporaneous with Winnicott's. They were close colleagues and after his death Milner wrote two tributes – the first was given at a memorial meeting of the BPaS in 1972, and the second was commissioned by the French journal *L'Arc* for an

edition dedicated to Winnicott's work in 1977. The two papers, like the title, are thematic 'overlapping circles' and presented together in **Chapter 6**. Milner pays tribute to Winnicott the man, to his ideas and to the ways in which he influenced her – personally, professionally and theoretically.

These tributes were written when Milner was in her seventies and had known Winnicott since the 1930s when she writes how she was 'captivated' by a lecture he gave on the spatula game '. . . by the mixture in him of deep seriousness and his love of little jokes . . . the play aspect of his character, if one thinks of true play as transcending the opposites of serious and non-serious' (**Chapter 6**: 170).

Marion Milner, who was a child analyst and a 'weekend painter,' discusses how she thinks in pictures and was interested in the 'interplay of edges'. One of her most important books *On Not Being Able to Paint* explores the nature of boundaries and space in painting paralleled with a subjective experience of the inner self (Milner 1950). Her natural disposition to observe and self-reflect, linked with the experience of the 'other', corresponded deeply with Winnicott's approach especially the concept of 'potential space' and the theory of 'playing.' Her appreciation of Winnicott's conceptualizations is manifest throughout this chapter as she evocatively links his ideas with her own original thinking on the prelogical area of experience (see Glossary). However, there is also an area of divergence, posed as a question, related to Winnicott's notion of the core self.

I can understand him when he claims that the sense of self comes on the basis of the unintegrated state, but when he adds that this state is by definition not observable or communicable, I begin to wonder. Not communicable, yes. Not observable, I am not so sure. I think of the dark still centre of the whirling Catherine wheel and feel fairly certain that it can, in the right setting, be related to by the conscious ego discovering that it can turn in upon itself, make contact with the core of its own being, and find there a renewal, a rebirth . . .

(**Chapter 6**: 172)

Milner's critique relates specifically to Winnicott's 1963 concept of communication in which he states that the core self must never be communicated with otherwise it will amount to a violation of the self (1963: 187 in 1965a). This divergence between Milner and Winnicott has potential for further exploration.

Winnicott's work is acknowledged by a wide variety of psychoanalytic cultures and many of his books have been translated into 24 languages to date. Arguably, however, it is the French reception of Winnicott's contribution to psychoanalysis that has been the most successful. Initiated in the early 1960s, when his papers were translated and published by *La Revue Française*, today, along with Freud and Lacan, Winnicott's thought is established as fundamental to psychoanalytic development and discourse in France (Birksted-Breen et al. 2010: 16). Four of the subsequent chapters in **Part Two** come from France. Each paper selects a specific concept of Winnicott's that resonates with the French development of psychoanalysis with its philosophical underpinning – potential space, the *après coup*, a freedom of thought and primary narcissism. As is characteristic of French psychoanalysis the role of the father is as crucial a component to the early psychic environment as is the mother's. This is not a contradiction of Winnicott's schema but does indicate an interesting controversy related to the notion of a 'dual relationship' in early psychic processes.

André Green had Winnicott in mind when, in 1975, he wrote 'Potential space in psychoanalysis: the object in the setting', re-published here as **Chapter 7**. Green addresses the way in which the term 'object' has been used and misused in the psychoanalytic literature since its inception with Freud, and analyzes the evolution of Winnicott's 'object'. Green concludes that Winnicott defines not so much an object as a space in which objects will be created. Winnicott's thought, observes Green, emerges from clinical work and Green's appreciation is especially for Winnicott's late work as seen in *Playing and Reality*. He stresses that Winnicott's observations were a result of the close examination of his countertransference in the clinical situation rather than 'infant observation' or paediatric work. This is an argument that relates to Green's debate with Daniel Stern in which he, Green, argues that infant observation cannot make a contribution to the development of psychoanalysis because it is only within the context of the analytic setting that psychoanalysis as theory and technique can evolve (Green 2000b: 21–6; 2000c: 41–72). Winnicott may well have concurred with this view since, towards the end of his life, he stated that he had learnt much more about early psychic phenomena from the adult patient who had regressed in analysis than he had from his work with children and/or mothers and babies.

With an exploration of the French psychoanalytic concept of the 'double' Green stakes a claim for his addition to Winnicott's notion

of ‘there’s no such thing as a baby’ and maintains that ‘. . . there is no such entity as a baby with his mother. No mother-child couple exists without a father somewhere . . . the child nevertheless is the product of the union of the father and mother. Of this union he is the *material, living, irrefutable proof*’ (Chapter 7: 201)

Green argues that a mother who negates the father imago in her mind will cause psychosis in her infant. This reinforces Green’s argument that ‘. . . ultimately *there is no dual relationship*’ (p. 201) Here we encounter an area of divergence and potential controversy amongst Winnicott commentators. For instance, in Chapter 4 Loparic argues and emphasizes that Winnicott’s work *does* indicate an original dual relationship (see p. 138–145). Green’s contrasting position is explored elsewhere in his paper ‘On thirdness’ (Green 1991 in Abram 2000). The question arises – what constitutes a ‘dual relationship’ in the context of Winnicott’s formulations? Does the core of the theoretical matrix significantly shift the Freudian oedipal structure as Loparic maintains or, with the notion of the father in mother’s mind, could it maintain and even enhance it? There is no doubt that the father takes on a different meaning, and therefore a different role in Winnicott’s new paradigm. But perhaps the question should stand as an irresolvable paradox concerning the beginning of life (cf. Chapter 16).

Haydée Faimberg’s well-known conception of the ‘telescoping of generations’ (1981/85 in 2005) enlarges on Freud’s concept of *Nachträglichkeit* and in Chapter 8, her original presentation of 1998 is published for the first time. Faimberg considers the link between Freud’s early concept and her own implicit use of it which, she subsequently discovers, is also implicit in Winnicott’s concept the ‘fear of breakdown’. Faimberg poignantly illustrates that, while never explicitly using the term *Nachträglichkeit*, Winnicott’s concept of the ‘fear of breakdown’ has a continuity with Freud’s original concept of *Nachträglichkeit*.

In the context of an intercultural dialogue Faimberg goes to the ‘heart of the matter’ and proposes, for the first time in 1998, that Winnicott’s ‘fear of breakdown’ offers psychoanalysis an ‘excellent example of *Nachträglichkeit*’ (p. 206). In order to illustrate her point Faimberg highlights how Winnicott proposes a construction. When the ‘fear of breakdown’ is felt by the patient in the *present* time of the session, the analyst should interpret that the fear of the future breakdown is based on the breakdown that has *already happened*. This, Faimberg asserts, constitutes a construction as Freud had originally suggested in his paper of 1937 – ‘Constructions in analysis’.

Winnicott makes it possible to give – from the present moment of the experience of helplessness in the transference – *a retroactive meaning (to the patient's fear of breakdown in the future) by means of a construction:*

The breakdown he is now experiencing for the *first* time, already took place at a moment when the patient was not yet there to have the experience.

(Chapter 8: 207)

The past, therefore, can only be constructed in the present time of analysis.

This observation links with the concept of early psychic deficiency of the environment and the psychic trauma that occurs as a result. In Winnicott's theory, if there is not a self capable of dealing with the 'thing' (event or lack of holding) then the psyche can only 'catalogue' rather than 'process' the experience (Winnicott 1954). It indicates that the infant was unprotected at a crucial moment of development and therefore, as Faimberg rightly points out, is at the mercy of a 'primitive agony' a 'falling forever.' This is what constitutes breakdown in Winnicott's language.

Haydée Faimberg's appreciation of Winnicott's formulation of the 'fear of breakdown' and its implicit reference to the operation of *Nachträglichkeit* is more complex than it may appear. Faimberg wants to emphasize that in the broader conceptualization she proposes, following Freud, there are always two phases. Paradoxically, it is the second phase that gives meaning to the first phase, because, as indicated above, there is a Self in the present time more able to experience what had happened. The new awareness that emerges in the context of the transference in the analytic setting means the patient is able to receive the analyst's construction – if offered at the right time – and the 'catalogued' event is brought into consciousness. The process from then on enables the early psychic trauma to be put into the past.

Faimberg's 1998 conceptualization was developed from her study with Corel in their paper 'Repetition and surprise: construction and its validation' (Faimberg and Corel 1989 in 2005) in which they emphasize the 'fertile paradox' of construction that it is both retroactive and anticipatory (2005: 31). Faimberg terms the first phase – the phase of anticipation – because it anticipates a meaning that is not yet there, due to the fact that nobody was there to register meaning

as such. It is the second phase, the construction in the context of the analysis, that the past can be constructed for the first time.

. . . *Nachträglichkeit*, in its broader conceptualization, is an operation that intervenes in the clinical situation, in the psychoanalytic process, and gives us a conceptual frame of unconscious psychic temporality with which to explore and understand how psychoanalysis produces psychic change. The effectiveness of psychoanalysis thereby comes to the fore.

(Faimberg 2007: 1223)

Faimberg's important contribution retroactively illuminates the originality of Winnicott's formulation 'fear of breakdown,' and at the same time articulates her own original extension of Freud's conception of *Nachträglichkeit*.

'Fear of breakdown' is an evocative example of Winnicott's particular use of words as can be detected in his earliest publications.<sup>17</sup> From his first seminal paper in 1945 he had made a deliberate attempt to stay alive in his writing (by using 'plain English') – matched with his desire to stay alive in his thinking.<sup>18</sup> His allegiance, he wanted to make clear, was to scientific freedom which clearly related to the idea of a 'freedom of thought' (Chapter 10). This is a crucial element of his scientific approach, as Loparic has already shown in Chapter 4. Despite the fact that Winnicott in his later years understood that people had to work hard at understanding where he was coming from, the value of his innovative use of language, as we see throughout this volume, resulted in fresh formulations that in turn led to a new psychoanalytic theoretical matrix.

Ogden celebrates Winnicott's use of language in 'Reading Winnicott' – published in 2001 (sixteen years after his preliminary discussion of Winnicott's theories [re-published in Chapter 2]) and re-published here as Chapter 9. Ogden's observations on Winnicott's use of the English vernacular emerged out of teaching Winnicott. The paper under scrutiny is Winnicott's 1945 paper, 'Primitive Emotional Development'. Ogden observes that the writing is ' . . . a piece of non-fiction literature in which the meeting of reader and writing generates an imaginative experience in the medium of language' (Chapter 9: 214). Through a dissection of the text Ogden illustrates ' . . . the life of the writing . . . as inseparable from, the life of the ideas' (ibid.).

An independence of mind was crucial for Winnicott in his thinking and he felt it was crucial to psychoanalytic treatment – non compliance. This sentiment comes through in his theories and his clinical work. As Daniel Widlöcher argues in **Chapter 10**, Winnicott amplifies the notion of the [sense of] freedom and in particular a ‘freedom of thought’. Widlöcher explains that since the 1960s French analysts had been interested in Winnicott’s work because they were interested in his developmental model with its focus on relationship (cf. Birksted-Breen et al. 2010: 16). Widlöcher explores four levels of freedom and creativity: communication, metapsychological structure, paradox and therapeutic goals. Widlöcher, like Green, celebrates Winnicott’s focus on the countertransference and shows how it offers psychoanalysis a new dimension.

But Winnicott went further than counter transference theorists, pointing out that it is not simply in response to the analysand’s transference that an empathic understanding of his or her unconscious can develop – the origins of that kind of mutual communication lie in the interaction between mother and baby. Co-associativeness or co-creativity makes for shared reverie, the infant’s capacity to be alone in the mother’s presence. She helps her child to play, just as the analyst helps his or her patient to play – in other words, and somewhat paradoxically, to work at the combinatorial associations between representations and affects.

(**Chapter 10**: 237)

Widlöcher highlights that the notion of ‘freedom’ functions in a particular way related to Winnicott’s notion of ‘potential space’. He suggests the term ‘co-thinking’ to describe how unconscious associations play a role in the analyst’s listening. Widlöcher’s view is that the self creates the link between the transformations involved in the inter-psychic communication. He examines the concept of paradox in Winnicott’s work and concludes that freedom of thought is an integral part of the potential space between the subject and the object and plays a fundamental part in illusion.<sup>19</sup> This notion powerfully resonates with Milner’s concept of ‘the necessity of illusion’ (cf. Milner 1950: 26–34).

The concept of illusion and primary creativity in Winnicott’s work relates to the notion of creative living associated with staying alive. This is inextricably linked with Winnicott’s notions of

the ‘spontaneous gesture’ and ‘recognition’. If the spontaneous gesture is not met in an alive and creative way, then the infant has to withdraw. Extending Winnicott’s concept of primary creativity Kenneth Wright, in **Chapter 11**, sets out to formulate a theory of artistic endeavour making use of what he feels is implicit in Winnicott’s formulations. In this chapter, resonant with Milner’s work, Wright explores the distinction between the notions of intersubjective and self-communication – an examination which reverberates with Winnicott’s exploration of the ‘place where we live’ (Winnicott 1971) – as he moves towards formulating a theory of artistic creation. Wright is not writing from a position of artist, in the way Marion Milner wrote *On Not Being Able to Paint*, but from his position as a psychoanalyst. As such, although this paper is not a clinical paper, it contains a depth of insight that can only emerge from long experience of analytic clinical work. Building on his previous writings, and on Winnicott’s original concept of primary creativity, Wright examines the artist’s ‘search for form’ linked with his source of inspiration concerning Winnicott’s theory of the mirror-role of mother with its focus on the role of reflection (Wright 1991 and 2009). Here he brings his personal review of how Winnicott extends Freudian principles:

As Winnicott puts it, the infant has the experience of ‘creating the breast’ (‘primary creativity’) but only when the mother is attuned enough to give it in a way that corresponds to the baby’s anticipation (Winnicott 1953). It is important to note that this way of thinking subtly transforms the classical concept of wish-fulfillment by stressing its object-relational aspect: primary creativity is more than libidinal satisfaction – *it involves the finding by the baby, and provision by the mother, of an external form (the breast) that corresponds to the baby’s inner, subjective state.*

(Chapter 11: 250–251 [italics in original])

Wright quotes from the work of Susanne Langer who simply states that ‘Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling,’ in order to apply Winnicott’s theory of primary creativity to the artist’s quest:

. . . we could say that in creating his work, *the artist, like the baby, creates (or finds) external forms for inner feeling states.* Seen in this way, artistic creation echoes the transaction of ‘primary creativity’ in

which an inner ‘something’ is realized through the mother’s provision of a matching form.

(Ibid., [italics in original])

Comparing the artist’s aims with the baby’s spontaneous gesture Wright suggests that the artist makes a *self*-created form which relates to the ‘answering form’ of the original mother. A review of Winnicott’s theory of transitional phenomena aids Wright’s desire to create a bridge between Winnicott’s theory of the mother–infant relationship and an understanding of the psychic roots of the artist’s motivation. But, as Wright the analyst knows, creative endeavour is not necessarily a pleasurable reaching out – and an examination of Natkin’s work offers evidence that the artist’s skill and motivation may arise from an original deficiency as well as trauma. The canvas thus becomes the artist’s *self* provision due to a lack of an ‘answering form’ from the original mother.

Wright explores his different perspective from two other psychoanalytic theories of the artist’s activity – Bollas’s ‘maternal aesthetic’ with its focus on the ‘transformational object’, and Hannah Segal’s emphasis on the reparation of the object. He maintains that both theories, whilst emerging from different basic assumptions, do not account enough for the continual self evolving that Winnicott emphasizes (Chapter 11: 260–261).

In his conclusions Wright returns to the clinical situation and, paradoxically, shows how his exploration of the artist’s quest actually illuminates the analytic relationship as an ‘. . . *affective matrix* in which ‘forms for human feeling’ (Langer) . . . like the artist’s forms . . . must resonate with experience if they are to serve a containing function’ (Chapter 11: 264–265).

Self-reflection, as Wright has shown, has a healthy dimension. This is compatible with René Roussillon’s recent examination of Winnicott’s notion of merger between mother and infant in Chapter 12. Roussillon argues that Winnicott expands Freud’s concept of primary narcissism and transforms it into a clinical concept.

For Winnicott, primary narcissism cannot be conceived of in any solipsistic way. How it develops should be thought of within the context of the primary psychic relationship . . .

(Chapter 12: 270)

Roussillon suggests that a ‘kind of illusion’ erases the individual’s thought that the relationship with the primary object has impacted

on her [sense of] self. This therefore has a clinical implication – to analyze primary narcissism reintroduces ‘. . . what the primary narcissistic illusion has erased, i.e. the role played by the primary object in its foundation because narcissism involves two and perhaps three people’.

(Ibid.)

This ‘. . . and perhaps three people’ rejoins us to the aforementioned divergence between Green and Loparic on the early psychic predicament. Are there two or three people involved in primary narcissism? The role of the father, in French psychoanalysis, is never far away in conceptualizing early states of mind; but Roussillon with his ‘perhaps’ seems more equivocal than Green concerning the issue of the ‘dual relationship.’

However, his main emphasis in [Chapter 12](#) is that Winnicott’s extensions make Freud’s concept clinical rather than metapsychological. To initiate this examination Roussillon reviews Freud’s paper, ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ to demonstrate how the ‘ego assimilates’. He concludes thus:

Narcissism assimilates the object and takes in the shadow of the object that has fallen on the ego. At the same time, it erases the fact that there is a shadow that has fallen on the ego and is henceforth mixed up with it.

([Chapter 12](#): 271)

It is important to note that Roussillon’s idea of ‘illusion’ in this chapter is different from the ‘illusion’ referred to by Winnicott when the baby has the illusion that he is God [as the result of his needs being met]. But it is interlinked in as much as the unconscious memory of ‘needs being met’ becomes assimilated in the mind in the same way that Roussillon shows that the ‘shadow’ (of the object) is assimilated. The different quality of ‘illusions’, therefore, refers to different stages of development. Winnicott’s illusion (of omnipotence) refers to the phase of absolute dependence whereas Roussillon’s ‘illusion’ refers to the phase of ‘relative dependence’ when the baby has to deal with loss and separation (Abram 2007: 130–45).

### Part Three: Late Winnicott studies

One of Winnicott's last papers – 'The use of an object' – was given to the New York Psychoanalytic Society in 1968, followed by three discussion papers. Due to a variety of reasons, the discussants seemed to misunderstand Winnicott's thesis (see [Chapters 13, 14 and 17](#)). Despite each discussant's appreciation of Winnicott's work the two main areas of criticism concerned his interpretation of the term 'object relating' and the lack of Freudian instinct theory in his argument. After the presentation of his paper Winnicott fell seriously ill and had to be hospitalized in New York for several weeks. Remarkably, from his hospital bed, he wrote his response to the discussion papers which is re-published here as [Chapter 13](#). Written two years before he died this paper addresses the points made by Bernard Fine, one of the American discussants, concerning Freud's instinct theory. Winnicott clarifies his disagreement with Freud's concept of the death instinct in this chapter but his main aim is to convey that the newborn baby is not yet able to distinguish whether a sensation is inner or outer: this is why, he argued, instincts were not relevant – *from the baby's point of view*. 'The behaviour of the environment is part and parcel of the child's development, . . . this cannot be omitted' ([Chapter 13](#): 299).

. . . The crux of my argument is that the first drive is itself *one* thing, something that I call 'destruction,' but I could have called it a combined love-strife drive. *This unity is primary* . . . The fate of this unity of drive cannot be stated without reference to the environment.

([Chapter 13](#): 299 [my italics])

It will be clear in the light of the papers in [Parts One](#) and [Two](#) that Winnicott had been leading up to this formulation since the 1940s related to his research on classifying the environment. This paper shows an advance on instinct theory because it expands his concept of primary maternal preoccupation. Linked with this and stimulated by the finding of some unpublished notes in the Winnicott archives, [Chapter 14](#) offers an interpretation and discussion of Winnicott's final theory of aggression. An examination of the unpublished notes compared to the late writings, including [Chapter 13](#), shows that the notes (which constitute a plan for a paper that was never written),

confirm a consolidation of Winnicott's concept of 'survival of the object'. Following on from an exposition of the themes related to 'the use of an object' [Chapter 14](#) aims to demonstrate that Winnicott's critique of instinct theory led to the notion of psychic survival. The author sets out her interpretation of the clinical implications in Winnicott's thesis:

I propose that the clinical implications in Winnicott's formulations suggest the notion of an intra-psychic surviving and non-surviving object. These intra-psychic objects arise through an admixture of the primary object's oscillations between psychic survival and non-survival of the newborn's needs. I conclude that this specific inter-psychic dynamic between object and subject is at the heart of human development which is naturally revived in the transference-countertransference matrix. Consequently, the notion of psychic survival constitutes the specificity of clinical psychoanalysis as a therapeutic treatment.

([Chapter 14](#): 302–303)

Dissociation as a defence is entirely relevant to the above themes of life and death, survival and non survival, and Goldman, in [Chapter 15](#), explores another of Winnicott's final preoccupations on the meaning of dissociation. Goldman reminds us of Winnicott's prayer, 'Oh God may I be alive when I die,' and surmises that this expressed desire suggests that:

. . . Winnicott yearns for a psychic space in which he can simultaneously hold both life and death. His desire, in other words, is not simply to survive omnipotently but to find a way to bridge the ultimate dissociation *between* life and death. Winnicott is recognizing that aliveness and death have meaning only to the extent that a link can be retained between the two.

([Chapter 15](#): 331 [italics in original])

Goldman discusses how Winnicott shows that psychological aliveness cannot be taken for granted and, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, he confirms the infant's need for a responsive environment, adding that this is the location – between infant and environment – of the *capacity to feel alive*.

For Winnicott, aliveness originates in an undifferentiated field which, *only from an external point of view*, appears as a newborn needing to be met by a responsive environment. Rather than a quality located *within* a distinct individual, aliveness has its roots in a *psychic field* as mother shields infant from premature awareness of ‘complications’ and ‘coincidences’ beyond its ken.

(Chapter 15: 332)

Goldman makes the point that Winnicott wanted to concentrate on the life force rather than debate the death instinct and, related to the title of his chapter, quotes Winnicott’s observation that:

In each baby . . . is a *vital spark*, and this urge towards life and growth and development is a part of the baby, something the child is born with and which is carried forward in a way that we do not have to understand.

(Winnicott 1964: 27)

(quoted in Chapter 15: 333, italics added)

Goldman makes an important link between Jones’s ‘aphanisis’ and Winnicott’s annihilation anxiety and interprets that Winnicott wants to emphasize ‘aliveness and being’ rather than the Freudian focus on infantile sexuality. The author cites Winnicott’s clinical example of the man whose dissociated part was female (Winnicott 1971: 72–5). Goldman concludes that Winnicott’s final words, as seen in the unpublished Notes re-published here in Chapter 14, offer further evidence that it was the ‘vital spark’ in human life that Winnicott noted required facilitation.

An oft repeated misperception is that the father has no role to play in Winnicott’s theoretical matrix. The student of Winnicott’s writings, however, will see that the father is ever present and the environment will most definitely fail if the father is not actively engaged in the task of parenting from the beginning. But, as we have seen above (Chapters 4, 7, 12), it is a question of emphasis and there is a divergence amongst authors concerning the role of the father and the meaning of a ‘dual relationship’ in Winnicott’s psychoanalytic model. To add to this dialogue Christopher Reeves, in Chapter 16, makes a philological examination and tracks the role of the father in Winnicott’s writings. He argues and confirms that, although not always directly addressed, the father is integrated in Winnicott’s theories.

Reeves offers his interpretation that, without ever naming the roles, Winnicott theorized two distinct fathers and that the two different functions of the father mean that, for the baby, there are effectively two different fathers.<sup>20</sup> After demonstrating that the father was ‘. . . at once *important, intrinsic* and *implicit* for Winnicott . . .’ [Chapter 16](#) proposes that the first distinct role of the father should be termed the co-nurturant father (p. 360). Subsequently, as the baby develops, a different father emerges in Winnicott’s writings – one who has to contain the growing child’s negative feelings and, crucially (in relation to his later concept ‘the use of an object’), one who has to survive them. This father is proposed to be the ‘sire father’ – loving first, but also ‘strict and strong’. However, Reeves comes across a problem in Winnicott’s implicit description of the two fathers:

Underlying the problem is Winnicott’s desire to retain both options, to insist on the father’s distinctiveness of role and differentiation from mother where the family unit is being viewed as a threesome, while laying stress on the essential continuity of the father’s role with that of the mother, when the focus is on the dyadic ‘core’ of the family – the mother and the baby. It is a characteristic of Winnicott’s theorizing not to seek to resolve paradoxes by precise conceptual differentiation.

([Chapter 16](#): 367)

This observation goes some way towards addressing the divergence between Loparic and Green concerning the existence of a ‘dual relationship’, at the beginning of the infant’s life. Paradox is intrinsic to the human condition from the beginning and its resolution infers a false self solution.

The important question of influence and transmission of psychoanalytic ideas ([Chapter 8](#)) and the inevitability of a ‘zeitgeist’ in psychoanalysis is addressed by Nellie Thompson in [Chapter 17](#) who analyzes the reciprocal influence of American psychoanalysts on Winnicott’s thought. This paper is a sequel to Thompson’s earlier paper of 2008 in which she compared and contrasted the work of Phyllis Greenacre with Winnicott’s ideas – in particular the earliest relationship (Thompson 2008). In [Chapter 17](#) Thompson extends her focus and uses data from an examination of Winnicott’s correspondence that shows how familiar he was with the work of several American analysts. Thompson argues that Winnicott’s focus on early object

relations relates to the work of Kris, an émigré originally from Vienna, who had written in 1956 that, ‘. . . we now think that the development of ego functions and object relations are of equal and intrinsic importance’ (Kris 1956: 67). This is amplified by Thompson’s observation of the collaborative work between Hartmann, Anna Freud, Kris and Loewenstein concerning the development of ego functioning which corresponds to Winnicott’s perspective in his paper – ‘Ego integration in child development’ (1962) – and correlates with the previous themes concerning instinct theory and its relevance at the beginning of life (Chapters 13, 14).

Their depiction of the mother-infant relationship deeply resonated with Winnicott’s view of the importance of the maternal environment in the infant’s life. Their writings emphasize that the ego and id are undifferentiated at birth . . .

(Chapter 17: 393)

These American authors, as Thompson points out, stress that the ‘ego and id are undifferentiated at birth’ and that the mother is the most important environment. This is really no different from Winnicott’s view although the language is different, i.e. when these authors refer to the ego and the id Winnicott refers to the merger between infant and mother. In tracing the writings and presentations of papers that focused on the themes of ego functioning and regression, Chapter 17 argues that while it is true that Winnicott’s work impacted (and still does) on the work of American analysts, it was equally true that Winnicott was integrating, from reviews and meetings, the opinions and perspectives of several key American analysts, many of whom originated from Vienna (cf. Thompson 2010).

The squiggle game by now is one of the most well-known leit-motifs of Winnicott’s work associated with his theory of playing and the discovery of the self. In Chapter 18 Farley offers an examination of the squiggle game that complements Loparic’s view in Chapter 4 and Milner’s observation in Chapter 6, i.e. that the legacy of the squiggle game has become much more than a therapeutic intervention. Farley reads the squiggle game as evidence for a psychoanalytic conception of history. Linking Winnicott’s observations related to ‘discrepancy’ and Bollas’s ‘unthought known’ Chapter 18 indicates how important the act of witnessing relates to the concept of history.

[Chapter 18](#) argues that the mother, as ‘subjective object,’ is the baby’s first witness, and in that capacity she is called on to engage the negative labour of attending to experiences that cannot be known or seen directly, even as their unconscious force requires a response.

In this chapter we are reminded of the outside world and global history – the Second World War – as the context in which Winnicott was making history in his application of psychoanalysis with evacuees in Oxford. From her work in the Winnicott Archives in London<sup>21</sup> Farley researches in Winnicott’s wartime hostel scheme books and comes across some children’s drawings ([Chapter 18](#): 424). There, Farley finds that Winnicott was making use of the squiggle game much earlier than has hitherto been published, i.e. in the early 1940s rather than, as previously thought, from the mid 1950s. This tallies with Marion Milner’s observation in [Chapter 6](#) that Winnicott’s language medium of pictures and doodles was intrinsically part of his way of relating to himself and others.

The need to articulate trauma in the presence of a witness – as long as the witness is a receptive, reflecting and surviving Other – offers a chance for process and digestion of a ‘catalogued’ trauma – a wound. Tracing two case histories with the squiggles as evidence, [Chapter 18](#) concludes with a thought that reverberates with Wright’s extensions of Winnicott’s notion of primary creativity ([Chapter 11](#)).

The squiggle may be evidence of how we make from the stray fragments of the past a meaningful historical narrative. But this history in pictures may also testify to the labour of letting go, or leaving something behind so that the past may become, ‘memorable rather than spellbinding’ (Phillips 2004: 143) – which is, perhaps, the ultimate act of creativity, the art of history.

([Chapter 18](#): 445)

[Chapter 18](#), written from the perspective of a new Winnicott researcher, and thus representative for the hope of future Winnicott studies, completes this collection on Donald Winnicott Today. The illustrations, in [Chapter 18](#), which depict Winnicott’s clinical work in vivo, are a moving reminder of Winnicott’s dedication to Freud’s ‘methodology of investigation’ and his distinctive expansion of theory and methodology. While the evidence of Winnicott’s immense contribution to psychoanalysis is collectively demonstrated by the authors in this volume, perhaps it would be true to say that should