

'Although this collection does not represent a comprehensive engagement with the intellectual history to which Winnicott contributed so significantly, it does propose that using his work to think about themes of importance to practitioners now is also a way of thinking about some of the present preoccupations of psychoanalysis. How certain themes assume an importance and develop at certain times often resonates with debates of the past, and to encounter them in the present almost always offer something new. Theoretical and clinical ideas are produced in particular conditions and often also in response to, or as part of, a certain intellectual and socio-cultural context; how they have come to be understood and how they have their effect also involves that wider world and its interests.

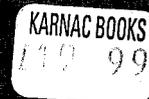
To think about Winnicott in terms of his links with others is to place him firmly in a discursive field of exchange, debate, theoretical and technical challenge. The papers collected here emphatically suggest there is much to be gained from reading Winnicott and the other psychoanalytic theorists and clinicians with attention and openness.'

Lesley Caldwell, from the Introduction

'This book, inspired by Winnicott's life and work, adopts, broadly, two themes: the true self and the resonance of Winnicott's thinking with the contributions of other major psychoanalysts of the past half century. The second theme could be said to emerge from the first: the pursuit of authenticity, whether by patient or analyst. There is no more important concern for psychoanalysis. Our role, in a world where the complex role of healing is often displaced by strategies of rationalisation and normalisation, requires defending by example. These papers are emblematic of analytic work at its finest. I cannot imagine anyone with a serious interest in mental health failing to be inspired by their integrity.'

Paul Williams, Joint Editor-in-Chief, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*

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Caldwell Winnicott and the Psychoanalytic Tradition KARNAC

# Winnicott and the Psychoanalytic Tradition



Edited by  
**Lesley Caldwell**  
**KARNAC**

WINNICOTT  
AND THE  
PSYCHOANALYTIC  
TRADITION

Interpretation and Other  
Psychoanalytic Issues

*edited by*  
*Lesley Caldwell*

KARNAC

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*Dedicated to the memory of Harold Stewart*

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## CHAPTER THREE

## On humming: reflections on Marion Milner's contribution to psychoanalysis

Claire Pajaczkowska

There is a state of mind in which things are found. It is an experience of finding something that already exists, but which had not yet been discovered. This capacity for finding is something that is made from within. Marion Milner was particularly alive to the dynamic of making and finding, and how this can be experienced as great joy. In this article I discuss Milner's distinctive contribution to psychoanalysis and show how it might be used today to think about culture as a frame for finding and making objects.

Like doodling, humming exists in a space that links inner and outer, subjective and objective realities; the visceral resonance of sound that vibrates through muscle, tissue and bone is also the sound wave that is heard through the ear and reaches out to some external object or other. It is this state of liminality that makes humming so interesting, and Milner's work offers the means of understanding experiences of liminality and transitional space.

Milner—child, adolescent and adult analyst, and author—enjoyed professional and popular recognition. Herbert Read described her work as having the “force of a sudden illumination”. Following her death in 1997, she is particularly remembered for her significant contribution to theories of culture, creativity and the visual arts. As well as being the friend and colleague of Donald Winnicott, Milner was a founder member of the Independent Group of British Psychoanalysts in the 1950s. Her contribution to psychoanalysis is noted by historians Eric Rayner (1991), Gregorio Kohon (1986), D. Goldman (1993) and F.R. Rodman (2003). The distinctive nature

of the Independent Tradition in British psychoanalysis has been noted by many, as have its origins in the turbulent years of analytic debate and disagreement known as the "Controversial Discussions", and we find the dynamic of that turbulence in the annotated essays *The Suppressed Madness of Sane Men* (Milner, 1987). There she described her personal and professional development from a childhood ambition to be a naturalist, to her work as a teacher, to her brother's twenty-first birthday gift of Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, which introduced her to psychoanalysis, to training as an analyst, supervised by Melanie Klein, and finding her own idiom there. This time of innovation and emergence in the British Society finds its resonance in the fluid and lucid quality of Milner's writings, which have a paradoxical quality of a strength forged by fire and yet experienced as spontaneous and new by every generation of readers.

Coming to her work some decades after its first publication, it is easier to see the themes of longstanding significance which emerge specifically from the preoccupations of Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. The mood and tone of Milner and her contemporaries writing in Britain immediately after the war and the profound optimism of social democratic idealism that infused the public sector is palpable in the assumption that state organizations such as the National Health Service and the Local Education Authorities might listen to the findings of psychoanalysis.

Winnicott's experience as a paediatrician working in hospitals and at the Paddington Green Clinic, colleagues working within the Child Guidance Movement, and Milner's own research on the education of girls, all refer to a world in which healthcare professionals saw themselves as working to rebuild a new, democratic, inclusive society where the best would be available to all. This provision of the best for a new future was most transparently represented by the care given to raising the next generation, so that babies and their mothers, nursery school children and adolescents all figured centrally as the symbols of a nation's hopes. Post-war British social democratic psychoanalysis suggested that only if individuals were allowed to reach for themselves the stage that Winnicott called the "capacity for concern" would the concept of society be anything other than empty. The distinctive style of Milner and her colleagues managed to combine imaginative empiricism, social ethics and a deep

understanding of psychoanalysis. It was one of her hopes, expressed in the dedication of her book *On Not Being Able to Paint* (1950), that her experiences might enable her son and his generation "to reach more rapidly through learning from others" the knowledge that she had acquired slowly through personal experience.

One of Milner's preoccupations that emerges as being of longstanding significance, is the centrality of feeling and affect in mental life. Rather than being developed as a systematic theory of affect, this preoccupation appears as an intuitive pattern of reference to feeling, and as a capacity for including emotional states within her reckoning of mental life. Amidst the wealth of ideas and writings, I suggest that there are three concepts that show her understanding of the centrality of feelings and the structuring function of affect on thought, knowledge, relationship and representation. These are her concept of the "framed gap", her theory of symbol formation, and her clinical interpretations of the emergence of a self from a relationship of shared "twoness". A more correct way of describing this process in numerical terms would be to say that out of zero, or no number, one, two and three are simultaneously created. How the infant-mother relationship creates self as well as self and other is one of the fundamental questions of post-war British psychoanalysis, but the form Milner and her colleagues give to this question, and her own links to the concept of illusion in symbol formation, constitute a distinctive perspective. Here I introduce these concepts and then show how they may be used today.

### *Framing the gap*

The first of the concepts that initially might have seemed inconsequential and peripheral, but which Milner retrospectively identified as a unifying concept across her clinical and cultural work, is that of the "framed gap". The analytic process is framed in time by the regularity of sessions, breaks and routines, and also framed by the agreed space of the analytic encounter. Milner extends this understanding of what analysts call the setting to other cultural expressions of this experience of a boundary. She writes of the framed gap provided by the "blank piece of paper" (1987, p. 225), where the blankness of the space allows the emergence of representational activity from the subject's own "blankness" or the

amnesia that protects the ego from the repressed unconscious. Other frames in culture include the proscenium arch of theatre framed by the stage and the curtain, a frame that is vestigially retained in cinema. Art gallery and museum provide architectural and institutional frames for seeing art and artefacts differently. The classroom is a frame which, for a specified length of time, separates one kind of learning experience from another. Dreams, suggests Milner, are framed in sleep. The frame is a representational relationship that marks a subject's ability to change their relationship to their unconscious through the creation of a third term, or space that is constructed as "other". The frame describes an imaginary line which demarcates an inner from an outer space, and this can be used as a metaphor for other processes of delineation and demarcation within the subject. Milner's most popular description of its liberating function occurs in her study of the capacity to shift attention in *On Not Being Able to Paint*, where she shows how doodling enables her to disengage her mind from conscious intentionality and thereby render it receptive to other, less conscious states of experience.

Milner's concept of the framed gap is recognizable as a variant of what neo-Freudians would describe as a form of ego functioning, or as one condition of the "representational world", and analysts who use Bion's theory might liken it to his concept of the container, or the way that the "alpha function" contains the "beta elements" of the mind. It is interesting that these concepts were all developed by the same generation of analysts, but here I want to show how this concept of the framed gap is integrated into Milner's understanding of symbol formation and how both refer to the role of illusion in mother-infant relationships. I will return to the concept of the framed gap, particularly when discussing humming as an acoustic equivalent of doodling.

### *Symbol formation*

This concept was prominent in Milner's own practice and theory, and "The Role of Illusion in Symbol Formation", the paper she wrote for an issue of the *International Journal* in honour of Melanie Klein (1987 [1955]), is, in some ways, a response to the debates that "framed" psychoanalytic theory at the time. For example, she writes from the premise that symbolism is something other than regressive

or defensive ego function, as it had been rather narrowly conceived by Ernest Jones's interpretation of Freud. Milner's intuition that a symbol extends from unconscious representation to all forms of mental activity, and to all the forms in which the subject interacts with the "outer world", is an emphasis that she makes a space for by transgressing the analytic canon. She also reframes the discussion of symbol formation away from the symbol as concept (whether innate or perceived) to focus on the process of its formation as a representation of feeling states, thus dislodging a cerebral concept of representation for an affective one. The symbol is defined as an emotional equivalent of a mental state or experience, rather than in Jones's sense of a connection of logical equivalence, albeit a logic of the unconscious. For Milner, the presence of the body, as source of the emotions and feelings for which symbolism is equivalent, is very different from Jones's conceptual thoughts about the body. He limits his references to the body to the standard Freudian libidinal tropes of oral, anal and phallic, but Milner includes a range of bodily processes such as breathing, speech, song, movement, sensation, as well as more schematic references to "nipple", "breast", "anus" and so forth. The paper, although influenced by Klein, is already differing from the Kleinian concept of symbolism, as Milner works from a different understanding of the relation between infant and mother that does not presuppose a repertoire of innate fantasies that exist in the infant's mind and structure conceptualization.

Further innovation in her paper on symbol formation is evident in her choice of the term "illusion" to describe the relation between feeling and symbol. The word "illusion" has a number of connotations, including the idea of a kind of magical thinking characteristic of animism and "primitive thought, deception and trickery". These two connotations are redolent of Jones's concept of the symbol and the illusory nature of its relation to reality. However, the etymology of illusion lies in the Latin root *ludere*, to play, and it is this sense, where symbol formation is understood as one component of the relationship within which transitional objects give way to the transitional space of culture through the triangulation of a merged "two-in-oneness", that Milner brings to her discussion of symbolism. This is different from the Kleinian trajectory of inscribing innate, unconscious symbolic knowledge of a lexicon of phantasy objects that are seen to reappear in children's play and adult dreams. This view

is not substantively different from Jones's. Milner's concept certainly includes some aspects of the Kleinian understanding of reparation, a symbolic response to the subject's awareness of aggressive attacks made on the primal object, as necessary components of the psychic capacity for using a third, symbolic space. However, the revolutionary nature of Milner's insight lies in how she understands the process of symbol formation as the means by which a nascent subjectivity emerges within the psychic field at the same time as the other, the object, and the outside world. For Milner there is no "inner world" without the "outer world", just as for Winnicott there is no baby without a mother. This relational dimension of subjectivity, understood as the product of a structure such as play, the *ludere* of illusion, is a substantive advance in psychoanalytic theory. Milner writes:

In psychoanalytic terms, this process of seeking to preserve experiences can certainly be described in terms of the unconscious attempt to preserve, recreate, restore the lost object, or rather the lost relation with the object conceived of in terms of the object. And these experiences can be lost to the inner life not only because of unconscious aggressive feelings about separation from the outer object, but also because it is of the nature of feeling experience to be fleeting. Life goes on at such a pace that unless these experiences can be incarnated in some external form, they are inevitably lost to the reflective life. [1987, p. 227]

The symbol may be partly informed by the processes Klein described as "reparative", but is also "relational", existing quite differently from the way "internal objects" are conceived by the object relations school, where the symbol is a re-creation of a lost or damaged object. Milner's concept implies a making, for the first time, of some kind of representational object that did not exist in this form before, a process belonging to an "earlier" emotional state than that of the "depressive position" (1987, p. 228).

French structuralist psychoanalysis, such as that of Jacques Lacan, Maud Mannoni and André Green, was also evolving along these lines, albeit in a very different tradition. Mannoni's *The Child, His Illness and the Other* (1970) employs a similar notion of the relational

use of object as signifier, and Lacan's work revolves entirely around this understanding of the centrality of the signifier in the construction of the subject, although he does not have Milner's facility for intuiting feeling or for understanding the corporeal.

The *ludic* as an undiscovered dimension of the real was undoubtedly the empire of Donald Winnicott and Marion Milner, and yet neither they nor their colleagues ever tried to claim "ownership" or mastery of this empire, understanding it as the privilege of childhood and their work as the privilege of perceiving and understanding it.

### *E-merging*

The third concept, the emergence of self from not self, or the significance of the "pre-oedipal" to oedipal structures of subjectivity, is related to the two concepts discussed above. The framed gap is, in a sense, a symbol of the process through which a subject emerges from the state of being merged, but for this to make any sense, there needs to be an understanding of Milner's emphasis on the process of emergence, which is often described as part of Milner's clinical practice, but not limited to it. For example, writing about her friend, mentor, analyst and colleague Donald Winnicott for a memorial meeting at the British Psycho-Analytical Society in 1972, Milner said, "During the war I had shown him a cartoon from the *New Yorker*. It was of two hippopotamuses, their heads emerging from the water, and one saying to the other, 'I keep thinking it's Tuesday.' It was typical of him that he never forgot this joke" (Goldman, 1993, p. 117). Years later, Milner reflected that the shared joke conveys many of the preoccupations of her work throughout her life, "the threshold of consciousness, the surface of the water as the place of submergence or emergence". Of course Winnicott's capacity for understanding the wordless dialogues of infants and mothers was the product of decades of systematic observation as hospital paediatrician, not just of the pursuit of the Zen-like "absent-mindedness of reverie", but Milner also writes of the need for a "space for absent-mindedness", a kind of thinking that, having mastered realism, can nevertheless disengage from it and enter a space in which thought does not depend on a marked separation between subject and object, or different types of object, such as days of the week. For analysts, the named days of the working week are perhaps even more significant

than for other workers as the names can signify the "frame" of the setting that, at times, may be the only demarcation between psychosis and reality. Following patients as they regress to dependence can exert pressure or strain on the boundaries of the analytic setting, which is in place precisely to offer the analyst and analysand protection from the fear of becoming merged.

The joke and its image also anticipate another aspect of Milner's contributions to the theory of art and culture: her concept of a medium as the third term which enables the co-existence of two different realities. The meeting of inner and outer worlds in play takes place through the medium of the toys; the meeting of conscious and unconscious thoughts in art takes place through the medium of the materiality of the artwork: narrative, words, song, musical sound, paint, clay or other material is simultaneously substance and communication. For Milner, the concept of medium has some of the meaning of Winnicott's concept of culture as transitional space, a third term enabling triangulation and the co-emergence of ideas of one, two and three.

According to Milner, the state of mind that exists when emergence is taking place is not only one of mental structuration, such as the dawn of self consciousness, or the birth of the subject; it is also one of distinctive emotion and feeling. This she describes as ecstasy, the emotional experience of sudden discovery of inner space and limitlessness, and an intense capacity for concentration. She traces the minute transformations and fluctuations in the quality of concentration in her child patients as they move through different predicaments, and intuitively a pattern in the quality of concentration. Interestingly, she does not then classify this quality into different "types" of, say, libidinal, obsessive, hysterical, paranoid, and so on, but is interested in what the state of mind means to the subject as a unique experience.

Milner's work does include references to schizophrenia, especially in her case study of "Susan", the young woman Winnicott asked her to analyse, but the classificatory system of psychoanalysis is also something Milner wanted to subject to analysis. She writes in 1987 that if she were to write another paper, it would be on the use and meaning of the word "mad" as it is used colloquially and clinically.

Milner's concern for exactness in using concepts impelled her to research the psychoanalytic accounts of mysticism, a discourse in

which the concept of ecstasy is also used. Her essay includes an interesting review of Bion's writing on the concept of "O", which is not unlike the idea of the "framed gap", and she is able to distinguish her thoughts from his on the grounds that whereas Bion equated mysticism with genius, Milner thought that while genius may share some characteristics with mysticism, the two are not synonymous. In this study she notes her interest in Lao Tzu's Zen writings, the *Tao Te Ching*:

He who knows the masculine and yet keeps to the feminine  
Will become a channel drawing all the world towards it,  
And then he can return to the state of infinity,  
He who knows the white and yet keeps to the black  
Will become the standard of the world. [Milner, 1987, p. 262]

Milner is interested in the mystical Zen ideal of "absolute vacuity", whether or not this is equivalent to a state of massive denial, and whether Bion's idea of letting go of "memory and desire" is an appropriate one for the analytic setting. My sense is that the reference to the philosophy of the Far East functions as a way of reframing the Western philosophical tradition's conception of gender difference. As a way of reframing the constrictive definitions of masculinity and femininity inherent in the Freudian conceptual apparatus, the "otherness" of another culture enables Milner to reconceive gender without having to become confrontational or adversarial in relation to canonical thought. Both Milner and Winnicott went on to make some extraordinarily fertile and generative insights into the primary femininity of creativity, and their thinking about the play of sexual difference in creativity could not have been formulated within the Freudian framework of western binary differentiation.

In the references to black and white Milner refers to her analysands' use of black paint in their art, differentiating between the bad black and the good black. There is a sense in which the colour black connotes death and another boundary or framed absence which is also fertile and generative. There are, she maintains, levels of experience described in mysticism that closely correspond to states of mind encountered in analysis, and that are not adequately described in the scientific literature. The reformulation of femininity beyond the conventions of rather normative, pre-feminist authority

is powerfully present in her work, and this intuitive "liberation" of gender from its unimaginative moorings within science is also implied in her choice of a title for her collected writings, *The Suppressed Madness of Sane Men: Forty-four years of exploring psychoanalysis*. Milner locates herself on the side of exploration rather than knowledge, on the side of the verb rather than the noun, and always somewhere in between boundaries. Is it this identification with the fluidity of liminal states that makes Milner's work so difficult to classify and so fresh and contemporary to each new generation that finds it?

The experience of merging, of e-merging, of being half submerged, and the experience of being in contact with the conventional calibration of time (I keep thinking it's Tuesday) is a good metaphor for Milner's psychoanalysis. Following the patient into the real experience of states of mind that are only half-conscious, whilst keeping in mind the existence of the submerged depths and the external realities of time and space, or of science and knowledge, is characteristic of her work in both clinical practice and cultural analysis. The technique that most distinguishes her analytic practice, as reported in her clinical papers, is that of understanding the analytic setting as the "framed gap" which serves to allow the patient to encounter the blankness of their own amnesia, or denial and resistances, so that the repressed or unconscious material may materialize in a way that is unique to the subject and can then become integrated into the subject's own self. While differing from the Kleinian preference for direct verbalization by the analyst of what is believed to be unconscious latent content of the transference, and from Anna Freud's methods of analysing resistances, Milner was well aware of her indebtedness to all analytic mentors and precursors, dedicating her last book to "The British Psycho-Analytical Society, Warts and All, Gratefully".

Her interest in the emotional significance of gender (as in the Zen thoughts on the masculine and feminine) as well as her more orthodox analytic understanding of the psychic construction of gender enabled her to navigate the turbulent waters of the controversy between the two maternal mentors, Klein and Freud. Perhaps the most significant differences between these two lay in their different concepts of the child. Freud *père* himself had demonstrated that the child and the infantile is the core of the unconscious in the

form of the Oedipus complex, infantile sexuality and repressed memories of childhood events and beliefs. Melanie Klein interpreted the child's play and adult symptoms as if she already knew the content of the infantile mind and the adult unconscious, as if indeed it were a "content" and a psychic reality that must be observed as transference and countertransference. Anna Freud maintained that the world of childhood was not yet adequately known and that it must be observed, documented and described, carefully and systematically, as well as being inferred from interpretations within clinical practice. That Melanie Klein was a mother and Anna Freud not may have had significance for the perception of the relative status of their knowledge. And the fact that Klein was referred to as "Mrs Klein" and Anna Freud as "Miss Freud" also seemed to arrange these roles in a generational, oedipal dynamic, with Mrs Klein being elevated to the role of the missing mother to accompany Freud *père* as totem leaders of the small band of analytic brothers, the forty or so members of the British Society. But for Milner their work was both available as conceptual tools and present as an oedipal predicament that had to be negotiated in finding her own independent voice. In her "Afterthoughts" she notes that omission of references to two books by Anna and Sigmund Freud are "symptoms of the constant struggle both to use the parents' insights and at the same time to be sensitive to my own experience, to see with my own eyes" (Milner, 1987, p. 297). Here we find Milner's own identification with the oedipal child, an identification and sensitivity which is characteristic of all her clinical and theoretical work. The child, for Milner, is the agent of a kind of thinking and feeling, of understanding, that is neither the oedipal infantile unconscious of the adult nor an empirically quantifiable population to be observed and measured, but a valuable "informant" in play with a "participant observer" who must learn their language in order to understand and enjoy them fully. For Milner the object of psychoanalysis is not to assure the mastery of the ego over the id, not to celebrate the radical alterity of the unconscious, but to learn to love the unconscious, with all the sense of responsibility and care implied in the word "love".

Milner's comments on the experience of being in supervision with Melanie Klein for a child analysis (her membership paper) are testimony to her awareness of the real differences in technique that became a fully fledged theoretical difference. Milner documents the

case with the child's actions and speech, adding Klein's comments on the significance of the child's behaviour. The supervisor's comments were directed to the analyst, and they show a single-minded focus on Klein's idea of what is taking place in the child's unconscious phantasy. This appears, even then, as existing in tension with Milner's own intuitive method of following, empathically, the child's experience of inner conflicts, and of her changing states of mind. Not insensitive to Klein's ideas, Milner, like Winnicott, was able to integrate an understanding of the significance of early infancy and the child's relation to its mother, in reality and in phantasy, as a central component of her method and her understanding.

There is still a wide readership for her early books *On Not Being Able to Paint* (1950) and *An Experiment in Leisure* (1937), both of which are written for a wide readership, without explicit reference to psychoanalytic theory, but with much implicit use of the experience of being in analysis.

Milner is used today in order to understand creativity as a primary activity, neither derived from cultural conventions nor sublimated instincts or unconscious impulses. The understanding of the primacy of object relations as part of human maturation and psychological development means that the human need to draw, write, sing, dance and communicate is seen as something directed to an "other", but also—and equally—to a self. In fact the need to communicate is a product of the space that gradually emerges as being experienced as a space "in between", neither self nor not-self. And it is the formulation of the meaning and significance of this space "in between" that is characteristic of the contribution of Marion Milner to the British psychoanalytic tradition. Like Winnicott, there is a constant recourse to the inner connection of certain kinds of emotional and psychological truths learned from years of meticulous clinical work, and a special interest in the space "between" what they are experiencing in their work and what is written up in "the literature". Through reading Milner the reader wonders if it is possible to speak or write of an experience that is always before and beyond words, and it is something in the quality of Milner's writing that makes this question possible for the reader.

In her most popular book, Milner speculates on the meaning of not being able to paint and invites readers to recognise the significance of spontaneously making symbolic or cultural forms for

a relationship to the self. This is analogous to an analytic understanding of the symptom as "murmuring to itself and hoping to be overheard". Making, or creating, is an activity that is founded in a primary joyful state of being, and being conscious of being. This primary ec-stasy is a process and activity that is movement out of stillness and *stasis*.

I suggest that we appreciate humming in the light of Milner's recognition of the critical importance of the duality of being merged and e-merging. Humming, rather than singing or speaking, is an expression of a state in which the subject, or hummer, is in a sort of "state of grace" that is both mundane and divine. It is an activity that is auto-erotic and object-related, both material and communication. Humming is, I suggest, another example of a framed gap, where the self is allowed to become absent as protagonist by becoming present as bodily, acoustic frame.

There is a moment of exceptional pleasure and concentration when children learn for the first time to read silently, by sounding out the words on the page as sounds within the mind: in the mind's ear, as it were. This point, at which children become able to master the process of reading as a circuit of taking inside the self a symbol that exists in the outside world, in the book, is also a point at which the child becomes able to find a place for themselves as an active part of a circuit of meaning in a representational world. This mastery of a long held ambition to own the mystery of reading is accompanied by an ecstasy of joy and satisfaction. Although this experience is forgotten and reading becomes as mundane as walking and breathing, the memory of that joyous immersion within a circuit of meaning through the silent reproduction of sounds within the mind is something we rediscover in humming. Of course there are other memories also retrieved in humming that predate literacy, such as feeding, kissing, breathing, crying and so on.

### *On humming*

The mystery of humming lies in the fact that it makes us both active and passive simultaneously, like the baby with the cotton reel in the Fort-Da game. We lose and we find at the same moment. The mouth emits a resonant hum and it is heard internally through the bones,

and externally through the ears, as if it arrived from elsewhere. The elsewhere is also the "within", the blankness framed by noise.

The ear is an organ of reception that we cannot voluntarily close. Sounds, transmitted through the materiality of the maternal body, actively fill the sensory experience from before birth, and may continue into states of deep unconsciousness. Breathing, too, is an automatic, involuntary process, and smell can also be sensed through states of unconsciousness. The ear has, unlike the nose, a particular part to play in the circuit of sensory perception that connects sensation to sense and meaning. As language is the prime means of communication, the ear is endowed with particular social significance. Although originally programmed to be used by infants to locate the source of a mother's voice in order to track her by eye, the ears soon articulate their synaesthesia with vocalization and speech. However, they always retain something of the pre-symbolic sense with which they began. I have observed babies, during the weaning phase, humming to the activity of eating finger foods or from a spoon, as if to add another corporeal dimension to the experience which was once, sucking noisily at the breast, a more total and engulfing experience.

Here I want to suggest that humming is the acoustic equivalent of doodling: when understood in Milner's sense, it provides a symbolic equivalent of the emotional aspect of hearing a song or piece of music. It is a means of setting up a circuit of emitting and receiving noise simultaneously, connecting inner feeling, physiological resonance and vibration, with the affect of the meaning of the music, and the external space of sound heard by the ears. From the inner world of fleeting feeling the hummer can make an envelope of sound that surrounds and insulates as well as communicating. The communication is not directed to anyone in particular. The hummer may be humming to themselves. To the listener, the hummer indicates being in a state of self-absorption.

Humming is not the tuneful product of a loss that is mourned: it is not the blues, the visceral cry of the cantor at prayer, the beautiful song, the siren song of seduction or desire; humming is an expression of the experience of being at one with oneself. Being merged through the illusion of relatedness and being e-merging through the perception of oneself as the origin of sound. In this way the act of humming is an acoustic way of being in state of "absent

mindedness" a state that Milner thinks is important insofar as it enables another kind of thinking to take place. The relation between the hummer and the mental representation of the memory of singer or music is equivalent to the child play of mimicry and imitation. It is this playful relation that, like the role of illusion in symbol formation, enables the hummer to revisit, and thus, reconfigure, the boundary between inner and outer. The relation between hummed music and, say, orchestral music is equivalent to the relation between the "illusion of union and the fact of contact" (1950, p. 95). The corporeal resonance of humming also evokes the "fact of contact" and recreates the original maternal envelope within the "illusion of union" that is the hummer's relation to the original score.

Milner relates this kind of "absent mindedness" to what Winnicott called the reverie of primary maternal preoccupation, which is quite different from phantasy or fantasy. Walkers, swimmers, sportsmen of all kinds, musicians and artists all report a similar, necessary creation of a "framed gap" within which something may be found that is not available for encounter anywhere else. It is this uniqueness of the encounter with oneself as unique that may be being unconsciously sought.

It has become commonplace for analysts to acknowledge the transformational value of great art, literature and music, but it is absolutely characteristic of Milner's idiom that she is able to find the transformational value in moments and acts of the most ordinary, everyday kind. There is something about the certainty of the value of what is found, simply by the fact of being found, that guarantees its meaning for the subject. There is an absence of striving.

But presence may not be amenable to being sought and it may be simply found. The experience of the self as existing needs to be found, at times, in order to tolerate the burden of existing for others, or being needed; and Marion Milner was able to describe this experience in ways that nobody else had described it before or has described it since.

One paradox that tantalizes and frustrates those working within the Independent tradition is that their legacy is one that inspires profound admiration and longing for emulation but does not install orthodoxy or compliance. People cannot become like their mentors by copying them, but by becoming themselves in a way that is always completely unpredictable and new. The originality of self

and its creativity cannot be sought, it can only be found. And that, paradoxically, is what Milner was saying.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### Being and sexuality: contribution or confusion?

*Lesley Caldwell*

In her early book, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974), Mitchell argued for psychoanalysis as a theory able to explain the process whereby men and women come to internalize difference as oppression. In tackling this equivalence she was stating one of the problems facing feminist theorizing of that time and arguing for psychoanalysis as offering a way into why this might be so. In her opening remarks at the Freud Museum conference that celebrated the book's twentieth anniversary, she said, "What we as feminists asked of Freud's theory was the same question Freud was asking as a male hysteric: What is a woman? What is the difference between the sexes?" (1995) This was a reasonable and relevant question to ask, especially since it was the one that allowed Freud "to formulate the Oedipus complex and the castration complex as a sort of 'answer'". But Mitchell went on to make a distinction between what can be asked as a feminist, an activist, a theorist, and what can be asked as a clinician, a position she identified as involving a technique of listening and hearing in a particular way. Such a practice gives rise to different questions. This discussion of Winnicott and, by extension, the psychoanalytic world we have all inhabited, recognizes the questions that were not, or have not been asked, of and about sexuality as it manifests itself in the consulting room, and in clinical papers and debate, and their implications for practitioners; it offers a tentative engagement with the questions that can and must be asked.

In much of Winnicott's clinical material, especially in *The Piggle* (1977) and other examples of his work with children, in the extended