

ECHOES OF CHILDHOOD

The Foundational Role
of Child Analysis in
Adult Analytic Work

Edited by
Caroline M. Sehon



First published in 2026 by
Karnac Books Limited
62 Bucknell Road
Bicester
Oxfordshire OX26 2DS

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A C.I.P. for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80013-441-6 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-80013-443-0 (e-book)

ISBN: 978-1-80013-442-3 (PDF)

Typeset by vPrompt eServices Pvt Ltd, India



www.firingthemind.com

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Articles from *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* (Taylor & Francis, 2025):

- Barroso, A. M. (2025). Navigating infantile anxieties in a traumatized child and family. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 78(1): 181–190. From: *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 78(1), © 2025 Taylor & Francis. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Group. RightsLink Order No. 502013371.
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- Prezant, D. W. (2025). Working with children helps us work with adults: A commentary to Dr. Barroso. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 78(1): 197–201. From: *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 78(1), © 2025 Taylor & Francis. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Group. RightsLink Order No. 502013368.

- Sehon, C. M., & Scharff, J. S. (2025). Play, containment, and insights from child analysis. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 78(1): 147–164. From: *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 78(1), © 2025 Taylor & Francis. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Group. RightsLink Order No. 502013365.
- Sehon, C. M., & Scharff, J. S. (2025). Refinding the ghosts in the nursery: The value of child analysis for adult psychoanalytic treatment. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 78(1): 165–180. From: *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 78(1), © 2025 Taylor & Francis. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Group. RightsLink Order No. 502013364.
- Scharff, D. E., & Scharff, J. S. (1992). *The Interpersonal Unconscious*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson. Illustration and excerpt reprinted with permission of Jason Aronson, Inc., an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, Inc.
- Scharff, J. S. (2017). Case study: Analysis of a traumatized hemophiliac boy. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 98(1): 71–90. © 2017 Institute of Psychoanalysis. Reprinted by permission of Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group, www.tandfonline.com on behalf of the Institute of Psychoanalysis. RightsLink Order No. 502014018.
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Editor's note and acknowledgments

Caroline M. Sehon

Introduction

Echoes of Childhood is the culmination of a thirteen-year collaborative project, “Enriching Adult Analytic Work by Child Analytic Training and Practice.” This project originated as an annual discussion group at the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsA), which Virginia Ungar and I cofounded in 2012.

I came to envision a book that would extend the wisdom and insights of our discussions to a broader audience. I hoped to refine and consolidate the contributions of this “laboratory” of thought, thereby enriching the candidates in adult training and those in integrated child and adult analytic programs. This volume reflects that aspiration. I am deeply grateful to the contributors, who have generously shared their work and clinical insights, which sharpens the analytic instrument for those working with patients across the life span. With my invitation, each presenter readily agreed to contribute, united by a shared purpose: to demonstrate how a child analytic perspective opens access to the deepest layers of the adult mind.

Following a developmental arc, the book is organized into four parts:

Part I: *Early childhood* examines foundational insights from infancy and early childhood, emphasizing the analyst's role in containing affect, decoding nonverbal communication, and understanding the impact of early trauma.

Part II: *Middle childhood* addresses the treatment of latency aged children with severe obsessive–compulsive neurosis and explores the effects of trauma in family systems.

Part III: *Adolescence* investigates countertransference dynamics in adolescent analysis, including the value of a two-systems analytic treatment approach.

Part IV: *Adulthood* highlights the enduring influences of early childhood experiences (the “ghosts in the nursery”) in shaping and accessing the deepest strata of the adult mind.

As psychoanalysis evolves, we hope that a deepened synergy between child and adult analytic work will enrich clinical practice, thereby advancing treatment for patients of all ages. In accordance with ethical guidelines, case material has been disguised or presented in composite form to safeguard confidentiality.

Acknowledgments

Creating this book has been a deeply meaningful journey, made possible only through the generous support, guidance, and inspiration of many individuals and institutions. It is a testament to the contributors' collective commitment, intellectual rigor, and passion. They are united by a conviction in the foundational value of child analytic theory and technique for analytic work across the life cycle. I am very grateful for their devotion to our discussion group, and generosity in sharing their profound clinical wisdom.

I feel the deepest gratitude for the board members, faculty, and students at the International Psychotherapy Institute (IPI)—my professional home. I am especially indebted to IPI co-founders, David and Jill Scharff, whose teaching, mentorship, and vision have

profoundly shaped my professional development. David has contributed as an author and discussant in this volume, and Jill has provided me invaluable support as a writing consultant and co-author. These contributions exemplify their enduring generosity and intellectual vitality. I also appreciate their years of participation in the discussion group.

I had the good fortune to meet Virginia Ungar through my training at IPI. Her mentorship, friendship, and creative partnership—spanning over a decade—have profoundly impacted my identity as a child analyst. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my child analytic supervisors and teachers—Ted Jacobs, Jeanne Magagna, Jack Novick, Kerry Kelly Novick, Jill Savege Scharff, David Scharff, and Virginia Ungar—each of whom is also a contributor to this volume. Their steady encouragement, generous guidance, and willingness to share their knowledge and the subtle gems of child analytic technique have profoundly shaped my professional development. I remain deeply indebted to them.

The American Psychoanalytic Association (APSA)'s discussion group served as the catalyst for this project. I thank Dan Prezant (APSA president), Tom Newman (executive director), Seth Aronson (Program Committee chair), and Carolyn Gatto (Scientific Program and Meetings director).

I appreciate the kindness of Jill Miller and Denia Barrett, co-editors-in-chief of *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* (PSC), who invited me to contribute to PSC, Vol. 78—an initiative that proved pivotal in the genesis of this book.

Special thanks to Kate Pearce at Karnac for her steadfast belief in this project, and to James Darley, Anita Mason, and the editorial, production, and marketing teams for their excellent work in bringing this volume to completion.

My appreciation extends as well to Leonard Rosenbaum for meticulously preparing the index, to Jenn Chalfant for her invaluable administrative support, and to Andy Fraser, MBA, and Becky Sterling of Sandglass Systems, Inc., whose creative vision and thoughtful design brought the book cover image to life.

Finally, I thank my teachers, supervisors, friends, and (above all) my patients (and their parents) and supervisees, whose courage in sharing their deepest selves has provided the clinical material that animates and grounds the insights of this book.

Preface

Virginia Ungar (Argentina)

Caroline Schon's *Echoes of Childhood: The Foundational Role of Child Analysis in Adult Analytic Work* emerges from more than a decade of rigorous, generous, and sustained dialogue among child analysts at the meetings of the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsA).

What began in 2012 as an APsA Discussion Group, co-founded by my dear friend and colleague Caroline Schon and myself, was conceived as a meeting ground where insights from child analysis could illuminate work with patients across the lifespan. Over twelve years, this group became a fertile laboratory, where we shared clinical work, tested theories, and explored the subtleties of practice with children and adults. The book is a direct result of Caroline's talent and creativity as she has distilled that collective experience into an integrated psychoanalytic vision.

We founded a Discussion Group, hoping to create a space for child and adult analysts to meet. We continually discovered that the exchange enriched everyone's practice, deepened our capacity to observe and listen, broadened our understanding, and reminded us that the infantile always relates to the adult. From those sustained encounters, *Echoes of Childhood* took shape.

This groundbreaking book is the first of its kind in three decades. This ability to gather voices from multiple countries, theoretical traditions, and clinical cultures is a testament to Caroline's leadership and vision. The authors are united by a vision that child analysis is not a specialization but a vital dimension of analytic understanding applicable to all analysts. The clinical work presented here spans infancy to adulthood, demonstrating developmental continuity and the persistence of the earliest psychic layers, which influence personality and relationships throughout life.

Caroline Sehon has organized the chapters with an eye to development, guiding the reader from the nonverbal world of infancy, through the expanding inner life of childhood, into the turbulence and promise of adolescence, and finally into the complexities of adulthood—now illuminated by the perspectives gained from child analytic work. In each section, the reader encounters both the specificity of each developmental period and the threads that run through all: persistence of the infantile, the necessity of containment, and the centrality of observing and listening beyond words. Each contributor reflects a distinct voice and clinical style, yet they converge on a single certainty: the analytic sensibility shaped by working with children.

This vision has deep historical roots. Child analysis pioneers Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, and their contemporaries laid the groundwork through collaboration and debate. Yet the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) formally recognized child and adolescent analysis only in the 1990s, with the creation of the Committee on Child and Adolescent Psychoanalysis (COCAP), which I chaired from 2005 to 2009. That milestone paved the way for further innovations, including the Integrated Training Program, which enables candidates to train as both adult and child analysts. The underlying belief is as compelling as it is sensible: direct work with children provides analysts with privileged access to the most fundamental levels of emotional life, and this deepens their work with patients of all ages.

Working with children requires and cultivates exceptional capacities. We learn to pay special attention to the language of gesture and play, to hear what is communicated without words, and to wait without forcing meaning too soon. Esther Bick's method of infant observation has been central in developing this stance, sharpening our ability to observe and

conceptualize the nonverbal. These skills are also essential with adult patients, whose earliest experiences remain unspoken in the analytic relationship.

Caroline's book can be read as a map, lens, and bridge. It *maps* the psychic journey from early life to adulthood. It offers a *lens* (polished by child analytic training) that clarifies the adult's internal world. And it *bridges* the professional divide between child and adult work. The vignettes illustrate theory and they are moments of encounter in which analyst and patient emerge transformed (cf. Bion) after going through analytic process.

In our group discussion, we learned that our stance with a child patient—being open and willing to “not know” until the patient can show us—serves us well with adults. *Containment* is a technique and a state of mind in which we hold what feels uncontainable until it can be thought (Bion). The child's world, with its immediacy, intensity, and unguarded expression, teaches us how to sustain the analytic stance.

Contemporary culture, caught up in a race for success, pressures educational institutions, which in turn put weight on parents, who then pressure analysts to shorten and simplify child therapies. In contrast, *Echoes of Childhood* reminds us that psychoanalysis gains its vitality from depth and breadth. It illustrates how integrating child and adult work enriches the field and shows that the patience, humility, and openness cultivated in child analysis sustain us in the consulting room with patients of all ages.

This impressive book will speak not only to analysts and therapists, but to all who explore the enduring influence of childhood—in clinical and educational contexts, across organizations, and in personal reflection. I encourage you to allow the chapters to work on you without rushing to conclusions, listen for what lies beneath the words, and allow meanings to emerge. “Echoes of the infantile” are always present—in our patients, in ourselves, and in every analytic encounter. Caroline Sehon's work shows us how to hear them and how to deepen our work with every patient.