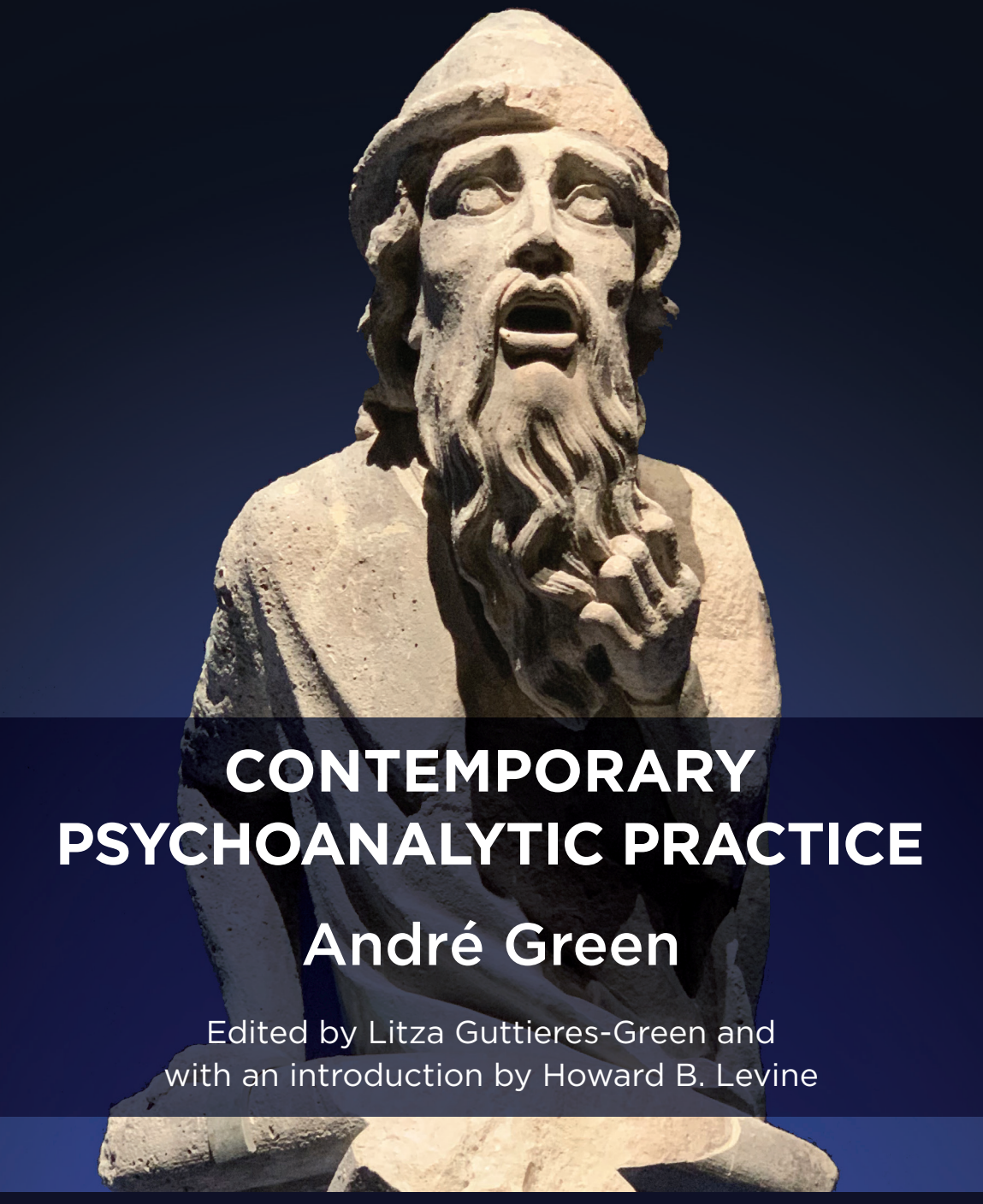
FRENCH PSYCHOANALYSIS: CONTEMPORARY VOICES, CLASSICAL TEXTS
Series Editor: Howard B. Levine



CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYTIC PRACTICE

André Green

Edited by Litza Guttieres-Green and
with an introduction by Howard B. Levine

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Preface by

Fernando Urribarri

Introduction and notes to the English edition by

Howard B. Levine

KARNAC

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Contents

About the author and contributors vii

Author's remarks to the French edition ix

Editor's remarks to the French edition xi

Preface to the French edition xiii
by Fernando Urribarri

Introduction to the English edition xxxix
by Howard B. Levine

Text sources xlix

CHAPTER 1
The psychoanalytic frame: Its internalization by the analyst and its application in practice 1

CHAPTER 2
The psychoanalytic process: Myths and realities 27

CHAPTER 3
Issues of interpretation: Conjectures on construction 75

CHAPTER 4
Repetition compulsion and the pleasure principle 99

CHAPTER 5
Passivity—passivation: Jouissance and distress 109

CHAPTER 6
The enigma of guilt and the mystery of shame 123

CHAPTER 7
Sexuality in non-neurotic structures: Past and present 139

References 159

Index 165

About the author and contributors

André Green (1927–2012), French psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, member of the Paris Psychoanalytical Society (SPP), was one of the most pre-eminent figures of the contemporary psychoanalytic movement, both for his theoretical and clinical research and his role within institutions. In 1965, Green became a member of the SPP, of which he was President from 1986 to 1989. From 1975 to 1977 he was a Vice-President of the International Psychoanalytical Association and from 1979 to 1980 a Freud Memorial Professor at University College London. He was elected an Honorary Member of the British Psychoanalytical Society.

He attended Jacques Lacan's seminars between 1961 and 1967, when he definitively broke with him. He then directed a seminar at the Institute of Psychoanalysis in Paris where he invited the great philosophers and authors of his time, including Jean-Pierre Vernant, Michel Serres, Jacques Derrida, Marcel Detienne, and René Girard. A great reader of D. W. Winnicott and a friend of W. R. Bion, he constantly bridged the gap between British, American, and French psychoanalytical research in a spirit of international openness and turned toward the future of psychoanalysis. His theoretical contributions—the dead mother, private madness, the work of the negative, the analytic third, and the

analytic object—opened the way to psychoanalysis beyond neurosis, the hallmark of twenty-first-century psychoanalysis.

Many of his works, such as *Life Narcissism*, *Death Narcissism*, *On Private Madness*, and *The Work of the Negative*, are classics of psychoanalytic literature.

Litza Guttieres-Green, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, full member of the Paris Psychoanalytic Society and the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis, is the author of a number of articles on hysteria, psychic pain, and the feminine.

Howard B. Levine, MD, is a member of APSA, PINE, the Contemporary Freudian Society, and Pulsion, on the faculty of the NYU Post-Doc Contemporary Freudian Track, on the editorial board of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* and *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, editor-in-chief of the Routledge Wilfred Bion Studies Book Series, and in private practice in Brookline, Massachusetts. He has authored many articles, book chapters, and reviews on psychoanalytic process and technique and the treatment of primitive personality disorders. His edited and coedited books include *Unrepresented States and the Construction of Meaning* (Karnac, 2013); *On Freud's Screen Memories* (Karnac, 2014); *The Wilfred Bion Tradition* (Karnac, 2016); *Bion in Brazil* (Karnac, 2017); *André Green Revisited: Representation and the Work of the Negative* (Karnac, 2018); *Autistic Phenomena and Unrepresented States* (Phoenix, 2023), and *The Freudian Matrix of André Green* (Routledge, 2023). He is the author of *Transformations de l'Irreprésentable* (Ithaque, 2019) and *Affect, Representation and Language: Between the Silence and the Cry* (Routledge, 2022).

Fernando Urribarri is a psychoanalyst and a member of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association (APA), where he conducts the "André Green Research Seminar." In 2005, he codirected the International Symposium at Cerisy dedicated to André Green (transcripts published by PUF).

Author's remarks to the French edition

The present volume brings together some selected texts written between 1997 and 2005, presented at conferences, published in various bulletins and journals, or as contributions to collective works, in order to make them accessible to a wider readership.

I thank the directors of the aforementioned publications for granting permission to reprint. My thanks also go to Ana de Staal and *Les Éditions d'Ithaque* for agreeing to publish this work.

André Green
Croagnes, July 2011

Editor's remarks to the French edition

The texts in the present volume were selected by André Green himself in the year prior to his death, with the help of Fernando Urribarri. He was able to authorize the publication of the book, but did not have time to revise it entirely.

As a result, I completed this work.

In fact, the book contains mainly oral presentations transcribed and published in journals, without any editing. I made some corrections I deemed necessary for ease of reading. For Freud's texts, and for convenience, I chose as reference the *Oeuvres completes de Freud* (PUF).*

My thanks also go to John Jackson for reviewing all the texts and providing his unfailing help throughout the project.

I want to thank and acknowledge The Boston Group for Psychoanalytic Studies (BGPS) for supporting the translation of this volume.

I hope that this book will be of interest to its readers and meet with their approval.

Litza Guttieres-Green
Paris, 2012

* Translator's note: The reference used for the English version of Freud's works is the Strachey translation in the *Standard Edition* (Hogarth).

Preface to the French edition

Fernando Urribarri

A history of contemporary clinical thought

> *This is the project on which I invite you to reflect. We must create passageways between the focus of analysis and the limits of the analyzable, must force reflection to move between contradictory polarities, to answer the current need to portray the full extent of analytic practice and the variety of situations which experience provides.*
>
> —André Green, *The Psychoanalytic Frame: Internalization by the Analyst and Its Application in Practice*

The simplicity of this title, *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Practice*, could suggest that this idiomatic formula does nothing more than refer to current psychoanalytic practice. But, in truth, this expression designates a historical and conceptual state of affairs. In fact, it provides an account of the "silent revolution" (Green, 2006b, p. 90) which inspired a new psychoanalytic paradigm that constitutes one of the major objectives of André Green's work.

The author of *Les voies nouvelles de la thérapeutique psychanalytique* [*New Modalities of Psychoanalytic Therapy*] pointed out that

"psychoanalytic technique is doubtless the least examined aspect of psychoanalysis" (ibid., p. 99). Indeed, the present work (which had as a tentative title "Technique Revisited") came into existence as an attempt to correct this failing.

While *Propédeutique: la métaphysique revisitée* [Propedeutics: Metaphysics Revisited] (Green, 1995b) was the first work to present an overview of André Green's metapsychological thinking, the present volume brings together his key contributions to the renewal of psychoanalytic practice and technique. The texts included here have two distinctive characteristics. First, they delimit the field of psychoanalytic practice, expanded and radically altered by the predominance of work with non-neurotic structures. Second, they reinforce the underpinnings of the practice, to construct a contemporary clinical model. Thus, in the texts that follow, the author reconceptualizes the analytic frame and its variations by introducing the concept of "the internal framing structure of the analyst"; he distinguishes between myths and realities of the analytic process applied to neurotic and non-neurotic structures; he assesses the results of the extension of the post-Freudian notion of countertransference by proposing a new definition centered on the analyst's psychic work; he reevaluates the technical connections between interpretation and construction in light of contemporary practice; finally, he reformulates, within the limits of analyzability, the relation between remembering, repeating, and working through.

In all his texts André Green adopts a historical posture, both in continuity with and in opposition to Freudian and post-Freudian models. He deconstructs the reductionisms and impasses encountered in these models, in order to better integrate his contributions into a new synthesis intended to create a contemporary paradigm: Freudian, pluralistic, expanded, open, and complex.

Three important essays complete this volume, presenting unprecedented developments regarding *psychic functioning at the limits of analyzability*. One essay sheds light on feelings of guilt and shame linked to the *paternal function*, and discusses thirdness (Ch. 6). Another essay explores *passivation* (not to be confused with passivity) as a key concept in borderline states (Ch. 5), and includes the only revised version of the "dead mother complex" (Green, 1980a) which extends the original version. Finally, we must mention the remarkable theoretico-clinical

study entitled "Sexuality in non-neurotic structures: Past and present perspectives" (Ch. 7). Although this text, unique in Green's vast body of work, focuses primarily on the paradoxical singularity of *sexuality in borderline functioning*, it also reexamines its general theoretical significance from a contemporary perspective (which connects the intrapsychic with the intersubjective).

After working with me to select the articles to be included in this volume, André Green asked me to write the preface. Therefore, as I did in my previous contributions to *Du signe au discours* (Green, 2011; Urribarri, 2011) and to *Illusions et désillusions du travail psychanalytique* (Green, 2010; Urribarri, 2010), I intend to place this volume in the context of Green's work by means of a brief history of Greenian clinical thought seen as his contribution to a contemporary clinical paradigm.

Conceptualizing the epistemology of the practice

André Green should be read in the same way that he read Freud and "his" post-Freudian authors (Lacan, Bion, and Winnicott). To use the definition given by another remarkable reader, Jean Laplanche, such a reading is necessarily critical, historical, and problematic (Laplanche, 1998), in conformity with what Green (1983b) calls the theoretical process (as distinct from the analytic process), which is largely latent and in the course of which certain problematic questions present themselves to the mind in a manner relatively independent of the author's architectonic consciousness.

We must not forget that Green integrated into his reflection on technique and on practice, from the beginning, an epistemological concern: "A fundamental question for psychoanalysis has to do with the relation between theoretical models and clinical practice" (Green, 1979b, p. 376). Green's essay "Surface analysis, deep analysis" (1974) starts with a question: Can we speak of a single analytic technique when we know that various techniques will be used in the course of one day? He answers by introducing the epistemological notion of an "implicit theoretical model of the practice" as a mediator underlying the model guiding all technical research. In "Penser l'épistémologie de la pratique" (1990a) Green concludes that given the impasses to which theoretical

models borrowed from other disciplines (biology, linguistics, etc.) have led, it would be judicious to explore the epistemological potential of the *analytic device itself*.

In order to perceive the underlying unity in the apparent dispersion and the thematic arborescence of André Green's work examined in chronological order, I have suggested that the question of the contemporary in psychoanalysis has been orienting his work since "L'inconscient freudien et la psychanalyse contemporaine" (1962), followed by *Key Ideas for a Contemporary Psychoanalysis* (2005a), and up to *La Clinique psychanalytique contemporaine* (2012).

The word "contemporary" has evolved throughout Green's work: from an adjective to a noun, from a difficulty to a conjecture, from description to concept, until it became a "guiding principle." More specifically, this word encapsulates the process of forging a new paradigm intended to overcome a perceived crisis in psychoanalysis. The "epistemological motor" of this crisis (Green, 1980b) is located in the "gap" between the Freudian foundations and the challenges to psychoanalytic practice posed by non-neurotic patients.

Greenian thought can best be described by identifying three stages[1] which, from an epistemological standpoint, prove to be decisive for bringing about what we shall consider a process of innovative research.

In 1975, in his London Congress paper, Green presented his contemporary psychoanalytic project which combined a research proposal on the "limits of analyzability" with a historical view of the crisis of psychoanalysis (Green's "theoretical framework"). Next, Green announced a "return to the fundamental model (Green, 1980b). Soon afterwards, in "Le langage dans la psychanalyse" (Green, 1983a), he constructed an original theoretical model to shed light on the foundations of the Freudian method (applied to neurosis). Finally, *Key Ideas …* (2005a) discusses changes ushered in by the new millennium (Green, 2006c) and launches the contemporary project. In order to guide the development of a general model for analytic practice, Green proposes a synthesis of the two previous models offering a new dyadic

[1] See Urribarri (2010), where I had proposed the following division: an initial stage from 1960 to 1970, a stage where ideas reached maturity in the 1980s and '90s, and a late period after 2000.

model "based on the dream and on the act" (correlated to neurotic and non-neurotic functioning). This dyad makes it possible to reconstruct the foundations of analytic technique centered on the conceptual pair "external frame–internal frame."

First stage: The emergence of the contemporary project

The emergence of the contemporary psychoanalytic project in André Green's work can be said to correspond to his 1974 London Congress paper "The analyst, symbolization and absence in the analytic setting" (Green, 1975). This paper adopts as its initial "theoretical framework" a new historical and epistemological perspective, resolutely antidogmatic, set forth in two strong statements.

The first statement concerns the present and posits the existence of a *crisis of psychoanalysis* associated with external and internal factors. Among the latter, Green highlights the changes in analytic practice, which created a discrepancy between the technique and the theory (fragmentation into several post-Freudian schools). The second statement asserts that in order to understand and confront these problems, they must be *conceptualized historically*. Thus, Green suggests that the "parallel evolution of theory and psychoanalytic practice" unfolds in three stages corresponding to three models (Green, 1975, pp. 8–9). The *Freudian model* focuses on intrapsychic conflict from a theoretical point of view, and on transference in practice, in the context of neurosis. By contrast, in the *post-Freudian model*,[2] the theory focuses on the relational or intersubjective aspect (specifically on the object relation and the role of the Other), while technique is redefined around countertransference (or the desire of the analyst). Here, the paradigmatic cases are psychotic patients (and children). *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Practice* (this volume) takes mental functioning within the frame as its vantage point for describing borderline functioning. The book endeavors to recognize, place in

[2] Note to the English edition: The term, relational, in this context relates to two objects linked by an object relationship and should not be read as indicting the American Relational School. Similarly, the term, intersubjective, indicates the unconscious mutuality of the functioning of two unconscious minds, analyst and analysand, and should not be taken as a reference to the American Intersubjective School.

historical perspective, and surmount the theoretical and clinical impasses of the Freudian and post-Freudian models.

In the conclusion of his London Congress paper, Green asserts that "solving the crisis disrupting psychoanalysis [that is, its future] will depend on its ability to preserve its Freudian heritage and to integrate its subsequent acquisitions" (Green, 1975 p. 17).

Green focuses his research on borderline cases, considered the new problem cases. He defines them from a clinical point of view (psychoanalytic) as "states at the limit of the analyzable," and no longer from a psychopathological standpoint as "borderline cases." His approach is based on the study of the representational process (defined as the basic function of the psyche) in the analytic frame (whose status is both clinical and epistemological). This theoretical perspective describes representational functioning based on the theory of the heterogeneity of the psychoanalytic signifier, bringing together strength and meaning, as well as economic and symbolic considerations (Donnet & Green, 1973). By introducing and developing the concept of "frame" (elaborated by Bleger, Winnicott, Baranger, Donnet, Green …) Green becomes an analyst of analyzability.

The study of the limits of analyzability requires these limits to be redefined. In 1975, Green introduced the crucial concept of "analytic object," which is, in effect, the product of the meeting of the patient and the analyst. It is a third object, a discursive object (living discourse), produced in the encounter and exchange between the analysand and the analyst in the potential space of the setting.

Green (1975) asserts that the limits of analyzability can only be those of the analyst himself, the patient's *alter ego*. What's more, he states that these limits coincide with those of figurability.

From a metapsychological standpoint, analyzability is defined based on the presence (or absence) of the analytic object. This third object, to be seen as a transitional object of sorts, reflects the potential and intermediary nature of the analytic space: the frame itself being considered a third element with a thirdness-producing aspect. This object constitutes the methodological device enabling the production of analytic material, as well as the construction and study of the analytic object. This confers a new triadic structure to the analytic process: transference/countertransference/frame. In this sense, *contemporary*

clinical thought is born of the conceptualization of the frame and the redefinition of analyzability, through the construction of a new "logic of the analytic pair" (Green, 1979a).

The 1975 paper proposed an extension of the notion of a countertransference, differing from the post-Freudian version. Green pointed out the central role of the analyst's tertiary processes: they can introduce play between primary and secondary processes. Here, Green presents an original conception of the figurability and imagination of the analyst.

The paper states that the current analytic field oscillates between two extremes: at one end lies social "normality" (McDougall), where the analyst's situation is one of "object exclusion"; at the other end are states of fusional regression and object dependence. With this context in mind, Green describes the changes he considers necessary for the analyst's listening. He reminds us that Freud's implicit model of neurosis is based on perversion (neurosis as the inverse of perversion). But post-Freudian authors have gradually discarded perverse fantasies in favor of psychotic defense mechanisms. Green suggests that listening should be founded on a "double code" (of psychosexuality and the work of the negative). He introduces the notion of "private madness" which combines the two codes and is only revealed in the transference, in borderline cases.

How does the analyst work in these situations? "What is demanded of the analyst is more than his affective capacity and empathy" (Green, 1975, p. 6), that is, his well-meaning neutrality and his countertransference; it is, in fact, his entire mental functioning that is demanded. Thus,

> The analyst's psyche […] is affected by the patient's communication. The analyst will respond to the empty space with an intense effort of thought in order to try to think that which the patient cannot think […]. The only solution is to give the patient the image of elaboration, by situating what he gives us in a space which is neither the empty one nor one filled to overflowing, but a ventilated space. […] It is the space of potential and of absence for, as Freud was the first to see, it is in the absence of the object that representation of it is formed, the source of all thought. (Ibid., p. 7)

Green proposes other technical changes when working with borderline cases. He proposes shifting from the predominance of content analysis (representation) to that of container analysis (structure of the ego, borderline defense mechanisms). Beyond the interpretive function, Green insists on the analyst's *framing function*. Drawing extensively on Winnicott's technique, Green (ibid., p. 16) suggests that the analyst try to overcome the dilemma between invasion and abandonment by transforming delusions into play and death into absence, by creating an intermediary field of potential space: "Perhaps the aim of analysis is only to enable the patient to be alone (in the presence of the analyst)" (ibid., p. 17).

In *The Chains of Eros*, Green (1997) asserts the need for the analyst's mad thought in order to understand the peculiar thoughts of the patient's private madness.

> To accept the madness of transference, even psychotic transference, means that the analyst must come to know the mechanisms of a logic that is more than the unconscious logic implicit in Freud's text […]; it means discovering other forms of logic. Freud's logic is one of hope because it counts on realized desire. Borderline cases confront us with the logic of despair (negative therapeutic reaction) or negative investment (splitting). (Green, 1980b, pp. 206–227)

Thus, contemporary clinical thinking emerges and comes to constitute, above all, "a borderline concept."

Before closing this section, let us mention the main technical text André Green wrote prior to those included in this volume. In "Le silence du psychanalyste" [The silence of the psychoanalyst] (Green, 1979b), the author severely criticizes the "golden rule" of the analyst's silence invented by the French analytic orthodoxy. Silence is redefined as one of the elements of the frame and of the analyst's listening function within a complementary and dynamic relation with the patient's discourse. Green shows the radical unsuitability of silence when used as a "technique" with patients subject to severe pathologies. He proposes a mode of dialogue which, in the face of predominant de-linking, must strive to:

> *create shared speech in a single verbal strand in which the analysand's and analyst's discourse weave a fabric of cross-linked speech.* […]

> Here, the analyst must resort to psychoanalytic imagination and, above all, must attempt, more than to translate content, to use the remnants of shreds of the patient's discourse […] to put them together in a new potential space (Winnicott) whose form is often paradoxical. (Ibid., p. 386; author's emphasis)[3]

He concludes his text (ibid., p. 395) with the statement: "Symbolization is a two-part process: the first links the terms of the conscious, the second uses established links and connects them to the split unconscious. […] This *surface* work, on a level with associations, is intended to constitute the preconscious […]."

The double-limit model

Green's research on the limits of analyzability has led to the development of an initial theoretical model of borderline functioning, named the"double-limit" model (Green, 1982). This model makes it possible to connect the double conflict (of the ego with the id and with the object) with the double limit determining the frame (between the inside and the outside of the session, and between the analyst and the patient), in order to construct a "model based on the act," at the limits of analyzability.

The stages of development of this model can be reconstituted by going over a series of articles dating back to the early 1980s. One of them, "Passions and their vicissitudes" (Green, 1980b) conceptualizes private madness by placing it on the impulse–passion–madness axis, to go beyond the limits imposed by Freudian and post-Freudian perspectives.

> The future of theory, clinical work and technique does not lie in the replacement of Freudian concepts centered around castration with a modern concept with other referents—fragmentation, disintegration, annihilation, etc.—but in the *articulation* of these two approaches. In order to build a bridge between [them], it seems

[3] Note to the English edition: The original of this text appeared in the French journal *Topique*, *23*: 5–26, 1979, and was reprinted in *La folie privée*, but was not included in the English version of the latter, *On Private Madness*, published by Karnac in 1997. A slightly different translation of "The silence of the analyst" may be found in Green, A. (2023). *The Freudian Matrix of André Green*, edited by Levine, H. B., pp. 53–74, published by Routledge.