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Wartime Attachments: essays on pain, care, retreat and treatment in the First World War.

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An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn

1914: Psychoanalysis and the Narcissistic Wound

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I'll say upfront that really what I'm most interested in, with respect to Freud's thoughts on War, is the possibility of finding an answer to the question of how to mourn. It should come as no surprise to hear a psychoanalyst situate the problem of war within a framework of mourning – truth be told, there's not a lot that psychoanalysis can't (or perhaps won't) situate within a framework of mourning. But the question of what is lost in war – of just what it is necessary to grieve – is, I think, surprisingly difficult to answer. And furthermore the relationship between these two questions ('what is lost' and 'how to mourn') evades immediate comprehension. Now, I'm not promising to arrive at an answer to these questions in the next 40 minutes or so, but perhaps simply foregrounding them may do some work for us.

There are some further very broad lines of thought that it might help to place up front. First, insofar as it makes sense to speak of an experience of the war, I'm going to be following and exploring some of Freud's thoughts on the perspective of the non-combatant, rather than the perspective of the soldier. My reason for this is because ultimately I'm concerned to say something about war in general, rather than the specifics of the Great War, as we may or may not choose to refer to it. I'm taken by a line from Gertrude Stein, a line incidentally that Jacqueline Rose figures to frame her psychoanalytic discussion of war; Stein remarks: 'It is funny about wars, they ought to be different but they are not'.¹ I'm interested in this tension between the sameness of wars and the difference of wars. Was the war of 1914 to 1918 a new kind of war? Yes, undoubtedly. It's newness being inseparable from the technological shifts in warfare that were the signature of, as Freud would remark, a war 'more bloody and more destructive than any war of other days' (1915, 278).² Revolutionary changes in air-warfare and aerial reconnaissance, the development of gas warfare (chlorine gas, mustard gas, phosgene gas), the introduction of the submarine, high explosive shelling, submachine guns and automatic rifles, such developments marked, what Freud

refers to in his in his 1915 essay 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death' as 'the enormously increased perfection of weapons of attack and defence' (278). One hundred years on, however, the newness of the twentieth century's mechanised and industrialised attacks on life has, of course, paled. Why? Well, not least because the 'the enormously increased perfection of weapons of attack and defence' has further increased, as is technology's wont. We now have modes of warfare and feats of technology that extend weaponry's 'increased perfection' in ways we can only presume were unimaginable when Freud was writing. Drone technology would be the obvious example here. A discrete air-to-surface missile with a diameter of just seven inches can be delivered from a distance of up to eight kilometres, by a remote operator situated in an altogether distant land, to strike at the target of a single human body – near perfect precision. Deadly precision, we'd have to say, and maddening too in acknowledgement of the combination of extreme proximity (the locked coordinates on a solitary human form) and utter displacement (the finger very faraway that pulls the trigger). This too-near, and too-distant engagement constitutes a curiously intimate and alien form of human violence. So are we to say, then, that with Drone strikes, war is now, again, new – qualitatively different from that which went before? Or, must we say, to run two tried and perhaps tired lines together, that when there is no war to end all wars, there is, in fact, nothing new under the sun?

Before I endeavour to answer these questions, let me ask another one: What possible benefit might there be in bringing out the 'sameness' of wars? It's certainly not a strategy that the historians among us would have much truck with. But it is a move that takes us into the landscape of narcissism. It may be that to focus on the sameness of wars would be to commit the specifically narcissistic crime of failing to recognise difference: Narcissus remember, was that beautiful boy of myth, chooses his self-same-image to fall fatally in love with? But, in fact, did he? Whether Narcissus falls in love with his image as himself, or with his image as if another is a moot point. Arguably, the play of sameness and difference (and indeed the question of recognition) is kept alive in narcissism rather than killed off. This I think leads to an inevitable follow-on question in my seemingly interminable series of opening questions – namely, what could it mean to speak (truthfully) of sameness and difference in a time of war when battle lines are drawn and breached, and occupation by a foreign body comprises an ever-present threat? On the one hand, for wars to work, difference is mobilised as overstatement: Freud writes that war 'stamps strangers as enemies', and I'll return to this statement later (1915, 299). In times of conflict

it's 'us and them', the goodies and the baddies – such is the rhetoric of the playground to which war invites us to regress. But the black and the white of it, and, let's not forget that war is so often a matter of colour, is wholly opposed to the difficult negotiation of sameness and separateness both within psychic landscapes, and within the social and political border spaces that war reconfigures. In lieu of the hyperbolic and highly defensive modes of splitting and othering that war mobilises, how else might we organise our mourning? And specifically how can psychoanalysis as a discourse that found itself, and founded so much of its theory, in the context of war, help us?

So, these are some of questions that I hope to keep alive in my paper this afternoon with special reference to the idea of the narcissistic wound. The 1914 of my title, signals the break-out of a particular war, but also, as some of you may by now be anticipating, it points us towards the production of Freud's 1914 paper 'On Narcissism: An Introduction'. My other metapsychological coordinate will be the sister paper to On Narcissism, 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917 [1915]) which Freud wrote the following year, and which really extends the terrain of thought that he's that he's fighting with in 1914.³ Beyond those two papers, I'm going to spend some time towards the end of my talk with a very different text of Freud's from 1915, 'Thoughts For the Times on War and Death'.

Having just turned 58 years of age when war was declared in the June of 1914, Sigmund Freud was never afforded a view from the trenches. His perspective – his psychoanalytic perspective – is the one of the witness. Ernest Jones tells us that in 1914, 'as often happened when [Freud] felt in poor health or low spirits' his 'productivity' was at its highest: 'Inner concentration was taking the place of interest in the dismal happenings in the outer world'.⁴ The psychoanalytically minded among us will see straight away that Jones is describing the shape of a defense mechanism here, specifically, a form of self-preservation which would become central to psychoanalytic theory in this war-time period. The withdrawal of interest from the outside world, is how Freud would regularly describe the narcissistic component of melancholia.

To contextualize Freud's growing sense of personal isolation, it is only necessary to note the ways in which the outbreak of the War impeded the advance of psychoanalysis as a scientific movement. Plans for the International Psychoanalytic Association's forthcoming Dresden congress were immediately

halted, the trade and distribution of key psychoanalytic journals was starkly curtailed, healthy attendance at the weekly meetings of the Psychoanalytic Society in Vienna was no longer possible given the conscription of many Freudians and the redeployment of their psychoanalytic talents, the wealth of correspondence that fuelled Freud's writing practice ran perilously low, as did the bread and butter of his clinical practice: fee paying patients.⁵ Freud's inner circle was disbanded, and his scientific community was under threat. By November of 1914, he had just the one patient in his clinic.⁶ The following month, writing to his ally and much needed friend Sandor Ferenczi, Freud declared that he was now more isolated from the world than ever. I shall quote a rather lengthy extract from this letter because I think it contains a great deal that will be of relevance to our ongoing discussion. So, Freud writes [SLIDE 2]:

I am living, as my brother says, in my private trench; I speculate and write, and after hard battles [I] have got safely through the first line of riddles and difficulties. Anxiety, hysteria, and paranoia have capitulated. We shall now see how far the successes can be carried forward. A great many beautiful things have emerged in the process: the choice of neurosis, the regressions taken care of without a hitch. Your Introjection has proven to be very useful; some progress in the phases of the development of the ego. The significance of the whole thing depends on whether we succeed in mastering the actually dynamic, i.e., the problem of pleasure-unpleasure, about which I am actually in doubt after my preliminary attempts. But even without this I may say that I have already given the world more than she has given me. I am now, and, because of the foreseeable consequences of the war, will also be later, more isolated than ever, and I know that at present I am writing for five people, you and the few others.⁷

To begin with, then, we can take this letter as it was intended: a progress report from the imaginary frontline. Freud's readiness to see himself as an embattled figure, advancing his science, defending his cause, and indeed defending his ego from factional politics and dangerous defectors is often noted. Here his military imaginary appears in the language of the primitive trench, the severe battles resulting in concrete capitulations, and allusions to further as yet unconquered territories. More fundamentally, in fact in the very building blocks of psychoanalytic theory, this similar military imagery persists: A few, no doubt,

familiar examples [SLIDE 3]:

- Mechanisms of **defence** [*Abwehrmechanismen*]: especially theorised in 1915 to include repression, turning round upon the subject's own self, reversal into the opposite.
- Trauma & the '**protective shield**' [*Reizschutz*]: 'trauma can be defined in its first stage as a widescale breach of the protective shield'.⁸
- Models of charge and discharge – **Resistance** [*Widerstand*] – Cathexis [*Besetzen*] / **to occupy**.
- **Censorship**: 'Have you ever seen a foreign newspaper which has passed the Russian censorship at the frontier? Words, whole clauses and sentences are blacked out so that what is left becomes unintelligible' (Freud in a letter to Fliess, 1897).⁹
- **Repression** [*Verdrängung*]: in war, *Verdrängung* is the active dislodging of the enemy.¹⁰
- **The battlefield of the transference**: 'His father-transference was merely the battlefield on which we gained control of his libido; the patient's libido was directed to it from other positions. A battlefield need not necessarily coincide with one of the enemy's key fortresses. The defence of a hostile capital need not take place just in front of its gates' (Freud writing in 1917)¹¹
- Zones, maps and territories [SLIDE 4]

That the images and movements of war preoccupy Freud's theoretical expression, is perhaps only to be expected from the scientist whose subject matter is conflict itself. Interestingly, as has often been noted, there is a vigorous or even violent quality to Freud's choice of language in the German that gets censored in the act of translation to English. As Peter Loewenberg has made clear, Freud's use of expressions and figures of speech derived from military combat is one way of ensuring that the active and kinesthetic dimension to psychoanalytic work is communicated – in other words because warring factions really are at work in the individual psyche, and hence in the clinical encounter, we do need to be able to hear them too in psychoanalysis's theoretical language. If we were to name these warring factions – these constitutive forces of psychic life (which is always a life in conflict) – we would simply utter the terms sex and death. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Instead, we can return to our long quotation for a moment [SLIDE 5]. Thus far, I've pointed to the obvious namely, how the backdrop of the war infiltrates Freud's descriptive account of his own isolation. It follows, then, that the war years for Freud were not representable (to himself) as a period of 'splendid isolation' which was the phrase he used to refer to an earlier duration of heightened and passionate attachment to his work (the early period of his professional practice [1893-1906]). And yet, as Jones has alerted us to, when we consider the wealth of writing that came out of Freud's retrenchment between 1914 and 1918 we simply could not say that the war was altogether an experience of impoverishment. I'll let this list speak for itself. It captures the wealth of texts – and note the prevalence of metapsychological texts – that were drafted or published within the '14 to '18 date range. It's plain that the landscape of Freud's theory building was really beginning to take shape at this point in time [SLIDE 6].

- *REMEMBERING, REPEATING AND WORKING-THROUGH (FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE TECHNIQUE OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS II) (1914)*
- *OBSERVATIONS ON TRANSFERENCE-LOVE (FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE TECHNIQUE OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS III) (1915 [1914])*
- *FAUSSE RECONNAISSANCE ('DÉJÀ RACONTÉ') IN PSYCHO-ANALYTIC TREATMENT (1914)*
- *THE MOSES OF MICHELANGELO (1914)*
- *SOME REFLECTIONS ON SCHOOLBOY PSYCHOLOGY (1914)*
- *ON THE HISTORY OF THE PSYCHO-ANALYTIC MOVEMENT (1914)*
- *ON NARCISSISM: AN INTRODUCTION (1914)*
- *PAPERS ON METAPSYCHOLOGY [1915]*
 - *INSTINCTS AND THEIR VICISSITUDES (1915)*
 - *REPRESSION (1915)*
 - *THE UNCONSCIOUS (1915)*
- *A METAPSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE THEORY OF DREAMS (1917 [1915])*
- *MOURNING AND MELANCHOLIA (1917 [1915])*
- *A CASE OF PARANOIA RUNNING COUNTER TO THE PSYCHO-ANALYTIC*

THEORY OF THE DISEASE (1915)

- *THOUGHTS FOR THE TIMES ON WAR AND DEATH (1915)*
- *ON TRANSCIENCE (1916 [1915])*
- *SOME CHARACTER-TYPES MET WITH IN PSYCHOANALYTIC WORK (1916)*
- *SHORTER WRITINGS (1915-1916)*
 - *A Mythological Parallel to a Visual Obsession*
 - *A Connection between a Symbol and a Symptom*
- *INTRODUCTORY LECTURES ON PSYCHO-ANALYSIS (1916-1917 [1915-1917])*
 - *PART I. PARAPRAXES (1916[1915])*
 - *PART II. DREAMS (1916[1915-16])*
 - *PART III. GENERAL THEORY OF THE NEUROSES (1917[1916-17])*
- *FROM THE HISTORY OF AN INFANTILE NEUROSIS [The Wolfman] (1918 [1914])*
- *ON TRANSFORMATIONS OF INSTINCT AS EXEMPLIFIED IN ANAL EROTISM (1917)*
- *A DIFFICULTY IN THE PATH OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS (1917)*
- *A CHILDHOOD RECOLLECTION FROM DICHTUNG UND WARHEIT (1917)*
- *LINES OF ADVANCE IN PSYCHO-ANALYTIC THERAPY (1919 [1918])*
- *ON THE TEACHING OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS IN UNIVERSITIES (1919 [1918])*

In his letter to Ferenczi – we can look at it again – Freud seems to acknowledge the gift of his friend's work on introjection to the progress he is making on the question of ego formation [SLIDE 7]: 'Your Introjection has proven to be very useful'. A notion of introjection, or of oral incorporation, would of course be of use in developing an account of ego formation because it describes a process through which the outside gets in. For our purposes today, I suppose we're thinking about how war gets in, and indeed we're proceeding on the understanding that it cannot do so without violence.

I'm going to turn now to the two war-time papers that I mentioned earlier, 'On Narcissism: An Introduction' written in 1914, and 'Mourning & Melancholia', written the following year.

The English title of Freud's 1914 work 'On Narcissism: An Introduction', suggests that the paper promises an introductory sketch of narcissism, whereas the German 'Zur Einführung Des Narzissmus' indicates that the task of the paper is in fact to account for the *introduction of narcissism* to the broader psychoanalytic project (1914, 69) [SLIDE 8]. This difference of inflection is important: Why, we'd want to ask, does Freud 'introduce' narcissism to his metapsychological field; how does it assist him in fashioning his account of subject formation?

The answer is not that easy to find, because *within* this notoriously difficult paper we can identify conflicting accounts of narcissism as an explanatory framework for an individual's genesis. Most importantly, there is what's taken to be the standard understanding of primary narcissism that Freud conveys with his analogy of the amoeba.

Thus we form the idea of there being an original libidinal cathexis of the ego, from which some is later given off to objects, but which fundamentally persists and is related to the object-cathexis much as the body of an amoeba is related to the pseudopodia which it puts out. (1914, 75)

The amoeba's pseudopodia (its feelers, or its antennae, if you like) extend into the world of objects on the understanding that they can be swiftly withdrawn and returned to rest in the amoeba body. Primary narcissism, then, is read as the 'early state in which the child cathects (or occupies) its own self with the whole of its libido'.

However running alongside this version of narcissism where there is an original libidinal occupation/cathexis of the ego (implying the existence of the ego from the start), there is an alternative version, where narcissism is posited as an intermediary stage between auto-eroticism and some form of object-relationship proper. In this second version it is asserted that the ego (as a unified) entity could not possibly exist from the beginning, rather the ego 'has to be developed'. Freud claims that because 'a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start', a 'new psychological action' is necessary to propel the transition from autoeroticism (an object-less state which exists from the outset) to the state of narcissism (a state in which the ego is libidinally cathected).

Frustratingly, the reader of this 1914 paper does not learn what the 'new psychical action' is that instantiates the necessary development of the ego. In fact, it's only when narcissism gets reworked as integral to the theory of mourning and melancholia that Freud gains ground on this question. Furthermore, it is through the theorization of grief-states that the *violence* of ego development is underscored [SLIDE 9].

Mourning and melancholia, then, contribute to the catalogue of commonplace conditions, enumerated by Freud in his 1914 paper, that are characterised by a narcissistic withdrawal of libido on to the subject's own self (e.g. organic illnesses, hypochondria, sleep, falling in love, grieving – these are all narcissistic states). When the sick man suffering from toothache, says Freud, withdraws his libidinal cathexes back into his own ego and temporarily neglects his most cherished objects in the external world, we do not find his behaviour alarming (1914, 82). Likewise, we are not taken aback when the loss of a loved one creates in the individual a state of 'profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, [and] inhibition of all activity' – for the person in question will, of necessity, devote herself to the work of mourning until the point at which 'respect for reality gains the day' and investments beyond the ego can be afforded once more (1917, 244). Such is the condition of so-called normal mourning. For the melancholic, however, the picture is a little more complex. In addition to exhibiting the painful symptoms of a subject in mourning, the melancholic manifests a curious 'disturbance of self-regard' which finds expression in uninhibited self-criticism and self-reproach (244). It is only when one understands melancholia as a process through which an object-cathexis (i.e. a libidinal investment in a loved one) is replaced by an identification, that the true target of the melancholic's criticism is revealed to be the lost object rather than the individual's own self. This confusion rebounds because the nature of the loss that gives rise to melancholia cannot be directly apprehended as it can in so-called normal mourning: the melancholic might know '*whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him' (245). With this differentiation between the known *whom* and the unknown *what*, Freud underscores the opacity of melancholia commensurate with the withdrawal of the object-loss from consciousness. This leads Freud to articulate the distinction between the two states as follows: 'In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself' (246).

But just how does the lost object get 'inside'? Freud explains that when, in melancholia, the surfeit of libido that the loss of the object releases is withdrawn

into the ego it then binds the ego to the abandoned object in a narcissistic identification. In a much-quoted passage, the mode of identification of the ego with the abandoned object is described as follows:

Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification. (249)

It is important to keep in mind here the inviolable psychoanalytic principle of ambivalence: With particular reference to narcissism, Freud tells us that in the oral/cannibalistic phase of sexual organisation, where love and hate are not yet in opposition, the desire to incorporate the object is an expression of 'a type of love which is consistent with abolishing the object's separate existence and which may therefore be described as ambivalent' (1915a, 138).¹² Hence in melancholia, a regressive narcissistic identification with the object enacts an incorporation which brings the melancholic's ambivalence to the fore. We can see now why Ferenczi's 'Incorporation', noted in the letter above, proved useful to Freud. In sustaining a narcissistic identification with the object, the melancholic does not have to give up the lost object wholesale (object-loss is transformed into ego-loss); however, in the very act of safeguarding something of the object (through its transformation), the melancholic also preserves the conflict that was coincident with object-love. Now though, the 'conflict due to ambivalence' is a battle that rages entirely within one breast (1917, 251). Freud continues **[SLIDE 10]**:

If the love for the object – a love which cannot be given up though the object itself is given up – takes refuge in narcissistic identification, then the hate comes into operation on this substitutive object, abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering. The self-tormenting in melancholia, which is without doubt enjoyable, signifies [...] a satisfaction of trends of sadism and hate which relate to an object, and which have been *turned around upon* the subject's own self. (251)

Presupposing that the ego can take itself as object (a substitute object),

melancholia models a *turning around* of destructive trends back on the subject's own self. We cannot overlook the violence inherent in this melancholic fantasy-scape with its intimate connection to the operations of (moral) conscience. Freud offers the phenomenon of suicide (and suicidal thoughts) as operative under this schema where 'the ego can kill itself only if, owing to the return of the object-cathexis, it can treat itself as an object' (252). Some years later, by which time the ego's critical agency was theorised as the superego, Freud asks how 'in melancholia the super-ego can become a kind of gathering-place for the death instincts?' With reference again to the figurative 'turn' (a turning around of destructive trends), he concludes that 'the more a man controls his aggressiveness, the more intense becomes his ideal's inclination to aggressiveness against his ego. It is like a displacement, *a turning round upon his own ego*' (1923, 54).¹³

What is important to note is that this curious picture is thoroughly generalised when Freud explains that melancholic 'substitution[s]' should be understood as 'common' and 'typical' in a theory of 'character' development (1914, 28). The upshot being that, in the story of subject formation, the ego is some how instantiated by a violent turning around upon itself. This paradoxical shape has been further developed by many critics, perhaps most importantly with respect to melancholy (or narcissistic) subjectivities, by Judith Butler who takes Freud's figuration of the ego's 'turn back upon itself' to craft an account of grief as that which 'interiorizes' the psyche.¹⁴

With this metapsychological sketch established, I'd like now to move away from the conflicted twists and turns of ego development, and consider instead Freud's cultural diagnosis of the particular historical moment of conflict.

In the spring of 1915, six months or so into the war, Freud gathered his thoughts on war and death in two parallel essays [SLIDE 11]. The task he sets himself in this work is to shed light on the reasons that the non-combatant (and we can assume he is speaking for himself) feels so bewildered and so inhibited – so without bearings – once war breaks out. I shall talk us through the main points of Freud's discussion here.

An alternative title for Freud's thoughts on war and death might be, 'how

we get civilized, and what it costs'. The price of civilized peace, and this is of course the kernel of what we can call Freud's sociology, is the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction. Primitive impulses, low morality, individual brutality, all the trends of unfettered egoism are worked-over by the influences of civilization and refashioned as the appearance of altruism. 'By the admixture of erotic components', writes Freud, 'the egoistic instincts are transformed into social ones. We learn to value being loved as an advantage for which we are willing to sacrifice other advantages' (1915, 282). Now, it is not simply that this lesson – learning to value being loved – is hard won (there are plenty of pleasures to take along the way), but rather that it engenders a fundamental misrecognition. Because, of course, the transformation from the egoistic to the altruistic is not quite what it seems, because 'the primitive mind is [...] imperishable' (286). Violent, aggressive, deathly impulses persist, but they 'get turned back on their possessor' and exist as 'ambivalence of feeling' (281).¹⁵

One of the points that Freud is keen to convey, in his 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death', is that the mistake, or the misrecognition, at the heart of a civilized education lies in our being 'misled into regarding men as 'better' than they actually are' (283). Those who have been responsible for something like the best which has been thought and said, have, Freud reminds us, evolved from 'little sadists and animal-tormentors' (282). And, he continues, 'if we are to be judged by our unconscious wishes [then] we ourselves are, like primeval man, a gang of murderers' (297). So far, so familiar, I imagine. This much is simply a broad-brush account of Freud's appraisal of cultural hypocrisy where, alienated from his instincts, man 'is, psychologically speaking, living beyond his means' (283). But where do war and death fit in, exactly? The answer is multilayered but revolves around the theme of disillusionment. Specifically there are three factors to consider, first there is the disorientation of a moral system that comes from a kind of epistemological crisis: it is a commonplace that when war comes truth is among the first of its casualties. Freud explains that what we accept for ourselves as part of the compromise formation that is social life – including the acceptance of a prohibition on deliberate lying and deception – we also expect of our state. War, however, reveals that 'the state has forbidden to the individual the practice of wrong-doing, not because it desires to abolish it, but because it desires to monopolise it' (279). Conveying the sense of basic injustice that arises when the asymmetry of the social contract is glimpsed – the fury and envy that meet in disappointment – Freud illuminates one aspect of the narcissistic wound of the non-combatant. However, he also adds a crucial gloss to the maxim about truth

and war, namely that the disappointment felt with respect to the state's deception is not altogether justified, for 'it consists in the destruction of an illusion' (280). In which case, it is not truth that is the first casualty of war, but rather illusion. The second factor that counts for the disillusionment of the non-combatant in war-time, concerns the brutality he is forced to imagine, or hear report of, in his fellow citizens. A necessary reminder of his own brutality – man's readiness to kill at will in his dreams, and in his unconscious – is offered by Freud to redress the complaint. The logic being that we have not sunk so low, because we never rose so high. The third factor that contributes to a sense of wartime disillusionment concerns death directly. We cannot in any meaningful sense think our own death, and in our unconscious at least we are convinced of our own immortality. This much is communicated, says Freud, by the husband who declares to his wife, 'if one of us two dies, I shall move to Paris' (298). The conventional treatment of death, whereby we do all we can to eliminate it from life, is thoroughly swept away by war. 'Death', Freud writes, 'can no longer be denied; we are forced to believe in it'. More forcefully he insists that with the return of death as a *necessity*, 'life has, indeed, become interesting again; it has recovered its full content' – the full content of life is of course a life with death in it; an honest, and death-facing life (291).

So, let's hear again the psychoanalytic consolations that Freud has to offer in this paper he's writing for his contemporary witnesses of the war: 1, we have not fallen so low because, in truth, we never rose so high; 2, what we have lost is the comfort of an illusion; 3, quite beyond the lies that the state may tell us, war catches us out in our own lies, and our own desire to believe the lies of others, as a consequence we feel more than a little humiliated (or narcissistically wounded). But, when exposed in this way, we have the opportunity to keep our omnipotence – and our negative narcissism – in check, and to reassess how well our illusions are actually working for us. Freud's counsel? To take seriously the violence of one's own disappointment, to pay credence to death, and – as ever with Freud – to endeavor to allow a 'little more truthfulness and honesty' in amongst the social hypocrisies that we can never fully dispense with (288).

By way of conclusion, I'd like to return, albeit elliptically, to some of the questions that I framed my paper with – especially the relation between 'what has been lost' and 'how to mourn'. Although I did say that I couldn't promise to

answer these questions, I'd hope that it should now be possible to convene a few thoughts in the right direction. Might it be that the narcissistic wound that Freud describes as the condition of the disillusioned citizenry in 1914, offers the chance to start mourning one's own death? In principle, I suspect this is right; however, to do this – to do good anticipatory mourning – would require precisely those conditions that war makes most improbable. I mentioned earlier that Freud wrote that 'war stamps strangers as enemies'; we can return to this now. You'll remember that I said I wanted to think about the *sameness* of wars. It seems to me that the paranoid fantasy that accompanies the category shift from stranger to enemy is key here, whether we're talking about the First World War, or the conflicts on today's geopolitical stage that produce sights and spectacles just as shocking, and as traumatic, as any view from the trenches. That fantasy runs: *it isn't that I don't know you (i.e. that you're stranger), rather, it's that in advance of the possibility of knowing you, I know you to be bad.* And I put it like this to indicate the ubiquity of such thinking. Splitting, as we know, is a way of not doing ambivalence, and not doing mourning.

Freud explains the consequences of this stranger-enemy distinction with reference to the imperative 'to not kill'. In Freud's mythic story, 'thou shalt not kill' evolved from the particular context of having killed a love one: specifically from the psychologically intolerable combination of grief plus satisfied hatred: this is to say that on the grounds that the ambivalence is too much to bear, the injunction 'thou shalt not kill' has its root in the killing of a loved one. Swiftly though, this injunction is extended to strangers, and then on to enemies. Yet, whilst 'thou shalt not kill' holds fast in peacetime, in war, this final extension to the enemy-subject collapses. And with this collapse comes the collapse of the possibility of remorse. In war, what has been made *impermissible* with respect to the killing of an 'enemy' is any acknowledgement of the very ambivalence that first instigated the ethical imperative (i.e. the intolerable coexistence of love and hate). It can only be our place to speculate as to the ways in which this disconnect from the possibility of remorse is further disconnected once the nature of war has become so distanced that human contact – bodies meeting bodies – is done away with altogether.

- ¹ Jacqueline Rose, *Why War? - Psychoanalysis, Politics, and the Return to Melanie Klein* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 15. Quoting from Gertrude Stein, *Wars I Have Seen* (New York: Random House, 1945).
- ² Sigmund Freud, 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death' (1915) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works* field: pp. 273-300.
- ³ Freud, 'On Narcissism: An Introduction' (1914) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*: pp. 67-102; -- 'Mourning and Melancholia'(1917[1915]) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*: pp. 237-258.
- ⁴ Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud Life and Work, Volume Two: Years of Maturity 1901-1919* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 199.
- ⁵ George Makari, *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), pp. 299-300.
- ⁶ Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud Life and Work*, p. 195.
- ⁷ Freud, 'Letter from Sigmund Freud to Sándor Ferenczi, December 15, 1914' in *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi Volume 2, (1914-1919)*: pp. 36-38.
- ⁸ Jean Laplanche & J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac Books, 1988 [1973]), pp. 358.
- ⁹ Freud, 'Letter 79, Extracts From The Fliess Papers' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume I (1886-1899): Pre-Psycho-Analytic Publications and Unpublished Drafts*. (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis) pp. 272-273.
- ¹⁰ Peter Loewenberg, 'Wild Analysis: A New Freud Translation' in *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 53 (2005), pp. 973-79.
- ¹¹ Freud, 'Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis' (1917a) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVI (1916-1917): Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (Part III)*: pp. 241-463 (456).
- ¹² Freud, 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' (1915a) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*: pp. 109-140 (138).
- ¹³ Freud, 'The Ego and the Id' (1923) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX (1923-1925): The Ego and the Id and Other Works*: pp. 1-66 (54).
- ¹⁴ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). Butler writes that 'the turn from object to ego is the movement that makes the distinction between them possible, that marks the division, the separation or loss, that forms the ego to begin with. [. . .] The turn thus produces the divide between ego and object, the internal and external world that it appears to presume'. (p. 170).
- ¹⁵ We can recognize that this turn back, the turning back of primitive impulses, is akin to the reflexive turn of narcissism/melancholia that comprised the constitutive, and indeed elusive, movement of subject formation; the moment when the outside gets in; where the 'subject emerges only through the action of turning back on itself'. Butler, p.68.