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be just a few examples of the general process wherein what is initially condemned by the orthodox gradually moves center stage.

In the early 1990s, I conducted a large international survey to look into what psychotherapists and analysts did when confronted with political material in the clinical setting (Samuels, *Political; Replies*). Space does not permit an adequate summary of this research but two things stood out. First, clients bring such material more frequently than they used to. Second, the clinicians are often completely at sea when confronted with such material. There is still a lack of books and articles on this topic and I freely admit to my own ongoing perplexities in this area (see Samuels, in Reppen; *Politics*).

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A PSYCHOANALYTIC ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT PHASE OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Linda H. Robinson

The current resurgence in the cycle of violent Israeli-Palestinian retaliation and recrimination stretches back, depending on who you talk to, to Passover 2002, the past 24 months, the war of 1967, the war of 1948—or right back to the time of Isaac and Ishmael. The acts of Palestinian suicide bombers and those of Israeli occupation and incursion must end. In this note, I will consider the current phase of the long-running conflict between Israelis and Palestinians in the context of wondering about dissociated patterns of relating on both sides. I would like to suggest that to see the conflict through such a lens allows us to consider the present impasse in the political and diplomatic relationship between the two parties as temporary and as being generated by a kind of mutual annihilation anxiety and a difficulty recognizing the subjectivity of the other. What can be done to reduce the fear, anger, hopelessness and vengeance and in so doing introduce the idea again of mutual dialogue, of a co-constructed conversation between the two parties, with perhaps even the mediating support of a third party?

The current "intifada" or uprising began in September 2000 and has made life in Israel and in Palestine particularly intolerable. The ambient anxiety and uncertainty affects everyone. The Israeli Army's grip on the West Bank and Gaza has increased with aerial bombings, frequent town closures, curfews, roadblocks preventing food and medicine entering, mass arrests, more settlements, targeted assassinations, home demolitions, destruction of water resources, farm lands and olive groves. In Israel, tourism and capital investments are down and unemployment is up. Suicide bombers have turned daily life into a giant existential game of chance. These days Israelis have to ask themselves: Can I buy lettuce without being killed today? Can I take the kids to eat pizza without being killed today? Can I go to a Passover Seder without dying? Over the past few months, the answer was at best: maybe.

If you were a Palestinian hoping for peace, you are far worse off now than you were in the past. There are even more curfews and closures in the West Bank, your economy has entirely collapsed, your President could not flush the toilet for three months last spring without asking the permission of the Israeli Army, your freedoms of movement, belief, organization and your basic human right to live an ordinary life have been curtailed indefinitely. If you were an extremist Palestinian who despaired or disapproved of a non-violent, dialogue-based political solution and felt a violent military

solution was best, well then you have exactly what you were looking for. You and Prime Minister Sharon have a tacit unspoken agreement: that might is right and that violence is the way.

Prime Minister Sharon and his supporters seem to believe that bombings, sieges, closures and military control of the Palestinian people will cause that proud people to pack up their nationalist aspirations and submit. President Arafat and his supporters seem to believe that terrorizing, killing and maiming Israelis at malls, in buses and in pizza parlors will help him achieve a Palestinian State. As the cycle of fear and violence continues, there is less appetite than ever in Israel's government to consider hard questions like the future of Jerusalem and the dismantling of the settlements that provide the "justification" for the occupation. There is less support for the peacemakers and moderates who appear to their own people to be weak-kneed and irrational in the face of overwhelming levels of oppression. Everyone waits for the next excuse, the next piece of extremist violence that radical Palestinians will provide to Sharon to give him another reason to justify turning away once again from the Hard Questions. There is clearly a failure of political vision and integrity on many fronts in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Israelis and Palestinians need an urgent mediated separation.

If the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian Authority were to be considered as an analytic treatment, we could say that

currently (August 2002) it is in a state of impasse, of rupture awaiting repair (in a longer piece, I would consider the past of this "treatment," namely what happened when the parties last met at Camp David with President Clinton in 2000 and at Taba, Egypt in January 2001). Today, bombings by suicide bombers bring bombings by aircraft and various forms of oppression, which in turn bring more suicide bombings and so it goes in an apparently endless loop.

The current impasse reminds me of a treatment of a middle-aged married couple whose vituperative dislike for each other was only matched by their dislike and mistrust of me. They came for treatment after their two adolescent children had been removed because of emotional abuse and neglect. The couples treatment lurched from impasse to impasse. It became clear that the problem was not the removal of the children but the marital relationship. Briefly, Mr. N was hostile and aggressive during the treatment. He ate potato chips noisily during every session, yelled at his wife, and blamed her for everything including the children's removal. Mr. N's mother had recently passed away after a long period of Alzheimer's disease, and he was unaware of his traumatic feelings of loss. It seemed to me that those feelings had gone unmetabolized by him and had become violent behavior. For example, Mr. N had a collection of antique Japanese swords, one of which he once wielded while in session, wondering aloud if it would be murder or

manslaughter if he hit his wife over the head. Earlier on in their marriage, Mrs. N had been dropped from a long-running soap opera when she became pregnant. She had then married Mr. N and stopped acting. She had wished to terminate the pregnancy but he had persuaded her to have the child. Mrs. N had long struggled with an alcohol and Valium addiction that helped her to manage dissociated feelings of loss. She felt humiliated and angry at her husband but took a more subtly aggressive stance in negotiating conflict. For example, she would remind him that she was the mother of their children and would easily win custody in a court battle. Not surprisingly, there was a certain amount of physical violence in their relationship.

The treatment of the N couple feels similar to the way I feel now when I read about the loop of recrimination and retaliatory violence in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza—helpless, angry and certain of only one thing: a way must be found to end the impasse created by mutual blame. Over time, the children's removal brought to light what had become dissociated and "unknown" by Mr. and Mrs. N, brought to light by the children's removal. They did not stop disliking each other (or me) but they did find ways to understand each other a little better and to live together with their children.

In listening to Israeli and Palestinian voices, this is what I hear: the majority of Palestinians are sure they wish to have a state even if they are conflicted within

themselves as to the form, religion and size of that State. The majority of Israelis, Sharon and also President Bush are on record as saying that there will eventually be a Palestinian State. However, they are conflicted as to what it would take for Israel to survive such an event. Some Israelis see it as suicidal to permit the creation of a Palestinian State. Some Israelis, including myself, feel a Palestinian State is imperative for the political, moral, and financial viability and future of the State of Israel.

One reason why this particular political conflict looks and feels so hopeless and intractable at this time is because both parties to the conflict are gripped by a mutual annihilation anxiety, each locked in its own truth in which the reality of the other is experienced as a threat to its very existence. Both parties are locked into dissociative patterns of relating that are repeated with a near compulsive urgency. It is the opposite of an intersubjective-interpersonal space. Without dialogue, it is a space filled with threat and incompatible self-narratives of the traumatic past that are dissociated and, therefore, unsymbolized in thought and language. Both parties seem to be temporarily frozen into positions of understandable hyper-vigilance and alertness, each expecting and anticipating the next move by the other. It is as if the more vigilant they are the easier it will be to absorb the next blow. As clinicians, we can identify these positions as those struck by people for whom trauma remains unmetabolized. The sense of help-

lessness is still being defended against, suppressed or dissociated.

What might the unmetabolized trauma look like in this case? I would suggest that it is the trauma of statelessness, which the Palestinians are still experiencing and the Israelis seem to have dissociated. It seems to me that the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is a problem created by memory and forgetting. Israelis have dissociated their memory and experience of statelessness and oppression and the battles—military and diplomatic—they fought to get a State in 1948. Palestinians are acutely aware of that need and in touch with a wish today to have a State. In the past 54 years, aspects of the painful and intolerable part of remembering being Jewish in the pre-State period of Israel have been dissociated. Israel has forgotten the anguished yearning for a State. This dissociation allows it to oppress another whose wishes mirror its own. Neither party can access the reality of the other without feeling that it is surrendering its own reality and risking annihilation in the process.

Israelis and Palestinians seem to have become completely numb and indifferent to the pain of the other because of an over-determined preoccupation with their own suffering. Each day brings tales of new victims on both sides. Both sides suffer blind spots in their ability to understand the other due to fear. Neither can see the other as a separate subject. Arafat has become the debased other onto whom some Israelis can project despised and dis-

owned qualities, and thus can feel superior. The recent incursions into the West Bank, and other acts of oppression committed by some Israeli soldiers, can be seen as projections or dissociations in the service of the political needs of the dominant population whose goal it is to justify itself and its moral rightness. Likewise, some sectors of the Palestinian population view Sharon as a despotic figure, perhaps to manage their conflictual feelings about their own leadership.

By way of these dissociated patterns of relating comes the enactment of the current loop of retaliatory violence. Levi describes enactment in this way: "the product of not just one, but two forces, contradictory and opposed; the one attempting to maintain the delimited self-system intact with its established boundaries and dissociations, and the other attempting to break down this organization . . . a powerful though perverted attempt at self-cure" (p. 184). Enactments in this sense can be understood as an opportunity to redo old ways and resolve old problems: a kind of creative mutual playing out of a wish to be known and understood in ways that have been dissociated. Enactment in its unexamined forms causes mental states of thinking and analyzing to become circumscribed. Angry retaliatory belligerence and mutual demonization do not open discourse and dialogue. Rather, they foreclose such possibilities and prevent the metabolism of feelings. So the loop of violent enactments reveals a disso-

ciated trauma that limits the capacity for self-reflection and creates rigid, defensive, and even paranoid postures. If the current situation is an endless unanalyzed loop of enactments, revealing the unmetabolized trauma of statelessness, what can be done?

I would suggest that American citizens, as opposed to European or Israeli, have a special responsibility to consider their opinion on this conflict and let their voices be heard. Only America has the leverage to resolve and mediate this conflict. The site of dialogue should be revisited under pressure from the US and its citizenry because it is the largest financial, moral and military supporter of Israel. If talks are not held leading to a political solution, then not only will the loop of violent recriminatory acts continue, but the Palestinians will continue to suffer the indignities of occupation, the character of the State of Israel will become more and more closely identified by the world as that of a colonial oppressor, and there is the risk of a regional war which could spiral out of control. That war may be even more extensive given the geo-political needs and aspirations of members of the Bush Administration to build a coalition of States who agree to support and overturn the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Therefore, the interests of Americans, far as they may seem from the sordid Middle East conflict, may also be at stake.

If a dialogue could ensue and the US lends its "observing ego" and creates a "potential space" then perhaps some of the mutual

fear, hopelessness, revenge and anger could be set aside. Both sides could then safely mourn their fantasies of omnipotence: Israel's of a State that includes the West Bank and Gaza, and Palestinians could mourn the idea of a State that includes Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and Eilat. Eventually, perhaps, the settlement and occupation policies of the Israeli government in the West Bank and Gaza, and the Palestinian policy of promoting statehood through violence and bombings, would cease. Both parties could begin to define their core identities in terms of what they themselves choose and not on what the other is "forcing" them to become. Israel could get on with being an unbesieged free country instead of expending all its energies on ruling and controlling an angry people. Israel could avoid the risk of configuring part of its own identity on that of an aggressive, superior occupier, unfairly victimized by the suicide bomber. Palestinians, too, could leave behind ways of thinking about parts of their national identities as martyrs and victims of Israel. They could pursue nation-building and democratic institutions unfettered, and divest themselves of an identity partly built on oppression.

Terrorism and revenge would then cease to be the main defining characteristics of both communities, as they are at present. The subjectivity of the other party could be recognized, as mutual dialogue replaces terror with a political, negotiated solution in a co-constructed conversation.

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POWER AND TRAUMA IN CHINESE FILM: EXPERIENCES OF ZHANG YUAN AND THE SIXTH GENERATION

Shannon May

Soon after Zhang Yuan's first film, *Mama*, was released in 1990 the State-owned Film Distribution Corporation pulled all prints without explanation. After independently financing, filming and exhibiting *Beijing Bastards*, Zhang was officially banned from feature production in 1994 by the Chinese government. Other artists were directed not to work with him; companies were ordered not to rent equipment to him. Zhang was branded a disseminator of "spiritual pollution."¹

As the first film since the nationalization of the industry in 1951 to be made entirely outside of the State system, Zhang's *Beijing Bastards* marks a new movement in Chinese film. Even before the first shot, the audience is warned that a new form of filmmaking has emerged. At the beginning of each Chinese film produced since 1951, two standard