

## CHAPTER ONE

# The dread of sameness: social hatred and Freud's "narcissism of minor differences"

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One normally thinks that we stick together with others like us, and that we exclude others whose difference provokes antipathy towards them. I will argue that antipathy is more rooted in sameness than in difference. Consciously, we exclude others who are different, but unconsciously, we hate sameness, and avoid it by creating delusional differences. Hatred drives the projection of these delusional differences into the other that it creates, there to be exterminated. Overt differences, to which the delusional differences can be attached, mask the delusional projection and the source of hatred in sameness.

In what Freud called "the narcissism of minor differences", neighbours harboured the most persistent grievances against each other. "[P]recisely communities with adjoining territories, and related to each other in other ways as well ... are engaged in constant feuds and in ridiculing each other ..." (1930a, p. 114). He went on to say that

the Jewish people, scattered everywhere, have rendered the most useful services to the civilisations of the countries that have been their hosts; but unfortunately all the massacres of the Jews in the Middle Ages did not suffice to make that period more peaceful and secure for their Christian fellows. When once the Apostle

Paul had posited universal love between men as the foundation of his Christian community, extreme intolerance on the part of Christendom towards those who remained outside it became the inevitable consequence. (Freud, 1930a, p. 114)

The clear implication was that Jews provided the “neighbour” that the host community could vilify, exclude, and annihilate, on behalf of its own coherence; and they provided it for any community. Without such a contribution, new “neighbours” would erupt from imminent rifts inside the host community. As eternal neighbours, Jews might be different from their hosts, but as Freud says, “often in an indefinable way” (1939a, p. 91). Freud suggests that the antipathy of the narcissism of minor differences does not arise as a consequence of difference, but in the creation of difference. The problem is not managing difference, but managing the endogenous unease in human society.

There is substantial documentation of entrenched tribal hostility between neighbours: in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea; between the Nuer and Dinka in the Sudan; between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda; in the Holocaust, which aimed to expunge all European Jews, including those who were German. One could add Balkan nationalism, with the disintegration of Yugoslavia into civil war between Serbs, Croats and Muslims, sparked by the eruption of Serb nationalism when Albania and Croatia, each with minority Serb populations, bid for independence (Ignatieff, 1998); the “troubles” in Northern Ireland (Blok, 1998); the eruption of Georgian nationalism with the disintegration of the Soviet empire; the forced eviction of ethnic/national populations, suddenly rendered “foreign” by post-war redrawn boundaries (Schulze, 2006; Volkan, 2006, pp. 21–34) (Volkan speaks of an “ethno-nationalism”).

Nonetheless, the idea that we hate difference is so deeply engrained that it might be difficult to consider the thesis that it is sameness that we hate, especially given the historical, sociological, and economic complexities of each case. Each case of virulent aggression between ethnic groups strengthens the belief that we hate difference. In my view, however, the common sense of hating difference is easier to believe because it reinforces a defence against self-examination, a self-examination that could reveal a hated similarity or, more fundamentally, the hatred of the similarity that is, in the limit, oneself. Difference supports a defence against such self-examination. Vamik

Volkan says that “we create [minor differences], in order to strengthen the psychological gap between enemy and ourselves” (1986, p. 187), but this formulation, while it refers to creating difference, is in danger of begging the question: the origination of the psychological gap—the difference that apparently attracts the hatred—is the problem to be explained, not the answer to it.

Jeffrey Murer’s analysis comes close to mine. Taking the case of Bosnia, which was partitioned by the Dayton Accords along the ethnic lines created by the Bosnian war of 1993–1995, Murer argues that “[t]hese institutionalised identity frames now channel continuing conflict through symbolic and structural violence, even as they helped to end the physical violence and military hostilities of the 1990s” (2010, p. 2; also, McMahon & Western, 2009). The settlement consolidated the belief in the hatred of ethnic *difference* on which narratives of identity had been built. This characterisation of ethnic hatred between ancestral enemies is cemented in place by the idea of conflicts frozen by the imposition of authority, as in the former Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, which erupt when the authority collapses. He argues for a fluid notion of identity, formed in continuous relationship with the other, constantly constructing new narratives of identity in response to specific conflicts. “[A]cting out the conflict is the performance of identity [which forms] through a series of threats, responses, and the narrative structures that chronicle those responses” (Murer, 2010, p. 4).

“[T]he political institutions created by the Dayton Accords inhibit opportunities for different collectivities to engage one another inter-subjectively ...” (Murer, 2010, p. 8). Instead of the seventeen recognised national minorities, it has created three identities—Serb, Croat, and Muslim—whose relationships are inflamed by nationalist rhetoric. They are ethnic groups, not political parties in a nation, and they act as ego ideals. Any erosion of identity constitutes a rift between ego and ego ideal, an absolute loss that sparks violence in order to demonstrate belonging by defending the group ego ideal.

Murer has identified a certain comfort in holding to the conviction that these differences are immutable and antagonistic, and can only be mitigated by quelling them. This conviction maintains a fragile equilibrium, but the more similar are these identities, the more they threaten to dissolve into each other, the more easily disturbed is the equilibrium, and the more readily they turn to violence to rebuild their differences (Murer, 2010, p. 16). Murer refers this inflammatory instability to an

enemy within—Kristeva’s “abject other”—a totally demeaned self that seeks redemption by demeaning an abject other outside, for which a kindred other best serves.

But what is the nature of this internal enemy? I will begin with the transformations and outcomes of narcissism, specifically the implication that narcissism intensifies as the overt differences between people decrease, producing a “narcissism of minor differences”. At the heart of it lies an unease that must be projected. It is not that objects—ethnic identities—pre-exist, but that they are created in the process of projection. The differences that spark violence are delusions, fostered by projection: that is implicit in the idea that the group is an ego ideal, whose demands are most immediately satisfied by violence against the non-ideal, demeaned, other. We can call this unease the death drive or the abject, but the issue remains: it seems that to be left with oneself, whether as an individual or as a group, is hateful; to be left with an other very like oneself is nearly as hateful, but it offers a ballistic, projective attack as a way out. To *create* such an other is most effective, because it can be done any time, anywhere, as an omnipotent phantasy. To retreat into an enclave in which, externally, one is acting rationally, while, internally, a delusional world is maintained, creates a rigid, but stable structure.

### *The instability of the narcissistic ego*

The basic problem is the illusory state of mind that accompanies narcissism. The more difference diminishes, the more primitive states of mind erupt, including the twinned illusion of omnipotence and helplessness. The immediate corollary of narcissistic eruption is violence, which, in a moment of omnipotence, projects an illusion of difference and helplessness, consolidates them in the targeted enemy, and vanquishes them, thereby achieving a stabilisation, albeit transiently. Perhaps the best example, in Freudian terms, of the disjunction between conscious perception of difference, and the unconscious phantasy of sameness that provokes hatred, is that between male and female. It was on this difference as a sign of castration that Freud (1918a) based the concept of the narcissism of minor differences.

In Freud’s account, male and female differ in many aspects, but only the phallic aspect tranches upon the narcissistic core of identity. The taboo of virginity avoided the virgin’s hatred of the male, aroused

by her phallic envy, and the male's hatred of the female, aroused by his phallic insecurity exacerbated by fear of her castrating retaliation. But, for Freud, a taboo is a defence against a wish (Freud, 1912–1913, pp. 69–70). So I would add that the horror of castration opposes a wish to be castrated. The Oedipal wish to replace father with mother—countered by the castration threat—is the wish to enter mother, not just to possess her, but to be at the origination of himself—to be the mother in whom he emerged. Castration horror at the sight of the female would then act as a defence, aiming to maintain the difference between male and female against the wish to undo their difference (cf. Gabbard, 1993). In fact, the difference reassures the male, because the threat now appears to emanate from external object, not as a wish from inside.

The drive to be the same is a feature of narcissism, which forces its way into all human relationships because it is there from the outset of psychic life, and remains as a pole of psychic life opposite to external reality. The first object for the ego is itself, and from this standpoint, narcissism is an achievement in which the ego comes into being for itself and in itself (Freud, 1914c). But it comes into being in a tension between being an object for itself and being replaced by an external object. There is, therefore, a rift in the psyche from the moment one can speak of there being a psyche. In relating to an object, the ego suffers the violation of its narcissism by the external world. The virulent hatred that erupts from narcissism would, in my view, be quenched only by the extermination of the object that unsettles this narcissism, and even that could not wholly satisfy, because the needed object, into which imperfection had been projected, would then have vanished. In other words, narcissism lives in a world of phantasy, which contact with reality can only contaminate.

Thus, there is conflict in narcissism. Difference reassures because it fixes what would be a deeper foreboding of depletion. In the world of narcissism, objects are replicas that steal the essence of the self. Here is a clinical vignette that shows this conflict between ego and object in males.

A man reported a dream, in which he was watching a little boy playing in a fenced children's playground in a park. As he watched the child play, he realised that the child was himself as a child. Since he was both the child and the man who was watching, there could be only one penis. To whom did it belong? Father and son were

reduced to the single penis that joined them: a narcissistic emblem that was the marker of both their sameness and their difference.

In this one-penis phantasy (see Isaacs, 1940, p. 286, for a case with brothers), father and son are separated by the difference between the generations, but the difference is eroded because they share the organ on which castration anxiety focuses. To the narcissistic ego, the object is a replica of itself, and, to the extent that the object continues to exist in its own right, it can only signify extinction of the ego. Freud says that the phallic woman reassures the male that there is no castration, because she is the same as he, but as a woman, she also represents an unstable delusion of difference along with the wish to be the same. In a mature form, this ambivalence refers to loving and hating the same object, and to concern for it. At a primitive level, it refers to the anxiety of extinction in assimilating to, and differentiating from, an object (Figlio 2000, pp. 61–72, 78–82; Figlio, 2010; Freud, 1915c).

Eric Rhode reported a patient, who spoke about

someone he knows who is in prison—and who suffers from an unusual bone disease. The man in prison appears to have two skeletons—or, rather, one full skeleton and another adjacent one that seems to shadow the first skeleton and to exist only in bits. The fragments of the second incomplete skeleton keep growing ... He believes that ... at the time he was conceived ... [a]n inseminated ovum in part began to split; a pair of twins should have been formed; but the process was somehow arrested. The other twin never reached life, but its residue, the growing bits of bone, continue to exist as a disabling physical reproach within the twin who lives—or partially lives ... He now finds himself in a prison, both actual and symbolic. (Rhode, 1994, p. 42)

This image captures well his patient's view of himself. For Rhode, there is a "foetal consciousness that is vulnerable to binary division" (Rhode, 1994, p. 37) at birth, in the separation of the baby from a mother who, even in the separated infant's imagination, will replace it with another. But the binary division is more powerful at the threshold between what Melanie Klein called the "paranoid-schizoid position" and the "depressive position" (Hinshelwood, 1991). Here, the ego in

relation to an object sets off a catastrophic change. In the primitive paranoid-schizoid world, the psyche lives in an omnipotent illusion of fantastic good and bad “part objects”, split from each other and projected into the object world, which then becomes idealised or retaliatory and threatening. In the depressive position, the ego has synthesised whole objects, and is concerned for their state and impelled to make them better. The threshold of the depressive position marks a gap “between a self that determines that its egoism should die so that it might be reborn through others and a self that determines to achieve a spurious immortality by way of paranoid-schizoid delusions” (Rhode, 1994, p. 37).

### *Twins and doubles*

So there are two modes of thought—the paranoid-schizoid, in which the ego is threatened with extinction by the replica other; the depressive, in which the ego gives itself over to protect the other. “To be a finite human, as opposed to being a psychopathic god” (Rhode, 1994, p. 37) is to be able to recognise the urge to project a psychotic part of the psyche. The patient who thought of the prisoner with the double skeleton is reporting a paranoid-schizoid experience of being inhabited by a twin who was not born, and who, as a paranoid projection, has been killed so that he could live. The depressive version, in which he lives because his mother gave birth to him and cared for him, despite the risk to her life, has been invaded by a paranoid phantasy, in which he is haunted by a twin who wants his life back.

Juliet Mitchell (2003) explores the theme of the sibling as an alternative self. She draws a distinction between lateral and vertical relationships; that is, sibling vs. parent-child relationships. She follows Freud in seeing early object love as an overflow of narcissism. In the narcissism of the child’s love, its sibling depletes its narcissism, and thereby becomes a threat to its existence. A sibling, like a double for Rank and for Freud is a preserve of narcissism lost to the ego in its finite existence in the world, or a twin in Rhode’s analysis, which was an object of hatred to be eliminated for the self to survive, yet in its extinction it carries off the self with it. For Mitchell, the sameness between siblings constitutes an essential ambivalence, in which a threat to existence shadows sibling love. One sibling is born because the other dies. In this concrete, unsymbolised world, a sibling is a twin, a twin is a double, a double is

oneself extracted from oneself. Uncannily, a sibling is both a comforting reassurance and at the same moment the thief of one's being. Twins are the objects of ritual, in order to neutralise their power (Blok, 2001, pp. 50, 122–123, 264n; Firth, 1966; Freud, 1919h; Girard, 1988, pp. 54–59, 61–63, 75, 252; Rank, 1914).

Ambivalence lurks inside narcissism. The sibling, and, more specifically, the twin, brings out the relationship between decreasing psychosocial distance and increasing narcissistic intensity. Now we can move directly to the relationship between violence and sameness. This relationship has been addressed most directly from mythological and anthropological angles by Anton Blok (2001) and René Girard (1988). Girard, like Mitchell, argues that Freud privileged the parent-child relationship and as a result, only dimly recognised the primitive layer of what he calls “reciprocal relationships” (what Mitchell calls “lateral relationships”). Although Girard is concerned with a theory of social organisation, while Mitchell deals with the psyche, their thinking heads in a similar direction. Both think that the parent and the Oedipus complex are secondary formations to a primal level at which existence itself is at stake.

For Girard, the nuclear issue is the management of absolute violence, which would destroy a society. His thesis is that violence is intrinsic to human society, and that it is managed by choosing a sacrificial victim arbitrarily, against which the community unites through discharging its violence on that victim, in effect, expelling it from the community. Cultural practice embeds this scapegoating in the ritualised sacrifice of a surrogate sacrificial victim, creating a cycle of “generative violence” to restore the community from internal disintegration through internal violence and infection (Girard, 1988, p. 266). The sacrificial victim is also made sacred, but the sacred is violent and “... the surrogate victim is the basis of all religious systems” (p. 280). The god can be the ritual sacrificial victim, the repository of violence in an attenuated form, and the community is then calmed by the export of its violence (p. 266).

The idea of a marginal person or group to export a source of instability is supported by extensive cross cultural work by the anthropologist, Anton Blok (2001). Blok has studied the role of “infamous occupations” in the interstices of society: prostitutes, chimney sweeps, barbers, bath attendants, quacks, surgeons, midwives, skimmers, gelders, grave diggers—all worked at the edge of society, carrying away bodies, parts of bodies, and detritus or products of bodies. They are sacred and



unclean, totem and taboo: the repositories of ambivalence, a danger, and yet needed to resolve it. Clarke (2003) applies Bauman's and Simmel's idea of the stranger—someone, both alien and familiar, who moves into and out of a locality—to racism and anti-Semitism.

Girard derives the intrinsic violence of society from a refinement of Freud's concept of an immediate, "primary identification". For Freud, primary identification was different from later identifications, in not being based on building up the ego through mourning of lost objects (Etchegoyen, 1985). There is substantial evidence that the first relationship to an object is not properly a relationship, but a pre-psychological lure into mimesis in which a primordial body ego accommodates to the impression of the object, settles itself, so to speak, upon being disturbed. This primitive, shallow identification does not involve internalisation, and precedes perception (Gaddini, 1992). Girard claims that primary identification is too vague a term, and he speaks, instead, of this inborn tendency to assimilate oneself to a model: to desire it by imitating it, but also to imitate the model in desiring a third figure and this figure's recognition. The third figure has the power to receive the subject-disciple's desire, and in effect to confer being on it, grounded in its worthiness to the third object, but also to set the subject-disciple and its model in opposition to each other, each fighting for this recognition (Girard, 1988, pp. 144–7).

Desire thereby generates, as if by logical necessity, a cleavage into mimesis and opposition. It is an ambivalence, which is an elemental force in society. Modernity in the West is in such a state of mimesis, an "advanced stage of indifferentiation", which involves the complete effacement of the paternal function" and degeneration into absolute violence (Girard, 1988, p. 190). Mimesis spreads through the community like a contagion. The society is therefore always in danger of succumbing to collective violence as a plague inside the community. Sexuality as the vehicle of desire not only drives the ambivalence into violence, but also the violence is itself sexual. Girard's innovation "is to introduce the mechanism of the surrogate victim" (p. 205). Desire-sexuality-violence become an indissoluble unit, which is expelled by an enactment of it on the surrogate victim (Haas, 2002, reaches a similar conclusion). The surrogate victim exports this intrinsic destructiveness to social integrity at the heart of all societies in ritual sacrifice as an action, not a thought. The approach to sameness brings out the social law of reciprocal violence; that is, the mutual violence between people as they lose differentiation one from the other. But what is this force that seeks discharge?

I think it is a recrudescence of a primal, narcissistic state. In this state, the subject is always threatened by the very existence of an object, because that object is its replica—the self, itself, stolen and displaced into the other. Such a state is psychotic, in that the object world as normal, perceived reality vanishes. In classical psychoanalytic terms, it would be a merger of ego and ego-ideal, with a collapse of the differences of gender and generations, as in the single penis phantasy. The ego-ideal is not attached to reality: it is a narcissistic agency, a preserve of primary narcissism. An identification of the ego with the ego-ideal would be manic, an illusory world of omnipotence (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1984). In Kleinian and Bionian thinking, one could also see it in terms of massive projective identification, in which the object is appropriated by the subject, creating a confusional world divorced from the reality that relating to the object world would normally produce.

To make this thesis clearer, I will turn again to Juliet Mitchell's analysis of siblings. The thing about siblings is that they are at a similar developmental level. In the "lateral" relationship between them, they evoke a crisis of sameness. The "vertical" relationship between the generations, with their clear markers of difference in gender, reproductive capacity, secondary sexual characteristics, and overall competence may evoke desire, as in Oedipal desire, but does not threaten to the same extent a collapse of individuality through an erosion of a sense of difference. They are reassuringly solid.

This process is pure action, the foreclosure of thinking. For Mitchell, as for Freud, thinking is spurred by the attempt to describe in language the indescribable emergence and disappearance of oneself through objectifying oneself in the sibling whose very emergence the child would like to preclude. Thinking and curiosity are processes taming these primal forces by bringing them under the lawful authority of reasoned action (Mitchell, 2003, p. 69; Freud, 1910c, pp. 78–9). Her account suggests that thinking, including the organised, socially shared thinking of philosophy, literature, science, mathematics, music, and art, aim to assimilate the terror of sameness and the hatred that it breeds. But the closer the sibling is to a twin, the more the threat from sameness would loom in the mind of each sibling and the more it would approach a baseline sense of threat to existence itself. The closer the siblings are to twins, the greater would be the mutual hatred. The more sameness pervades, the more civilisation is at risk from the pull, and the hatred, of indifferenciation.

The core issue is the divide between omnipotent phantasy and reality (Freud, 1911b). In the concept of the uncanny, Freud (1919h) brings out the ambiguous character of this divide. The closer we approach it, the more confused becomes the relationship between the attraction of the surmounted familiarity of home/mother and the terror of resurgent omnipotent phantasy. The horror of the collapse of the ordinary, external world, is simultaneously the most tempting relapse into ultimate satisfaction. Harold Searles (1960) deals most extensively with the seduction of psychosis, to the point of identifying with non-human and even inanimate objects, whose durability promises a safe psychic haven for the ego in its very dissolution.

### *Narcissism and hatred*

Mitchell's argument joins Girard's, in their seeing catastrophe in sameness. Both think that the Oedipal emphasis on the vertical relationship between child and parents conceals the more explosive, horizontal relationship among the same generation. Girard goes further, claiming that violence is inherent in sameness, and that violence is the secret, unrecognised nucleus of society, which is managed by choosing, then expelling or sacrificing a member who stands for the sameness. This scapegoat is both internal and external to the society, and is both desecrated and sacralised, and the process is ritualised, forming the basis of religion.

If the nuclear core is narcissism with its associated hatred, then the difference that we usually associate with hatred would in fact conceal the narcissistic urge to assimilate the object, and the dread of sameness that follows. That dread would be fastened to an external object by projection. What is difficult to accept is that the projection aims to dispel, not just the sameness, but the *wish* for it—that, underlying the projection, is the wish to have the qualities of the other, to be like it, to be the *same* as it. Projection does not expel only what is already present in the self and unwanted, but creates a confusion between unwanted parts of the self and external reality in the process of projection itself. Although Freud speaks of an external reality, he adds, that “the original ‘reality ego’ ... separates off a part of its own self, which it projects into the external world and feels as hostile. After this new arrangement, the ... ego-subject coincides with pleasure, and the external world with unpleasure ...” (Freud, 1915c, p. 136). In the limit, the

differences are not already there, as fixed points, but are products of phantasy. Far from evoking hatred, the overt differences are reassuring obstructions to indifferenciation.

My point is that difference has to be established. There is no pre-existent ego and object. They are mutually created in projection and introjection. In this respect, I am following José Bleger's (1967, 1974) theory of a primal undifferentiation of ego and object, good and bad, which is condensed into an "agglutinated nucleus". There is some similarity between the agglutinated nucleus and what Bion (1957, p. 274) calls an "agglomeration", which is composed of minute fragments of ego and the object it has invaded by massive projective identification, producing a torrent of " $\beta$  elements". These elements are compressed into a semblance of reality to form the basis of apparent ideas and speech, which lack inner coherence and are, therefore, essentially inarticulate. Bleger's agglutinated nucleus, however, also refers to this earlier undifferentiated core (what he calls the glichro-caryic position (1974, p. 22), in which parts of ego and object, good and bad, are mixed in an ambiguous state, not a confusion caused by extreme projective identification. Such a nuclear agglomerated state, normally consolidated into good and bad ego/objects in the paranoid-schizoid position, threaten to invade and internally decimate the ego.

Projection of the agglutinated nucleus can replace the dread of an internal occupation by psychotic forces with persecution by an external enemy, and a semblance of normality can be maintained by stabilizing this irrational "organisation" in a social structure. The difference that justifies hatred and conflict is such a stabilising structure. The parties to this hatred sign up to an unconscious contract to maintain this difference as a defensive system organised around paranoid-schizoid splitting and projection, rather than risk a descent into catastrophic undifferentiation. It is a stabilised complex structure that harmonises with external situations, and achieves a degree of conscious, rational status, but it remains unstable and needing reinforcement through recreating difference, followed by denigration and attack.

### *Ethnic hatred*

I have argued that we don't detect differences in the other, then hate that other for these differences. Instead, we create the other as a psychic reality. The manifest differences between male and female are a matter

of indifference; the virtual differences are immensely important. The sight of the female genital confirms the reality of castration only within a phantasy of castration. In this psychic reality, the issue is not the observation that a woman has no penis, but the phantasy that she has been castrated. The castration anxiety of the male is intensified by the feared retaliation for the hatred that castrated her, and is mitigated by the mitigation of the hatred. The phallic woman is a delusional annulment of the phantasy of the castrated woman and of her retaliation. Sometimes this psychic reality can be projected into and held in perceived reality, in which difference is reassuring; sometimes it is imposed on perceived reality, more in the order of a hallucination. Hatred then aims to seal this psychic reality in the other, and to destroy it there. As Freud pointed out with respect to the Jews, they are “often in an indefinable way different” (1939a, p. 91).

Freud (1930a) points to an indefinable, uneasy, internal state. His *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, which is better translated as *The Unease in Culture* than as *Civilisation and its Discontents*, refers to such a state of aggression, which is captured by a horizontal splitting of the ego, establishing a grade in the ego—the super-ego. The super-ego captures aggression in an internal ego/super-ego circuit. The super-ego can be projected into leaders or institutions, and introjected as a defined internal object.

Religious differences are as internal as the unease in culture, but are treated as nonetheless external, solid, evident targets of hatred. Victor Andrade (2007) derives this hatred from the secondary narcissism of the ego-ideal, which becomes a second ego that is projected and produces an unease of the uncanny. The regression to a secondary narcissism, in the relationship between the ego and the ego-ideal, can be either persecutory or blissful, as revealed in the duality of “sacred” (Andrade, 2007, p. 1030). The sacrilegious pole, which includes the otherwise surmounted suspicion that one’s beliefs are illusory, can be projected on to the other culture and eradicated. (p. 1031). It is similarity that evokes the uncanny, which can turn into psychotic terror, and it is one’s shaky belief that is projected into another religious group and attacked. The hated difference stems from a common root in a partially surmounted belief in an immortal soul, which is shared by all cultures, and hated in another culture as a way of dispelling one’s disbelief and retaining a narcissistic illusion as if it were reality and the source of conviction.

In the collapse of Yugoslavian stability into nationalist war, Slobodan Milošević exploited an anxiety of Serbs living as a minority population in Kosovo, when Albanians were demanding independence (Ignatieff, 1998, pp. 42–45). He aimed to reabsorb Kosovo into a Serbian republic. When Croatia then also moved to establish a republic for the Croatian people in 1990, in which the Serbs would be a small minority, the equilibrium of forces maintained by the Yugoslavian federation broke down (Tanner, 2010). Then warlords attracted local Serbs into the fight for self protection, as a modern European state collapsed into ethnic warfare. Political accounts must be given full weight, but they don't account for the unease that irrupts into violence fuelled by hatred.

There have been countless expulsions and relocations of populations following wars, in which national boundaries have been redrawn, and people are suddenly reclassified as foreign. In Yugoslavia, nationalist sentiment among common people was a secondary consequence of political disintegration, a response to the collapse of state order and interethnic accommodation that made it possible. It created communities of fear, groups held together by the conviction that their security depended on sticking together, in opposition to different ethnic communities. But Ignatieff says that the militiamen he talked to were defending their families not their religion; he thinks religious belief in “such a tumult of self-righteousness” (1998, p. 55) is shallow and inauthentic. The apparent differences don't cause conflict and violence, and it is sham to claim that they do.

Ignatieff says:

In the first stages, there is rather ambivalence, conflict within identity itself, feelings of difference fighting against feelings of recognition—the very process under way when the Serbian soldier told me that really, the Serbs and the Croats were all the same. It is not a sense of radical difference that leads to conflict with others, but the refusal to admit a moment of recognition. Violence must be done to the self before it can be done to others. Living tissue of connection and recognition must be cauterised before a neighbour is reinvented as an enemy. (Ignatieff, 1998, pp. 53–54)

He argues that recent conflicts, of the ethnic sort in the former Yugoslavia, have been fought, not by states, but by militia that often comprise young, undisciplined men. They are no longer regulated

by the soldier's honour, an unwritten code of behaviour on the battle field. I take him to mean that these militia give expression more immediately to ethnic and religious hatred, and also magnify it through unrestrained violence (often, however, manipulated by politicians) (see vivid accounts by Tanner, 2010).

In a visit to a Serbian bunker during the conflict, Ignatieff "heard reservists say that they disliked breathing the same air as Croatians, disliked being in the same room with them. There was some threatening uncleanness about them. And this from men who only two years before had not even thought that the air they breathed belonged to one group or another" (Ignatieff, 1998, p. 53). Referring to the narcissism of minor differences, Ignatieff says that, "as groups converge 'objectively', their mutual intolerance may grow" (p. 58).

Religious and nationalist sentiment intensified an anxiety of contamination. Ethnic cleansing is cleaning-up a contamination, and that is more primitive than attacking an enemy. It erases the perception of an other, and creates a world of delusion that is normalised as ordinary reality by the commonsense idea of hating difference. This aggressive maintenance of an illusory world is deeply confusing, because the conscious aim, of defending against an aggressive object, is "normal" in the sense of well anchored in reality, yet this conscious aim supports an illusory world of a regressive pull into a pre-objectal world. The dread and excitement of this pull is anchored in an apparently real, external world of aggression against the enemy, but the enemy is a virtual object that keeps the regression just this side of psychosis and terror (taking up Freud's reference to the "most useful service" rendered by the Jews, recent work on inter-war Hungary shows anti-Semitic agitation was directed mainly at Jews who were assimilating to the non-Jewish population (Pók, 2006, p. 378)).

The expansion of the Serbian nation by cleansing it of Muslims and Catholics by rape (Allen, 1996; Ignatieff, 1998, p. 43) captures this paradoxical process. The phantasy of contamination *by* the object is a projection that conceals the wish *to* contaminate the object, and here is the confusion between terror and excitement: the excitement of polluting the object and thereby destroying its fertility and the excitement of dwelling in the object by inseminating it. Ethnic cleansing is a mixture of extermination and insemination. The same women who are to be eliminated as non-beings carry the babies of the appropriating power. As an omnipotent phantasy, insemination cleanses the mother of babies

and instates new babies. The phantasy in which the enemy is feared, hated, and attacked with the aim of eliminating the threat is ambivalently tied to the phantasy of expansion by fertilisation.

Allen (1996) argues that, perhaps uniquely in this case, rape was an instrument of ethnic cleansing and genocide, in that it aimed to impregnate and to enact the phantasy of replacing the indigenous population; that is, to impregnate, not as the mixing of genetic lines, but as the phantasy of replacing a genetic line.

Here is genocidal rape's most bizarre paradox: if the Serbs want their formula to work, it must be implemented with persons whose ethnic, religious, or national identities have been erased. It must be performed on women who have, for purposes of the Serb father equals Serb baby equation, no identity beyond sex—on women, that is, who in theory *no longer bear the marks of ethnicity, religion, or nationality that the Serb military and the Bosnian Serbs used to justify their aggression in the first place.* (Allen, 1996, p. 97; Allen's emphasis)

She adds: "Some women, who have conceived from such a rape, abandon their babies, in order to protect them from themselves, so that they will be raised by someone able to love and care for them" (p. 99). One can only speculate that this outcome was part of the rape/impregnation phantasy. The babies not only replaced the indigenous population, but were likely to be hated by their mothers, as the orthodox Christians hated the Muslims and Catholics.

I will conclude by tying the idea of contamination of the object to narcissism and the hatred of sameness. As Allen points out, there is a curious paradox in fathering a child with a woman who is apparently hated for being different. Allen resolves the paradox by arguing that the woman's identity must have been reduced to sex. But I think that psychoanalytic thinking on narcissism and identification suggests another resolution.

Here we get to the deep confusion between the urge to merge into sameness and the hatred of it, a hatred that, consciously, reacts to differences—small, but important differences, such as between religions. In this case, the Serbian insemination that aimed to replace the Muslim or Catholic population also, concretely, expressed the wish to assimilate Serb with Bosnian or Croatian: once more to breathe the same air.



The collapse of identity into narcissism, both sought and dreaded, is enacted in the insemination. The excited phantasy of polluting the woman aims to destroy her in hatred, and to re-establish a difference, but in the ambivalence of also wanting to identify with her. The ambivalence of insemination is not only internal to the woman as object, but internal to the psyche of the man. This is the core of narcissism, in which hatred brews.

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