I would like to begin with one of Freud’s letters to Ferenczi, dated October 27
1918. The letter was written shortly after Hungary signed a special truce
with the Allies at the end of the first World War. Responding to Ferenczi’s
lament over the demise and disintegration of the monarchy, Freud’s advice
reads as both ironic and prophetic: "Withdraw your libido from your
fatherland in a timely fashion and shelter it in ΨΑ, or else you will have to
feel uncomfortable."³ Freud’s recommendation that Ferenczi "shelter" his
libido in psychoanalysis marked the emergence of a tradition in which
analytic identity and solidarity was expected to encourage the disintegration
of ethnic, national, and political bonds.⁴ Indeed, four years earlier Ernst
Jones had written to Freud that "...if the future of psychoanalysis had to be
weighed with the future of my own country, I should side with the former."⁵
Such statements should not be reductively read as gestures of loyalty or
expressions of partisanship. In the early twentieth century European

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¹ This is a revised version of a paper read for the panel on "The Unconscious at the
Frontier" at the 22nd annual conference of the European Psychoanalytic Federation
² Tel-Aviv University; Israel Psychoanalytic Society. (rolnik@post.tau.ac.il)
³ Falzeder, E. and Brabant, E. (1918). Letter from Sigmund Freud to Sándor
Ferenczi, October 27, 1918. The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor
Ferenczi Volume 2, 1914-1919, 304-305
⁴ Freud’s letter to Ferenczi also contains a sketch of the idea of a conflict over two
ego ideals, that which one is accustomed to – a peaceful Ego - and that forced upon
one by the state of war - a warlike Ego. As the editors of the correspondence note,
Freud took up this idea in his Introduction to Psychoanalysis and the War Neuroses
(1919).
⁵ Paskauskas, R. A., Ed. (1993), The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud
psychoanalysis was viewed by various followers as an antidote to the discontents of the modern political subject.

I am very much interested, from both a historical and clinical perspective, in identifying those theoretical preferences and modes of thought within psychoanalysis that reflect political and cultural identifications. The historiography of psychoanalysis is replete with examples of the relationship between ethnic, socio-political, and cultural sentiments and the emergence of particular analytic subcultures. This includes the interest in Freud’s Jewish identity and its bearing on his theory, the influence of communism on interpretations of the Oedipus Complex in Soviet Russia, the influence of pragmatism on Ego-Psychology in post-World War II America, or the part played by anti-Americanism in the development of French, and in particular Lacanian, psychoanalysis. Quite often, such extra-analytic identifications constitute the "hidden passengers" in the analysts' "identification cargo" (that which facilitates or limits the analyst's clinical sensibilities). However, we often fail to take notice of the impact of these identifications on our personal analytic thinking or on the functioning of psychoanalytic institutes at the group level. Only under extreme circumstances, such as war or life under brutal totalitarian regimes, does one realize that the practice of the so-called “impossible profession” may turn into an impossible obsession, or even acquire the characteristics of indulgence in perversion. One is reminded here of that illustrious moment in the annals of the British Society when Donald Winnicott, during one of the

animated meetings of the "Controversial Discussions," drew the attention of the warring factions to the fact that an air raid was in progress. At the time he was still considered a "Kleinian".

Although we cannot expect the historiography of psychoanalysis to tell us “how much political reality psychoanalysis can bear,” there are chapters in the history of our science which provide insights regarding that frontier where various conceptions of analytic theory meet the realm of politics, social aggression, and ideology. One such chapter is the story of psychoanalysis in Israel, both its past and present.

Psychoanalysis was not only conceived at the frontier of dreaming. Freud's prose is soaked in political allusions, ethnic references, and military metaphors, bearing witness to the unique geopolitical space in which it was developed. The capital of a disintegrating Empire and the birthplace of the dynamic unconscious, Freud's Vienna stood at several crossroads. It was positioned at the frontier between the Occident and the Orient (the latter, according to Eric Hobsbawm, beginning at the eastern limits of the city). It stood at the frontier between enlightenment and romanticism, as well as the frontier of modernity. It occupied the frontier between social democracy and virulent antisemitism (Lueger), and at the frontier between psychoanalysis and Jewish nationalism (Herzl).

How are we to understand the affinity which early Zionists professed to find in Freud's theory?

From its first years, psychoanalytic theory has been interpreted as being an expression of the human need to lay bare the mind’s unconscious experiential foundations. These foundations were what led Freud to assign considerable weight to both the collective human past and the past of each
individual. Almost immediately, psychoanalysis became popular among champions of Jewish national particularism who saw the new discipline as fusing radicalism and tradition and so sought to enlist it for their own political ends. The relation of Jewish particularism to the universalism of European Enlightenment, as well as to German neo-romanticism, also found expression when Freud’s early positivist ideas were welcomed as quasi-scientific support for Zionism’s romantic attempt to reconstruct a unified (and unifying) national past. Early attempts made in Vienna by leaders of the Jewish youth movement, as well as by analysts such as Siegfried Bernfeld, to reconcile Freud’s ideas with Marxism, on the one hand, and with Martin Buber’s philosophy of a metaphysic Eros, on the other hand, were an early indication of the convoluted terms of endearment under which psychoanalysis would gain a footing in Jewish Palestine and, later, in Israel.

The Zionist movement, like most national movements, developed an instrumental relation to the past, striving to give its followers the impression of a collective present and future through the construction of a unitary collective-mythological past. The image of the Jewish immigrant arriving in pre-state Israel itself served this purpose: the figure of a newcomer who had freed himself from the chains of an oppressive past and who would henceforth determine his own fate was presented in terms that were both historical and abstract and mythic. That is the source of a recurring tension in the social history of Israel between the cultural heritage and past of individual immigrants and the tendency of Zionism to construct an imaginary collective past. From the onset of political Zionism the need to build a society with a fixed, distinct identity encouraged the establishment of a "super-narrative," one capable of both embracing and overshadowing
manifold historical memories, cultural identities, and ethnic sensibilities that might still linger beneath the surface. In ensuring that the association between personal misery and the plight of the Jewish collective would not remain within metaphorical boundaries, a scientific connection had to be found between the private and the public, between the sickness of the individual and that of the collective. A pointed expression of this dynamic is found in the fact that *Group Psychology and Ego Analysis* (1921) was the first of Freud’s essays to be translated into Hebrew, appearing already in 1928. A text that utilizes the positivist terms of drive to describe the process by which the individual becomes attached to society, *Group Psychology and Ego Analysis* seemed to cater to the needs of the educators in Palestine. Although devoid of ideology, Freud’s language proved entirely compatible with the world-view of those searching for a scientific underpinning for the collectivist self-understanding of members of the Jewish *Yishuv*, or pre-state society. The individual was recognized only when he represented the desire to unite with the group’s members and improve the group’s cohesion. The work was especially recommended to those “who took part in nationalist propaganda and in the dissemination of new ideas,” as one of the reviews written in honor of its publication claimed.

The Freudian texts were also identified, and served, as an intellectual playground where the East-European and Central-European intellectual traditions could meet and interact. As early as 1920 we find Ernest Jones reporting to Freud about a conversation he had held with Chaim Weizman in which the Zionist leader (who would later become the first president of the Jewish state) took pride in those “poor Galician immigrants who arrive in Palestine with no clothes but with one hand holding Marx’s *Capital*’ and in
the other, Freud’s ‘Interpretation of Dreams.’” Hebrew culture gradually integrated the socialist version of the “Russian Freud,” to whom constructivist-collectivistic aspirations have been ascribed, and the “German Freud,” notorious for his individualistic and pessimistic Weltanschauung.

From the 1920s a number of papers on the dreams of Jewish settlers in Palestine appeared in psychoanalytic journals. Particularly revealing was the conclusion reached by one physician from Tel-Aviv. Analysis of the dreams of his German and Russian-speaking patients recently arrived in the country convinced him that they had an unconscious knowledge of Hebrew. In Jewish Palestine the Unconscious was not structured just like any language. It was structured like the language of the prophets.

Several dispatches from Palestine were sent directly to Freud. During the bloody events of the 1936-39 Arab Revolt, a dentist from Berlin, who had recently joined a kibbutz, wrote to inform Freud that some Arab villagers in Palestine were blessed with telepathic powers and that the only method of transmitting information available to the Arabs was by thought transference. Freud cordially thanked the dentist for providing him with further evidence on the subject of telepathy, a secret passion which he was advised to suppress but could never really overcome.

A blend of enthusiasm and misunderstanding characterized the initial encounter between Freud and his readers in Zion. Several failed attempts to establish psychoanalysis prior to the wave of immigration of

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analysts from Central Europe during the 1930s indicated that the project of bringing Freudian theory to Palestine and keeping it from deteriorating into a cultural and ideological curiosity would require a special brand of analysts whose analytic identity would not fall short of their Zionist convictions. Max Eitingon certainly epitomized this profile.¹⁰

Eitingon’s letter to Freud, written shortly after his immigration from Berlin to Palestine, testified to a determination to not let historical and societal circumstances excessively interfere with the establishment of psychoanalysis in Palestine: “The intensive building that characterizes this place forces us to follow our own private path and not become absorbed too early in public life,” Eitingon wrote to Freud, and then added, “after all, it is the same people, with the same problems we had been used to dealing with, as clearly neither orthodox Jews nor Arabs are suitable in any way for psychoanalysis.”¹¹ Blinding himself to the two "Others" of Jewish nationalism – religious orthodoxy and the indigenous Arab population – Eitingon was deploying the same strategy used by those busy constructing the new Jewish self.

The transformation of the Institute in Jerusalem into the offspring of the Berlin Institute had an enormous psychological impact on both the analysts and their analysands, who felt that they had succeeded, under the tragic circumstances which led to their arrival in Palestine, in creating for themselves a Berlinian microcosm that would facilitate their acclimatization

¹⁰ Max Eitingon (1881-1943) had assumed a number of important administrative functions and key positions in addition to his historically most significant role as the founder of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Policlinic - the IPA’s most esteemed training facility.
to their new home. Paradoxically, in an ideological environment that tended to appropriate the individual’s private sphere for the benefit of public interests, and during a period when the fate of European Jewry was shaped by a fascist ideology which refused to recognize the dynamic concept of the "mind," Freudian psychoanalysis offered the immigrant the ability to reexamine the borders between inside and out, between his inner world and the reality outside of it. Interestingly enough, yet consistent with the reaction of most psychoanalysts at the time, neither the encounter with murderous antisemitism nor the imminent Arab-Jewish conflict (let alone their interrelated impact on the making of the Israeli political unconscious) were openly acknowledged or reflected upon analytically. Thus, for nearly six decades, Freudian psychoanalysis thrived in Israel while it has become ever more evident that neither ideological passion nor political and historical legitimization can do away with the fact that the Zionist revolution constituted a much more violent interpretation of history than had previously been acknowledged.

This raises a question over whether the price paid for the establishment of psychoanalysis in Palestine did not entail relinquishing its critical aspects. Did the desire to ensure a wide consensus regarding the merits of Freud’s theory in the collectivist and ideologist atmosphere of pre-state Israel bring Eitingon and his successors to steer psychoanalysis onto a pronounced anti-intellectual path, leading to a narrowing of its horizons?

A paradox becomes apparent: on the one hand, in the collectivist social reality that characterized life in Palestine, the ability of the analysts to “retreat to the clinic” and offer an individual the opportunity to recover her own private language and history was of great significance; however, this
very retreat to the clinic distanced psychoanalysis from critical intellectual discourse, where it could have contributed its share to the liberation of society from the neo-romantic, utopian, and almost messianic ideological elements then so dominant.

The formative years of psychoanalysis in Israel were consequently shaped by a perpetual conflict. While popular psychoanalytic discourse worked ceaselessly towards defusing the social pessimism that was part of Freud’s works (as well as Freud’s well-documented skepticism regarding political Zionism), it was left for the analysts to safeguard the therapeutic position of psychoanalysis.

I cannot offer a systematic account here (of the sort I did concerning the early days of psychoanalysis in Israel\textsuperscript{12}) of the psychoanalysis being practiced in Israel today. Currently celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary, the Israel Psychoanalytic Society finds itself thriving, both in numbers of members and candidates as well as applicants for training. It is no less flourishing in terms of theoretical diversity. Representatives of all major psychoanalytical orientations are to be found in the membership. But if analysts in Israel seem to have relinquished the search for a common ground in matters of theory or technique, they have not given up the desire to remain under the same roof, however loosely associated. No portrait of contemporary Israeli psychoanalysis can ignore the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict, or the violent stamp of Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian population since 1967. If terror and persecution are notorious for probing the limits of mental and historical representation, then working analytically

at the frontier of militant nationalism and religious fanaticism can prove challenging for those seeking to translate their patient's concrete situations of horror into meaningful psychic experience and to convey the notion that reality, however harsh and painful it might be, is never dissociated from one's inner world. And yet, anyone following the scientific discussions held by the Israel Psychoanalytic Society, or reading the case reports of its graduates, cannot fail to notice that the vast majority of younger analysts in Israel today orient their clinical work on the basis of psychoanalytic models of the mind which, by and large, shift the emphasis from the dynamic unconscious to the conscious, relational, and experiential levels of mental functioning. It is further worth noting that a blend of romanticism and mysticism quite often characterizes the way "independent," "self-psychologists," "relational," and even "post-Kleinian" theoreticians are read and taught by senior Israeli analysts. Such shifts may well be considered part of a more general trend in analytic discourse, frequently associated with the postmodern turn and therefore not specific to Israeli analytic culture. They may also be interpreted as a reaction against Israeli analysis' European, and, in particular, "German past." However, I believe more than that is operating behind the sea change in our local analytic climate of opinion, and that a measure of historical-social contextualization of this trend is required.

I would like to highlight a possible link between Israel's ever-narrowing willingness to critically reflect upon its own contribution to the escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the rising popularity in Israel of analytic theories which tend to downplay the role of primary aggression in mental life and explain a patient's aggression by concrete adversities - a trend that
accompanies a steady decline in interest in the unconscious and in promoting the patient’s sense of responsibility for the destructive forces in his psyche. For example, ever since the Six-Day War, Israeli analysts have played a pivotal role in applying psychoanalytic theories of trauma, which deal primarily with the psychic ramifications of secondary aggression, to the sphere of politics.

It now appears as if the political calamity - in which omnipotence, projective identification, self-idealization, victimization, and vindictive acts of retribution take precedence over the assumption of responsibility and the work of mourning – have gradually lured Israeli psychoanalysis away from the unconscious, revoking some of the neo-romantic sentiment that characterized earlier attempts to juxtapose Zionism and psychoanalysis. This development raises several questions: Could it be that this trend is itself multiply-determined, and perhaps reinforced, by an Israeli political culture that promulgates the notion that all evil comes from outside? Would it be too audacious to suggest that our listening and interpretative capacities are being tempered by the political culture in which we operate more than we have so far been willing to acknowledge? Clearly, we must be careful to not draw simplistic analogies between political cultures and analysts’ preferences for a specific psychoanalytic model of the mind. However, instead of “withdrawing” our libido from the fatherland (as Freud would have it in his aforementioned letter to Ferenczi, and as many Israeli analysts now tend to do), I suggest we start exploring the possibility of such links between our scientific-clinical discourse and the political sphere in which it takes place, notwithstanding the destabilizing effect these new links may have on our self understanding.