

# Clio's Psyche

Understanding the "Why" of Culture,  
Current Events, History, and Society

**Special Issue**  
**The Psychology of Violence**  
**and the Uses of Enemies**

**American Political Polarization**

**Ayn Rand and Modern Conservatism**

**Carveth & Sagan on**  
**Evolutionary Social Theory**

**Volume 19 Number 3**  
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# **The Psychology of Violence and the Uses of Enemies**

## **Part I: Terrorism**

### **Psychohistorical Reflections on the 2012 Aurora Massacre**

**Howard F. Stein**—University of Oklahoma

On July 20, 2012, a massacre at the Century Movie Theatre in Aurora, Colorado left 12 people dead and 58 people injured. This brief essay attempts to understand the Aurora, Colorado killings through the lenses of the American love affair with guns, the dynamics of the negative identity, changing gender roles, and the delegation of violence.

The massacre in Aurora must be placed in the historical context of the recent spike of massacres in the U.S., both preceding and following the Aurora killings. Soon after the Aurora massacre, on Sunday, August 5, a U.S. Army veteran and white supremacist killed six people and wounded others in a Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. Three earlier shootings are part of a much larger sequence of meaning: (1) at Columbine High School, Littleton, Colorado, on April 20, 1999, in which two senior students shot and killed 12 students, one faculty, and themselves, and wounded 21 other students; (2) at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia, on April 16, 2007, in which a disaffected student shot and killed 32 students and faculty; (3) at the army base Fort Hood, Texas, on November 5, 2009, in which an army psychiatrist shot and killed 13 people and wounded more than 32 people. If the Aurora massacre is part of a prevailing cultural pattern, the psychohistorical question arises as to the psychodynamic significance and underpinnings of the mass killings.

#### **The Fatal Event**

According to police and news reports, around 12:38 a.m. on July 20, 2012, the accused mass killer James Holmes entered an emergency exit of the Century 16 Movie Theater in Aurora, Colo-

rado. Featured was the midnight opening of the new Batman movie, *The Dark Knight Rises*. The accused killer, having earlier bought a ticket, had sat in the front row, propped open an emergency exit door, and left through this exit to change into his protective clothing: full SWAT team dress in black, including body armor, helmet, throat guard, groin protector, bullet-resistant leggings, load-bearing vest, gloves, and gas mask.

At first, many members of the audience thought it was a prank that he was dressed in a costume like many other viewers. He then tossed tear gas grenades into the audience. In the ensuing panic, he fired his various guns toward the audience and at people trying to flee the theater. He carried an armory of guns with him: an AR-15 semi-automatic assault rifle (that later mercifully jammed), a 12-gauge tactical shotgun, a Glock 22 handgun, and a hunting knife. He had recently purchased 6,000 rounds of ammunition and numerous magazines for the rifle. During his assault, he killed 12 people and shot 70. He surrendered to police outside the theater.

### **The American Romance with Guns**

I begin my analysis with a brief discussion of guns, for without them the scale of human carnage would have been so much less in all of these instances, and contemporary arms technology is an essential part of the Aurora narrative in particular. Guns are part of the American cultural ethos and central narrative of nation-formation, establishment, and expansion. Guns are both a means to an end, and an end in themselves. In the language of anthropology, they are both instrumental and expressive. Guns are inseparable from the romance of the westward expansion for land and gold, the "Spirit of the American West," the longevity and durability of Western movies and television shows, private land possession and tenure, personal freedom and individualism, the right of self-defense and protection, American democracy itself, and last but not least, children's play.

If our obsession with guns is irrational, it is also uncanny, for it embodies the compensatory male phallusism of an entire culture over five centuries. It began long ago with the rationalization of the slaughter of American Indians in the name of divine providence, thereby diminishing guilt for genocide. One thinks of the

power of the male child's identification with the aggressor (father), thereby reversing powerlessness into power.

Further, as Robert Hill and I wrote in *The Ethnic Imperative* (1977, 53), "America [became the expansive domain of] the eternal male adolescent, as well as his dream, the exclusive claim of the son to virgin land and motherland, the escape from dominating and punitive [European] fathers, the success of the son beyond the father, and the escape from the guilt-inducing oedipal family through spatial and interpersonal separation." The possession of guns made this all possible and was indispensable to the accused killer James Holmes in translating fantasy into reality and action in the July 20, 2012 Aurora massacre.

### **The Joker and the Negative Identity**

We know little of James Holmes' inner life, though he did identify himself with the "Joker" character of the Batman movies and comic books that date back to 1940. Aurora, Colorado "became" the fictitious Gotham City, where the Joker is the sworn enemy of the hero Batman. Though made to look like a clown, he is far from a playful trickster. He is a murderous nemesis who appears indestructible. His character is that of the psychopathic master criminal, one lacking a sense of shame or guilt, and he is responsible for many tragedies in the lives of Batman and Gotham City.

Psychodynamically, the Joker could be understood to be the evil double, underside, or alter-ego of Batman. In the model of Erik Erikson (*Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 1968), Batman can be understood as the "positive identity," the consciously idealized American person, the "good self," the "me," while the Joker can be seen as embodying the consciously devalued but unconsciously admired "negative identity," the "bad self," the "not me." James Holmes, on the other hand, consciously identified with the person and mission of the Joker.

Perhaps, then, the vast audience for Batman, past and present, is unconsciously enthralled with the evil of the Joker, while hoping that Batman will win—but never completely. So, in a sense, we, the American audience, are both victims of the Joker and are Jokers ourselves. How can this possibly be?

### **American Rage, Changing Gender Roles, and the Dynamics of Delegating Violence**

A recurrent part of the gun-violence of the mass killings since Columbine can be understood as an assertion of “traditional” European American (“white”) masculinity in the face of societal threats to it. Changing gender roles include the threat to American men who have long identified themselves with culturally dominant European American male roles. (There are, of course, numerous tribal, ethnic, and religious masculine narratives in the U.S. I am here referring to a specific, widespread, nationally mainstream masculine gender ethos.) This has been vastly exacerbated by the dehumanizing mass firings of blue and white collar men since the mid-1980s that go under the familiar euphemisms of corporate downsizing, reduction in force, rightsizing, deskilling, outsourcing, offshoring, reengineering, and restructuring.

Lower echelon employees and mid-level managers, largely male, were treated as disposable waste in the name of the sacred “bottom line,” productivity, profit, and enhanced shareholder value—all of which eventually proved to be alluring myths that masked corporate economic reality. The ethos of the American Dream and the long-standing “psychological contract” of reciprocal obligation between employer and employee were shattered, and tens of millions of American men were without employment, paycheck, and identity (as worker, provider, father, husband). Men were not only unemployed or underemployed; they were humiliated.

This was, and remains, a time of narrowing options of traditional American roles (work, marriage, family) available for boys and adolescents to become men. During the same period came the threat to men’s traditional gender role by the various American women’s movements and women’s increasing presence in the American workforce. The experience of symbolic castration and symbolic murder became widespread. Among American males there is a search for a cure for impotence. (Is it coincidence that this is also the age of Viagra, Levitra, and Cialis, medications to remedy “erectile dysfunction” in men?)

Much of the rage was turned inward against the self, or toward fellow employees who had been fired: “I/he must have done

something to get fired.” Randomness was unthinkable. Political groups such as the Tea Party and numerous white American “hate groups” have attracted many disposed of, unemployed, disenfranchised white Americans who were filled with rage at the injustice of corporations, banks, and the political economy. They felt—and were in fact—betrayed. They felt futureless. Their angry projections contained a grain of historic truth. Further, as Molly Castelloe asks (personal communication, July 23, 2012, quoted with permission), “Is it possible ... that these shootings [in Aurora] express collective anxiety over changes in gender roles and in our perceptions of what it means to be a man?”

It seems as if vulnerable men such as Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, through (presumably) James Holmes, were enacting widespread palpable rage and group fantasy on the stage of contemporary American history. Far from being “isolated incidents” by “lone gunmen” (or, in the case of Columbine, two), the repeated massacres can be seen as psychological repetitions of and metaphors for psychological massacres in the American workplace. That would make the actual massacres an instance of what the late Rudolph Binion termed “traumatic reliving” (“Traumatic Reliving in History,” *The Annual of Psychoanalysis, Psychoanalysis and History*. Volume 31. Winer, Jerome A. and Anderson, James William, Eds., 237-250). The cycle of repetition and sacrifice is never complete.

Uncannily, the psychodynamic stage is set for future outbreaks of mass violence in America: anywhere there are vulnerable men (including young men) for whom the social drama resonates with private, personal life history and family drama. There will be those—few, perhaps—for whom the Joker, or some similar nefarious fictional character, will ring true to their inner life. They will, in turn, bring the Joker to life to wreak havoc and revenge upon a society who will disavow any resemblance with him. He will, once again, have the technical means (guns of frightening sophistication) to make his private fantasy become a public nightmare.

There are two subtler forms of violence that express our current ethos of violence: what Peter Petschauer calls “the noise in American life and our neglect of private and public spaces” (personal communication, August 13, 2012, quoted with

permission). “Everybody ... screams. At airports, in bus stations, on TV, on the radio, sports events, etc.; the noise level is ear piercing.” Petschauer continues: “There is the general neglect of private and public spaces....Maybe this is not violence in the strictest sense of the word, but it is a form of not caring for oneself and others who also need, must use, this space.” Put another way, there is less and less a sense of a shared commons, both spatial and social.

### **Conclusions**

This psychohistorical analysis of the massacre in Aurora, Colorado may make some plausible sense out of what politicians and media writers are fond of calling “the senseless killing of innocent people.” If so, it helps us to understand the often tragic psychological symbiosis or fit between individual and group that is one of the core concerns of psychohistory.

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## **Anger and Ideology: The Milwaukee Sikh Temple Shooting**

**Glen Jeansonne**—University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

**David Luhrssen**—University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

The August 5 shooting at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin by Wade Michael Page closely followed the July 20 movie theater

massacre in Colorado by James Holmes and preceded the August 7 guilty plea by Jared Loughner for the 2011 Tucson shooting of Congresswoman Gabby Giffords at a public meeting.

Each perpetrator represents a unique psychological history. Loughner, who responded to forced medication under psychiatric care, is a textbook case of paranoid schizophrenia. Holmes emulated a villain from popular culture, the Joker, depicted in the 2008 film *The Dark Knight* as a remorseless agent of chaos. Page was alone in his willingness to die, preferring suicide to surrender. His assault on the Sikhs was also the only incident that conforms to terrorism, defined as the use of violence to achieve a political objective.

Page has more in common with Anders Breivik, the Norwegian who killed 69 people in a military style commando raid at a Labor Party summer youth camp in 2011, than with Holmes or Loughner. Page and Breivik were both white supremacists, heirs to the ideology and pseudo-science that undergirded Nazism, and fed a loose-knit international network embracing militant racism laced with Nordic references. Both Page and Breivik sought victims whom they regarded as outsiders, foreigners and parasites in white society.

Page bonded with white supremacist hate groups while in the U.S. Army, where a racist subculture thrived despite decades of racial integration. “Up until his going into the service, I just knew him as that kind, gentle boy,” his stepmother Laurie Page told the press. “He said that it was the best thing he ever did,” she added. “He thought he was making a career of the military” (Molly Hennessy-Fiske, “Sikh Temple Shootings: Stepmother Describes ‘Kind, Loving’ Boy,” *Los Angeles Times* website, August 7, 2012).

The possibility for alienation and dissociation was implanted in Page’s adolescence. His father remarried when he was 10 and three years later, when his birth mother died, “he was devastated,” according to Laurie Page. His father and stepmother moved to Texas when he was a teenager, leaving him behind in Colorado in the care of an aunt and grandmother. Thus, his father was absent at a critical phase in Page’s development. After graduating from high school, Page joined his father and stepmother in Texas before

enlisting in 1992. The nurturing he enjoyed during his early years was uncertain and conditional; family did not sustain the bonds he sought, and the military did not provide a sense of purpose as strong as he found among white supremacists.

By 1995, Page was with the 9th Psychological Operations Battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where a billboard on the road to the post screamed: "Enough! Let's Start Taking Back America!" The ad was purchased by the National Alliance, one of several white supremacist groups thriving on the base. During this period, two neo-Nazis from the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg murdered a black couple in nearby Fayetteville. According to a March 1999 article in the *Military Law Review*, Nazi flags adorned the barracks of National Alliance members ("Shooter's Odd Behavior Did Not Go Unnoticed," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 7, 2012).

As early as the 1980s, younger generations of neo-Nazis began shedding the brown shirts of their predecessors in favor of emblems drawn from the British skinheads. While off duty, National Alliance members from Fort Bragg tied their boots with white laces and wore jeans held up by suspenders, also in emulation of British skinheads, with hair buzzed to the scalp. The British skinheads had also been rebelliously aggressive: they preyed upon West Indian and Pakistani immigrants, venting their resentment over the white working class' ostensible decline (Dick Hebdidge, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 1979, 54-59).

The skinhead ethos came to the U.S. in the 1980s in the baggage of the punk rock movement, along with hardcore bands who extolled Aryan superiority to the beat of aggressive rock largely bleached of its black roots. Page embraced the aesthetic, shaving his head and covering his body in tattoos, flaunting his ideology in indelible ink. He performed with bands such as End Apathy, Celtic Warrior, Aggressive Force and Blue Eyed Devils, traveling an underground circuit of white power concerts, record labels, fan magazines and websites replete with images of Viking warriors and Nazi rallies.

It is ironic that Page served in a "psy-ops" unit whose mission involved shaping the perceptions of civilians in Latin America.

At that time, Page was already espousing hatred for non-white “dirt people,” according to fellow soldier Fred Allen Lucas. “It didn’t matter if they were black, Indian, Native American, Latin—he hated them all,” Lucas said (“Shooter’s Odd Behavior Did Not Go Unnoticed”).

Plus, Page alarmed superiors. He fell in rank from sergeant to specialist and was given a general discharge in 1998, a step below an honorable discharge which barred him from re-enlisting. If Page thought he had found a home in the army, the doors were now locked. He was left with only the network of Aryan supremacists to provide him with community and meaning. Page became a militant activist in those circles, drawing the concern of the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center as well as federal authorities, who suspected him of raising money for domestic terrorists (Brian Bennett, “Sikh Temple Shooting: Gunman had been on Investigators’ Radar,” *Los Angeles Times* website, August 6, 2012).

The skinheads with whom Page identified were not content to preach hatred; they practiced it violently. The Anti-Defamation League published its first report on the skinheads in 1987 and continued to closely monitor the subculture as it swelled throughout the 1990s. According to the League, skinheads were responsible for murdering dozens of Latinos, blacks and Asians and committed many lesser crimes, including stabbings, shootings, thefts and the desecration of synagogues (Anti-Defamation League Special Report, *Young Nazi Killers: The Rising Skinhead Danger*, 1993).

In targeting the Sikh Temple, Page acted out the ideology he had long advocated, but his mode of attack contrasted with his white power peers, who usually committed their crimes under cover of darkness with the full expectation of living to kill again. Page’s brazen assault had the mark of a suicide mission, his death wish directed against himself as much as his victims. The circumstances of Page’s recent life give every indication of disappointment compounded by anxiety. In his eyes, he was a victim of the white working class’s loss of status.

In studying mass murderers, Reid Melroy, psychology professor at the University of California-San Diego and FBI consult-

ant, developed a profile of sociological and behavioral clues. Page was exceptional only in that he was 40, and the median age for mass killers is 27. But, like many mass murderers, Page had a criminal history, albeit his record was shorter than many of his predecessors, consisting only of guilty pleas for criminal damage to property and driving under the influence. The most prevalent common denominator, according to Melroy, is a sense of victimization (John Cloud, "Preventing Mass Murders: Can We Identify Dangerous Men Before They Kill," *Time*, August 6, 2012). By definition, most white supremacists cast themselves as victims in their fanatized conception of a society under threat from the rising tide of immigration, a "Zionist Occupied Government" and the decline of the white race.

In addition, Page had endured a succession of losses typical for mass killers, including financial setbacks and professional and personal problems. He had been dismissed from the Harley-Davidson dealership in Fayetteville, North Carolina after clashing with supervisors and fired from his next job with a trucking company. He purchased a house in Fayetteville but lost it to foreclosure. In 2011, he moved to the Milwaukee area to be with his girlfriend, who was also active in the skinhead movement, but by June 2012 he had lost both her and his factory job. Neighbors at his final residence describe him as a sullen, depressed, erratic loner. According to psychiatric nurse Jennifer Dunn, who lived below him, Page "made no eye contact" and spent the last two days before the Sikh shooting playing angry, pounding, high-decibel rock music ("Shooter's Odd Behavior Did Not Go Unnoticed"). Perhaps Page felt he no longer had anything to lose. Immersed in a subculture of bigotry, victimization and violence, he amplified his sense of failure into murderous rage and directed it against an object of white power, demonizing one of the more exotic immigrant groups, the Sikhs.

*Glen Jeansonne, PhD, is Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee whose most recent book is The Life of Herbert Hoover, 1928-1933: Fighting Quaker (2012). David Lührssen, MA, has taught at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and has lectured at Marquette University. His most recent book is Hammer of the Gods: The Thule Society and the Birth*

*of Nazism* (2012). Together, Jeansonne and Luhrssen have co-authored *Changing Times: The Life of Barack Obama* (2009) and *Elvis Presley: Reluctant Rebel* (2011). They may be contacted, respectively, at [gsgj@uwm.edu](mailto:gsgj@uwm.edu) and [dave@shepex.com](mailto:dave@shepex.com).

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## **Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus and Women Suicide Bombers**

**Anatoly Isaenko**—Appalachian State University

On August 28, 2012, Aminat Kurbanova committed suicide in the Dagestani village of Chirkei, killing the spiritual leader of the two major Sufi orders in the North Caucasus, and six other people. Earlier, Maria Khorosheva (and her husband Razdobud'ko) perpetrated a suicide attack on a Dagestani police station. But these are just two examples. Overall, 46 women (sometimes in groups) committed 26 terrorist acts in Russian territories during the last 12 years; most of them in Chechnya, Dagestan, and Moscow (*Kavkazskii Uzel*, viewed Sept. 4, 2012, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/179683>).

Some specialists argue that these suicides are the result of a long-standing confrontation between radical Islamists and moderate Muslims in the ethnically and religiously torn area of the North Caucasus (Anatoly Isaenko, *Polygon of Satan: Ethnic Traumas and Conflicts in the Caucasus*, 227-306).

While one can explain Kurbanova's act as revenge—Russian forces had killed her husband, a Salafist militant, and she lost everything in one of the regional wars—the idea that widows and other Caucasian women are bent on revenge because Russians have abused them is an exaggeration. Thus, I agree with Paul Murphy that it “is a valuable propaganda tool and is aggressively promoted by those interested in blaming the Kremlin for Russia's current terror. The idea was first promoted by the [Chechen] leader of the Dubrovka [Moscow Theatre] siege [in 2002] and picked up by Russian journalists who dubbed the women [terrorists] at Dubrovka ‘black widows’” for their black attire (Paul Murphy, December 28, 2004 interview with the Center for Defense Information, published

in *Johnson's Russia List*, No. 9005, January 5, 2005, 4-5). But among these 19 women there were only a few widows; some others were unmarried teenage girls, while still others accompanied their husbands, family members, or friends. Like Kurbanova and Khorosheva, some of them were well established and professionally successful. For example, Kurbanova-Saprykina was an actress in the Dagestan Russian Theatre and Khorosheva a student of the Pyatigorsk Linguistic University in Stavropol Krai.

In *Polygon of Satan*, I utilized numerous interviews to obtain people's reactions to the societal crisis in the Soviet Union and Russia in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These interviews indicated that violent solutions became the norm in Russia proper and the Caucasus after 1991. Ordinary individuals had begun to understand that their political leaders, and the political and mafia elites that backed them, would employ the most ruthless measures to attain personal goals. Oligarchs, tycoons, godfathers, corrupt bureaucrats, and regional ethnic elites grabbed any opportunity that expropriation of the so-called common property opened. Few analysts understood that an "all-dimensional dependency had begun to assume both obvious and latent economic...and extra-economic forms." These new forms "determine the numerous power relationships and are associated with coercion, violence, and the constant threat of the use of either" (Volodymyr Polokhalo, *The Political Analysis of Post Communism*, 7).

Overall, people's stories then and now depict an atmosphere of social injustices and helplessness to redress them. In a multi-ethnic society, a multi-sided crisis can be transformed into conflicts between different ethnic groups. In agreement with Marta Cullberg Weston, one may argue that "when resources are scarce, envy and distrust between the different groups tend to build and group antagonisms tend to grow. If the leaders in such a society actively play on group antagonisms to further their political agenda, the society is on a collision course with disaster" ("When Words Lose Their Meaning: From Societal Crisis to Ethnic Cleansing," *Mind and Human Interaction* 8: 1,1997: 22). This is exactly what happened in the Caucasus under the post-Soviet leadership, as ethnocentric elites played on the antipathies and fears of ordinary citizens, exacerbating their chosen traumas and encouraging ethnic ha-

treds with the help of “historic” myths. Their reading of reality coalesced with their claim to power and drew on each group’s own uncertainties and fears. This linking of past traumas and current reinterpretations of history led ordinary people into ethnic wars.

From 1991 to 1994, again from 1999 to 2000, and once more in August 2008, as a result of the “hot stages” of the latest cycles of ethnic conflicts between Azerbaijanians and Armenians, between Ossetians and Ingushians, Georgians and South Ossetians, Georgians and Abkhazians, and between Russians and Chechens, out of a total of 25 million people living in the Caucasus almost two million people were forcibly displaced, thousands murdered, and hundreds of thousands were wounded and suffered psychological traumas (*Polygon of Satan*, Chapters 4-7; compare *Conflict in the Caucasus*, [www.womenaid.org/press/infor/aid/conflict.html](http://www.womenaid.org/press/infor/aid/conflict.html)). Thomas Buck, Alice Morton, Susan Allen Nun, and Ferid Zurikashvili carefully analyzed the effects of these conflicts on internally displaced women in Georgia. In agreement with my findings, they found the following: (1) rapid decline in living standards; (2) traumatization; (3) drastic changes in the economic role of women; (4) lack of women’s political participation and representation; and (5) timid attempts to create women’s organizations (*Aftermath: Effects of Conflict on Internally Displaced Women in Georgia*, Working Paper No. 310, Washington: Center for Development Information and Evaluation, USAID, September 2000: 5-11). In addition, in the conflicts in which Muslims represented one side in the region, I observed a rapid neo-Islamization and radicalization among young women of traditional Muslim communities. Vamik D. Volkan showed very specifically that an individual under such stress “may project aggression and anxiety onto someone else, one ethnic group may attempt to deal with frustration by utilizing other nationalities or groups as ‘suitable targets of externalization’” (cited in Weston, “When Words Lose Their Meaning,” 23). A societal crisis that turns general assumptions about life upside-down undermines individual and group coping strategies. People react with anxiety, anger, depression, projection, or apathy.

This circumstance was immediately noticed and appreciated by the ideologues of Salafism and Jihadism. They saw it as a unique opportunity to reignite faith through offering support to their

brethren and women. Their goal remains building an Islamic state of Imarat Kavkaz as an enclave of a would-be worldwide caliphate. Thus, the new generation of women *shahids* (martyrs) trained by Salafist teachers are not interested in independence of their ethnic territories or in "social justice," which they have never experienced. For them, to sustain suffering, wounds, and a cruel death for such an abstract idea makes little sense. But a permanent jihad in the name of the caliphate itself gives a sense of everlasting life and its ultimate completion and self-sufficient realization. This is not an abstract idea because it connects *shahids* with the entire scope of Islamic values as they understand them. Their religious mentors teach them that a person who abandons her family, community, and people feels free from the hardships of life, a corrupt social environment that lacks social lifts, the hypocrisy of official religious authorities, and the injustices of politicians. In this new approach, they can live and do only that which corresponds to their belief; that is, the love they share with their peers, brothers, and sisters. In this way, these Salafist propagandists employ their charms and create a new generation of female proselytes.

Today, in one Karabudakhkent district of Dagestan alone, 150 mosques operate, forging cadres of new *shahids* of the regional and global jihad (Milrad Fatullaev, "*Kto v Dagestanskom Gubdene glavnyi* [Who is the Boss in Dagestani Gubden]?" *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, April 4, 2010: 3-4). The suicide attackers of the March 29, 2010 Moscow metro blasts were women from this area of Dagestan. Zulikhan, the woman who blew herself up at a Moscow rock and beer festival, apparently not only destroyed this "festival of infidels," but also cleansed "herself of an incestuous relationship with her step-brother." Murphy, in addition, cites the case of Zarema, who was caught in Moscow a few days later: "She desperately wanted to start a new life in Moscow with her daughter, but got caught by her family who shunned her," and she decided in this context to join the ranks of *shahids*. Other women died in suicide attacks because their teachers, like the terrorist Shamil Basaev, asked them to do so and because they believed that it guaranteed a way into "paradise." In a very real sense, they followed Khava Baraeva, the first Chechen woman suicide-bomber who killed herself on July 2, 2000 to inspire others to *jihad*.

In contrast to these women, other Caucasian women display a remarkable desire to survive and to fight for their human rights. A good example is the human rights activist Natalia Estemirova. Until her recent tragic death she helped people, including women who were victims of the arbitrariness of official structures and of Salafist extremists. Others, inspired by her struggle, are joining emerging NGO organizations in Dagestan, Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkaria, Ossetia, and other areas of the Caucasus. I believe that the future belongs to these individuals; their work greatly contributes to a genuine democratic transformation of their communities.

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## **Part II: The Basis of Violence**

### **Some Underpinnings of American Violence**

**Peter Petschauer**—Appalachian State University

Many authors now write about the “two Americas,” and by this, they usually are referring to the current divide between liberals and conservatives in our country. Other divides are not highlighted as often, but they, too, are all around us. For example, another division has Americans moving into areas of the country that suit their cultural, educational, and political preferences (Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart*, 2008). But the divide that we rarely address is between the ideal images of the U.S. and the less than ideal behaviors of Americans. This divide underpins our inability to understand fully, and thus to tackle, the violent outbursts of a few and any traumatic consequences.

We routinely see the ideal America all around us. In TV shows and in movies, for example, almost every male actor is handsome and hardly a female performer is anything other than beautiful. On TV, too, we are offered glimpses of gracious houses that people buy or rent. The same images of beauty hold true for the magazines that arrive at our homes and grace our nightstands or coffee tables. The U.S. is presented as a charming place in which everyone lives contently in fun and rewarding settings. This image is shown on infinite numbers of websites that advertise vacation destinations, retirement locales, and thousands of college campuses. Finally, we have an infinite number of products that encourage us to think that beauty surrounds us; for example, classic furniture, computers, and phones.

The divide becomes apparent in our newspaper and TV news, which show another, not so pleasant America. Even this drumbeat of distress, murder, and mayhem only hints at the nastiness of the iceberg below the pleasant surface. The ideal image helps us ignore the persistently untoward and violent behavior of segments of our citizenry and to encourage them in their antisocial thoughts and actions.

Milder forms of illegalities encourage violent behavior and constitute the nasty iceberg underneath our pristine waters. There are the 18-year-olds who walk into bars with false identification to drink alcohol. There are the college students who smoke weed and think nothing of the impact on them and others. Then we see people texting while driving. Although these infractions may seem harmless, they point to a more profound problem: the illegalities that permeate large segments of our society allow too many to think that such behavior is permissible. Those most affected by this dismissive attitude often have developed a weak superego and conscience.

Then there are the more serious illegal activities, like those of merchants and industrialists who cheat their customers. There are the employers who, as Howard Stein has pointed out, fire thousands of employees without a second thought. (The best representation of his thinking is in Stein's "The Inconceivable Organization: Toward a Theory of Organizational and Cultural Change," *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*, 12, December, 2007, 349-368.)

Then we read of builders who, rather than hiring employees with full benefits, search for contract laborers in violation of local and federal laws and thus deprive these workers of benefits. Perhaps the most egregious of these misdeeds were those of American bankers a few years ago, which cost millions of Americans their jobs, homes, and pensions. These behaviors and this attitude point to an irresponsibility that undermines the fabric of our society. And they readily give the impression to someone who is not mentally and/or emotionally stable that he, or more rarely she, may also act outside of the law.

Barely legal and illegal behaviors are only one part characterizing our nasty iceberg; so are the various extremisms in our society. Amazingly, we have become used to them and immune to their effects. There is the loudness of our language and the import of violent vocabulary into our discourses, making it easier to accept actual violence. Some politicians now say, for example, that compromise is despicable and thus unworthy of a strong person. Also, while we have become resistant to the noise, some of it includes outright encouragement to act violently. Thus, we call our struggle against widespread drug use a war; the now infamous “war on drugs.” We called an earlier struggle on poverty the “war on poverty.” With this nomenclature, we brought war into our lives, but left the underlying problems unresolved. This, in turn, influences less stable individuals to assume that extreme language and behavior is perfectly acceptable.

This uncompromising language is supported by the violence in our media and the violent experiences of many individuals. Aside from the daily violence in our ghettos, including abusive language, screaming, and gunshots at night that many of my students report, there is the constant flow of violent TV shows and video and Internet-based games. Some groups, for example, completely ignore youngsters viewing and participating in make-believe murders.

There is still more to the iceberg. Our permissive gun culture encourages some to think that carrying loaded weapons that can kill dozens in one burst is perfectly normal. Those who agree also define America’s murder rate as normal. (In 2010, the number was still at 12,996 at a rate of 4.2 per 100,000 vs. Western Europe’s

number of 1,852, at a rate of 1.0.) Not all Americans see this war on each other as normal, but it is to advocates of violence, be they hardline politicians, gun advocates and sellers, or those living on the periphery of society.

Oddly enough, Americans also do not readily connect war itself with the violence that percolates under our purportedly normal society. My first father-in-law said, "War is like an illness." He had seen war firsthand in World War II and thought that soldiers not only bring home war-like behaviors, but that a society in war also becomes inured to its effects. America has been at war almost continuously for decades. We speak occasionally of the mental and physical illnesses our soldiers bring home and the trauma that their absence and return imposes on families. But we tend to ignore how America has, in the most recent wars, carried violence to Iraq and Afghanistan and how this nearly permanent warfare has desensitized us to its effects on people. Rather than seeking solutions by talking with our supposed and real enemies, we have decided too frequently that taking a stand, and using weapons to do so, solves our discontent with this or that regime. Rather than learning that war does not pay because it rarely resolves what was intended despite its high cost, we teach Americans that war is a good thing. We thus learn that killing people and destroying property is acceptable, if not laudable, for our own benefit and others' salvation.

Our illicit behaviors, unforgiving language, and love for warfare have infected our society. Here, then, is my point: Those in our midst who have not been able to develop a stable conscience or are otherwise less well adjusted to what is called "normal," all too often are unable to see behavioral boundaries and are incapable of arguing against, to themselves and others, extreme forms of expression. Some American leaders, and some others who do not see violence for what it is, maintain that it does not undermine the beauty of our society, and that the ones who commit violent acts are simply poorly adjusted or ill. Probably so, but now we can neither hide from violence nor hold back those among us who cannot resist behaving violently. The overall societal pressure to tolerate and to encourage illegal and violent behavior is so strong that some are unable to resist acting illegally and violently.

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## The Ugly American

Tom Ferraro—Private Practice

America is a vulgar place. To say that our culture lacks refinement and etiquette is a serious understatement. Last fall, I was away for a few weeks in Northern Italy, where *la dolce far niente* (the sweetness of doing nothing) is an art form. Upon arrival at New York's JFK Airport, even the air seemed dirty and stressed. Last month, I traveled to Seoul, South Korea to promote one of my books. Seoul is a city of 25 million citizens who all seem to embody Korean *jeong*: a feeling of respect, love, kindness, and affection for one's fellow man. I cannot think of a single English word that is comparable. We have been labeled "Ugly Americans" for good reason. We are extremely aggressive, overdriven, overwrought, and competitive.

Alexis de Tocqueville wrote *Democracy in America* in 1831. In it, he warned that America is a land of equal opportunity but that Americans were very practical, commercial-minded, and showed little interest in the arts or literature. He then said that our constitutionally protected equal status at birth produces a compulsive need to demonstrate our special worth. He felt that the lack of any class system—at least in comparison to Europe—produced an anxious need to accumulate observable evidence of one's proper social place to avoid shame. Welcome to the world of conspicuous consumption. His remarks were incredibly prescient, and *Democ-*

*racy in America* remains one of the most definitive texts on the American character. His point about our lack of interest in the arts and literature remains relevant.

For 10 years, I had a syndicated column for the Journal Register Company and was asked to review both sports and the arts. I recall watching Yankee games in front of sell-out crowds of 55,000 screaming fans per night and the next week attending a performance by Shen Wei Dance Arts, which was China's leading modern group. Shen Wei was barely able to fill a 300-seat theater at Jacob's Pillow. I realized then how little Americans care about the arts. The baseball player Derek Jeter was making about \$20 million per year, whereas Hou Ying, the leading dancer in China, made about \$25,000. The reasons that Americans are vulgarians have multiple determinants. Based upon de Tocqueville's writing, I feel we are essentially a masculine nation. We like sports, war, commerce, and all things practical. It seems that we do not care much for our aesthetic or feminine nature, which is so valued and supported in the arts. Aesthetics serves to soften *destrudo*, or the aggression that Freud referred to as the death wish. Thus, we are left with foul mouths and vulgarity.

All our anger is related to the way we live. We no longer have a sense of community. Our growing sense of isolation and the resultant loneliness produces a depression that remains unacknowledged and masked in most Americans. America's obesity and overuse of drugs are directly related to this masked depression. This combines with our compulsive competitiveness, aggressiveness, conspicuous consumption, and finally, depletion. Edward Shorter, a Professor of History at University of Toronto (*From the Mind into the Body*, 1994), reported that the single leading psychosomatic symptom reported today is chronic fatigue.

Political figures often have difficulty dealing with these aspects of the population. Obama has failed to address the nation's underlying sense of anger, unhappiness, and discontent; in fact, this almost cost him the election. But one can't blame him for turning a blind eye to all of this malaise. Perhaps one of his advisors reminded him what happened to the last president who consulted with a historian and social critic. President Carter understood our great American malaise back in the 1970s and brought Christopher Lasch

(*The Culture of Narcissism*, 1976) to Camp David to help him with one of his major television addresses on the oil shortage. The address was known as Carter's "Malaise Speech" and was one reason he was voted out of office after one term.

America is a dynamo of capitalistic opportunity unmatched in the world. But our shadow side is aggression, entitlement, arrogance, and vulgarity. To feel *la dolce far niente* and all the beauty and refinement of Europe or Asia is a marvelous thing. But, alas, I am like most Americans and addicted to overwork and all those irresistible consumables that money buy, like a new Lexus, a country club membership, or a fashionable summer home in the Hamptons. Ah, yes, the American Dream.

And so it is for all those smiling immigrants that come to our shores with high hopes in their hearts. This is the land of the free with equal opportunity for all. "Bring me your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Democracy in America is alive and well, but for my money it needs a little bit of polishing up. Maybe some Korean *jeong* or some of *la dolce far niente* one feels when in Italy. The joy of doing nothing is not very cost effective but it sure does feel good.

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## **Political Violence in Contemporary Greek Politics**

**James Allen**—Ramapo College

Violence as a means of dealing with opponents has a history as old as our species. Modern Greece illustrates the complexity of the issue. Violence arises from many sources, such as the quest for power, factional struggles, ethnic differences, vendettas, love triangles, ideology, and class. The post-austerity Greek social landscape is witnessing shifts in traditional party strength as well as new pieces on the game board. These developments have already altered the political composition of the Greek legislature. The last

major election quite possibly decided Greece's continued membership in the European Union (EU), the fate of the euro, and, not implausibly, global economic recovery.

Since 2010, as a reaction to EU-imposed austerity measures, Greece has witnessed a rise in violent actions directed at those perceived to be responsible for the suffering of the country. Engaging in political discussion in Greece guarantees hearing the word "they" employed countless times. More than likely, in the past "they" alluded to the "Invisible Government," the financier puppet masters, the CIA, the millionaire tax evaders and unnamed bogymen who are declared to really control the world from behind the scenes. Over the last two years, however, the political landscape has altered. The word "they," for a measurable segment of the population, is no longer some nebulous reference, some speaking device to help one present an opinion without defining it. For many, it is an identifiable, recognizable enemy. Since the Athenian riots of 2010, this new focus has escorted violence unparalleled since the end of the military junta in 1974.

Last June, viewers of the popular Greek television show *Good Morning Greece* were startled when a member of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party assaulted two female members of far left parties while on the air. This moment of physical violence reflected the country's politically charged atmosphere of anger, aggression and the propensity toward violence. Golden Dawn had done better than expected in recent elections (especially in Athens, with its almost daily strikes, occasionally violent demonstrations and burgeoning migrant population), winning representation in the parliament (18 seats). Still, with a memory of the military junta (1967-74) and civil war (1946) against the communists, the Greeks are keenly alert to the ramifications of political chain reactions. These 20<sup>th</sup> century episodes of the triumph of violence as a means for one group achieving and retaining political hegemony were calamitous for Greece. It would be good if collective memory would engender a will to renounce any internecine conflict. Indeed, most newspapers reacted with revulsion. But recent failed attempts at unity coalition governments have illustrated how conflict resolution remains elusive on the Greek political stage.

Neo-Nazis, semi-legitimized by an angry electorate, are

added to an already volatile political cauldron. Five days after the television brouhaha, an “unpapered” (in European parlance) Iraqi was brutally murdered. In the last six months, more than 500 undocumented immigrants have been stabbed and hospitalized in and around Athens. Perpetrators are assumed to be affiliated with Golden Dawn. An August viral video shows muscular, black-shirted Golden Dawn members kicking over marketplace stands owned by foreign proprietors who were unable or unwilling to show permits to the self-appointed enforcers. The party’s flag, with its red background and black stylized fret (envision a single section of the ubiquitous strip ringing a diner’s coffee cup), is unmistakably fashioned after the Nazi emblem. Their aping of the fascists even includes the straight armed salute.

Anger, aggressive behavior, and manifest violence are the hallmark of extremist political groups. But to what extent are they merely the product of “fringe” groups? Fringe suggests that they exist at the distant penumbra of the social matrix. Rather, do they exist symbiotically with the society at large, drawing from feelings of despair, frustration with the system, conspiratorial notions, or xenophobia? Psychological and sociological studies have both found correlations between economic hardship and the popularity of extremist movements and parties. Greece’s unemployment is around 25 percent, salaries have been cut by as much as half, and the country has an overall misery index unknown to the present generation. In this situation, the outrages committed by hate groups are not unanticipated. With an additional \$15 billion in loan payments announced in early November, austerity measures will intensify. As a consequence, the *New York Times* writes that Golden Dawn is poised to become Greece’s third largest party. A few individuals animated by hatred are not simply isolated anomalies within society; rather, they express the concerns and emotions of the larger society. It is worth considering that the violent rhetoric and actions of extremists are a manifestation of social proclivities finding an outlet in times of stress: inclinations we humans could easily revert to if they were not suppressed or proscribed by social conventions, taboos, and the societal superego. Newspapers, political and religious leaders, and spokesmen for various civic groups, all deplored with pious indignation the actions of the violent fringe. Yet, public

reaction appeared to be apathetic. The government responded to the murder by rounding up thousands of illegal immigrants in a massive sweep code named Operation Xenios Zeus (ironically the ancient god of hospitality).

Consider the Greek triple jumper Voula Papachristou. She was withdrawn from Greece's Olympic team on July 25 after tweeting what she believed to be a humorous opinion on the reports of an increase in cases of West Nile Disease in Greece. More than this, it was a commentary on the increase in African immigrants: "With so many Africans in Greece...the West Nile mosquitoes will at least eat homemade food!!!" (<http://www.reuters.com/places/greece>). One wonders whether or not she was only repeating an insipid quip that had already been viral throughout the Greek social media. In a recent opinion column in the popular newspaper, *The Daily*, the writer decried the lack of a "culture of toleration" in Greece and closed his column by stating that toleration is something which the Greeks ought to adopt from Europe.

If this editorialist's assessment is correct, Greece's paucity of toleration may in fact be due to its excess of nationalism. Greece has nurtured a powerful nationalism that can be traced to its 400-year struggle to preserve its ethnic identity while under Ottoman rule—the long, bloody War of Independence, territorial disputes, and wars with their northern neighbors. There is the nagging realization that since Greece was reduced to provincial status by Rome, her fate has been in the hands of great powers. By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, currents of Greek nationalism had been transformed into the "Great Idea" informing later irredentist, expansionist policies. Ever fueling Greek nationalism is the notion that somehow they, the modern Greeks who live in the lands of the ancient Greeks, are the inheritors of their past glories. A souvlaki vendor will feel smugly confident that he has some small share of the bequeathal of democracy to the world. Who of us did not laugh at the father in the popular movie, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*? His buffoonish cultural chauvinism, completely defanged, made for hilarious caricaturizing.

Generations of Greek leaders have played the pipes of nationalism/cultural chauvinism with deadly adeptness. Contemporary politicians need not play this card. It lies ever face up on the

table, and it is imprinted on the psyche of so many Greeks. Should it surprise us that the lines of Golden Dawn's anthem begin, "Followers of our great ancestors...we are the new Spartans... led by the light of Hellenism which will cover the earth..."?

Consulting any typology of violence, we are made aware that there are different categories of violence. But given the contemporary increase of violence in Greece, does this convenient taxonomy compartmentalize violent activity in a way that misses or ignores the socially imbedded nature of violence? Take the common approach that trifurcates violence into self-inflicted, interpersonal and collective. Let us consider the instance of the television show. One would assume that a right wing attack on left wing party leaders follows an obvious collective to political connection. I would argue instead that we are observing gender roles in action. The perpetrator was a male weight-lifting enthusiast and the victims were women. It has become well known that the purpose of gender violence essentially is to control and intimidate, not simply to inflict injury. Paternalism permeates Greekness as a prominent and important aspect of it. On a scale of social measures to empower woman, Greece scores next to the lowest (that distinction falls to Italy) in UN research on European countries. The attacker later told reporters that he was quite sure that the host of the show was in full fraternal agreement with him as he, the host, was slow to intervene.

Violence is a topic best approached from a historical and social psychological perspective. It would be good if by measuring violence we could control it, but categorizing violence can at best elicit means to identify the immediate occasion for violence and thus arrest its widening and intensifying, such as in the law enforcement area of crowd control. However, the deeper causes dwell in a complex cultural matrix. That Greek journalist's desire that his compatriots adopt more evolved, European social norms faces psychic patterns established under Ottoman rule, what some even call a muted Orientalism. These morphologies of culture defy prediction and legislation.

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## **Anger, Discrimination, and Violence in Western China**

**Astrid Cerny**—Ramapo College

Several times in the past decade, I have visited and lived in Xinjiang, a vast region of striking ethnic diversity in western China. I first visited as a tourist, where the train dropped me off in the capital, Urumqi. After a 60-hour train ride from Beijing, I was not only glad to get off the train, but instantly captivated by this intriguing, remote spot on the map—still in China, but so un-Chinese. My relationship with this city went from summer explorations of mountains, deserts, ethnic minorities, and hearty food, to language study at the local university (Uighur and Kazak), to having my own apartment during a year of dissertation fieldwork. The experience of winter, a brutally cold and bleak season of coal-heated buildings, thick air pollution, and people bundled into heavy coats, was a most astounding contrast to the glorious blue skies of blazing summer and the abundance of fruits, meats, and breads in the open markets.

As a geographer, I was there to observe society and collect materials for my dissertation. The latter took me out of the city on long distance, never-a-dull-moment sleeper busses to the desert towns and mountainous county capitals, even more remote, simpler, and rugged than Urumqi. Once back in the city, where I spent the bulk of my time in winter, I was regularly confronted with an undercurrent of violence and crime such as I have not experienced elsewhere.

Every time I went shopping at a major supermarket or department store, I, as everyone, had to turn in my bags, including my handbag, or lock it up in one of the lockers. A guard prevented anyone from entering the supermarket carrying a bag. This was how supermarkets safeguarded against theft.

There were guards everywhere. While this is partially a

Chinese habit, for it expeditiously provides employment to millions of otherwise unemployed young men, there was, as with everything in Xinjiang, a local flavor to it. Guards stood at fast food restaurants, at open markets, and at the bookstore.

Petty theft, the kind we know to associate with overcrowded public transportation or large events, is not only something well-meaning friends warn the tourists about; it actually happens a lot. Everyone has stories about it, such as my friend David, a long-time Urumqi resident, who had a small camera stolen out of his coat pocket. He thinks there is only one place where it could have happened: it was while he was passing through the double doors as he entered a shopping corridor. As his hands were busy with doors, someone reached into the unprotected pocket. Pickpocketing, in other words, is a highly developed work skill in Urumqi.

But for whom? The Uighur people blame the Han and the Han blame the Uighurs. The Uighurs are the endemic ethnic group, having been in the majority for much of the last 1,000 years. The Han, as the ethnic Chinese call themselves, have been the invaders for much of that same time span. After 1949, there was relative peace and inclusion. Only in the last decade, through deliberate and strategic in-migration policies, has the government tipped the balance (though they fake the statistics) such that Urumqi now has a Han majority.

Violence came to a head in July 2009, as riots erupted in the city, and more than 200 people were killed, mostly Han. As I observe it, the powder keg had finally exploded. In 1999, 2001, and 2004, I watched, noticed, and listened to the mistrust and pejorative remarks, the subtle insults, and especially the discrimination. I often wondered how Uighurs tolerated the job discrimination, overt reminders of political inferiority, and economic inequality. For example, Uighur women and men need to be especially talented or loyal to the Communist Party to get ahead professionally. They feel obliged to send their children to Chinese school if they want them to get ahead. They sell out their cultural values on one hand and resent learning Chinese on the other.

Academic pressure is tremendous everywhere in China, but the assault on Uighur and other ethnic minority cultures (including

Tibetan and Mongolian) has been ramping up since the 1990s. A state goal is to make Chinese the one national language and stamp out the others. From 1949 onwards, the State and the Party espoused ethnic harmony through appreciation of diversity, which some say was even partially achieved in Xinjiang; now the slogan "harmonious society" is ubiquitous, demanding implicit submission to the paternalistic directives from Beijing.

It is no wonder that Uighur men are seething. Petty crime is rampant in Urumqi and so are frustration, an inability to get hired, and a constant reminder that name and appearance can mark one as a second-class citizen. There is bullying at every level of society. Bureaucrats deny paperwork or charge extra for Uighurs. Arrests and executions are reported all too frequently. Bosses hire Han with lower qualifications over Uighurs and other ethnic minorities with better qualifications. Manual laborers have no recourse when they are paid less (or not at all) by abusive, corrupt bosses in construction. White collar professionals speak carefully, always underscoring all the benefits the state has showered on them, even as they are aware of the inequalities, and the corruption at the top. This went on for years.

What ignited the powder keg in Urumqi was a rumor implicating Uighur men in the rape of Han women at a toy factory in Guangzhou, 1,800 miles away. A brawl at the factory left several Uighurs dead, and the rumor turned out to be false. Protest marches in Urumqi demanding an investigation were stemmed by police, but still escalated over the course of several days into riots, dozens of burning vehicles, and over 200 dead and 1,000 injured. It took battalions of riot police to quell the violence. The revenge of the Uighurs begat revenge by Han men and the streets were roiling with bands of marauding men wielding blunt weapons. It took so long to get under control that citizens demanded the resignation of Wang Lequan, the veteran hardline Xinjiang Communist Party chief, and eventually got it.

The Chinese state consistently argues that it is bringing civilization and development to its minority areas. It does not single out Uighurs in this, as the plight of the Tibetans has sadly illustrated for years. The state casts ethnic minorities as

“backward” (*luohou* 落后), people needing the state’s paternalistic guidance to achieve modernity. The Chinese literature has explored this polarity for many years, but with little progress or insight into deeper processes. A recent book, Steven Pinker’s *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, 2011, provides further perspective on at least one feature of recurring violence in Xinjiang.

Revenge, discussed by Pinker as an “inner demon,” was overtly exercised in Urumqi in July 2009 after the Guangzhou factory incident. Revenge appeared in public violence, in crowd behavior, and towards individuals after demonstrations seeking an investigation yielded no results. Shops, homes, busses, and cars were destroyed, sparked as much or more by the years of repressed anger than by the Guangzhou deaths. Interestingly, Pinker writes that anti-social revenge, as reported by the World Bank, is more violent in countries with weak Rule of Law. China ranks only in the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile worldwide on the Rule of Law.

The Chinese state seeks to control all of its citizens through the use of strict, conformist social control, overt police presence, and systematic reminders of state power. China’s version of the Civilizing Process, where it seeks to assimilate ethnic minorities into an idealized, superior Han culture is antithetical to Elias’ “civilizing process”—which Pinker uses to underscore his message about the decline of violence in Western society over the centuries. If revenge is a human urge and a base form of violence, and Han and Uighur in Urumqi coexist with a barely disguised disdain and occasional eruptions of brutality, then understanding what better angels may find their way to China eventually is correlated to Pinker’s analysis of centralized authority to use force, but the use of reason and humanism are not normative there. The contemporaneous relationship of petty crime to more violent crime in Urumqi is as much a function of the perceived vacuum of authority and trustworthy institutions of law and order as it is to the inconsistent quality of education and humanistic knowledge formation in China today. Conversely, reducing ethnic violence or achieving a “harmonious society” could benefit from the infusion of Pinker’s central argument—for China to outgrow its myopic framing of what it means to be civilized. None of that explains the prevalence of petty crime in Urumqi today, suggesting a weakness of applica-

tion of *Better Angels* to non-western contexts.

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## **Part III: Some Veterans Bringing Home the Violence of War**

### **Violence by Combat Veterans after Homecoming**

**Jamshid A. Marvasti**—University of Connecticut

**Aubrey A. Wank**—University of Connecticut

Violence is common among animals, but cruelty, rape, child abuse, and torture are the business of human beings. We live in a violent culture. America, in comparison with other western industrial countries, has a higher rate of violence, as well as the highest prison population rate in the world (R. Wednesday, *World Prison Population*; London, UK Government, 2001). Generally, it is understood that the media is a reflection of a society's character. Hollywood has a proclivity for violent movies and videogame makers focus on violent war games rather than peaceful ones. In these games, a man often goes into a building with a gun, kills everyone, and comes out as a hero.

Violent sports are among the most popular shows on television. Even football is labeled as "controlled violence." Researchers estimated that an average 18-year-old American teenager has viewed 200,000 acts of violence on television (American Academy of Pediatrics, *Policy Statement: Media Violence*, 2001). The puzzling question is, "Which came first, violence in media or in society?" Does the media only reflect what is in society or does it con-

tribute to society's violence? It seems likely that society and news media are feeding into each other, increasing the proclivity for violence.

### **Combat Veterans, PTSD and Violence**

The saying, "Men are at war with each other because each man is at war with himself," is often attributed to Ambassador Francis Meehan. Its truth illustrates the psychoanalytic concepts of splitting and projection of our unacceptable parts onto the enemy. But what happens when a veteran returns home and then, suddenly, there is no enemy? Would the need for enemies eventually create one, who becomes the target of enmity and perhaps even violence?

In our opinion, war is murderous violence that is not limited to the combat zone; soldiers who are trained to kill are not capable of switching this learned skill on and off at will. War decreases not only the participants' sensitivity to violence/murder but also that of civilians, who learn from government that war is the answer to conflict. Killing one person is called murder, but slaughter of thousands is labeled "victory," as Americans saw in Hiroshima.

When the U.S. invades another country (especially in urban war), atrocities are inevitable, and soldiers have to bomb and invade civilian neighborhoods and break into houses while chasing those designated as terrorists. Peace activists consider the slogan of "war against terrorism" a misstatement. Some of them believe that war in itself is terrorism and a code for mass murder. When servicemen are assigned to conduct torture (as at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and the Bagram Airfield), it creates a torturer with sadistic qualities. Torture not only damages the one who receives it, but also upsets the psychic balance of the human being administering it. When these veterans return to their homeland, they bring back atrocities and brutalities that they have been exposed to or have committed. Then child abuse, family violence, and aggression increases, sometimes as the result of a compulsion to repeat the trauma, or frequently, due to PTSD in traumatized veterans.

The connection between war trauma and violence is not new; we see it in *Ajax*, a play by the Greek dramatist and general Sophocles. In it, Tecmessa tries to restrain Ajax, her warrior husband, from his deadly mission of murdering fellow officers who

have shamed him. Ajax also wants to see his son, but Tecmessa worries about the boy's safety and hides him from his father.

### **Causes of PTSD**

In his book *War and the Soul* (2005), Edward Tick describes PTSD as, in part, the tortured consciences of good people who did their best under conditions that would dehumanize anyone. In our opinion, one of the reasons for the rise in PTSD in veterans is due to the fact that when they reach the level of "breakdown" in combat, they are not evacuated, given rest, or relieved from duty. Instead, they are given multiple drugs and forced to stay in combat. We believe that there is a connection between combat PTSD and later violent acts committed by veterans in their homeland. For example, the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study warns of the potential for excessive aggression in response to perceived threats (NVVRS; Kulka, et al, 1990).

Trauma changes the software and hardware of the organism. The brain is rewired and the neural pathways are altered. Any triggering incident causes a fight or flight response. An adrenalin rush, racing mind, hyperarousal, and hyper response reflex all result in reactions without thinking, which may cultivate violence without planning.

### **War Trauma and Violent Crimes**

In January 2008, the *New York Times* printed a list of 121 veterans charged with committing a homicide in the U.S. following their return home. In 94.2% of these cases, veterans presented significant psychiatric symptoms, including 70.2% who were suffering from severe PTSD.

Soldiers who have spent prolonged time in combat zones may develop a hypervigilant attitude; a "lock-and-load" mentality dominates their brain chemistry. Combat veterans may be more prone to entering a reactionary state (combat mode or survival mode) when confronted with perceived threats in civilian life. Combat mode may include cognitive, behavioral, and psychological components that transform to fight or flight responses as survival strategies. Combat mode also means readiness to use total force, without hesitation to destroy the source of a perceived threat. Veterans with PTSD may misinterpret a neutral event as threatening,

and then overreact to this misperception with violence.

One of the first veterans to successfully use combat stress and PTSD as part of a legal defense was Charles Heads. He was charged with killing his brother-in-law a decade after the Vietnam War ended. A medical expert testified that Heads believed he was “cleaning out a hooch” as part of a flashback from the Vietnam War, when he kicked in a door, entered, and shot his brother-in-law. The court found Mr. Heads not guilty by reason of mental disease (Sontag & Alvarez, *New York Times*, January 27, 2008).

A number of defense attorneys have argued in courts that their clients were not violent before deployment. The Army trained them to become killers and did not “reprogram” them upon their return to civilian life. They argue that before deployment, their clients were never hypervigilant, paranoid, or explosive; never had flashbacks of being attacked, experienced startle reactions, or carried loaded weapons day and night. They did not drink to excess, or misinterpret a neutral event as threatening. In other words, what had been “adaptive” in combat is suddenly considered “maladaptive” in civilian life, with the result that innocent people are hurt and veterans end up in prison.

Forensic literature reports many cases of violence committed by veterans which is believed to be caused by their war trauma and PTSD. A number of states have established special “veteran courts” where judges and prosecutors are sensitive to and educated about PTSD, and frequently veterans are committed to hospitals and rehabilitation programs rather than jail.

### **Managing Violence in Combat PTSD**

Some cultures have been more careful to protect themselves against violence in returning soldiers. Some American Indians put returning warriors through significant purification rituals before they could rejoin their families. French Foreign Legion warriors were kept in the base out of the homeland for years, as they were not considered suitable to live among civilians. In the U.S., the military is heavily relying on medications, but drugs only have limited effects in decreasing veterans’ symptoms. Edward Tick believes that war is an inherently moral enterprise, and veterans searching for healing are on a profound moral journey. He sug-

gested non-conventional treatments, which include: purification through storytelling, grieving rituals, initiation ceremonies, nurturing, recreation, healing journeys, and meetings with former enemies for reparation and reconciliation. One may redeem the self by rehabilitating and renovating the damage done to others. The building that was bombed can be reconstructed, and the harmed innocents can be healed.

Combat experience substantially changes psychological, spiritual, and medical aspects of most veterans. Those who were exposed or participated in atrocities are at higher risk of developing PTSD, crime and violence. We reap what we sow, when a group of soldiers is required to behave brutally outside their country, this brutality eventually may return back to their homeland.

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## **Civilians Going Berserk**

**Peter Barglow**—University of California, Davis

How can we comprehend a man's rampage during which he kills innocents? Anders Breivik killed dozens of civilians in Norway, propelled by a messianic religious delusion in July 2011. On July 20, 2012, James Holmes, a psychiatric patient with a history of illegal drug use, killed spectators at a movie theatre in Aurora, Colorado. Wade Michael Page killed Sikh worshippers in their

church on the basis of a religious pretext in August 2012. The history of each incident shares many details with that of the Oklahoma City bombing terrorist, Timothy McVeigh, as explicated in a prior issue of *Clio's Psyche* (Howard Stein, 2011, 129). All four were "loners" with a prolonged incapacity to have ordinary close human relationships. Murdering sprees are also associated with males. I found that only five out of 200 such notorious instances during the last half-century were perpetrated by women.

These men have little to teach us about the highly organized, deliberate genocides associated with Hitler, Stalin, and Franco. The minds of dictators need to be examined by sociologists, historians, political scientists, or psychohistorians—not by a psychiatrist. Only Page, a white supremacist, had the terrorist mentality typical of nationalistic, paramilitary, or radical religious sects. In many respects, the above recent murderers resemble persons who frequent the offices of psychiatrists, psychologists, and educators. Since minor psychopathology can help us understand more severely disturbed persons, I offer three pertinent case histories.

A sudden loss of control that appears crazy might merely be an effort to gain an advantage. I analyzed an attorney, age 30, for symptoms of sexual impotence. Much earlier, he had had a legal charge against him secondary to an episode of genital exhibitionism after smoking cocaine, a drug he still used. But he had since graduated from law school and joined a prestigious law firm. He inspired trust, assisted by a wholesome face suitable for a magazine ad for conservative, elegant shirts. On one occasion, he traveled to New York City for a corporate meeting and had a few drinks and a little marijuana during the trip. He wearily arrived at a sophisticated hotel, far after midnight. A pompous desk attendant told him that all rooms were rented, and he would have to find a cab to take him elsewhere for the night. My patient, in his black suit and silk tie, threatened to punch out the clerk, and then flung himself upon the marble lobby floor while protesting his plight with agonized screams. He awakened many guests and brought hotel personnel swarming to the area. Rather than being taken to jail, he slept free in the suite usually reserved for famous dignitaries.

The sole offspring of a couple who owned a rowdy neighborhood bar located on the floor above his bedroom was often

awakened by drunken patrons' celebrating and fighting, which elicited police intervention. He learned how riotous guests are restrained without harm. His treatment taught me that alcohol and exhaustion could produce sudden disinhibition, and that frenzied, excited behavior did not always imply psychosis. His "pseudoberserk" histrionic behavior appears superficially related to Holmes' recent shooting spree in a theater showing *The Dark Knight Rises* in July 2012. But, amok behavior can represent manipulation, psychotic wrath, or both. Drugs and alcohol used over long time periods are disinhibiting and become a factor in loss of control. The extent of loss of reality testing is a quantitative factor determining whether anger is expressed symbolically or concretely, such as through brutal murder. Mental splitting was present both in my patient and Holmes—pervert with women versus uptight lawyer, brilliant scientist versus grandiose killer. Holmes, of course, had to do great planning to pull off his brutal massacre.

Recently, in my private practice office, I treated a Hispanic man, age 25, recently discharged from a hospital. Authorities forced him to consult me about paranoid delusions, threatening letters, and profound insomnia. His mother had divorced his father when the patient was three years old. The father had abandoned the family but resided nearby. The patient displayed flat affect and showed cognition typical of a severe thought disorder. He denied suicidal or homicidal thoughts and reluctantly agreed to a trial of sedative and anti-psychotic medications. Later, when he came to an appointment severely agitated and delusional, he admitted to stopping all medications. I told him I could not treat him, terminated the meeting, and phoned his mother, suggesting hospitalization. That evening, he ferociously murdered an older man out for a stroll, who refused to lend him a cell phone. My patient responded by striking the stranger's head with a brick with such force that the victim died two days later. His mother told me that after leaving my office, he had phoned his father, who refused to speak to him. When I considered the possibility that I had contributed to the disaster, I speculated that the older man (whose ethnic identity was the same as that of the patient) in his wrath was misperceived as the patient's cruel father or as an image of me, the therapist. The dead man could have been the victim of a psychotic transference misper-

ception. Most often—as in this situation—we can't predict or prevent a murder by a mentally ill patient. Even if we identify a likely candidate for a murder (as James Holmes in Colorado was identified), we cannot medicate persons who refuse medication. It remains quite difficult to force such patients into an institution.

I conclude that neither psychiatry nor brain science explains berserk behaviors. Holmes' movie theater massacre resembles my schizophrenic patient's reported loss of control with a life-long history of social isolation and repeated treatment failures. But he differs from the former in the meticulous planning for his massacre and his deliberate selection of a theater featuring a violent movie, illustrating a rational choice of location for an insane act. He, like all of the other men I have described, was emotionally remote and fearful about intimacy. Massive self-esteem deficits, powerful tendencies to project blame, and a propensity to have narcissistic rage reactions in response to failures seem to characterize all of the men. Freud's Death Instinct and Jung's "Shadow's Archetypal Enemy" also have conceptual relevance to these catastrophic, violent outbursts. Psychiatrists, psychologists, and forensic experts have had pervasive failures in predicting violence. One astute journalist, David Brooks, advocated prevention through enhancing human relationships of persons likely to run amok. However, frenzied killings can't accurately be predicted, even in criminals with a history of unrestrained rage and prior physical assaults. Another answer is continual psychotherapy for everyone, although this is certainly an impractical solution.

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## Soldiers Going Berserk

**Peter Barglow**—University of California, Davis

Several shocking instances of a sudden slaughter of innocent civilians by U.S. military personnel during past years have made the expression “going berserk” a common media and household term. Historically viewed, Berserkers were Norse warriors who battled, often naked, in an uncontrollable, trance-like bestial fury first mentioned in *Haraldskvaedi*, a late 9<sup>th</sup> century skaldic poem. “Baresark” may refer to a thin shirt made from a bear pelt. The combatants possibly ingested the stimulant-hallucinogen muscarine, a natural ingredient of some mushrooms, which causes a loss of inhibitions similar to the result of alcohol in vulnerable individuals. Today, berserk behavior is considered on the boundary between heroism and insanity. But substance dependence remains important. From 2000 to 2006, half of the homicides in Australia involved alcohol consumption (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2009), a statistic mirrored by data from the U.S. and Canada.

In November 2009, Captain Hasan Nidal murdered 13 innocent persons at a Texas military base. His family reported that he had become a radical Muslim about a decade earlier, and many assumed his motivation was associated with radical nationalistic or religious ideology. Yet many journalists have downplayed the influence of a radical ideology in this incident. For example, Charles Krauthammer wrote, “Nidal is a criminal not a Muslim victim” (*Washington Post*, 2009) and Evan Thomas asked whether Nidal was “a ‘nut case’ or a Muslim fanatic” (*Newsweek*, 2009). This past March, Sergeant Robert Bales shot 16 Afghan civilians while intoxicated with alcohol. The press reported that he suffered from PTSD and in prior years might also have had a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Symptoms for TBI are protean, and treatment depends on the severity of brain injury. Afghan President Hamid Karzai called this event “intentional murder,” and the incident had international significance.

These notorious incidents have been replicated in miniature in recent years in individual murders committed by members of U.S. military forces. In 2009, three soldiers from Fort Carson’s

Warrior Battalion Transition Unit murdered a fourth, Kevin Shields, whose death was featured in a PBS documentary named *The Wounded Platoon*. The murder was attributed to roadside war stress, too-frequent tours of duty, poor screening of recruits by the military, and care providers' mistakes in medication management. On January 13, 2008, the *New York Times* counted 121 instances in which veterans of Iraq or Afghanistan killed relatives, other service members, or strangers after returning home from war. The *Times* article noted that such murders by soldiers without a prior criminal history occurred about twice as often during the six months after the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan than took place in the six months before. On March 23, 2012, Attorney Brocton Hunter, who specializes in the PTSD defense for veteran criminals, noted that "waves of veteran-committed crimes rise after every major military conflict." Contemporary American military administrative leaders discourage killing sprees because they jeopardize the safety of our soldiers captured by enemy forces and may inhibit their defectors from joining our army (Dave Grossman, *On Killing*, 2009).

Most medical and journalistic commentary has attributed these recent incidents to war stress and trauma-induced PTSD. Earlier, Jonathon Shay noted that descriptions of the berserk state in Vietnam era soldiers were "beastlike, godlike, insatiable, frenzied, suspicious, revengeful, cruel, inhuman, and crazy." Absent were prudent self-preservation, rational human appreciation, and realistic restraint. Shay speculated that a severe outbreak of berserk frenzy might generate a subsequent PTSD condition, not vice versa (*Achilles in Vietnam*, 1995, 98).

In psychiatry's *DSM-IV* classification, "Going Berserk" is concluded to be a "Culture-Bound Syndrome" synonymous with "Amok." It is considered a male illness accompanied by persecutory ideas, automatisms, amnesia, exhaustion, psychotic experiences, and dissociative reactions "precipitated by a perceived slight or insult." Many of these typical symptoms are also found in the categories of Intermittent Explosive Disorder, in bipolar disorder's "manic" pole of typical behavior, and in the category of Acute Stress Disorder. But PTSD, the popular diagnosis *du jour*, has been the most common medical psychiatric disorder associated with frenzied murderous rampages in recent history by experts and the

American public.

PTSD was made a disease by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980. The term appeared in the *New York Times* 40 times as often from 2000 to 2010, than from 1980 to 2000. Hundreds of millions of dollars of brain and clinical research have been devoted to identify its cause, but have yielded no robust data, little understanding, and no help in formulating treatments (Barglow, *Skeptical Inquirer*, 2012). Instead of the muscarine perhaps used by Viking warriors, the size of the hippocampus brain structure and fluctuations in levels of the chemical substances like cortisol, epinephrine, norepinephrine, glutamine, and GABA have been hypothesized to link PTSD to violence. But there is little connection between PTSD and other American Psychiatric Association diagnostic categories with the violent murderous incidents summarized above. Sgt. Bales was intoxicated, suffered from alcoholic delirium, and had been brain damaged earlier. Captain Nidal had not been in combat, and his behavior was fueled both by a radical Muslim ideology and the threat of an assigned tour of overseas duty—not by the aftermath of war trauma.

The example of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant William Calley, the leader of a highly publicized 1968 massacre in Vietnam, offers additional information for understanding berserk behavior. (Although others may view him as simply following orders, this is not my assessment.) This massacre took place 44 years ago—before the discovery of PTSD—in the absence of terrorist ideology and without the influence of alcohol. Calley was a “bland young man burdened... with much ordinariness” who had “little cause for pride, inner security or self-esteem.” He elicited no respect from superiors or subordinates in the military and seemed bereft of any conviction or ideology. He failed seventh grade and dropped out of college before working as a bellhop and dishwasher (Douglas Linder, *My Lai: An Account*, 1999,14). Yet he, too, ran amok. Could his rampage have been a way of denying a vast inner nothingness?

My conclusion is that the phenomenon of “soldiers going berserk” represents an enraged complex mental condition without a solitary cause. It is unrelated to any major psychiatric category or even directly to the emotional traumatic aftermath of warfare. Psychiatry and brain studies provide woefully inadequate explanations

for amok sprees by soldiers. Are more satisfying answers to these puzzling and horrific episodes provided elsewhere? Yes, ancient Greek myths and drama are rich domains to search for replies to this query. What kind of human psychological pain and what intentions lead to lethal frenzies? In Homer's writing, Achilles' dishonorable mutilation of Hector's corpse is attributed to enormous rage at the death of his foster brother Patroklos. But his behavior was preceded by a profound earlier period of self-destructive wrath at being deprived of a concubine that he was convinced he deserved for his proven valor.

The 492 BCE athlete Cleomedes of Astypalacea was accused and convicted of foul play that led to his murder of a boxing match opponent. He became "mad through grief" and (like Sampson) pulled down the pillar holding up a roof, killing 60 children. In Sophocles' *Ajax*, the mythic hero becomes enraged when he fails to be presented Achilles' armor as a reward for his valor. But the goddess Athena fooled him into murdering cattle and shepherds instead of Odysseus, who grabbed the prize. When he realized what he had done, these twin humiliations drove him to suicide. In Euripides' *Heracles*, the protagonist, who miraculously survived the staggering battle stressors of his 12 labors, insanely murders his wife and children (Barglow and Murphy, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 2011). He regains his sanity and survives through the empathic compassion of his friend Theseus, who provided him with rich gifts. Such ancient psychohistorical explorations can help us to make sense of the above senseless slaughters by soldiers through their artistic blending of universal truths with the uniqueness of a specific traumatic external environment.

*Peter Barglow's biography may be found on page 285.*

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## **Violence, War, and Being Human**

**Ken Fuchsman**—University of Connecticut

Humans are a kind and killing species; nurturing and violence are integral to who we are. These characteristics of gentleness and ferocity stem from an intertwining of the human situation and

human nature. We not only have the longest period of childhood dependency, but we nourish our youngsters, who need sustenance and protection. For our children's safety, we do what is necessary to provide food and shelter. We are omnivores—as well as gathering, we hunt, cook, and eat animals, and at one time we had to actively protect ourselves against predators. In addition, we are one of the few species that has to worry about being killed by others of our own kind.

Homicide and armed conflict are found in all cultures. As collaborative and caring as we are, a group/other distinction often appears. We feel justified in inflicting death on those who we perceive as a threat to us, and/or for whom we have developed enmity. “The emotional preference for ‘us’ and hostility to ‘them,’” writes Keith Oatley and colleagues, “is indeed a candidate for a biologically inherited human universal” (*Understanding Emotions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2006, 250). There is a dark side to us. Our propensity for animosity and skill at killing and waging war makes us, according to David Livingston Smith's book of the same name, the most dangerous animal (*The Most Dangerous Animal*, 2007). Yet, without success in the business of violence, humanity would not have evolved into the dominant species on the planet. Removing violence from the human equation is like separating nitrogen from oxygen and still expecting to have air.

Can we understand human psychology without including the fury unleashed in violent human actions? Can we comprehend this psychology separate from the context of the human condition of needing food to survive? Some believe that our propensity for slaughtering our own kind derives from our killing other living creatures. Historian Joanna Bourke writes that “allowing cruelty to animals” opens “the way to cruelty towards people” (*What It Means to Be Human, Counterpoint*, 2011, 85). “The origins of warfare for both chimpanzees and human beings,” says Francis Fukuyama, “seem to lie in hunting” (Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, 2011, 73).

Once the floodgates of violence in war are opened, they produce extremes. A World War II soldier said, “Combat is like torture, and it will reduce you, sooner or later, to a quivering wreck” (quoted in Paul Fussell, 1989, *Wartime*, 281). An Ameri-

can veteran of the same conflict, Edgar L. Jones, wrote, “We shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed or mistreated enemy civilians, finished off enemy wounded, tossed the dying into a hole for dead, and boiled the flesh off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts.... We mutilated the bodies of the enemies cutting off their ears...and buried them with their testicles in their mouths.” The war brought out “the blackest depths of bestiality” (“One War Is Enough,” *Atlantic*, February 1946, 49-50).

As well as atrocious behavior, war engenders heroism and trauma. No single person in recent history exhibits the dual side of the legacy of violence more than Audie Murphy. This slight, 5-foot 5-inch poverty stricken Texan was the most decorated American soldier in World War II. His military exploits are almost beyond belief. In one January 1945 encounter near the Alsatian town of Holtzwihr, Murphy single handedly held off 250 Germans from a burning tank, killing 35 in an hour, while coming out physically nearly unscathed. But mentally, it was another story. For the rest of his all too brief life, according to biographer Charles Whiting, he “was an insomniac, eternally restless, suffered from nightmares and hallucinations...and seemed apathetic about the values of civilian life” (Whiting, C., 2000, *American Hero*, Eskdale, 15-20, xiii). Murphy said: “War robs you, mentally and physically, it drains you....You live so much on nervous excitement that when it is over you fall apart.” He also said: “It was as if I wanted to destroy everything I had built up....I hated everything and everybody” (quoted in Whiting, 56, 177). Murphy died at the age of 46 in a plane accident.

The legacy of wartime violence is complex. On one hand, it can awaken bravery amidst danger. In war, death is always imminent, no matter how secure a base may seem. An underlying anxiety pervades everything, as soldiers in war zones are always ready. The ever-present threat of being killed can call forth a powerful closeness within the band of military brothers. There is a resemblance between this closeness and the attachment process of mother and baby, as fear of loss occurs in both situations. “Across all human cultures and most primate species,” write Jeffrey Simpson and Jay Belsky, “young and vulnerable infants display a specific se-

quence of reactions following separation from their...caregivers. Immediately following separation, most infants protest vehemently, typically crying, screaming and throwing temper tantrums.” If their mother or other caregiver does not return, the “infants enter a second stage—despair” (“Attachment Theory within a Modern Evolutionary Framework,” 2008, Cassidy and Shaver, eds., *Handbook of Attachment*, 131). The wartime band of brothers is a substitute for the mother, so similarly, an emotional devastation follows the death of a member of one’s unit. The loss in war can activate hatred, vengeance and barbarism that hardly know any bounds. “The emergence of rage out of intense grief,” writes psychiatrist Jonathan Shay, “may be a human universal” that “can imprison a person in endless swing between rage and emotional deadness as a permanent way of being in the world” 1994, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 40). And still for all of its psychological consequences for many participants, violence and war have been integral to our progress as a species from the first acts of conquest to the more recent practices of genocide.

There can be a deep fury within humans. Its intensity varies greatly from person to person, and in peacetime, it is generally kept under control. But the conditions that bring on armed conflict can activate our rage. Once combat awakens that deep anger, rape, dismembering and atrocities frequently trail along with it. The other side of the sacred family bonds that permeate human cultures is the wartime violation of mothers while their offspring watch in horror. In modern war, it is not only soldiers who act brutally; leaders removed from combat may order impersonal killings of civilians, including fire-bombings and dropping weapons of mass destruction on population centers. Biologist Loren Eiseley writes that “man” has become “a frequent terror and abomination even to himself” (*The Star Thrower*, 1978, 44).

These violent extremes are one horrendous side of the human ledger. It would be better for all of us not to feel endangered, but we often do. A good part of what has made our species great is connected to the restless search for power over others using scientific and technological innovations to advance military prowess. This will to power in politics often occurs in an environment that mixes camaraderie and suspicion. Leaders characteristically worry

that someone is out to displace them, and then the foulness of paranoia, feeling threatened, animosity and rage enter the equation. Diplomatic skill can keep distrust at bay and may help forge alliances and friendships, yet the fear and threat of conflict remain in the background. War, with its accompanying horrors, is not only diplomacy carried out by other means. It can awaken something primal in combatants. As the late John Keegan says: “Warfare is almost as old as man himself, and reaches into the most secret places of the human heart, places where...emotion is paramount, where instinct is king” (*A History of Warfare*, 1993, 3). To Randolph Bourne, war inevitably brings “luxuriant releases of explosive hatred” (*The Radical Will*, 1978, 337). The primal fury unleashed during wartime can, as Audie Murphy said, make you hate and want to destroy everything. In the violence of war, the benevolent and tormented human animal too often finds that self-preservation can be closely aligned with destruction of others and being traumatized oneself. We have been a species dependent on killing, leaving us both triumphant and haunted by our own deeds.

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## **Part IV: Some Reasons for Optimism**

### **Communal Responses to Terrorism and Child Post-Trauma**

**Anna Geifman**—Bar-Ilan University  
**Tamara Reznikov**—Research Assistant

A vast and mounting body of research on terrorism emphasizes that children are an especially vulnerable population group. In the past decade, they have been targeted for terror attacks world-

wide—from Beslan, North Ossetia, to Itamar, Israel, and most recently, in March 2012, Toulouse, France. When not physically targeted, children are at risk of psychological and psychiatric complications either as a result of direct exposure, proximity to a violent event, or indirectly, when someone related to them is hurt (Pierre-Nicolas Carron, Philippe Reigner, Bertrand Yersin, Stefan Vetter, “Conséquences psychologiques individuelles et communautaires du terrorisme,” *Rev Med Suisse*; 4, 2008: 2115-2119).

Children’s unmitigated traumatization is hardly surprising, given their inability to rationalize and integrate a painful episode within a larger sociopolitical context. Less obvious is evidence that trauma-related symptoms—severe anxiety and nervousness, depression, attention deficit, anger, hyperactivity, and aggressiveness—vary under the same objective circumstances, such as equal severity of a frightening episode. The difference lies in children’s subjective perception of terrorizing experiences and their emotional response to being threatened (Avital Laufer and Zahava Solomon, “Responses of Israeli Youth to Terror: Posttraumatic Symptoms and Indicators of Psychological Growth,” *Megamot*, 2006, 44, 407-423).

Researchers attribute varying degrees of mental suffering, after identical exposure to terror, to prior experiences, in which key factors are their sense of security and stability. Some observers assume that economic uncertainty of a child’s home is a primary cause of severe post-traumatization. However, financial volatility is hardly tantamount to instability; at most, it may be only a factor that impedes psychological adaptation. Moreover, in more or less economically homogeneous communities, children respond to terrorization differently; their perception of the grave situation depends in part on parental influence. A gentle superhero-father, portrayed in the cinematographic daydream *Life is Beautiful*, in reality could not totally structure his boy’s responsiveness to experience in a concentration camp. Still, interpretation of distress is instrumental in determining the variability of child victimization.

Experts have stressed that, when analyzing psychological consequences of exposure to violence, it is not enough to focus on the immediate family of affected children. Society at large, especially the media, teachers and other adults in control of a child’s

environment, provide them with models for adjusting to terrorization and fear. There is strong evidence that among the most influential factors in ameliorating psychological damage in children exposed to coercion is value-based upbringing, along with nurturing bonding with such a community that accentuates positivity and constructive attitudes (James Garbarino, *Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment*, San Francisco, 1995). While further in-depth research is required, a preliminary comparative analysis of several case studies suggests a direct link between children's ability to cope with the sense of fear resulting from exposure to terrorism and the emotional responses expected—and largely constructed—in their environment.

Independent and official media are instrumental in their impact. The images transmitted on television in live coverage of violence have a determining impact in the occurrence of post-traumatic stress symptoms in the child population, and there is a direct correlation between the length of exposure to gruesome images and the gravity of the psychological shock. During the 9/11 attacks, American children saw an average of three hours of live images of the event, with a duration of up to five hours or more in 25 percent of the cases (Carron, et al., "Conséquences psychologiques," [http://rms.medhyg.ch/article\\_p.php?ID\\_ARTICLE-RMS\\_173\\_2115](http://rms.medhyg.ch/article_p.php?ID_ARTICLE-RMS_173_2115)). Researchers held responsible parents and other adults who were preoccupied, anxious, and saddened "by the disaster...glued to the television," and "psychologically unavailable" to children who, at least initially, were left on their own to deal with broadcasts of the traumatizing news (<http://www.news.cornell.edu/releases/Sept01/Garbarino.kids.bombing.lgk.html>). The impact, while not to be ignored, may in no way compare with astonishing findings concerning children in Gaza at the same time: those exposed to the local media coverage of events related to the so-called Al-Aqsa Intifada demonstrated greater levels of anxiety and distress than their peers affected by the incidents directly (A.A.M. Thabet, Y. Abed, P. Vostanis, "Emotional Problems in Palestinian Living in a War Zone," *The Lancet*, vol. 359, May, 2002: 1801-1804).

"We are looking at a lost generation," assert psychologists who treated child survivors of the 2004 school massacre in Beslan. "They are living with terrible trauma and grief, but when they turn

to parents or other relatives, they see that they can't cope, either." In Israel, their counterparts are a "Qassam generation"—children in the residential Sderot, about a mile from Gaza; between 2001 and 2009, they have been growing up under approximately 12,000 Qassam rockets produced by Hamas. Terrorism has been the hallmark of their daily life and a frame of reference: when a science teacher asked why a lizard needed its scales, all of her young students knew the answer: "Against the Qassams!" (Anna Geifman, *Death Orders: The Vanguard of Modern Terrorism in Revolutionary Russia*, 2010], 4-6, 159-160). The Sderot experience and that of terrorism in Israel generally lay bare a well-developed culture of "interpreting terror" for children.

The fundamental assumption is that children cope best with their fear and distress when adults around them are capable of dealing with the same feelings and are able to demonstrate composure and competence. "I encountered their fright when terrorist acts happened so often in and around our area. It is very important to answer children's questions as directly as possible, providing specifics about a violent episode in order to leave as little room for imagination and scary fantasies, but at the same time avoiding gory details. It is essential to emphasize that grownups are there to restore regular routines, and that kids will never be alone" (Tamar Reznikov's interview with N. H., an elementary school teacher, Eli, Israel, August 2012). The notion that normal life will resume is an essential element in Israeli efforts to reassure children suffering from post-traumatic symptoms. Adults are skilled in measures to establish security in the near future—the young receive this reassuring message from parents, teachers, and the conspicuously confident local community—in striking contrast to the situation in Beslan. There, from the very beginning and for months to come, young survivors and witnesses of the terrorist act were exposed to an avalanche of accusations from their parents and other town residents; according to their allegations, the proverbial incompetence of the Russian authorities and their total disregard for human cost during the botched rescue effort were in part to blame for the blood-bath (Geifman, *Death Orders*, 157).

Initial therapy sessions with Beslan child survivors included magic marker drawings of "terrorists' scary faces" on balloons,

which the children then exploded—the opposite of the advice given by Israel’s Ministry of Education. During the 2006 conflict with Hezbollah, the Ministry advised schoolteachers to focus class discussions on such themes as kindness, gratefulness, reciprocity, and humor, as well as communal and national ethical obligations, as in the case of Israeli hospitals providing medical care to Lebanese children (cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Moe/Tzfon/ErcotHafala/bateySefer/).

Our answer to hate “will be the strengthening of our identity,” underlined Rav Ehuda Ben-Ishai in an interview after the death of his daughter, son-in-law, and three grandchildren—11- and four-year-old boys and a three-month-old baby girl—at the hands of terrorists on March 11, 2011 in Itamar, Israel. “Anger and em-bitterment are a waste” at the time when it is essential to focus on surviving children, he said. One is strengthened by knowledge that what happened to his family affected people as a whole. Correspondingly, his message was about communal creativity: “We build and build all the time...We continue...building life” ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP1K18ktr58&feature=player\\_embedded#at=2605](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP1K18ktr58&feature=player_embedded#at=2605)).

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## **Approaches to Overcoming the Pressures of Pervasive Enemies**

**Heiderose Brandt Butscher**—York University

In light of the recent tragedy of the Aurora, Colorado shoot-

ing, this paper argues that society must acknowledge violence as reaching crisis proportions and must examine how it relates to youth and violent crime in order to find solutions to transform this impasse into creative, positive action. The "Now is the Time" project, recently created in Chicago through the collaboration of theater companies and libraries, reaches out to youth and their communities to give them a voice and an expressive platform for telling their stories and to resolve personal issues.

From my experience teaching high school students and university undergraduates, I recommend strategies that may render a deeper understanding of youth culture and assist in combating their rebellious reaction to mainstream society. I contrast approaches to overcoming the pressures of "pervasive enemies" through the lens of Lou Andreas Salomé (1861-1937), a psychoanalyst and confidante of Nietzsche, Rilke and Freud and advocate for all types of creative expression for the transformation of self. My approach is a focus on: (1) peer groups, gangs, violence in media and popular culture; (2) Salomé's position on transformation; and (3) a strategy for developing empathy through role-play employing the "prismatic effect."

Schools are dangerous places since there is disconnect between the lives of students and teachers as a consequence of the threat of bullying by peers causing students to live in fear. Families, schools, and society generally do not adequately address this issue. Teachers, staff and students must show respect and dignity acting as a team to engage students in productive action.

Multiple "enemies" are pervasive, tempting youth's participation, from bullying to drugs, from gangs to guns, from shooter video games to extreme sports. Violence is prevalent in teen culture: think of playing first-person shooter video games (a genre of action game centered on weapon-based combat through protagonist-first-person perspective), listening to rap lyrics containing suggestive language, or participating in sports that extol daring. Cultural influences such as these begin in childhood, targeting impressionable teens through images and actors. Some children's cartoons contain violence, sadism, or frightening science fiction, including "social bullying" (CBC statistics, released September 27, 2012). During the Olympics, ads announced fall TV programs such

as *Mad Doctors*, *Grimm*, or *Mi5*, alongside Tylenol or Coca Cola commercials.

At the same time, many young people are channeled into activities that can transform their lives in a positive direction. For example, Chicago's "Now is the Time" project is one such citywide initiative that is inspiring young people to make positive change in their communities and stop youth violence and intolerance. This program is an open platform that offers youth participation and self-expression through storytelling-theater, as well as a peer-audience, and becomes an experiential medium for understanding humanity and developing empathy for suffering caused by violence. It also connects students, libraries and community centers through theater, interactive exhibits, and workshops. It focuses on social activism and civic responsibility while creating healthy communities.

Toronto, Canada has a similar "Youth Action Plan" that targets youth violence and youth unemployment. Ontario's Ministry of Children and Youth Services funnels "The Youth Challenge Fund" into neighborhoods with priority resource allocation in view of the gun violence in Toronto this year: a mass shooting at a community barbeque in July, with two dead and 23 injured, and a shooting at Toronto's Eaton Centre that left another two dead in June (both incidences were linked to rival gangs). This project has become a successful tool to stabilize the community by engaging youth with police through "soft policing" and creating after-school jobs. As a bridging effort, the chief of police held a town hall meeting in Scarborough, and a town planner is currently working with the community to garner cooperative action ([www.thestar.com/news/article/1246850](http://www.thestar.com/news/article/1246850)). As building trust is vital, an innovative York University Project involves Jane-Finch youth and York University students to make NOISE (New Opportunities for Innovative Student Engagement) for social change as high school students will be working in hands-on social action projects (*YFile*: Aug. 27, 2012).

The commonality between Chicago and Toronto demonstrates that youth seek respect and identity within social communities to build reciprocal trust, connections to jobs and sustainable social programs. It is, of course, impossible to predict people's

anti-social behavior simply because they play video games or because they display “narcissistic personality disorder”—as is the case of Anders Behring Breivik, convicted in Norway with a maximum sentence for murdering 77 people in July 2011. However, projects such as those involving youth in Chicago and Toronto promote community spirit and a purpose for youth that transcend negative tendencies.

A model for transformation I designate as “prismatic effect” is a unique way of interacting experientially on an individual level as well as within social groups: Salomé opened the possibility of character modification through interaction with others and through subsequent transformation of self. She advocated fantasy and visualization through creative expression in which the dynamics of transformation and restructuring of the self come into play. She was instrumental in encouraging René Rilke’s artistic expression through extensive creative collaboration, actualizing his potential and transformation as Rainer Maria Rilke (Heiderose Brandt-Butscher, *Clio's Psyche*, Vol. 18, No. 4, March, 2012).

Salomé exuded a “prismatic effect” upon those with whom she interacted: with feminists who read her articles in *Imago*; with colleagues in the avant-garde psychoanalytic society in Vienna, particularly Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud; with the artistic community of Berlin’s “*Freie Bühne*”—during her 20-year contribution as critic for Director Gerhardt Hauptmann’s realism theatre (from 1885-1904). Salomé should be viewed as a “prism” promoting the “refraction” of the self while infusing the dynamics of creativity in all its forms. The Newtonian notion of “prism” is synergized by the psychology of color in its spiritual effect, postulated by Wassily Kandinsky (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1910).

Interpersonal relating with the other evolves in a process I term metaphorically “refraction,” implying the “prism’s” intrinsic dynamics that transform the self into other possibilities. As a result, the self evolves with an enriched conception of being imbued with renewed agency. The refraction allows for creative expression of the unconscious self, hence reinforcing the possibility of its transformation. A reciprocal exchange stimulates creative impetus and achieves a reciprocal creative output while furthering self-actualization. The articulation of unconscious layers of experience

encourages the other to create from an intuitive or “ur-creative” source (Peter Salm, *The Poem as Plant: A Biological View of Goethe’s Faust*, 1971).

Empathy is intrinsic to a deep understanding of the other; an empathic attitude can dissipate the narcissistic tendency to focus on the self. Any medium of art involving the creative process encourages transformation of the self. Accordingly, artistic expression transforms narcissism’s focus on self with the opportunity for empathic understanding. The accent shifts from self towards understanding and acceptance of the other’s worldview.

Furthermore, the “prismatic effect” activates an extraordinary intuitive perception of the other’s psyche. Formulated as “perception” (Max Weber’s “Verstehen”; British object relations’ empathic “attunement”), psychological depth and life’s experiences represent a contextualized perspective. The “refraction” of self is one potential development for engaging youth through the creative process that promotes experiential transformation through role-play.

An intrinsic complementarity—“prismatic effect”/empathy is exemplified by role-play which promotes “ur-creative power.” Creative and “expressive art therapy is transformative” (Stephen Levine, *Poiesis: The Language of Psychology and the Speech of the Soul*, 1997). Moreover, at a University of Toronto workshop on “Role-Play” (OISE, “Holistic Teachers,” September 15, 2012), David Booth demonstrated that “powerful changes in self-understanding occur when students and teachers work collaboratively in role. Role-play extends into role-creating—social role, self-role, character role; you become the strongest ‘you’ in the safety of the role. In undergraduate humanities courses, my students turned historical readings, short story excerpts, articles, or scientific accounts into dramatic skits or dialogue through which they integrated lecture topics and debated important issues. Through the “prismatic effect”—on “intra-psychic and interpersonal levels”—all youth are included and participate in their created role. As the late Andrew Brink pointed out, “Not only does creativity assist in recovering for reprocessing lost but much needed unconscious affect, it provides a sort of ‘theatre of repair’ wherein found and created objects can be manipulated and realigned...It is a

major challenge for the humanities, with untold rewards in re-describing the creative arts as not just culturally decorative but as inseparable from healthy living on intra-psychic and inter-personal levels” (“Repair Theory and Creativity,” *Clio's Psyche*, Vol. 18, No. 4, March, 2012).

I suggest that community centers invite youth volunteers to train and subsequently connect young people and encourage them to serve as role models to participate in arts, sports, and jobs. Projects might include apprenticeship programs, arts, crafts, and practical skills. Holistic bridging efforts, through the “prismatic effect,” together with attuned peer role models, can transform youth while actualizing their potential and integrate them within a productive community.

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## Human Reactions to Nature's Violence

**Paul H. Elovitz**—Ramapo College of New Jersey

Hurricane Sandy's devastation was widespread and shocking. The Northeast, especially New Jersey, Staten Island, and Long Island, were subject to the incredible destructive force of nature. According to *The Star Ledger*, 2.7 million New Jersey residents lost power, and for some, it is very slow in being restored. In other places it is worse. In Long Island, the power company says it can restore all its customers by Thanksgiving!

The incredibly powerful winds hit my suburban town of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey quite hard, but with nothing like the force that swept away boardwalks, cars, homes, and people in places subject to the tidal surge. In the roughly 10 square miles of my town of over 10,000 people, about 50 roads were blocked by trees and downed wires and almost the entire community was with-

out electricity for nine days. Last year, we suffered through two power outages for a total of seven days, so we had some experiences with what to expect and how to cope.

Prior experience, however, does not lessen the stress of sleeping with inside temperatures in the low 50s and 40s, as frost appears on the pumpkins outside. When after a week the afternoon temperature in our bedroom matched the outside temperature, we were glad we moved out after three days. The coldness drains you, no matter how many clothes you bundle on your body. With the chill and darkness came a terrible lack of security. Neighbors raced around their property to check for damage and also check the street to see what shape their neighbors were in. In my case, I found that the oldest and largest tree on our property, along with eight others, had been blown over, while three more large ones were reduced to tall poles. Fortunately, there was no damage to our home. I felt lucky, having last summer removed the dead and dying trees close to our abode.

The faces of my neighbors and other people I came in contact with revealed extreme stress; their attention spans were short and emotions volatile, and they looked much more to each other for help and moral support than in the normal course of events. As we drove to the food and hardware store in an adjacent town, half of which never lost its electricity, I also noticed unusual body language. I saw strain on faces and jerky motions. People made more eye contact than usual, but it was quite brief. They would speak about the tree that fell on their house or their neighbor's house, or about how lucky they were that one missed their home. At the stores, there was a run on flashlights, batteries, gas cans, chain saws, propane heaters, and other items usually associated with camping or the outdoor life. Conversations while standing in line went to who was suffering the most, with considerable concern for the poor people who lost houses and cars from inundations of water. At that stage, there were few signs of what I have written about as the "olympics of victimization." People who never lost electricity or who got it back quickly sometimes expressed some guilt over their good fortune. To the extent people could find working television sets, as at my college, the focus was on the news and getting a sense of the devastation, the roads that were blocked, and the re-

sources available. The incessant focus on the presidential election gave way to an obsession with Hurricane Sandy and its aftermath.

Generosity! There was a remarkable amount of generosity expressed wherever one turned in my community. Our local, always accommodating ShopRite supermarket had immediately offered the service of refrigeration and refreezing to patrons who could bring their perishables in marked containers. The mayor of my town gave out his cell phone number, returned calls, and updated those in his community who could get emails on a twice-daily basis. As time went by, he began to express his frustration, and that of the community, with our notoriously slow and inefficient electrical power company. Increasingly, messages from the mayor reported that he had not only been speaking with the senior officials of the company, but also with its parent company and with the governor's office, learning the status of what was being done, and usually, not done, on a step-by-step basis.

The generosity of individuals and groups was also striking. The administrator at Ramapo College in charge of emergency preparedness, with whom I had once team taught a course on leadership, saw my wife and I enjoying the heat of a lounge and told us how to get a dormitory room to sleep in. He soon arranged to offer available rooms to commuting students who lacked electricity and gas for their normal commute. The college fully backed this type of generosity. A security guard, who did not know me personally, generously offered her charger so that my wife's cell phone could be revived. Generosity was exemplified also by the numerous volunteers who stood in the freezing cold distributing ice and dry ice, the repair personnel and town employees who cleared fallen trees, and the volunteer firemen and ambulance corps who risked their lives driving amidst live wires. The kind offers to stay with friends and family from North Carolina to New York State was much appreciated, but not practical to accept.

Hurricane Sandy stirred many other emotions among storm victims living in a cold and permanent state of worry and exhaustion, including anger, frustration, fear, and a need to look after oneself and one's family regardless of other people. Selfishness was not something that I observed personally in my community and its surroundings, but it was visible on the news, with great emphasis

on a story of a Staten Island mother who had to abandon her car and whose two young children were swept out of her arms at the height of the hurricane after a man refused to open his door to her desperate family. Subsequently, on television, he defensively denied her story, saying it was a man who came to his door and then tried to break into the back of his house, not a woman with children. Stories of angry acting out by people in long lines were also common on the news, occurring elsewhere, but not visible to me in my community and those surrounding it. However, I sensed considerable anger just below the surface, an anger often expressed in the way frantic people drove their cars aggressively, ignoring stop signs and sometimes working traffic lights.

Cold, hungry, worried and frightened people heard on their car radios and on TV monitors in stores and warming centers about the suffering of others, and I'm inclined to say my situation was not that bad. The images of the devastated shore areas and pictures of my wife's hometown of Hoboken mostly under water reinforced this impulse.

As the waters receded and roads slowly reopened, gasoline soon became the preoccupation of many, which the media brought to people's attention with a vengeance. Their threat of long gas lines and shortages became a self-fulfilling prophecy, since almost everyone wanted to protect themselves by having a full tank. Suddenly, fuel became the manic center of attention. Within two days, reports spread of people waiting up to five hours for gasoline; some even parked outside of closed gas stations because of a rumored delivery later in the day. I was angered when, after waiting in a line for an hour with assurances of there being enough gas for all, I was told there was none and directed to go to a gas station with a line that turned out to be at least a mile long. The Saturday after the storm, we passed a gas station where over a hundred people were waiting with multiple cans to haul home to power their small generators and cars. These cold people talked to each other about their plight as they moved along in an orderly fashion. Fear was close to the surface with anger barely below it.

Collective fear turned to the impact of the first snowstorm of the year, which hit on day nine of the power outages. By that time, most people, but not this author and many others, had their

power restored. The four inches of snow looked beautiful, but it soon turned to slush. Many people were slowly turning their attention back to the election.

In the face of the power of nature to disrupt our lives and the realization of just how fragile our existence can be, humans mostly responded in a civilized manner during the crisis of Hurricane Sandy. Although on day 10 of our power outage, I was still cold and dreading how freezing my house would be when my wife and I made our daily trip to check it, I was proud of my neighbors, our community, and my college, but also not oblivious to the danger of a societal breakdown in times of severe stress.

*Paul H. Elovitz is a Founding Faculty member at Ramapo.*



## **Integrative Thoughts on the Lifton versus Pinker Debate**

**Denis O'Keefe**—New York University

The Sunday January 7, 2012 edition of the *New York Times* featured a fascinating dialogue between two very important thinkers on the topic of violence in the contemporary world. Steven Pinker's recent 800 page book *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* sparked the discussion in which Robert Jay Lifton provides some initial thoughts on the "paradox" of contemporary forms of violence. The *New York Times* piece led The Social Research Center for Public Scholarship at The New School to invite Lifton and Pinker to debate the overall question of whether we live in a more or less violent period of history. The current paper will provide a brief analysis of Pinker and Lifton's basic arguments and add some preliminary thoughts on how their positions may not be as contrary as they initially appear.

Steven Pinker, Harvard University Professor of Psychology, in the book that triggered the debate, seeks to answer a number of provocative questions on the nature of violence in human history. His central thesis is that we currently live in the most peaceful and least violent period of human history and that people living today have a significantly reduced risk of being victim of violence or cru-

elty than in any other historical period. Pinker provides a convincing argument chock-full of statistics and research from a number of different fields, including history, anthropology, psychology, sociology, neuroscience, philosophy and economics. He initially seeks an explanation for his findings in genetic inheritance, but quickly finds that not enough time has passed for evolutionary differences to account for the decreased violence. Instead, Pinker turns toward a more sociological explanation. He uses the idea of a “pacification process” to partially explain the decrease in interpersonal forms of violence. He outlines history in terms of the way in which the legitimate use of force has become monopolized by the state, resulting in a reduction in violence.

Pinker appears to have a convincing argument concerning interpersonal forms of violence, but he runs into some difficulty with his “pacification” theory—less than a quarter of his list of the 21 worst atrocities in human history occurred before the rise of the modern nation state, and the events he lists as pre-modern lack specificity. The latter occurred over large spans of time and place with ambiguous primary historical actors. They contrast sharply in this way with the more modern atrocities that make his list, primarily WWII. He also runs into some difficulty with his reluctance to explore neurobiological explanations for reduced interpersonal violence. Pinker argues that the brain of 60 years ago is the same as today, which focuses his explanation on changing socializing influences on aggression. It seems to be largely true that alterations in genetic inheritance cannot account for the change Pinker documents, but as modern neuroscientists are consistently finding, very small epigenetic changes can have very significant impacts on human behavior and recursive changes in social systems. This mutually reinforcing process has the potential to impact societal and behavioral norms exponentially.

A simple example of this recursive process may be the changing male brain and the rapidly changing socialization of masculinity found throughout many parts of the world. In just two or three generations, we have seen a change in the size of the corpus callosum in males, primarily responsible for communication across hemispheres, in that it is now indistinguishable with that of a female, which was previously found to be larger. Experimental re-

search has consistently demonstrated the impact of rearing on the corpus callosum via epigenetic mechanisms. Because of its integrative function, an immature callosal axon “results in an inability of the affective and symbolic energies of the right hemisphere to be externalized through the verbal expression of the left hemisphere” (Allen Schore, *Affect Dysregulation and Disorders of the Self*, 2003, 228). An argument can be made that the changing socialization of masculinity has impacted the development of this brain structure, increasing its functional capacity to cope with aggressive impulses and recursively impacting change in social systems.

The neurobiological evidence seems to provide a localized site of action and further explanation of the decreasing rates of interpersonal violence and may be an adjunct to Pinker's emphasis on the “pacification process,” but the question of larger systemic forms of violence remains in dispute. Our understanding of the nature of violence and how it has evolved over time requires closer scrutiny. Interpersonal forms are easiest to define. It is the systemic forms that provide for some difficulty. David Gill, emeritus professor of social policy at Brandeis University, adds to the *Times* discussion a definition that includes structural violence. He emphasizes “acts and/or socially maintained conditions that inhibit human development by interfering with the fulfillment of universal human needs, including biological/material, social/psychological, productive/creative, security, self-actualization and spiritual needs.” With this definition, large segments of our world's population fall into the category of victims of violence not represented in Pinker's model.

An example from the United States would be our failing health care system. Recent yearly estimates suggest that 45,000 American deaths are attributable to lack of access to health care. A slightly older study from 1997 suggested the number was closer to 100,000. Another estimate from the Attorney General found that upwards of 85,000 African Americans died of treatable illnesses in the year 2000 alone. The fact that these numbers vary so significantly does highlight the inherent difficulty in quantifying systemic violence, but even the more conservative numbers are over three times the recent U.S. homicide rate, indicating that just this one form of systemic violence would have a significant impact on

Pinker's model; too large an impact to be ignored. The idea that such systemic forms of violence could only be born of modern nation states complicates matters further, as this appears to contradict Pinker's explanatory model. It seems justified to ask: has the acting out of our violent impulses only transferred to less obvious, disguised forms in modern nation states? Has it become the role of the large group process to provide the necessary numbing to quell individual guilt while still allowing for the vicarious experience of murderous impulses toward delegated groups? These are fundamental psychohistorical questions. Pinker would have done well to explore the 40 years of psychohistorical research on the topic, including the work of Robert J. Lifton.

The life and work of psychohistorian Robert J. Lifton needs no introduction to the readers of *Clio's Psyche*. Lifton reports that he read Pinker's book with "special interest," but found his own experience to be contrary to Pinker's findings on decreasing violence. He doesn't deny the possibility that life may be less violent today than in previous centuries, but his focus on the development and use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, primarily of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, has led him to focus on the "grotesque consequences of numbed technological violence" as the identifying feature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The new capacity for killing is infinite, and he argues these capacities cannot be fully grasped by statistics on past war-making and killing. For Lifton, it is the "dynamic of mind and technology, in which technology creates a psychological attraction to ultimate power and protection from painful feelings associated with more direct forms of killing." The paradox for Lifton is that life for most people today may be less violent than previous centuries, but never before in human history have we been in such danger of self-annihilation.

The difference between Lifton and Pinker on the topic of contemporary violence appears initially to be a matter of perspective. Pinker emphasizes the impacts of cultural developments on norms regarding the expression of violence and the civilizing and pacifying influence of the state on the individual. Lifton speaks from a more phenomenological perspective of how technological advancements and hierarchical systems provide the psychological numbing necessary for mass killing and violence forewarning fu-

ture potentialities. For Pinker, modern society pacifies individual violence and for Lifton, it potentiates collective violence despite decreasing individual violence.

Lifton and Pinker both emphasize the socializing pressures of modern systems, but at the expense of the recursive nature of micro-macro pressures on human behavior. What is missing, and may prove integrative, is a discussion of how individuals and their psychological development impact the creation, development, and maintenance of social systems. From this perspective, social structures and their ideological underpinnings provide a defensive function as an arena in which internal conflicts and historical traumas, whether shared by the group or developmental experiences common to a group can be expressed and reenacted via projective and introjective mechanisms.

Epigenetic research provides a neurological correlate to developmental psychological theories, evidencing an increasing capacity to modulate violent feelings, thoughts and impulses. This supports Pinker's assertion that interpersonal violence has been steadily decreasing throughout history without the need for a "pacification process"; an explanation that appears increasingly implausible due to continued victimization as a consequence of systemic forms of violence arising with the creation of the modern nation state. Lifton's observations of the growing tendency to rely on the "numbing" effect of technological advancements and social systems suggests that our more insidious, violent nature is finding its expression increasingly in structural forms far removed from guilt, responsibility or empathic connection. The face-to-face victimization of another, which has become intolerable for most of us, finds expression in ideological policymaking. Our species' evolving ability to modulate aggression should be celebrated, as Pinker rightly suggests, but we must continue to heed Lifton's warnings of our growing reliance on systemic and technological violence. An emergent thrust to equate social and interpersonal forms of violence may succeed in broadening a definition in which policy related aggressions find similar psychological prohibitions as interpersonal violence. Lifton's career as an activist researcher is an inspiration for those of us engaged in this endeavor.

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## **The Decline of Violence in an Era of Apocalyptic Danger**

**Paul H. Elovitz**—Ramapo College

Violence comes to us in vivid and gruesome images on the television news, our electronic devices, and newspapers. The prevalence of violence in the media leads many thoughtful people to believe that life had to be better earlier in history, at least before the Nazis. They are wrong! The average individual in our species has never been safer than at the present time. Our relative safety is reflected by greatly reduced death and homicide rates, an enormous increase in lifespan, higher standards of living, and the ability to travel safely far and wide, rather than huddle together in small bands of relatives fearful for their lives. Steven Pinker, in his monumental study, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined* (2011) has documented this decline with considerable data.

So why don't we feel safe? When we turn on the television, go online, or read newspapers, the images we focus on incline to be those of danger and violence. Living in my safe neighborhood, where no one has broken in on the nights when my wife and I have forgotten to lock the front or back door, many of the television programs we watch will involve murder and violence in multifaceted forms. Despite this safety, many neighbors have expensive burglar alarms installed. Our sense of insecurity is partly historical in nature. Our ancestors, rubbing sleep from their eyes as they peered out of their caves, looked in all directions to be sure there were no man-eating predators or murderous enemies in the neighborhood. In looking at images of violence in the media, we are both checking

to see that we are safe, and also fulfilling certain inner needs regarding danger. If the danger is out there among the armed burglars, child molesters, and murderers, then the threat is not within. Yet the reality is that our danger from suicide is much higher than the danger of murder. This is generally true throughout the country and in the developed world. Some years ago, when I asked the coroner of my 900,000 mostly suburban county what the ratio of suicides to murders were, he said it was at least 10 suicides for every murder. We provide almost unlimited funds to fight terrorism—however ineptly—and we as travelers suffer all sorts of airport indignities as a part of this struggle against the murderous other. Conversely, we are much more economical when it comes to protecting ourselves from mayhem on the highways that kill far more of us.

Our perception of living in a violent society leads us to act in a much more fearful manner. Suburban mothers drive their children to school, wait in their car for the school bus to pick them up, or chauffeur them to the corner because they've heard of an incident halfway across the country of a child being abducted waiting for the school bus or walking home from school or the school bus. Children have been taught in school to be extremely wary of strangers. Our world is safer, but we see it as more dangerous.

The murder rate goes down over time, but our fear does not do the same. Based on our societal focus on violent danger—as reflected in so many of the TV programs we watch, the books we read, and the newspaper stories that grab our attention—we appear to want, whether consciously or unconsciously, some danger in our lives. Perhaps our attraction to danger is meant to keep us on our toes. Although I've never believed in the "death wish" for society in general, certainly many individuals have such a wish. These include the "cowardly suicides" that seek "death by cop," sometimes after an atrocious act of violence.

As a historian teaching courses on Western Civilizations, I have sought to help my students understand that generally violence has been declining through the ages as a consequence of a number of factors. These factors include: more personal and societal self-control, a more rational approach to life, the concept of human rights, and an increase in empathy for our fellow human beings.

The repudiated forms of violence I focus upon comprise the legal practices of child and wife abuse, incest, infanticide, non-consensual sex, witch burning, arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, the blood feud, cannibalism, debtor's prison, human sacrifice, personal justice, public burnings (the *auto de fe*), floggings, genocide, public hangings, mutilation, the press gang, physical humiliation in the stocks, serfdom, slavery, stoning, and torture. The focus is on the complex psychological and societal processes involved in repudiating the legal processes of these behaviors. However, these behaviors continue to exist less frequently on an individual basis and in periods of historical regression, as under the Nazis.

The spread of democracy has helped quell violence, since democracies are much less likely to go to war with each other, although recent U.S. history attests that this does not preclude the start of war with non-democracies. There is also a generational cycle of sons going to war to prove that they can measure up to the heroism of their fathers. George W. Bush, who went into the National Guard to avoid service in Vietnam, took the U.S. into two wars partly to prove his manliness. Military men who have experienced real combat spoke off-the-record of some bellicose leaders without any real combat experience, such as Dick Cheney, who had five draft deferments during wartime, as being "chicken hawks." Of course, some hawkish leaders eager to prove their manhood, such as Theodore Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, are quite brave. The main point is their desire to take their country to war. (This is not always a bad thing, in that Churchill proved to be an ideal war leader in World War II.)

Is the decline of violence of western man partly a consequence of our shift from being a shame society to much more of a guilt society? In a shame society, the inclination is to fight for one's personal honor or the honor of one's family, the way some Muslims in Afghanistan will blow themselves up at the behest of the Taliban because they have felt so shamed that life is not worth living. Sometimes, they will kill their daughter or sister who has shamed the family by dressing in a western manner or refusing to accept an arranged marriage with a man several times her age. When shame gives way to guilt, the dominant force within members of society is an internalized inhibition on acting violently.

While I think there is some merit in this formulation, its limitations readily become apparent when I think of dedicated Nazis who sacrificed their personal preference and feelings for their individual "good Jews" in the service of their Nazi superego. In *The Nazi Doctors*, Robert Jay Lifton has done an outstanding job of pointing this out. Thus, while shame serves as a reason to fight for the honor of ourselves, our clan, our group, our religion, our nation, etc., guilt can also serve murderous purposes. (In a pessimistic mood, my thoughts race to Nietzsche's aphorism that "the good war halloweth every cause.")

Earlier this year, Lifton and Pinker engaged in a public discourse on violence in New York City. Pinker, in *The Better Angels of our Nature* and Lifton, in the entire opus of his brilliant work on the human propensity toward violence, both have an incredible amount to offer. As pointed out at the beginning of this brief essay, our lives are far safer today than in the past, yet Lifton is right in that our world faces a danger of apocalyptic and virtual destruction. The approach is not easy to reconcile regarding these two brilliant and eloquent public intellectuals who bring to mind the Hebraic prophets calling on my ancestors to lead more moral lives. The moralism is more directly apparent in the case of Lifton, as David Lotto pointed out so well in the September *Festschrift* issue.

The 5,000-year-long human experiment in civilization has become less violent because of the growth of a civilizing process, the development of humanitarian ideals based upon the spread of reason, self-control, internalized taboos on killing as shame gives way to guilt, governmental controls of violence, and much else. It is not a consistent process, and, as demonstrated by the Nazis, Serbians, and Rwandans and so forth, regression is always possible. There is so much to be thankful for and much to fear, but to the extent we let ourselves be dominated by unrealistic fears, we weaken ourselves and our society. The civilizing experiment continues.

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**Thanks to our diligent editors and dedicated referees who must remain anonymous.**

## **The “False Self” Projected on Obama by Many Republicans**

**Jennifer Durham**—Adelphi University

It was an extremely frigid day in January 2009 when the first self-identified African American was sworn in as president of the United States. After an endless election season with contentious and drama filled primaries for both major political parties, millions of people gathered in Washington D.C. for this historic event. I remember waking at 2 am in the bitter cold to make my way to the Metro station. It was so crowded that we all were shoulder to shoulder and almost had to move in lock step. To say that there were people of all ages, races, genders, social, and economic statuses does not quite capture the image.

Once on the Mall, the unique mixture of wonder, elation and pride of millions of people was palpable. All of us, so different but in many ways similar, had come to witness a manifestation of what many have called a myth and an illusion: the American Dream. While the millions of people that witnessed the inauguration from around the world probably had some idea of the difficulties and challenges facing the first black president, I, as a proud African American woman, did not anticipate the symbiotic dance between two phenomena that would usher in an era of aggressive—often violent—language, and force Obama to deal with two competing versions of himself.

The first partner in this symbiotic relationship could have been expected—the party that lost. While it didn’t come as a surprise that its leaders would strategize to regain power, the intensity and relentlessness of their opposition is noteworthy, beginning with a meeting on the actual day of the inauguration where it was decided to oppose all Obama proposals. Even in December 2008, there were secret meetings led by the House GOP whip Eric Cantor and Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell, where they laid out their strategy of unflinching resistance to President Obama during an economic emergency. “If he was for it,” former Ohio Senator George Voinovich explained, “we had to be against it.” All of this opposition was delivered with language infused with a combination

of aggression and disrespect not before seen in the modern era. Many would argue that it was the President's blackness that fueled this unprecedented animus, but that's a topic for another paper.

The second partner in the dance was grassroots hatred, embodied in the Tea Party movement and fueled by corporate money. From the beginning, they were livid with Obama. They were not so concerned about the deficit when we spent over \$800 billion on the Iraq war. They sat silently as Bush borrowed more money from foreign sources than the previous 41 presidents combined. They didn't protest when President Bush rang up \$10 trillion in combined budget and current account deficits or when U.S. citizens lost \$12 trillion in investments, retirement, and home values on his watch. But in early 2009, they were now furious at President Obama for ruining the county with his "fascist," "socialist," "Sharia Law worshipping," "communist," "neo Nazi," or "racist" policies. All of these terms have been projected onto the President, often in various incongruent combinations, by this group and their surrogates in popular media. The symbiotic relationship between intense GOP opposition and the maniacal hatred of this organization has given birth to an entity I refer to as the "False Obama" and has forced the President to battle against its prominence.

This idea of two competing selves or consciousnesses is not foreign to psychoanalysis. Donald Winnicott introduced the concept of the emergence of a true self when children are exposed to adults who validate their authentic ideas and experiences. This genuine self can be threatened by adults who reflect back to children images of self that are distorted by deficits within the adult. In this essay, I use Winnicott's true and false self as metaphors to suggest that there is a danger of the authentic self being smothered in public consciousness or distorted by the false self when it is in alignment with societal norms that reflect deficits in society such as racism.

Although there are sufficient, legitimate criticisms of the President that are based on facts and his actions, it is surprising how often they take a back seat to the aggressive language used to evoke the False Obama: the foreigner, the "Other," the "fascist," "socialist," "Sharia Law worshipping," "communist," "neo Nazi," "racist," or just the plain old "angry black man." This can be seen

in Clint Eastwood's communication with the False Obama in the empty chair at the Republican National Convention. The first comment attributed to the False Obama is "shut up" after being asked about Guantanamo Bay. Even if one opposes Obama's policies and governing style, there is nothing in the country's experience of him that suggests he would make such a primitive, intellectually bankrupt, surly response as "shut up." At no point has he ever demonstrated unrestrained hot headedness. Eastwood then went on to bring up Afghanistan and again the False Obama replied with another "shut up." The False Obama devolved to more crudeness when Eastwood brought up Mitt Romney. Eastwood implied that the False Obama first tells Romney to "F" himself and then tells Eastwood to do the same.

While this may seem antithetical to the calm, somewhat aloof, articulate, polite man we have observed for four years, it is in complete alignment with the stereotypical cursing, explosive, emotionally and intellectually immature black man. Turning back to the Winnicott false self metaphor, Eastwood was interacting with the Obama he wanted, the one he projected. The distorted False Obama reflects racism and its many manifestations within American society.

So what does President Obama do with False Obama? He goes out of his way to engage in public behavior that impedes the False Obama. Consequently, when called a liar by Congressman Wilson during his televised State of the Union Address to Congress and the nation—something that has never been done before in the modern era—he says nothing. Likewise, when his citizenship is repeatedly questioned he remains affable, and when Arizona State University invites him to speak at a graduation but refuses to give him an honorary degree, he still comes and makes a joke about it. When the governor of Arizona sticks her finger in his face, he walks away.

As much as his political enemies, with aggressive language, would like to give birth to an emergence of the False Obama, the President battles against it, perhaps to his detriment. Some have argued that his poor performance in the first presidential debate is attributable to an inability to establish a way to confront the opposition that excluded the angry black man, so he didn't confront

it at all. Although the characterological reasons—based on his failure to readily express his anger—for his poor performance found in the writings of Paul Elovitz and Ken Fuchsman in this journal are available for all to read, it is clear that when the President speaks many see and hear him as the False Obama and treat him in a way that tempts this inauthentic Obama to emerge.

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## **Political Polarization in Contemporary America**

**Kenneth Rasmussen**—Santa Monica College

Almost all observers of American politics agree that there is a greatly increased degree of polarization and rancor between those who identify themselves as “liberal” or progressive and those who identify themselves as “conservative” or libertarian. Reflected in the congressional gridlock over a solution to the current fiscal crisis, it is almost as if the two camps inhabit distinct, if not alternative, subjective political universes.

In assessing this situation, it is useful to have both a historical and a psychoanalytic perspective. Historically, American politics has seen extreme polarization several times. In the early years of the Republic, extreme differences and exaggerated rhetoric often characterized public debate. Alexander Hamilton and the federalists were accused of being covert monarchists who conspired to overturn the American experiment in republicanism. Hamilton retorted that Jefferson and his allies threatened to embrace mob rule

and destroy the union itself (Ronald Chernov, *Alexander Hamilton*, 2004). The rancor in the Antebellum and Civil War periods was extreme as was the reaction to FDR's New Deal. The 1960s, with its split between "Middle America" and the New Left, was similarly a time of intense divisiveness.

Yet many observers have pointed out that the polarization we are currently seeing is one-sided. Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein, a liberal-conservative scholarly team, have described it as an "asymmetrical polarization"—the rise of a new conservative right with positions and policies that were once considered to be on the fringe of the political spectrum (*It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*, 2012). The extremism of the opposition to Barack Obama's pragmatic progressivism, and the spread of a virulent demonization of his person, should make us curious as to the psychohistorical dimension of this development.

Political radicalization and polarization increase in relationship to two developments. The first is the emergence of a critical social, economic, and political transition (e.g., the forging of a new nation, the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, our current postindustrial social and economic crises) that unsettles and disconcerts. Increasing numbers of individuals feel insecure and threatened, anxious and motivated to take political action. The second is a large population having untreated emotional distress, some of whom find radical politics appealing. While not all extremist political partisans exhibit psychopathology, it could be argued that most do. It is a basic tenet of political psychology that politics involves the "displacement of private affect onto public objects" (H. Lasswell, *Psychopathology and Politics*, 1930). While it is important not to be reductionist, there is strong evidence that political fanaticism feeds upon unresolved personal psychopathology and displaced trauma (T.W. Adorno, et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*, 1950; Robert Stolorow, *World, Affectivity, Trauma*, 2011).

One can assess two examples of the many figures who have been in the forefront of the trend toward political polarization—Rush Limbaugh and David Horowitz—and find psychohistorical evidence to support this thesis.

Born in 1951 in a small Missouri town, Limbaugh is the son of an influential conservative judge whom he idealized and whose conservative Republican beliefs he embraced. An indifferent student who experienced school “as a prison,” young “Rusty” was drawn to radio at age 16 (working at a station owned by his father) and dropped out of college after a year to pursue a radio career. It was a rough road to success, however, with Limbaugh for a time working as a promotion manager and salesman before landing his first successful talk radio position in Sacramento in 1984.

Although he idealized both his parents as loving and supportive, Limbaugh struggled in his 20s to both find himself and please his father. “I had always loved radio and was convinced I could be successful without a diploma. But this development caused my father great anguish. He was convinced I would never amount to anything without that sheepskin.” This theme of how close to failure he came in both his and his father’s eyes is prominent in both his books. “I was literally on a downward spiral from the age of 21 to the time I turned 32...But I was trying desperately to find my niche...Because of my financial status I began to think I *was* worthless and could never be attractive to anybody” (*The Way Things Ought to Be*, 1992, 31). What made Limbaugh finally successful was forging a new mode of radio talk show that combined irreverence, humor, and partisan rightist political commentary.

Consumed by his determination to succeed in radio as a disc jockey, Limbaugh’s struggle for selfhood was an arduous one, as he admitted in the semi-autobiographical *See I Told You So*. His performance in college was desultory, and in one incident, his father intervened in his favor with a professor, but this paternal intrusion did not prevent him from getting a “D” in a speech class; his speech professor later recalled his “smugness” and unwillingness to follow instructions (P. Colford, *The Rush Limbaugh Story*, 1993, 13-15). Limbaugh recalled that after leaving home, “for the next 10 years of my life, everything was framed by ‘I’ll show them’” (Colford, 1993, 23).

For Limbaugh, rightist ideology serves a psychological function, shoring up a vulnerable self that is threatened by feelings of worthlessness and the danger of dissoluteness. “America,” he assures his readers in *See I Told You So*, “needs a cheerleader—

someone who can make us feel good about ourselves and give us the confidence to be ourselves again” (Limbaugh, 1993, 16).

Another influential polarizer and cheerleader for the ultra-conservative cause is the polemicist David Horowitz. Born in 1939, David Horowitz was the son of Russian-Jewish parents, both of whom were dedicated members of the American Communist Party for most of their lives. His father was a frustrated, enigmatic man who, burdened with a “discomfort that was a permanent aspect of his being,” nurtured revolutionary dreams but stifled his son’s ambitions. David’s difficult relationship with his father and tormented journey toward independent selfhood is the psychological leitmotif of his political autobiography, *Radical Son*.

Horowitz’s mother was equally political. As a Communist Party activist, she also worked as a teacher of typing and stenography. “Determined and forceful, yet unsure of herself,” David experienced his mother as “overbearing” and dominating. Despite this, David grew up with a strong attachment to his tormented father, who confused him with an odd combination of courage (he refused to sign a loyalty oath) and asthma-ridden personal fragility.

His parents, embedded within a New York Jewish American community, lived a dual existence, outwardly bourgeois but secretly “members of the progressive ghetto, who believed in their truth with a ferociousness that left no room for dissent” (Horowitz, 1997, 44). The pall that this duality cast on David’s self-development was severe: almost “all conversation in our household was political; other than what was necessary to advance the business of daily life” (Horowitz, 58). This severely unempathic surround took its toll. “I understood early that my parent’s political religion was really the center of their moral life. This meant—without necessarily intending it—that the condition of their parental love was that I embrace their political faith. I would make my choices only later, after I had separated myself from and set out on a path that every son takes—to become a person in his own right” (Horowitz, 1997, 44).

Initially following in his parents’ political footsteps, Horowitz was an ardent leftist through the 1960s and most of the 1970s, editor of *Ramparts* magazine and author of a solid, albeit

Marxist, critique of Cold War foreign policy, *Empire and Revolution* (1964). His break with the left, when it finally came, was painful. In a political evolution taking him far to the right, he is now a combative conservative singularly focused on attacking the left. Howowitz has conducted a sustained assault not only upon leftist university professors, but also on Obama's foreign policy, which he construes as having made common anti-American cause with the radical Islamic Jihadists. Using his online magazine *FrontPage*, he is now amply funded by wealthy conservative donors who give him the forum, but not the academic respectability, he craves.

In sum, the upsurge in political polarization and fanaticism that we are experiencing in American politics reflects two psycho-historical processes: first, accelerated social change and insecurity that has a psychological impact upon individuals; second, a relative increase in the number of individuals who, due to their social environment, fear of looking inward, and perhaps the cultural stigma within their social milieu, have never effectively engaged in the psychotherapy or psychoanalysis merited by their inner turmoil. Ultra-rightist (as well, it can be argued, ultra-leftist) ideology serves as a defense against the disintegration of the self, and a way of projecting unresolved emotional issues into the political realm. Influential leaders in public discourse who do this, like Limbaugh and Horowitz, now exert a significant power in our public life, and that works against the constructive resolution of the political crises our nation faces today.

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## **Featured Author Interview with Jennifer Burns on Ayn Rand, Paul Ryan, and Modern Conservatism**

**Paul H. Elovitz—Clio's Psyche**

*Jennifer Burns, PhD, earned her bachelor's degree in history from Harvard University magna cum laude (1998) and both her master's and doctorate in history from University of California*

at Berkeley (2001, 2005). She has taught at University of California at Berkeley and University of Virginia on religion, society, politics, and the conservative movement in American history. Currently, Professor Burns teaches at Stanford University. She received 22 fellowships, awards, honors, and grants, including the University of Virginia Bankard Fund for Political Economy (2010-2011, 2009), Research Fellow at Herbert Hoover Presidential Library (2006), and University of California, Berkeley, Dean's Competitive Fellowship (2002). In 2009, her book *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* was published by Oxford University Press. She has also published more than 30 articles, including "The Root of All Good: Ayn Rand's Meaning of Money" (*Journal of Cultural Economy*, 2011) and "Godless Capitalism: Ayn Rand and the Conservative Movement" (*Modern Intellectual History*, November 2004). Dr. Burns has lectured extensively on Ayn Rand, American political conservatism, and other subjects. In addition, she frequently gives public talks, educational outreach, and media appearances. Professor Burns may be contacted at [jenniferburns@stanford.edu](mailto:jenniferburns@stanford.edu). The interview was conducted in late summer and early fall with the assistance of Peter Petschauer.

**PHE:** What led you to the study of conservatism?

**JB:** It was vastly understudied, given its importance in American history, but when I entered graduate school this was beginning to change. It seemed the most exciting area of research in the field.

**PHE:** Who was Ayn Rand (1905-82)?

**JB:** She was born Alissa Rosenbaum in St. Petersburg, Russia, the eldest daughter of a prosperous Jewish family.

**PHE:** What is her importance for the conservative movement?

**JB:** Rand has been a source of ideological inspiration for conservatives since the publication of her first novel, *The Fountainhead*, in 1943. She provided a moral defense of capitalism and helped make laissez faire capitalism more acceptable as an intellectual position.

**PHE:** Why did Wisconsin representative and Republican vice-

presidential nominee Paul Ryan give copies of Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* as Christmas presents?

**JB:** Like many young conservatives, Ryan was drawn to Rand at a formative age and has described her as the reason he entered politics. *Atlas Shrugged* encapsulates Rand's political views and is an easy way for Ryan to help his staffers understand him.

**PHE:** How loyal to Ayn Rand's vision is Paul Ryan?

**JB:** Ryan is loyal to Rand in terms of his economic ideas, his belief in limited government, and his conviction that the world can be viewed as a clash between individualism and collectivism. However, his social conservatism, personal religious belief, and national defense policy are all different from what Rand would have advocated. Additionally, on the campaign trail Ryan has claimed to be a defender of Medicare, a program Rand opposed on philosophical grounds.

**PHE:** Is this cherry picking of her ideas common among her conservative Republican admirers?

**JB:** Yes, most Republicans are selective in their use of Rand's philosophy. Modern conservatism blends social and fiscal conservatism, but Rand was a libertarian who believed individual rights should be paramount in both economic and social life.

**PHE:** Since Paul Ryan is being heralded as his party's "big thinker," what do you make of him getting some of his ideas and his inspiration from unrealistic novels written by a not very successful Hollywood screenwriter?

**JB:** One reason for Rand's longevity is that she wrote novels with a broad popular appeal that still find an audience today. During her lifetime, she was not taken seriously as an intellectual for this very reason.

**PHE:** John Galt was Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* hero fighting collectivism, so it was striking to see John Galt signs at Tea Party rallies. How do you explain this?

**JB:** The Tea Party believes that Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* accurately predicts the dangers of a government grown too big, so they take John Galt as an inspirational figure.

**PHE:** In a *New York Times* op-ed article, “Atlas Spurned,” you wrote “the Tea Party...members believe they are the only ones who deserve government aid.” This fit my picture of the Tea Party in my suburban area where I attended meetings and noted that the majority of the participants, who were denouncing government entitlement programs, were probably on Social Security and perhaps Medicare. How do you explain this?

**JB:** There is an excellent study of the Tea Party by the Harvard political scientist Theda Skocpol that explains this dynamic in detail. Her book, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (2011), reveals that many members of the Tea Party make a distinction between those who deserve government aid and those who don't. This is reminiscent of Rand's division of the world into “producers” and “looters,” although Rand opposed many of the programs that Tea Party members support.

**PHE:** It's interesting to me that the contemporary conservative movement is inspired by such disparate impulses and movements. These include religious and social conservatives, Republican anti-immigrants/anti-internationalists, anti-federal government, low-tax advocates, and libertarians drawing their inspiration from various individuals, including Ayn Rand. Is this accurate?

**JB:** The hybrid nature of conservatism makes it appear contradictory to outsiders, but is actually one of its strengths. Political conservatism is a coalition rather than a consistent philosophy, so there are many entry points. What unites conservatives is a sense of common identity in that they oppose liberalism and are willing to put aside differences to work for the defeat of this common enemy.

**PHE:** I've been struck by the extent to which in the last 30 years or so, a conservative intellectual infrastructure has been greatly strengthened in response to what conservatives see as the liberal bias of the foundations, news media, universities, and Washington elite. This view is driven home as I watch authors being interviewed at meetings and book exhibits of the American Enterprise Institute, Freedom Works, Heritage Foundation, Hudson Institute, Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs, and Manhattan Institute. As a student of contemporary conservatism in America, I'd appreciate you providing your thoughts about this phenomenon as

well as some of the details.

**JB:** Conservatives have created a parallel academy that now rivals that of the modern university. This phenomenon can be traced to William F. Buckley's *God and Man at Yale* (1951), which attacked the Ivy League as a bastion of socialism and atheism. This widely shared attitude led conservatives to look elsewhere for ideas and intellectuals. At the same time, the contemporary academy became more professionalized, and today most disciplines do not encourage practitioners to speak to a broad audience. Into the breach came a variety of organizations that make it possible to be a politically engaged intellectual outside the university sphere. This world has now developed to the point where it is self-sustaining and likely to be a feature of our political and intellectual life for some time to come.

**PHE:** The Right in America often call Obama a European socialist, even though most American liberals of my acquaintance see him in action as a middle-of-the-road liberal who often chooses Republican small government solutions. In my own articles on him, I have argued that compromise is his default position that got him to the presidency. What do you make of this?

**JB:** As conservatives have become ever more wedded to Ayn Rand-style ideas about the limited role of government, even some of their earliest intellectual heroes, who advocated a welfare state, would be called socialist. This stems both from the dynamics of anti-government ideology and the lack of any real practicing socialists to lay claim to the label. Socialism is no longer a live category in American politics, but an all-purpose insult for anyone who supports an active role for government. The negative label of socialism also has deep roots; I've found conservatives prior to the Civil War calling their opponents socialists!

**PHE:** The libertarian movement is a prominent force in the Republican Party when it is out of power. It seems to me to be a major source of enthusiasm among young people and of future intellectual talent in the party. Libertarians become quite disillusioned when Republicans hold power for a period of time and feel used by their conservative allies. Does this fit your image of what happens?

**JB:** To some degree, libertarians become disillusioned, but they

tend to keep voting Republican. Libertarians decided decades ago that economic freedom was more important than cultural or social freedom. Some of this is due to the influence of Rand, as I describe in my book.

**PHE:** As a historian and psychohistorian, the fantasy of no government, which Ayn Rand did so much to engender, interests me. I suspect that much of it has to do with the party out of power, at least at the national level, being inclined to want low taxes and less government. Also, I see the individual appeal of *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* to high school and college students and other younger people as a response to the extremely long period of dependency that they have had in our society. To me, this appeal is largely a counter-dependency movement that is intensified when, after leaving the family welfare system, young people face the shock of 20 or 30 percent of their wages being deducted by the government. Their parents' generation has usually long since come to terms with the reality of what one has to pay for the benefits of society. What are your thoughts on this assessment and these issues?

**JB:** Anti-government sentiment is a pretty durable feature of American culture, and it seems to persist whether or not individuals have benefitted from government or not. Indeed, many studies show that the people who depend the most upon government benefits are often the most anti-government in their political views. Some of this must come, as you suggest, from a basic discomfort with dependency. Even in the depths of the Great Depression, many who wrote to Roosevelt asked first and foremost for a job, so they could remain independent. Today, the elder generation who often embrace government programs feel that they have earned these benefits by their productive work, and they resent the supposedly "non-productive" who might benefit from any new programs. In this way, the sting of dependency is reduced.

**PHE:** Ayn Rand had such great appeal to me that the night before I entered the only socialist society (the U.S. Army) in which I have ever lived, I stayed up most of the night finishing *Atlas Shrugged*. I've often smiled about the appeals of Rand's individualistic and anarchistic views of the world as I entered a highly structured dictatorial world as a young draftee. Have you heard from others about similar contradictions?

**JB:** Yes, actually I found many fan letters to Rand written by members of the U.S. military! The dynamic is exactly as you describe: living a regimented and controlled life, many readers found Rand's work, particularly *The Fountainhead*, to be a refreshing tonic.

**PHE:** It has always been my thought that Alissa Zinov'yevna Rosenbaum, who later took the name Ayn Rand, was greatly influenced by her family's suffering at the hands of the Bolshevik Revolution. At the formative ages of 14 to 21, when she dared not openly speak her mind in Soviet society, she formed her commitment to anti-collectivistic radical individualism. Clearly your book confirms this. My question is: to what extent do you think she was influenced by anarchism expressed by Evgeny Zamyatin? Before you respond, I want to note that I realize Rand usually denies the influence of others, including Zamyatin.

**JB:** There is some evidence that Rand's early work, specifically her short novel *Anthem*, was influenced by Zamyatin; both used the very similar literary device of writing in the second person to make a political point. Several scholars have researched this more thoroughly than I; relevant citations include: Zina Gimpelevich, "'We' and 'I' in Zamyatin's *We* and Ayn Rand's *Anthem*," *Germano-Slavica* 10, no. 1 (1997): 13-23 and Shoshana Milgram, "*Anthem* in the context of related literary works," in *Essays on Ayn Rand's Anthem*, ed. Robert Mayhew (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 119-171.

**PP:** To follow up: How did Rand's experience in Russia and her Jewishness influence her questions about authority and especially toward state authority?

**JB:** Rand's view of state authority was profoundly shaped by her experiences in Russia, particularly the Bolshevik seizure of her father's chemistry shop. In her mind, this became the basic template of government action: the property of the productive would be stolen and given to the non-productive. Because the revolutionaries claimed to be acting for the good of the people, this experience also made Rand forever suspicious of ethical claims about the common good, which she thought only served to mask state coercion.

**PHE:** How do you correlate some of the events in Communist

Russia with Rand's belief system, as reflected in her novels and philosophy?

**JB:** The primary event in Rand's life that resurfaces in her novels comes from her father's reaction to the Bolshevik seizure of his chemistry business. Afterward, Rand's father went "on strike" and decided he wouldn't work any longer, if he couldn't keep the fruits of his labor. This formed the basis for the plot in *Atlas Shrugged*. In that novel, producers decide to withdraw from the economy after they are subject to restrictive regulation and high taxation. Rand's first novel, *We The Living*, is largely modeled on her family's life in Russia and expresses a strong anti-communism but little of her later philosophy.

**PHE:** What do you think the influence of her Hollywood career was on her development as a novelist and objectivist?

**JB:** I believe that Rand's early years in Hollywood help explain why her novels are still read more than 50 years after publication. Rand learned the essentials of plot, story, and drama in Hollywood, and wove these elements into her novels. While this earned her much grief from critics, who found her writing style simplistic or unsophisticated, it has helped her attract millions of readers.

**PHE:** How do you explain how a powerful woman, who has an adoring husband and adoring younger followers, has Dominique in *The Fountainhead* raped by Roark?

**JB:** It seems that Rand's fantasy life found its way into her novels, although Rand insisted the scene in *The Fountainhead* was not really rape. However, I find the scene troubling; if you read it closely, you see the encounter described is one of force and brutality. It is true, however, that rape is a staple of the romance novel, a genre that *The Fountainhead* resembles in many ways. There is some interesting academic literature about how romance novels use rape as a plot device to appeal specifically to women readers. In my book, I talk about Rand's tangled views on gender and sexuality, but they are so complex they almost deserve a separate book of their own.

**PHE:** What is the impact of Nietzsche's notion of the Superman on her?

**JB:** Nietzsche was a formative influence on the young Rand, which I discuss at length in my book. The four sections of *The Fountainhead* were originally each prefaced with an aphorism from Nietzsche, which she removed just prior to publication. The Superman was also a palpable presence in her early, unpublished fiction.

**PHE:** Did the psychology of Nathan Branden, her psychologist, disciple-lover turned apostate, have any influence on her? Even though she called psychology “that sewer,” did she ever write or think of speak of herself in a depth psychological vein?

**JB:** Rand did enjoy reflecting upon her own psyche throughout her life, particularly focusing on the ways she found herself to be more rational and consistent than other people. While she did value consistency to an unusual degree, and had difficulty with change, she tended to overlook the ways in which she shared basic human psychological needs. In particular, she had difficulty wrestling with and acknowledging difficult emotions; for instance, she tended to talk about the ending of her relationship with Branden in philosophical, rather than emotional, terms.

**PHE:** As a psychobiographer, my goal is to write with a minimum of psychological terminology. I am struck how your book goes into great details of her childhood, emotional life, and personality, but does not use any psychological terms. Could you explain your decision to do so?

**JB:** I thought it was best to let Rand's life and writing shine through rather than indulge my amateur psychological explanations. Many of Rand's former intimates have offered lengthy analyses of her psychology, but my interest was in how she shaped and was shaped by history and the broader social context in which she found herself.

**PHE:** Explain your statement that while “Rand intended her books to be a sort of scripture,” and “for all her emphasis on reason it is the emotional and psychological sides of her novels that make them timeless.”

**JB:** Rand celebrated the unfettered self, and this idea has made a great impact on her readers, whether they choose to interpret it in political terms or not.

**PHE:** As a Jew and a historian who has written a little about the role of Jews, or former Jews, in radical and liberal movements, I wonder about their contributions to the conservative movements that you study. Is it significant or are Rand and the Jewish neo-conservatives an anomaly?

**JB:** While most American Jews have voted and continue to vote Democratic, Jewish intellectuals and political organizers have played an important role in American conservatism. But the same could be said, as you point out, for liberal and radical movements. Therefore, I'm hesitant to draw any definitive connections between religion or ethnic background and political commitment. As you look more closely at the history of Jewish involvement in American politics, what comes through most of all is the diversity of the Jewish experience, rather than the commonality.

**PHE:** Thanks for sharing your knowledge with us. ◻

## **Some Thoughts on Ayn Rand**

**Peter Petschauer**—Appalachian State University

Most of us do not deny that our early lives have an impact on our later lives, but such was not the case for Ayn Rand. Her defenses may mean that she was well aware of her past and its influence on her thinking and that she probably thought people in the U.S. would not know of her past. They did not in her lifetime, but as historians and psychologists, we do know better since we now understand denial and resistance: when the “patient” tries to counter everything she had experienced in her childhood, there is more reason to think this is a defensive maneuver. In Rand's perception of society and the role of government in it, one sees a society more like the one of Imperial and early Soviet Russia than American democracy, either in the 1940s, 50s or today.

She thought that she created herself, without a past so to speak, including her basic outlook on life. Although Jews were not very welcome in the last years of Imperial Russia's St. Petersburg, Alisa Rosenbaum's family was well off, with a massive house and considerable staff, and she attended good schools. But her pharmacist father lost his store, the house, and the good life after the Revo-

lution and their family was forced to move to Odessa on the Black Sea. There, Bolshevik soldiers marched in and threw the family out of their property—an important facet to understanding Rand's thinking.

She later left no doubt about her admiration for successful businessmen whose hard-earned life was taken away by those who avoided work. She had been, as a child as well as a Jew at the border of society, with no friends and companions, and that seems to be as good a reason as any she chose her first name. Though she may have chosen Rand at random, or because it sounded strong, it seems that the name reflects a common German phrase *am Rand leben*, to live at or on the border [of society]. Perhaps Rand saw herself as living at the border of society, and her struggle was to be at the center of it. In this context, her choice of "Ayn" would be fascinating. In Hebrew, it means eye; so, was she focusing her eye on society from the outside?

Rand is not unique among Russian women who come to this country seeking to change their identity, except that today we have the Internet and thus cannot hide a past as readily. Even at that, for the most part we do indeed not know their pasts, and that is why marrying Americans makes so much sense to them. It is not just to be away from Russia and all of its troubles, and to be safe, but also to become part of the new society, and in that way, appear without a past and to create a more appealing present.

*Peter Petschauer's biography is on page 267. □*

## **A Psychobiographer's Ruminations on Ayn Rand**

**Paul H. Elovitz**—Psychohistory Forum

As a psychobiographer, I have always been curious about why Alisa Rosenbaum reinvented herself as Ayn Rand and how this reinvention related to both her personality and experiences growing up in Imperial and Bolshevik Russia. Although Jennifer Burns, in *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*, avoids delving into Rand's psychology, she does provide considerable data for such a study. As I read that "Alisa was a

lonely child” with a “withdrawn nature,” who was “never able to maintain a steady friendship,” yet who “saw herself as a child of destiny,” I wondered what her childhood was like, and what kind of a mother she had. How did Alisa, as a highly competitive lonely child with a volatile mother who “had never wanted children,” come to grips with her situation (10-11)? Her physical, but not her emotional needs, were met in her somewhat intellectual household before the Russian Revolution threatened the economic and intellectual basis of her family’s life. Alisa’s sense of specialness and feeling of being apart from her family led her as a young woman to flee to relatives in America in 1925 and then to Hollywood as a screen writer, where she learned her craft as a writer. Alisa became Ayn, who drew upon her formative Russian experiences for materials for her books that she set in America.

Some of the evidence for her childhood fantasy life can be found in her novels and the theory of objectivism. She developed a philosophical system around her experience in the Russian Revolution, which involved the government—the Reds—simply expropriating what they needed during “War Communism” as they fought for survival against the Whites and foreign interventionists. Rand became convinced that only the individual could be counted on amidst the chaos of civil war, revolution, and the loss of incentive to produce as a consequence of the expropriations carried out by force under war communism. She could idealize her father, whose labor strike was the model for John Galt in *Atlas Shrugged*.

In Soviet Russia, it might be dangerous for Alisa to speak her mind freely at school and in public, but she could view herself as a Nietzschean superwoman and create Dominique, her heroine who was unbounded by the standards of the mere mortals surrounding her. Yet, I wonder if Rand’s decision later in life to have an affair with a young disciple was influenced by communist denunciations of marriage as a bourgeois form of female subservience. (In the name of her objectivist philosophy, announcing the breaking of their marriage vows to the world made this infidelity no less painful for her devoted husband and her paramour’s wife.) Could her atheism have been influenced by that of Soviet Russia? These are questions worth pursuing.

Just as she didn’t get along well with others as a child, as an

adult Rand didn't get along with anyone who wasn't a loyal disciple, including a sister who eventually joined her in America. Nor did she have good relationships in conservative politics. She denounced libertarians as "scum" and railed against Hayek and Reagan. Her books brought people to these movements or simply let them enjoy a fantasy of complete individualism, as in my case. Whether in Russia as an adolescent or American as an adult, this talented woman "was mercurial, stubborn, and driven," prone to "anger and depression." Mood swings would be exaggerated in her later life by "her habitual use of amphetamines" (279).

The development of the conservative intellectual infrastructure, well-funded by the Koch brothers and other conservative plutocrats, is a powerful example of the ability to turn fantasy into reality—Ayn Rand's great talent. Some conservative intellectuals, like Paul Ryan, still draw their inspiration from Rand's anti-government tirades. However, once they hold the reins of government or even came close to holding them, her ideas are mostly repudiated, as in the case of Ryan.

*Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, is editor of this journal. □*

## **A Male-Female Collaboration Research Question**

**Paul Salstrom**—St. Mary-of-the-Woods College

I maintain a file folder about creative male-female collaborations and recently, a new case has me wondering about parallels in the early lives of such collaborating creators. Thus, I've begun gathering information about my subjects' childhoods. The three main male-female collaborations that I know of so far are renowned literary figures Truman Capote with Harper Lee (Capote being virtually the co-author of Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*); the sculptor Auguste Rodin's highly creative 10-year collaboration with his mistress and fellow sculptor Camille Claudel; and the painter Wassily Kandinsky's spectacular creativity in Bavaria just before World War I while living and collaborating with the German painter Gabriele Munter.

My new interest is the collaboration between Kevin An-

Andrews and his wife Nancy Cummings in writing *The Flight of Ikaros* (1959), a famous travel book about Andrews' adventures in rural Greece during the Greek Civil War. Nancy Cummings (1919-2006) was the daughter of the poet E.E. Cummings, but she didn't find this out until she was 27 years old. Until then, she considered herself the daughter of the art collector Scofield Thayer, who she also didn't realize had been institutionalized for mental problems since she was nine. After learning that her father was actually E.E. Cummings, her relationship with him was troubled, as was her marriage to Kevin Andrews that began soon thereafter. Yet, despite their marriage troubles, Nancy Cummings' literary contribution to Kevin Andrews' remarkable book *The Flight of Ikaros* was immense.

Similar to his wife's struggle with the identity of her father, Kevin Andrews (1924-1989) grew up thinking he was the son of the famous explorer Roy Chapman Andrews. Later, during combat as a U.S. soldier in Italy during World War II, he apparently acquired post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), soon followed by the beginnings of lifelong epilepsy and the revelation by his mother that he wasn't Roy Chapman Andrews' son after all. Nevertheless, his mother said she couldn't reveal who his real father was.

Both before and after his military service, Kevin attended Harvard University and felt drawn to Greek studies. After graduation, he received a fellowship to study in Greece, where he soon felt very at home, especially among rural people who still led traditional lives. Despite the Greek Civil War underway, Kevin spent months in remote, dangerous parts of the Peloponnese, studying medieval and early modern castles and living with peasants. He thoroughly enjoyed his four years in Greece (1947-1951); only when his fellowships became no longer extendable did he return to the U.S. By the time he finished writing his first book, *Castles of the Morea* (1953), he was on close terms with Nancy Cummings, the estranged wife of his friend Willard Roosevelt.

Roger Jinkinson illustrates the uncanny parallel between Kevin's and Nancy's lives in *American Ikaros: The Search for Kevin Andrews* (2010) when he writes, "If Kevin's origins are complicated, Nancy's are labyrinthine." When Nancy was 27, in 1948, she was informed by E.E. Cummings that he was her father, not the

wealthy literary editor and art collector Scofield Thayer (1889-1982) who had been married to her mother at the time Nancy was born and was listed as her father on her birth certificate. Scofield Thayer and Nancy's mother weren't divorced until a year later, whereupon she married E.E. Cummings, but soon left him and married an influential Irish banker-politician. In 1924 while Nancy was still a small child, her purported father Scofield Thayer moved to Vienna to be psychoanalyzed by Freud. In 1929 when Nancy was nine, Thayer entered a mental hospital and remained institutionalized the rest of his long life.

During World War II, Nancy married Willard Roosevelt, a grandson of Teddy Roosevelt, and she bore two children. It was several years after the war that she learned her actual father was E.E. Cummings. In 1954 she divorced Willard Roosevelt and married the adventurous Kevin Andrews. Soon they moved to Switzerland, and in 1956, to Greece. Meanwhile, they collaborated on Kevin's remarkable book *The Flight of Ikaros* (1959). During those years, Kevin grew increasingly disgruntled and outspoken about his identity issues, especially about his mother's long secrecy, and meanwhile his wife Nancy grew similarly disgruntled about her own identity issues and about both her mother's and father's (E.E. Cummings') long secrecy. Unlike Kevin, however, Nancy bottled up her feelings. In Kevin's case, his love of Greece helped him more or less acquire another identity, a quasi-Greek identity, and in 1975 he renounced his U.S. citizenship and became a Greek citizen.

As for Nancy, identification with a place couldn't help her very much. Though she, like Kevin, had been raised at sundry locations in the Eastern U.S. and Europe, she felt no affinity for Greece, especially rural Greece. She also didn't fit in at E.E. Cummings' summer farm home in New Hampshire due to jealousy directed against her by Cummings' third wife, Marion Morehouse. In 1968, when Kevin began living dangerously in opposition to the rightwing Greek dictatorship of 1967-1974, Nancy took the four children (two by her first husband and two by Kevin) and left Greece for the safety of England. Although she and Kevin never divorced, they also never lived together again.

So strikingly similar are Kevin Andrews' and Nancy Cum-

mings' identity issues that I am left wondering if parallel identity issues likewise existed in the early lives of other successful collaborators, such as those aforementioned. It's well known Truman Capote and Harper Lee grew up as sometime neighbors in the small town of Monroeville, Alabama, but what I'm wondering goes beyond that, to family circumstances. I'd welcome any relevant information or insights from *Clio's Psyche* readers, whether about any of the four cases of male-female collaboration that I've mentioned or about other cases.

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## **Psychohistorical Conference Report**

### **Modernity Psychosis: The Evolutionary Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Eli Sagan**

**Don Carveth**—York University

Eli Sagan's work rests on the assumption that psychoanalytic theory can be enormously useful in understanding society, provided that theory is used in a critical and non-reductionist manner. Robert Bellah writes of Sagan's *The Lust to Annihilate: A Psychoanalytic Study of Violence in Ancient Greek Culture* (1979), "Not since E.R. Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational* has anyone made so major a contribution to the understanding of the development of Greek moral ideas." Dorothy Dinnerstein wrote of Sagan's *At the Dawn of Tyranny* (1985), "This is a wonderfully original and incisive book—a book with profound bearing upon the psychology and politics that now threaten a sudden end to life on earth." Karl Menninger wrote: "Eli Sagan gives us deep insights and profound thoughts relevant to our imminent self-destruction." In addition to his many intellectual achievements, Eli has been active in national U.S. politics and even holds the distinction of having been listed twice on the John Dean/Richard Nixon "Enemies List." This essay is a summary of presentations given by Eli Sagan and me on September 12, 2012—sponsored by the Toronto Psychoanalytic Soci-

ety and co-sponsored by the Psychohistory Forum.

In his specific contribution to psychoanalytic theory, *Freud, Women and Morality: The Psychology of Good and Evil* (1988), Sagan addresses and corrects a serious deficiency in Freudian theory. Freud considered conscience one of the functions of the superego (the others being self-observation and maintenance of the ego ideal) and viewed the superego as coming into being around five years of age with the shattering of the Oedipus complex due to the fear of castration by the rival. But we know now, even in light of empirical infant research (Paul Bloom's article on "The Moral Life of Babies," *New York Times Magazine*, May 5, 2010), that conscience has its roots much earlier than this.

The Kleinians have long distinguished persecutory guilt, which amounts to self-torment, from depressive guilt, which instead of being all about the self (as in shame and self-persecution) is about caring for and making reparation to the other. Sagan's recognition of this distinction stemmed from his study of the classical scholar E.R. Dodd's discussion of the momentous development in ancient Greek civilization from a shame to a guilt culture. There is no doubt that conscience, as depressive position concern for the other, arises far earlier than the Freudian superego. As Sagan points out, it is difficult to comprehend how a mental function such as the superego, which is about aggression turned back against the self under the threat of castration and operates in Freud's words "like a garrison in a conquered city," can be the seat of conscientious concern for others. He illustrates the distinction between superego and conscience by pointing to Mark Twain's description in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* of "Huck's dilemma." His racist superego demands that he turn his runaway slave companion, Jim, in to the authorities, while his conscience demands that he protect the friend he loves.

As Sagan explains, the superego, in addition to being about aggression turned against the self, is formed through internalization of the culture, and the culture that is internalized has generally been racist, sexist, heterosexist, etc. Drawing on Robert Jay Lifton's work on the Nazi doctors, Sagan points out that they were, for the most part, not psychopaths but severely misguided idealists: they did their work "under the banner of the superego."

Following Rene Spitz's observations of infants interested in feeding their mothers as much as in being fed by them, Sagan insists that this is no mere imitation but an early form of identification with the nurturer; it is here that he finds the roots of conscience, while the roots of the superego lie in identification with the aggressor. Inevitably, the primary object will be experienced as both nurturing and frustrating. The fundamental principle of reciprocity that governs the psyche, the need to give back what one has been given, manifests not only in the *lex talionis*, whereby we repay aggression with aggression, but also in our need to repay the love we have received through loving. Sagan finds in Reformation thought a precursor of the distinction between superego and conscience through its differentiation of Law and Gospel which, I observed, are each to be found in both the Old and New testaments.

As I elaborate in my forthcoming book, *The Still Small Voice: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Guilt and Conscience* (Karnac, 2013), I view the superego as fuelled by hate (as Freud himself increasingly came to view it) in contrast to the conscience grounded in attachment and love. With Alexander, Ferenczi and Klein, I view the superego as an internal, bad, persecutory object and see the goal of analysis as its elimination, not in favor of the rational ego but of what Jean-Jacques Rousseau called "pity"—i.e., sympathetic identification, the basis of conscience. Sagan himself, however, prefers to view the superego as a compromise-formation, a blend of identifications with the aggressor and the nurturer in varying combinations and, along with contemporary mainstream psychoanalysis, calls for superego modification rather than its elimination in favor of conscience.

In addition to the important distinction between superego and conscience, *Freud, Women and Morality* contains other important corrections to standard Freudian theory, such as the point that only a few Freudian analysts (such as Hans Loewald) have grasped: that the healthy resolution of the Oedipus complex is not renunciation out of fear of castration but rather finding a sublimated way to "kill" the rival and possess the desired object. Sagan points out that even Freud's own case history of "Little Hans" makes this clear: Hans is freed from his phobia when he gets a symbolically bigger and better penis than his father's and has babies with his mother.

Sublimation rather than renunciation is the key to a healthy Oedipal resolution.

Sagan's first book, *Cannibalism: Human Aggression and Cultural Form* (1974), is one of the very few psychohistorical studies of the currently neglected concept of sublimation. In this and subsequent works, Sagan describes the progressive cultural development from cannibalism (oral devouring), to head-hunting (anal collecting), to human sacrifice, to slavery (in which instead of killing one's enemies one puts them to work), to the various other forms of tyranny and domination—classism, racism, sexism, homophobia, childism (as Elizabeth Young-Bruhl reminded us) and the domination and exploitation of nature.

Following the lead of Talcott Parsons and his student Robert Bellah and elaborating on their work, Sagan has developed a psychoanalytically informed theory of the stages of social evolution. The breakup of tribal and kinship-based social organization produces a paranoid position resulting in varying forms of aggression, human sacrifice, and defensive tyranny. But these come increasingly to be opposed by an expanding conscience and out of this conflict arise varying forms of sublimation. In the West, the ever-widening application and extension of conscience led finally to the socialist critique of capitalism, the civil rights movement, and the women's movement. More recently, it is manifested in an ecological conscience that condemns our rape and exploitation of nature as well as one another.

In all of this, Sagan, like Hegel, sees the gradual evolution of the spirit of liberty, the extension of human rights, not just to the narrowly defined citizens (as in Athens where the slaves and women were excluded) but to an ever-widening group of people; he views modernization as an attempt to transcend the paranoid position and to sustain and develop the miracle of democracy. But this progress induces such anxiety that severe periodic regressions (Stalinism, Nazism) occur. He sees the modern world as intensely ambivalent: on one hand, we appear to want to carry the democratic project to its natural conclusion, but we are stalled by the anxiety such liberation evokes and by the forces of reaction. The delegitimation of virtually all forms of domination in modernity has resulted, for many people, in the forms of extreme reaction or

“backlash” that Sagan calls “Modernity Psychosis.”

For Sagan, there is no progress without regress. At times, it is as if we are going 60 miles per hour forward and backwards at the same time. In *Citizens and Cannibals*, he points to the remarkable history of Maximilian Robespierre, a brilliant, far-seeing champion of human rights and both political and economic democracy, who within a few short years became an instigator of the Terror, feeding his enemies without trial into the mouth of the cannibal guillotine in what amounted to an orgy of human sacrifice.

In addition to progress and regress, there is paralysis. Sagan sees America as encountering “a failure of nerve” in the late 1960s when Lyndon Johnson’s “war on poverty” and his plans for “the Great Society” stalled. What emerged instead was the neo-liberal cult of the free market and the essentially religious dogma that pursuit of selfish aims serves the interests of others through the operation of a god-like “invisible hand.” But Sagan does not consider ideology to be the fundamental problem. His perspective is more fundamentally psychoanalytic than that. He sees the root of our retreat and paralysis as resistance motivated by a fundamental fear of and reluctance to pursue positive change. On this point, his analysis is broadly Oedipal: we are terrified of success, of challenging the “gods” who might retaliate in terrible ways. So, we retreat from the tasks that conscience sets for us and even from effective opposition to the profoundly regressive forces around us. I myself wonder if such resistance underlies retreat from the insights of Alexander and Ferenczi into the need to eliminate the superego that, after all, is associated in our minds with the father.

In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud raised the possibility of a “pathology of cultural communities,” a psychoanalysis of society capable of diagnosing social pathologies, such as the moral inhibition and resistance to progress that is currently so pervasive. Eli Sagan has contributed mightily to the development of such a psychoanalytic sociology.

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## Book Review Essays

### Poetry and Psychohistory

**Howard F. Stein**—University of Oklahoma

*Review of Merle Molofsky, Ladder of Words (Sleepy Hollow, NY: Poets Union Press, 2011) ISBN 978-1-257-99780-0, 158 pages, \$15.00; Mad, Crazy Love: Love Poems and Mad Songs (Sleepy Hollow, NY: Poets Union Press, 2011), ISBN 970-0-557-75404-5, 81 pages, \$10.00.*

In this brief review essay, I explore multiple ways in which poetry and psychohistory intersect. I suggest that writing and reading poetry might be added to psychohistorical research methods. I write as a psychohistorian, psychoanalytic anthropologist, and poet. I draw upon and recommend two recent highly emotionally engaging books of poetry by Merle Molofsky to illustrate these relationships. Merle Molofsky is a poet, playwright, editor, and psychoanalyst in New York City.

First it must be asked: Of what “use(s)” is good poetry to the psychohistorian—or to anyone for that matter? How does good poetry “work”? Good poetry increases our access to our own inner life, and in turn, both to our experience of our life in the world, and to the inner world of others. In *Evening Light* (1983), Stephan Hermlin writes, “Poetry’s real ‘benefit,’ provided that anyone wanted to use this absurd term, [lies] in its unmistakable ability to give new names to what is seemingly familiar, in its rejuvenating function, in its conjuring up what has been forgotten” (98).

Good poetry crystallizes experience into the smallest possible utterance. Good poetry renews the old, turns cliché into fresh perception. Good poetry turns our attention to what we might have not even noticed. Good poetry opens what we thought was closed. Good poetry shakes us out of complacency. Like good ethnography, it makes the strange familiar and the familiar strange. Good

poetry reminds you of what you didn't know you knew. Good poetry gives us access to our own unconscious and to that of the writer. Or, to invert the metaphor in Molofsky's term, good poetry takes us to the top-most rung of the "ladder of words" and beyond, to insight, feelings, transcendence, wisdom, and fruition we had not imagined possible at the foot of the ladder. In her two books, Molofsky's poetry gives us all of these things.

I would now like to turn to three possible intersections of poetry and psychohistory. To begin with, perhaps most obviously, there is the psychohistory of poetry (and of all the arts), in which poetry is studied and analyzed for the themes, fantasies, wishes, defenses, hopes, dreads, and meanings it embodies and evokes of a historical era or culture. The work of the late Rudolph Binion on "traumatic reliving" in history exemplifies this approach.

Here, a poem, play, novel, piece of music, painting, movie, etc., is explored by a psychohistorian in terms of what light it can shed on the individual artist whose life and work in turn embody a historical era or culture. The poem or other artwork thus becomes the vessel of a people. Utilizing tools of scholarship together with countertransference, a psychohistorian studies a poem much as he or she would approach any other text or document. With respect to Molofsky's two recent books, one could mine them psychodynamically for what they might illuminate about the eroticism of our age, the experience of the human body and of relationships, and our fantasies and feelings about the Vietnam War.

Second, perhaps more problematic, is the poetry of psychohistory. As I envision it, here writing poetry would become one more tool of the complex methodology of a psychohistorian. Just as Sigmund Freud wrote of the unconscious of the psychoanalyst as a sense organ with which to explore the unconscious of the patient/analysand, in the hands of a psychohistorian, poetry would become a sense organ with which to explore a historical era, group, or culture. Bridging the literary and the scholarly, sociologist Laurel Richardson has very convincingly used her own poetry as part of her ethnographic writing, the goal of which is to offer the reader access to the lived experience of the person or group.

This addition to ethnographic writing would offer what an-

thropologist Clifford Geertz called the “native’s point of view” as refracted and experienced through the unconscious and imagination of the ethnographer, the result being a poem (*Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 28, #1, 1974, 26-45). Intersubjectivity would be a tool of greater understanding of the person, group, or era being studied. Taken further, the psychohistorian or anthropologist’s poetry could be used as a tool of explanation, of theory-building, as well as of description, evocation, and interpretation. I have employed this approach as an applied clinical anthropologist in two recent books: *Insight and Imagination: A Study of Knowing and Not-Knowing in Organizational Life* (2007) and *In the Shadow of Asclepius: Poems from American Medicine* (2011).

I hasten to add that the psychohistorian or ethnographer’s poetry must be deeply felt and inspired, not contrived. This is no mechanical exercise. A poem might arise as the psychohistorian is studying some subject. In addition to linear narrative coming to mind, perhaps a poem would also come to mind, as evoked by the act of studying the subject. In terms of understanding how this occurs, the act of studying, say, a historical era would evoke some unconscious/conscious fantasy or image. The writer would follow this fantasy or image rather than dismiss it as a diversion or unwelcome intrusion, and this “following” would lead to a poem that is incorporated into the data and the analysis. Even as I write this, it still sounds terribly mechanistic, while in life it is spontaneous and welcomed.

I would like to suggest a third form this relationship between poetry and psychohistory might take. This could be called poetry-as-preparation or poetry-as-exercise. Just as a pianist might play a lot of Czerny or Bartók or Hanon piano exercises as preparation for practicing/performing a sonata or concerto, likewise—to follow this metaphor—a psychohistorian might immerse himself or herself in reading poetry as a way of accessing and engaging the unconscious in the study of some psychohistorical subject or period.

The two recent books of poetry by Molofsky would, for my taste, make for wonderful preparation for a psychohistorian who is studying American culture today, the past 60 years of American life, or the sense of place in New York City or in one’s own body.

As I read these often raw, emotionally demanding poems, I found my imagination as well as my intellect engaged in fathoming the times, places, relationships, and feelings Molofsky writes about. Here, poetry exercise as an instrument provides a tool (awkward as the word might be) for delving more deeply into the subject of psychohistorical scholarship.

To return to Molofsky's two books, it seems to me that, as riveting poetry, they "perform" all three of these "functions" for the psychohistorian. Stated differently, they can be read in all three ways. In Molofsky's hands, personal and social dream and nightmare are given voice. She forces the reader to be engaged with her life—and one's own. The mood of her poems ranges widely from tender to violent. Her poetry is often voluptuous; she conjures experience from which there is no escape. Her social conscience is keen, even brutal. I could taste, smell, and touch the worlds she evokes. In her account of human life, stench is not far from perfume. Nature, human nature, and human bodies are not prettified or romanticized.

Many of her lines are stingingly memorable: e.g., "We all have sheltered, we all have known, / in secret wounded places, dread" (*Ladder*, 29). In a poem on the experience of the American welfare system, Molofsky writes: "What happens here is not a dream. / If you wake up screaming you will be subdued. / You have volunteered to stand chained into lines. / Orders are orders. You are expected / to be this or that, to obey. / You are expected to acknowledge that you are in the way. All signs point the way out. / You are given numbers; numbers / are taken away" (*Ladder*, 47). In a poem called "Journey," she gives feelings their body: "As if with fingertips and tongue, / those keenest skins, those eyes / of touch, as if with probe / or grope or snaking journeys / against all textures of stasis / and of change; as if we could / know, at this once, what it is / we are given to feel" (*Mad, Crazy Love*, 67).

For the reader who wants to feast upon good contemporary poetry, I recommend these two books. For the psychohistorian, they provide additional rich fare.

*Howard Stein's biography may be found on page 254. □*

## Individual and Collective Influences of Psychoanalytical History

**John Jacob Hartman**—University of South Florida

*Review of Peter Loewenberg and Nellie L. Thompson, editors, 100 Years of the IPA: The Centenary History of the International Psychoanalytical Association 1910-2010: Evolution and Change, (London: International Psychoanalytical Association, 2011), ISBN978-1-905888-16-0, 560 pages, softcover, \$75.*

This large book marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) at the Nuremberg Congress in 1910. It took four years of work by the editors, Peter Loewenberg and Nellie Thompson, eminent historians and psychoanalysts, to gather material from 56 contributors from 41 countries. The book is organized geographically—Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia and Oceania—with additional chapters on the history of training standards, new societies, and summaries by the last six presidents of their terms in office.

Rather than being either dry or self-congratulatory, this volume presents a fascinating and frank panorama of successes and failures in establishing and maintaining psychoanalytic societies and training centers from Vienna to Calcutta, and from Buenos Aires to Taipei. These historical accounts offer a treasure trove of possibilities for psychohistorical investigation.

Taken as a whole, this volume constitutes an account of the progressive institutionalization of a social movement. What began as a small group of Jewish medical men meeting in Freud's apartment in Vienna became a worldwide organization with over 10,000 current adherents, of which I am a member. The different accounts demonstrate the group process within the analytic societies (authoritarian leadership, secret committees, ideological battles, coups, splits, lots of splits), the group process between the societies and the growing IPA institutional structure (regional control, lay analysis, training models, language conflicts), and the group process in the IPA itself (leadership, central control, dismissal of heretics, political structure). However much psychoanalysis purports to

be a science and a treatment for human suffering, in its institutional form it has been prey to all of the ills that beset a social movement. This volume provides a surprisingly candid, open, and thorough account.

Let me cite an example that psychohistorians might address. The relationship between psychoanalysis and the political structure of the countries in which its practitioners reside comes through very clearly. This has been underappreciated by psychoanalysts and historians. For example, psychoanalysis and totalitarianism are incompatible and, in fact, totalitarians attempt to destroy psychoanalysis when and where they can. The 100-year history of the IPA is riddled with the consequences of World War II and the Holocaust. The effect of scattering psychoanalysts around the world had a deleterious effect on psychoanalysis in Europe but had the effect of strengthening psychoanalysis in North America and spreading psychoanalysis to far-flung corners, especially South America. What is also less well-known in North America is the effect of totalitarian regimes in places like Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and currently Venezuela on both psychoanalytic training and practice. Anti-Semitism may play a part in this, but seems an insufficient explanation in many of these cases. By contrast, the political structure in Switzerland and in Uruguay currently has significantly influenced how psychoanalysis is organized in these countries along democratic lines. The efforts to bring psychoanalysis to China may prove to be an interesting place to explore this issue as well.

I was further struck while reading this volume by just how personal political and ideological conflicts can be. The account of the British Psychoanalytical Society gave a frank and interesting rendition of the conflict between Anna Freud and Melanie Klein that led to the “controversial discussions” during World War II and an uneasy truce between these two factions, with Anna Freud retreating to her Hempstead Clinic. However, later she wished to have her clinic recognized by the IPA as a separate society to train adult and child psychoanalysts. This led to another battle and compromise with the IPA that was in many ways unsatisfactory and hurtful to Anna Freud. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl revealed these private feelings in an excellent biography. In published letters, Anna Freud spoke very disparagingly about the IPA President Leo

Rangell from Los Angeles. In a fascinating development, Rangell gives his side of the story in his chapter on his IPA presidency. He alludes to the fact that Anna Freud was very friendly with Ralph Greenson, another Los Angeles analyst who helped arrange funding for the Hempstead Clinic, and with whom Rangell was in a bitter personal feud that Rangell dubbed a "local rivalry." Now that's personal, but it may well have affected political proceedings in the IPA at the highest levels.

Another theme that is demonstrated by the accounts in this book is the tremendous effort that societies have expended to become members of the IPA. The same is true for individuals who have endured war, persecution, geographical dislocation, financial hardship, and other miseries to obtain psychoanalytic training to become credentialed psychoanalysts. This is a remarkable part of the history as well.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in the history of psychoanalysis, in the development of social movements, in the relation between the personal and the political, in the group process in and between institutions, and in the relation between psychoanalysis and its social and political context. To those interested in applying psychohistory to the psychoanalytic movement, this book will prove to be a very valuable reference.

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## **The Wagner Complex**

**Jay Y. Gonen**—Independent Scholar

*Review of Tom Artin, The Wagner Complex: Genesis and Meaning of The Ring (Charleston, SC: Free Scholar Press, 2012), ISBN 978-0-615-63878-2, i, 264 pages, softbound, \$24.95.*

Robert Donington's highly impressive psychological analysis of Richard Wagner's operatic ring cycle appeared in the last mid century. It utilized a Jungian approach that viewed the cycle mostly as a depiction of Wotan's intra-psychic journey toward shifting control from the ego to the self. In his new book *The Wagner Complex*, Tom Artin delivers the long-awaited comprehensive analysis of the ring cycle as well as its author from a Freudian standpoint. This time, the intra-psychic journey depicts the trials, tribulations and subsequent failure of the tragic pre-Oedipal and Oedipal struggles to fuse with mother and yet to separate from her. It is a brilliant work.

The book proceeds along three basic tracks that interact with each other. The first is the operatic text itself, which receives a careful inspection for significant psychological themes as well as for loaded terms. For this purpose, the author frequently goes back to the original German terms in order to uncover nuances that might be lost in translation. This extra care makes the entire study more convincing.

The second track consists of summoning essential insights of psychoanalysis and demonstrating that the basic psychoanalytic story of human development is already imbedded in the text of the ring cycle. In order to do this, Artin goes back to classical psychoanalysis rather than more recent developments. Freud is not teamed up with Erik Erikson nor Heinz Kohut but rather Otto Rank, Melanie Klein and Ernest Jones. In this classical psychoanalysis, instincts had the upper hand and were able to overcome repressions, not to mention conscious reason. Artin's ability to delve into numerous and minute details adds a convincing touch to his basic hypothesis that central Freudian credos are imbedded in the text of the ring. Non-Freudian readers may therefore conclude that, as usual, the devil is in the details.

The third track purports to show that the contents of the previous two tracks—the psychological loadings of the text of the ring and of psychoanalysis—formed the woof and weft of Wagner's own personality. Utilizing material from Wagner's life, Artin is able to jump back and forth between the operatic text and details of Wagner's life to illustrate psychological issues involving relations to mother, to sisters, dual father images, and the more general issue

of carrying split images of close relatives or significant others.

The opening remark of the book is that “*The Ring* is a circle.” It therefore ought not to have a beginning or end. As befits a mythology, it operates in a circular, not linear, time and serves as an elaborate metaphor for existence. Nevertheless, the timeless framework in which gods and giants and dwarves operate serves to express the inner world of Wagner as well as modern audiences. In this connection, one is reminded that the 1976 new choreography of the ring cycle in Bayreuth by Patrice Chéreau depicted on one occasion a hydroelectric plant and on another a run-down neighborhood of deserted tenement housing. This stage setting that was greeted at first with raised eyebrows by both audience and critics evolved in time into *le succès du scandale*. It serves as another reminder that timeless mythology can be very timely indeed.

What better way to dramatize a mythology that sets up an entire world to live in than the *Gesamtkunstwerk*—usually translated as the total artwork—that was Wagner’s brainchild for the ultimate integration of the dramatic arts into an all-encapsulating performance. Wagner’s megalomania, a trait that was acknowledged by many including Donington and Artin, embraced architecture as well. His own design for the special theater in Bayreuth that would be suitable for a performance of the ring cycle placed the orchestra in a pit and therefore out of sight. Nothing was allowed to distract the audience from the dramatic events on the stage. Within the total artwork, the captive audience should become completely captivated and shaped by the performance. This is how, with quite a bit of megalomania, the genius artist becomes the shaper of man. It was a great historical misfortune, however, that later on an art model designed for the stage was exploited in politics. In Nazi Germany, the total artwork inspired a totalistic political work. Comprehensive controls were applied to the inhabitants of the so-called *Volksgemeinschaft*, or people’s community, to shape them into new improved German persons. Everything became political theater in the folkish state.

*The Wagner Complex* is written in the classical tradition of depth psychology and is a timely reminder of how rich and far-reaching this approach can be. It portrays a worldview and/or a conception of the psyche that is replete with oral, anal, necrophilic,

and Oedipal hurdles. In this intra-psychic world, an ironclad double-bind law rules supreme. The necrophilic fantasy implies that only one life can be shared between mother and a newborn son. What is more, even for a trickster such as Wotan, it is impossible to act out Oedipal urges without guilt. The truth always lies in the depth, in primordial waters, in the unconscious where instincts forever crave satisfaction through an illusionary infantile omnipotence. Does the myth of the ring cycle offer any promise of redemption? Could the reborn gods of the next cycle finally grow up to successfully shed off their babyish omnipotence and become mature mortals? Wagner's mythological text is ambiguous on this point. As for the author of *The Wagner Complex*, he seems to be pessimistic on this issue. In unraveling how the ring cycle is actually Freudian to the core, Tom Artin has produced a masterful illustration of the fragile balance between civilization and its discontents.

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## **“This Real Ghetto Pain”: Black Community and the Black Psyche**

**Merle Molofsky—Harlem Family Institute**

*Review of Eddie Taylor, Restoring the Mind of Black America, First Edition (Chicago, IL: African American Images, 2011), ISBN 978-1-934155-61-5, 146 pages, softbound, \$15.95.*

Dr. Taylor takes on the challenge of describing the psycho-historical experience of the post-Civil Rights Movement era black community in the United States, using psychoanalytic concepts—particularly those of Melanie Klein and the object relations theorists—to understand what he describes as “the decline of the African American community.” He rises to this challenge brilliantly. The heart and soul of the book addresses the trauma experienced by the black community in the loss of two major civil rights leaders, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, the dissolution of the Black

Panther Party, and the defense known as “manic reparation” against major depression caused by these traumatic losses.

The book is organized in four sections. Part One, “Framework,” offers the phenomenological research philosophy underlying the book, outlines the concept of psychological reparation as developed by Melanie Klein, and applies the concept to social reparation. Part Two discusses the Civil Rights Movement, introducing “Significant Revolutionaries,” the inspiring leadership of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and the Black Panthers, and the impact on the black community as the Civil Rights Movement came to an end, when the two leaders were murdered, leading to communal “manic reparation.” Part Three, “Community Activists Speak,” features interviews with eight community activists, some of whom are older people who were adults and some of whom were children during the Civil Rights Movement, and some of whom learned about it in school, by reading and by hearsay. Part Four, “Our Future Hope,” is indeed hopeful, offering a vision of “Restoring the African American Mind,” of a future that will enable a traumatized and disorganized community to experience meaningful reparation and healing.

In the introduction, “Remains of the Revolution,” the author bears witness to the triumphs of the Civil Rights Movement and laments the aftermath. “Having grown up in the inner city...I have been perplexed to witness violence, hatred, and crime. How could such a powerful movement disintegrate into such terrible social decline in virtually every area of African American life?” (v). His question is a cry echoing the anguish of a people traumatized by kidnapping, slavery, vicious oppression, and discrimination, who were then uplifted by the courage and vision of civil rights leaders, only to be further traumatized by the murders of their beloved leaders.

Taylor chronicles the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, which set goals that bypassed the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Black Nationalism and Back to Africa movement of Marcus Garvey. From the Harlem Renaissance to the 1950s and flowering in the 1960s and 1970s, the Civil Rights Movement “provided the Black community with direction, guidance, and hope for a better life in America” (viii). He points out that equality was the hallmark of the

movement, a vision of unifying Black Americans into a coherent community. Studying African history, African American educators began to offer the black community a vision of being true to both an African and American Black identity.

Dr. Taylor then uses psychoanalytic theory to understand the devastation caused by the murders of inspiring leaders at the culmination of the Civil Rights Movement. “Only when...the African American community [begins] to acknowledge the loss on a deep, emotional, soul level can the process of healing begin” (12). He explores the extent of the damage and offers a vision of hope.

Using Klein’s concepts of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions as his base, and his phenomenological research philosophy, Taylor addresses the black community psychology in response to traumatic loss: first, a seesawing of projections onto one another, resulting in disparaging of blackness, and second, developing a manic reparation defense to avoid depression, resulting in substance abuse and community violence. Reparation is an attempt to make amends. Manic reparation is an attempt to avoid guilt.

Part Two is a tribute to Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and the Black Panthers and a recognition that a mourning community became lost in manic reparation, resulting in despair. The author points out that many individuals transcended this situation, but their achievements remained individual and did not encompass the black community as such.

The voices of eight authentic and inspiring community activists he presents envision a reinvigorated Black community. Some voice disillusionment with current black leaders, whom they describe as self-interested, “hot dog leaders” who promote themselves, not the community. The author suggests that the psyche of the black community mind can be healed by addressing the fear that underlies anger turned against the self; by mourning; by strengthening black churches; by psychotherapy; and, in essence returning to the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement—by community action.

This valuable book inspired powerful thoughts and memories in me. First, Americans of all races and ethnicities have to recognize the lingering trauma and pain of African American history. When I was a child in the 1940s and early 1950s, my mother cease-

lessly worked for civil rights. In our white Brooklyn neighborhood, bigots organized groups against integration of housing and education, including a group called SPONGE—Society for the Prevention of Niggers Getting Everything. Shocking then, and still shocking! My mother fought the message of this group, canvassing, speaking out, saying, “Everyone is equal, everyone is entitled to every opportunity America offers. If you don’t share, it will be taken nonetheless.”

Second, it resonates with my understanding of the Passover Seders I have attended all my life, with the repeated phrase during the service, “*Avadim hayenu*”—“We were slaves.” The trauma of slavery and oppression can never be forgotten. We must never forget. African Americans and Jews, and many other ethnic groups, are formed by their traumas—and by the leadership that offers alternatives. We never cease needing a Moses.

As a tribute to Dr. Taylor, I will close this review with an excerpt from the reggae singer Duane Stephenson’s “Ghetto Pain,” included on his album, *From August Town*:

From day to day we live, searching for our identity,  
While the rich man says, we are a menace to society,  
But they don’t know what it’s like,  
This real ghetto pain, what it’s really like,

Taylor understands healing of “this real ghetto pain” comes from genuine mourning and reparation, by restoration of the lost and damaged leaders, not by bringing the dead back to life, but by recognition that these are part of a community’s history. The pain has to be embraced. “It will be worth it because now we understand: *the pain will birth the promise*” (131). He closes with the Langston Hughes poem, “Harlem,” which begins famously with “What happens to a dream deferred?/ Does it dry up/ like a raisin in the sun?” and closes with “Or does it explode?”

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## The Historian's Life of Joseph Dowling

Paul H. Elovitz—*Clio's Psyche*

Joseph A. Dowling III (1926-2011), Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at Lehigh University and a former member of the Editorial Board of *Clio's Psyche*, died last December 21 after a long period of ill health that included prostate cancer and an arthritic hip. He was well known as an intelligent, knowledgeable, humorous, and friendly historian who taught at Lehigh from 1957 until his retirement in 1994. For a number of years, he was an active member of the International Psychohistorical Association, who readily lent his name to be a member of the Editorial Board of the fledgling *Clio's Psyche* in 1994.

Dowling's life started in poverty-stricken Clydebanks, Scotland as an only child of a Scottish mother and an Irish-born father, a soldier in the Royal Scots Fusiliers who died when his son was seven years old. His mother immigrated to the United States but sent her son back to her Scottish family to be cared for while she worked in her new country. In 1940, Dowling was part of the British child evacuation in the face of German bombs and a threatened invasion; his evacuation would eventually be permanent. Joseph graduated from high school in Point Pleasant, New Jersey and spent two years at college prior to being drafted into the U.S. Army immediately after the end of World War II. He earned his bachelor's degree cum laude from Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee (1948) and his MA (1951) and PhD (1957) from New York University. His specialty was American studies and 19<sup>th</sup> century American history. His early teaching positions were at Shorter College in Georgia and Bates in Maine. At Lehigh, he was an active part of the life of the college and of faculty governance; twice he functioned as chair of the history department. In addition, Professor Dowling served on the Pennsylvania Council of the Humanities as well as the Pennsylvania and American Historical Associations.

Joseph Dowling saw himself as more of a teacher than a scholar. However, he did publish some articles on William Dean Howells and a few others, including "Psychoanalysis and History: Problems and Applications," in the *Psychoanalytic Review* 59, #3 (1972) and "Millennialism and Psychology," in the *History of Childhood Quarterly: The Journal of Psychohistory* 5, #1 (1977). At Lehigh, he received the Stabler Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Christian and Mary Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching. Two awards are now offered in the Lehigh history department in his honor: the Dowling Best Teaching Assistant Award and the Dowling Dissertation Award. He is also remembered for being extremely sociable as well as a lifelong atheist and socialist.

After being awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to Katholieke Universiteit in Leuven, Belgium in 1988, he created a Lehigh study abroad program in this Medieval European city. In fact, not long after the death of his wife Sylvia in 2001, he moved to Leuven because he loved the European university setting, enjoyed associating with young people, and wanted to get away from family problems. As a consequence of his declining health and limited mobility, his daughter Kathryn Borten brought him home only months before his death. He wrote his unpublished autobiography, *My Journey*, which may be available from Katie at [ktborten@aol.com](mailto:ktborten@aol.com). On January 7, 2012, there was a "Celebration of the Life of Joseph Dowling" in Bethlehem, PA. Predeceased by one of his sons as well as his wife, he is survived by two daughters, one son, and eight grandchildren.

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## **Remembering My Mentor Sander Breiner**

**Nancy Kobrin**—Independent Scholar

Sander J. Breiner (1925-2012) was, without a doubt, an extraordinary human being. He was also my most exemplary mentor. My connection to him was made possible by the Psychohistory Forum and its journal, *Clio's Psyche*, and therefore, I am doubly

honored to have been asked by his family as well as by Paul Elovitz to write these brief words.

I first came across a reference to his work "Some Interesting Child Rearing Practices in the Arab Moslem World," in *Historical and Psychological Inquiry* (1990), edited by Paul Elovitz. I immediately sought out his book *Slaughter of the Innocents: Child Abuse through the Ages and Today* (1990). I read it in one sitting and immediately contacted Dr. Breiner with a series of questions; he answered every one.

During this same time frame, I had the good fortune to publish several essays in *Clio's Psyche* which morphed into *The Banality of Suicide Terrorism*, where I drew a link to the devalued female in the shame/honor Arab Muslim culture. Dr. Breiner's writings were critical to my argument, which is now receiving support from neuroscience. He always took time out of his busy schedule to provide important insights, and thought provoking comments and questions. He was tough yet kept me on track, encouraging me most especially to reach out to moderate Muslims.

I learned the most from him about the significance of the mother-infant bond. While I never actually asked Dr. Breiner directly, I sensed that he knew a lot about Arab Muslim culture from living and practicing in Detroit, which has a significant diaspora. He was peripatetic and yet extremely practical. I have always felt that the best psychoanalysts writing about aggression and violence were those who knew war first hand, such as Wilfred Bion, who was a World War I tank commander. During World War II, Dr. Breiner enlisted in the U.S. Army and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. His daughter Linda said that he was awarded the Bronze Star before his death. His granddaughter Zena served in the Israel Defense Force with distinction. Zena's brother, Noah, studied at Haifa University. I had the opportunity to meet both Linda and Zena here in Tel Aviv, and as the saying goes, the apples do not fall far from the tree.

By now, we were on a first name basis. Sandy encouraged me to teach the military and law enforcement about the psychology of radical Islam. I had wanted to go into Afghanistan on a Human Terrain Team but was not permitted due to anti-Semitism. Linda

told me that her father had wanted me to know that he had undergone a similar experience in the army and that he had completely believed me when I had told him that I had been hazed quite horribly. In his case, his life had been threatened by a sergeant who didn't like Jews, so our work and life experience took similar paths. (Like Sandy, I too grew up in Chicago.)

His last request was that I write something short that would demonstrate links between our work. Just days ago, I had completed an essay in his memory to be translated into German when Paul contacted me for this remembrance. I had sent the essay to Linda, who wrote me back saying that the essay had arrived uncannily on the last day of the *Shloshim*, the thirty-day period of mourning. She said her Dad would always ask, "What have you done for the Jewish people today?"

Sandy wrote about the devalued female in Arab Muslim culture, that it was not just that abuse of the female would affect the development of the brain, but that when the female baby became a mother, she would inevitably communicate a kind of psychological abandonment to her children because of her own trauma. This, to him as well as to me, was common sense. He wrote in an email that "genetic expression can be affected by external events" because "Mothers-to-be emotional and physical well-being will affect the beginning neural tube and primitive heart," and "In the first two years of life the brain quadruples in size." Furthermore, "between 9 to 22 years of age 50% of the gray matter is lost, and the white matter increases enormously." He concluded that the key to solving Islamic suicide terrorism would require the intervention of moderate Muslims to stand up against terror-suicide and "enhance the value and importance of the female (childhood through motherhood)." He considered the little girl to be the most important person in the world. Therefore, she merited better treatment than the male—not equal but better! I do not know of any other scholar who has ever stated this with such authority.

Yet, Sandy did something even more remarkable, something that few of us are actually able to do—he taught us how to say goodbye when we face death. He contacted each of his patients, colleagues and friends and he communicated to each one of them what we meant to him and what we must now do as we face life in

a new way, without him in his physical presence. He gave us this special gift of love. Sandy lives on through this gifting.

*Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, PhD, is a psychoanalyst, Arabist, and counter terrorist expert who is an invited participant in the seminar on psychoanalysis and culture of Tel Aviv University. She may be contacted at [Nhkobrin@mac.com](mailto:Nhkobrin@mac.com). □*

## **The Psychiatrist/Psychoanalyst as Psychohistorian: Sander Breiner**

**Paul H. Elovitz—Clio's Psyche**

The death of Sander Breiner on August 28, 2012 at age 87 was a serious loss for his family, his patients, psychiatry, and the membership of the Psychohistory Forum. Sandy was a gentleman of the old school who faced death as he faced life: with curiosity, courage, optimism, and intelligence. Eleven days before his passing, he called to thank me for *Clio's Psyche* and for working hard to publish his articles, noting that more often than not his submissions were rejected by the editors or the anonymous referees. The distance between his home and office in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan and our meetings in Manhattan was too great for him to attend our Forum Work-In-Progress sessions. However, at least once or twice every year, Dr. Breiner would respond to the presenter's paper with his commentary to be read at the meeting or forwarded to the presenter. Fortunately, we were able to publish his submissions on the psychology of aging, death and dying, health care, the Holocaust, punishment, and much else. He loved to contribute to scholarship and was quite proud of his book, *Slaughter of the Innocents: Child Abuse through The Ages and Today* (Plenum Press, 1990), as well as of the hundreds of articles he published.

Courage, curiosity, determination, an indefatigable humor, and optimism were among Breiner's outstanding characteristics. For 14 years, he lived with cancer until the fight simply became too hopeless in August, when his doctor said that life's end was imminent within the month. Ill health was something he had always met head-on. A bad back and the cancer meant that he had to make adjustments in his life, which he did quite readily. When he could not

bend as he had previously, he had the beds of his gardens raised so he could continue gardening. Since climbing mountains was no longer something his body could take, he had himself helicoptered to climb the plateaus of beautiful mountains. In a telephone conversation, in which I complained that I was behind schedule because of problems with severe sciatica limiting my time sitting at the computer, Sandy shared some of his adjustments to the realities of declining health while aging.

Medical students at Michigan State University and elsewhere benefitted from Dr. Breiner's knowledge. Having psychoanalysts as teachers is an enormously important thing for medical students, because in their highly competitive process of being accepted into the profession, feelings are so often denied, suppressed, and repressed, yet it is precisely the sensitivity of doctors to the feelings of their patients which is curative. He was a Founding Member of the Psychohistory Forum and also a member of a large number of professional organizations in a variety of fields.

On July 12, 1925, Sander J. Breiner's life began in Fiume on the Dalmatian coast while his American parents were traveling in Europe. He grew up in Chicago, and graduated from the University of Illinois and then the Chicago Medical School prior to training as a psychoanalyst. In World War II, he served in the U.S. Army. We wish to express our condolences to his wife Beatrice and his family.

*Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, is editor of this publication who may be contacted at [pelovitz@aol.com](mailto:pelovitz@aol.com). □*

## **Michael Flynn (1962-2012): In Memoriam**

On September 25, 2012, Michael Flynn died at age 49 as a result of ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's Disease). Flynn was a professor of psychology at York College in Manhattan, an Associate Director of the Center on Terrorism at John Jay College, and a psychotherapist in private practice. He was co-author or co-editor of a variety of books including *The Year 2000: Essays on the End* (1997), *Trauma and Self* (1997), *Genocide, War, and Human Survival* (1996), and the author of various articles. He also edited a volume of the *Psychohistory Review*.

Flynn was known for his humor and for being extremely well-read. He is survived by his wife Yolanda Rivera, his 12- and 16-year old daughters, his parents, and two brothers. □

## Letters to the Editor

### Appreciating Robert Jay Lifton

Dear Editor,

In 1976, along with a social worker, I started co-leading awareness groups for children of Holocaust survivors at Boston University. We were young mental-health professionals in our mid-20s whose family backgrounds were similar to those we were treating. We spent many hours de-briefing our weekly sessions together and with a supervisor of Harvard University, who also encouraged us to do research on the effects of the groups and on the psychological impact of growing up with parents who have experienced massive psychic trauma.

When colleagues heard of our pioneering group they started asking, “Did you read Robert Jay Lifton’s book, *Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans Neither Victims nor Executioners?*” The rap-groups that Lifton and others were instrumental in co-leading in the early seventies had become “phenomenon,” not only in terms of healing wounds, but in giving veterans a voice. Our groups for children of survivors were more structured, but there was an element in common with Lifton’s groups: bringing people together who had experienced a common bond with a historical trauma.

After writing about our initial groups for the *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, I contacted Lifton to see if we could meet. Eager to learn more about the work, he immediately gave me an appointment. I felt intimidated, but my fears of meeting a well-known Yale psychiatrist evaporated as soon as I met him. Lifton was friendly, interested in my experiences, and he left the door open for me to continue to keep him abreast of my clinical work and research. His work with Hiroshima survivors had sensitized him to Holocaust survivors and to the significance of sharing their testimonies when all around there was silence.

We next encountered each other when Lifton started work-

ing on his monumental project on the Nazi doctors. This time, I was glad to be in a position to help him with contacts of survivors who could give testimonies. In 1978, I met Bob and his late wife Betty J. Lifton (with whom I developed a close relationship) at the American Colony Hotel in Jerusalem. His research was then in full swing, and I got to witness a seasoned researcher who was passionate about his subject. We also spent time together with an Auschwitz survivor who was a leading Israeli psychiatrist, discussing how to break the silence about the effects of the Holocaust on subsequent generations and to train mental-health professionals.

Lifton next appeared as a protagonist in my film *Breaking the Silence: The Generation After the Holocaust* (PBS, 1984). When the director tried to usurp the film as his own, Lifton was not a passive bystander. He refused to appear in the film, which for me was the beginning of a process to regain my rights. He graciously came to speak at the celebration of the opening of the film in New York.

Over the years, my contact with the Liftons became more social, visiting them in Wellfleet and New York City. They were most famous for their New Year's Eve parties in their spacious apartment overlooking Central Park. Betty Jean and I shared professional interests, especially around her book on Janusz Korczak. B.J.'s life's mission was to help adopted children understand their identity and connect to their roots and to make Korczak a household name for his devotion to the orphans he cared for at the cost of his own life in the face of Nazi genocide. B.J. felt a particular kinship with the work I was doing with child Holocaust survivors. Lifton truly encouraged and appreciated his wife's contributions to the field. In 1984, when I started working with the psychoanalyst Judith Kestenberg on the persecution of children during the Holocaust, I suggested that we co-lead a group similar to the rap-groups for Vietnam veterans. Our monthly New York group eventually mushroomed into groups around the country, and ultimately an international network of Holocaust child survivors and a Hidden Child Foundation.

When Lifton left Yale and joined the faculties of John Jay College and the Graduate Center of City University of New York, I had finished my course work for my doctorate and was working on

my Rescuer Project. Lifton gave permission to my research assistant to sit in on his class, leading her to become a changed person. When a member of my dissertation committee, Stanley Milgram, suddenly died of a heart-attack, I asked Lifton to serve in his place, which he willingly did. He was always available for consultation, and he helped me learn how to handle a massive data-set. I learned some tools of the psychohistorian à la Lifton, which crystallized my thinking about the motivation of rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust. Most importantly, always interview each person at least twice. Do not ask about motivation, but lead the interviewee step by step to the moment that he or she made the decision to rescue. There is, of course, the beginning of a rescuer self. How does that self evolve over time? What happens to that self after rescue relationship(s) are over? Light bulbs went on for me, and I developed a new way of thinking about how to analyze qualitative data.

*The Nazi Doctors* was published while I was writing my doctoral dissertation. Lifton's findings enriched my understanding of the rescuers about which I had an opportunity to write in the earlier Festschrift for Lifton, edited by Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn.

Not only do I value Lifton's sincere dedication to his students, but I admire his commitment to using his profession to make a difference in the world, to get us to see how easy it would be to destroy the world with a touch of a button. Bob Lifton is a colleague, friend, and, above all, my mentor.

Sincerely yours,

Eva Fogelman

***Eva Fogelman, PhD**, is a social psychologist, psychotherapist and supervisor in private practice in New York. She is the author of the Pulitzer Prize nominee Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust, and the writer and co-producer of Breaking the Silence: The Generation After the Holocaust. Dr. Fogelman, who is the co-director of Child Development Research and a frequent contributor to Clio's Psyche, may be contacted at [EvaFogelman@aol.com](mailto:EvaFogelman@aol.com). □*

## **On Loss and Achievement of the First Man on the Moon**

Dear Editor,

Neil Armstrong (1930-2012) was the first man to reach and walk on the moon, following a four day ride from the Earth on Apollo 11. As a clinical psychologist whose scholarship is focused on the relationship of loss to achievement, I bring this perspective to my subject. Unlike so many outstanding individuals who suffer parental loss in their early lives, Armstrong's father and mother both died when he was 59 years old. This is a late loss profile showing little creative pursuits, but loss did contribute to the accomplishment in some ways.

His only daughter, Karen, died at only two years and nine months of age after many and long-lasting bouts of sickness. Armstrong was 31 years old when her death finally occurred. At the time he had a son, Erik, who was four years old and another son, Mark, was born a year later.

He became totally consumed by space travel following his daughter's death. His wife, Janet, said, "He stayed on the job all night long, totally losing track of time. When he went to Cape Canaveral, he often forgot to call and tell me where he was staying. I'd get frantic. He was possessed by the project" (Leon Wagner, *One Great Leap*, 2004, 135). Armstrong became ever more withdrawn. On March 3, 1966, he entered the Gemini 8 capsule and received a \$700 a year raise for the successful flight.

The moonwalk occurred on July 20, 1969, seven years after his daughter's death. He said, "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." NASA had no idea Armstrong had picked out the name Tranquility in advance for the lunar base. Amateur psychologists might see the name as related to the harrowing space flight and frightful landing. My take was that he saw space travel and the moon as the goal. His bereavement process was to become a man with a mission. He suffered the loss of his wife as a consequence. They divorced in theory in 1990 and a final decree occurred on April 12, 1994. His first wife, Janet Sharon, had married him on January 28, 1956, and Karen died on January 28, 1962.

Professional psychologists know the death of a child is something that can often lead to a divorce. Armstrong had parents who lived together for 60 years as a married couple. Why divorce? His solution to losing his daughter was to distance himself both psychologically and indeed physically from his wife and family.

He recovered and married his second wife, Carol Knight, a widow, friend and neighbor whose husband died in a small plane crash in 1989 when he was 49. His second marriage took place on June 12, 1994, soon after the divorce decree.

First wife Janet's assessment of her husband was that he felt guilty; he got all the acclaim for what thousands did to help him accomplish the famous event. My interpretation is that he couldn't face the daughter's death and thus face his wife. Yes, he was guilty, but for what had transpired in the marriage.

He ended his life as a happy man. We all have profited enormously by his tremendous efforts.

*Marvin Eisenstadt, PhD, is clinical psychologist on Long Island and a longtime associate of the Psychohistory Forum. □*

## **Mutual Respect Rather Than Violence is Basic to Humans**

Dear Editor,

I categorically reject any assertion that humans are hard-wired for aggression or violence; otherwise, it would hardly be necessary for the military to spend so much time and money on elaborate programs training young men to hate and kill. We sociologists pay great attention to the importance of the primary group. In teaching an introductory course, I always pointed out to my students that humans are virtually unique in the extent to which we are completely dependent on others at birth and remain so for a considerable length of time. It has also been my observation that small, face-to-face groups (families, neighborhoods, small island villages) survive through an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation. But when the groups get large enough to see the emergence of specialized functions and to require coordination and regulation, the persons who emerge as leaders tend to be "big thinkers" and all too

often have a tendency to be carried away by ambition, greed and self-importance. From here on, it becomes a downhill slope, with those of lesser ambition caught up in the dynamic. In war, everyone loses.

Yours in peace,

Lincoln Grahlfs

*F. Lincoln Grahlfs, PhD, is a retired sociologist who served in the South Pacific in World War II, witnessed an early nuclear test, is an anti-nuclear activist, and taught within the University of Wisconsin system and at other educational institutions. He may be contacted at [flg17@sbcglobal.net](mailto:flg17@sbcglobal.net). □*

## **Reflections on Being Human during Hurricane Sandy**

Dear Editor,

Having grown up in Puerto Rico, I am no stranger to hurricanes. Interestingly, I have only fond memories of hurricanes; memories of spending the entire day together with family. The adults weren't busy, and we all slept at Grandma's! Although the windows were boarded up and the wind and heavy rain pelted the roof and walls, I have only good feelings associated with those experiences.

For the positive quality of those memories, I think my parents have to be credited for managing these dangerous events with grace and love. I imagine I might also feel differently about those storms if I had experienced significant loss as a result. Luckily, we were never seriously affected. We lost electricity and water, but we managed. On the island, hurricanes and the loss of these "modern" conveniences are more common and people quickly learn to cope. We also did not have to worry about cold temperatures—certainly a plus.

My preparation for Hurricane Sandy included filling both cars with gas, collecting bottled water and nonperishable foods, finding flashlights, gathering firewood, keeping everyone downstairs, and accepting that nature would have its way in that we might have extensive damage to our New Jersey home. The storm

was about to strike, but I felt ready.

On Monday night at about 9 p.m., the lights went out and we were “powerless” in the modern sense for 10 days. No television, no Internet, no phones, no video games for my four children. We lit candles, retrieved books, and settled down for a slumber party of sorts in the living room. There was some tension as the winds intensified, there were some strange sounds outside, and yet it was so dark that we could not see what was going on. We slept in unconscious bliss, blind to the 45-foot pine that fell into our yard and luckily angled away from our home as it came down.

We approached the first few “powerless” days with excitement. Our family was safe and completely free for family time. We coped and really did enjoy our time together, but we remained anxious about what might be happening elsewhere.

My husband had a very different experience. On Tuesday, he returned to work as a police officer in a town adjoining Newark. He dealt with devastation and looting, the combined results of power loss, flooding, fear of chaos, and lack of resources. Home became a significant sanctuary for him: his body language changed between the time he walked in and the time he rid himself of his uniform.

Humans can be very good at detecting danger, even with very subtle cues, but we are also very good at ignoring it, even when that danger includes potential for extreme violence or devastation.

The fun we were having in our cozy home was heartwarming, but that feeling was no match for the dipping temperatures outside. We built fires in the fireplace and huddled near, but we eventually decided we needed a generator. It took a lot of human help to achieve that goal: we had to track one down, and we had to find an electrician who was willing to connect it to our heating system.

I have to say that the power of human kindness never fails to amaze me. We were able to connect the heat, we had several invitations from “powered” friends to stay at their homes, we were offered meals and received calls of concern. Human kindness is so powerful for inspiring and strengthening the human spirit.

Of course, human reactions to chaos and disaster can vary; they can involve care, kindness, and compassion as easily as violence, denial, or selfishness. What I found interesting in my own experience was the very present but perhaps subconscious awareness of that tension between the life instinct and the death instinct; the tension between the need to see myself and others as kind, coupled with the real awareness of danger and the need for each person to protect themselves and their loved ones, even if that need requires a "suspension" of kindness.

Being human isn't easy, but when people can do it well, it is certainly inspiring.

Sincerely yours,

Lysandra Perez-Strumolo

*Lysandra Perez-Strumolo, PhD, is Associate Professor of Psychology at Ramapo College and Director of its Faculty Resource Center, as well as Past-President of the Latino Psychological Association of New Jersey. Her research interests are in the areas of Latino psychology, psychological responses to trauma, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Professor Perez may be contacted at [lperezst@ramapo.edu](mailto:lperezst@ramapo.edu). □*

## **BULLETIN BOARD**

**CONFERENCES:** Invitations to Psychohistory Forum Work-In-Progress Seminars will be sent by email to members as plans are finalized. We may schedule one for the end of January, and on **March 2, 2013**, **Lawrence Friedman** will present on the Life and Work of Erich Fromm. Our fall meetings were on **September 12, 2012** in Toronto, in conjunction with the Toronto Psychoanalytic Society, and on October 27 on the 2012 presidential election with papers by **Herbert Barry**, **Ken Fuchsman**, and **Paul Elovitz**. The Forum sponsored a session at the Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society's (APCS) conference at Rutgers on **October 19-20, 2012** with presentations by **David Hoddeson**, Paul Elovitz, and Jennifer Durham. **Fred Alford**, **Molly Castelloe**, and **Burt Seitler** are other Forum members who also presented at this conference. The International Psychohistorical Association (IPA) welcomes paper proposals for

their **June 5-7, 2013** conference at New York University, and the International Society for Political Psychology (ISPP) would like proposals for their July 8-11, 2013 conference at the Lauder School of Government at Herzliya, Israel. We welcome new member **Peter Barglow**, a psychiatrist at the University of California—San Diego. **NOTES ON MEMBERS:** Congratulations to **Jamshid Marvasti** on the publication of his edited book *War Trauma In Veterans and Their Families* (2012). To **Norman Simms** who left New Zealand to lecture extensively in Australia on Alfred Dreyfus. The second of his books on Dreyfus is due out in April, 2013. Currently he is completing the third volume and starting the fourth volume. **OUR THANKS:** To our members and subscribers for the support that makes *Clio's Psyche* possible. To Benefactors Herbert Barry, David Beisel, David Lotto, and Jamshid Marvasti; Patrons Fred Alford, Peter Loewenberg, Alice Maher, and Jacques Szaluta; Sustaining Members Dick Booth, Eva Fogelman, Ken Fuchsman, Allan Mohl, Peter Petschauer, Joyce Rosenberg, and Nancy Unger; Supporting Members Peter Barglow, George Brown, Paul Elovitz, Judith Gardiner, John Hartman, David Hoddeson, Bob Lentz, Joel Markowitz, Hanna Turken, Lee Solomon; and Members Geoffrey Cocks, Michael Isaacs, Glen Jeansonne, Margery Quackenbush, Ken Rasmussen, and Roberta Rubin. Our special thanks for thought-provoking materials to James Allen, Peter Barglow, Jennifer Burns, Heiderose Brandt Butscher, Donald Carveth, Astrid Cerny, Jennifer Durham, Martin Eisenstadt, Paul H. Elovitz, Tom Ferraro, Eva Fogelman, Ken Fuchsman, Anna Geifman, Jay Y. Gonen, F. Lincoln Grahlfs, John Jacob Hartman, Anatoly Isaenko, Glen Jeansonne, Nancy Kobrin, David Lührssen, Jamshid Marvasti, Merle Molofsky, Dennis O'Keefe, Peter Petschauer, Kenneth Rasmussen, Tamara Reznikov, Paul Salstrom, Howard F. Stein, and Aubrey Wank. Thanks to Peter Petschauer for Guest Co-editing this *Psychology of Violence* Special Issue. To Nicole Alliegro for editing, proofing, and Publisher 2007 software application, Caitlin Adams and Devin McGinley for editing and proofing, and Professor Paul Salstrom and Jessica Minzner for proofing. Our special thanks to our editors and to our numerous, overworked referees, who must remain anonymous. □

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