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# Clio's Psyche

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

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Volume 4, Number 4

March, 1998

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## Interview

### Autonomy, the French Revolution, and Human Rights: Lynn Hunt

Bob Lentz  
The Psychohistory Forum

*Lynn Hunt was born in 1945 in Panama and is the oldest of three sisters. She received her PhD in history from Stanford University in 1973 and subsequently taught at the University of California, Berkeley, for 13 years. Since 1987 she has been at the University of Pennsylvania where she is Annenberg Professor of History. She received a Distinguished Teaching Award from Berkeley in 1977, was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1991, and is a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, California, 1997-*

### Stanley Milgram and Obedience to Authority Articles on Milgram, Obedience, and the Holocaust

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### Stanley Milgram and His Obedience Experiments

Thomas Blass  
University of Maryland

The social psychologist, Stanley Milgram, died on December 20, 1984, at the age of 51, after a series of heart attacks spanning a five-year period. But despite that relatively short life span, he was able to establish himself as one of the most inventive, important, and controversial social scientists of our time. Although he created a number of highly original research paradigms, he will always be remembered primarily for his seminal work on obedience to authority. In fact,

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### Stanley Milgram and Obedience to Authority

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the importance of that work could arguably be equated with that of Freud, in that both of them created profound alterations in our thinking about human nature.

The obedience experiments were conducted early in his career at Yale University from July, 1961, to May, 1962, partially overlapping with the Eichmann trial. The Israeli government carried out Eichmann's death sentence on May 31, 1962, four days after Milgram had run his last subject.

Perhaps because of its disturbing implications about human nature -- that it doesn't take evil or deranged persons to commit evil acts -- the obedience research has received widespread and continuing attention, not only from psychologists but also from a surprising diversity of other disciplines: law, economics, business ethics, philosophy, and Holocaust studies. In fact, one of the first anthologies to reproduce one of Milgram's journal articles was *The Norton Reader*, used in writing and English literature courses. Interest in the obedience studies has by no means been limited to academia. Beginning with a newspaper article which appeared in the *New York Times* on October 26, 1963, titled "65% in Test Blindly Obey Order to Inflict Pain" and written by the *Times'* science editor, Walter Sullivan, and a highly unusual, critical editorial in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, dated November 2, 1963, the general public learned, and continues to learn, about the experiments and their implications through newspaper and magazine articles. Let us now turn from the ideas to the man who developed them.

Stanley Milgram, a secular Jew with a lifelong sense of Jewish identity, was born in the Bronx on August 15, 1933, to Samuel and Adele Milgram, both immigrants from Eastern Europe. Samuel was an expert baker and cake decorator, and Adele would help him in the bakery. He was named for grandfather Simcha, which means *joy* in Hebrew. The thought of his coming did not bring joy to his older sister Marjorie. At age one-and-a-half she said to "throw him in the incinerator." By this time the family had moved to a "better" Bronx neighborhood, largely populated by Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. A younger brother, Joel, was born five years later, and as soon as he was old enough, became Stanley's willing partner in mischief. Once, for example, during a tussle on the living room floor, they broke the round glass top of an ornate coffee table with a

recessed middle. To hide their misdeed from their parents, the brothers spread a strip of cellophane tightly across the top. The substitution went undetected for a few weeks, until one day a guest placed a cup and saucer down on the table, and they started sinking, and sinking...

Adele had a cheerful disposition and the boys found it easy to make her laugh. She would be the one to help the children with their homework. Samuel's long and odd hours at the bakery gave him little time for the children. Yet, he was a proud father. Marjorie was his Hungarian princess and he often boasted about his four-year-old boy, Stanley, who could recite the Pledge of Allegiance and Mother Goose rhymes by heart. Stanley identified strongly with his father, and even idolized him. Reflecting back as an adult, Stanley recalled that his father seemed "especially sturdy, his heavy-boned arms strengthened by

## Clio's Psyche

Vol. 4, No. 4

March, 1998

ISSN 1080-2622

Published Quarterly by The Psychohistory Forum

627 Dakota Trail, Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417

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Free to members of the Psychohistory Forum

\$25 yearly to non-members

\$40 yearly to institutions

(Both add \$4 outside USA & Canada)

Single Issue Price: \$9

We welcome articles of psychohistorical interest that are 300 - 1200 words.

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years of kneading dough in the shops, his face reflecting Jewish warmth, and in his high, chiseled cheekbones, traces of his Magyar birth land." It was a special source of pride to Stanley that, as a child, everybody said he looked like Sam. Stanley had an inquisitive mind and his boyhood interests were scientific. As he told one interviewer in 1974, "I was always doing experiments; it was as natural as breathing, and I tried to understand how everything worked" (Stanley Milgram, *The Individual in a Social World: Essays and Experiments*, 1977).

During World War II, Stanley was very much aware of his family's worries about Nazi Germany -- his father still had family living in Europe -- and he often spoke about his parents' listening to the radio to follow developments there closely. Stanley's interest in the Holocaust and the obedience experiments which it eventually spawned had their roots in this era. After the war, Stanley entered James Monroe High School. There, he became editor of the *Science Observer*, a school newspaper; was a member of Arista, the honor society; and worked on stagecraft for theatrical productions, an experience that he undoubtedly drew on when he later infused the obedience experiments with dramatic elements to increase their impact on the participants.

After high school, Milgram attended Queens College, majoring in political science. Intending to go into the foreign service, Stanley applied to, and was accepted by, Columbia's School of International Affairs. But a dean at Queens College overheard him giving a speech in a senior social science seminar, was very much impressed, and steered him toward graduate studies in the Department of Social Relations at Harvard University.

He began in the PhD program in social psychology at Harvard in the fall of 1954. Gordon Allport took him under his wings and became his mentor, and eventually chaired his doctoral dissertation. It was also at Harvard that Milgram met the person who became his most important intellectual and scientific influence: Solomon E. Asch. Asch had brought a rational approach, grounded in Gestalt psychology, to social psychology. In 1955-1956 he came to Harvard as a visiting lecturer, and Allport assigned Milgram to be his teaching and research assistant. Milgram also worked with Asch later at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in 1959-1960, helping the latter edit a book on conformity, which

was never published.

Asch had become famous for inventing an elegantly simple but powerful experimental paradigm to study conformity, his "line-judgment" task. Milgram's doctoral dissertation research was inspired by Asch's paradigm -- a comparison of conformity levels in Norway and France, using auditory rather than visual stimuli. It was an ambitious study: Milgram spent one year (1957-1958) in Norway and then another (1958-1959) in France collecting the data. In the fall of 1960 he came to Yale as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology. It was while he was there that he conducted his series of obedience experiments. In 1963, Harvard beckoned. He stayed there until 1967, when he was offered, and accepted, the Directorship of the PhD Program in Social Psychology at the CUNY Graduate Center at the rank of full Professor (skipping the Associate Professor level). He remained there until his death in 1984.

In his writings, Milgram points to two antecedents of his obedience research. One grew out of his experience with Asch's conformity experiments: Could one, he wondered, demonstrate the power of social influence with something more consequential than judging lengths of lines? The second antecedent was expressed by him as follows:

[My] laboratory paradigm merely gave scientific expression to a more general concern about authority, a concern forced upon members of my generation, in particular upon Jews such as myself, by the atrocities of World War II.... The impact of the Holocaust on my own psyche energized my interest in obedience and shaped the particular form in which it was examined (Stanley Milgram, *The Individual in a Social World: Essays and Experiments*, 1977).

Turning to the consequences of the obedience research, even before his first publication on the obedience studies appeared in 1963, the American Psychological Association (APA) Membership Committee, in a letter dated November 23, 1962, informed Milgram that his membership application was put on "hold" until they could look into the ethical questions raised by his research. In 1964, the *American Psychologist* published a scathing ethical critique of the experiments written by Diana Baumrind and it also published a rebuttal article by Milgram. It is generally agreed that the ethical controversy

generated by the obedience experiments, as well as a handful of other studies, stimulated both the APA and the Federal government to promulgate more stringent rules for the protection of human research subjects.

More generally, reactions to the obedience experiments from psychologists and others ranged from highly critical, through ambivalent, to highly complimentary. The psychiatrist, Milton Erickson, wrote Milgram that he was "very much impressed by your studies which I am convinced have many implications which merit investigation," but Bruno Bettelheim denounced the studies as being akin to the Nazi experiments. Milgram's fellow social psychologists were generally supportive of his research, and he won the American Association for the Advancement of Science's (AAAS) annual social psychology award in 1964 for his report, "Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority." His obedience work did not prevent him from being nominated on March 14, 1972, to the Council of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI). Yet, earlier while Milgram was at Yale, his mentor, Gordon Allport, expressed some ambivalence about the experiments when he told colleague and former teacher Roger Brown: "I'm rather glad he's doing these experiments in New Haven, but we will hire him as soon as he finishes." A letter to Milgram, dated July 6, 1967, from a Benedictine monk in Washington, DC, read as follows: "I must write to tell you that my immediate reaction to reading your report on obedience was one of sheer revulsion ... for the extremely callous, deceitful way in which the experiment was conducted." On the other hand, some clergymen drew moral lessons from the obedience experiments in their sermons and appreciatively sent Milgram copies.

Perhaps the most serious personal consequence of the obedience research was Harvard's denial of tenure to Milgram. According to Brown, this was due to some senior members of the department "attribut[ing] to him some of the properties of the experiment.... They felt uneasy about him." Preliminary discussions with other colleagues suggest that some other reasons may have been operative as well.

Milgram was quite resolute about the ethical acceptability of his obedience experiments, and argued that he became a target of ethical criticism not because of his methods but because of what he found. Sometimes, however, he went overboard in minimizing the distress experienced

by a typical subject, writing in one place that "relatively few subjects experienced greater tension than a nail-biting patron at a good Hitchcock thriller."

Although, after completing the obedience studies, Milgram went on to conduct research on a variety of topics -- the small-world problem, mental maps of cities, and the link between TV viewing and anti-social behavior -- like it or not, the obedience experiments continued to claim his attention for many years after they were conducted. For example, he was still giving invited colloquia on the topic in 1984, several months before he died, and his last two publications which came out posthumously in 1987 were also about obedience. Undoubtedly, his wry and sometimes wacky sense of humor and his ability to laugh at himself helped disarm some of his critics. One student at CUNY recalls Milgram lecturing about obedience while shocking himself with a battery-operated device attached to his fingers.

*Author's Note: Most information in this article given without citation is from the Stanley Milgram Papers, Yale University Archives, as well as interviews with Milgram's brother, Joel; his widow, Alexandra (and unpublished materials provided by her); and former colleagues and students.*

*Thomas Blass, PhD, a survivor of the Holocaust, is a social psychologist and professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He has published extensively on Stanley Milgram and his work in publications such as the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, and Holocaust and Genocide Studies. He has also edited two books: Contemporary Social Psychology: Representative Readings (1976) and Personality Variables in Social Behavior (1977). Dr. Blass can be reached by e-mail at <bllass@umbc2.umbc.edu>. □*

## Reflections on Milgram

**George Kren  
Kansas State University**

In 1945, following the liberation of the German concentration camps by British and American armies, photographs and newsreels starkly revealed that a new level of horror had been reached. Susan Sontag later wrote:

One's first encounter with the photographic inventory of ultimate horror is a kind of revelation, the prototypically modern revelation: a negative epiphany. For me, it was photographs of Bergen-Belsen and Dachau.... Nothing I have seen -- in photographs or in real life -- ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously (*Susan Sontag on Photography*, 1990).

The question asked in bewilderment was, "How could people do this?", without ever receiving an adequate answer.

Theodore Adorno and his colleagues in *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), concluded that certain personality types are attracted to authoritarian movements -- in other words, that there *is* such a thing as an authoritarian or fascist personality. Harsh German childrearing practices were seen as responsible for creating people who could commit these atrocities. Henry Dicks in *License for Mass Murder* (1972) had interviewed some SS men and officers convicted of major crimes and held that they had a distorted personality whose origins Dicks saw in their authoritarian childhood and in bad mothering. Florence R. Miale and Michael Selzer in *The Nuremberg Mind* (1976) sought to prove the abnormality of the leading Nazi figures by analyzing their responses to Rorschach inkblots. The major merit of these explanations was that they permitted the comforting conclusion that since the perpetrators could be labeled medically deviant, then clearly they were different from the rest of us who could not possibly do such things.

Such a view could not maintain itself for long, as reports from Algiers, Chile, Greece, and, above all, Viet Nam showed that the Germans had no monopoly on the commission of atrocities. It is in this context that the pathbreaking studies of Stanley Milgram must be placed. Between 1960 and 1963, Milgram, a member of the psychology department of Yale University, carried out a series of experimental studies on obedience. These are described in detail in his book, *Obedience to Authority* (1974). The experiment consisted of a "teacher" subject being asked to give electric shocks to a "learner" (who acted out that role). The object of the experiment was to determine how readily individuals would administer pain when asked to do so by the individual supervising the experiment. (All of Milgram's subjects were male.) Against expectation, Milgram found that

Many subjects will obey the

experimenter no matter how vehement the pleading of the person being shocked, no matter how painful the shocks seem to be, and no matter how much the victim pleads to be let out.... It is the extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority that constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding explanation (p. 5).

Milgram referred to Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1964) which had portrayed Eichmann, in Milgram's words, as "an uninspired bureaucrat who simply sat on his desk and did his job" (p. 5). The pessimistic conclusion Milgram arrived at was:

After witnessing hundreds of ordinary people submit to the authority in our own experiments, I must conclude that Arendt's conception of the banality of evil comes closer to the truth than one might dare to imagine. The ordinary person who shocked the victim did so out of a sense of obligation -- a conception of his duties as a subject -- and not from any peculiarly aggressive tendencies (p. 6).

Milgram's final conclusion has been cited in numerous studies on the Holocaust:

Ordinary people simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority (p. 6).

The phrase "I was only obeying orders" was heard not only during the Nuremberg trials and in the trials of the rather large number of individuals who had participated in the running of concentration camps and death camps. Eichmann used it as the primary means of his defense in Jerusalem. Both Rudolf Hess, the commandant of Auschwitz, and Franz Stangl, who had commanded the death camps of Sobibor and Treblinka, in their defense argued that it would have been unthinkable for them to disobey orders.

Dwight Macdonald in *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1959) cites the response of a paymaster of a camp who, when told that the Russians who had liberated the camp would

probably hang him, responds with "What have I done?" Macdonald comments, "What had he done indeed? Simply obeyed orders and kept his mouth shut. It was what he had not done that shocks our moral sensibilities." He then concludes, "It is not the lawbreaker we must fear today so much as he who obeys the law" (pp. 60-61). Macdonald, as many other writers, had noted that the Germans had a propensity for their deep respect for law, order, and obedience to authority. This made it possible to point to a responsibility in the German character.

The emphasis on the willingness of people to obey authority as a prime explanatory principle for atrocities, with its implied demand that immoral orders should not be obeyed, underwent a metamorphosis. When many Americans during the 1960s thought to apply what they perceived as the lesson from Nuremberg by refusing to participate in a war they viewed as immoral, they found that their government did not permit individuals to exercise their consciences in this regard and applied a variety of repressive measures. In Viet Nam, when a pilot refused to participate in a bombing mission (as I recall of Hanoi) which he believed would (as it did) result in many civilian deaths, he found himself court-martialed. In Austria, for reasons of conscience Franz Jägerstätter had refused to join the army to participate in what he viewed as an illegitimate war. For this he was executed. The response of the Church was to not recognize him as martyr to conscience. Bishop Joseph Fliesser commented:

I consider the greater heroes to be those exemplary young Catholic men, seminarians, priests, and heads of families who fought and died in heroic fulfillment of duty in the firm conviction that they were fulfilling the will of God at their posts. Or are the greater heroes Jehovah's Witnesses and Adventist who in their "consistency" preferred to die in concentration camps rather than bear arms? All respect is due the innocently erroneous conscience; it will have its reward from God. For the instruction of men, the better models are to be found in the example set by the heroes who conducted themselves "consistently" in the light of a clear and correct conscience (in Andres Maislinger, "Franz Jägerstätter," in F. Parkinson, ed., *Conquering the Past*, 1989, pp. 180-181).

The Milgram studies, with their documentation of the ease with which people can,

when authorized to do so, inflict harm on others, do not serve as the foundation for a positive view of human nature. They suggest that people only do harm when some legitimizing authority commands them to do so. Left to their own devices, Milgram implies, they would not inflict any pain on anyone else. Such a view is no longer tenable. In *Varieties of Psychohistory* (1976), Leon Rappoport and I included an essay by an army psychiatrist, which examined the wanton killing of a Vietnamese farmer by an American sailor (pp. 257-263). In describing the event, he noted that the unit had

swept through a village, killing all living things, including men, women, children and livestock.... [The sailor, who was a corpsman] came across an elderly injured farmer. When smilingly asked by one of his officers, "How are you going to treat him, Doc?", Bob shot and killed the harmless man lying at his feet.

What is of particular interest here is that there are no indications that anyone in the unit thought such conduct in any way unusual. The army psychiatrist also commented:

As with My Lai, however, I doubt whether direct orders to gun down defenseless men, women, and children were responsible for the brutalities committed. Certainly our soldiers knew that such a command was unlawful and under most circumstances would not have obeyed it if they basically had not wanted to.... Many other such brutalities were reported to me by different individuals. In these cases there was no question of orders being responsible for the acts committed. These individuals clearly killed because they wanted to (p. 259).

The work which provides decisive evidence that we must go beyond Milgram is Christopher R. Browning's *Ordinary Men* (1993). Reserve Police Battalion 101, whose actions he describes, was made up of older men, no longer fit for military service, engaged in massive killing operations in Poland in 1942 and 1943. The men of this unit were not fanatical Nazis -- they came from Hamburg, from a social class that had been anti-Nazi in its political culture, and some were probably former socialists and communists. Browning describes how the commander of the unit, 53-year-old Major Wilhelm Trapp, felt distressed about his tasks: "If this Jewish business

is ever avenged on earth, then have mercy on us Germans" (p. 48). Trapp, after explaining the battalion's mission, then made an "extraordinary offer: Any of the older men who did not feel up to the task that lay before them could step out" (p. 58). One man stepped forward followed then by ten or twelve others.

Browning then describes the "action" which some men did find indeed difficult. Browning clearly puts to rest the old canard that individuals had to participate in killing operations or put their lives at risk. In explaining the reasons why most of the men participated in the killings, Browning rejects Daniel J. Goldhagen's interpretation of the primacy of anti-Semitism (*Hitler's Willing Executioners*, 1996). Browning examined the indoctrination in anti-Semitism the men received and discounts it as a significant explanation for their actions. He judged that

80 to 90 percent of the men proceeded to kill, though almost all of them -- at least initially -- were horrified and disgusted by what they were doing. To break ranks and step out, to adopt overtly nonconformist behavior, was simply beyond most of the men (p. 57).

Browning concluded his book by asking what group of men could not become killers under such circumstances.

Setting aside Goldhagen's nearly universally rejected explanation of German behavior as grounded in an "eliminationist anti-Semitism," one cannot fail to be appalled at his description of the death marches at the end of the war. Inmates from camps were moved under incredibly brutal conditions away from Allied armies. Those who could not keep up were killed. The men who did this were not simply following orders or acting under compulsion of an external authority.

We have for too long been operating on the basis of an Enlightenment view of human behavior, which has perceived nurturance and kindness as "normal" and destructive behavior as aberrant. Milgram's recognition of how easily individuals respond to authority was a major attempt to account for the new level of human destructiveness. It did not go far enough. It may be time that we move toward a new secular equivalent of original sin, recognizing that it takes little to liberate the potentialities for destructive and cruel behavior which lurk just beneath the

surface.

*George Kren, PhD, was born in Linz, Austria, and earned his doctoral degree with George Mosse at the University of Wisconsin. He has written extensively on the Holocaust, editing (with Leon Rappaport) The Holocaust and the Crisis of Human Behavior (updated 1994) and Varieties of Psychohistory (1976) and writing numerous articles. Currently he is working on a general Holocaust book. For an interview, see Bob Lentz, "George Kren: A View From Kansas," *Clio's Psyche*, vol. 1, no. 4, March, 1995. □*

## The Ordinariness of Goodness

**Francois Rochat**

**University of Lausanne, Switzerland  
and**

**Andre Modigliani**

**University of Michigan, Ann Arbor**

In the early 1960s, Stanley Milgram conducted an experiment on obedience to authority. His findings immediately stunned the scientific community and beyond. People asked, how was it possible that fully two-thirds of the apparently normal adults who participated in Milgram's study had followed the orders of the experimenter (a technician ostensibly in charge of running a study on memory and learning) to the point of repeatedly inflicting severe electric shocks on a learner who was trying unsuccessfully to memorize a list of 30 pairs of words? Could people really be so willing to obey the orders of an authority figure no matter what the consequences might be for their fellow human beings?

As Milgram was obtaining the results of his experiment, Hannah Arendt was covering Adolph Eichmann's war crimes trial in Jerusalem for the *New Yorker* magazine. Soon after the trial, Arendt wrote about the "banality of evil," referring to the Nazis' success in routinizing the persecution of Jews in Germany to such an extent that it became an accepted part of daily life for citizens of the Third Reich. The Nazis' success in Germany was matched in numerous other countries as well, as their empire and influence expanded.

Arendt's view of the "banality of evil" is consistent with Milgram's findings. But if Stanley Milgram discovered in his laboratory at Yale University what European history had demonstrated during the 1930s and early 1940s,

this is only part of the truth because we cannot overlook the few people who resisted Nazi orders to persecute Jews, thereby withstanding the growing anti-Semitism of those dark times. Nor should we overlook those participants in Milgram's experiment who refused to follow the experimenter's orders.

Both during the Holocaust and in Milgram's experiment, there were only a small number of people who resisted the authorities' orders to assist in persecuting targeted victims. These resisters, however small their numbers, accomplished extraordinary deeds, for they managed to negate the banality of evil. Among those who resisted the paralyzing pressures of the Holocaust were those who attempted to rescue Jews, often risking their lives in the process. Considering the terrifying circumstances, how were these people able to defy the authorities and help the persecuted? This was our question as we went back both to re-examine Milgram's original experimental data and to collect historical data on rescuers of the Jews during the Holocaust. We were very lucky to be able to interview some of these rescuers and listen to their answers to our question. To our surprise we found that rescuers were not heroes, nor were they saints. Instead, they were ordinary people who very gradually transformed themselves into the "rescuers" we speak of today. They did not plan on becoming rescuers. Rather, they responded to people in need of help, initially by doing small things: opening their doors to them, giving them food, steering them to temporary safe haven. The personal testimonies of these rescuers reject, in different but concordant ways, the popular notion that they were somehow extraordinary human beings. Over and over they insisted that they were merely given an opportunity to help, and they took it. After this initial step, one thing led to another; step-by-step they did what needed to be done to safeguard the lives that had become increasingly intertwined with their own.

By listening closely to their own descriptions of their thoughts and actions, we came to appreciate that what they were telling us about the inaccuracy of their portrayals as heroes was both very convincing and terribly important. In essence, their deeds as rescuers, while outstanding, were nonetheless the deeds of ordinary people. We would do well to understand this, for it is all too convenient to believe that only superheroes can render assistance to others in need of help as they

did. Such a belief would mean that the choice of helping is not available to all of us.

At the end of our interviews we came to believe that the "banality of evil" was only part of the truth, the other part being the "ordinariness of goodness." When we examined the behavior of those subjects in Milgram's experiment who did not follow the experimenter's orders, we found exactly the same thing -- namely that they were not extraordinary people. They were simply people objecting, sometimes even timidly and apologetically, to the orders being given because they questioned the purpose of inflicting further electric shocks on a learner who was already in obvious pain. They were no Rambos, attacking the experimenter or blowing up his laboratory in order to save the poor learner who had been strapped into his seat. No one ever sprang up to free the learner. Rather, those who refused to continue inflicting pain on the learner did so because they could not obtain from the experimenter a meaningful explanation for why they should go on. They stopped the experiment dead in its tracks, even though some of them were actually somewhat embarrassed about stopping because it meant ruining the experiment. In no way did any of them resemble the traditional hero: strong, quickwitted, and ever-confident of victory.

We are convinced that it is precisely because rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust as well as Milgram's disobedient subjects were ordinary people that their actions can teach us so much.

*Francois Rochat, PhD, is a research psychologist at the Institut des sciences sociales et pedagogiques at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. His work has focused on the social psychological dynamics of resistance to authority in experimental settings as well as in historical contexts.*

*Andre Modigliani, PhD, is an associate professor of sociology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. His recent work has dealt with media discourse on political issues and its relationship to public opinion. Currently, he is pursuing work on obedience and defiance to authority in both historical and laboratory contexts. □*

## **Marx's Road to "On the Jewish Question"**



**J. Lee Shneidman**  
**Adelphi University**

The focus of this paper is to examine Karl Marx's (1818-1883) reason for writing "On the Jewish Question" ("Zur Judenfrage," 1843). The position taken is the following: 1) Karl Marx was angry at something; 2) the anger was caused by Marx's seeming helplessness in the face of the power of the Prussian state; 3) "On the Jewish Question," while using seemingly accepted anti-Semitic language, was an attack on the Christian state which had forced itself upon the family of Marx.

A problem in dealing with the young Marx is his choice of words. About Marx's *Gymnasium* (high school) graduation examination essay, "Reflections of a Young Man on the Choice of a Profession," written in August, 1835, the headmaster wrote that Marx "constantly seeks for elaborate picturesque expressions. Therefore, many passages ... lack the necessary clarity and definiteness and often precision...." (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Papers*, 1977-1983, (KM), vol. 1, p. 734, n. 1). Marx was brilliant; he was facile in languages, whether German, Latin, Greek, French, or, later, English. One may ascribe the headmaster's comments to Marx's infatuation with his ability with words.

Unfortunately, Marx continued to obfuscate with words. Marx used six words to express the idea of alienation: *Entäusserung*, *Entfremdung* (the word used by Freud), *Vergegenständlichung*, *Veräusserung*, *Verdinglichung*, and *Versachlichung*. Although the words have been translated as alienation, estrangement, reification, and materialization, there seems to be little agreement among translators as to which translation to use. One finds the sentence "*Die Veräusserung ist die Praxis der Entäusserung*" (Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, ed. Quintin Hoare, 1975 (QH), p. 241) usually translated as "Selling is the practice of alienation." Is Marx just showing off, or are there hidden implications?

Then there is the problem with *Judentum* and *das Judentum*. The first means Judaism or Jewishness, the latter means Jewry. But there are anti-Semitic meanings which are not to be found in dictionaries: commerce, huckstering, usury, and trading. Most translators warn that Marx was playing with the word *Judentum* and used it in its anti-Semitic sense to attack the commerce of the

civil society (KM, 3:140; QH, p. 238; and Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. and ed. T.B. Bottomore, 1964, p. 36, n. 3).

Facility with words is one thing, but is that ability used to mask a feeling? Marx penned the following lines in the fall of 1836. The young Marx was angry at, confused and frustrated by something. But what?

Never can I do in peace  
 That with which my Soul's obsessed,  
 Never take things at my ease;  
 I must press on without rest.

I am caught in endless strife  
 Endless ferment, endless dream;  
 I cannot conform to Life,  
 Will not travel with the stream.

Worlds I would destroy for ever,  
 Since I can create no worlds  
 Since my call they notice never,  
 Coursing dumb in magic whirl.

Therefore let us risk our all  
 Never resting, never tiring  
 Not in silence dismally, dull,  
 Without action or desiring;

Not in brooding introspection  
 Bowed beneath a yoke of pain  
 So that yearning, dream and action  
 Unfulfilled to us remain (KM, 3:526-527).

What is the pain that he wished not to examine? What is the shame he wished to hide? Who was not hearing him? I do have several clues to explore. The major one is Marx's great interest in alienation. *Alienation* is a most difficult concept (Raymond William, *Key Words*, 1967, pp. 33-36). From whence came Marx's interest in the concept? From whence the trauma that leads to the wish to destroy worlds? In his *Gymnasium* essay, Marx wrote,

Only that position can impart dignity in which we do not appear as servile tools but rather create independently within our circle. Only that position can impart dignity which requires no reproachable acts (Karl Marx, *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, trans. and ed. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat, 1967, pp. 36-38; KM, 1:3-9).

Rather strong words for a teenager.

While writing "Reflections," Marx wrote another essay, "The Union of Believers with Christ According to John 15:1-14," which is full of

theological sermonizing.

Therefore union with Christ bestows inner exaltation, consolation in suffering, calm assurance, and a heart which is open to love of mankind, to all that is noble, to all that is great, not out of ambition, not through a desire for fame but only because of Christ. Therefore, union with Christ bestows a joy ... a joy known only by the ingenuous childlike mind which is linked with Christ and through Him with God, a joy which makes life higher and more beautiful (KM, 1:636-639).

Interesting, especially since "Reflections" and "Union" were written at the same time, August 11-16, 1835. The two papers seem to be in conflict. The first seems a product of the humanistic Enlightenment, while the second a product of Evangelical mysticism (and note the part about "the ingenuous childlike mind"). The first calls for individual identity; the second, a surrender -- or, the alienation -- of one's individualism to a mystical super entity.

Having approached a precipice, let me retreat into historical background with a brief tale of the Marx family and French political and intellectual imperialism. Karl Marx was born Jewish. His father's family had been rabbis for centuries in the area of Trier. His mother's family were also rabbis. But Marx's father, Heschul, was directed by his rabbi father toward a secular education in classics and law following the wave of the Enlightenment. We have no evidence as to how Jewish Heschul, or Heinrich as he began calling himself, was.

On May 30, 1808, Napoleon had issued an edict restricting some economic activities of Trier Jews. The edict remained on the books after Prussia annexed the region. By then, Heinrich Marx was a struggling young *Advokat*, or lawyer. In 1814, shortly before the collapse of the French Empire, Marx wrote a legal brief defending Jewish rights. Heinrich Marx and Henrietta Pressburg were married in a civil ceremony in November, 1814. A few months later, on June 13, 1815, Marx wrote to the Prussian governor of the Lower Rhine objecting to the enforcement of Napoleon's 1808 edict. By this time Marx was a respected member of the legal profession, but there were dark clouds on the horizon. The Prussian government not only had no intention of removing the Napoleonic restrictions, but was intent upon barring Jews from the legal profession. On March 11, 1812, King

Frederick William III had granted Prussian Jews civil rights provided they spelled their names in German and wrote in German, but he did not open the professions to them, although they were permitted to attend German schools.

Heinrich Marx was, in all probability, a Deist, and did not wish to convert from one religion that he did not believe to another he did not believe. He did everything possible to prevent his conversion. In a letter to the king he even asked whether circumcision reduced one's ability to practice law. Having already a son and a daughter, Marx felt pressured -- he had no livelihood save as a lawyer. Sometime between the spring of 1816 and the summer of 1817, Marx converted to Lutheranism -- the official state religion. Neither his wife nor his children converted. In order to earn a living to support his growing family, Marx had alienated his power to determine his religion, or lack of it, to the Prussian state.

Marx's conversion allowed him to continue to practice law. He prospered and his family grew: five more children were born between 1818 (Karl) and 1826. None of the children were baptized and there is no record of circumcision. By law, however, all were Jewish. In 1824, when Karl was six, Heinrich realized that the reactionary Prussian king was about to officially close schools to Jews. He had the children baptized in the Evangelical faith on August 26, 1824. Once again, faced with the power of the Prussian state, Heinrich had alienated his powers. Once again, practical necessity had forced him to do something in which he did not believe. The mass conversion had little visible effect, but it did have psychological consequences. A proud, respected man had been humbled by the power of the state, and Heinrich and his family were effectively cut off from the Jewish community. Heinrich Marx continued to express his liberal Enlightenment views until 1834 when he was forced into silence by the reactionary government.

There is little data of significance between August 26, 1824, and October, 1830, when Karl entered *Gymnasium*, where he met and became friendly with Edgar von Westphalen, a classmate. At first it may have been the library of Baron Ludwig von Westphalen, with its remarkable collection of classical literature, which had attracted the teenager to the Westphalen home, but eventually it was the Baron's daughter, Jenny, four years older than Karl, with whom he fell in love

and who reciprocated his love. The Baron, a salaried administrator rather than a landed aristocrat, liked Karl and seems to have had no objections to his Jewish origins. Both the Baron and Karl's father realized how bright Karl was and tried to guide him into entering the legal profession in order to provide income for a family. (They should have learned from the experience of the Luther and Calvin elders.)

This brings me back to the two graduation essays written August 11-16, 1835. The essay on "The Union of Believers" was a sham. Neither Karl, nor his father, nor the Baron for that matter, believed it. It was an exercise in bowing to the state requirement, just as his father had bowed to remain a lawyer. It was a perfect example of self-alienation. The other essay, "Reflections of a Young Man," is a different story. "Only that position can impart dignity in which we do not appear as servile tools," he wrote. Was Marx lamenting the kowtowing to the power of the state in the forced conversion of his father to earn a living, his own conversion to enter school, and his father's sudden silence in politics? Was this Marx's first step in his investigation of the alienation of man from his humanistic nature?

Marx graduated from the *Gymnasium* September 25, 1835, and on October 15 he was at Bonn University matriculating in jurisprudence. But Karl did not wish to be a lawyer. He wanted to be a literary person, a poet. Karl lived it up: he joined the *Poetenbund*; fought a duel and was wounded in the eye; and was constantly in debt and becoming ill. Heinrich did not think that Bonn had the proper atmosphere for his son. On October 22, 1836, Karl went to Berlin and registered at the University in the Faculty of Law. Before transferring, he had made a quick trip to Trier where he and Jenny secretly became engaged.

He was writing a "humoristic" novel, *Scorpion and Felix*. It wasn't very funny. In the last paragraph of Chapter 27, he wrote:

I am dizzy ... do not know which is the right side and which the left; our life is, therefore a circus, we run around, try to find sides, till we fall down on the sand and the gladiator, Life, slays us. We need a new savior for -- you [Life] rob me of slumber, tormenting thought, you rob me of my health, you are killing me --... (KM, 1:622).

Confused and angry? Yes! At whom or what? Life! Apparently Marx had started the novel at

about the same time he wrote the poem in which he cried, "Worlds I would destroy for ever."

Karl was burdened: Jenny, worried about how her family would react, had not told them of the engagement; Heinrich was increasingly ill; and Karl himself had just dived into Hegel's writings. It was too much. Karl left the University and took a room in Stralau, then an island in the Spree, where he swam, relaxed, and read Hegel. Marx was troubled by the "opposition between what is and what ought to be" (KM, 1:12). By January, 1838, Heinrich was confined to bed; he died on May 10. Karl loved his father and carried his portrait with him to his own grave. Karl's parents had been his only means of support, and Heinrich's income had been considerably reduced by his illness. In the will, all that could be granted Karl was 800 *thalers*, not enough to support Karl's lifestyle for a year.

Marx returned to the University, attended some classes, and made new friends -- the so-called Young Hegelians. One of them, Bruno Bauer, suggested that Marx send a copy of his polemical doctoral dissertation to Jena University, in the independent Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar where Prussian censorship held no writ. The officials at Jena examined Marx's record at Berlin, read the dissertation, and awarded him his doctorate in absentia, April 15, 1841.

Marx had to find a paying position. But he did not. He went to Trier in May, 1842, and had a fight with his mother who cut off his allowance because he refused to obtain a full time position. To make matters worse, in March, 1842, Baron von Westphalen had died, leaving no inheritance for Jenny. Karl increasingly seemed oblivious of the need to earn money. At times he was so self-involved that even Jenny complained of his inattentiveness. Marx, in 1842, increasingly was involved in the questions of the freedom of the press, the role of religion in society, and the role of the state. He even broke with his friend Bruno Bauer because Bauer wanted to simply criticize religion without examining the relationship between Christianity and the state.

Marx still needed a job. In July, 1842, he went to Bonn hoping to secure a position as philosophy instructor at the University, but abandoned that idea when he learned that in March Bauer had been removed from his post by royal decree because of his atheistic views. Fortunately, Dagobert Oppenheim, a member of the Board of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, offered Marx a position on

the Board. Marx accepted. He had been engaged in criticizing the Prussian government for its censorship policy. He published a series of comments discussing freedom of the press. This was followed by an attack on the legal theories of Gustav Hugo, who seems to have believed that a legal slave had a better life than a poor farmer. Marx was appointed editor of the newspaper in October, 1842, and moved to Köln (Cologne) where he met Frederick Engels. The first issue under Marx's editorship, January 1, 1843, contained an attack on Prussian censorship. This, plus an attack on Tzar Nicholas I, led to a Prussian counterattack. Marx resigned as editor and the newspaper was closed. As a youth Marx had complained that no one would hear him; at least now we know who would not let him be heard.

Having no visible means of support, Marx married Jenny, June 19, 1843, in Kreuznach and they went on an extended honeymoon in the Netherlands. Having split with the Young Hegelians and Bruno Bauer, Marx and his new friend, Arnold Rugé, decided to resurrect the idea of publishing a book. Realizing that the Prussian censor would never tolerate the work in Prussia, it was decided to publish it in Paris. After the honeymoon, Marx returned to Kreuznach and began writing two articles, "On the Jewish Question" and "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law." Marx's mindset was on the state. In a letter to Rugé in March, 1843, Marx had written that in Prussia "the most disgusting despotism in all its nakedness is disclosed to the eyes of the whole world" (KM, 3:133). On March 31, 1843, the king had rejected a petition by 911 citizens of Köln, including Marx, to allow the *Rheinische Zeitung* to resume publication. Marx felt ashamed to be a Prussian, but hoped that the shame would lead to action to overthrow the government. In a letter to Rugé, written from Köln in May, 1843, he had stated:

Man's self-esteem, his sense of freedom vanished from the world with the Greeks, and with Christianity it took up residence in the blue mists of heaven, but only with its [self-esteem's] aid can society ever again become a community of men that can fulfill their highest needs, a democratic state (QH, p. 202).

He went on to attack the dehumanizing world and the dehumanized man of the monarchical system of government. Marx had thus returned to his position in the graduation essay, "Reflections," but

now he spelled out what caused the servile condition.

It is my view that Marx's mindset at this juncture was the relationship between man and the state. Marx planned a frontal assault on the very concept of the organized European state. "On the Jewish Question" was to further his attack. The Jews were incidental to the issue -- they were the straw men by which to castigate the Christian state and the bourgeoisie who supported it. But why use Jews at all? A hypothesis: First, the popular meaning of *Judentum* gave Marx a double entendre which would allow him to play games with the language; second, the liberal attempt to secure Jewish civil liberties gave him an opportunity to settle a score with the State, his former friend Bruno Bauer, and the liberal bourgeoisie who had done nothing to oppose the State when it had forced his father into political silence. On March 13, 1843, he had written to Rugé, "However much I dislike the Jewish faith.... The thing is to make as many breaches as possible in the Christian state and to smuggle in as much as we can of what is rational" (KM, 1:400).

Bauer wished to deny Jews political rights because most Germans lacked political rights and, besides, as long as Jews remained Jews, they could never be free. To Marx, Bauer had erred in discussing the Jewish question by framing the issue in political and theological terms; the real issue was human emancipation. Further, there is a distinction between the right of man and the rights of citizens. The right of man to practice his own religion is dependent upon man alienating himself from men. Religion represents an egotistical rather than a communal right. The fact that the Jew can be politically emancipated without abandoning his religion demonstrated that political emancipation is not human emancipation because in political emancipation man returns to civil society where man is alienated from the community.

If both religion and civil society result in alienation, why does man create them?

Religious suffering is at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature; the heart of the heartless world, and the soul of the soulless condition. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of the illusionary happiness of the people is the demand of their real happiness (QH, p. 244).

It should be remembered that opium was the chief medical painkiller of the era. Marx was opposed to all religion, not only Judaism. He was also opposed to the political society wherein individuals elected representatives because in a republic the people have alienated their power by granting decision-making authority to others to solve their practical needs.

*Practical needs, egoism*, is the principle of *civil society* and as such appears in pure form as soon as civil society has given both to the political state. The god of *practical need and self interest* is money. Money is the jealous god of Israel in face of which no other god may exist.... The god of the Jews has become secularized and has become the god of the world (KM, 3:172, emphasis in original).

Let us not look for the Jew's secret in his religion, rather let us look for the secret of religion in the real Jew. What is the secular basis of Judaism? Practical need, self-interest (QH, pp. 236-237).

Strong anti-Semitic words. Or are they? Marx thunders against something with the passion of the Jewish prophets. But what is that something? From whence the passion? "The Jews have emancipated themselves insofar as the Christians have become Jews" (KM, 3:170). "The Jew is perpetually created by civil society from its own entrails" (KM, 3:171). Does he mean that Christians have become assimilated Jews? Hardly! Does he mean that Christian society encourages the Jewish religion? I doubt it. Then what is this all about? Why is Marx thundering, emphasizing?

Let us venture a hypothesis. Marx felt injured. In 1843, Marx felt ashamed at being a Prussian and wrote of man's self-esteem, but that was too late to be the etiology of Marx's feelings. Marx's use of the word *sensibility (sinnlichkeit)* indicates his belief that man is dependent upon external forces, but, unlike philosophical materialists, Marx believed that man can change his circumstances. So, what outside forces had injured Marx? Remember the 1835 essay, "Reflections," in which he wrote, "Only that position can impart dignity in which we do not appear as servile tools." Heinrich Marx had bowed to the power of the state and become a Lutheran. That was a living lie. One could have remained a non-practicing Jew and be content. But Marx had to publicly renounce a faith which he did not believe and publicly embrace another faith which

he did not believe. The practical Jew had to accept the reality of deceiving in order to earn money. In the same fashion, Karl had to live a lie in order to get into school. Remember the other essay -- the one about the "Union of Believers." Marx did not believe a word of it -- it was a sham. Living as an assimilated, enlightened Jew was honest. Living as a Lutheran was living as the "servile tools" of the dehumanizing state. As a teenager Karl saw his father and his liberal *Gymnasium* teachers forced into silence by the power of the reactionary Prussian state in order to remain "free" and employed. Money had created a rift between Heinrich and Karl -- the practical Jew wanted his son to become a lawyer so that he could earn money to support a family -- and between Karl and Henrietta -- she was a shrewd businesswoman who had managed her dowry quite well and had refused to put herself and the other children at risk to support Karl's irresponsible attitude toward money.

The last line of "On the Jewish Question" is, "The *social* emancipation of the Jew is the *emancipation of society from Judaism*" (KM, 3:174, emphasis in original). The first line of "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law" is, "For Germany the *criticism* of religion is in the main complete and the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism" (KM, p. 175, emphasis in original). Saul K. Padover wrote that "After writing 'Zur Judenfrage' Marx never returned to the subject as such. Having solved the problem to his own satisfaction and having settled with his family background, he dropped the whole matter" (Saul K. Padover, *Karl Marx*, 1978, pp. 170-171). Padover was both right and wrong. Marx did come to terms with a problem but it was not his Jewish background. The problem was the power of the state. Enough of religious criticism -- it was the state that was the problem. Let me play Marx's game with *Judentum* and retranslate the last line of "On the Jewish Question": "The social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of society from huckstering." The teenaged Karl wrote, "Worlds I would destroy for ever." The mature Marx set about to accomplish that end.

*Author's Note: I wish to express my gratitude to the members of the Psychohistory Forum's Research Group, Communism: The Dream that Failed, who attended the meeting where I presented the complete paper this article is taken from: Benjamin Brody, Ralph Colp, Jr., David Felix, Mary Lambert, Conalee Levine-Shneidman, and Chaim Shatan, as well as to others*

who attended, including Paul Elovitz, Elliot Pruman, and Isaiah Share.

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## The Enigma of Canada's Mackenzie King

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It is generally agreed by professional students of Canadian politics that William Lyon Mackenzie King (1874-1950) was the most successful politician in Canada's history. King became leader of the Liberal Party in 1919, and before his retirement in 1948 he had served as Prime Minister for a total of 22 years (1921-1930 and 1935-1948). King had succeeded in leading the country during the trying days of the Great Depression and World War II. Intellectually, King was serious: he enjoyed listening to classical music; as a young man he had been a student of the economist and social theorist Thorstein Veblen; and he was an avid reader who wrote books of his own.

Yet, once Mackenzie King's spiritualism became public shortly after his death, the standard evaluations of his reputation began to shift. The man renowned for his political caution and moderation, with the acute antennae able to balance the complex shifting forces of Canadian life, was also capable of having consulted mediums for the sake of contact with the "other world," and he regularly used a "rapping table" at the end of the day's work. A leader who reads the Bible daily, as did Woodrow Wilson, and makes marginal comments of his own, seems odd enough to our secular ears. It had long been known that King also had a special devotion not only to the memory of his deceased mother -- a prominent feature in King's study was a portrait of his mother, lighted at all times by a special lamp -- but also to a succession of terrier dogs. But, Mackenzie King became a national joke after it became public that he thought he could communicate with dead political leaders, on at

least one occasion claiming to have called an election based on such a conversation, and thought of himself as having extrasensory means of communicating with living politicians.

The gradual release of King's monumentally extensive diaries provided abundant evidence of the scope of his obsessions and superstitions; in particular, the high-sounding moralism of this dull, lonely old bachelor looked hypocritical in the light of what would appear to be his youthful frequenting of prostitutes. Evidently he was saving his diaries for use in memoirs; more than once he left instructions for them to be destroyed after his death. According to his will, only the parts he had marked were to be preserved, but since he never got around to going through them, the literary executors decided that everything was to be kept. The privacy he had taken pains to safeguard was now impossible, and the conceit of this failed program of partial literary suppression hurt his reputation. Not unlike Richard Nixon with his tapes, King's diaries discredited him, at least initially, in the eyes of history.

One 1916 incident in King's life, hitherto curiously overlooked by historians, highlights what evidence about psychopathology might teach on the subject of King's political successes. In the midst of some key personal losses in life, while temporarily out of power and working in the United States for John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the Rockefeller Foundation, King at the age of 41 consulted an eminent Canadian neurologist in Baltimore, Maryland, Lewellys F. Barker (1867-1943), with whom King stayed in contact for medical consultations until Barker's death, and psychiatrist Adolf Meyer (1866-1950). Due to the successful publicity which Freud's students have attained, combined with the impoverished state of psychiatric history in general, Meyer's name is now almost forgotten. Meyer was born and educated in Switzerland; in 1892, at the age of 26, he came to the United States. By 1910 he was the founding head of the Phipps Clinic at Johns Hopkins, a university which already had notably benefited from Rockefeller philanthropy and would do so again. Overall, Meyer became arguably the most important single figure ever to teach psychiatry in 20th-century North America. Meyer's informal clinical notes to himself about King have survived, and so have the hospital records at Johns Hopkins where King briefly stayed from October 30 to November 11, 1916, having teeth extracted and adenoids removed. (In

1930 Harold Lasswell made a prediction about the future significance of hospital records for political leaders.)

King's diaries report his own version of his 1916 troubles and his clinical encounters. For example, King's curious conviction about the power of "electrical" influences in his life does add a special dimension to his later spiritualist beliefs and practices, which otherwise might seem to be accounted for by how widespread such notions were around the turn of the century (Freud himself wrote about his own involvement with the occult.) In King's case, however, he was troubled enough to seek medical help. A specific instance of "the phenomena of regarding people as near at times and of their exerting an influence upon me" is that while King was coming out of the anesthesia for an operation at Johns Hopkins, he saw the letters "Hughes" before him; it was Presidential election day in 1916, and King took this vision to be a sign of the electoral success of Charles Evans Hughes. Once it was clear that Woodrow Wilson had in fact been elected, thanks to the Western returns, King concluded that he had only been accessible to the influence of Hughes' Eastern support, and that accounted for the misleading communication.

The world of 1916 is so far away from us now as to require that we guard against any hasty retrospective diagnoses. This period in King's life does involve signs of psychopathology: in Barker's words, "ideas of reference (electrical influences), sensitiveness, obesity, pathological emotivity, hallucinations of perineal sense ... [and] insomnia," and from the hospital records, "Psycho-neurosis; Psychasthenia." However, it is essential to recall not only that King recovered quickly in 1916, but to keep in mind the almost supernormal way in which King later bested his opponents and so successfully governed Canada for all those years. Even though psychoanalytic ideas have so often been misused for reductionistic purposes, belittling human accomplishments, Freud himself used to like to quote Prince Hamlet, "There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

By the time King went to work for Rockefeller in 1914, he was unsure about his future. King had already acquired a considerable reputation as a labor mediator; he had helped organize a new Department of Labour; and had won election to the House of Commons at the age of 33. When the Liberal Government was defeated in 1911 King had lost his seat. Although he was

re-nominated in 1913, he had no chance to contest the seat until the next election in 1917. After Canada entered World War I in 1914 King did not take part in the war effort, as his energies went to helping the Rockefellers, especially with their mining problems in Colorado. But in 1916 the urgency of the original call from the Rockefellers was over; Colorado was quiet and the mines were becoming profitable again. By the summer of 1916 Canadian troops in Europe had already suffered badly. Canada's casualties in that war were proportionately to exceed by far the American dead and wounded. King's absences from Canada were politically awkward enough that later, in April, 1920, in the House of Commons he had to defend himself against the charge of cowardice. In 1916 King was also being buffeted by the specter of familial losses. King's father, who finally died on August 30, had been ill and blind for some time; one of King's sisters, a year older, had died in the spring of 1915; and his mother was in poor health -- she was to die on December 18, 1917. Before the death of his older sister, King already knew that his only brother, a physician who was four years younger, had contracted tuberculosis (although he would live until 1922). We do know that as a young man doing graduate work in Chicago King was "nervous and worried ... fearing a breakdown he consulted a doctor..." (R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King*, 1958).

Exactly what transpired medically in the summer of 1916 is obscure. King had discontinued his diary, then started it up again (perhaps a sign of personal distress) from June 22 to July 2, and finally resumed it on October 13 (his father had died August 30), after which the record for the rest of the year is pretty complete. On June 22 he wrote that he had "literally fled" to Kingsmere, his country house outside Ottawa, Canada's capital, "away from the world of humans." His unsettled career and family conditions "added to my unsettled state and caused me to fret and worry, acting impulsively..." Writing that he was "depressed and disheartened," King found himself "in an encounter with my own nature such as I have never known before. It has been at times as though a fire would devour me, and I have been unable to get rest by night or day." The entry for June 23-26 includes his belief that

the mind itself [is] the instrument of a higher something which is the real spiritual self.... Experiences I have had have shewn

me wherein one's self may pass almost completely as it were from the body, and that the invisible and intangible is more real than the visible.

For June 27-29 he wrote,

I continue to worry over the nervous condition I find myself suffering from at times. I fear that there may be some injury to my spine, that the pressure in the nerves of it is the cause.... The tendency to worry is something I must guard against. I ... become unduly suspicious that things are against me, when there is no reason for it....

King's general hypochondriacal predilections and paranoia were observed by many, and seem to be consistent with his vanity and self-involvement. Paranoid thinking may have given King a special edge in politics, though on occasion it also proved an interference. At this time King also wrote, "What I should like most of all to settle is the settlement for life with one I could love."

Soon after resuming keeping his diary, on October 16 he reported that a "sculptor in Italy" had "written suggesting a bust of mother in marble. I fear I cannot resist it. After all she and father are more to me than all else, why should I not preserve as far as I may be [able] all the inspiration of their lives." King would soon mention the matter in his interview with Meyer.

On October 24 King had been summoned to New York by a wire the preceding day. King said that when John D. Rockefeller, Jr., had asked him "how I was, I told him that I had suffered a great deal from nervousness and was going to consult a specialist." Rockefeller recommended Dr. Simon Flexner who promptly spoke to King, learned the nature of his trouble, and then advised King to consult Barker at Johns Hopkins. On October 25th Flexner wrote to Barker, "He has consulted already a number of Canadian doctors ... and what he now needs is to be set up by an authoritative person whom he will trust implicitly and whose directions he will carry out without feeling that he must still get other advice." On October 26th Barker examined King and wrote Meyer, "The principal subjective disturbance is that of being influenced electrically by others and of influencing others in this way." On October 27 King had an x-ray of the head and claimed that "I could feel the electric sparks on the back of my head as the rays were shot through the skull onto a plate beneath."

Barker also commented on King's "hallucinations of perineal sense." No medical historians I have consulted have been confident on the issue of what could have been meant by this, other than to suggest that either hallucinations of smell or tingling sensations at the anus might have been implied. King was more than a little concerned about the state of the base of his spine and insisted that he be x-rayed there in order to rule out trouble.

King recorded about his

long interview with Dr. Adolph Meyer, Specialist in Mental Hygiene at Johns Hopkins Univ.... I outlined the conflict in my thoughts between spiritual aspirations and material struggles and conflicts, the fight with myself. This he explained was unnecessary and wrong, that all the phenomena I had described to him were natural enough ... that what was health, I was mistaking for an evil passion.... Told me at all costs to maintain my independence of thought.... To become calm as respects the internal conflict I had described, and then proceed 'like a sun on its course' regardless of other men, or their views. To be myself. He was very strong on this, also on my preserving my idealism.

King was clearly pleased with Meyer:

I felt this man had a soul which could understand mine. That he too was a man with ideals and understood the ideal.... As I left him he shook hands with me twice. Spoke of the pleasure it was to meet me, said he hoped we might meet again and that he could expect great things of me. This was one of the really important interviews of my life.... All day I have been comparatively free of the feelings I had entertained before.... My mind is greatly relieved tonight.... I had come to a point where I thought my work for the future would be undermined by this nervous dread. Now I believe it will be greater than ever.

Adolf Meyer was knowledgeable about Freud, although clearly no adherent or disciple; Meyer had met Freud when he came from Vienna to receive an honorary degree from Clark University at Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1909. By then Meyer was a celebrity in his own right: he, along with Carl G. Jung from Zurich, was one of the three to be honored with a doctor of laws



degree. Meyer picked up immediately on the sexual theme in King's clinical material. Meyer wrote a letter to Barker about King:

The problem of our patient [is] ... first, a perfectly obvious elimination of natural sex life from the intensely religious and spiritual trend of affection, which only once became focused away from his mother on a nurse, unfortunately without response on her part....

It had been Freud who had maintained at his Clark lectures that "pathological symptoms constitute a portion of the subject's sexual life or even the whole of his sexual life..." (*Standard Edition*, vol. 11, p. 49). (Few psychoanalysts would speak that way nowadays.) It is striking that while in Baltimore in 1916 King made a little trip to visit the woman he had once been seriously interested in marrying, the nurse -- now herself married -- who had in 1897 helped him through a strictly medical crisis, but whom King's family had objections to his marrying.

However, the text of King's diaries itself has to be considered a subject for interpretation because he had a notoriously convenient memory, and, without actually directly lying, left out inconvenient conversations. For example, on the critical issue of marriage, which King would allude to throughout the remainder of his life, he chose to cite Barker's advice that if he found the right woman he ought not to put off getting married. King never mentioned in the diary, however, Meyer's opinion which was decidedly against King's marrying. So, while King did not see Meyer after 1916 (though there are a few brief letters between them) and King continued to consult Barker right up into World War II, King followed Meyer's advice even though what Barker told him fit in better with King's conception of himself. The unreliability of King's diary, in leaving out Meyer's emphatic opposition to King's taking a wife, has considerable importance for King's diary as a whole. Because King's version of things is often the only one available, historians have been too apt to accept King's accounts as unquestionably the truth.

The example of King's life can do something in itself for our understanding of psychological theory. I do not think we have been adequately prepared for the idea that someone so privately odd could nonetheless function in a political democracy in such a successful manner. If his 1916 problems did not turn out to function as

a political deficit, it was because his genuine assets were so large. I believe that King's lack of "normalcy," which was so extreme as to lead clinicians (whom I have asked for advice) to think in terms of a so-called latent psychosis or even schizophrenia, must have lent a special edge to his political capacities. It is not possible to sustain the early hope of Lasswell that democratic character can be identified with psychological health, not to mention the suggestion once forwarded by Freud's biographer Ernest Jones that cabinet ministers, like foreign secretaries, ought to submit themselves to psychoanalytic inspection before being appointed to their posts.

I leave the reader with a quandary. We know that every historical explanation has to imply certain psychological assumptions about human behavior. We also think that Freud's conceptualization makes possible a critically important understanding of human motives. But even when we have psychiatric evidence, as in the case of Mackenzie King, that does not by itself settle everything. I was first drawn to Freud because of a central concern with how we ought to live, and the moral implications of psychology. King's life does successfully challenge certain naive stereotypes. King played such an immense role in Canadian public affairs that it is a nonsensical question to ask whether what he did was good or bad for the country. It would be like questioning whether an immensely long-standing marriage was successful or not. Canada and King are now unthinkable without each other.

Nowadays, thanks partly to the impact of the Freudian revolution in ideas, a North American political candidate's private life is so much a public matter that privacy gets used manipulatively. So, to the extent that King becomes more interesting because of his psychological peculiarities, it may be that someday it will seem that the release of his diaries turns out to be, instead of a self-inflicted wound, another bit of canniness on the part of this political magician.

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## The Attack on Psychotherapy as a Contemporary Purity Crusade

David Lotto  
University of Massachusetts

The last 10 to 15 years have seen an attack on psychodynamic psychotherapy including psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy. To a lesser extent the attack also has been on all forms of intensive and long-term psychotherapy, both outpatient and inpatient. What follows are some tentative psychohistorical thoughts about why this is happening now and how it might be related to other contemporary social and political events.

While attacks on psychoanalysis are nothing new, having been a constant presence throughout the 100-year history of psychoanalysis, in the last decade or so criticism has come from a wider range of sources. Much of it has a more bitter and strident tone than it has had in the past. Attacks have come not only from the usual sources such as academic psychology or rival therapeutic schools, but from the popular press as well.

In addition, a new wrinkle in the last decade has been the peculiarly American phenomenon in which profit-seeking private corporations have been given a tremendous amount of power and control over psychotherapy. The result has been a vicious attack on almost all forms of psychotherapy whose aim is anything other than crisis intervention or short-term symptom alleviation. This aspect of the attack is waged primarily by financial means by a new breed of managed care and insurance corporation, whose mission is to maximize its profits by minimizing the amount of care provided. These corporations now get to have a major voice in making decisions about who gets how much and what type of care.

These attacks are having a clear effect on the profession and practice of psychotherapy. Since the mid-1980s enrollments at analytic training institutes have been falling drastically, the number of patients in long-term intensive psychotherapy has declined significantly, and third party reimbursers (managed care and insurance companies) have virtually declared war on long-term psychotherapy.

The cutting and restricting of benefits for those in need of psychotherapy is a relatively small

part of a much broader cutback on spending for those who are ill, in body or in mind. This kind of withholding -- this taking away -- from the needy is part of a larger societal project which includes attacks on many of the disenfranchised and have-nots. These include welfare recipients (via so-called "welfare reform"); criminals (from mandatory sentencing and the increased popularity of the death penalty); African-Americans (by the attack on affirmative action); immigrants; the disabled (through cutbacks in government disability payment programs); and the working poor (from the downward pressure on wages, particularly in lower paying jobs).

My contention is that the motivation for the attack on psychotherapy is the same as is driving all the other attacks on the poor and the weak. It looks much like a classic purity crusade where scapegoats are sought out to blame and sacrifice. The usual projective mechanism the dominant group members use to rid themselves of their impure and guilty thoughts and feelings is working overtime. These feelings are projected onto scapegoat targets like welfare recipients and seekers of psychotherapy. Just as "welfare cheats" are seen as lazy, greedy, parasites who are fully responsible for their unfortunate lot in life, those seeking intensive psychotherapy are seen as inadequate, flawed, self-indulgent, and fully responsible for their misfortunes. They are the "worried well" and, like the other scapegoat groups, are certainly not deserving to be taken care of by us. As receptacles of all the unwanted, unacceptable, and disavowed parts of ourselves, they need to be punished; they must be made to suffer for their (our) sins.

When we recognize a purity crusade, as psychohistorians, we need to ask questions about why this might be happening at this particular historical moment. What is the group so anxious, uncomfortable, or guilty about that they have to resort to this kind of attempt at relief? Or, alternatively, what trauma has the group suffered that seeks discharge by means of this enactment?

I suggest that the trauma we are attempting to deal with is essentially that of the middle class which has become the trendsetter in establishing the dominant group consciousness and lifestyle. In the last two decades this group has fallen onto hard times in terms of its expectations of more and better for its self and its children. Relative to the expectations established from the end of World War II through the late 1970s, there have been

severe disappointments. For one, we have had to give up the belief (or fantasy) of steady upward mobility and, in particular, that one's children will be economically better off than oneself. For another, we have lost faith that there will be the security of a steady job, health care, and old age income provided by either one's employer or the government. The middle class's anxieties are brought on by living in a time of downsizing; in Barbara Ehrenreich's phrase in *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (1989), we live with the "fear of falling." To paraphrase Edward Herman in an article in the *Nation* a few years ago, since the demise of the Cold War we have gone from a national security state to a state of national insecurity.

As psychoanalytic psychohistorians we know that this kind of trauma, particularly when its existence is not fully acknowledged, can lead in the group, as in the individual, to a regression to the paranoid-schizoid position. In this state, that which is felt to be "bad" is split off and externalized onto a scapegoat which can then be blamed and attacked -- the makings of a purity crusade.

Unfortunately, psychoanalysis lends itself all too well to becoming a symbol for self-indulgence and entitlement and thus a prime target of a purity crusade. The seekers of psychotherapy are not deserving of our help and compassion. We can't afford to pay for any form of psychotherapy where patients can take their time to explore their inner worlds, pursue personal growth, maturity, or the fulfilling of potentials. In times of a purity crusade we cannot countenance such frivolity and hedonism. There's no room for such luxuries. All that can be allowed into this Spartan world of permissible psychotherapy is addressing concrete solvable problems quickly and efficiently, or providing brief emergency treatment in crisis situations.

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## Guns, a Dream,

## Nostalgia, and History

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The role of guns in my life is the central issue in this essay. I will discuss how guns may provide a psychic link to personal emotions and a fascination with war.

When I was 10 years old in the summer of 1950, I went off to a summer camp located in north-central Wisconsin. I had been there the previous year and, while learning to swim, it became plain to disappointed counselors that I was uncoordinated and utterly lacking in confidence about almost all physical activities. It was decided that my one major activity for this summer would be learning how to shoot a .22 (short) rifle and earning a so-called "pro-marksman medal." After some disappointments, I managed to do this, and my achievement was dutifully noted at the camp farewell dinner. Yet, while pleased with what I had managed to do, an interest in guns did not take hold of me. For a while, I continued to collect toy soldiers, past, I suppose, the age deemed appropriate for such an activity, but an interest in real guns, much less owning one of them, held no charm.

My mother's sister lived in Atlanta, and she had two children, a girl and a boy who was approximately my age. We began visiting Atlanta in 1951, the transportation of choice being a train called The Georgian, alas, of course, since discontinued. On our very first visit, we learned of the Battle of Atlanta, and visited a depiction of it provided by the Cyclorama. Later visits, in 1954, 1955, and 1956, with their occasional repeat visits to the Cyclorama, served to cement an interest in the subject. By the time I was 16 in 1956, I had learned that Atlanta had been the most "fought-over" city in the Civil War with the exception of Richmond. There had been Kenesaw Mountain, Peachtree Creek, the Battle of Atlanta proper, and Ezra Church. These battles of summer, 1864, had cost around 25,000 casualties in total.

In 1958, I visited Atlanta alone. I was 18 at the time, and had completed my first year of college. Although I ended up doing well, I had experienced a mental collapse in the first semester, the effects of which still resonate from time to time. Also, initial efforts at translating highly attenuated libidinal drives into action had gone nowhere. Women did not like me and, in all

fairness, I did little that would draw them close. Much as I liked academic success, which pleased my parents even more, it could not compensate for a sense of loss and unfulfillment. I was despairing, as the refrain out of *Showboat* put it, "tired of living, and scared of dying." I felt both very young and very old.

My most substantive link to guns occurred during the 1958 visit to Atlanta. My cousin and I went target shooting with a friend of his who had a variety of weapons. We could have taken some "heavy stuff;" but decided to go with .22 (long) rifles. I had not fired a gun for eight years.

After a boring drive, under a hot summer's sun, we wound up on a bridge spanning the Chattahoochie River. We must have been in violation of a variety of city ordinances -- where we were was, at the time, quite rural-looking, but still within the city of Atlanta proper -- when we began firing into the river, trying to hit varieties of objects floating downstream. Through pure luck, I "outshot" my cousin and his friend, managing to cut in half a drifting twig. My cousin didn't give a damn but his friend was furious, taking out his fury by blowing the head off a dozing fence lizard. I, in turn, leveled my gun at him, threatening to blow his head off, something which, with a .22 (long) rifle, would have proven to have been quite time-consuming. My cousin, declaring that we were both nuts, stepped between us, bringing to an end a very negative social encounter.

On the train ride home, I had a dream. For the first time, I dreamt about the battles of Atlanta. There, in their fading butternut brown uniforms, were the men of the Army of Tennessee, stirring the red-clay dust with often bare feet. I thought that I could pick up some of their conversations but was not sure. On horseback, was their half-cracked leader, General John Bell Hood, who, having lost his right leg in an earlier engagement, had to be strapped into the saddle. Having endured much pain, he seemed determined that others sustain a great deal of suffering as well. Ferociously bearded, he was urging his outclassed tatterdemalions forward to one or the other fruitless encounter. With something of a start, I woke up, wondering if there was some way by which I could establish some sort of connection with a dreamt past in which I felt perfectly at home. In all of the murkiness, the words were quite distinct: "Get a gun." A bond, by no means a positive one, was forged between me and the doomed defenders of Atlanta. I wouldn't get a gun for five years or so.

But, between 1963 and 1970 I purchased several. Until a few years ago, I owned a gun (or two) from time to time.

Interestingly, one of my major purchases took place in 1970, when, separated from my first wife, I was on the way to a divorce. It was a moment of enormous psychological humiliation for me. The gun was a Mauser K98, obviously a German weapon. Those who comment upon the link between the individual and history often mention symbolic connections which, in one way or another, tie unfortunate souls into varieties of repetition compulsion. When I purchased the Mauser, I was becoming fixated upon the Great War [World War I], a war in which the Mauser played a major role on the losing side. Nobody really won much of anything in the Great War, but Germany, the least of all. The Mauser rifle was a spiritual link to this extraordinary realm where hopes died in the mud.

It would be arrogant to suppose that there is anything of a "general truth" embodied in this. Is it possible, though, that for people who feel personally humiliated and defeated, the notion of "the lost cause" on a broader scale becomes a resonating device which can serve, on the personal level, as an attenuating mechanism? That, in a society such as America in which gun ownership is not only tolerated but actively encouraged, a gun can provide a kind of link to a well-nigh timeless realm in which conflicts can rage on forever? I'm not sure. But many Americans who are into varieties of weaponry are, or think themselves to be, spiritually defeated. Perhaps what motivates them is not so much the thought of victory, but a kind of repetition compulsion of defeat avenged without end. I still have an intense, morbid fascination with the Great War. Although I no longer own a gun, my fascination with guns continues, too -- a curious conflation of personal concerns and broader historical issues. Hopefully, in the near future I'll be paying a visit to the Ypres-Salient area of Belgium which I've already visited twice. Along the way, I've thought about why wars viewed from the angle of utmost futility, allow me, an academic, to get in touch with certain aspects of myself.

What is of concern is how, in a particular context, guns can serve as psychic links to particular times and places which, nonetheless, have been rendered "timeless," and how such can be of comfort to folk who lack a sense of purpose. The last word, in some ways, has been provided by

non-psychohistorian Paul Fussell. In his *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), he concludes by describing how "war poets," folk who wrote bitter diatribes against the Great War, were drawn back to reflect upon the war, again and again, and to pay frequent visits to the old battlefields. Somehow, the war had fulfilled a crucial need, and it always would. Somehow, while loathing this war -- and some of these people had become pacifists -- they had grown to love it. Reginald Farrar wrote about visiting old Great War battlefields. "They draw and hold me like magnets: I have never had enough." H.M. Tomlinson, another soul who had written against the war, said the following: "I still loaf into the past, to the Old Front Line, where now there is only silence and thistles. I like it; it is a phase of my lunacy." Fussell has it right, I believe, in considering the drawing power of war which, in the United States, is provided a certain concreteness through the availability of guns: "My belief is that what we recognize in them is a part, and perhaps not the least compelling part, of our own buried lives."

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## Autonomy, the French Revolution, and Human Rights: Lynn Hunt

(Continued from page 109)

1998. Professor Hunt has written extensively on the French Revolution, including *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Other books she has written or edited include *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*, ed., (New York: Zone Books, 1993), and *Telling the Truth about History*, with Joyce Appleby and Margaret Jacob, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994).

**BL:** When did you know you wanted to be a historian?

**LH:** When I was a teenager I became interested in history, but I didn't really decide to go into history until my second year in college. I attributed it to the fact that my mother's parents

were immigrants from Europe. Her father was a German-speaking Russian from Ukraine and her mother was born in the United States to an immigrant family from Germany. So they were both Germans but from different parts of Europe.

**BL:** What are your areas of expertise?

**LH:** My subject area is the French Revolution and the 18th century. I also do a fair amount of work on historical methods. In the 1980s my interest shifted away from what might be called traditional social history, which I had done in the 1970s, towards the new cultural history which is language, symbols, and the various forms of symbolic behavior and how they enter into politics and society.

**BL:** Symbols include the arts?

**LH:** Absolutely. I began with certain speeches and festivals, then I did quite a bit of work on engraving, and from there I became more interested in painting -- how they're used to set up a new political culture in a revolutionary period such as the French Revolution. One of the characteristics of revolution is the need to re-create identities very quickly, so there's a heavier than usual reliance on things like festivals and propaganda. You can't accomplish political re-education all at once. One of the fastest ways the revolutionaries tend to believe it can happen is by mass rallies and by changing all of the symbolic aspects of politics -- the seal of state, the symbols of the nation -- and giving them a new content.

**BL:** When and how did you first encounter psychohistory?

**LH:** I had always been interested in psychology. When I was a teenager I had already read a lot of Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, and the American school of ego psychology. I had seriously thought of going into psychology when I was in college. The big influence on me in graduate school was Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther*. The book was the subject of intense discussion in the late sixties. I think it stuck with me because most of my fellow graduate students were so hostile to it, and I was not.

**BL:** Were there any mentors who helped you with the psychodynamic approach to history?

**LH:** I had one lecturer in graduate school, Margo Drekmeier -- she taught early modern European intellectual history -- who was very interested in the relationship between psychological and sociological components, and

encouraged me to read in that area in a general way, although it was more heavily on the sociological side. The big book in those days for us was Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967).

The other person at Stanford who had a not immediate but long-term effect was Paul Robinson who has always been interested in Freud and the psychological dimension. His first book, *The Freudian Left* (1969), was on the modernization of sex -- Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse, and others. He probably doesn't do psychohistory, strictly speaking.

**BL:** You've had neither analysis yourself nor any psychoanalytical or psychotherapeutic training. How did you become able to do psychologically/psychoanalytically-informed history?

**LH:** I think I came at it more from the side which has recently grown in importance, the cultural studies side, in the same way that people in literature did, through a long project of reading Freud and an intense interest in psychoanalysis, though not from a clinical therapeutic side. That's very characteristic these days of literature people who tend not to be psychoanalytically trained -- there is a tremendous amount of psychoanalytic work being done in literature compared to history. Most of my historian friends have been or are in therapy, so it's not that they are uninterested in the psychological dimension. But, interestingly, in their historical work they tend to avoid it because in history the psychological dimension has fallen out of favor in the last decade, though I think it is bound to come back.

**BL:** How can we hasten its return?

**LH:** There need to be more general articles like the Fred Weinstein article in *History and Theory*, "Psychohistory and the Crisis of the Social Sciences" [1995 34(4), 299-319], which tried to grapple with how to bring the social and the psychological together.

**BL:** How do you define "psychohistory"?

**LH:** I see an important distinction to be made. Psychohistory has been identified with explicitly using psychological, especially psychoanalytic, theory of individual development in historical context. I would like to see more of a move toward a revival of the psychosocial which I see as having been quite prominent in historical work in the nineteen-teens, nineteen-twenties, and nineteen-thirties; as having been quite prominent in

sociological work -- in the work of Talcott Parsons, for example -- but as having dropped out, ironically, with the rise of social history in the post-World War II period. The older connection was already implicitly there in Max Weber and Emile Durkheim -- more socially oriented theorists who saw that the psychological had to be incorporated. This is the part that would speak to all historians as opposed to the very specific interest in current psychological and psychoanalytic theory and its possible application.

**BL:** Has psychohistory itself had any impact on your areas of expertise?

**LH:** Certainly, Bruce Mazlish's work, *The Revolutionary Ascetic* (1976), is important in studies of comparative revolutions. Ironically, in my view, there has been more interest in psychological explanation in explaining extremes in history -- revolutionary movements, fascism, totalitarianism, witchcraft -- what are seen as abnormal historical experiences -- than in explaining mainstream events.

**BL:** Would the psychosocial cover more the mainstream?

**LH:** Well, it certainly would remind historians that everyone has a psyche -- not just Hitler, not just the extremes and abnormals. It's not just people who believe in witchcraft who have psychological components to their behavior.

**BL:** Tell us briefly about your best known work, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, on the psychological aspects of the French Revolution.

**LH:** It's an attempt to do a collective psychological analysis of the way the French thought about politics. I use a fair number of psychoanalytic concepts to do that, to try to get at what was the psychological underpinning for the way politics were re-thought during the Revolutionary period. I closely follow the work of two people with competing visions of how the psychological works. On the one hand, Freud, who, in *Totem and Taboo*, tries to analyze the origins of all political organization and social structure, which I think is an important attempt to get at the way in which founding myths are established. I also use the work of Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (1977), who is a critic of Freud's but who is also interested in the psychological dimension of collective behavior. In the case of Freud, what I'm interested in is the whole idea of a primal story of the foundation of

political authority. In the case of Girard, it's really his competing claims about what that primal story really is. He focuses on the community's need for a scapegoat to overcome its internal desires for violence rather than on the father figure. The scapegoat can be the king but can also be someone else who does not occupy a paternal role.

**BL:** What has been the nature of the commentary on *The Family Romance*?

**LH:** I think for historians the big issue is the use of psychoanalytic concepts in connection with historical analysis to which many historians are violently resistant. And they're also resistant to the idea of analyzing the collective unconscious which is a concept that I take from Freud and also, to a certain extent, from Emile Durkheim. There are things about the French Revolution such as an excess of emotional attachment to certain issues that are just impossible to explain in terms of rational calculation of interest. For example, the queen, Marie Antoinette: why did they have to execute her? Extremely unusual event in world history, to kill a queen who cannot rule, who has never ruled, who will never be able to rule -- and the kind of vitriol that surrounded her person and her trial!

**BL:** Could you elaborate on the "collective unconscious"?

**LH:** I think of it as that area in which rules of conduct and presuppositions about the meaning of life are developed that are either not entirely conscious or not at all conscious to the people whose behavior we're talking about. For example, why would the French Revolutionaries, in the midst of war -- a war that they're losing at that moment -- spend their time having a trial of the queen in which they discuss her sex life and her supposed incest with her son in great detail? It shows that a lot of the rules of political behavior are actually developed unconsciously rather than in the process of conscious political discussion. What I tried to argue in my book is that the collective unconscious for Europeans is very much tied up with family models of authority, and I tried to work through to new models of authority, which can't be done entirely on a conscious level.

I think there are various clues about the collective unconscious in political behavior. I used actual political decisions like holding the trials of the king and the queen, and planning to execute them, and what that might have meant to people. But I looked at not just what was said in newspaper

editorials or in political speeches, but also by what subjects were chosen for engraving, for painting, for the writing of novels. I tried to access what unconscious rules were being developed there by looking at father figures, mother figures, brother figures, and their development over time in both novels and paintings. Then, perhaps most controversially, I also used the writings of the Marquis de Sade [1740-1814] as what I called a kind of revolutionary dreamwork, as one especially extreme expression of these familial models of authority and how they're being worked through. I used pornography, in short, as a clue to what was going on in the collective unconscious. (I have edited a book called *The Invention of Pornography*. In that book, I and my collection of essay writers argued that pornography began as a form of political and social commentary -- a form of criticism of aristocracy and monarchy -- and only really took shape as we know it as a modern commercial product sold for sexual arousal -- as a sex-aid product -- at the very end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. We don't know why the shift in pornography took place; that's a subject that remains to be researched.)

It's not until Sade that you get the working through of all possible pornographic themes. There is no one who is more extreme than the Marquis de Sade because he understands murder and death as being the final result of what he is talking about, and portrays it as such obsessively over and over again. Why do we get this very extreme representation of pornography in the 1790s? I argue that what the French Revolution does is show people, largely unconsciously, that all authority is conventional, all authority depends on people believing in it. The most striking thing that the French Revolution does, and I think this is what Sade is commenting on, is to undermine the idea that authority is natural, traditional, God-given -- that it has some transcendental foundation that cannot be contested. Instead, what the French Revolution does is say, "We can remake the social and political order according to ideas we have about what would be the best social and political order." What Sade does is essentially turn that around and say that you could also remake the social and political order along the most evil lines. In other words, the idea that you can create the authority you want by a decision of human will opens the possibility that anything is possible. Sade is showing that if there is no foundation of authority other than in human will, then all things are possible and the foundation of morality is in

question. Sade is not just a simple celebrator of this discovery but also the person who showed its most alarming consequences.

**BL:** Are there any psychosocially significant revolutions in the world today?

**LH:** The whole Islamic world is basically in a state of revolution. This would be a very interesting movement for a psychosocial analysis because it's clear that there are enormous psychological as well as social issues involved in Islamic fundamentalism. There's a steady current of resistance to modernity. What modernity represents for many people in the Islamic world is a threatening rearrangement of familial roles and, especially, gender roles -- what the role of women is supposed to be in a modern Islamic society. I see a large amount of reaction to the idea that women in the Islamic world will be like women in the Western world, completely autonomous beings. That is a big, big strain in Islamic fundamentalism.

Where the fundamentalists actually get power they try to turn back the clock on women's autonomy and self-motivation and self-determination. But it's very hard to do that. It's an area that calls out for symbolic analysis because what you're wearing underneath that black robe is a tremendously fraught issue. In all revolutionary situations: what people wear becomes the ultimate symbolic arena.

**BL:** What is the importance of childhood to psychohistory and the psychosocial?

**LH:** It's been one of the most difficult things in historical analysis to resolve because we tend not to have huge amounts of information about the childhood of historically significant people. As a consequence of this paucity of information on individuals, there's been a fruitful turn toward looking at the history of childhood in a social as well as a psychological way in a more collective fashion, focusing not on the lives of specific individuals but on more general patterns of childrearing. Surprisingly little has been done on this, at least in French history, since Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (1962), pointed the way to the importance of a kind of collective analysis of the history of childhood, and there needs to be much more done on this subject.

**BL:** Who are some others who have made the greatest contribution to psychohistory or the psychosocial?

**LH:** I have been most influenced by those who have started from the social and then tried to

incorporate the psychological. What I find most promising for the future is, for example, the kind of thing laid out by Norbert Elias in *The Civilizing Process* (1939). Elias was a German Jew, forced to flee in the 1930s, who lived much of his life in Switzerland. He tries to bring together a sociological and psychoanalytic analysis, tries to offer a kind of developmental history of the West in these psychosocial terms, which is also one of the things that Freud does. So it is not about an individual -- it's an attempt to get at the unspoken rules of social behavior and what they might tell us about the changing historical contours of the psyche, how the experience of the psyche might have actually evolved over time. This is an area that has been much neglected but now, interestingly, Elias' direction has been picked up much more by the Dutch and the Germans than it has in the Anglo-Saxon world, not just because he wrote it in German originally, but for reasons that have to do in part with the dominance of behavioral psychology in America in university faculties.

Someone like Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (1980), is very important because, even though he's hostile to psychoanalysis, he points to a way of understanding the psychological historically over time. Also someone like Ariès who was deeply interested in how psychological experiences were shaped historically. I'm also interested in the work of a philosopher like Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (1989), who wants to understand the origins of what he calls "modern inwardness." Now, he understands it in terms of intellectual history, which I think is too limiting, but he again points to a kind of Western development of ideas of the self rather than assuming that the self is the same in every era over time. So I'm very interested in the developmental view and that's why for me, Ariès, Elias, Foucault, and Taylor, and even Jürgen Habermas who has some suggestions along these lines in his early work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), are very interesting ways of reviving the whole area.

**BL:** What are you working on now?

**LH:** I am working on the history of human rights. One of the things I'm very interested in is the history of human rights is a kind of Norbert Elias question, which is, What vision of the self has to come into play for human rights to make sense? I'm interested in practices and ideas about individual autonomy, which I want to argue



became much more prevalent in the 18th century than they had been before -- not that there were no ideas before, obviously there were -- but that *everyone* might be an autonomous person is an 18th century idea which started in the 17th century. One of the things I'm going to argue is that the novel is very important for spreading this idea and making it a kind of concrete reality psychologically for most people. The idea that you can read about ordinary people -- imagine yourself as identifying with them -- is an important psychological component of making human rights a credible idea. You have to move away from the Medieval notion that a person is a kind of marker in the system of kinship relations, is completely defined by the communities that they are in, is defined much more in the communal and social context in which they live, to a more 18th-century and modern notion, that the individual is self-determined, that you make your own choices, you decide what you want to do. I think there's a lot of social determinacy that goes along with the psychology that's behind human rights. You can't have human rights -- and I don't think you had human rights before the 18th century -- unless you can imagine that all individuals, starting with all male individuals but spreading quite quickly thereafter, are equally able to make their place in the world.

**BL:** Do any exemplary novels come to mind?

**LH:** *The* novel for me in this regard is the one that many people in 18th-century English literature talk about, Samuel Richardson's novel, *Clarissa*. One of the things I've always been interested in is why it is that *the* fictional individual in the 18th century is almost always a woman, why it is that it's the woman that is the heroine of the story when rights are in the first place imagined to be male. Yet, for Rousseau, Richardson, and most writers, it's a female figure that is the figure that they use to develop these ideas of what it is a self is. So, why *Clarissa*? Why *Pamela*? -- Richardson has another novel, *Pamela*, about a servant girl -- and that's very important in starting this off because here you have middle class and upper class people identifying with a servant girl. And for Rousseau it's also a woman in his novel, *Julie*. My current thinking is that it's because women are especially poignant cases of dealing with restraints. There's a way in which the idea of the struggle for autonomy is much clearer with women who are much more controlled by their family. So you can get a much

better story about the conflict over individuality with female characters because they're not free to leave home -- they're not free to go off and seek their fortune. Now, of course, there are many stories about that with males: *Tom Jones*, *Robinson Crusoe* -- I don't mean to say there are no male heroes. But one of the really interesting issues is why the heroes aren't *just* male, since they are the ones who are free to go off and make their way in the world. I think it's because there is a tremendous emotional investment with the idea of what to do about constraint, what to do about restraint, what to do about limits on autonomy.

*Bob Lentz is Associate Editor of this publication.* □

## Essay Reviews

### Trauma and Tragic Form

Daniel Dervin

Mary Washington College

*Essay review of Rudolph Binion, Sounding the Classics: From Sophocles to Thomas Mann. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 1997. ISBN 0313304580, viii, 160 pp.*

As ravenous bees to summer meadows do informed readers descend on the classics. But unfortunately the scene of pleasure is in disarray, trampled over by botanists, lepidopterists, amateur field biologists, and a few straying big-game hunters -- all otherwise known as humanists, critics, and guardians of the canon. The table where these worthies assemble to deliver their reports and dispute over their findings has expanded with every generation. Such is the dilemma facing a serious reader of the classics today. One can either squeeze into a place at the table and add one's modest contribution or, in understandable desperation, make a clean sweep of the board and essay a fresh gaze at the subject. Rudolph Binion, historian and humanist, who has written a seminal psychohistorical study with *Hitler Among the Germans* (1976) and delved into humane letters with *Soundings* (1981), opts for the latter.

This being a difficult trade-off, the results must necessarily be mixed, succeeding better in some areas than in others. The boldness of the enterprise is matched by a vigorous, idiomatic, quizzical prose style that probes through anomalies for fresh insights but in places gets trapped in its

own Baroque densities.

Binion's rationale for a "fresh inquiry" into a baker's dozen of Western classics is to locate a key subtext hitherto unnoted by previous generations of scholars and readers. This, he also refers to as an "undertheme" which doubles with the "express theme," complements it, and enhances the given work's status as a classic (pp. 3-4, 147). The enterprise may sound a might arbitrary or unduly reductive, especially to contemporary scholars pumped up on postmodernist theory -- Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence," "belatedness," and "strong readers" spring to mind. It's hard to get around the experience that major literary works proffer not only a multiplicity of overt themes but an equally disconcerting array of elusive underthemes. Pushing the envelope of relativism, one could suppose there are as many subtexts to the great works as there are readers; thus in the Norman Holland school of readers-response: "Hamlet is my most famous creation." It seems that what literature is about is determined by what we are stimulated by it to reconstitute in our idiosyncratic psyches. To paraphrase Pogo, "We have met the text and it is us."

For the classical humanist, *Oedipus Rex*, for example, is about the perplexity of the most blessed ending up the most accursed, the irony of the detective solving a crime by apprehending himself, the paradox of blindness and insight rendering character somehow both free and fated. For Freud the tragedy was complex -- in several senses. Not only did it seem to confirm in action what he was discovering in wishes, or that the interplay of desire and disavowal operated like the dream and secondary elaboration, but that the onstage action unfolded like a psychoanalysis with the hero's evasions, denials, and projections all operating like a patient's resistances that eventually yield to self-recognition. For Rank, the mythic substructure is part of a universal substratum of heroic origins in accord with Freud's family romance; for Roheim, it dealt with the covert crime of matricide (Jocasta hanging herself before Oedipus reaches her with sword drawn); for John Munder Ross and other contemporary American analysts, it's about Laius's murderous impulses toward his son, with a homoerotic subtext which Oedipus thwarts by parricide; for Hays, it embodies the Jungian archetype of the limping hero; for another, it's about Jocasta scripting with the aim of securing spousal revenge via the offspring; for others, it plays with primal scenes

(the Sphinx and Teresias focusing the creative quest for origins).

For Binion, it is about the subject's repeatedly reliving the "traumatic exposure" incurred by Jocasta's handing over her three-day-old infant to a shepherd who then passes him on eventually to a second royal family. Coming of age, Oedipus repeats the original trauma by abandoning his adopted parents on the word of the Delphic oracle and, I gather, undoes the original damage by blindly murdering father and marrying mother, though as Binion shows they all should have known better. The play itself, in which the hero mutilates himself and sentences himself to exile, is a second enactment of the trauma.

All told, Binion's is an ingenious reading of the tragedy's hidden import and deserves its place among other readings, without, of course, replacing them. Certainly, his subtext clarifies much of the obsessively driven quality of Oedipus, but simply reliving one's painful past, as in an analysis, is defensive, while Oedipus endures to internalize his aggressive drives by blinding himself when his murderous rage has been pre-empted by Jocasta's suicide. "It was Apollo who made me do it!" he cries, adding, "but my hand delivered the blow." In Francis Ferguson's tragic rhythm of purpose-passion-perception, it is the awareness of guilt as well as, or more than, traumatic reliving that motivates the hero's blinding plus self-banishment and thereby transforms the victim into a person.

Like the blood cells rushing to heal a wound, trauma draws on emergency energies of the ego to alleviate or undo passively experienced pain by an active reliving -- but the tragic art enlists all the creative resources. More than victim, the tragic hero is also beleaguered agent, and in classic drama the implications are unlimited and inexhaustible, still. The critical response then is never either/or, but always both/and -- for at some point that ever enlarging table of scholars addressing the classics needs to be reconvened. Binion does a fine job of interrogating Oedipus -- what did he know, when did he know it? And the more I think about the total action, the more impressed I am by its pervasive ambivalence, keyed not only by the incest taboo and the many opposing word-pairs, but by key actions. Laius wants to have Oedipus slain, so he hands him over to Jocasta instead of seeing to it himself; she wants to have him exposed, so she turns him over to a shepherd instead; Oedipus, who wants to walk away from his fate but walks into it, loves his

parents but kills the one and is poised to do the other in -- it's as if all three get what they want but cannot admit it, which returns us to Aristotle's terror and pity, and to that elusive classical quality of stasis, equipoise, or balance. By demonstrating how the overwritten flaw of pride (hubris) explains less about the hero's blindness and reckless overreaching than the underwritten pattern of early trauma, Binion shows how perilous is that balance.

Unquestionably, ancient plays of ritual revenge for sexual or physical abuse resonate with moderns, and given the psychohistorian's interest in parenting modes as interpretive keys for stages of cultural evolution, so well codified by Lloyd deMause, one understandably turns to these works as psycho-archeological sites for clues to former practices. Tales are always retellings, plays are reenactments, but they also always subsist in oblique, derivative, and symbolic forms -- never as direct reflections of a specific act or set of actions. Careful probing may turn up a hidden core of conflict that may contain traces of abusive parenting consistent with the historical epoch. In late antiquity, parenting encompassed modes of infanticide and abandonment, so that fantasies of revenge for physical or sexual abuse may enter the creative process and shape it variously. "Electra's obsessions about killing her mother," for example, may be seen as a "legacy of her extremely abusive childhood," including exile as a form of maternal abandonment (Jeff Richards and Jean M. Goodwin, "Electra: Revenge Fantasies and Homicide in Child Victims," *Journal of Psychohistory* (1994) 22:2:213-222). With these events occurring later in her childhood, Electra's revenge is better planned and more focused than Oedipus's blind and seemingly random flailings (which yet reach their mark). Another daughter of Greek patriarchy, Iphigenia, is willingly sacrificed by her father, Agamemnon, at Aulis to appease Artemis and fill the sails of the Greek warships bound for Troy. In Euripides' version, she is rescued at the last moment and whisked away by divine intervention. Subsequently, she turns up among the Taurians as the priestess presiding over human sacrifices to the gods, thus suggesting her actively repeating the trauma she had suffered passively. Conveniently displaced, her compulsive revenge does not disrupt official patriarchy, but in a dream she returns to her father's house and her former bedchamber, where after the house collapses save for a single column she hears a human voice: "then, observing this ministry which is to slay strangers, I besprinkled him as for death, and I wept." The voice, it turns

out, belongs to her long-lost brother, Orestes.

Although revenge reappears as dramatic form in Elizabethan revenge tragedy (notably *Hamlet*) and persists as a motive in popular films, it cannot be directly equated with any period or parenting mode, and may be fueled as much by indeterminant narcissistic injuries as by actual abuse.

Ultimately Binion's readings fall on the side of literary criticism's close textual analysis rather than on advancing psychoanalytic or psychohistorical overviews. Though I have slighted his pieces on St. Matthew's Gospel, on Dante's lustful lovers, on Tristram and Isolde, on *King Lear*, and others, they are all heartily recommended. Throughout, the scholarship is solid; the book itself is well edited and handsomely produced; and the readings are always stimulating.

*Daniel Dervin, PhD, a prolific psychohistorical author, recently published a study of women writers which is reviewed on page 137.*

□

## Bridging Ethnic and National Chasms

Peter Petschauer  
Appalachian State University

*Essay review of Vamik Volkan, Bloodlines, From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997. ISBN 0374114471, 280 pp., \$24.00.*

Most of us who lived through the Cold War remember it less for its ability to contain ethnic diversity than for the threat the Soviet Union seemed to pose. Those of us who traveled in the area of the Soviet empire were naive enough to assume that "nationalism," as it was called then, was banished forever. The fewer of us who traveled extensively in Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s can look back at the few hints of disagreement between Slovenians and Macedonians, Serbs and Croats, but not as harbingers of the horror that was to follow in the 1990s.

Vamik Volkan has been in these areas and many others that he covers in *Bloodlines*, his latest book. Unlike many other authors, he clearly explains the differences between nationalism and ethnicity. I find particularly useful his explanation

about the ethnic tent. Even though his first chapter is entitled "Ethnic Tents," I looked for an even more precise definition of this "tent." In an interview for *Clio's Psyche* (vol. 2, no. 2, August, 1995), he said essentially that the "tent" is located in a specific place, a geographic locale in which an ethnic group has lived and lives and on which it has built its culture over a long period of time. This culture, from music to thoughts, is in a sense positioned, almost like paintings, in the fabric of the tent, its wall. At the same time, the wall of the tent provides the border toward the outside and protects the ethnics living in it from outside storms. The border of the tent, therefore, provides separation, differentiation, and security. The tent is held up by a pole; to Volkan, the pole represents the leadership of the ethnic group. If the pole is rigid, like a poorly designed mast of a sailboat, then it cracks or splinters easily. If the pole is flexible, like a carefully selected tree in the deepest forest of Siberia, then the winds slamming against the ethnic tent will not break it, but simply allow it to bend and recover quickly. One can almost visualize tents standing all across the world and in them ethnic groups, be they Russians, Ossetes, Uzbeks, Bosnians, Serbs, or members of tribes in Central Africa.

A theme of *Bloodlines* is the consistency with which the collapse of empires, or states, has caused ethnic violence to become a prevalent condition of late 20th-century life. Several chapters deal with the territories of the former Soviet Union -- the Europeans now call them "Reforming Republics" -- and how they are responding to the dissolution of that empire. For example, Russians who migrated into areas such as Estonia and Latvia even before the expansion of the Imperial period are lumped together with the more recent arrivals from Russia who are considered occupiers. Now, all of them are perceived as immigrants and as ethnically distinct from Estonians and Latvians.

The way the presence of Russians is handled in different parts of the former Soviet Union varies, depending on the ethnic group they are facing. For example, the way Russians are being pressured to leave an area takes on different forms. In Ossetia, an area at the foot of the Caucasus that Volkan does not discuss, systematic efforts pressure Russians out. It is not the same pressure as that in Chechnya and Ingushetia, but it is still a form of ethnic cleansing. Even if it is not the violent form that Volkan describes for parts of

the former Yugoslavia, it takes the form of Russians not attaining jobs, promotions, raises, and parking permits. While Volkan deals with the behaviors in the Balkans to illustrate the extremes to which ethnicity is being carried, these less violent forms of cleansing are felt with great intensity and extreme personal hardship by those whom they affect. These "milder forms" of cleansing are less visible to the Western press but very obvious to the people who have lived in these areas for generations because they undermine their standard of living, lifestyle, and very life.

While these cleansings are taking place in some of the Reforming Republics, in others, as Volkan describes so well, a rapprochement is being articulated -- a compromise, by the way, in which he and his Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction at the University of Virginia actively participated. All sections of the book bear close reading, but the one on a cemetery in Riga needs special care; it shows with which wisdom and insight he and his teams have worked in these areas of the world. While some authors see themselves almost as travelers, Volkan came to the task of assisting rapprochement with a profound understanding of psychology and history. One can argue that the presence of his team -- with its clear understanding of the intense feelings, the hurt and the abuse -- may have done no more than provide a safe place and skilled leadership. But their offering a safe haven and being facilitators is a significant contribution beyond mere analysis of the problem.

One can contrast the experience of some of the states that have emerged from the Soviet Union with other areas of the world that Volkan has studied, for example, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Cyprus. Again, one finds here distinct similarities and differences. One of the most cruel and vicious of the efforts at ethnic cleansing took place in Bosnia. By contrast, one may study Cyprus where the conflict simmered and never reached the sort of inhumanity as it did in Bosnia. Volkan does an exceptional job explaining how various ethnic groups reached the point of explosion. One of his unique interpretations is how ethnic groups in this part of the world -- but obviously in others as well -- selected certain events in the past to characterize as "chosen victories" or "chosen traumas." For Serbs, the most obvious of these choices is Kosovo. Unlike most authors, he is able to explain this Medieval battle not only from the Serb but also from the Turkish point of view. He provides a

magnificent illustration of how events over time are interpreted to mean a loss against an aggressor and occupier, and how this loss is used as a way to define and to separate an ethnic group from a neighboring or occupying ethnic group. I am struck by how similar the experience in the former Yugoslavia is to that of the Chechyns, Ingushy, and Ossetes. All of them look back to a similar traumatic experience which defined their ethnic group vis-à-vis outsiders — the Turks in Bosnia, or the Mongols -- later known as the Tatars -- in the Caucasus. The defeat of the local ethnic groups by these early outsiders and then their struggle against them was later transferred to the Russians who came into the area in the 18th century. The horrors of the 1920s, the Stalin deportations, and the recent Russian attacks in the area all served to refine the image of the outsiders who are not only different but also evil and must be resisted. When, today, the people of the Caucasus fight against the Russian state, they do so with the same intention as their ancestors because they define themselves by the “outsider.”

Volkan also has been able to resolve the difficulty of defining or separating oneself as a member of one ethnic group from another in an area that for a long period of time has had an ethnic mix. For example, how did one, or does one, know in Bosnia that one is Serb, Croat, or Muslim (Turk)? The bloodlines are intermixed, the language is similar if not the same, and the names are similar -- though, yes, the religions are different. Volkan shows that while people in Bosnia knew that they had different ethnic blood(s) flowing in them, they had to decide to which ethnic group they belonged. In the exceptional film, *Vukovar*, everyone with time had to decide to which group he or she belonged. This selection of one's bloodline, or “spermline” in the language of the Caucasus, is similar to that area where people have Mongol, Cossack, Russian, and other blood flowing in their veins and must now decide, if there is any doubt on the part of others, to which group they belong.

One of Volkan's finest insights deals with the Turks on Cyprus. During the years from 1963 to 1974, when they were ghettoized into a small area of the island, many Turkish families kept parakeets, and he provides evidence that they used the birds to sustain their image of themselves as functioning and independent individuals, families, and as a group. As soon as the ghettos could be abandoned, the parakeets disappeared. I am

reminded of the recent American penchant to collect toy towns. Surely the desire to recreate pretty and cute towns with shops and post offices symbolizes the desire of many Americans to live in such pleasant and safe environments, away from the ones in which they actually must live.

Volkan's *Bloodlines* is not only the work of a mature scholar but also a warning to everyone who is willing to hear about the excesses of ethnic pride. We ought to heed his warning even in our ethnically “integrated” society. All too many of the other societies he discusses also seemed to be ethnically integrated at some point.

*Peter Petschauer is Professor of History at Appalachia State University and past Chair of the University of North Carolina Faculty Assembly. □*

## A Matricentric Narrative Gem

Andrew Brink

Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

*Essay review of Daniel Dervin, Matricentric Narratives: Recent British Women's Fiction in a Postmodern Mode. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press, 1997. ISBN 0773486445, iii, 279 pp., \$89.95. Winner of the Adelia Mellon Prize for "its distinguished contribution to scholarship."*

*Matricentric Narratives* is a polished gem reflecting so many glints as to dazzle the reader. Its substance is made to seem clear, but the surfaces and refractions are so many and so complex as to pose the reader with no easy task. We are too close to the recent efflorescence of women's fiction, feminism, post-modernist “theory,” and revised psychoanalysis to hope for full clarity. Dervin is remarkable for his determination to face these interconnected manifestations and to try to make sense of them. His guidance is deft and often illuminating. If he has not completely made sense, it is not for want of vigorous address to the leading critical questions in the culture of our time. Future historians of Western culture and society will turn to this book as they try to explain the explosion of feminine consciousness into the creative arts and the critical reaction to that explosion.

I would have hoped for more to be said about fear of women and of heterosexuality. I am greatly impressed by two books by Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (1986) and *Evil Sisters: The*

*Threat of Female Sexuality and the Cult of Manhood* (1996), both of which reveal the power with which misogyny fuels representations of women as lethal seductresses in 19th and 20th-century art and literature. Dijkstra may not explain analytically the reasons for male terror, sadistic control, or avoidance of sexually arousing women, but he certainly does document its occurrence in imagery created by men. Dervin no doubt knows all about culturally pervasive fear of women, but he chooses a less alarmist, more mollifying, even meliorist tack without being sanguine about the outcome. Dervin comes across as a decent, caring male with no wish to pick fights with feminists, nor does he try to argue away their attacks on patriarchal suppression of women. He is too well grounded in psychoanalysis to think that winning public disputes can relieve suffering. Instead of addressing the tragic record of men trying to outmaneuver and control females, too often by idealizing only to demonize them, he sets about to appreciate their recent cultural achievement in writing fiction.

At least the book began that way, as a sort of social scientist's investigation of the remarkable productions of British women writers from the 1960s, such as Margaret Drabble, to those of the 1980s, such as Anita Brookner. But ideological disputes, arising from Parisian intellectual disruptions in 1968 and flooding into all subsequent literary criticism, broke up this plan, deflecting Dervin into grappling with the critical nihilism he so disliked. Somebody of lesser intellect would have given up the project, but not Dervin who knows that as a psychohistorian he has something special to offer. How much of lasting value for thinking about creativity in our disturbed age comes out of this book? Quite a bit, I believe. First, the term "matricentric" is a good one, avoiding as it does the too clinical suggestion of "gynocentric," or the politically inflamed "feminist." Matrix, or creative womb, incorporates the biological, psychoanalytic, and sociological aspects of novels by women (pp. 18, 186). This classification opens a discussion virtually unmanageable in one book, yet there is no going forward without at least sketching the issue of female creativity. This is done with telling accuracy and Dervin's example is exemplary for male critics.

Central to the problem facing literary critics is how to use, or what to say about, "theory," that harsh anti-bourgeois doctrine that

seeks to undermine the claims of art to coherence and meaning. Not only did its proponents claim that literary texts can always be made to contradict themselves, they asserted that, by "intertextuality," texts write themselves, and that the agency of authors should be downgraded. Roland Barthes proclaimed the "death of the author," while Michel Foucault theorized a mere "author function" in place of the pervasive living presence of authors in their texts assumed by liberal humanists. Suddenly, the writer, with all his or her conflicts, was expelled from the text, with linguistic transactions substituted for the interplay of feelings. Memory, intrapsychic and interpersonal conflict, and affect itself were ruled out of criticism, depersonalized techniques of reading for the ambiguities of language put in their place. Little wonder that a critic such as Dervin, interested in Eriksonian identity quests by women writers in their fiction, should be disconcerted by the new critical dogmatics. If there is no such thing as an author seeking to clarify feeling in however a displaced way, then what is the use of literary studies in the humanities?

Dervin knows that something went very wrong when "theory" started the flight from affect and reflection upon lived experiences. He also knows how intimidatingly pervasive in the academy the new "deconstructionist" or "postmodern" ideology became and at what risk to professional reputation one tried to counteract it in the name of humane values. By the late 1990s the worst of dogmatic distortions of creativity may have passed, but the lingering bitterness of conflicts among teachers and critics has yet to subside. Perhaps for this reason Dervin's response on behalf of psychoanalysis seems more like a quick riposte than a considered re-working of basic questions.

In part, the reason is that, among the most powerful postmodern theorists, Jacques Lacan is still regarded, especially among literary critics, as a reliable guide to Freud. When Lacan asserted that the unconscious is structured like a language, literary critics took notice, appropriating a whole set of fanciful Lacanian assumptions, including some derogatory to women and others, such as the chimerical "mirror stage" of infantile misrecognition, a concept quite contrary to recent research in infant development.

Dervin rightly deplores the relativizing of psychoanalysis in "cultural studies," the fashionable postmodern academic pursuit.

Psychoanalysis is misunderstood when it is given primacy amongst the tools of criticism. Yet this is no easy task when the Oedipus complex, motive hunting, and psychobiographical narratives have themselves been called to question. Freudians were less helped than dislocated by Lacanians, and both are challenged by object relations revisionists and attachment theorists. Postmodern "cultural politics" warp psychoanalysis, which for Dervin is basically about "how male/female children engage common and special development conflicts to become infinite varieties of men and women" (p. 177). It is not a metalanguage by which to address historical uses of power, nor a weapon that can be responsibly used in gender wars. Dervin would like to rescue psychoanalysis for what it uniquely contributes to understanding creativity and the cultural manifestations of the individual and group unconscious. So occluded have its legitimate uses become that there is less of the skilled psychohistorian in this book than the embattled Dervin clearing away ideological misconceptions so that the real work of criticism can begin. It would be good to have his extended reading of, say, the novels of Margaret Atwood, to which he could bring the scholarship and sensitivity of his work on D.H. Lawrence; incommensurables to be sure, but my wish is clear. (See *A "Strange Sapience": The Creative Imagination of D.H. Lawrence*, 1987.) As it is, Dervin is to be thanked for his vigorous examination of the critical detritus which is easily overwhelming without someone of his range to sort it. Dervin's critical priorities seem exactly right. I have seen nothing better than his plea on pages 184-5 of *Matricentric Narratives* for returning to the history of children as the starting place for understanding social conflicts and creativity in any era.

*Andrew Brink is a literary scholar and psychohistorian who taught at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, from 1961-1988 and headed the Humanities and Psychoanalytic Thought Programme at the University of Toronto from 1988-1993. His publications include Obsession and Culture: A Study of Obsession in Modern Fiction (1996). □*

### Princess Diana

Dear Editor,

Writing on Princess Diana's death in last December's **Clio's Psyche**, I proposed a possible connection between an increasingly hostile group-

fantasy and the role of the paparazzi as empowered delegates to enact her sacrifice. Like all psychohistorical analyses, especially of current events, this one had to be tentative. However, I have since been surprised to find an almost uncanny piece of supporting evidence in the *London Review of Books*, October 16, 1997, p. 4. It was disclosed that the British media had already begun planning for just such a singular catastrophe: "We had worked to a fictional scenario," wrote TV news editor John Morrison, "involving the death of a leading royal in a car crash in a foreign country." Thus, when the news came in, the BBC was primed to play its part in orchestrating the global mourning.

### Letters to the Editor

Dan Dervin  
Fredericksburg, Virginia

Dear Editor,

Dan Dervin could have done a lot more with Diana as a feminist icon -- a strong, empowered woman of the 1990s [in "Princess Diana" in the December issue]. Unlike such strong royal women as Queen Mary and the Queen Mother, Diana used her strength not to support her husband but to weaken and humiliate him. She appears to have used men in ways which men are not supposed to use women, that is, as "sex objects."

Richard Brashares  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

*Professor Brashares is a historian of England with a specialty on the British peerage. After teaching at various universities including Mississippi and Temple, he retired from Temple University as an administrator. □*

### Bulletin Board

The **SATURDAY WORK-IN-PROGRESS WORKSHOPS** schedule is as follows: On **March 7** the general topic is the biographers' use and misuse of empathy and the panel is comprised of **Charlotte Goodman** (Skidmore College), **Vivian Rosenberg** (Drexel University), **Linda Simon** (Skidmore), and **Paul Elovitz** (Ramapo College). On **April 4** **John Hartman** (University of Michigan and private practice) will present on "Group Process and Propaganda: The Case of Nazi

Anti-Semitic Film." On **April 25** psychoanalysts **Mary Lambert**, **Conalee Shneidman**, and **Hanna Turken** will conclude the spring program with "The Mothers of Psychohistorians." In September **Eva Fogelman** (CUNY Graduate Center and private practice) will present on "The Rescuer Self." **AWARDS AND HONORS: David Beisel**, previously the recipient of a New York State Chancellor's Award for outstanding teaching, has been granted a National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development Teaching Excellence Award. He will represent his college in the national competition which will be held in Austin in May. **Ralph Colp** (Columbia University) has been interviewed extensively on camera for the BBC documentary, "Darwin, the Man," which will be aired in March. **CONFERENCES: The Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society** is having its fourth annual conference on November 6-8, 1998, at Emory University in Atlanta Georgia. The theme is "Oedipus Today" and papers and panels are welcome. The Program Chair is Juliet Flower MacCannell, 916 Ashbury Street, San Francisco, CA 94117, Fax: (415) 664-9584, e-mail: <jfmaccan@uci.edu>. The **European Psychohistory Congress**, sponsored by a variety of organizations, is scheduled for July, 1998, in Paris. For information, e-mail <jatlas@hornet.liu.edu> or fax (718) 488-1086. The featured speaker at the **International Psychohistorical Association's** (IPA) June 3-5, 1998, conference at Fordham Law School in New York City will be **Alice Miller**. Contact Henry Lawton, e-mail <HWLIPA@aol.com> or phone (201) 891-4980, for convention details. The **International Society for Political Psychology** (ISPP) has a March 1 deadline for paper proposals for its July 12-15, 1998, annual conference in Montreal. The topic is "Identities and Interests at the Close of the Century" and the program chair is Jon Krosnick, Tel.: (614) 292-3496. **TRAVEL: David Beisel** enjoyed a mid-year stay in Puerto Rico and **Diane Gross** (NPAP) is studying Cantonese after traveling to China. **Don Hughes** (University of Denver) recently spent five weeks in India. After their Egyptian trip was canceled due to fundamentalist terrorism, **Lee and Conalee Shneidman** took a December break in Central America. **GRANT SUPPORT: Our appreciation to the Ramapo Foundation for 1997 support for typing the interview of Lynn Hunt. The American Psychoanalytic Association (APA) has announced that it has over \$130,000 to support new research proposals in 1998. Grants of up to \$20,000 per year for up to two years are available for**

psychoanalytic researchers with a March 15, 1998, deadline. Contact Robert M. Galatzer-Levy of Maryland, Tel.: (312) 922-5077, Fax: (312) 922-5084, e-mail: <gala@midway.uchicago.edu>. **OUR THANKS:** To our members and friends for the support that makes **Clio's Psyche** possible. To Patrons Herbert Barry, Ralph Colp, Dominic and Mena Potts, and Jerome Wolf; Sustaining Members Alberto Fergusson and Peter Petschauer; Supporting Members: Andrew Brink, Florian Galler, William Joseph, and Hannah Turken; and Contributing Members David Beisel and Michael Hirohama. Our thanks for thought-provoking materials to Thomas Blass, Richard Brashares, Andrew Brink, Dan Dervin, Lynn Hunt, George Kren, David Lotto, Andre Modigliani, Peter Petschauer, Robert Pois, Paul Roazen, Francois Rochat, and Lee Shneidman. Thanks to Aimee Elg, Michele O'Donnell, and Michelle White for proofreading, and to Anna Lentz for her assistance. □

**"Group Process and Propaganda:  
The Case of Nazi Anti-Semitic Film"**  
An April 4, 1998 (Saturday)  
Psychohistory Forum  
Work-in-Progress Presentation  
by John Hartman (University of Michigan)















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## Death to the Winner: A "Kennedyesque" Enactment

Daniel Dervin  
Mary Washington University

On New Year's Eve on Aspen mountain, in the late afternoon after most skiers had taken their last run, about 30 skiers -- including Michael Kennedy, son of the late Robert Kennedy, along with several of his siblings and their children -- embarked on a singular game that had become a seasonal ritual. Michael displayed a snow-filled, plastic waterbottle and, turning on a video-cam, captured the start of ski-football. The day before, the game had ended in a tie, and, despite warnings from the ski patrol, the group gathered for a rematch, with the slogan "Death to the Loser" echoing on the slopes turned icy by the banking sun. Michael's mother Ethel, who in some reports had supplied the ball, drank cocoa on the sundeck while the others began the contest. At first Michael handled the camera but then, passing it on to his daughter Rory, went out for a pass. An expert skier and organizer of these annual events, Michael lost control of a ski while catching the ball and, turning to exclaim, "This is great!", smahed into a tree. He died instantly of massive injuries to the brain and spinal column.

Though the media accurately reported his death as accidental, they could not refrain from ehashing the traditional Kennedy risk-taking and recklessness, or from depicting Michael as a mixture of Eros and Thanatos, whose life was "just one breathtaking downhill streak" in the words of Steve Dunleavy (*New York Post*, January 3). Thus, amidst celebrating the Kennedy mystique of service, idealism, and derring-do, an eerie sense of fatedness suffused the responses. Shadows of blighted lives from generations past fell over the present tragedy. Along with the Kennedy brothers John and Robert's assassinations in the 1960s were the older brother Joe's death in World War II and the younger brother Ted's Chappaquiddick. Having granted the vaunted Kennedy vigor, exuberance, and joie de vivre, the gods returned to exact a cruel vengeance. As free will seemed bound by harsh necessity, action turned into enactment.

Like his father Robert who ran his brother Jack's campaign, Michael ran the campaign of his uncle Ted and had begun helping his brother Joe run for governor. Like the Kennedys from the patriarchal Joseph down, Michael did not let marriage interfere with his womanizing until his affair with a teenage babysitter led to divorce. He was also devoted to public service. So far Michael, who was born in 1958 and was 10 when his father was killed, performed true to type. But a darker shadow, this one cast by Camelot, may have been more fatal. It [the shadow???) flung [correct???) the happy memories, captured on film, of the legendary Kennedy brothers playing touch football on the White House lawn and of Michael's father tossing the football with him at Hyannisport [more???) – this whole sentence is unclear to me].

Michael could never replicate those sunny games, which had become profoundly linked in his memory with violent deaths by head injuries, any more than he could he outdistance the father seen as the "bravest guy who ever lived" (*Newsweek*, January 12). But he could contrive to fuse the game of innocence with the imminent danger of death. An unlikely variant of football would be played on the icy slopes of Aspen Mountain; the players would forego ski poles, ignore warnings from the ski patrol, and, of course, shun helmets. The rubrics of these rituals favored risk, excluded safety. Only under certain conditions could the lives and deaths of beloved ancestors be enacted to allow the living a transitory rush of fusion. Like other Kennedy wives, mistresses, and mothers, Ethel would be co-opted to validate the games while being confined to the sidelines where she served as a symbolic accomplice.

"There was blood all over the place," a witness observed. In the end, assassination in some terrible and mysterious way had become internalized as sacrifice -- accidental yet fateful -- and the death of the parent would be enacted as the death of the self.

*Dan Dervin, PhD, who has been immersed in psychohistory and psychobiography for many years, is currently in Colorado writing a biography of a pioneer Italian immigrant priest. He also is bringing out a collection of short stories in the spring.*

*Editor's Note: The death of Congressman Sony Bono, which also was caused by slamming into a tree while on skis, drew added attention to the dangerous behavior in the name of sport which is common in America. □*

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In the early 1960s, Stanley Milgram conducted an experiment on obedience to authority. His findings immediately stunned the scientific community and beyond. People asked, how was it possible that fully two-thirds of the apparently normal adults who participated in Milgram's study had followed the orders of the experimenter (a technician ostensibly in charge of running a study on memory and learning) to the point of repeatedly inflicting severe electric shocks on a learner who was trying unsuccessfully to memorize a list of 30 pairs of words? Could people really be so willing to obey the orders of an authority figure no matter what the consequences might be for their fellow human beings?

As Milgram was obtaining the results of his experiment, Hannah Arendt was covering Adolph Eichmann's war crimes trial in Jerusalem for the *New Yorker* magazine. Soon after the trial, Arendt wrote about the "banality of evil," referring to the Nazis' success in routinizing the persecution of Jews in Germany to such an extent that it became an accepted part of daily life for citizens of the Third Reich. The Nazis' success in Germany was matched in numerous other countries as well, as their empire and influence expanded.

- Arendt's view of the "banality of evil" is consistent with Milgram's findings. But if Stanley Milgram discovered in his laboratory at Yale University what European history had demonstrated during the 1930s and early 1940s, this is only part of the truth because

## Awards and Honors

**CORST Essay Prize** • Professor Janice M. Coco, Art History, University of

California-Davis, winner of the First Annual American Psychoanalytic Association Committee on Research and Special Training (CORST) \$1,000 essay prize, will present her paper, "Exploring the Frontier from the Inside Out in John Sloan's Nude Studies," at a free public lecture at 12 noon, Saturday, December 20, Jade Room, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City.

**Sidney Halpern Award for the Best Psychohistorical Idea** • The Psychohistory Forum is granting an award of \$200 to Michael Hirohama of San Francisco for starting and maintaining the Psychohistory electronic mailing list (see page 98).

### Some Forthcoming Features

Interview with **Lynn Hunt**, author of *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*

Review of **Rudolph Binion's** new book, *Sounding the Classics: From Sophocles to Thomas Mann*, by **Dan Dervin**.

"The Enigma of Canada's Mackenzie King" by **Paul Roazen**

"A Health Care 'Purity' Campaign" by **David Lotto**

"Marx's Road to 'On the Jewish Question'" by **J. Lee Shneidman**

Articles on Stanley Milgram by **Thomas Blass** and by **George Kren**

### The History of Psychohistory

**Clio's Psyche's** interviews of outstanding psychohistorians have grown into a full-fledged study of the pioneers and history of our field. Psychohistory as an organized field is less than 25 years old, so most of the innovators are available to tell their stories and give their insights. Last March, the Forum formally launched the Makers of the Psychohistorical Paradigm Research Project to systematically gather material to write the history of psychohistory. We welcome memoirs, letters, and manuscripts as well as

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### Psychohistory Forum Presentations

**September 27**

**George Victor on Hitler's Masochism**

**November 15**

**Michael Flynn, "Apocalyptic Hope —  
Apocalyptic Thinking"**

Contact Paul H. Elovitz (see page 34).

### Free Subscription

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### THE MAKERS OF PSYCHOHISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT

To write the history of psychohistory, the Forum is interviewing the founders of our field to create a record of their challenges and accomplishments. It welcomes participants who will help identify, interview, and publish accounts of the founding of psychohistory.

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