
Clio's Psyche

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

Volume 6, Number 3

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Holocaust Consciousness, Novick's Thesis, Comparative Genocide, and Victimization

How Hollywood Hid the Holocaust Through Obfuscation and Denial

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In the decade following the Second World War and our initial confrontation with the Holocaust in all of its enormity, the motion picture industry continued to be dominated by "the Jews who invented Hollywood." It was these Jews who had created the myths that helped Americans cope with the enormous trauma of the Great Depression

(Continued on page 106)

Reflections on Competitive Victimhood

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Review of Peter Novick, The Holocaust in American Life. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999. ISBN 0395840090, 373 pp., \$27.

Peter Novick is a fine historian who has written a fine, if flawed, study. In *The Holocaust in American Life* he asks many of the right questions and offers some insightful answers. As I read along, I found myself nodding in agreement at

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many points while imagining the howls of outrage provoked by his several challenges to current orthodoxies. For example, Tony Judt -- an unusually balanced scholar and one of my favorite historians -- found Novick's book to be "dense, carefully researched, and rather irritating" ("The Morbid Truth," *The New Republic*, July 19 and 26, 1999). The book stirred up my own thoughts on competitive victimhood.

Psychohistorians will find here some useful observations. In an interesting chapter on Holocaust consciousness in relation to the newly emerging phenomenon of competitive victimhood (the tendency among various non-Jewish groups to promote their own victimizations), he speaks of "Holocaust envy." In a couple of places, he notes that the Holocaust has become a kind of "moral and ideological Rorschach," "a screen on which people [have] projected a variety of values and anxieties." And he acknowledges that "in the special case of Holocaust survivors, the succession of trauma, repression, and return of the repressed often seems plausible." That, however, is about it, psychologically. Novick soon becomes defended: "the available evidence," he says, "doesn't suggest that, overall, American Jews (let alone American gentiles) were traumatized...."; he concludes that historical explanations do not involve "conjuring up dubious" notions like a "social unconscious" (which he puts in quotes). Indeed, he casts doubt on the realities of repression itself while seeming to allow for it. "(Even here ... survivors in the late 1940s frequently wanted to talk about their Holocaust experience and were discouraged from doing so.)" Passages like these suggest that Novick has an inadequate understanding of trauma; one guesses that he does not know, or accept, that embedded in the repressed trauma is also the wish to express it. And, like many writers on the Holocaust, he flees from any psychological explanations. (See my "Resistance to Psychology in Holocaust Scholarship," the *Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Fall 1999, p. 124.)

Even though he is not a psychohistorian, Novick does ask important psychohistorical questions: Why here? Why now? Why has the Holocaust, which "took place thousands of miles from America's shores" and affected only "a small fraction of one percent of the American population," become a central part of late-20th-century American consciousness? This is a truly important issue, yet one of the things which makes Novick's work so frustrating is that he is unable to provide any

answer outside the boundaries of traditional social and political categories.

Novick's chronological reconstruction seems correct. No one talked or thought much about the Holocaust in the 1940s and 1950s because, he says, Jews fought hard not to be identified as victims; the immediate post-war years were an upbeat time; tales of horrific suffering were too depressing to listen to, anyway; and West Germany had become an ally in the Cold War (no repression here). Even the 1950s success of the book, stage play, and film versions of *The Diary of Anne Frank* made Anne into a universal, not Jewish, symbol. Things changed, says Novick, with press coverage of the capture and trial of Adolf Eichman. In the 1970s came viewings of the television mini-series, *The Holocaust*. These two events in particular were what brought the Holocaust forward into American consciousness. Moreover: "When a high level of concern with the Holocaust became widespread in American Jewry, it was, given the important role that Jews play in American media and opinion-making elites, not only natural, but virtually inevitable that it would spread through the culture at large." (We know what he means, but one may hear in these words disquieting echoes of anti-Semitic statements like "The Jews run Hollywood.")

Novick finds this renewed emphasis on Jewish consciousness the result of "survival anxiety," fears that secularism, materialism, and out-group marriage in the late 20th century were eroding Jewish identity. When Novick turns to other contributing factors, he broadens his analysis to include other recent social and intellectual trends, mentioning the related growth of "the new ethnicity" and "identity politics." Although he writes that the "roots of these many-sided phenomena were various and tangled -- too complex to be detailed here," he does offer some brief observations.

The threatened "loss of identity" in the U.S. -- and not only among Jews -- produced a quest for "a new identity of experience[d] collective disadvantage." The new identity became a victim identity. Causes included new media images of blacks in the post-civil rights era as "trapped in despair and hopelessness in the urban ghettos. A new focus on spousal abuse and child abuse," the homeless who flooded city streets, and "a strong emphasis in historical and literary works on the experience of losers."

All of this helped the Holocaust move "to the center of American culture." In the 1970s it

"came to seem an appropriate symbol of contemporary consciousness" because the assassinations of the 1960s, the hopes for a Great Society which "had all been dashed," and Vietnam and Watergate had raised doubts about America's idealism and what constituted the real bases of U.S. culture. In this environment, the Holocaust "became an aptly bleak emblem for an age of diminished expectations." But what Novick leaves out here is the crucial role of Christian fundamentalists and the growing apocalyptic expectations, studied by Strozier and others, that this is the End Time and that the imminent Second Coming of Jesus is connected in some way with the birth of the State of Israel. He misses the possibility that the consciousness of many Christians turned to Jews and to recent Jewish history not merely because Christianity emphasizes "suffering and redemption."

On the whole, Novick's is a good effort at traditional historical explanation. But when he gets, finally, to an emotion — to the passages quoted above about abuses and "diminished expectations" — that Americans became "depressed" about, he has to leave it there, and moves quickly on to other issues.

Psychohistorians will want to know more. The emergence of a new widespread phenomenon which prizes the victim identity is a startling development and is not "self-evident." To *identify* is to describe and it is a description of a process, not a cause of things; it cries out for deeper explanation.

How to approach the emerging culture of competitive victimization psychohistorically? One way to mark the onset of a depression (I remember reading somewhere in the psychoanalytic literature) is when an analyst begins to read obsessively about the Holocaust. By analogy, one measure of a society's depression may be when large numbers begin to express that depression by directly assuming the identity of victims themselves. In a competitive society it is perhaps inevitable that this trend should also produce what Novick calls the "Victim Olympics" -- what others have called "the Olympics of suffering." (Novick insightfully observes the "greatest victory is to wring an acknowledgement of superior victimization from another contender.") It is not just that every group is competing for "public honor and public funds": victim one-upmanship looks like regression, and sounds to me like so many squealing siblings seeking to be crowned King of Pain by the American "family."

One reason for this emerging culture of suffering is suggested by the title of a recent piece by Ian Buruma in *The New York Review of Books*, called "The Joys and Perils of Victimhood" (April 8, 1999, pp. 4, 6, 8 and 9). Buruma seems to be on to something when he recognizes, but does not develop, the rarely acknowledged secret regressive pleasures of victimhood: the secondary gains of attention and the concern of others; the possibility of financial compensation; the thrill of being allowed to continuously express "righteous" anger; the "right" to be depressed and cranky; the lure of powerlessness. It is not that there have not been victims (and legitimate anger) in history, for surely one of psychohistory's roles is to bring the consequences of multiple traumas to the consciousness of wider audiences. Here, however, I am concerned with psychological functions and emotional payoffs. As Buruma notes, "almost every commu-

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nity, be it a nation or a religious or ethnic or sexual minority, has a bone to pick with history. All have suffered wrongs." Nothing new here. So the questions remain, Why here? Why this? Why now?

Buruma makes at least two observations which psychohistorians will find compelling. In a passage reminiscent of Dan Dervin writing in **Clio's Psyche**, Buruma says:

Princess Diana was in fact the perfect embodiment of our obsession with victimhood. Not only did she identify with victims, often in commendable ways, hugging AIDS patients here and homeless people there, but she was often seen as a suffering victim herself: of male chauvinism, royal snobbery, the media, British society, and so on. Everyone who felt victimized in any way identified with her, especially women and members of ethnic minorities.

Diana became our "victim delegate," allowing us to viciously experience our pain through her. There must have been millions upon millions of victims because millions worldwide identified with her suffering and death.

Buruma's second suggestion also has to do with what psychohistorians would call "the delegate role," this time played by victims' children. Most victims -- of Nazism, of Maoist purges -- were prevented from speaking out by their own "shame and trauma." (These things may be present many generations later, as, for example, in some Irish-Americans whose shame prevents them from reading the details of the Great Famine in works like *Paddy's Lament*: they begin the book, then have to put it down, it is "too terrible.") Sometimes, says Buruma, "it is left up to the next generation, the sons and daughters of the victims, to break the silence." He doesn't say so specifically, but there seems to be among them a quest for a healthier, more authentic self. "It was as if part of themselves had been amputated by the silence of their parents."

Buruma's words seem to point us in the direction of the history of childhood. On the one hand, emerging competitive victimhood performs a psychosocial function by allowing those who are more defended (an "older psycho-class"?) to characterize victims as "wimps" who should "get over" their suffering and "get on with their lives," allowing those so defended to displace anger at their own traumatic victimizations as adults, and, especially as children. In almost every writing we

seem to need to reiterate that childhood is not the idyll that society defensively imagines it to be. Sometimes even the mass media may acknowledge this: *The New York Times* recently called its review of psychoanalyst Leonard Shengold's *Soul Murder Revisited*, "Home as Concentration Camp" (Eva Hoffman, *Book Review*, October 17, 1999, p. 28). On the other hand, it is possible that what we are witnessing with the appearance of widespread competitive victimhood is not merely multicultural copycat-ism, but something truly profound, even revolutionary, in the history of childhood.

It is not that public discussions of spousal and child abuse served as catalysts for a new idea of victimhood, as Novick would have it; it is rather that domestic violence -- ever present, never acknowledged -- could now, in the 1970s and 1980s, be discussed in public for the first time as acute social problems. One psychohistorical theory argues that large numbers of better parented people had now emerged with egos strong enough to hear and talk about the kind of suffering which earlier generations had to repress (Lloyd deMause, "Evolution of Childhood," *Foundations of Psychohistory*, 1981, pp. 1-82). As psychiatrist Chaim Shatan has said for years, violence is connected to an unacknowledged ocean of "impacted tears." Comparative studies are needed, of course: for example, what were the psychological roots of the Abolitionists' ability, by the middle of the 19th century, to identify with African-American slaves? Today's new victimhood suggests that millions may have now moved to the "depressive position," that the stronger egos of a better parented psychoclass means less repression, and that they may be ready to move toward some kind of tentative future therapeutic working-through. Can we actually be seeing here some confirmation of those long-term improvements in the evolution of childhood found by deMause's research some 30 years ago? But even if improvements in childcare are merely only a couple of decades old, the new victimhood may be telling us that the sons and daughters of a new generation, by identifying with the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution and expressing themselves through competitive victimhood, are not only ready to express the silent suffering of their parents, but are preparing themselves sometime soon to weep their own impacted tears.

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Professor Beisel, whose specialties are psychohistory and German history, is a prolific author, a past president of the International Psychohistorical Association, and a Contributing Editor to Clio's Psyche. □

Response to David Beisel

Peter Novick
University of Chicago

In the Introduction to *The Holocaust in American Life* I observed that in addressing the question of why the Holocaust wasn't talked about for a long time, then came to be talked about a lot, there was something of a tacit consensus about the answer:

...sometimes explicitly, always implicitly, Freudian.... The Holocaust, according to this influential explanation, had been a traumatic event, certainly for American Jews, more diffusely for all Americans. Earlier silence was a manifestation of repression; the explosion of talk in recent years has been 'the return of the repressed.'

In explaining why I was not attracted to this model -- instead, preferred the approach of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs -- I wrote the following, from which Professor Beisel quotes a snippet:

Surely there were some American Jews -- perhaps even some gentiles -- for whom the Holocaust was a traumatic experience. But the available evidence doesn't suggest that, overall, American Jews (let alone American gentiles) were traumatized by the Holocaust, in any worthwhile sense of that term. They were often shocked, dismayed, saddened, but that's not the same thing, certainly not for purposes of setting in train the inexorable progression of repression and the return of the repressed. Characteristically, it is simply assumed that the Holocaust *must* have been traumatic. And if it wasn't talked about, this *must* have been repression.

In writing this, Professor Beisel says, I "became defended." Are psychohistorians really unaware of how deeply offensive this sort of thing is to those outside the guild? How the superior posture of psychohistorians, condescendingly ex-

plaining to the benighted rest of us, how our views are the result of "defensiveness" furthers the belief that rational scholarly disagreement can't be pursued with them? How this form of argumentation (if one can call it that) makes it certain that they will be confined to a scholarly ghetto within the historical profession?

Claims that Americans were (or were not) "traumatized" by the Holocaust are *empirical* assertions -- estimates (informed guesses, if you will) about the contemporary psychic impact of the Holocaust. Having spent many years immersing myself in surviving evidence which bears on the question (some of which I cite in the book), I concluded that for most American Jews the Holocaust was not "traumatic." Perhaps I was mistaken; I like to think that I am open to correction when I am offered (non-circular) *reasons* for changing my mind. But Professor Beisel offers no grounds for rejecting my conclusion except to assert that it is evident that I am "defended."

A short digression on "empiricism." Any theoretical discourse contains concepts which, in practice, can't be continually questioned -- for psychoanalysis, the universality of infantile sexuality and the Oedipus complex, etc., for Marxism, the class struggle and relations between base and superstructure, etc. One can't pursue Freudian or Marxist analysis without *stipulating* the importance and ubiquity of these phenomena, and much of such analysis consists of exploring how they play out. That's fine. But believing in the existence of certain mechanisms of trauma, repression, and the return of the repressed, and interest in exploring their interaction in practice, does *not* make it legitimate to *stipulate* that, in any particular case, "trauma" and its sequelae are present. And one should be particularly wary of shoehorning a particular case into an interpretive framework because one has developed tools for operating within that framework. Doing so resembles the well-known story of the man looking for his wallet under the streetlight, even though he dropped it down the block, because "the light's better here."

I find it at least "peculiar," Professor Beisel's comment on another observation of mine, concerning why the Holocaust came to figure so largely in American culture at large. I wrote:

A good part of the answer is the fact -- not less of a fact because anti-Semites turn it into a grievance -- that Jews play an important and influential role in Hollywood, the television industry, and the newspaper,

magazine, and book publishing worlds. Anyone who would explain the massive attention to the Holocaust has received in these media in recent years without reference to that fact is being naive or disingenuous.

Of my remarks on this subject, Professor Beisel writes: "We know what he means, but one may hear in these words disquieting echoes of anti-Semitic statements like 'The Jews run Hollywood.'" Are we again delving into the depths of my (in this case "self-hating") psyche, as Professor Beisel "hears disquieting echoes"? Or does Professor Beisel *dissent* from my view that one can't ignore this dimension of the question without being naive or disingenuous? He is, he tells us, "disquieted" about these remarks of mine, but *why*? Hard to say.

On two points having to do with my saying that the Holocaust "became an aptly bleak emblem for an age of diminished expectations," Professor Beisel criticizes me for what I fail to do.

He says that I "leave out ... the crucial role of Christian fundamentalists and the growing apocalyptic expectations ... connected in some way with the birth of the State of Israel." I miss "the possibility that the consciousness of many Christians turned to ... recent Jewish history not merely because Christianity emphasizes 'suffering and redemption.'" But Christian interest in the Holocaust has been greatest among Catholics and "mainstream" Protestant denominations which *eschew* apocalypticism; of all Christians, fundamentalists have been those who have talked *least* about the Holocaust. Again, what *grounds* does Professor Beisel have for asserting that fundamentalism played a "crucial role" in the rise of interest in the Holocaust?

More generally, Professor Beisel chides me for not exploring in detail the *psychic origins* of "diminished expectations." He might as well criticize me for slighting the military and diplomatic roots of the Cold War, which also played a role in my story. Any historian inevitably takes some of the background of what he or she writes about as "a given," lest one get caught up in "infinite regress." For Professor Beisel, diminished expectations, like the growth of victim consciousness, "cries out for deeper explanation." I'm not sure about "cries out," but I agree that it is *worthy* of explanation from various perspectives. I could only do so much, and thought it prudent to restrict myself to realms where I thought I had something worthwhile to contribute.

Peter Novick, PhD, was born in 1934 in Jersey City and retired this year as Professor of History at the University of Chicago. He is the author of The Holocaust in American Life (1999); That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession (1988) which won the American Historical Association's 1989 prize for the best book of the year in American history; and The Resistance vs. Vichy: The Purge of Collaborators in Liberated France (1968) which, in translation, was a bestseller in France. He reports spending many years in psychoanalysis and dedicating That Noble Dream to his analyst.

The Memory of the Holocaust: A Psychological or Political Issue?

Flora Hogman
Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

Quite recently, the Council of French Bishops issued a "declaration of repentance" regarding its "failings" during the Nazi Holocaust. "The Catholic Church knows full well that conscience is formed in remembering, and that, just as no individual person can live in peace with himself, neither can society live in peace with a repressed or untruthful memory." In Germany, Wolfgang Thierse, the Speaker of the *Bundestag* [Parliament], in responding to the contentiousness surrounding the Memorial to the Jews in Berlin, stated, "We are building it for ourselves. It will help us confront a chapter of our history."

The memory of the Holocaust is in the general public awareness and in the news, as well it should be: the World War II generation is now getting older and facing the prospect of death. Its chances for expression and for dialogue become more limited as time goes on; its need for integrating the war experience becomes more urgent. We all know about the groups of survivors and of children of survivors which have mushroomed in recent years; about their writing autobiographies, fiction, and films; about their returning to places of hiding and saying "thank you" to rescuers -- all are trying to give flesh to the years of the Holocaust. We also know about groups of the second generation of Germans -- the children of the German war generation -- and we have heard about German "fatigue" with the Holocaust. And, of course, we

know about Holocaust museums in America and Holocaust awareness in general.

It was not always this way. Soon after the war ended, most people wished to forget about it. The survivors needed to start new lives rather than to dwell on the past. The perpetrators did not wish to be reminded of their deeds; they, too, wanted to resume normal lives and keep what spoils of war they could. There were issues of shame on survivors at being seen as "victims" as well as of avoidance of a sense of guilt by individual and nation bystanders. The factual memories of the past were silenced, to be replaced by myths or a sense of void.

Often a single event or a person served as a catalyst to break the silence -- demonstrating that the past was still alive and could not be buried again. In Israel there was the Eichmann Trial and later in Germany, the case of Anja Rasmus. This young girl from Passau chose to research how people in her town had resisted the Nazis, which was what she had been taught in school. To her dismay, everyone blocked her research. She finally discovered they had not resisted at all. Because she exposed the lies and myths, there were death threats against her and she eventually left Germany, but after she had raised the consciousness of the people. Anja was part of the second and third generations of young Germans who grew up with "silent" parents and/or grandparents. In terms of denial of memory, theirs was a similar experience to that of the children and grandchildren of survivors. We know how these different groups eventually gathered, spoke up, and searched for the "stories" of their families in the war.

Memory, myth, and silence have also struggled in France for center stage after the infamous French collaboration with Germany, orchestrated by Vichy Premier Henri Philippe Pétain. France had lost its glorious image. After the immediate post-war "*reglements de comptes*" [settling of accounts], myths quickly took over. For example, the number of those French who claimed to have resisted Nazi Germany swelled. Soon the Catholic Right (according to Henri Rousso in his book, *Le syndrome de Vichy*, 1987, translated as *The Vichy Syndrome*, 1991) led an effort to rehabilitate Pétain and once again make him the "hero" of France -- claiming that Pétain was trying to "save" France from Germany. They thought he deserved to be treated more as a "martyr" than a quisling. (As I witnessed a few years ago while traveling in France, the picture of Pétain framed in

a French flag still hangs in some homes.) French Fifth Republic President Charles DeGaulle, in his memorial to war deportees, never mentioned the Jews, only "racial" deportees. Rousso sees in the "nostalgic" right wing not only the collaborators of the war but also those who pursued the Algerian war of the 1960s as they sought to hold on to part of the North African patrimony of France as its glorious past.

An indictment of the role of France during World War II was soon incorporated into the 1968 student unrest in the streets of Paris against the inglorious war in Algeria. Filmmaker Marcel Ophüls described the average French reaction during World War II in highly unflattering terms in *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1971). This hugely successful film was banned immediately from French national television. The struggle for remembrance had begun. The struggle to restore the memory of the Holocaust included not only survivors but much better known people such as Ophüls, Serge Klarsfeld, and Claude Lanzmann. Historians joined the search for memory with PhD theses; survivors formed groups and wrote, as did children of survivors. The 1980s trial of Klaus Barbie, a collaborator responsible for numerous deportations and the torture of the leader of the French Resistance, Jean Moulin, reflected the struggles with memory through the judicial system: Barbie's "lawyers" attempted to retain the myths of pure France and reject the "myth" of the good resistance. (Barbie was first defended by a priest-lawyer until the Church put a stop to it.)

Scandals shatter myths but defenders of myths fight back. Thus, although French President Jacques Chirac admitted three years ago to the role of France in the deportation of Jews, a struggle for indemnification of the victims is still being fought as different forces in the French system confront the issue of responsibility for wartime actions.

The war eventually had a large impact on the Catholic Church and European Christianity in general. There were clashes: Paul Touvier, one of the French collaborators, was hidden by the Church for years after the war. "Saving" Jewish souls also produced battles after the war between the Church and the Jewish community, as demonstrated in the Finaly Children Affair in which a convent and Catholic adoptive mother for a long time refused to give back her converted "Catholic children" to their Israeli relatives. However, the guilt produced by the knowledge of the death camps and of the Christian silence during the war

impelled Christians into an examination of conscience, though they often had to be prodded by Jews. The French historian Jules Isaac, whose entire family was murdered in concentration camps, wrote about the Christian teaching of contempt for Jews (*L'enseignement du mépris*, 1962) and was quite instrumental through his dialogues with Pope John XXIII in forging the text of Vatican II in the 1960s in which an expression of equality of all religions was first articulated.

The dogmas of the Church and its triumphalism [the belief that a particular doctrine is superior to all others] were later questioned. In *The Crucifixion of the Jews* (1975), Franklin Littell wrote that two myths were propagated by Christianity: first, God is finished with the Jews and, second, the new Israel (Christian Church) took the place of the Jewish people as carriers of history. As these myths were questioned, Judeo-Christian movements developed with ongoing dialogues, conferences, and publications. Recently New York Cardinal John O'Connor wrote about "his abject sorrow" in *The New York Times*. However, the struggle for acknowledgment of wartime responsibility still goes on in the Catholic Church. For example, Pope Pius XII is to be canonized despite increasing evidence that his conduct during the war was mostly motivated by insuring the survival of his "company," the Church.

This struggle with memory thus involves all protagonists of the war: victims, perpetrators, bystanders, rescuers, the Church, and nations -- all of which impact upon each other. The victims were first afraid of being devastated by "memory" of their suffering but also of imposing knowledge of their suffering. The perpetrators strove for the "banality of evil," engaging in dissociation. The bystanders were afraid to hear horror stories because they didn't want to feel responsible and thus feel guilty -- they then tended to feel victimized themselves. Such splitting and dissociation created a serious curtailment of identity and of a sense of authenticity, perhaps even of the ability to feel. Yet, an event as monstrous as the Holocaust cannot just be cast away. The return of memory and an effort at integration, as shown above, is impelled by a sense of guilt and incompleteness -- often in the next generations -- and the need for authenticity. With the restoration of memory comes an integration of the events and feelings which transform the separate group identities -- amidst the struggles along the way.

Many questions remain. Are we hearing

too much about the Holocaust? Does focusing on it perpetuate a Jew-as-victim status and a self-image as an oppressed people? My initial response is that memory is essential to the ability to mourn, with the resultant integration of suffering and loss into a complete sense of identity: some healing for the victim only comes with acknowledgment of the suffering. Perhaps Heinz Kohut's idea of mirroring the injured self provides an appropriate concept here. In this case, because Jews, Germans, the Church, and various nations are involved, the mourning becomes a communal enterprise. Jews, as the primary advocates for this historical recognition, are helped to transcend the despair following from their loss by the public acknowledgment. In doing this, they feel less like victims and more like parts of the human community.

What about the present widespread interest in the Holocaust? For some, the event becomes a myth, a survival archetype: there has been an evolution from fear of the victim to an admiration for the survivor who now has a complete story to tell and thus becomes a hero worth emulating. But have bystanders been replaced by voyeurs? Do Jews need this "mirroring?" Do they enjoy it? Is it bad? Are they too steeped in the past? Or is it the only way for them to feel that the past is finally integrated? Does it have consequences for the "voyeurs" who might become too identified with the suffering hero and perhaps distort that suffering? There have been fears of "trivialization" of the Holocaust. Whatever the answers, society does need to accept some of the ramifications of this flawed and delayed explosion of information.

Others are bored with the Holocaust and argue that it's not today's problem or even yesterday's; they say it is time to forget. They note that there is much competition for suffering in the world. They think we are stuck on the Jew as victim. Sometimes such criticism becomes anti-Semitic since it is tempting to keep on hating the victim. This perpetuates victim status because one cannot mourn in the middle of hate. And the victims know that the haters don't forget -- witness swastikas periodically painted on Jewish homes or synagogues. Our world must deal with people who have such a need to hate.

So where is the political issue? Earlier this year, Peter Novick, at a presentation on his book, *The Holocaust in American Life* (1999), at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City, asserted that the "memory" of the Holocaust is so much in the forefront in the U.S. today basi-

cally for political purposes: American Jews need to protect Israel. It is in the interest of the American government to reinforce this focus because of its pro-Israeli policies. In the process, the Holocaust is "sacralized," treated as unique, and the Jew remains a victim. Novick reported this to be in marked contrast to the years after the war, until the 1960s, when no one spoke about the Holocaust. He scoffed at the idea of "repressed memories" of trauma, arguing that other concerns were prevalent at the time. At this meeting I stood up in protest, describing the experience of Holocaust survivors including the travails of memory culminating in the Conference of Hidden Children in 1991 and their impact on American Jews. Novick's rejoinder was that Holocaust survivors constitute a miniscule number and thus don't count. Besides, he asserted, memories of survivors cannot be trusted for accuracy. When I spoke further with him about the objectivity of historians on the Holocaust, he referred to his award-winning book, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (1988), in which he alleged that historians are totally nonobjective. Nor do I consider Novick to be objective.

Why do I object to Novick's presentation? After all, I certainly don't advance the idea of the "uniqueness" of the Holocaust beyond that it was unique in the sense that each genocide is different in its own way. Nor do I quarrel with his assertion that anything can be used for political purposes. I object because his presentation created a distorted picture of the tortuous vagaries of "memory" of a traumatic historical occurrence -- he "flattened" this memory into a purely "political" event, dismissing the issue of identity and trauma integration. As we have seen, not remembering as well as remembering can become a political issue. It would make more sense to understand the struggle for integration of group suffering rather than to put it down. This is what I have attempted to illustrate in this short piece, using the European experience. However, I would think that as all Germans must include Nazism in their history, so all Jews must include the Holocaust in theirs, and so must Novick. Unfortunately, there is no way around it.

Flora Hogman, PhD, is a psychologist in private practice in Manhattan who conducts a hidden-children-during-the-Holocaust survivors group. She, alone in her immediate family, survived the war in France where she was a hidden child and has written extensively on the need to remember as a way of coping with trauma.

In 1998 Dr. Hogman was guest editor of the Psychoanalytic Review for a special issue on overcoming genocide and trauma. □

Holocaust Saturation in America

Eva Fogelman
Graduate Center of CUNY

A perception persists that Holocaust awareness is ubiquitous. Peter Novick's exceedingly well researched book, *The Holocaust in American Life*, is based on this premise. But hard data tell a somewhat different story. A 1993 study, conducted by the Roper Organization for the American Jewish Committee, concluded that "ignorance of the Holocaust is rampant in the United States." Thirty-eight percent of a representative sample of 992 adults over the age of 18 did not know what the term "Holocaust" meant, or gave an incorrect interpretation of the term. Of the high school students polled, 53 percent were unenlightened about Holocaust facts. Furthermore, in 1990 an Anti-Defamation League (ADL) survey of Americans and the Holocaust showed that the public, by a 44 percent to 3 percent margin, agreed that the public schools pay too little rather than too much attention to the Holocaust.

How does Peter Novick, a fastidious researcher, ignore these discrepancies? Novick is not alone in his conclusions. For one thing, Novick appears to rely on Tom Smith's synthesis of several polls, in asserting that 97 percent of those who were polled knew what is meant by the Holocaust. A high percentage would surely lead an observer to conclude that the Holocaust has entered the American cultural mainstream. What is missing in these data is what people "really" know.

Although anecdotes are not scientific data, I note a few in order to illustrate the lack of real knowledge in the United States about the destruction of European Jewry. Following the release of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, I was on a tour for my book, *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (1994). The topic was familiar to radio and television talk show hosts, booksellers, university professors, and journalists. When, however, I asked students, "Who was Oskar Schindler?", they would often reply, "Liam Neeson." They either did not know the story, or were confused as to what was fictionalized in this Hollywood version of the Holocaust.

Speaking in several colleges in Illinois, one of the first states to mandate Holocaust education, I often asked students what they learned in high school about the Holocaust. Most could not recall much focus on the topic. This lack of education is not surprising. Although curricula and study materials exist, they do not seem to get to grass roots educators. Many teachers of social studies, history, and English in today's classrooms did not learn about the destruction of European Jewry as students. Clearly, if youngsters are to become educated in this area, teachers need to be appropriately trained.

A second reason to assume that Holocaust consciousness is pervasive is that America has indeed witnessed a dramatic shift towards increased memorialization of the Holocaust through commemoration, education, literature, oral history projects, and research. This heightened Holocaust consciousness bombards the media and the arts. We seem to be now in the midst of a Holocaust *Zeitgeist*. Novick correctly says that when the media focus on the Holocaust it responds to external events, such as Nazi Americans wanting to march in Skokie, Illinois (a neighborhood populated by Holocaust survivors), President Reagan wanting to pay homage to Waffen SS at Bitburg, the Kurt Waldheim affair, the Demjanjuk trial, and Swiss banks' confiscating Holocaust survivors' bank accounts. The media are not necessarily eager to focus on the Holocaust. Producers seem to weigh whether they have focused too much or too little on the Holocaust. When my book was published several months after the release of *Schindler's List*, national television stations who were approached to promote the book said, "Oh, we already covered the topic." When survivors seek to publish their memoirs, they are told, "Holocaust books don't sell" or "The market is flooded. Sorry, we will pass on your book."

Nonetheless, the American public and the organized Jewish community did alter their total avoidance of the subject -- the norm during the 1940s and 1950s -- and shifted to focusing on the Holocaust in response to external events in the 1960s and 1970s, and even more so in the 1980s and 1990s.

Peter Novick astutely navigates the reader through this striking transition. His years of archival research have unearthed fascinating -- some obscure -- facts that were determining factors in denying the victimization and extermination of the Jews of Europe, or in misusing the tragic event for political purposes. One example is Novick's discovery of an early riveting decision in the Jewish community to avoid focusing on the weakness and victimization of

the Jews.

In the late 1940s, John Slawson convened an academic meeting on anti-Semitism that led to the landmark Authoritarian Personality Studies. Slawson shared the results and his conclusions with the Jewish public affairs umbrella organization, the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC, now the Jewish Council for Public Affairs). He concluded from the findings that Jewish organizations "should avoid representing the Jew as weak, victimized, and suffering...." Slawson continued, "...there needs to be an elimination or at least a reduction of horror stories of victimized Jewry.... We must normalize the image of the Jew.... War heroes stories are excellent.... The Jew should be represented *like* others, rather than *like* others. The image of Jewish weakness must be eliminated...." Slawson was most interested in cultural integration of the Jews lest the anti-Semites, who "subconsciously knew that Jews were weak," would be stimulated to act on their "sadistic impulses."

The changes in the Jewish religious community are for the most part ignored in Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life*. This is a significant omission, although not surprising. Novick, a secular Jew, is an "outsider." This is reflected in his analysis and ultimately his conclusion that the Holocaust is "virtually the only common denominator of American Jewish identity in the late twentieth century." Novick does not explain the destruction of European Jewry in the larger context of Jewish history, nor the psychological process of mourning.

The Jewish religious organizations' negligence in not reciting special mourning prayers for the six million dead Jews, the *Kaddish*, was motivated by very different reasons than the rest of the organized Jewish community. Some rabbis (one cited by Novick) felt that the Holocaust was a punishment from God because the Jews of Europe went astray. These early rabbis never explained why pious people were murdered and why a million-and-a-half innocent children were killed. Religious leaders in the Orthodox and Conservative movements deliberately avoided any discussions or liturgical responses to memorialization. Abraham Joshua Heschel, a Holocaust survivor himself, purposely did not bring up the past in his theological teachings. He felt that if American Jewry was to flourish after the Holocaust, Jews needed to concentrate on spirituality rather than focus on "Where was God?"

Novick's conclusion, that most American Jews are dependent on the Holocaust for their identity, is not surprising. Novick himself is an assim-

lated Jew who is not involved in Jewish communal or religious life. There is no question that there are those Jews in America who identify as Jews only through the Holocaust. We do not know with certainty what proportion of Jews in America identify via the Holocaust. Without concrete data, our perceptions, concretized by anecdotes, constitute the lens through which we view the world. I live on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where I participate in the Simchat Torah celebration in which the streets are blocked off to accommodate the joyousness of the holiday; I share a Friday evening Shabbat service with one thousand others; I have witnessed the increased competition to enroll children in Jewish day schools, even as those schools are proliferating. Judaism is thriving on its own -- on its values and its inherent strengths -- and does not depend on the Holocaust for its survival.

At times, *The Holocaust in American Life* is uneven in its thoroughness in researching a specific issue. Sometimes a "sound bite" is used to highlight a specific point, while the complexity of the larger matter is ignored or given short shrift. For example, in his treatment of the "Righteous Among the Nations of the World," Novick is insensitive and uninformed. He concludes that the "institutional use of the commemoration of Righteous Gentiles as 'the exception that proves the rule' has usually been in the service of shoring up that mentality -- promoting a wary suspicion of gentiles." Clearly, Novick has not read the writings of Rabbi Harold Schulweis, who set the agenda of commemoration of rescuers on the American scene, nor has he reviewed the archives of the ADL's Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers, nor has he read my book *Conscience and Courage*.

Novick is accurate when he says that Holocaust survivors (such as Benjamin Meed) are suspicious of Christians. As a late adolescent in Warsaw during the German occupation, Meed did not have an easy time finding a hiding place among his Christian so-called friends. Meed, however, is not the one in the Jewish community who sets the communal agenda of repaying the debt owed by Jews to those non-Jews who risked their lives. In 1953, when Prime Minister Ben-Gurion established Israel's Commission of Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Law, the law included as well the recognition of those worthy of the title "Righteous Among the Nations of the World." The purpose of recognition of rescuers was to make visible the anonymous and visible the hidden to fulfill the Biblical injunction "to vindicate the righteous by rewarding them for their righteousness" (Kings 8:32).

Harold Schulweis, a young rabbi in California at the time of the Eichmann trial, was concerned that when young children learn about the atrocities committed against Jews they will lose trust in the world, and they will fear being Jewish. Schulweis tirelessly spoke of the Jewish responsibility to recognize goodness in order to show Jewish children that amidst all the evil there was goodness, and therefore there is a glimmer of hope. It was in that spirit that he approached me to direct a Jewish Foundation for Righteous Christians in 1986, and in 1987 the Anti-Defamation League sponsored the organization under a new name, the Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers. The purpose of the new foundation was to obviate the misconception held by Novick and others that Jews recognize the rescuers only to show that most were *unrighteous* Christians.

Novick's glib style in discussing lessons of the Holocaust is a response to the misuse of the Holocaust, but he ignores the genuine dilemma of educators, and particularly Jewish educators. The salient question: How do we teach about this historical period while simultaneously educating youngsters to embrace their Jewishness in positive and meaningful ways, without fear?

Combining facts with impressions has its pitfalls. *The Holocaust in American Life* is engaging with its behind-the-scenes information of how the Holocaust as a Jewish tragedy shifted from invisibility to center stage concern in American Jewish life as well as in American public discourse. However, when Novick has to resort to his own notions he is cynical and pessimistic, and at times ahistorical.

At the end of the 20th century, nine out of ten American Jews celebrate a Passover *seder*, a form of commemoration, if you will, of the Jewish people's slavery and liberation from Egypt. The groundwork is now being set religiously, politically, culturally, and nationally for some form of Holocaust commemoration for future generations. We in the post-Holocaust era are all part of the process in the way the generation of Jews that followed the destruction of the First and Second Temples and the Golden Age in Spain were responsible for shaping the memorialization of those events. If the present is any indication of the future then the memory of the destruction of European Jewry will be part of Jewish and world history for posterity.

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Director of Child Development Research and Psychotherapy with Generations of the Holocaust and Related Traumas of the Training Institute for Mental Health. She serves as an advisor to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Her best known publication is Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust (1994). □

Response to Eva Fogelman

Peter Novick
University of Chicago

Some (not all) of Dr. Fogelman's criticisms of my *The Holocaust in American Life* seem to be based on misunderstandings of what I wrote. She says that my book is based on the assumption that "Holocaust awareness is ubiquitous" -- an assumption which she then proceeds to question, basing her argument largely on various public opinion surveys. I am less impressed than she is with how much one can infer from what I term in the book this "blunt and flawed instrument," and I reiterated this caveat on the occasions when I cited them. In any case, on a number of occasions I distinguished between the frequency of *references* to the Holocaust -- increasing *diffuse awareness* of the Holocaust -- and any *substantial knowledge* about the Holocaust. Indeed, so far as gentile Americans are concerned, I argue that concern with the Holocaust is "a mile wide and an inch deep." So, I don't see that we have any quarrel on this point, and I don't understand why she's trying to create one.

There are issues on which Dr. Fogelman offers social (or are they psychological?) explanations of what she sees as the deficiencies in my book. She finds inadequate my treatment of American Jewish religious responses to the Holocaust. This, she says, is because I am "a secular Jew ... an 'outsider'...." Others will have to judge whether the several pages I devote to religious matters are inadequate, but if they are, is the explanation so simple? Are Dr. Fogelman's writings on Polish Catholic rescuers devalued because she is not a Polish Catholic? This kind of offhand reductionism seems to me deplorable -- the sort of thing that gives psychology (and psychohistory) a bad name.

In a similarly reductionist fashion she explains why it is "not surprising" that I conclude that "most American Jews are dependent on the Holocaust for their identity." My conclusion, she says, derives from the fact that "Novick himself is an

assimilated Jew who is not involved in Jewish communal or religious life." For starters, where does she get this "assimilated" stuff, and what is it supposed to mean? And in any case, Dr. Fogelman misstates my conclusion on the question of identity. I wrote, summarizing the long chapter in which the matter is discussed, that "so far as self-understanding is concerned, there's no way of knowing just how many American Jews, and which American Jews, ground their Jewish identity in the Holocaust, but the number appears to be large." I immediately added, "It's clear that the Holocaust has less relative importance for those Jews with an identity firmly rooted in Jewish religious belief or who are otherwise grounded in Jewish culture, but that's a rather small percentage of American Jewry." (Does Dr. Fogelman disagree?) Then, after briefly reviewing the myriad factors I'd previously discussed in the chapter -- factors which, in my view, led to the centering of the Holocaust in American Jewish consciousness -- I wrote the following:

For those who prefer "harder" data, and for what it's worth, there are the results of the American Jewish Committee's "1998 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion." Those responding were asked to rate the importance of various listed activities to their Jewish identity. The year 1998 was the first in which "remembrance of the Holocaust" was included in the list. It won hands down -- chosen as "extremely important" or "very important" by many more than those who chose synagogue attendance, Jewish study, working with Jewish organizations, traveling to Israel, or observing Jewish holidays.

Dr. Fogelman goes on to say that my treatment of "Righteous Gentiles" is "insensitive and uninformed." To demonstrate this, she quotes very selectively from my book. She cites my conclusion about the *institutional* use of the commemoration of Righteous Gentiles while omitting the context of that conclusion. Let me demonstrate this by quoting the relevant passage from my book.

Some *individuals* who pressed for recognition of Christian rescuers wanted to combat blanket condemnation of gentiles; in the words of one such individual, to break down the "fortress-like mentality" of American Jews. But the *institutional* use of the commemoration of Righteous Gentiles as "the exceptions that prove the rule" has

usually been in the service of shoring up that mentality -- promoting a wary suspicion of gentiles.

(I then proceed to illustrate this wary suspicion by noting the frequency with which American Jews observe that they repeatedly ask themselves which of their gentile acquaintances would hide their children, "if it came to that.")

As proof that "institutional" commemoration of rescuers does not serve the function I said it did, Dr. Fogelman cites the Anti-Defamation League's support of her "Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers" and her own writings (which she mistakenly assumes I do not know). But, in fact, the example she gives *supports* my contention. Dr. Fogelman is, as it happens, one of those *individuals* I had in mind. In discussing her book, Abraham Foxman, head of the ADL, which promoted it, illustrates my point about *institutional* use, by publicly insisting that "what is important about the book is that the reader comes away understanding that rescue of Jews was a rare phenomenon. [The fact is] that 700 million people lived in Nazi-occupied Europe; to date 11,000 have been honored by Yad Vashem for rescuing Jews." (I also cite the director of Yad Vashem's Department of the Righteous, who explained that "spicing" the history of the Holocaust with stories of rescuers was indispensable in showing the delinquency of European Christians "against the background of the righteous.")

Readers of this exchange will understand my difficulty in framing a satisfactory response to various adjectives Dr. Fogelman applies to me -- "glib," "cynical," "ahistorical." To decide whether these terms are accurate, as in reaching judgments on the issues which I have briefly addressed above, they'll have to read the book and compare it with Dr. Fogelman's characterizations. □

Comments on Peter Novick's "Response"

**Eva Fogelman
Graduate Center of CUNY**

I thank Peter Novick for his penetrating comments, which help illumine some points in my review of his book.

Researchers are not immune to subjectivity. The questions we choose to study and what we focus on to analyze are often related to some core

of ourselves. Were I writing *The Holocaust in American Life*, it would have included a larger section on religious institutions and their role in Holocaust commemoration.

With respect to Novick's question about how many Jews derive their identity from religion, culture, and nationalism that are not based on the Holocaust, there are no serious hard data. Again, from my vantage point, the percentage is larger than that which Novick cites. Novick's book raised an important question for demographers who are putting together the 2000 *The National Jewish Population Survey*.

As for the "institutional" commemoration of the rescuers, I am certain that Peter Novick is aware of my book, *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*. Novick's use of Abraham Foxman's letter to *The New York Times* in response to a review of my book is out of context, and is inconsistent with the spirit in which the Anti-Defamation League chose to house and administer the Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers. Furthermore, Novick diminishes the passion with which the rescuers are honored at Yad Vashem by thinking that when the instrumentalities [spokespeople] of the organized Jewish community say that there were few rescuers, the institutions are not giving the rescuers their due. Novick's analysis of the rescuer in the landscape of Holocaust commemoration is incomplete and unidimensional. □

From Denial to Remembrance

**Ellen Mendel
Adler Institute of New York**

Why is the Holocaust the topic of so much discussion today, over 50 years later? From a psychological perspective it makes perfect sense that the Holocaust wasn't discussed after World War II and now occupies a central role in Jewish history. Many Jews who came out of the camps were embarrassed and ashamed. After having survived the "unmentionable," to discuss it would have focused on their role, bringing with it too much pain and that which would later be termed "survivor's guilt." The losses were too great and the experiences too horrifying.

Moreover, it seemed that people in America didn't want to hear about it. America was the victor. After all the losses and sacrifices of the war, people didn't want to be reminded of its vic-

tims and casualties. They wanted to enjoy the new peace and prosperity. And the survivors wanted to Americanize themselves and join the mainstream as quickly as possible.

So the survivors kept their nightmares repressed during daylight and sometimes at night as well, often not even discussing them with their families and children. Their experiences as the victims of Hitler's genocidal assault, on some level, seemed so unreal as to cast doubts on their verity. Often it was hard for the survivors themselves to believe what they had withstood. In spite of the newsreel pictures of the liberation of the camps, which showed the indescribable, shocking everyone who viewed them, there was a general atmosphere of denial.

Another reason for the collusion of silence is that our national policy had changed. Almost overnight at the end of the war, the United States switched enemies from Germany to the Soviet Union. After the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, we started reaching out to the Germans to help us fight Communism. We sheltered Nazis in our country and sometimes encouraged their escape to South America as well. It seemed "unfashionable," certainly "not nice," to continue to discuss the atrocities. The general American public didn't want to know and the survivors didn't want to talk.

By the late 1960s and through the 1970s, though, some survivors such as Eli Wiesel and a few others in Holocaust anthologies did have the courage to describe their experiences, feeling the necessity of bearing witness. In 1975, Lucy Dawidowicz's well-researched book, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* came out, documenting what had happened all over Europe. All these books paved the way for Helen Epstein's *Children of the Holocaust* (1979) in which the author interviewed second generation survivors, thereby breaking through the wall of silence. While several "children" spoke about their reluctance to question their parents about their camp and war experiences, others wanted to know and started discussing this period in their parents' lives. There seemed to be a need to understand in order to deal with their own guilt and identity issues.

This coincided with a general American exploration of family backgrounds; possibly starting with the television series, *Roots*. All at once it began to be fashionable to explore one's heritage. Gradually, more survivors wrote about their experiences, and their children tried to come to terms with theirs, as well, through art, film and writing.

Time lent distance, which made it easier for some of the survivors to write. It began to become contagious as survivors would realize that staying silent might create as much pain in the long run as speaking about it. Moreover, as the Holocaust deniers appeared and even colleges and universities held debates about the Holocaust's truth, it became incumbent upon the survivors who had borne witness and were aging to testify to the horrors they had seen and had been victims of. This imperative began in many cases to take precedence over remaining silent. Suddenly it became safe to speak. And speak they did: in books, to young people, and to their own families, often visiting with them the places of horror they had walled off in their memories. As more survivors and their children opened up, others joined their ranks.

Suddenly their stories were picked up and shown by the media, and they felt a greater support from the outside world. While most of the Holocaust films had been made in Europe, after Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, the American, non-Jewish public became interested and more aware as well. The more that was written, shown, and spoken about, the less of a taboo the subject became, until people who would not have thought of revealing their experiences at an earlier date did so, often with the encouragement of children and grandchildren. Spielberg's interviews of survivors further encouraged the preserving and telling of stories. To this must be added the opening of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, and the subsequent opening of other museums of the Holocaust which created the opportunity for dissemination of information to many groups, further validating the survivors' experiences.

Finally, with the breaking up of the Soviet Union, much documentation came to the fore: pictures heretofore not seen, information not known. With this came the press' news articles relating to the complicity of countries previously believed to be neutral. What now was coming out was the enormity of crimes against the survivors not only during the war but after the war as well. In addition to murder, there was robbery and deliberate withholding of information and monies of all kinds by every country in the Western Hemisphere. Every day there were new articles implicating other countries, and politicians began taking a stand as well. The latest information involves the many companies that used Jews for slave labor geared to use up the "slaves" after a few days of labor. These include the biggest companies in Ger-

many today as well as subsidiaries of theirs in the U.S., e.g., Deutsche Bank, BMW, and Ford. Because of the boundlessness of the atrocities, the final word about this has not yet been written. For all the above-mentioned reasons, I believe that the centrality of the Holocaust in the minds of Jews in 1999 is valid and necessary as well. I don't think that it is being abused or exploited by them. Instead I believe from a psychological point of view that the passage of time is crucial for the telling of the "tale."

Finally, what sets the Holocaust apart from other blood baths is that generally in situations of genocide the warring countries have an on-going, often long-standing, feud and hatred of one another (Bosnians, Croatians, etc). This creates enmity on both sides. Not so with the Jews who sought to live unmolested, in peace. They wanted neither to harm nor be harmed. Yet they were beset upon by one of the most cultured of countries which had made barbarism a national policy. How such a phenomenon could have occurred with the compliance, cooperation and willingness of such a vast population, in the 20th century, in my opinion must remain a topic of vital concern. Any kind of complacency as the survivors pass out of existence is not only not warranted but very dangerous. In closing, I believe that the tragedy of the Holocaust was not just a loss for the Jews, but a loss for the entire civilized world in every area of endeavor which can never be recovered.

Remembrance

How long ago and far away
and yet I will remember
Those I knew and didn't know
and time forgot.
For if not I,
who will bear witness?
Who will remember
the torn wings of butterflies
And drooping heads of flowers
withered and dying.
Like so many, so many, so many
and more....
Who passed through the camps
swept up by fear
Lives not yet in full bloom
cut off!
Cut off in the middle
of the concert of life
By the drumbeat
of the death knell
Stopping their breath

like so many candle flames
Extinguished!
Their light shining
only in the eyes and tears
Of those who remember,
Remember their courage,
Remember their courage!

Ellen Mendel was born in Germany during the Hitler era and barely escaped, coming to the U.S. in 1940. She is a psychoanalytic therapist in private practice, and a Staff Member, a Training Analyst, and on the Board at the Adler Institute of New York. She may be contacted at <LNM97@webtv.net>. □

Personal Reflections on Trauma and Coping in Poland

Nigel Leech

School of Health, University of Teesside, UK

Last September, I made a short trip to Poland, to attend as a panelist the Second European Congress of Dialogue and Universalism at Warsaw University. This was a philosophy conference with a small section of the program on psychohistory. The editor of **Clio's Psyche** requested that I report my impressions and reflections on Poland from my perspective as a psychohistorian. My conclusion is that the Poles and their society are in denial, especially of the Holocaust, as they attempt to cope with the enormous trauma they have faced since the Nazi and Soviet invasions of 1939.

The extent to which the Catholic Church was involved in the conference was quite noticeable. Many of the speakers and panel leaders were priests with some belonging to the Warsaw faculty of philosophy and others holding relatively important positions in academic and decision-making areas. There was a mixing of theology and philosophy I had not experienced in Western Europe. In a Poland in transition from Russian and Communist domination to a more traditional Polish and Western society, the Catholic Church is a major source of power.

There also seemed to be a shared Slavic mythology representing a sense of regression back to an earlier time. Several of the speakers spoke passionately of the Slavic traditions of Poland, of a peasant culture that had clear roots firmly fixed in mother earth with happy peasants toiling the rich Polish soil to provide the country with healthy or-

ganic nurture. This regressing back to supposedly happier times is not surprising given Poland's traumatic history of the last two centuries during which it experienced five partitions, the loss of its independence, failed rebellions against Russian and German rule, independence, defeat, sovietization, genocide, rapid change, and incredible trauma. Let us look at the question of Polish Jews in the last 60 years.

Prior to the Second World War, 3,300,000 Jewish people lived in Poland, with 375,000 living in Warsaw alone — some 10 percent of the city's total population. (At that time the only other city to have a larger Jewish population than Warsaw was New York.) Between 1939 and 1945, 90 percent of all Polish Jews were killed, and presently estimates of the numbers of Jews living in Poland range from 5,000 to 15,000. During the war there was a death penalty for Poles and their families who helped Jews. As a result of Polish anti-Semitism and fear of reprisals, less than one percent of Jews facing the Holocaust were helped by Poles, apparently the smallest percentage in any country. It is my thought that these losses and the failure to help their Jewish neighbors must leave the people of Poland carrying an unimaginable amount of psychic trauma and unresolved guilt.

A child who has witnessed or has knowledge of abuse that is happening to siblings or other family members can experience trauma. Adult survivors of child abuse report to me that for them the witnessing of another's abuse left them with a greater sense of guilt and trauma than they have from their own personal experiences of childhood abuse. It is likely that children and adults who lived through the Second World War suffered from this psychic trauma and guilt. Indeed, there is a literature which suggests that if trauma is unresolved then it can be "carried or passed" from generation to generation. Thus, the Polish people may be left not only with their own personal unresolved trauma, but also with that of their parents and grandparents.

In Warsaw I found it surprisingly difficult to find evidence of how these collective traumas were being resolved, if, indeed, they are being resolved. In the city itself I came across few obvious public references to the devastating war. (Admittedly, I had little time and only visited a small part of the city.) There are various plaques on buildings marking certain places where some people were executed, but mostly the devastation was simply covered over, especially as related to

Jews. The old town of Warsaw, which had been virtually completely destroyed during the Second World War, had been rebuilt exactly as it was before the destruction. This cover-up seemed to be generally the case throughout Warsaw. But bricks, mortar, and stone do not hear psychic wounds.

I decided to visit the building used as Gestapo headquarters during the Nazi Occupation even though it and its museum were not on my tourist map. I only found out about the existence of the building from our psychohistory panel host. The building had a small plaque in Polish stating it had been the Gestapo headquarters and that it was the "museum to the victims of war."

The museum was quite small, consisting of a few cells and an interrogation room. As I recall, the only reference to Jews that I found there concerned a non-Jewish Pole who had been executed for helping a Jew. Thus, it seems to me that a way of coping with, and dissociating from, the trauma that this building represents is to reduce the museum to a size that is manageable and containable.

What I found most distressing about the former Gestapo headquarters was that the museum itself was so small. The historical building, representing incredible suffering, might have served to further Polish coming to terms with the loss of its Jewish citizens and as an emblem of understanding and resolution. Instead, the tiny museum reduced it to a mere gesture. A psychoanalyst from Zurich, who attended the conference, visited the site of the Warsaw Ghetto and was distressed by the same thing — just how little memorial there was to show for so much suffering.

It is common for individuals to keep painful memories split off from ordinary awareness. David Grove, a psychotherapist from the U.S., has provided a model that gives a way of understanding this process. When we are faced with a traumatic situation (i.e., something that is beyond our usual means of coping) we need another way of coping that enables us to survive and not become psychically overwhelmed by the experience. A way of doing this is to unconsciously take that part of ourselves that knows about the trauma back to a moment in time before the trauma happened. This has the effect of psychically denying the experience. This coping mechanism tends to be maintained because it feels less painful to pretend trauma never happened than to examine its painful consequences. We might know or sense that something did occur, but memories are partial or non-existent. We are left with the confusing feelings

that result and have to cope with the consequences of the repression. It is likely that this mechanism leads to dissociative states.

Individuals and institutions develop defenses against difficult emotions that are too painful or too threatening to acknowledge and similar defenses operate on a societal level. Thus, society can also develop dissociative states. This is similar in many ways to deMause's psychohistorical notion of "social trance." The rebuilding of Warsaw and the revival of Slavic traditions may demonstrate how a society struggles to cope with trauma by going back to a time before the trauma happened, just as individuals sometimes do. Distance in time from a traumatic event is often necessary before an individual or a society can begin any process of resolving the repressed hurt.

Before too long, I hope to revisit Poland to explore further some of these issues on just how a society copes with its traumas and to determine if my initial impression and speculations are verified.

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Eating and Being in the Holocaust

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[Editor's Note: The following is excerpted from Chapter One, "Why Food? A Personal Introduction," of the author's unpublished manuscript, Eating and Being: On the Psychosocial Meanings of Food.]

As part of the effort, carried out in collaboration with my colleague George Kren, to unravel the psychohistorical factors which made the Holocaust possible, I started ruminating about food as a topic for psychosocial study. Early on, was the occasion at Professor Kren's home when we were examining a collection of gruesome photographs of Holocaust victims. He was called to the phone, and, wanting a change of pace while I waited, I

picked up a gourmet club magazine lying on his coffee table. Glancing through the pictures of blackened red fish, roast beef, paella, and legs of lamb, it suddenly seemed utterly clear that this was no less a pornography than layouts in sex magazines, or the photos of skeletal Nazi victims.

Beneath the horrors of Holocaust testimony there is a latent truth of startling simplicity, namely that it speaks to the nature of our existential condition as being grounded upon the body. Even if it were not so prominent as it is in Holocaust literature, consideration of the body would lead inevitably to reflection upon the significance of food as shaping the condition of body and mind. But food is a central theme. Without exception, Holocaust victim/survivor accounts show that starvation conditions led rapidly to demoralization, and ultimately to dehumanization:

The main thing was to get something to eat and drink. When food was brought in, an excitement ensued which one can otherwise observe only among animals (Bondy in E. Cohen, *Human Behavior in the Concentration Camp*, 1953, p. 132).

...food was a very favorite topic of conversation. The prisoners would go "dining out" together and exchange recipes for special dishes: Hungarian Jews told me again and again how goulash used to be cooked ... these food discussions are called by Rumke "culinary dry screwing" while Frankl uses the term "gastric masturbation" (*Human Behavior*, p. 132).

For Primo Levi, the worst of the starvation experiences were the dreams:

One can hear the sleepers breathing and snoring.... Many lick their lips and move their jaws. They are dreaming of eating.... It is a pitiless dream which the creator of the Tantalus myth must have known. You not only see the food, you feel it in your hands, distinct and concrete, you are aware of its rich and striking smell; someone in the dream even holds it up to your lips, but every time a different circumstance intervenes to prevent the consummation of the act (*Survival in Auschwitz*, 1969, pp. 54-55).

The point of these quotations, and countless others that could be cited, requires little elaboration: without a minimally adequate diet, behavior not only deteriorates to a primal level, but the psy-

chosocial structures essential to a recognizable sense of personhood are first reduced and finally crushed. This is one important reason why many prisoners in the Nazi camps reached such a dehumanized state that they were referred to as *mus-selmänner* -- prisoners close to death, inmates whose skin was all that held their bones together and whose will had been completely drained from their veins.

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How Hollywood Hid the Holocaust Through Obfuscation and Denial

(Continued from front page)

and the wrenching social and emotional upheavals of the war. (See Neil Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*, 1988.)

Now the mythic view of the American society which they had created in the 1930s and sent to war in the 1940s would help to define the national character of the new, much more all-encompassing middle-class life of America in the 1950s. It was a mythic view, a projected group fantasy if you will, that served the need for consensus and conformity that so marked this society in search of its identity. Within this mythic American society, ethnic differences vanished into "the melting pot" ideal of a quasi-Christian American culture, where fathers were wise, loving, and protective (e.g., Judge Hardy and Dr. Welby) and there was "no such thing as a bad kid" (says Spencer "Father Flanagan" Tracy in *Boys Town*). It was a mythic society that was always certain as to whom the good guys and bad guys were and that celebrated the heroic individuals who exemplified moral courage (*High Noon* and *Shane*). Needless to say, it was a mythic society far different from the reality of the America of McCarthyism and the Hollywood blacklists and the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, of the Cold War and Korea

and "the missile gap."

There had been no place for Jews as Jews in Hollywood's mythic society. Indeed, as Neil Gabler points out, "Hollywood was itself a means for avoiding Judaism, not celebrating it" (*Empire*, p. 130). And if there was no room for Jews, there was still less for the Holocaust. Indeed, the word did not even exist in the public consciousness then, nor did the phrase "Holocaust survivor." They were "displaced persons" or simply "refugees" – as originally determined by the U.S. State Department, which gave no special distinction to the uniquely Jewish experience of being targeted for extermination as a people.

This concept of according the Jewish experience no special distinction was a comfortable one for most of the fearful Jewish moguls of Hollywood. (How fearful they were we would learn when, almost to a man, they groveled before the House Committee on Un-American Activities.) But a few – mostly younger, and often independent, producers – found that the tragic enormity of the Holocaust demanded their attention. And yet the handful of films that they produced were created well within the forms and myths created by Hollywood's founding generation. In fact, all of these films were in fact resolutely designed to keep the destruction of European Jewry off-stage, tangential to the drama at hand: *Sword in the Desert* (1949), *The Juggler* (1953), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1956), *The Young Lions* (1958), *Exodus* (1960), and *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961).

In four of these films – *Sword*, *Juggler*, *Exodus*, and *Lions* -- the (still unnamed) Holocaust made an appearance mainly in the guise of refugees – frail and powerless, often emotionally damaged, being persecuted once again, this time by the British no less, as they sought haven in Palestine. In all them – forcefully so in *Exodus* – the image of the refugees as stereotypic Jewish victims was contrasted with a totally new image: the image of the Jew as fighter. (See the very rich material, and arguments, offered by Deborah Dash Moore in *To The Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.*, 1994, chapter 8, "Israel as Frontier.")

Only *Exodus* succeeded in making this new myth of "the fighting Jew" credible to both American Jews and American gentiles alike. *Sword* was ahead of its time – appearing too soon after the war, while the British were still much admired and therefore not yet credible to the American public as the villains of the story. Montgomery Clift, the

Jewish GI of *Lions*, was no longer able to serve as a mythic figure – a survivor himself, of a horrendous, near-fatal automobile wreck that destroyed his face and left him in pain and drug-dependent. Neither he nor his role in the film was credible enough for the task of redefining gentile attitudes toward Jews.

Of course, most gentile moviegoers were unaware of what virtually every Jew in America knew and celebrated: the fact that Kirk Douglas in the title role of *The Juggler* and Jeff Chandler were Jews, while Paul Newman was “a half-Jew.” Douglas was already one of the two most popular male stars of the 1950s (along with Burt Lancaster). He had an established macho image that would seem to have been perfect for “the fighting Jew.” But Douglas’ refugee was a most unsympathetic character, establishing the movie stereotype of the Holocaust survivor that survives, in film, to this day: broken and bitter, often abusive – unfeeling men, incapable of giving or receiving love or affection. Douglas’ psychopathic survivor (contrasted, in the movie, with Israeli *sabras* sound of mind and body) is godfather to Sol Nazerman of *The Pawnbroker* (1965), Peter Helfgott of *Shine* (1996), and Isaac Geldhart of *The Substance of Fire* (1996). In *The Juggler*, as in all the films to follow except *The Pawnbroker*, the Holocaust itself was kept offscreen.

With Newman’s charisma, an array of credible heroes and villains, and a rich story line of a type familiar to American filmgoers, *Exodus* succeeded enormously at the box office, creating a positive group fantasy that not only filled American Jews with pride, but which also satisfied gentile Americans. It provided a history of, and a rationale for, the creation of the State of Israel that was congenial to America’s own historic myths – “the plucky little Jewish state fighting for its freedom” (*Golden Cities*, p. 257). Many, if not most, gentiles still held anti-Semitic attitudes that had become politically incorrect in the aftermath of the Nazi obsession with destroying the Jewish people. *Exodus* allowed them to identify with a new kind of Jew, the heroic Israeli half-a-world away, without giving up their inner prejudices about the Jews in their midst. And this at a time when these prejudices fueled, and were fueled by, the relentless focus on Jewish Communists (real and alleged) in the movie industry, on college campuses, and in the State Department. (The bifurcated gentile image of the Jew – the heroic Israeli versus the problematic American Jew found its perfect embodiment in

the fevered imagination of Richard Nixon. Even today, Nixon apologists point to the President who admired the Israelis and stood by them stalwartly during and after the Yom Kippur War. Nixon antagonists point to the evidence still pouring out of the Nixon tapes, of an anti-Semitic President, laboring under the fear of a vast Jewish conspiracy devoted to bringing him down.)

Not incidentally, the structure of *Exodus* also allowed gentile Americans to blot out the horrific truth of the Holocaust and to blot out any lingering sense of guilt they might have felt if they had been confronted with “the memory of the Holocaust itself, the murder of six million Jews, in all its raw, senseless, fiendish horror” (Philip Roth, cited in *Golden Cities*, p. 250).

The Diary of Anne Frank and *Judgment at Nuremberg* were no less designed to protect the sensibilities of the audience from having to fully confront the murder of six million Jews. Neither film was intended to help the average filmgoer come to grips with the enormity and the complexity and the massive machinery of the German-led attempt to make Europe *Judenrein* [purified of Jews]. One could not grasp, from either movie, that the extermination of the Jews had the highest priority among the German leadership, higher even than the successful prosecution of the war. (During the final days, in 1945, precious resources, desperately needed by the German armies, continued to be committed to the transport of Jews to the death camps and to the goal of completing the Final Solution.) Both movies were concerned with universalizing the Holocaust at the expense of the particular (the unique fate of European Jews). These films helped to create the most successful Holocaust myth of the 1950s. In this myth, the Holocaust became the symbol of *all* the German crimes against humanity, allowing us to shed a discreet tear for a handful of pitiful victims with whom we could identify, while taking comfort in the hopeful message that good will triumph over evil in the end.

Judgment at Nuremberg focused on the trial of a group of German jurists as a way of dramatizing the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials. The drama turns upon the appearance on a handful of pathetic victims of the Nuremberg Laws – the most compelling being those portrayed by Judy Garland and Montgomery Clift. Garland played a German woman who had been accused of having sex with an elderly Jewish friend. Clift appeared as a retarded man who had been forcibly sterilized

(Cliff's battered physiognomy was most appropriate to *this* role). Both cases had been tried before Germany's chief judge, played by Burt Lancaster. Maximilian Schell was fierce, electrifying, as the German defense attorney.

The presiding judge, an American played by Spencer Tracy, is pressured by U.S. officials to go easy on the accused jurists, who were the kind of Germans that would be needed in rebuilding West Germany to be a bulwark against further Soviet expansion in Europe. Tracy stubbornly rejects this notion and – upholding “justice, truth, and the value of a single human being” – sentences the judges to life imprisonment. Schell sneeringly predicts that “they will be free in five years,” which in fact was the case with the great majority of those Nazi officials sentenced at Nuremberg. (CineBooks' *Motion Picture Guide Review*, cited in Microsoft *Cinemanía '95*, CD-ROM.) The CineBooks' review also notes that the film “was sensational in its day” and was “an astounding success” at the box office.

What was faithfully reproduced rather statically on the large theater screen was a drama about the abandonment of the rule of law and in no way about the vast murder machinery that had operated far from, and without the need of, courtrooms. Yes, it succeeded powerfully as the first attempt to dramatize the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, and the role of German judges in perverting the rule of law by enforcing the racist, repressive rules of Hitler's Reich. But by focusing exclusively on the deeds of these German judges, the movie fails as a means for helping Americans understand the particularistic nature of Holocaust. How would one know, from this movie, what Lucy Dawidowicz dedicated her professional life to making clear: that for the first time in its history, “a state and a political movement had dedicated itself to the destruction of a whole people.” And that the near-total destruction of Jewish civilization in Europe was something that happened, and happened by design, to the Jewish people alone and to no other people that fell under the shadow of the Nazi horror (Lucy Dawidowicz, “Thinking About the Six Million,” in *The Holocaust and the Historians*, 1981, p. 14).

Contributing to the ultimate mythic view that obscured the Holocaust was the casting of Lancaster as the German and Tracy as the American. These two actors, in their own personas as well as in the roles they were playing, projected a fundamental sense of decency. Whatever the dia-

logue that passed between them, who they were and how they acted contributed to the creation of the myth that the Cold Warriors *wanted* to project: the Germans were fundamentally decent people who had been misled by Hitler and his fellow gangsters, they had paid their debt for their mistakes, and they were now a suitable Cold War ally against the Soviet Union (apparently a greater threat to American interests than Hitler, and Hitler's beliefs, had been). (To my mind, Paul Lukas (himself a refugee from Hitler's Germany) and Claude Rains were far more effective in the earlier TV version. They conveyed the unbridgeable gulf that existed between the two jurists – the German who still did not apprehend the awful nature of his guilt and the American who understood it all too well.)

The Diary of Anne Frank would surely seem to have been the vehicle with which to confront the Holocaust in a meaningful way. Instead, it became the ultimate vehicle of avoidance and denial. Millions upon millions of people have read the book and/or seen the play or movie – many, many times more than have read the works of Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, Aharon Apfelfeld, or Andre Schwartz-Bart, or have seen *Night and Fog*, *The Shop on Main Street*, *The Pawnbroker*, *The Sorrow and the Pity*, *Shoah* or *The Last Days*. No Hollywood production has been made of Wiesel's *Night* or Schwartz-Bart's *The Last of the Just*, two of the earliest and still most memorable novels. These books were designed to take us to the heart of the Holocaust in the way that Anne Frank's diary – even in its original form – could not, and that the distorted play and the movie made from it deliberately would not. Anne Roiphe has observed:

Those of the Holocaust books that are true literature, Wiesel, Levi, Apfelfeld, have found their art in negation. They tell us what Anne Frank could not: the truth.... [T]hey are always accusations, indictments of the human condition. Do Christians read those books? Some do, of course, but the majority do not. They do read Anne Frank and are reassured, at bottom, after everything, people are basically good (Anne Roiphe, *A Season for Healing: Reflections on the Holocaust*, 1988, p. 52).

The movie – starring Millie Perkins, a young American model with a faint southern accent and a lightweight personality – offered Americans (and the world) a heroine they could identify with: Anne Frank as “Junior Miss,” a flighty,

perky, mischievous American teenager, the girl next door. Jewish? God forbid. In this version (and there was an alternative, Meyer Levin's original script, strongly emphasizing the Jewishness of Anne Frank, her family, and the others in the hide-out), the onstage villains are not the Nazis, but Mr. and Mrs. Van Daan and the dentist, Mr. Dussel. The Van Daans are scripted very broadly and played even more broadly (by the *Jewish* actors, Lou Jacobi and Shelley Winters) as caricatures embodying anti-Semitic stereotypes endemic to Western society: Jews are shrill, pushy, materialistic, insensitive, etc.

To the extent that the Nazi menace was acknowledged – by means of the blaring bleat of the automobile horns and the stomping of jackboots on the stairs – it was in an image that we had grown familiar with in post-war movies. Indeed, these were symbols of the menace most often directed against French and Scandinavian and Polish civilians (generally, resisters of the German occupation). In other words, the vague threat of Nazi arrest was one that the de-Judaized Frank family shared with other Europeans. Moreover, the Nazis were an aberration because, after all, “people are really good at heart.” No hint here that the Nazi obsession with obliterating the Jews was directly aided and abetted not only by tens if not hundreds of thousands of “ordinary Germans” but by untold numbers of non-German Europeans – all feeding upon the same Jew-hatred that drove Hitler and his followers.

Totally missing in the film, of course, is what happened after the pounding on the door. We are presented, indeed, with an unexceptional account of a young girl's coming of age – with all the familiar teenage angst (*Father Knows Best* relocated to an Amsterdam attic). We are spared the details of the horrible fate that Anne Frank shared with a million Jewish children. No account here of the last days of Anne and Margot Frank and their mother in Bergen-Belsen – starving, ill with typhus, terrorized, and de-humanized. The movie's idealized image of Anne Frank stands between “the horrifying historical event and the desire of the ... public to be given only the most convenient and comforting version of it,” as Omer Bartov writes in another context (review of *Anne Frank Remembered*, *American Historical Review*, October, 1996, p. 1155). This, in fact, the role that her published diary itself, as well as the denatured play and film made from it, serves in Western historical memory (group fantasy, we might say).

What we know now, thanks to the work of Cynthia Ozick, Ralph Melnick, and others, is that de-Judaizing and universalizing Anne Frank was precisely the purpose of Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, the husband and wife playwrights, who worked under the tutelage of Lillian Hellman, Garson Kanin, and Kermit Bloomgarden. They were Broadway pros, all of them, and the last three of them, at least, Jewish. Their agenda included such things as expunging of Margot Frank's Zionism, and the de-Judaizing of the Chanukah celebration held in attic hideaway. Even more importantly, the creative team changed the nature of Anne's perceptions of her predicament and of the awful event in which she and her family were caught up. Ozick, for examples, cites the “Nazified notion of race” in the lines that have been attributed to Lillian Hellman, which had Anne say, “We're not the only people that's had to suffer. There've always been people that have had to ... sometimes one race ... sometimes another.” These lines – “pallid speech, yawning with vagueness” – replaced Anne's own musings:

In the eyes of the world, we're doomed, but if [after] this suffering, there are still Jews left, the Jewish people will be held up as an example.... God has never deserted our people. Through the ages Jews have had to suffer, but through the ages they've gone on living, and the centuries of suffering have only made them stronger.

Kanin apparently had found this kind of rumination to be “an embarrassing piece of special pleading.... The fact that in this play the symbols of persecution and oppression are Jews is incidental, and Anne, in stating the argument so, reduces her magnificent stature.” Ozick adds, “The passionately contemplative child, brooding on concrete evil, was made into an emblem of evasion” (Cynthia Ozick, “Who Owns Anne Frank?” in *The New Yorker*, October 6, 1997, p. 85).

Thus, in the Hacketts' version, a “de-Semitizing of the most anti-Semitic episode in history” (Bernard Hammelburg, “A Fresh Look at ‘Anne Frank’: In Search of the Historical One,” *The New York Times*, November 30, 1997, Arts Section, p. 1), the story of Anne Frank and her diary was mythologized as a universal human comedy, a universal tragedy of man's inhumanity to man, and a universal paean of hope for redemption through the ultimate good deep in mankind's hearts. Only a vague image of the Holocaust itself could be discernible through the tears of laughter

and sorrow. But what has thus been made so vague can easily be distorted, dismissed and, ultimately, denied. All three were to be the fate of the Holocaust in the minds of Americans over the next two decades, thanks in no small part to the handiwork of Broadway and Hollywood's smoothest, and most fearful, professionals.

All of us have probably had the experience of re-visiting particular films that we had loved once, when much younger, and being awfully disappointed. Upon reflection, we might feel that we have become more mature, more sophisticated in our tastes – that we have simply outgrown most of the movies we loved in our youth. True as that may be, it is even more probable that we have outgrown – or, more accurately, no longer have a need for – the myths that once were so much a part of our world-view, our group fantasies of the era. The assumptions and posturings of *Bataan*, with now seem more likely to provoke laughter than cheers and tears. Yet there are others – even cliché-ridden films – whose myths continue to hold us fast: e.g., *Casablanca*. Many of us may have been thrilled by *Exodus* and moved by *The Diary of Anne Frank* when we first saw them. In truth, I loved them both at the time. In my 20s, child of a very assimilated household, painfully aware of the system of quotas still solidly in place in the universities and the workplace, I was buoyed by the idea that two such “Jewish movies” could do such great box office. It betokened to me a new era for Jews in America. And in their own way, they surely contributed to precisely that, if at an expense of comprehending the nature and the extent of the Holocaust. Re-visit these films today and they are virtually unviewable. Not so another film of the 1960s, as shattering today as it was then: *The Pawnbroker*.

The first American film to take the audience inside a concentration camp (through a devastating series of flashbacks), *The Pawnbroker* was a gritty, powerful film in its own right – based upon the stunning, brooding novel by Edgar Lewis Wallant. Directed by Sidney Lumet, it offers a tremendously intense performance by Rod Steiger as Sol Nazerman, “a benumbed Jewish survivor of the concentration camps who lives in Harlem, running a pawnshop – fat, sagging, past pain, past caring.” (Pauline Kael, cited in *Cinemanía '95*.) This grim, wrenching, unrelenting film gives no quarter in its portrait of the human devastation wrought by the Holocaust. In Kael's words, even when events strip away Nazerman's defenses, “he doesn't dis-

cover a new, warm humanity, he discovers sharper suffering – just what his armor had protected him from.”

There are drawbacks to such a film, considered as an alternative narrative to the dominant vague and universal myth/fantasy of the Holocaust thus far generated by Hollywood. First, as already noted above, it is difficult for American audiences to identify with, and perhaps even care deeply about, a protagonist as unsympathetic as Sol Nazerman. He was no match for an upbeat Millie Perkins version of Anne Frank. Second, the microcosmic focus upon the fate of Nazerman, his wife, and his two children in fact also shields the audience from the full extent and nature of the Holocaust. American filmgoers, well acquainted with motion picture images of dismal prisons staffed by sadistic guards, might well assume that the Jews (personified by Sol Nazerman) were subjected to nothing more than an especially vicious and brutal form of such imprisonment. There is no hint, even in this dark study of a film, of the industrialized murder of millions of de-humanized, starved, diseased, and tormented men, women, and children. Even in a powerful film like this one, we are allowed to tiptoe around the edges of the Holocaust instead of plunging into the heart of darkness.

By the end of the 1960s, Holocaust studies, novels and documentaries had reached such a floodtide that – though the immediate audiences were confined to intellectual circles and to those Jews and non-Jews most dedicated to knowing – the key images and terminology had become the currency of the larger society. The Holocaust itself generally obtained a paragraph or two in the history books, an aside within the triumphal narrative of the Second World War. “Holocaust,” “genocide,” “the Six Million,” “gas chambers,” “Auschwitz” -- all of these became part of the vernacular, and part also of the mythology of the mid-20th century.

The facts of history are the skeletons upon which we hang our myths. But to mythify historical facts is not the same as to falsify them, although some myths do. Nor is it the same as trivializing them, although some myths do that, too. Myths can and do exist that neither falsify, deny, trivialize, or sentimentalize. At their best, myths tell the truth in ways that help us to comprehend it, to form a consensus point of view, and to create a usable past.

Competing myths exist about that enormous assemblage of facts from mid-century that

we call the Holocaust. Just the naming of it is the beginning of myth and in fact provides a mythic template that can be, and has been, applied to so many other not very similar situations. The name and the myth imply a moral judgment that one assumes holds for most people. It is to find shelter under that consensus moral judgment that prompts users and misusers to co-opt the name, and to create from it their own myths. As Lucy Dawidowicz recognized, to make Auschwitz, that unimaginable death factory, "a metaphor and a paradigm for evil" raises the profound danger of obfuscating that which was uniquely Jewish about the awfulness of the Holocaust "under a universal or ecumenical classification of human suffering." And if one thus blurs the distinctiveness of the Jewish fate, then one "can disclaim the presence of anti-Semitism, whether it smolders in the dark recesses of one's own mind or whether it operates in the pitiless light of history." Only forcing ourselves to focus "on the horror that happened can help avoid it for the future," she concludes ("The Six Million," p. 15).

Americans and Europeans most opposed to the Vietnam War could describe U.S. bombing of North Vietnam as a "holocaust." A holocaust also was the ongoing slaughter of whales in the Pacific. Yet even more pernicious than such obfuscation – made all too feasible by Hollywood's evasive, universalized myths – was the phenomenon of Holocaust denial, a destructive counter-myth whose rapid acceptance on American college campuses was alarming. Even more alarming, a respected intellectual like Noam Chomsky could lend his authority to a book that argued that gas chambers were a myth propagated by the Jews. Television and radio programs invited Holocaust deniers to participate in talk shows so that "both sides of the story can be told." And a President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, thought it appropriate to pay homage to the graves of the German military in World War II, including members of the SS. Of course, Reagan himself had been a satisfied cog in the Hollywood dream machine of the founding generation moguls, a loyal company man.

In the mid-1970s came William Styron's book, *Sophie's Choice* – a best-seller, followed in 1982 by the movie written and directed by Alan J. Pakula, a box office success that won an Oscar for Meryl Streep as Sophie. *Sophie's Choice* was the Hollywood statement on the Holocaust between *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Schindler's List* (1993). It was in fact both an acknowledgment and

an obfuscation. The film possessed first-rate acting in addition to Streep: Kevin Kline as Nathan, Sophie's Jewish-American and abusive lover, and Peter MacNicol as Stingo (read Styron), the sensitive Southerner they befriend. And it possessed first-rate production values; Nestor Almendros was the cinematographer. But it was meretricious at its heart.

Sophie's Choice is a film all tarted up as the ultimate, most sensitive, most powerful statement to date on the Holocaust – all dressed up as a profoundly moving human tragedy. Seen in the soft barroom light of sentimentality, a viewer (especially a non-Jewish viewer) might react as Roger Ebert did when he heralded *Sophie's Choice* as "a fine, absorbing, wonderfully acted, heart-breaking movie. It is about three people who are faced with a series of choices, some frivolous, some tragic. As they flounder in the bewilderment of being human in an age of madness, they become our friends, and we love them" (cited in *Cinemanía* '95). Hey, he's not wrong. *Sophie's Choice* was all that. And, by the way, isn't his summation the very soul of an universalist response to this film? (Ebert identifies Nathan as "an eccentric charmer" and "a crazy romantic.")

But guess what. If we draw close enough to this beautifully made movie to see beneath the greasepaint, we just might see what Anne Roiphe sees when reading the novel: "the heroine is Polish [Catholic], the mad villain is Jewish, the hero is a southern gentile who is the sanest and most humane of all." By making Sophie both *the* victim of the Nazis with whom we are asked to identify *and* the victim also of a crazed, often vicious Jew who throws her down the stairs of their tenement, Styron has blurred "the essential Jewish nature of the Holocaust." Roiphe believes that Styron, a white Christian Southerner, is not comfortable about the behavior of "his own kind" toward the Jews. "If he shifts the victim to the universal human being, he finds a category in which he belongs." Moreover, she writes, Styron thus provides a much more congenial product for his readers (or movie audiences) "who also want to feel identified with the victims of the tragedy, (but) are wearied by Jewish accusations" (*Season*, p. 44).

Interestingly enough, the film *does* do something in the service of truth that the book cannot. Through the artistry of Pakula and Almendros, it *does* underscore the essentially Jewish particularity of the Holocaust. The pivotal scene near the end of *Sophie's Choice*, an extended flashback

in which Sophie's awful secret is revealed, is filmed in a haunting, nightmarish black and white setting, with subtitles for the German dialogue that will take place. It is the Mengelean selection process at the railroad siding entry to Auschwitz. As we pan down the two doomed lines slowly shuffling forward, it becomes clear that all of the hundreds and hundreds of men, women, and children, except for Sophie and her children, are wearing the yellow star. Subliminally at least, Almendros' cameras tell us what Auschwitz was *really* about.

But another, more subversive, message also comes through. As we experience the agonizing dialogue between Sophie and her tormentor, the German officer, one cannot escape the feeling that the tragedy here lies in the fact that she, a Catholic, has been caught in a trap set for the Jews. It is as if the movie was telling us that the same scene would be far less tragic if instead of being a victim of the officer's sadism, Sophie had been merely an eyewitness to his torture of one of the nameless, faceless *Jewish* mothers in the line.

Sophie's Choice was a dark fantasy that combined acknowledgment and obfuscation, a fantasy that permitted the audience to think of the Holocaust as a brutal death machine that swept up Jew and Christian alike. And it permitted the audience to think of the Holocaust as an *aberration*, the work of a particularly sadistic gang of German Nazi gangsters who listened to Beethoven in the evenings at camp, at home with their families. It was a dark fantasy well suited to fleshing out the universalist imagery established by *Judgment at Nuremberg* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. A dark fantasy that in no way – by itself – could head off the opposing fantasy of denial propagated by America's homegrown Jew-haters.

Yet, in the almost two decades since *Sophie's Choice* was released, we have seen the creation of the U.S. Holocaust Museum, the relegation of Holocaust deniers to tiny fringe groups, and the enormous success of *Schindler's List*. Last year, at Passover, Showtime, a cable channel, introduced an excellently produced and well acted made-for-TV movie, *The Devil's Arithmetic*. This astonishing film takes an imaginative Jewish American teenage girl from a Passover *seder* into the heart of a Nazi concentration camp. Stressing the importance of remembering, it is unsparing in its verisimilitude, creating the reality of the labor/death camps, up to and including the gas chamber itself. And this astonishing, absorbing movie was aimed at teenagers.

What accounts for the sea change in the dominant group fantasies that made possible these things, unimaginable at the time *Sophie's Choice* was released? I would submit that the process began with NBC television's *Holocaust: The Story of the Family Weiss*, a nine-and-a-half hour miniseries, broadcast over four nights before Passover, 1978. *Holocaust* was the brainchild of writer Gerald Green, who was appalled by the rise of Holocaust denial and conceived of the series as a potential weapon against the deniers.

A year earlier, ABC (and the entire broadcast industry) had been astounded by the huge success of *Roots*, a nine-part miniseries. ABC had expected so little of this miniseries about slavery in the United States that it scheduled the nine episodes on consecutive nights in January, 1977, to get them out of the way before the February ratings sweeps. The final chapter received the highest rating for any entertainment program to that date. After the success of *Roots*, the networks searched desperately about for other ideas for a miniseries. And there was Gerald Green, script in hand. *Holocaust*, too, was an enormous success, its ratings as a series exceeded only by *Roots*. (*Holocaust* later received the highest ratings in the history of West German television, where it has been credited with finally bringing the subject into public debate, particularly among the younger generation.)

Holocaust, like *Roots* which preceded it, was derided by some critics at the time as a cartoon, a long soap opera that trivialized its subject. The truth is that – however oversimplified the stories, however overly good the good guys may have been – *Roots* and *Holocaust* had the facts, all of them, and presented them clearly and unequivocally. After *Roots*, it was no longer possible for most Americans to think about slavery in quite the same way. They could no longer entertain a group fantasy of a benign slave system that was peopled by happy, loyal darkies, as in that great myth, *Gone With the Wind*, which had dominated the public consciousness of the subject for nearly 40 years until Alex Haley came along.

And after *Holocaust*, it was no longer possible for most Americans to think about the Holocaust in quite the same way. They could no longer entertain a group fantasy of a universalized "crime against humanity" in which everybody is "really good at heart" as in that great myth, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which had dominated the public consciousness for more than 20 years. It was not possible after Gerald Green gave chapter and verse on

the single-minded destruction of the Jews by the Nazis, "ordinary Germans," and their collaborators in Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, Hungary, etc. And the American public could no longer think in quite the same way about "the banality of evil," Hannah Arendt's inadequate response (especially when taken out of context as it was) to the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. Not after Michael Moriarty's brilliant, often understated, depiction of the Eichman who helped to preside over the Wannsee Conference that initiated the Final Solution.

If one of the positive roles of a myth (the history story we drape upon the facts we know) is to create a usable past, then *Holocaust* succeeded where Hollywood had failed to that date and beyond. It succeeded to the point of preparing the way for *Schindler's List*, to the point where even *The Diary of Anne Frank* could no longer stand the way it was originally presented. Last year, the play was re-written and re-staged for Broadway. Its writer, Wendy Kesselman, and its director, James Lapine, have stated that as they prepared for their assignment, searching for "the real Anne Frank," they journeyed to Amsterdam hoping to find "the unexpurgated, precocious Anne who listened to clandestine radio broadcasts and understood that the Nazis were gassing Jews" (Hammelburg, "A Fresh Look," p. 1).

A usable past is *meant* to be used politically – i.e., to achieve through political means the common good. Who can doubt that one of the factors that forced Americans to pay attention to what was happening in Bosnia was the presence on the scene of Elie Wiesel and all that he represented, all that had begun to become pertinent to the American mind after the broadcast of *Holocaust* and the extraordinary interest in the U.S. Holocaust Museum on the part of non-Jewish Americans. We have come a long way from Bitburg, and the storytellers, from Gerald Green to Steven Spielberg, have played a role in the journey.

To ascribe the "sea change" that has made all this possible to the TV miniseries *Holocaust* is, of course, itself an inadequate explanation. The Hollywood moguls did not, after all, "hide the Holocaust" from a public that was thirsting to know. In this "hiding" – as in the creation of mythic America – Hollywood was acting as delegate to the needs and wishes of the nation at large. And Gerald Green and the networks did not foist a truth-telling on the public that was still unwilling to know. The ratings tell us otherwise (as with *Roots*, too). Green was a delegate for a nation with

a need to confront the horror at long last. The "sea change" reflected a public that had evolved from the schizoid splitting and denial that marked the McCarthy era. Having been brought to the nihilistic horror of the assassinations of Jack and Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., and to the inescapable madness of the warfare that was taking place in Vietnam, we had painfully evolved into a nation in the grip of a need to make reparation.

And yet, as David Beisel has made devastatingly clear in another context, though we have come very far in knowing *about* the Holocaust, we still draw back from the full horror of it. Because we are terrified that we will be forced to confront the "existential meaningless" of it and the dreadfully fragile contingency of our own lives and being. Thus, for all that we know and have acknowledged, we constrain our delegates from helping us understand just how and why "splitting, projection, and the permission to act out helped unleash Europe's killing frenzy" (David Beisel, "Resistance to Psychology in Holocaust Scholarship," *Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Fall 1999, p. 124). (This is a beautifully written, incisive *tour-de-force* by the scholar/teacher from whom, more than any other single individual, I learned how to do psychohistory.)

Holocaust, Schindler's List, The Devil's Arithmetic – all take us very far in knowing *about*, but not nearly as far as we *could* go. And they don't even begin to take us down the path of knowing *why*. Nevertheless, *Holocaust* *did* find its audience and the "sea change" *did* take place, and there was, after that, no going back -- only the question of whether or not we could still go even further, a possibility that is at least still open.

But there *are* those who think: Oh, no, we have already gone too far; there has now been *too much* emphasis placed upon the Holocaust; the message has been absorbed, so "enough already." To them, one has only to point to the comparative audiences for the Italian-made productions, *Life Is Beautiful* and *The Truce*. The comforting fairy tale was a phenomenal success, while the tough-minded Primo Levi memoir, exceptionally acted by John Turturro (who is by now an honorary Jew, given his roster of Jewish movie roles), played to miniscule art house audiences. Myth-making is transient and group fantasies are dynamic and always up for grabs. The creation of a usable past is a task that never ends, and in that task knowledge is power.

Melvin Kalfus, PhD, taught history and

psychohistory at Florida Atlantic and Lynn universities. Among his psychobiographic publications are *Frederick Law Olmsted: Passion of a Public Artist* (1990) and "Richard Wagner as Cult Hero" (1984). A current researcher of the Civil War, FDR, and Hollywood and the Jews, he is a member of the Advisory Board of the Psychohistory Forum and a past president and long-time treasurer of the International Psychohistorical Association (IPA). □

***Life Is Beautiful* Is Not a "Romantic Comedy"**

Flora Hogman

Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

It was interesting for me to read the descriptions and reactions to *Life Is Beautiful* in the **Clio's Psyche** special issue on Humor in the Holocaust (June, 1999). Except for scenes in the first half of the film, alternatively funny or ironical, I did not find the rest of the film funny at all. But this is related to my being a Holocaust survivor. I was a hidden child during the war.

The essence of the film for me was a transcendent effort to safeguard feelings of love and hope against total destruction. Only through preserving the innocence of the child can love survive. In fact, it is this innocence which must be safeguarded against destruction. The fight is basically from the child's point of view, from his lens, to deny the horror that is surrounding him, to prevent one's "soul" from being destroyed, not unlike the end of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the triumph against despair.

A determination to preserve the child's illusion affirms that evil has no right to exist in the world of the young child; the right to feel that father's love can transcend, and the right not to give up the prerogative to that feeling -- an essential recovery of something which was certainly lost to me.

Thus, the film for me has a touching, healing message. I believe the film adds a valid, important dimension to the Holocaust tragedy, a fight to the death against the loss of innocence: the child knows the father is lying but must, wants, to believe the father. Interwoven in the "fable" is that the child also learns from the father to protect himself.

I remember a man whom I had interviewed

about his World War II experiences as a child, who had discovered his brother and father shot. "I didn't know what to tell my mother, so I said nothing. Mother pressed for a lie. I said I knew they were taken away to work. Mother believed me, knowing I was lying.

I find it difficult to understand how this film can be seen as a "romantic comedy." □

"Victim Olympics": The Collective Psychology of Comparative Genocides

Ralph Seliger

Meretz USA

In his new book on the impact of the Holocaust on American Jewish identity, *The Holocaust In American Life*, historian Peter Novick discusses what he dubs the "Victim Olympics." This is an unseemly phenomenon of ethnic one-upmanship which pits groups against each other with self-serving interpretations of historical grievances and suffering. The psychological dimension involves how the need to feel ethnic pride has created this mutually antagonistic competition.

I experienced an instance of this on a recent social occasion. While visiting a Jewish immigrant from Holland, one intimately familiar with her parents' Holocaust-era struggle for survival, I discussed murderous events of more recent vintage. I noted that the only close modern parallel to the Jewish catastrophe of World War II was Rwanda, where as many as 800,000 defenseless Tutsis were butchered during 100 days beginning in April, 1994. I hit a nerve in pointing out that this was a rate of slaughter which may have exceeded Auschwitz at its worst, even though I had not done so to minimize the Holocaust, but rather to emphasize the magnitude of this more recent horror. Still, her angry reaction should not have come as a complete surprise.

As a child of refugees from the Holocaust, who never knew his grandparents and numerous other relatives as a result, I inherited an intense interest in both the legacy of Jewish suffering and the cataclysmic experiences of other peoples. I am pained, personally, when the injustices visited upon others become a source of acrimony against "the Jews" for having so successfully memorialized our bitter encounter with genocide.

I might find this at work where -- *a propos* of nothing -- a usually cheerful black man turns scornful about "the Jews talking about their Holocaust" when African Americans suffered a "holocaust" of their own in the "Middle Passage" of slave ships transporting and killing en route untold numbers of victims. Or, over a decade ago, when I waited in the hospital with my mother for news on my father's emergency heart surgery alongside an elderly Armenian-American woman and her adult children in the same situation. As almost inevitably with my mother under stress, she mentioned their survival of Hitler. This elicited a diatribe from the old woman, decrying "the Jews" for thinking they are the only ones who have suffered.

Psychiatrist Vamik Volkan applies his psychological and psychoanalytic knowledge to shed light on this issue in *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (1997). Dr. Volkan observes in this study of a variety of contemporary international and inter-ethnic conflicts that "Rarely was there empathy for the suffering of the 'enemy' group...; instead there was an inability to identify with the anguish of the other. There was only an isolated concern with one's own helplessness and losses."

He quotes Anwar Sadat's speech in Jerusalem in November, 1977, that "70 percent" of the problem between Egypt and Israel was psychological. Dr. Volkan then illustrates this with an example from an Egyptian-Israeli group dialogue when an Egyptian found it difficult to accept that Israelis have genuine fears about the Arab world. A zero-sum competitive psychology is at work: If the Egyptian acknowledged the Israelis' fears, "he would be granting Israelis the status of an injured party, thereby compromising the unique, injured status of Egyptians.... [...and his reluctance underscored] his belief that Israelis, unlike Egyptians, lacked emotions; they were nonhuman."

Dr. Volkan employs a mix of psychological insight and metaphor to explain the longevity of ethnic grievances, some -- such as the Serbs on Kosovo and "the Turks" -- enduring for centuries. Volkan refers to "selectively-chosen trauma" and a collective "unresolved mourning" over historical events which are remembered inexactly or even inaccurately. Together with "selectively-chosen glories" which depict events and eras in idealized terms, these are transmitted through the generations as "psychological DNA." "The influence of a severe and humiliating calamity that directly af-

fects all or most of a large group forges a link between the psychology of the individual and that of the group." The trauma is too painful to be mourned to completion. "Because the traumatized self-images passed down by members of the group all refer to the same calamity, they become part of the group identity, an ethnic marker on the canvas of the ethnic tent."

The psychological aspects of this competitive "sport" of ethnic suffering may also be disguised within, or supplemented by, ideological agendas. An article in the Spring, 1999, issue of *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, "The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflections on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship" by Garviel D. Rosenfeld of Fairfield University, pinpoints the issues as presented by leftists in indicting mainstream Holocaust scholars as "Jewish exclusivists" or Zionist apologists. One such work, examined independently by Rosenfeld and myself, is a contentious book by Ward Churchill, an American Indian activist and professor of Native American studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present* (1997).

Professor Churchill disputes official estimates of the native population of the Americas and the Caribbean at the initial moment of European contact in 1492. He favors a population estimate of about 25 million north of Mexico, about 15 million in the Caribbean Basin, and about 125 million in the Western Hemisphere as a whole. Hence, he argues that the European colonizers brought on a "holocaust" in the Western Hemisphere of far more massive dimension than what the Jews suffered in World War II. Churchill not only indicts Western civilization for its treatment of indigenous peoples in the Americas but also attacks prominent Jewish Holocaust historians -- including Deborah Lipstadt, Lucy Dawidowicz, Yehuda Bauer, and Steven T. Katz -- for being "Jewish exclusivists" in arguing that the Jewish Holocaust ranks as the world's worst instance of genocide, or, in the view of Cornell historian Steven Katz, that it was the only "true" genocide.

Prof. Rosenfeld regards Katz's terminology as unnecessarily inflammatory:

Katz could have ... argued that the Nazis' intent to kill the entire Jewish people made the Holocaust different from all other cases of mass murder, AND referred to these cases (as did Yehuda Bauer) as "genocide." By failing to do so, his book needlessly

offended groups extremely sensitive to the neglect of their historical experiences, opening its author to the charge of establishing a "hierarchy of victims."

Churchill and other leftist scholars attacked Yehuda Bauer of Hebrew University for minimizing the extent of genocide against Gypsies and Slavs, especially Poles, in World War II. Yet Rosenfeld indicates that Gypsy populations were not consistently rounded up for extermination in all countries under Nazi occupation. And, although ten percent of non-Jewish Poles perished, every Pole was *not* targeted in the same way as every Jew. Indeed, it is this concept -- to paraphrase Elie Wiesel, there were many other victims, but *every* Jew was intended as a victim -- which Churchill fails to credit or to understand.

Churchill prefers to see this "interest in Jewish exclusivism" as an ethnocentric Jewish conceit or perhaps a Zionist tactic to win world sympathy. He quotes writer Edward Alexander to the effect that allowing for other's experiences of genocide "converts to moral capital in the political arena at Jewish expense." Still, Churchill plays the same zero-sum game he accuses "Zionists" of to advance his own agenda of aboriginal rights. As "demonstrably one of the most victimized groups in the history of humanity, [American Indians] are entitled to every ounce of moral authority we can get," he writes.

It is sometimes said that suffering ennobles the soul. Indeed, the best of the ethical and compassionate teachings in Judaism, Christianity, and other great religious or philosophical traditions are based upon instances of suffering or persecution. Yet the group- and psycho-dynamics of history suggest that suffering is more likely to embitter than to ennoble, and that the latter is rare -- a product of profound human growth and maturity.

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Forgiveness and Transcendence

Anie Kalayjian
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As a child of a survivor of the Ottoman-Turkish Genocide of Armenians, I have been very familiar with the atrocities planned and carried out from 1894 to 1915. During World War I, the Turkish authorities declared the Armenians to be enemies of the Ottoman Empire. Adult males, and especially those identified as potential leaders, were arrested, taken to a desolate area, and shot. This process was designed to deprive Armenians of leadership and representation, so that deportations might proceed without resistance. Ultimately, famine, thirst, torture, epidemics, pillage, and plunder resulted in the deaths of one-and-one-half million people which was two-thirds of the Armenian population in that area. My father was one of the fortunate survivors who was then able to settle with his family in Syria. My mother's family walked through the deserts to Syria, where I was born.

The collective pain and suffering of my nation of Armenia and the continued Turkish denial of its Genocide left me feeling helpless and pained. I eventually concluded that the best way to deal with those negative feelings was to sublimate them. This led me to found the Armenian American Society for Studies on Stress and Genocide. In the Society we began systematic research on the psychosocial impact of the long-term effects of the Armenian Genocide. The study revealed that the persistent denial of the Genocide by the Turkish government evoked intense anger and rage in survivors due to the lack of validation and reparation. Validation of a traumatic experience is an essential step toward resolution and closure. An explicit expression of remorse by a perpetrator to a victim has enormous healing value. Against a background of losses and atrocities well beyond the realm of usual life experience, these aged survivors reflected a sense of personal and communal accomplishment, tempered with anger regarding the perpetrators' denial of how they were victimized.

In 1988 a devastating earthquake struck Armenia. This motivated me to establish a Mental Health Outreach Program to assist the psychosocial needs of the surviving community in Soviet Armenia. Both my clinical outreach and research with the earthquake survivors in Armenia revealed yet further traumatization. Some of the nightmares of the Armenian earthquake survivors were not of the earthquake, but of the Turkish gendarmes whipping them into the deserts during the Genocide. This created a tremendous feeling of pain and helplessness in me. How was I going to help my countrymen to work through the long-term effects of

the Genocide? How would I help the Armenian elderly survivors of the Genocide integrate the trauma, find meaning in their experiences, and move to the next stage of their life -- death?

About six months later, in 1989, I met Viktor Frankl at the International Forum of Logotherapy in San Jose. Frankl was a psychiatrist who survived Nazi concentration camps where he lost most of his family. He went on to write *Man's Search for Meaning* (1963). Feeling extremely fortunate to have met Frankl, I tearfully asked him, "How can I help the Armenian people heal from the injury perpetrated by the Ottoman-Turkish Genocide, ... [from] the insult of [being the victims of] the denial perpetrated by the successive Turkish governments ever since the first genocide of the 20th century." I went on, "The Armenian survivors are still ... tormented [as] the psychic genocide continues. What can I do?"

Viktor Frankl looked at me with great understanding and empathy, and quickly said, "Ask the Armenians to be the first to forgive. You have waited close to 80 years. These survivors are dying as we speak, they can't wait any longer. Help them to forgive." I felt a moment of relief and comfort since I thought I now knew the answer. But how? That was yet another big question. What Viktor Frankl talked about is an individual, and spiritual, forgiveness, not a political one. I kept on trying to insert it in my lectures and in Armenian Genocide commemorations, but in vain. Some of my Armenian colleagues stopped talking with me for advancing these ideas. They did not realize that forgiveness does not imply the abandonment of the goal of educating the perpetrator of the crime to the need to accept responsibility.

I continued sublimating, continued conducting research on the Armenian Genocide, and continued helping around the world. In 1996, we published our first scientific research article in the *Journal of Traumatic Stress* after four years of revisions; not because of the paper's scientific merit but its political consequences. The Introduction of the paper (where the historical perspectives were mentioned) got changed and revised about a dozen times by the Editorial Board of the journal. Some Turkish leaders even threatened the Jewish editors by saying, "Which is more important, a dead Armenian or a live Jewish person?" A second study was published in the *Psychoanalytic Review* with the encouragement and support of Dr. Flora Hogman, a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust.

Although my personal journey of forgive-

ness began in 1988, the most important event that impacted my journey was in the summer of 1998, when I took a taxi in New York City. I sat next to the driver, noticed his accent, and inquired, "I detect a familiar accent, where are you from?" "Turkey," he answered, noting that he had been studying in South Africa for about 10 years. Immediately I began speaking in Turkish, and ask him if he was Turkish. His reply was a definite "Yes." Smiling, he said, "My name is Ahmed. Are you Turkish, too?" Before he even completed his sentence, I replied, in a tone expressing urgency, "No, I am Armenian!" My response must have been strong and definite because Ahmed quickly declared, "I have many Armenian friends here in New York, they are from Istanbul." He went on to tell me about his friend Garo, who one day had invited him to his house for dinner. When Garo's elderly mother found out that Ahmed was Turkish, she threw him out of her house, yelling at him, "Your government massacred my people and my family, I don't want you in my house." My gut reaction was "Yes! Good for her, you deserve to be thrown out." My heart was beating faster and faster, my body was feeling hot, and my hands were cold and clammy, as I felt my anger escalating. Indeed, this was a very familiar feeling.

I had felt this same anger surging in January, 1997, when I first read Sami Gulgoze's Letter to the Editor in the *Observer*, the American Psychological Society's newsletter. Gulgoze's response to the research article, "Coping with Ottoman-Turkish Genocide: The Experience of Armenian Survivors," was to write, "Whether there has been a genocide or not has been a scholarly debate for years, and there is strong evidence against the existence of such an event in the Ottoman land."

In the taxi, I remembered my intensifying feelings of anger, rage, resentment, disappointment, and hopelessness as I had read the letter. This was written by a scholar, a professor of psychology, from a reputable university in Turkey. What could I expect from this taxi driver? While I was submerged in those negative thoughts, I realized that Ahmed was still talking; in fact, he was trying to say something. I looked at him with anger, as he said, "I wish it [the Genocide] didn't happen. It is very sad and bad that it happened. Many innocent people died for no reason."

Ahmed sounded genuinely sad and troubled. He grew more anxious as I sat silently, processing my feelings. After all, I had thought I had resolved my anger about the Armenian Genocide.

He added, "But it is not my fault; I didn't do it." To this I answered, "Of course, I know you didn't commit the Genocide. Do your other Turkish friends know about the Genocide?" He responded, "Well, you know, we don't talk about it in Turkey. It is not mentioned in our history books."

Ahmed's admission helped me to achieve a new level of understanding, forgiveness, and hope. I meet many skeptics, as I lecture around the world on human-made traumas and forgiveness in order to achieve closure. Many Armenians, especially, confuse forgiveness with forgetting, and in this process turn their anger against me as they exclaim, "How could you even think of asking fellow survivors and their children to forgive the Turks!" I think that they equate forgiveness with forgetting. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting. Forgiveness does not mean that I will stop researching the Armenian Genocide. Forgiving does not mean concealing the truth and forgetting our human rights. Forgiving means freeing oneself of the chains of anger, unlocking the locks of resentment, and taking a step toward ending the cycle of hatred. Only when freed of hatred can one achieve one's potential and succeed in life.

I wrote about my experiences with the Turkish taxi driver, and the issue of forgiveness. It was published in a few Armenian papers. I then received many calls and letters to the editor, brimming with hatred and stating that I didn't know what I was talking about. I was even called a "Turk [enemy] lover." Many of my colleagues stopped talking to me.

As I continued my journey toward forgiveness and integration of the trauma of the Armenian Genocide, I submitted a paper to the Sixth European Conference on Psychotraumatology, Clinical Practice, and Human Rights, which was to take place in Istanbul, Turkey, in June, 1999. Because I was fully cognizant of the Turkish denial of the Genocide, I revised the research paper and entitled it "Mass Human Rights Violations: Resilience vs. Resignation." My paper was accepted with some revisions. (Together with a colleague from Canada, I submitted another paper on the Genocide, which was rejected.) Because they were worried about my safety, all of my friends and colleagues were against my going to Turkey to present on the Turkish Genocide against the Armenians. Despite all the opposition, I went to Turkey.

Upon my arrival at the conference in Istanbul, I noticed how the keynote speakers talked freely regarding Turkish human rights violations

currently imposed on Kurds. I was encouraged by their candid reports, and decided to distribute my original abstract on the Armenian Genocide. At that point the threats began. First, I was threatened with being murdered, to which I responded with skepticism, stating that I didn't think anyone would dare to kill me in front of the 650 scholars from over 48 countries present at the conference. The next day I was threatened with torture if I talked about the Genocide. The third day the Genocide abstracts were literally snatched from my hands. On the last day of the conference, the day when my lecture was scheduled to be presented, I was called by the Turkish organizers and the British head of the European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies to a private meeting in the basement. At this meeting I was presented with an ultimatum: either I would sign a letter stating that I would refrain from speaking about the Turkish Genocide of Armenians or I would have to leave the conference without presenting. This letter was given to me only 20 minutes prior to my lecture which was scheduled at the last hour of the meetings.

I reminded my inquisitors that this was a human rights conference, and they were in fact violating my rights as a presenter, by telling me what I could and could not talk about. But it was to no avail. They reiterated that because of the political situation, "we" had to protect the Turkish organizers. I posed the question as to why the plight of the Kurds was freely discussed while the Armenian issue was treated with silence. They provided no satisfactory answer, but again reiterated that if I wouldn't sign the letter, I would have to leave the conference without delivering my presentation. Given this awful choice, I chose to sign the letter to not lose an opportunity to address the conference.

My European colleagues helped me to revise my transparencies by covering the identifying words such as "Genocide," "Armenian," and "Ottoman-Turkish," with a special black transparency marker. I began my discussion without looking at the screen where the first transparency was projected. As I began to apologize for the black lines, I noticed smirks on the faces of many of my European and American colleagues. A look at the screen revealed the underlying, identifying words coming through the black marker's ink. My comment was, "Oops, I guess we could not hide it, it is coming through."

There was a growing tension in the audience. The Turkish attendees were extremely tense, and others were laughing at the irony in my state-

ment. I continued showing the transparencies and focusing on forgiveness as a therapeutic intervention. It was a tense situation as I decided what I could and could not say. Nevertheless, I was able to communicate the importance of spiritual forgiveness as a means of getting over resentment and moving toward dialogue. I also mentioned how my Turkish colleagues were even wondering how I dared to ask the survivors to forgive, as they said, "The Turks should apologize first." But, to follow the logic of Viktor Frankl, we have been waiting for 84 years and nothing has happened; we cannot wait idly and continue suffering as victims. We need to empower ourselves and move on to the next phase of dialogue and collaboration. As long as there is anger and rage we cannot collaborate. I also asserted that admission to genocide is a very difficult burden to carry on one's shoulders, especially since the Turkish people have a very erroneous view about the Armenian Genocide. I then asked the scientific community to assist the Turkish people in the task of developing an emotional maturity by accepting responsibility and apologizing for the wrong doings of their ancestors. They, too, need to forgive their ancestors to be able to stop the denial and accept the responsibility. After the lecture, my European, American, and African colleagues hugged and congratulated me for my courage. I began crying in their arms. I was crying with a sense of relief, empowerment, and happiness to be alive.

I returned safely to New York with plans to write about my experience in Turkey. Although I was spiritually enriched, I was emotionally and physically drained. For two months I postponed the writing. Then the devastating earthquake happened in Turkey on August 17, 1999.

Since I have worked with natural disasters for over a decade in Armenia, California, Florida, Japan, and Santo Domingo, I began wondering, Should I go to Turkey to help? The answer was a definite "Yes." My outreach does not have any geographic nor political boundaries. As I was pondering how to assist, I received two invitations from Turkey. I then began developing the Volunteer Mental Health Outreach Program for the earthquake survivors, funded by the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey, and invited many experts in the field to join me. We worked several weeks under the tents with over 500 survivors in group therapy, debriefing, relaxation and breathing exercises, and researching the impact of the trauma. About a quarter of our clients were Armenians and the rest

were Moslem Turks.

My colleagues could not believe that after all those threats to my life, and the difficulties I had in Turkey last June, I was still willing and able to assist the Turkish surviving community. For me it was yet another challenge, and a step forward in my journey of forgiveness and transcendence.

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The Holocaust as Trope for "Managed" Social Change

Howard F. Stein
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Introduction

This paper explores some shared psychological meanings of Holocaust imagery (Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 1998) invoked by people experiencing downsizing, re-engineering, restructuring, managed care, and other forms of "managed" social change in the United States. I present a brief case example to illustrate how the evidence for the Holocaust metaphor lies in the action that carries the seed of its emotional plausibility. It is my countertransference that leads me (and others) from experience of action to its symbolization. By listening via my own unconscious, I can comprehend and hold onto others' projection of Holocaust imagery and language onto contemporary American workplace cataclysm.

Since the end of World War II and the revelation of the Nazi war of extermination (Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945*, 1975), the word *Holocaust* (from the Hebrew, *olah*, burnt offering, sacrifice) has been adopted by many different groups, under varied circumstances, to designate the nature of their suffering. Whatever else atrocities, genocides, and

other horrors are called by those who undergo them, they are often characterized as a Holocaust. At least one common structural denominator is the concentration of power that makes institutional terror possible.

While participating in my own workplace organization, in my frequent role as speaker or presenter at national conferences, and in my capacity as organizational consultant (interviewer, participant observer), I have often heard downsizing, re-engineering, restructuring, and managed care described in the idiom of the Holocaust. What is one to make of the cultural borrowing of this highly charged image? What is its psychodynamic significance? What, exactly, does it embody and condense? How does this use correspond to, or differ with, the use of the Holocaust by other groups? As a Jew who lost virtually my entire paternal family in Rumania to the Nazi era, how do I listen to these narratives and not discount them as flights of hyperbole? In this paper I shall present an extended example of this use and suggest some interpretations.

The Holocaust as Metaphor for Evil

In *The Holocaust and the Crisis of Human Behavior* (1994), George Kren and Leon Rapoport ask, "Why does the Holocaust not fade away?" (p. 3). They reply:

...insofar as the Holocaust is seen in general moral terms, it stands out as the ultimate expression of the human capacity for organized evil and has come to serve as the standard to which all lesser or proximate evils are compared. Accordingly, over the past decades any substantial threat to the existence or basic rights of an oppressed population or minority group has triggered appeals to the Holocaust (p. 4).

The Holocaust can be used "as a reminder of past evil, and ... as an explanation (or analogy) of present events" (Professor Gary Holmes, personal communication, October 1, 1999). Among those who commit atrocities, it is commonly invoked to diminish personal responsibility for action, if not to exonerate oneself, and to rationalize for oneself a victim ideology ("I was just following orders").

A widespread group psychological use of the Holocaust is to turn suffering from an absolute, lonely experience, into a comparative, relative experience. One encounters statements such as: "We suffered (a) as much as you did, (b) more than you

did." Such positions serve partly as what Franco Fornari called "the paranoid elaboration of mourning" (*The Psychoanalysis of War*, 1966), substituting vigilance and anger for vulnerability and grief. It is a salve for loss through continued fighting.

By contrast with this widespread narcissistic-defensive usage, I find that many Americans evoke Holocaust images (e.g., Nazis, SS, Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, trains, Dr. Josef Mengele, selection for life or death, gas chambers, SS police, labor camps, large scale executions, euphemisms, secrecy, rumors, disappearance) as an idiom by which to comprehend the extent, depth, and kind of suffering they experience in the workplace since the early 1980s. The "symbol choice" directs us -- if we can bear to hear it -- to the speaker's catastrophic experience and to the psychohistoric dynamics of group representation or group fantasy. When individuals, families, workplace organizations, and ethnic-national groups suffer catastrophe, they search for metaphors that -- affectively and cognitively together -- attempt to answer the question: What is this experience *like*? (see Thomas Ogden, "Reverie and Metaphor: Some Thoughts on How I Work as a Psychoanalyst," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 1997, 78: 719-732). The effort at "likening" becomes an intermediate area between consciousness and unconsciousness.

(Although I wish here primarily to immerse the reader in the phenomenology of business-as-Holocaust, there is a growing literature by psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, and scholars of contemporary managed social change. See my (with others) *The HUMAN Cost of a Management Failure: Organizational Downsizing at General Hospital*, 1996, and my *Euphemism, Spin, and the Crisis in Organizational Life*, 1998.)

A Letter from a Colleague

In late September 1999, I received a letter from a senior Jewish academic and teacher in an American biomedical setting, a person whom I have known some 15 years. Her poignancy and remarkable candor take us to the heart of my subject matter: *the Holocaust as trope* [figurative use of a word as metaphor or hyperbole] *for what passes officially for American corporate "business as usual."* My colleague had read my 1998 book, *Euphemism*. In the summer of 1999 I had sent her a manuscript I would present at the Society for Psychological Anthropology in September. It was titled, "From Countertransference to Social Theory: A Study of Holocaust Thinking in American Business Dress." With only a few minor adapta-

tions to assure confidentiality, I quote her letter in its entirety, and with her permission.

I read your paper "...A Study of Holocaust Thinking..." It was tremendously powerful -- shocking, really. Simply the juxtaposition of the two language categories of the title -- Holocaust and American business -- is profoundly troubling. The article raised deeply personal issues for me. This is what I must share with you at the moment.

As you may recall, I spent two years (1992-1994) as acting chair of my department of internal medicine, a challenging, demanding, and ultimately extremely painful and soul-crushing time for me. When I relinquished that position, I spent the next year on sabbatical, attempting to become a prototypical National Institute of Medicine hard science researcher -- and shortly thereafter underwent a series of health crises, including the near loss of the sight in one eye (wonder why!). In any event, I never really allowed myself to process the administrative experience or to reflect on why it had caused me such anguish. Reading your article, I was overcome by feelings of guilt and shame, as I realized how -- on a small scale -- I came to approximate the aggressors you portrayed.

Although I always tried to act with integrity, I think looking back that I was frequently co-opted by the dominant bottom-line corporate thinking that you describe so well. For example, I personally fired two colleagues whom I had known and worked closely with for over 10 years, simply because they could no longer prove their "utility" to the system. I am convinced now, with hindsight, that their terminations were only symbolic in nature, did nothing substantial to assuage our budget problems, and were primarily sacrificial acts to appease forces both within and without the department. The more I read of your analysis, the more I realized just how guilty I was of the sins you cite -- the euphemized language, the personification and subsequent glorification of the institutional organism, the denial of the still small voice within, the sense of having "disappeared" good human beings who in a day became obliterated from our world. There are other examples as well.

I guess I am sharing all this because I believe I am basically a good human being who has always identified more with the oppressed than with the oppressor (and, indeed, as a social scientist and non-M.D., as you well know, have always been more oppressed than oppressor). Yet how easily power corrupted me and created a damning shift in perspective. I began to dream the collective dream, and it wasn't that hard. Clearly I paid a price -- I attribute my subsequent health problems at least in part to the internalizing and somaticizing of tremendous levels of anxiety and distress -- but on a conscious level I thought I was just exhibiting necessary toughness, showing I could be "one of the boys."

The striking thing in what you write is that to NOT dream the dream, play the game, you almost have to be crazy -- and very brave, to trust your inner experience only in the face of overwhelming disconfirming messages from the outside world. But on balance, it is better to be crazy than cruel. I had the opportunity to become a Nazi -- a little, baby Nazi to be sure, but there it was -- and I seized it eagerly. Eventually, as your article points out, I was eaten in turn, when I was no longer useful to the survival of the machine. I don't wonder at all how the Holocaust could have happened.

Well, my friend, I hope these thoughts are not too depressing. Although I admit to being temporarily devastated as these unlooked-for insights worked their way up from my unconscious, on balance I learned a great deal. For example, I think my subsequent physical recovery and professional fulfillment are both direct results of my having had the wisdom to voluntarily renounce the chair position (which, out of pragmatism more than anything else, the dean had asked me to accept on a permanent basis) and relearn the skill of listening to my own heart. That inward turning is also what eventually moved me away from hard research toward the medical humanities, and I can honestly say I have recovered my soul in the process.

So, while I have had to face that good people, including myself, can do bad things, I have also discovered that *teshuvah*

(Hebrew, for repentance) and redemption both are possible. Good lessons for the New Year. And I have to thank your article for helping me to bring all of this into such clear focus. I thank you for your plain speaking, your courage, and your unwillingness to deny and distance from some very brutal truths. If this be insanity, then we need more of it.

Discussion

This single example, a personal letter, can be read as a cultural and historical exemplar that articulates what many people say; and what for countless others serves as the "unthought known" (Christopher Bollas, *In the Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*, 1989). My colleague makes the implicit explicit, the unconscious conscious. She describes part of the journey to unconsciousness and back to consciousness. Her letter reveals hard-won insight into herself, into processes widely shared in contemporary American culture -- and the personal cost of unconscious identification with the aggressor. It shows the work of aggression in the service of mastering the anxiety of overwhelming vulnerability -- and of the ultimate futility of such self-protection. It brings to mind Robert J. Lifton's well-known concepts of "psychic numbing" and "doubling" (similar to Melanie Klein's "splitting" and "projective identification"), and of Donald Winnicott's distinction between the "false self" and the "true self."

In part, at least, my friend's experience includes, among other things, the lure of power and acceptance (to be "one of the boys," with its gendered connotations), until another part of her talked back, via her body (her health). I wonder whether she had become a "victim" to her wish to belong and to overcome marginality.

The letter shows how, in the juncture between personal life history and organizational (cultural) history, the true self is (here, temporarily) cast aside and recovered. It shows how Holocaust thinking, imagery, and acting, can be engaged in within "normal" American health care, university, corporate, and government settings -- how a way that at first seems disturbing and repugnant (dissociated, not-me, "This doesn't happen here") becomes recognizable (integrated, me, "I did that," "I was that"). Finally, the letter is an intersubjective document that exists in interpersonal space in which she trusts to see herself and to be seen.

Conclusions

This paper has described and interpreted the symbolic linkage between modern large-scale American business organizational style and the Holocaust. A personal narrative was used to illustrate how American workplace experience comes to be represented in the idiom of Nazi atrocity. I have argued that the Holocaust can be used psychologically as a trope for the experience of massive forms of "managed" change that go by such euphemisms as downsizing, RIFing [reductions in force], surplus, separating, re-engineering, restructuring, and managed health care. Via a single document, I have offered data that help us to understand how the Holocaust comes to be a compelling internal representation and external expression for what is officially "the bottom line" of "just business" in American life.

(Author's Note: The author expresses gratitude to Professor Michael Diamond and Professor Gary Holmes for their encouragement in this project and comments on this manuscript.)

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An Israeli Psychohistorian: Avner Falk

Paul H. Elovitz

Ramapo College and the Psychohistory Forum

Avner Falk was born in Palestine (now Israel) in 1943 and spent his childhood and youth in Tel Aviv. He studied psychology and clinical psychology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and then went to graduate school in the U.S. and received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1970. He returned to Israel in 1971. From 1971 to 1982, Dr. Falk taught clinical psychology and psychiatry courses at mental health centers and nursing schools affiliated with the Hebrew University and Hadassah Medical School in

Jerusalem. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s he was also Supervising Clinical Psychologist at several mental health centers in Jerusalem. From 1962 to 1995 he served reserve duty as Mental Health Officer in the Medical Corps, Israel Defense Forces, retiring with the rank of Captain.

His books are *Moshe Dayan, haIsh vehaAgadah: Biographia Psychoanalytit* [Moshe Dayan, the Man and the Myth: A Psychoanalytic Biography] (Hebrew) (1985), *David Melech Yisrael: Biographia Psychoanalytit shel David Ben-Gurion* [David King of Israel: A Psychoanalytic Biography of David Ben-Gurion] (Hebrew) (1987), *Herzl, King of the Jews: A Psychoanalytic Biography of Theodor Herzl* (1993), *A Psychoanalytic History of the Jews* (1996), and *Monsieur Filis: A Psychoanalytic Biography of Napoleon Bonaparte*. His numerous articles are published in *The Psychohistory Review*, *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, and a variety of other journals. Paul Elovitz interviewed our featured scholar over the Internet in October. Dr. Falk may be contacted by e-mail at <falk7@newmail.net>.

Paul H. Elovitz [PHE]: Please tell us about your family background and what it was like in Palestine when you were born there on April 2, 1943?

Avner Falk [AF]: It was the middle of the Second World War and the Holocaust in Europe. The Jews and Arabs of Palestine were locked in a bloody conflict. Many Palestinian Jews were serving in the British Army but did not see action in Europe until the following year. Most of the others were busy making a living in a hard land and serving in various Jewish self-defense forces or terrorist groups fighting the British occupying force of Palestine who called themselves freedom fighters. My parents were middle-class professionals. I was their firstborn child. Economic conditions were such that they had to share their apartment with another family and had all of one room for themselves and their son. When I was three, they moved into a two-room apartment. When I was five, my only sibling, a girl, was born. My mother still lives. I lost my father when I was 49. My level of achievement may have to do with parental demands and expectations when I was quite young.

PHE: How did you come to love history?

AF: My parents told me stories of their lives in Germany and Poland and of their immigration to Palestine in the 1930s. I was very interested

in my family history. As a schoolboy, even though I was good at mathematics and science, history was my favorite subject. Our interest in general history begins with our quest for our personal history.

PHE: How do you define *psychohistory* and *political psychology*?

AF: Quite simply: Psychohistory is an interdisciplinary endeavor in which psychology, primarily psychoanalysis, is used to study history. Political psychology is the psychology of politics.

PHE: What brought you to political psychology and psychohistory?

AF: As a schoolboy I was intensely interested in history, as a young adult in politics. Early in my professional career as a clinical psychologist I began to write scholarly articles about subjects of applied psychoanalysis, such as the unconscious meaning of international borders and a psychobiographical study of Freud's relationship to Herzl. I moved more and more into the fields of psychohistory and political psychology. After many years, I made them my career.

PHE: What psychoanalytic/psychotherapeutic training and experience have you had and how has it affected the work you do as a psychohistorian?

AF: I studied clinical psychology, including psychotherapy, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. This included practica and internships in psychotherapy. My clinical training and supervision was conducted by psychoanalysts. I then worked for some 25 years as a psychotherapist and as a supervisor of psychotherapy in both public and private practice. I have had some 15 years of personal psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. My work as a psychohistorian is based on my psychoanalytic knowledge and on my long experience as a psychotherapist. My clinical training gave me a deeper insight into human feelings and motives which lie at the base of our entire civilization. It helped me see beneath the surface of things and to understand history and politics in terms of unconscious motivation.

PHE: Who was important to your development as a student of psychosocial phenomena?

AF: My first therapist, Dr. Franz Brüll, had a great impact on my choice of career. He was the one who first brought Erikson to my attention. Erikson had a great impact on me as a young man. Several psychoanalysts who taught or supervised

me during my student years in St. Louis were identification figures for me, but I had to develop my own self and my own ways of looking at the world.

PHE: What books were important to your development?

AF: Those of William Shakespeare, Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Heinz Kohut, Vamik Volkan, Howard Stein, and Charles Strozier.

PHE: Of which of your works are you most proud?

AF: My applied psychoanalytic studies; my last book, *A Psychoanalytic History of the Jews* (which contains an autobiographical introduction and some material on my family history); and my work in progress, a psychoanalytic biography of Napoleon Bonaparte. Despite hundreds of thousands of books and articles on Napoleon, including a psychoanalytic book by L. Pierce Clark in 1929, I believe that mine is the first full-scale psychobiography of the emperor. It is a very big book, and therefore very hard to get published, but I hope to find a publisher soon.

PHE: What approach do you take to this dynamic Corsican?

AF: I examine his birth to a narcissistic mother who had suffered several personal losses and who had expected to have a girl to make up for her losses of a couple of daughters in infancy. The baby boy is rejected and abandoned emotionally by his mother, but is loved by his nursemaid. Through splitting and denial he develops a Jekyll-and-Hyde narcissistic personality. He becomes a great creative rebel but also his own worst enemy.

PHE: What project will follow your Napoleon book?

AF: A psychohistorical study of political assassination, in which I became interested after the assassination of my prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, in 1995.

PHE: It may be of interest to you, that after Hinckley's failed assassination attempt on Reagan, I taught a course on the psychology of political assassination, but found the subject too depressing to keep teaching, so I went back to teaching political psychobiography in its place. What assassinations do you focus upon and what approach do you plan to take?

AF: I attempt a psychohistorical overview of political assassinations over the centuries. I then discuss Rabin's assassination in 1995, move back to Kennedy's in 1963, and study the two assassins.

Then I develop a theory about the narcissistic-borderline personality of political assassins, their feelings of failure, worthlessness and despair, and their unconscious wish to become important and famous by unconsciously merging with the man they assassinate, who plays the role of the bad mother to them.

PHE: You once mentioned to me that you find it quite difficult to edit your own prolific writing. I can relate to this because in my early years I used to have considerable trouble with emotionally accepting the editorial intrusions of others. What can you say about the process and problems involved?

AF: I can accept a good editor cutting out whole chapters of my book, but I can't do it myself. As one of our colleagues recently wrote me, "No author believes that there is a single extra word or idea in his or her writing." This is part of our probably incurable narcissistic perfectionism. This is why we need editors.

PHE: How has your life as an Israeli, including as a past member and Captain in the Israel Defense Forces, affected you and your understanding of the world?

AF: Israel has always been in conflict, both external and internal. So have I... My military experience was primarily as a mental health officer treating soldiers with combat reactions. I learned a great deal from this. Most of my soldier patients suffered from survivor guilt, and from damage to their self-esteem, more than they did from guilt from killing. On the other hand, Israel is somewhat insular and provincial, and my travels have helped me gain a larger view of the world. All this is described in the introduction to my *A Psychoanalytic History of the Jews*.

PHE: Since your published books have been on David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan, Theodor Herzl, and Jewish history, I wonder about your own relationship to Judaism and Jewish identity.

AF: Being an Israeli Jew, interest in these issues is natural to me, and, like most Israelis, I am a secular Jew. Nonetheless, I am deeply interested in the psychology of religion.

PHE: How do you explain the growth and psychology of fundamentalism? How does this affect Israeli and Middle Eastern politics?

AF: I believe that fanaticism, fundamentalism, and extremism are pathological and dangerous, based as they are on primitive unconscious

splitting, denial, and projection. Violence, which is often their result, is a pathological reaction to inner stress, when narcissistic rage overwhelms the person, or when a terrorist is convinced that the righteousness of his cause justifies murder. One also has to understand the historical, social, cultural, and political context, including religious beliefs. Muslim fundamentalists obviously play a very disruptive role in the Middle East peace process.

PHE: A recent front-page article in *The New York Times Magazine* wrote about Israel's millennial problem, indicating that there were millennial Jews with ideas of exploding Arab-Israeli relations in the hope of creating a third millennium crisis. Can you shed any light on the subject?

AF: Throughout Jewish history there have been "millennial Jews" with messianic fantasies not very different from those of other religions. There are fanatical Jews who wish to blow up the mosque of the Dome of the Rock on Jerusalem's Temple Mount and build the Third Temple. This could of course provoke the entire Muslim world into a holy war against Israel.

PHE: As someone who has studied, traveled, lectured, and held academic appointments in the United States, what is your impression of American society?

AF: I like the United States and consider it a second home. On the other hand, I am well aware of its racial, social, cultural, and other problems. Of course, Israel has its own racial, social, cultural, and other problems. It is a melting pot, or rather a pressure cooker, of Jews from many different cultures, half of them from Muslim countries. The cultural differences between them and those from European-based cultures are quite striking and there is much conflict and aggression in daily life. There are special groups with special problems such as the Holocaust survivors and their children and grandchildren. Living in such a society is in itself a source of learning about human nature.

PHE: I am intrigued by the psycho-geographical work that you have done in the past, and I look forward to your contribution to *Clio's Psyche's* year 2000 special issue on psycho-geography. How did you come to this subject and what importance do you place upon it?

AF: My personal interest in psycho-geography began with my first trip outside Israel in 1959, when I was 16, and with the excitement, anxiety,

and elation involved in the crossing of borders. My first article on the unconscious symbolism of international borders was published in the *Psycho-analytic Quarterly* in 1974, with a subsequent article in the *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* in 1983 and an article on the unconscious meaning of my city, Jerusalem, in *The Psychohistory Review* in 1987. I met Vamik Volkan, one of the pioneers of psycho-geography, at the International Society for Political Psychology (ISPP) conference at Oxford in 1983, and it turned out that he had read and cited my work. I read his works, as well as those of Howard Stein, another pioneer, whom I also met in 1989. In that year Howard Stein and William Niederland published an edited book entitled *Maps from the Mind* with my articles in it. I think of psycho-geography as crucial for our understanding of history and politics.

PHE: Several years ago you announced that you had given up your psychotherapeutic practice for full-time scholarship. Why?

AF: Psychotherapy is a very difficult and demanding occupation, both emotionally and intellectually. It takes up most of your time and energy. Some writers like Janet Malcolm have called psychoanalysis "the impossible profession." Around the age of 50 I realized that my own personal problems were exacerbated by my occupation, and vice versa, that life was short, and that I had to choose. As I could fortunately afford it, I decided to devote the rest of my life to scholarship.

PHE: What specific training should a person wanting to become a psychohistorian pursue?

AF: It would be best if he could get full training in both clinical psychology and history. Failing that, I think that the psychological training is more essential, and the historical training can be obtained on one's own. To me, psychohistory is political psychology's underlying discipline, and I would require any student wishing to become a political psychologist to study psychohistory. In my country there is a tremendous resistance to psychoanalysis among historians. I may well be the only psychohistorian in Israel. No psychohistory is taught at the Israeli universities as yet.

PHE: Please list the five people who you think have made the greatest contribution to psychohistory in order of their contribution.

AF: Sigmund Freud, Erik H. Erikson, Robert J. Lifton, Charles Strozier, and Peter Loewenberg.

PHE: What do we as scholars, especially

as psychohistorians, need to do to strengthen our work?

AF: Learn how to avoid pitfalls and do better scholarship. Create an international psychohistorical society with much more stringent admission requirements, a PhD in either psychology or history, than the International Psychohistorical Association (IPA), which accepts practically anyone calling himself a psychohistorian. Those who have degrees in both fields would have a special status, such as Fellows of the society.

PHE: Since I periodically meet you at conferences of the International Society for Political Psychology, please tell me about your experiences with this group.

AF: Political psychology has a good international society in the ISPP and a good journal in *Political Psychology*, and seems to be developing steadily, although the psychoanalytic view is not its main stream. What makes the ISPP attractive to me is that it is a group of highly educated people who are open to interdisciplinary scholarship, though psychoanalysis and psychohistory do not have a very big place in it.

PHE: How do you see political psychology and psychohistory developing in the next decade?

AF: Psychohistory is at a crossroads. *The Psychohistory Review* has folded, a very serious blow to our field. A new journal has been launched, *Psychoanalysis and History*, but it deals much more with the history of psychoanalysis than with psychohistory. That leaves only two journals -- the *Journal of Psychohistory* and **Clio's Psyche** -- in the field. Many book publishers believe that their readers no longer want psychobiography. I hope the field grows and prospers, but am concerned.

Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, Editor of this publication, recalls first meeting Avner Falk in person at an ISPP conference in Israel in 1989. □

Deconstructing Hillary Clinton's Stab at Psychohistory

H. John Rogers

Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

Shortly after the failed attempt to remove her husband from office by impeachment, in her famous *Talk* magazine interview, the First Lady offered an explanation for her husband's sexual

behavior. She suggested it grew out of stress generated by his youthful placement in the middle of a sometimes conflicted mother-daughter relationship. I will address the First Lady's amateur psychologizing, but will not join that vast legion of commentators who ignored Hillary Clinton's distinction between "explaining" and "excusing" human conduct.

First of all, the psychological literature is generally to the effect that an only male child placed between a loving mother and a loving grandmother is not per se at risk of developing into a compulsive philanderer. If anything, Clinton is a recognizable version of Freud's archetype, "His majesty the child." Simply put, instead of one dotting female figure, he had two dotting figures who were competing for his favor!

Secondly, it would be a dull child indeed who did not quickly intuit how to play these two sources of affection off against one another. If blocked from one source of gratification, even the most primal organism will immediately seek another source. Young Billy Blythe was by all accounts quite precocious, so it would be fairly safe to assume that very early on he countered a maternal rejection with turning to his grandmother ("I'll ask Me-Maw,") and vice versa.

With young Billy Blythe, both mother and grandmother had, of course, the same goal, i.e., "raising" the child in the best possible fashion. The two women definitely had some personality differences, but both were passionate, small town women, nurses, and Arkansans. When the child lived with his grandparents it was the grandmother, with his mother away in nurse anesthiology school and later at work, who disciplined him and the mother who indulged him. Nothing could have been more natural. Later, after the President's mother remarried and young Bill joined the couple in Hot Springs, it was the grandmother who would indulge him on his frequent return visits to Hope. Again, nothing could be more natural. This is quintessentially American and probably universal. There may be a different wrinkle or two, but there is little in rearing processes employed here that could even arguably produce a compulsive philanderer.

In the *Talk* interview, Mrs. Clinton spoke of her husband being torn between these two powerful women. The actual dynamic would seem to be quite the opposite. The mother and the grandmother were united in their esteem for young Bill Blythe. Rather than being required to mediate their

conflict, Master Blythe was the beneficiary of it. He did not need to compete for their affection -- he had it!

An argument could certainly be made that what the President actually learned as a child was to manipulate women to his benefit. However, this hypothesis overlooks the fact that both of these women were perfectly willing to give young Bill whatever they thought he needed. The grandmother had strict standards to be sure -- standards against which Clinton's mother had earlier rebelled -- but this does not affect the basic dynamic here. Both women were clearly committed to the boy and to satisfying his needs. What they may have differed on was what his needs were, but this is a very different question from the First Lady's basic thesis.

Clinton's mother was the sort of person who recognized the validity of the Southern Baptist Church but wanted nothing to do with it. She held the same values (perhaps "more honored in the breach than the obedience") that her mother did. Simply put, Clinton's mother liked a few "bright lights" and the Baptists frowned on this. A day at the racetrack is for most a harmless diversion. For a "hard-shell Baptist," it is a way station on the road to perdition. (I am advised by people close to Mrs. Clinton that she found her spiritual connection some two decades before her death in one of the 12-step self-help fellowships).

The psychological dynamics of this situation were not as the First Lady suggests, i.e., that of a referee between two strong-willed women, but rather conducive to a child's feeling "all conquering and all beloved." (These words come from Thomas Wolfe, the southern writer whose early family configuration was similar to the President's.)

Based on the biographies, the President's role as referee came later, as his adoptive father's alcoholism progressed into its middle stages. Thus, it would seem that Mrs. Clinton simply conflated the two situations, choosing for whatever reason to attribute the philandering to his first household rather than to his second.

Actually, such youthful trauma as the President suffered may well have been a result of the change from the relative Elysium with his grandparents at Hope to the turmoil and chaos of his second household at Hot Springs. The psychological stress incident to life with an abusive and violent adoptive father, who was in regular and

repeated conflict with an adored mother, would have been a far more determinative factor in the development of the President's adult persona than the situation that the First Lady posits.

What is interesting in Mrs. Clinton's analysis is that she reconfigures the situation to cast the other major female figures in the President's life as the villains. This scenario tells us a good deal more about her psychic structure than the President's. In the classic dynamic, the compulsive philanderer is said to be searching for a "mother." Thus, President Clinton would appear to be fortunate in that he seems to have found a "mother figure" almost as permissive and tolerant as his original archetype.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the Clintons' marriage seems to roughly parallel that of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, persons for whom they have on occasion separately expressed their admiration. FDR had a long series of female companions, and Mrs. Roosevelt has been subject to allegations of lesbianism as Mrs. Clinton has been. Despite the slings and arrows, the marriage of both couples not only endured but would appear to have prospered. (No one is talking now about how the First Lady will leave the President in 2001.)

The Roosevelts had some monumental attainments, and I would suggest that the nation is truly fortunate that they lived before the personal became so very political. I would have preferred posthumous revelations to the Starr Report.

H. John Rogers, JD, is a Harvard trained attorney in West Virginia, a Psychohistory Forum Research Associate, and a Protestant minister. He has had some psychoanalytic training. □

Male Violence towards Women

Andrew Brink

Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

Review of Donald G. Dutton, The Abusive Personality: Violence and Control in Intimate Relationships. New York: The Guilford Press, 1998. ISBN 1572303700, viii + 214 pp., \$26.95.

Advances in understanding male violence towards women will be welcomed by psychohistorians. Male wishes to control and punish women, for reasons generally unknown to themselves, need elucidating before larger questions about marital and social disorder can be accurately

posed. While perhaps only three to four percent of males do enough violence to their wives and partners to come before the legal system, the problem is on such a broad scale that study of any segment of it is important. Donald Dutton's study is of abusers he calls "cyclical," that is, they batter repeatedly after intervals of contrition and making up. They are not men usually associated with violence, and indeed their assaults seem out of character.

Dutton, a professor of psychology at the University of British Columbia, offers a "life span perspective," showing that the abusive personality begins in childhood, even infancy. Anything less is partial and misleading. He reviews theories of causality: behavioral and neurochemical, together with ideological theories of sociobiologists and feminists. Each is shown to be too general to reveal the psychodynamics of cyclical abusers, who invariably have high dependency needs, chronic fear, jealousy, and repeated build-ups of rage. Dutton's advance is in giving centrality to attachment theory in the controversy over the origin of spousal abuse. Will he be believed? I think so, because of astute clinical observation combined with skillful use of attachment theory originated by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth and honed to fine research instruments by others.

Several types of abusive attachment in adult males are distinguished. The psychopathic is least discussed, while "overcontrolling batterers" are said to be avoidant, dependent, passive-aggressive, and have a pre-occupied attachment style. "Instrumental" (undercontrolled) batterers are actively violent, lacking in empathy, and have an attachment classification of "dismissing." "Impulsive" (undercontrolled or cyclical) batterers are actively violent and are notably depressed, anxious, and ambivalent, typically with borderline personality. Their attachment classification is "fearful angry," a variant on Mary Main's Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) described by Kim Bartholomew. Thus, Dutton does not strictly follow the AAI protocol for assessing the current meaning of developmental attachment experiences. One may question reliance on such tests as the EMBU, a less exacting means of measuring memories of upbringing.

Critical readers will raise such methodological fine points; behavioral researchers will discover Dutton making speculative leaps, and, of course, psychoanalysts will miss discussion of long-established theory. But Dutton is an adventuring researcher; unafraid to traverse this highly

charged area of human relationships and to forcefully state findings. Abusers' anxiously attached relations with their mothers are certainly studied, but perhaps most revealing is the following research finding:

The results were so strong that, if I had to pick one single action by the parent that generated abusiveness in men, I would pick being shamed by the father.... A lethal combination of shaming and physical abuse was required to generate the kind of abusiveness we have described above (pp. 152-3).

It is a great pleasure to follow Dutton on his quest for experientially grounded explanation of cyclical wife abuse. This disconcerting topic is brilliantly addressed and made foundational for social theory. The book closes with a chapter on "The Treatment of Assaultiveness," showing that male assertions of power and control over women can indeed be modified, though the general availability of such therapy seems utopian at present.

Andrew Brink, PhD, is a Trustee of the Holland Society of New York and on the Editorial Board of Clio's Psyche. Before devoting himself totally to scholarly publication, he taught at McMaster University (1961-88) and directed the Humanities and Psychoanalytic Thought Programme at Trinity College of the University of Toronto. The Creative Matrix: Anxiety and the Origin of Creativity will soon be released by the publisher to be added to the list of his books on the origins of creativity. □

Knafo's Schiele

Dan Dervin
Mary Washington College

Review of Danielle Knafo, Egon Schiele: A Self in Creation: A Psychoanalytic Study of the Artist's Self-Portraits. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993. ISBN 083863480X, 185 pp., 83 illus., \$60.

No doubt the creative energies of all artists are fueled by powerful psychic forces, mostly multiple and deeply submerged; yet nowhere else but in the work of Egon Schiele are the psychic and the aesthetic so directly and often transparently linked. Had it not been for his creative gifts -- he began drawing at age one -- his fate would have surely been sealed by its 19th-century versions of heredity and environment. Born near Vienna in 1890 to a

syphilitic stationmaster and his infected, desperately depressed wife, Egon entered the world beset by dead siblings -- three older brothers had died at birth, a sister born three years later died as a child. "For the Schiele family, birth had come to be associated with death, disease, punishment, and, eventually, madness" (his father's terminal condition, p. 38). His mother failed to empathically mirror her talented child and spurned his burgeoning creativity. In his art, the mother is inevitably turned away from him or else he is frantically encased in a dead woman's womb. Experiencing his mother as dead, he was forced to enlist his art in the service of self-mirroring and self-validation. But the mirror of his art candidly reflected his anguished self-distortions, his mutilated or contorted limbs, his body often stiffly bound to a double or paying for its autoerotic pleasures with castration.

Both a rebuke to the deficits in mothering and a struggle for developmental mastery, his art also blazed new directions in expressionistic modernism. He also visually records his painful struggles to identify with a father he admired but also feared for equating sex with disease/madness/death, and his struggles to find heroic substitutes, notably in his precursor, Gustav Klimt.

Though Schiele was polymorphous perverse to a fault and his identity remained diffuse, he somehow managed to work through his conflicts to a degree and had embarked on a promising marriage when both he and his pregnant wife were carried away by the post-World War I Spanish flu. He was 28. It occurred to me that if we had lost Freud's writings, his ideas could be reclaimed in Schiele's art. But upon further consideration, I find this unlikely. What is needed is a third text, an interpretive key to carefully probe the visual work for the connections, some of which lurk on the surface, but many of which are more elusive.

Danielle Knafo is the ideal analyst for Schiele, not only because she is sensitively attuned to his aesthetic qualities but also because she enjoys the rare analytic ability to tune into all their hidden melodies and modulations. She hears not only the preoedipal pain but the oedipal striving, not only the narcissistic issues within the damaged self but the struggle for stable object relations. Most rewarding, her handsomely illustrated text reveals how astutely Schiele mirrored his own inner conflicts as well as those of his times -- and ours.

Daniel Dervin, PhD, an emeritus professor of literature at Mary Washington College in Virginia and a prolific psychohistorian, is a

frequent contributor to these pages who covers a wide array of subjects. □

In Memoriam: Robert G. L. Waite (1919-1999)

**Thomas Kohut and John M. Hyde
Williams College**

Robert George Leeson Waite, pioneering psychohistorian and Brown Professor of History, Emeritus, Williams College, suffered a massive stroke and died on October 4, 1999, at the age of 80.

Born in Cartwright, Manitoba, where his father was a minister of the United Church of Canada, Waite grew up as a "P.K.," a "Preacher's Kid," in the prairie towns of Manitoba and Minnesota. In telling stories of his boyhood, he could capture the flavor of life in these small towns, adopting the cadence, the expressions, and the lilting accents of the Scandinavian farmers and their families he knew so well. In the fall of 1937, Waite entered Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, in the midst of the Depression, when ministers of rural churches, like his father, were mostly paid "in kind." To supplement his scholarship and to earn whatever spending money he could, Waite held a variety of jobs, from working in the open pit mines of the Mesabi range in northern Minnesota to guarding the purported corpse of John Wilkes Booth in a traveling carnival. Upon graduating from Macalester in 1941, he entered military service from which he was discharged three years later with the rank of corporal -- a distinction he insisted that be included in his curriculum vitae. With weak eyes and a deaf ear, he was assigned to limited duties, one of which was guarding the Mendota Bridge across the Mississippi River in St. Paul. In later years, he told his grandson that he performed his task so well that no enemy plane had ever dared to bomb the Mendota Bridge while he was guarding it.

At the end of the war, Waite began his graduate study in history at the University of Minnesota, from which he received an MA degree. He then entered Harvard University where he began his lifelong research interest in German history with particular emphasis on the Nazi period. His dissertation on the *Freikorps* movement in post-World War I Germany, written under the supervision of H. Stuart Hughes, was published under the title, *Vanguard of Nazism* (1952). Upon receiving

his PhD in 1949, Waite was appointed to the faculty at Williams College, where he began his pioneering psychohistorical work on Adolf Hitler.

Waite's interest in psychohistory was influenced in part by his own experience during his first year of teaching at Williams. Suffering from depression and what he called "black despair," Waite thought he was a total failure and submitted his resignation. With the support, encouragement, and confidence of President James Finney Baxter, who refused to accept his resignation and personally arranged an appointment with a well-known psychiatrist, Waite was given a medical leave with the assurance that his job would be waiting for him. With his problems put in perspective, he returned to Williams and resumed his study of Hitler. Not only Waite's personal experience but also his sense "that the career of Adolf Hitler raises questions that can be answered neither by psychology nor by history working alone," caused Waite to turn to psychoanalysis.

Common-sense psychology would not prove adequate, he believed, in understanding Hitler's pathological personality, and so Waite immersed himself in psychoanalytic theory and consulted with experts like Erik Erikson, Norbert Brombert, and Lawrence Climo, staff psychiatrist at the Austen Riggs Center. As Waite had anticipated, his Hitler biography, published in 1977 as *The Psychopathic God*, produced intense controversy in the profession. But he was undaunted. He was contemptuous only of those who did not take him or his work seriously and of those who denied the importance of the individual in history. Disregarding the role of the individual in history, he noted, was not unlike trying to stage *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark. Long before his book was published, Waite became an internationally known advocate for psychohistory, much sought after as an eloquent and engaging speaker not only at professional conferences and conventions but also at alumni gatherings and local history societies, in church pulpits and in high school classrooms. A man of strong views, even stubbornly held, Waite did not suffer fools, period, once walking out of a television interview that included the Nazi apologist, David Irving.

A deeply idealistic and courageous scholar, Waite was committed to history as a never-ending search for truth. To be "objective" meant for him that the historian must avoid distorting the evidence to fit a subjective interpretation. It did not mean that the historian should be morally neutral. "How can one be morally neutral about Ausch-

witz?" he would demand, his voice quivering with rage. And yet, as Waite's commitment to psychohistory demonstrates, he sought not only to judge the past but also to understand it. These are two in many ways incompatible projects, however. Just as the therapist cannot treat a client she despises, so a historian cannot understand those whom she condemns. During the process of understanding, moral judgment must be temporarily suspended: one can neither condemn nor exonerate. Instead, one must transcend one's own subjective responses in order to imagine oneself in the place of the other, in order to experience as much as one can the subjective response of the other. The tension between moral judgment and empathic understanding is often present in Waite's work, not only in *The Psychopathic God*, but also in his earlier work on the *Freikorps* and in his psychohistorical comparison of Hitler and emperor Wilhelm II, *Kaiser and Führer*, which he wrote in retirement and which was published in 1998. Indeed, for Waite that tension was especially acute, since as a scholar he confronted in Hitler and the Nazis, what he, in *The Psychopathic God*, called "the heart of darkness."

Waite's surprisingly successful solution to the problem of combining judgment and understanding was to rely extensively on quotations from those he was investigating. As he put it in *Vanguard of Nazism*, he quoted at length from the memoirs of the *Freikorps* fighters "to convey their spirit as accurately as possible by letting them speak for themselves." Relying on their own words not only gave his readers access to the *Freikorpsmen's* psychological and political universe, it also allowed Waite to condemn them in a way that was compatible with their own experience. He quoted the members of the *Freikorps* so extensively, Waite told the readers of *Vanguard of Nazism*, because "had I relied on paraphrase, it seems probable that I would not have been believed."

A deeply committed, even passionate, teacher, Waite was a riveting lecturer. Pacing back and forth, grasping his bald pate, pausing to find the right words, he was able to engage generations of Williams students in appreciating the power of the past and our need to understand it. His lectures in the introductory European history course and his electives in German and Russian history attracted students in greater numbers than could often be accommodated. His students were surprised to discover that this warm, compassionate person could be a stern taskmaster who demanded respect for himself and for his discipline.

Retirement from teaching in 1989 did not spell the end of Waite's engagement with history or with life. He was active in the affairs of the First Congregational Church of Williamstown, served as expedition historian on numerous Williams alumni trips to Europe and other parts of the world, and was a much sought-after lecturer to community and alumni organizations. He taught courses and organized a "French" table at the retirement home in which he spent the last decade of his life. With his full beard, shaven head, knitted skull cap, and West Highland Terrier, Waite was a familiar figure in Williamstown.

Once an inveterate smoker, he accepted with a crusader's zeal the Surgeon General's warning about the dangers of smoking and took up needlepoint as a substitute. He took it with him wherever he went: at the panel "100 Years of German History" at the A.H.A. convention in Chicago an otherwise stuffy occasion was enlivened as an overhead mirror revealed Waite, the panel's Chair, at work on a "No Smoking" needlepoint; in China he rivaled the Great Wall as an object of curiosity; and in London, while he was observing a criminal trial at Old Bailey, the judge halted the proceedings and ordered "the bearded gentleman in the front row to put away his tapestry. It is distracting the jurors."

Productive to the very end of his life, Waite not only published the massive comparative study of Hitler and Wilhelm II, he recently wrote a light-hearted memoir entitled, *Hitler, the Kaiser, and Me: An Academic's Procession*, which appeared only weeks before his death and now serves as his valedictory.

A man of courage, principle, and passion, Robert George Leeson Waite was an inspiring teacher, a pioneering scholar, and, in every sense of the word, a very human historian.

John M. Hyde, PhD, Brown Professor of History, Emeritus, at Williams College, is a retired diplomat and political historian, who specialized in modern French history, worked with H. Stuart Hughes at Harvard, and spent his career at Williams.

Thomas A. Kohut, PhD, Sue and Edgar Wachenheim, III, Professor of History at Williams College, is a historian of modern Germany, with psychoanalytic training, who has written a study of Kaiser Wilhelm II and who is currently at work on a study of how a generational cohort, Germans born before the First World War who were active in the Youth Movement in the 1920s, experienced the history of the 20th century. □

In Memoriam H. Stuart Hughes (1916-1999): From the "Supporting Cast" of Psychohistory

**Paul H. Elovitz
Ramapo College and the Psychohistory Forum**

H. Stuart Hughes, a distinguished historian of Europe and friend of psychoanalytically informed history, died on October 21, 1999, at the age of 83. In *Gentleman Rebel: The Memoirs of H. Stuart Hughes* (1990), Hughes reports being close to Erik Erikson, his colleague at Harvard, and serving in the "supporting cast" of psychohistory (p. 237). William Gilmore, *Psychohistorical Inquiry: A Comprehensive Research Bibliography* (1984), calls "History and Psychoanalysis: The Explanation of Motive," in Hughes' book, *History as Art and as Science* (1964), "classic" and "must reading" (p. 44). Several years ago, in researching an American Historical Association meeting at which the late Professor Richard L. Schoenwald (1927-1995) decided to start the first psychohistory newsletter (the predecessor to *The Psychohistory Review*), it came to my attention that Hughes was there, encouraging this pathbreaking action.

Hughes starts his memoirs not with the mention of his patrician family -- Charles Evans Hughes who ran for President and served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was his grandfather -- but with a question from his psychoanalyst, Avery Weisman. Stuart Hughes, in the words of his wife, "could not have lived the life he did, at least the last 40-plus years of it, without benefit of psychoanalysis" (personal communication). And what a life it was: H. Stuart Hughes left his mark as a pre-eminent intellectual, prolific scholar, government researcher, political activist, senatorial candidate, and enemy of conventional thought.

Among his survivors are his wife Judith who is a modern European historian at the University of California in San Diego, a psychoanalyst, and a historian of psychoanalysis. We wish to thank her for answering questions at a most difficult time in her life.

Paul H. Elovitz, Editor of this publication, was introduced to Hughes' scholarship while in graduate school in the early 1960s. □

Bulletin Board

The next **SATURDAY WORK-IN-PROGRESS WORKSHOP** is scheduled for **January 29, 2000**, when **Jay Gonen** (Psychohistory Forum Research Associate) will present on "Hitler's Utopian Barbarism: The Roots of Nazi Psychology," which is also the title of his book, soon to be released by the University of Kentucky Press. **George Victor** will be a commentator. On March 4, 2000, **Jacques Szaluta** (U.S. Maritime Academy and private practice) with Richard Harrison (New York Center for Psychoanalytic Training) will present "Steven Spielberg's Creativity and Connection to the American Unconscious." Our program committee is working with three potential presenters: Michael Britton (peace studies), **Rita Ransohoff** (men's birth envy), and **Vamik Volkan** (ethnic cleansing). We will have our usual Presidential election-year psychobiographical presentations on the final candidates in the fall. **CONFERENCES:** A "Children and Their Literature" Conference was held September 23-24 at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, with **Peter Petschauer** as one of the organizers. The International Psychohistorical Association (**IPA**) will meet on June 7-9, 2000 at Fordham University Law School in New York City. The International Society of Political Psychology (**ISPP**) meetings are in Seattle, Washington, on July 1-4, 2000. **David Beisel** and **Nigel Leech** presented papers at the Psychohistory Panel of the September, 1999, Second European Conference of Dialogue and Universalism at Warsaw University. **SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLIC LECTURES:** On November 13, 1999, at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, Rita Ransohoff gave the talk, "Men's Fantasies and Truths about the Sexuality of Menopausal Women," and last May 20, **Andrew Rolle** spoke at the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute on "Revisiting Freud's Rat Man Case." **PUBLICATIONS:** Congratulations to **David Felix** on the recent publication of *A Century of Political Economy: A History* and to **Howard Stein** on *Learning Pieces*. Garth Amundson published "Therapists' Identification with Common Social Values as Obstacles to Increased Sociocultural Sensitivity" in the fall in the *Journal of Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy*. **TRAVEL:** David Beisel traveled to the Czech Republic and Poland, and Peter and Joni Petschauer spent part of the summer in Italy, Germany, and the Czech Republic. **AWARDS:** **Akin Akini** of the University of Chicago has received the **Forum Graduate Student Subscription Award**. **GET-WELL WISHES:** To John and Marie Caulfield. **NEW MEMBER:** Welcome to

Ellen Mendel of Manhattan. **OUR THANKS:** To our members and subscribers for the support that makes **Clio's Psyche** possible. To Benefactors Herbert Barry and Ralph Colp; Patrons Andrew Brink, H. John Rogers, and Jacques Szaluta; Supporting Members Anonymous and Rudolph Binion; and Contributing Members David Beisel, Sander Breiner, Alan Elms, Paul Elovitz, George Gouaux, Flora Hogman, Rita Ransohoff, Vivian Rosenberg, Roberta Rubin, Chaim Shatan, and Richard Weiss. Our thanks for thought-provoking materials to David Beisel, Andrew Brink, Dan Dervin, Avner Falk, Eva Fogelman, Flora Hogman, John Hyde, Mel Kalfus, Anie Kalayjian, Thomas Kohut, Nigel Leech, Ellen Mendel, Peter Novick, Leon Rappoport, H. John Rogers, Ralph Seliger, and Howard Stein. Thanks to Jonathan Battaglia for computer assistance and to Anna Lentz and Richard Renaudo for proofreading. □

Clio's Psyche of the Psychohistory Forum

Call for Papers

- The Future of Psychohistory and Psychoanalysis in the Third Millennium (March, 2000)
- Violence in American Life and Mass Murder as Disguised Suicide
- Assessing Apocalypticism and Millennialism around the Year 2000
- PsychoGeography
- Election 2000
- Psychobiography
- Manias and Depressions in Economics and Society
- The Psychology of Incarceration and Crime
- Legalizing Life: Our Litigious Society
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a Model for Healing
- The Processes of Peacemaking and Peacekeeping
- The Psychology of America as the World's Policeman
- Entertainment News
- Television, Radio, and Media as Object Relations in a Lonely World
- Kevorkian's Fascination with Assisted Suicide, Death, Dying, and Martyrdom

Most of these subjects will become special issues. Articles should be from 600-1500 words with a biography of the author. Electronic submissions are welcome on these and other topics. **For details, contact Paul H. Elvoitz, PhD, at <pelovitz@aol.com> or (201) 891-7486.**

**The Best of
Clio's Psyche**

The Psychohistory Forum is pleased to announce the creation of *The Best of Clio's Psyche*.

This 93-page collection of many of the best and most popular articles from 1994 to the September, 1999, issue is available for \$20 a copy and to students using it in a course for \$12.

It will be distributed free to Members renewing at the Supporting level and above as well as Subscribers upon their next two-year renewal.

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- Future of Psychohistory and Psychoanalysis in the Light of the Demise of the Psychohistory Review and the Attacks on Psychoanalysis (March, 2000)
- Violence in American Life
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- The Psychology and Politics of Victimization
- Election 2000
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a Model
- The Processes of Peace Making and Keeping
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- Entertainment News

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Contact Paul H. Elvoitz, PhD, Editor

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Next Psychohistory Forum Meeting

Saturday, January 30, 1999

Charles Strozier

"Putting the Psychoanalyst on the Couch: A Biography of Heinz Kohut"

**Call for Papers
Special Theme Issues
1999 and 2000**

- The Relationship of Academia, Psychohistory, and Psychoanalysis (March, 1999)
- The Psychology of Legalizing Life [What is this???
- Psychogeography
- Meeting the Millenium

Forthcoming in the March Issue

Special Theme:

The Relationship of Academia, Psychohistory, and Psychoanalysis

Additional papers are still being accepted. Contact the Editor -- see page 71.

Also:

- Interview with Arthur Mitzman, author of *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber*
- Ralph Colp, Jr.'s Review of Vadim Z. Rogovin, *1937: Stalin's Year of*

Call for Nominations

Halpern Award

for the

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Book, Article, or Computer
Site**

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Letters to the Editor

The History of Psychohistory

Clio's Psyche's interviews of outstanding psychohistorians (see "An American in Amsterdam: Arthur Mitzman," page 146) 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 volunteers to help with the interviewing. People interested in participating should write, call, or e-mail Paul H. Elovitz (see page 119).

Awards and Honors

• Professor Janice M. Coco, Art History, University of California—annual American Psychoanalytic Association Committee on Research) \$1,000 essay prize, will present her paper, "Exploring the Frontier Sloan's Nude Studies," at a free public lecture at 12 noon, Saturday, Oldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City.

rd for the Best Psychohistorical Idea • The Psychohistory Forum is Michael Hirohama of San Francisco for starting and maintaining the ng list (see page 98).

Student Award • David Barry of Fair Lawn, New Jersey, has been bership in the Forum, including a subscription to **Clio's Psyche**, for er as part of the Makers of the Psychohistorical Paradigm Research

Forthcoming in the March Issue

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Also:

- Interview with **Arthur Mitzman**, author

Next Psychohistory Forum Meeting

Psychohistory Forum Presentations

September 27
George Victor on Hitler's Masochism
November 15
Michael Flynn, "Apocalyptic Hope — Apocalyptic Thinking"

Call for Papers

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

Call for Nominations

THE MAKERS OF PSYCHOHISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT

Independent Variable of Internal Stability – May, 1945

Stagnant/Disintegrating Negative Trend						Stable/Creative Positive Trend				
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
Nazi Germany						USA				

receive a year's subscription to Clio's Psyche free. Help us spread the good word about Clio.

The Psychohistory Forum is pleased to announce

The Young Psychohistorian 1998/99 Membership Awards

John Fanton recently received his medical degree and is doing his five year residency in Providence, Rhode Island. Currently, he is at the Children's Hospital, Women and Infants Hospital, and the Butler Psychiatric Hospital. His goal is to become a child maltreatment expert working in the area of Preventive Psychiatry. At the IPA in 1997 he won the Lorenz Award for his paper on improving parenting in Colorado.

Albert Schmidt is a doctoral candidate in modern European history at Brandeis University who plans to defend his dissertation in April when his advisor, Rudolph Binion, will return from Europe for the occasion. Rather than do a biography of SS General Reinhard Heydrich as originally intended, he is writing on the German protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia under Heydrich's

Dreamwork Resources

The **Historical Dreamwork Method** is available to help the biographer better understand the dreams of the subject and other aspects of psychobiography. **Clio's Psyche** welcomes papers on historical dreamwork for publication and for presentation at Psychohistory Forum meetings. Contact Paul H. Elovitz (see page 43).

☆☆☆

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- Having previously chickened out of the

Letters to the Editor

military, he demoralized it by integrating

homosexuals into it. He disarmed the

Call for Nominations

Halpern Award for the Best Psychohistorical Idea in a Book, Article, or Computer Site

This Award may be granted at the level of Distinguished Scholar, Graduate, or Undergraduate.

American People with the Brady Bill.

Call for Papers Special Theme Issues 1999 and 2000

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- Our Litigious Society
- PsychoGeography
- Meeting the Millennium
- Manias and Depressions in Economics and Society

Next Psychohistory Forum Meeting

Saturday, October 2, 1999

Charles Strozier

"Putting the Psychoanalyst on the Couch: A Biography of Heinz Kohut"

Letters to the Editor on
Clinton-Lewinsky-Starr

Book Review Essay

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- Our Litigious Society
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- The Psychology of America as the World's Policeman
- Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa

600-1500 words

Contact

Paul H. Elvoitz, PhD, Editor
627 Dakota Trail
Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417

Forthcoming in the June Issue

- Interview with a Distinguished Featured Psychohistorian
- "The Insane Author of the *Oxford English Dictionary*"
- "Jews in Europe After World War II"
- "A Psychohistorian's Mother and

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