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# Clio's Psyche

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

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Volume 7, Number 3

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## Group Psychohistory Symposium

### Group Process

**Rudolph Binion**  
**Brandeis University**

How can a group of people act in concert to a given end of which they are unaware as individuals? This is the problem of group process.

Historians of all stripes tend to explain group action by a supposed concurrence of individual motives. This approach is radically wrong. A simple example will show why: the epochal decline of fertility across Europe that began in the 1870s (after a head start in France). As individuals, the Europeans of the 1870s had no better reasons for adopting marital birth control than did their predecessors from time immemorial. Together, on the other hand, they needed to defend against an imminent, and unprecedentedly massive, threat of overpopulation due to a recent sharp drop in the death rate, especially in child mortality. Their spontaneous collective defense was to cut back on births within marriage as much as they could without self-extinction and as fast as they could without social disruption. As that steep aggregate cutback was also smooth and steady, it follows that all married couples were in on it from the first, whatever their particular baby count.

Human behavior in concert to an unconscious end smacks of animal ethology. But if it is indeed of a kind with group behavior by other animals, what is its biological basis? Where some or all individuals in a given animal group act in that group's direct interest rather than their own, biologists speak of "group selection" and call it "altruistic." Also, because nonhuman animals coordinate their daily lives within groups, theorists of "group selection" tend to regard at least nonhuman animal groups as functionally equivalent to organisms. However, the concept of an organism does not readily admit of some of its parts serving the whole to their own relative detriment. (The pioneer group selectionist V.C. Wynne-Edwards saw partway around the contradiction of an organismic group with some members sacrificing for others. His monumental *Animal Dispersion in Relation to Social Behavior*, 1962, which focused on fertility,

*Continued on page 141*

## The Psychology of Conspiracy Theories

### Some Psychohistorical Thoughts About Conspiracy Theories

**Dan Dervin**  
**Mary Washington College, Emeritus**

It may never be possible to explain why some people construct conspiracy theories and others don't, not necessarily because the reasons are so obscure but because they are so many. People prone to conspiracy modes don't comprise a distinct grouping, as common experiences often reveal the perfectly normal person we are sharing a cocktail or plane ride with suddenly rolling out a grassy-knoll scenario for the latest catastrophe. Or just as plausibly, the person who chronically suspects the FBI of nefarious deceitfulness is vindicated in the cases of the falsely accused Richard Jewel in the Atlanta Olympics bombing or of Wen Ho Lee in the Alamosa atomic secrets fiasco.

Conspiracy buffs never quite qualify as paranoids. The latter believe themselves to be targets of concerted machinations of some powerful organization -- FBI, CIA, the United Nations, the telephone company, etc. The former believe certain prominent figures have been unjustly targeted by any of the above groups. This may be a minor distinction within one's psychic economy -- no more than the result of distancing and displacement -- but it allows for a relatively adaptive and pain-free social discourse.

Yet while the media and other cultural forms further distance and legitimize these discourses, they enter the purview of psychohistory by aligning reality in terms of dangerous aggressors and delegated victims. Following this familiar pattern, they also adhere to a few less familiar rules.

In the supposedly accidental death of Princess Diana, for example, three kinds of responses prevail: 1) an overwhelming sense of loss, demonstrated by the initial outpouring of grief and mourning and the later construction of a permanent shrine; 2) a devaluing cynicism, which portrayed her as shallow, vain, ruthless, unfaithful, and mentally unbalanced; and 3) a conspiracy theory, targeting "people who did not want Diana and Dodi to be together," as claimed by Dodi's father, Mohamed Al Fayed, who has pressed lawsuits against

the U.S. Federal Government for allegedly harboring secret documents.

As personages like Princess Diana and President Kennedy become fantasy figures through the media and group fantasy, they also become delegates for this threefold response: JFK was widely mourned, devalued for philandering and associating with the mob, and subjected to elaborate conspiracy scenarios; Martin Luther King, Jr., was mourned, accused of womanizing, and held, especially by his family, to be victim of a larger conspiracy; Robert Kennedy was mourned, accused of playing around, notably with Marilyn Monroe, and portrayed as victim of a larger conspiracy.

While these three conflicting versions compete for dominance, the historical person is kept

alive as a fantasy figure in the collective psyche, preventing the work of mourning to accomplish closure and playing into sacrificial scenarios that release feelings of revenge or martyrdom.

On an individual level, to a greater or lesser degree, conspiracy theory emerges as the preferred psychic organizer by means of which the person interprets their experiences with the social environment. For some, one conspiracy is sufficient to perform whatever psychic work needed; for others, conspiracy thinking operates as the skeleton key to unlock almost any mysterious or threatening event. Dick Gregory told a *Washington Post* (October 9, 2000) reporter that not only were Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert Kennedy, and John Kennedy "taken out" by the "people who control the system," but also John Kennedy, Jr., "because he was using his magazine to investigate the murders of his father and his uncle."

This lateral movement leads to a second rule: what's going on out there is secretly interconnected, and conspiracy theory provides the most authentic mode of interpretation for exposing the secrets. Once this worldview is granted, nuances and discriminations can be tolerated. True to form, Gregory believes that Princess Diana was killed, not, however, by the usual U.S. suspects, but by the "British royal family, which feared she would marry her [mixed-race] boyfriend."

In classical psychoanalysis, the paranoid compensates for loss of a centered self and vital ties to reality by placing him/herself at the center of a vast, malevolent conspiracy. The conspiracy buff also buys into that construction of the world but enjoys a narcissistic triumph by using his/her superior mental powers to expose the malevolent forces. In both instances, conspiratorial thinking is symptomatic of the reality loss in severe trauma and psychosis, and both replace reality testing with projection.

Shifting from classical drive-defense theory briefly to object relations theory, one might discern a slight shift from psychopathology to primitive emotional development. Melanie Klein held that infants initially experience a paranoid-schizoid phase in which gratifying experiences (the mother's good or nurturant breast) are not assimilated to frustrating ones (the bad or persecutory breast).

Supposedly for all of us, unbearable stresses and traumas may induce a regression to a paranoid level. Thus, when we attempt to interpret

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ostensible conspiracy phenomena, we need to stay in touch with any anxieties thereby aroused. We need to entertain ambivalence and to tolerate ambiguity in order to avoid the extremes of the know-nothing borderline ("Stuff happens") and the all-knowing conspiracy expert ("Bad stuff happens, and I'll explain why"). Early in 1998, Hillary Clinton thought she knew why bad things were happening to her husband and went on national television to cite a "vast right-wing conspiracy." She wasn't entirely wrong, for there were powerful people on the Right doing their best to discredit Clinton's rule, but there were also Monica and Bill's unruly libidos helping things along. With Clinton as liar and sex addict but also as victim, we need only mourn his departure to complete the threefold discourse with which this inquiry began. Loss engenders three basic options: 1) enshrinement, accompanied by mourning; 2) devaluation, often with manic features; and 3) conspiracy scenarios, with paranoid implications.

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## Conspiracy Thinking and Conspiracy Studying

Alasdair Spark

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In July, 1997, the supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary* included the term *conspiracy theory* for the first time. This inclusion recognized that conspiracy theories have become increasingly popular in recent years, most overtly in the United States, but also across the rest of the world. Just as striking is that this outpouring of suspicion has not been ignored or dismissed out of hand by academics. Indeed, the opposite has been the case -- it has been matched by a relative feast of serious work studying conspiracy theory (seeking to theorize conspiracy theory, if you will) and at least a dozen books have been published, with more to come. Why has this union of interest come about and what can it tell us of the nature of this contemporary phenomenon?

First, why was there an apparent rise in the status of conspiracy as an explanation for events in

the 1990s? It seems indisputable that this was so, ranging from the now complete acceptance by the great majority of Americans of a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy, through the claims made by militias about a "New World Order" and United Nations' plots, to African-American suspicions of a CIA plan to flood the ghetto with drugs, and speculations about UFOs and secret installations such as Area 51 in Nevada. Capping it all was the popularity of conspiracy-driven entertainment such as "The X-Files." We now live in what might well be called a "conspiracy culture" within which lurks a virtual reflex -- the almost instant suspicion that any event has a deeper, darker, conspiratorial explanation: the death of Princess Diana, the crash of TWA 800, the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, the extent of BSE ("Mad Cow Disease"), or even the most mundane meetings of the World Trade Organization.

It seems unlikely that a mass psychological derangement can be held responsible for this, since what is at work here is defined not by clinical paranoia but instead by a prevalent sense of suspicion -- the feeling that things cannot be relied upon to be what they are said to be. Some help can come from the most often quoted explanation, given in a famous article by historian Richard Hofstadter (*The Paranoid Style and Other Essays*, 1965, 1996), namely the long existence of a "paranoid style" in American politics. However, Hofstadter stressed the marginality of believers and the susceptibility of certain status-deprived groups to paranoid suspicions, namely those on the extreme Right. However, as our current circumstances show, conspiracy thinking is no longer confined to the few or to the margins (unless we are to count society so hopelessly fractured that only margins exist any longer). One clue for the rise in conspiracy theories since the early 1960s is that a succession of genuine conspiracies have been revealed to the public, with the many revelations of the Vietnam War, CIA assassination plots, Watergate, Iran-Contra, domestic surveillance and wire-tapping, involuntary radiation testing, and the Tuskegee syphilis experiments. In effect, this parade led to the collapse of public trust and the legitimization of suspicion: "If this is true, then why not this too?" Furthermore, the focus of these revelations has meant that the Left, too, has gained its own conspiracy reflex, as Hillary Clinton attested in claiming that a "vast right-wing conspiracy" was arrayed against her innocent husband.

However, any approach based on assessing the genuine would only legitimate certain conspir-

acy thinking as rational and therefore worthwhile -- in other words, suggesting that the meaningful task is to be able to distinguish between real and false conspiracy theories. This is no doubt valuable, but it is not all that is required of scholarly enquiry. What also demands academic attention is an appreciation of the sheer tendency of conspiracy thinking to *imagine*. To take the other extreme, the more baroque the conspiracy theory, the stronger our need to appreciate the psychological satisfactions of conspiracy thinking for individuals today, and the pleasing connections which conspiracy appears to provide. Indeed, some academics have come to see in conspiracy's curious methodology a new means of appreciating the contemporary world. It is in the tension between these two positions -- between studying conspiracy for its facts and studying conspiracy for its fictions -- that much of the recent academic work has found itself.

In the rationalist corner stand authors such as Jerrold Robins and Robert Post (*Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred*, 1997), whose basic claim is that conspiracy needs to be understood and combated as a fatal contamination of the body politic and the fertilizer for extremist acts such as the Oklahoma City bombing. Daniel Pipes (*Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where it Comes From*, 1998) agrees that a threat exists in conspiracy theory's power to urge political action, but he is less certain of the domestic risk. He finds that in the United States, conspiracy thinking, while prevalent, is a largely a confection, with the real danger resting in areas such as the Arab world. Elaine Showalter (*Hystories*, 1997) finds the plethora trivial, but sees this as evidence of the corrosive emotional self-centeredness and trophy victimhood of contemporary America, a condition revealed by the false claims of satanic abuse, Gulf War syndrome, ME ("Yuppie Flu"), and alien abduction. In her aptly titled book, she calls for a new public rationality and responsibility, and for academics in particular to stand up and be counted. In much the same vein, the late Carl Sagan (*The Demon Haunted World*, 1997) saw America on the verge of a new Dark Age, haunted by demons of ignorance and irrationality.

However, in the other corner stand cultural critics and historians such as Mark Fenster (*Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*, 1999), Timothy Melley (*Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Post-War America*, 1999), Peter Knight (*Trust No-One*, 2000), and Jodi Dean (*Aliens in America*, 1998), all

of who have seen the rise of conspiracy thinking as less of a contamination and more of an opportunity -- for both victims and scholars alike. For instance, Dean, in her seminal work, argues that those women who claim to have been abducted by aliens have actually gained a beneficial self-awareness and identity. All of these authors note the free-floating ability of conspiracy thinking to connect together disparate elements into narrative strands. They see this ability to sort through the contemporary avalanche of information as important, despite its often recidivist, extremist, or trivial results.

As this creditworthiness suggests, the significant baseline seen for any study of contemporary conspiracy thinking must be the uncertainty and dissonance of the post-Cold War world. Already, before the events of the late 1980s, it was a trope of postmodernism to characterize modern culture as defined by fragmentation, incoherence, and a resistance to meta-narratives. In our contemporary world, the new order of the globalization of economy, polity, and information, which has so rapidly accelerated in the wake of the end of the Cold War, demands that individuals and groups seek even more the reassurances of connection and meaning, but these satisfactions seem unable to cohabit any longer with ideological fixity. Instead, as Manuel Castells (*The Rise of the Network Society*, 1996) has argued, we find that the computer network is the typical interface between the local and the global, and it is more than mere coincidence that the Internet has been the breeding ground for many current conspiracy theories. It is a fertile locale for wildfire speculations, and, as a technology through which any item of information is potentially connected to any (and therefore every) other, it models conspiracy theories perfectly, offering message and medium as one. We might almost see conspiracy theories as the search engines of the popular imagination, sorting through the billions of bits of the contemporary to find lost meaning. Therefore, in the conspiratorial imagination's willingness to plot connections and to connect plots, what we can actually see (and should be studying) is a literal "common sense" emerging as an attempt to re-cohere and re-determine meaning in the absence -- perhaps permanently -- of authoritative institutional alternatives. Of particular interest is that what conspiracy theories most often attempt, is to map the future through the past -- or better, to "reverse map" history, since so much of the effort lies in laying tracks backwards, in popular, and even desperate, attempts to narrativize how things got to be this way. Equally, therefore, the

sheer thrill of these speculations for the individual must be acknowledged.

Thus, the new prevalence of conspiracy theory and its method of processing information to produce popular knowledge not only forms the basis for further study, but also points to a symptomatic feature of the contemporary condition. Conspiracy culture figures a more widespread collapse of distinctions between the literal and the metaphorical, the factual and the fictional, the paranoid and the persecuted, the diagnosis and the symptom, the personal and the political, the trivial and the worthwhile, and the plausible and the incredible. It is the loss of these distinctions which has served to disable traditional outlooks and politics (including cultural politics). So, whether the differentiation between conspiracy as legitimate revelation or deluded mystification is possible, or even desirable, is something as yet unresolved.

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## JFK and the Love Bug: The "As If" Solution

**Peter Knight**  
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In May of this year the ILOVEYOU ("Love Bug") computer virus hit computer networks across the globe. Almost as speedy as the chain reaction of the e-plague itself, conspiracy theories about the episode ricocheted around the Internet (Net). Although I didn't receive the Love Bug itself (and yes, I felt aggrieved like other Netizens that somehow I was out of the loop), I did receive several multi-forwarded "explanations" of the event. All agreed that Onel de Guzman, the Filipino computer student charged with the crime, was only a fall guy. Some argued that the music industry had created a virus which infected MP3 music files as a clandestine way of destroying the

freebie music-sharing Napster community -- something the industry had failed to do through the courts. Noting that the virus also attacked image files, others insisted that the porn industry would have most to gain from a virus which would require users to download all their illicit images again. Some pundits speculated that the antivirus software industry are the ones who are most likely to benefit from such a virus: nothing like creating a little paranoia in order to drum up business. Finally, some pointed the finger at Microsoft, suggesting that it had unique access to the source code of the e-mail program involved in the case, as well as a mammoth grudge in the wake of court rulings against its monopoly position.

As conspiracy theories go, these were not very impressive. For one thing, it turned out that the virus didn't destroy either music or image files. What's more, de Guzman's digital fingerprints were all over the viral software, and he even admitted to creating it (though he never intended to cause such wide scale chaos, he said). Unlike the traditional kind of right-wing extremist "paranoid style" described by Richard Hofstadter, conspiracy theories about the Love Bug didn't seem the products of a rigid demonological outlook which seeks to blame current woes on often blameless minority scapegoats. These were idle, not ideological, speculations. Neither did these theories fit the familiar pattern of a post-1960s counter-cultural suspiciousness about the authorities and the intelligence agencies. Casual talk of a "patsy" in this case was a far cry from the detailed investigations into Lee Harvey Oswald's role in the Kennedy assassination. Rather, the conspiracy rumors that circulated around the Net in the wake of the epidemic were on-the-fly reactions to a calamity in the making; they were the gossip of the global village, part joke and part anxious commentary.

Now, it might be tempting to dismiss this kind of ad hoc cyberparanoia as an insignificant example of conspiracy thinking, small fry compared to the deep sea catches of political assassinations, anti-Semitism, or the militias. I would suggest, however, that these sorts of everyday, take-it-or-leave-it rumors are precisely what makes conspiracy talk so prevalent -- and also so hard to pin down. These stories, it must be admitted, were not without a certain resonance and wit. Pinning the blame on Microsoft or the anti-Napster campaign, for example, cut to the chase of many current debates about the future of the Internet, that symbolic product of atomic age paranoia that was hijacked

once by the utopian but aging boomer generation, and then hijacked once more by commerce.

Although these conspiratorial e-mails might originally have been written with paranoid conviction, by the time they reached my inbox in a convoluted passage through cyberspace they had taken on barnacled layers of irony. Did the person who forwarded them to me believe in them? Well, I suspect not, but at some stage down the line someone might have, of a fashion. Did I believe in them? Not really. Or rather, not totally. Even though I knew that they were (probably) false, nevertheless I felt a momentary attraction to them. What if they were true? But then again, what if they weren't -- could a college boy's prank accidentally bring the Western world to its knees?

I suspect that I am not alone in my half-ironic, half-serious engagement with such conspiracy-minded rumors. Although the Kennedy assassination inspires both passionate endorsement and dismissals of clandestine explanations, like many other people I find myself caught somewhere between the two poles. Some of the conspiracy research strikes me as compelling in its discovery of discrepancies in the official record, or of evidence of various possible plots. On the other hand, I suspect that, given infinite time and patience, I could knock holes in most of these theories. But the case all too quickly enters an infinite regress of faith and doubt, sucking the amateur inquirer into its labyrinthine complexity. Each seemingly definitive revelation in the end contributes only to a sense that the truth will be endlessly postponed, leaving most investigators in perpetual hermeneutic limbo. I find myself thus suspended between not really believing that there was a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy, and not really disbelieving it either. Even if it turns out to have been the lone gunman all along (even though, as a card-carrying cultural studies scholar, I would claim that the source and meaning of any action is never purely "lone"), the alternative theories retain some plausibility. Adapting Freud's term, we might say that the event is overdetermined: even if one particular explanation turns out to be true (though how would we ever know for certain?), in many cases the rival theories *might as well* be true. Even when we know (or should know better) that there isn't a conspiratorial explanation to current events, we might still sometimes believe in the stories *as if* they were true.

This form of provisional, self-undermining belief is hard to pick up on the radar screens of the

two traditional explanations for conspiracy thinking. The first insists that talk of conspiracy is the symptom of deluded scaremongering -- a spontaneous but ultimately rigid product of something akin to mass paranoia, in short. But diagnosing talk of conspiracy as the outpourings of a troubled (collective) mind only works if people actually fully believe in the allegations -- if the theories are unconscious symptoms, in effect. The other standard theory of conspiracy theory argues that demonological rumors are often cynically promoted by the powers that be in order to legitimate their own sinister policies. But this view also requires that the gullible masses are still totally taken in by the scaremongering stories they've had forced up on them -- hardly true in the case of the typical take-it-or-leave-it toying with conspiracy theories in the case of the JFK assassination or the Love Bug.

If I am right that many people don't really believe or fully disbelieve in the conspiracy stories they circulate and consume, then much of the current earnest alarm about the gullibility of the masses is misplaced -- as is the equally earnest celebration of a savvy popular scepticism towards authority. Admittedly, there are many examples of delusional and dangerous conspiracy-mongering, but not everyone who tunes into the culture of conspiracy is a gun-toting militiaman or a dope-addled counterculture rebel. Quite possibly many people are, like me, partly a half-ironic participant and partly an armchair sociologist searching for signs of popular paranoia. It's always other people who are the really paranoid ones, we comfort ourselves, as we watch an episode of "The X-Files."

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## Mind Control and the Disappearing Individual

**Fran Mason**  
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Mind control narratives offer a very interesting subset of conspiracy theory but also present a postmodern perspective on conspiracy theory. They seem to speak directly to contemporary

threats to individuality and ask whether reality is fully knowable any more. While paranoia has most often been seen as the quintessential form of identity or psychological profile in relation to conspiracy, the notion of the mind-controlled individual is perhaps more significant.

While mind control is the product of a paranoid sensibility, there are many differences between the paranoid and the mind control "victim." One key difference is that while paranoia clearly exists as both a pathological and existential condition (there wouldn't be so many conspiracy theories otherwise), there is no substantive evidence to suggest that mind control exists as anything other than a fantasy, despite the claims made by Alex Constantine (*Psychic Dictatorship in the U.S.A.*, 1995). A further difference is that in paranoia the paranoid is always outside the proposed conspiracy and claims to be able to see it objectively and in its entirety. The paranoid individual is untouched by the hostile external world of the conspiracy. Indeed, paranoia can be seen as an attempt to posit an unproblematic notion of the self in contemporary society and in this sense is a last ditch individualism, holding the self together by holding the world at bay.

Mind control conspiracies, however, have a more problematic position as regards individuality and identity because of their less clear-cut position in relation to conspiracy. Mind control and implant conspiracy theories suggest an uncertainty about the nature of reality and the individual's perception of it. This is made abundantly clear in John Frankenheimer's 1962 film *The Manchurian Candidate*, which deals with the story of Raymond Shaw who has been brainwashed by a Russian-Chinese "conspiracy" in order to assassinate a Presidential candidate so that his stepfather, Johnny Eismann, a Red-baiting Senator in the McCarthy mould, can gain the Presidential nomination. Two other characters are significant: Raymond's mother, who is his American controller and who controls Raymond through his unconscious incestuous desires, and Major Ben Marco, Raymond's superior during the Korean War, who is also brainwashed after his company is captured by the enemy.

The scenes where the American soldiers are being brainwashed by enemy forces are particularly indicative of the problematic nature of reality under mind control. The soldiers do not see the conference room where they are being brainwashed, but perceive a "reality" in which they are

attending a garden party where they discuss things such as flower arranging with prim middle-class women in floral dresses. Indeed, none of them "see" Raymond kill another soldier because they are so enmeshed in the group fantasy that has been created for them. Mind control constructs reality and subjectivity by determining how the individual perceives the world. What appears to be both an objective reality and a self-constructed individuality is exactly the reverse.

Conspiracy theory and conspiracy fictions are full of similar stories of people whose actions have apparently been determined for them through mind control or implanted technology. Alex Constantine claims that Sirhan Sirhan, like Lee Harvey Oswald, was a "hypno-patsy"; Timothy McVeigh claimed to have had an implant placed in his buttocks; and Cathy O'Brien tells of her "experience" as a CIA-controlled prostitute and drug courier (with Mark Phillips, *Trance: Formation of America: The True Life Story of a CIA Mind Control Slave*, 1995). These narratives also suggest the entry of the conspiracy into the individual. The conspiracy is internalized and does not just exist as a threatening but recognizable external agency. It is both inside and outside, with the implant or mind control trigger acting as an on-off button. The conspiracy is outside until the implant or mind control trigger is activated at which point the subject becomes part of the conspiracy. The claims that the CIA has developed "remote viewing" technology (whereby the implanted victim becomes the eyes of a distant receiver) are the clearest example of this type of conspiracy fiction. In this instance, the "victim" apparently sees the world through the eyes of the conspiracy agency and becomes a stooge or puppet during the period they are under control -- what Ron Patton, a mind control believer, calls the "Marionette Syndrome" ("Project Monarch: Nazi Mind Control," *Paranoia: The Conspiracy Reader*, 4:3, 1996).

Mind control narratives represent the individual under threat, struggling to maintain identity in the face of an intrusive conspiracy. Mind control "victims" are thus unsure whether they can call their thoughts their own. Knowledge and self-knowledge become uncertain. Again, *The Manchurian Candidate* offers an example of this in Major Marco's dreams: he doesn't know where they come from, or whether they are a product of his own unconscious or evidence that his thoughts have been shaped for him by someone else. Such concerns with the invaded body (whether by im-



planted thoughts in mind control conspiracies, alien probes, or by actual implants) signify a fear about threats to "the rights of the individual" and the sanctity of the individual's mind. They also map a fear that individuality means nothing and that everyone is treated as a functional unit, a thing, or a commodity in contemporary society. The individual no longer functions as a distinct and meaningful agent, but is simply a carrier of information or a robotized unit. In this sense, mind control narratives represent a concern with the increased technologization of society either through the popular fear of the cyborg and the possibility that data chips will turn people into automatons or through concerns with the way in which information society has transformed the individual into someone who simply processes and transmits data (in effect the individual as a biochemical computer).

Mind control fantasies also, however, signify a concern with the inability to keep the outside world at bay. Mind control conspiracies collapse the distance between the individual and an external reality. In mind control, not only is the individual inside conspiracy, the conspiracy is also inside the individual. Identity no longer clearly belongs to the self and is potentially a product of others. The individual, in the traditional sense of an autonomous agent with an inner self, disappears. The individual becomes unsure whether reality is shaped inside or outside the mind and as such whether identity and selfhood are generated internally or externally.

This is the case with the construction of Raymond Shaw as an assassin in *The Manchurian Candidate*. The film maps contemporary anxieties about identity by suggesting that Raymond has no control over his own identity. However, the film suggests an ambiguity in that the apparent mind control seems to have allowed Raymond the opportunity to fake a brainwashed persona in order to achieve his own ends -- at least after his meeting with Marco in the hotel room. Nevertheless, the ending is more problematic than this. In the final scenes, the camera, in order to create suspense over whether Raymond will fulfil his mission, colludes with the notion of Raymond as mind control victim by concentrating on his supposed target as he lines up the sights on his rifle. Usually, such a camera shot is indicative not only of what the character sees but also signifies the character's intentions -- in this case that Raymond will shoot the person in his sights. However, this is revealed to be a piece

of cinematic misinformation when Raymond turns the gun on Johnny and his mother and shoots them instead.

In other words, the camera, in moving into subjective mode at the end, makes Raymond's motives and identity ambiguous. It is only when he reveals to Marco that he did it because no one else could have stopped Johnny and his mother that the viewer knows that he has clearly faked a brainwashed personality. Thus, mind control is as much about a way of generating one's own self as it is about the fear of a loss of self. After all, one thing mind control "victims" never admit is that they invented the conspiracy that has apparently invented their selfhood. The relationship between individual and reality (and between mind control victim and conspiracy) becomes circular. Each invents the other so that neither can be said to exist as a separate or objective reality. Both, therefore, exist only as simulations or as inventions of the other -- as the "real fake" or the "fake real."

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## Who Needs Conspiracies? The Comfort of Paranoid Delusions

**Paul Hamburg**  
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At the threshold of a new millennium dominated by rationalism, the world nonetheless resonates with daily inventions of plot and intrigue, of implausible paranoid explanation, each one stranger than the last. No single psychological or social theory can fully explain the remarkable seductiveness of conspiracy theory to contemporary communities. However, a number of specific psycho-social uses help make paranoia a compelling discursive temptation. Here are a few of the most significant:

### Dispelling Doubt

The apparent randomness of highly significant events -- whether murder, earthquake, or pestilence -- creates diffuse and pervasive anxiety. An unknown, unnamed, and unlocatable enemy is especially terrifying. Amidst this chaos, naming a sinister, powerful, imagined enemy crystallizes danger into a more predictable form. Rendered visible and nameable, the enemy is already on the way to being contained. An enemy with intention and will is less terrible, because passion makes it humanly vulnerable, unlike an intentionless, purely statistical catastrophe. Negative regard would seem easier to bear than the emptiness of a random wound. Paranoia soothes loneliness. Perhaps this is its most haunting hidden appeal.

A forgotten, friendless old woman imagines that her upstairs neighbors plot her demise, mimicking her every step as she walks from bedside to refrigerator down below. She is tormented by her imagination, but never entirely alone. What would she face if she gave up the delusion that keeps her such unwelcome company?

### **Creating Meaning**

In a time of waning faith, community, and ideological certainty, people face the complexities of war, epidemics, economic insecurity, and rapid social change alone. Meaninglessness looms large. Creating a myth of conspiratorial design creates order out of chaos, predictability out of randomness, and potential action out of passive despair. People desperately want the world to make sense, even if making sense requires the wholesale distortion of reality. Of course the paradox of paranoia is that the meaning it creates actually disempowers individuals and generates absurdity rather than coherence. Declaring African AIDS a conspiracy ultimately increases victimization by virtue of absurd responses against imaginary human enemies instead of appropriate precautions against real viral ones.

### **Simplifying the Complex**

In the face of intricate and ambiguous realities, people become too anxious to hold onto complexity. Conspiratorial solutions not only offer meaning in the face of the potentially absurd, but they typically offer singular, unambiguous meanings. Fiction, of course, can afford to be far simpler than real life.

Examples include simplistic government-plot explanations for the debacle at Waco, Texas; Scientologists' demonization of psychiatric treatment for mental illness; recent claims that Attention Deficit Disorder has been invented by drug

manufacturers in order to justify the poisoning of children with psychostimulant medication; and recurrent assertions that natural "cures" for cancer are suppressed by a medical industry hell-bent on profit. In each instance, complicated situations without clear solutions become instantly simplified by means of conspiratorial invention.

### **Exporting the Demonic**

Inventing conspiratorial explanations frees individuals from their own ambivalence, personal responsibility, and the need for self-reflection. Evil has been relocated elsewhere -- it is no longer lurking within us. The imagined enemy serves as an unburdening repository of guilt, shame, self-doubt and ambivalence. Projection -- this wholesale throwing forth of unbearable wishes, images, and other miscellaneous contents of the self -- is a primitive psychic sanitation system. Of course, what has been eliminated by projection inevitably returns, making this process repetitive, incomplete, and habitual.

"Godless Communism" and its fantastic domestic conspiracies against the integrity of American culture provides an example of how useful the demonization of one's enemy can be to fostering a sense of national purity. Whatever the actual threat of Soviet hegemony and subversion, the myth of an invincible, evil enemy served to further passionate, nationalist agendas for Ronald Reagan and Western ideologues. The demise of the Soviet Union and its allies has left a vacuum of available demons only partially replaced by hatred of Saddam Hussein or fear of pan-Arab terrorism.

### **Promoting Group Solidarity**

Conspiracy theories are ready-made tools to promote political cohesion. If "The brigands are coming!", then we upstanding citizens should unite, forget our petty differences and squabbles, and mobilize against a common danger. Conspiracy theory can be an instrument to coalesce rebellion or reaction to rebellion. By delineating a dangerous "them," it fashions a collective identity. Of course, fear, hate, and aggression primarily fuel such an identity.

Religious nationalism in many parts of the world epitomizes this strategy. Pakistanis are encouraged to forget immense grievances against their own government's ineptitude and instead mobilize to hate Indians. Indians are encouraged to hate Pakistanis in similar fashion. The recent disintegration of Balkan states that has fueled such terrible outbreaks of nationalist paranoia illustrates that ever-smaller national identities may engender

paradoxical fragmentation even as they fervently unite their adherents.

### Dividing the Opposition

Even as imagined conspiracies unite putative victims, they can also be a means for the powerful to divide their subjects. Are the factory workers becoming restless? Are the citizens agitating against the state? Conspiracy theories exploit differences of religion, gender, race, and affiliation in order to diffuse potential resistance to power. By dividing natural allies from each other, they stabilize oppressive power.

Managers have long employed such divisive measures against their workers, encouraging suspicions along lines of race, gender, and nationality to obscure common interests that would threaten worker-management relations. Conservative politicians (Nixon Republicans and their legatees) have long known how to divide black workers from white, in a cynical but highly effective effort to substitute fear for solidarity.

### Throwing out the Abject

Conspiracy theory typically defines its mythical enemy in terms of filth, sexual danger, or social deviancy. As such, it offers a convenient depository for unacceptable elements of the self -- I am not dirty, promiscuous, or rapacious; it is the other who embodies these abject qualities. By hating him, I can avoid hating myself.

Anti-Semitism throughout the ages has embodied this quality of demonizing the unknown Other. The Nazi image of the hated Jew assembled every disavowed quality uncomfortable to the anti-Semite: greed, ugliness, filth, clannishness, and stealth.

In summary, conspiracy theory realigns personal and social qualities in ways that reduce anxiety, promote social and psychological cohesion, suppress opposition, and displace inner discontent. Like paranoid states in general, conspiratorial thinking affords temporary solace at the incalculable price of profound disruptions in reality testing, ethical values, and humanity.

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## Consistency Encourages Conspiracy Theories

Thomas Blass

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Thirty-seven years have now elapsed since President Kennedy's assassination, and despite the passage of time, the painful memory of that event still occupies a special place in the national consciousness. An endless stream of books about the assassination has certainly figured importantly in keeping that memory fresh. To help the conspiracy-challenged, there are even such books as *Who Shot JFK?: A Guide to the Major Conspiracy Theories*. Why do conspiracy theories have such widespread appeal?

There is often a tendency to associate beliefs in conspiracies with the "lunatic" or political fringe. To the extent that conspiratorial beliefs dominate one's thinking, or are central to an ideology, then we are indeed talking about an extreme. But when they are not all-pervasive concerns, beliefs in conspiracies can represent a quite normal way of looking at things -- normal in the sense that such beliefs can meet a very ordinary, non-pathological need.

One of the most influential social psychologists, Fritz Heider, has theorized that a pervasive human need is to maintain a sense of consistency among our various thoughts, feelings, and actions. The belief that the Kennedy assassination involved more than one person, it has been suggested, can be understood as something that fulfills this need for consistency.

As Tom Bethell argued in the pages of the *Washington Monthly* many years ago, to think that such a big, devastatingly important result -- the killing of a President -- was caused by a very unimportant, solitary individual is jarring to the mind. To believe that a big outcome has a big cause achieves a sought-after consistency, since there is a better fit between cause and effect. Thus, it is quite easy to accept the possibility that Kennedy was assassinated through a conspiracy involving several (or even many) people.

A different perspective on conspiratorial beliefs comes from some studies conducted by Clark McCauley and Susan Jacques at Bryn Mawr College. They presented subjects of their experiments with simulated newspaper headlines about assassinations. One headline said that an attempt

was made on the President's life and that it was successful. Another said that an unsuccessful attempt was made on the President's life. Subjects were simply asked to indicate the likelihood that there was only a lone gunman or that more than one person was involved.

Over a series of experiments, these researchers found that people were more likely to assume a conspiracy when a successful attempt took place than when the assassination attempt failed. Rather than a consistency-based explanation, their findings point to the following one: People reason that if an assassination attempt was successful, it must have involved a conspiracy, since a group should be more effective than one person.

Whatever the best specific explanation, it is quite clear that persistent beliefs in conspiracy accounts of President Kennedy's death are not necessarily a manifestation of human perversity. Rather, they are quite akin to the ways of thinking that figure daily in people's attempts to make sense of their world.

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## Some Effects of Conspiracy Thinking and Paranoid Labeling

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I have a fascination with conspiracy theories as evidenced by my enjoyment of films like *The Parallax View* and television series like "The X-Files." Yet I am quite happy at times to see some views as paranoid, usually those I disagree with. I don't think I am alone in this, and in such apparent contradiction I believe we can learn something about the ambivalent relationship Western culture has with both conspiracy theories and paranoia. I want to examine some of the *effects* of both taking on a conspiratorial position and of positioning the Other (individual, group, or nation) as paranoid. In other words, what do we *do* by believing in conspiracy theories and what do we *do* when we call others "paranoid"?

When we adopt conspiratorial theories we see ourselves as knowing what is really going on. Conspiracy theories help to simplify a bewilderingly complex world. They enable us to connect apparently disparate events through a narrative that sees the intentions behind mundane happenings. They also personalize events so that we have a focus for our suspicion. Conspiracy films, for example, often have a person or group who are the "hidden hand" behind events. By subverting the taken-for-granted world, conspiracy theories mobilize people into action against perceived threats.

We know that the rhetoric of war serves to unify disparate national or ethnic groups against an external threat. This worked well in the West during the Cold War, Desert Storm, and the bombing of Yugoslavia. Conspiratorial rhetoric works in similar ways often directed towards groups within a country. At the pinnacle of her power, Margaret Thatcher, drawing implicitly on McCarthyite notions of Communist subversion, talked of British Trades Unions as the "enemy within." This strategy of marginalization helped to legitimize her taking extreme oppressive measures against the unions, culminating in her systematic breaking of the National Union of Mineworkers during the year-long coal strike of the early 1980s.

Conspiracy theories may fill believers with a sense of purpose and missionary zeal to convince others. As the narrator tells us in the 1960s television series "The Invaders," "Now David Vincent knows that the invaders are here, that they have taken human form. Somehow he must convince a disbelieving world that the nightmare has already begun." Alternatively, theories may encourage adherents to withdraw and regroup forces against expected attacks, as at Waco. Through such processes, conspiracy theories enable their believers to construct a valued identity for themselves and to see non-believers as dupes or allies of their enemy.

Some, like Hofstadter, see this position as primarily one adopted by minority political groups. There is some evidence to suggest that those who adopt a conspiratorial narrative are often from powerless groups. J. Mirowsky & C.E. Ross reported that social positions characterized by powerlessness and by the threat of victimization and exploitation tended to produce paranoia ("Paranoia and the structure of powerlessness," *American Sociological Review*, 1983, 48, pp. 228-239). People in powerless positions may be paranoid then because it may make sense in a world where others really do have power over them.

What are some of the effects of labeling others as "paranoid"? In doing so, we simultaneously mark "them" as different and other from "us," and as abnormally and pathologically suspicious. We simultaneously see them not as "knowing what is really going on" but as fringe weirdos. We marginalize them and remove legitimacy from their views. Thus, when ex-British Prime Minister Harold Wilson referred to a plot by the British Security Service (MI5) to destabilize his Labour administration in the mid-1970s, a Conservative Member of Parliament called him "positively paranoid" and urged him to see a psychiatrist. Similarly, following her interview on British television, where she described her relationship troubles, Diana, the Princess of Wales, was said by a Conservative Minister to be "in the advanced stages of paranoia," which helped to deligitimize her account.

Positioning the other as "paranoid" not only undermines the legitimacy of that person or group's views but it also serves powerful functions for those doing the positioning. In calling others "paranoid" we construct ourselves as rational, reasonable, and plausible -- an identity clearly valued in Western culture.

Conspiracies do, of course, happen and there are times when suspicion is seen as legitimate. But paranoia serves as a touchstone of what counts as reasonable suspicion. A recent public opinion poll in the U.K. found that 24 percent of people had lied to others and 64 percent felt they had been lied to at least once during the previous day. Yet to act in the world as if one is being lied to on this scale would be to invite accusations of paranoia. We know deceit and surveillance occur but to comment on them is to be seen as paranoid. A good example of some of these paranoid traps can be found in the work of intelligence and security agencies. Would you believe a small-time Welsh Nationalist who told you that he had been followed by 38 MI5 agents on one day in a small Welsh fishing village? The scale seems ludicrous and yet Security Service evidence in a trial in the U.K. in 1993 reveals that this actually happened. A discussion of this kind of surveillance would quickly take the form of conspiratorial discourse, a discourse that would then inevitably and ineluctably be read as paranoid.

For the intelligence communities and the organizations they infiltrate, conspiracy narratives are entirely functional: intelligence agencies need credible threats to survive and threats of infiltration

build group identity in the targets of those agencies. Thus, in the U.S., the conspiratorial accounts on both sides of the Waco siege and the Oklahoma City bombing served to warrant action taken both by right-wing and minority religious groups *and* by the Federal government. Following the end of the Cold War we see intelligence agencies refocus their targeting from the U.S.S.R. to terrorism, drugs, and "rogue nations" as new dangers.

Writers like Philip K. Dick have made use of reality loops where one "reality" is suddenly revealed to be just a surface reality with another reality underneath. This was used to great effect in the film *Total Recall*. In a similar way, we can see what might be termed "paranoia loops" created in attempts to address conspiratorial culture. Reactions to movements seen as conspiratorial and paranoid can be as overwhelming as the groups' rhetoric. Moreover, such moves themselves can become characterised by a paranoid narrative. W. Shaw has noted how religious cults' "paranoia about the outside world feeds on the outside world's paranoia about cults' paranoia which feeds on cults' paranoia" (*Spying in Guru Land: Inside Britain's Cults*, 1994). A traditional response to such concern is to pathologize those seen as dangerous by calling them "paranoid" -- a strategy that Shaw reveals to be double-edged. For those adopting a conspiratorial view, being seen as pathological by others decreases rather than increases whatever chance there may be that they will adopt a different stance towards the world.

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## Folk Theories of Power

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Conspiracies, large-scale conspiracies with significant impact, actually do occur.

For example, the Gladio conspiracy in post-World War II Italy was a clandestine organization set up by NATO and recruited from the remnants of Italian Fascism in order to combat what NATO feared might be the rise of a popular-Left movement. Commentators have linked Gladio to a

wider, European "stay-behind network" of similar organizations with a similar agenda. In the Italian context, Gladio, and its parallel organization, P2, have been linked to such actions as the Bologna railway-station bombing in 1980, in which 83 people were murdered, and to the assassination of Aldo Moro. (Moro was disapproved of by NATO because of the "historic compromise" which he authored, by which the Italian Communist Party under Enrico Berlinguer was to be invited into the parliamentary process.) The existence of Gladio was at first denied by the Italian government but then finally admitted by Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti in 1990.

Certainly there are clearly delusional theories of conspiracy, which appear to have the function of creating and sustaining a paranoid sense of group unity by splitting off and projecting, and which actually seem to flourish in conditions of beleaguerment such as the Ulster Protestant paramilitaries. (The psychology of cults, religious or political, is a fascinating field, the way the "anathematizing" of the Other ends up producing a fantasized group self-idealization, often expressed in terms of their "purity," racial or doctrinal.) However, it may also be the case that such delusional theories are actually distorted representations of how power works, a kind of "folk theories" of power. It may be that while these folk theories are clearly pathological, they are themselves symptomatic of the much larger "pathology" of power itself.

While it's obviously of great value to unpack the psychological mechanisms of conspiracy, at the same time we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that power is massively and unequally concentrated today, and is often actually beyond accountability, in spite of the comforting, media-orchestrated rituals of participation which take place periodically.

Consider, too, what function the Hollywood conspiracy genre (for example, *Conspiracy Theory* and *Enemy of the State*) serves. Some of these films, like Oliver Stone's *JFK*, make real claims about the functioning of power and advance explanations of historical events. Yet they are submerged under the sheer volume of those which don't. Perhaps all the other more fantasized material is serving some kind of cathartic function: discharging widespread anxieties concerning the functioning of power in order to end up vindicating it, in line with what media theorists refer to as "inoculation," whereby small pieces of alternate

ideologies are placed inside the dominant ideologies to render the alternate ideologies harmless and promote the dominant ideologies.

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## Accepting and Rejecting Conspiracy Theories

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"Highly paranoid" people may see conspiracies when almost anything "wrong" or unexpected happens. "Normally paranoid" people, those with enough paranoia to protect themselves by questioning the intentions of others, may see conspiracies after misfortune, especially when extreme, and when authorities fail to do what is expected of them. Unexpected national disasters foster myths. Given the prevalence of scapegoating, myths with paranoid cores are most dangerous.

As has been amply documented (e.g., Carl Friedrich, *The Pathology of Politics*, 1972), conspiracy is a basic method by which governments operate. "Conspiracy" means secret planning in concert of a wrongful act -- usually an illegal one. It includes -- when discovery threatens -- a cover-up by manipulating information, hiding and destroying evidence, suborning perjury, and giving perjured testimony. Conspiracy and cover-up are common in government operations throughout the world.

Government conspiracies may be classified according to purpose:

- personal gain (e.g., enrichment of officials)
- partisan political advantage (e.g., Watergate)
- national interest (e.g., Iran-Contra)

Patriotic arrogance, along with government propaganda, led Germans to expect victory in World War I, and they were still expecting it when their government surrendered. The shock and the harsh terms imposed on Germany gave rise to the

stab-in-the-back myth. Many Germans believed that their nation and its noble soldiers, on the verge of victory, had been betrayed by government leaders. Some believed that those leaders were not really Germans -- they were secret Jews engaged in an international conspiracy to destroy Germany. This belief contributed to anti-Semitic measures of the Third Reich, helping prepare the way to the gas chambers.

In 1941 most people in the United States were also biased by patriotic arrogance and a stereotype of Japanese inferiority -- especially military inferiority. They thought Japan could be beaten in weeks. The sweeping defeats suffered by the United States beginning with Pearl Harbor on December 7 were experienced as an inexplicable disaster, and fostered two conspiracy theories. In the "highly paranoid" one, Franklin Roosevelt -- a secret Jew whose "real name" was said to be *Rosenfeld* -- had engineered the disaster at Pearl Harbor to save Europe's Jews by getting America into the war against Hitler. In the "normally paranoid" one, the Japanese -- an evil, sneaky people -- had deceived the United States by mouthing peaceful intentions while preparing and launching surprise attacks. Japanese treachery accounted for their victories.

The thesis that Roosevelt provoked Japan's attack, seeking an incident to use in manipulating his unwilling nation into the war against Germany, has been dismissed for 60 years as a conspiracy theory. To many people, it has been unthinkable that he -- or any President -- would do such a thing. Unthinkability is a mark of denial. The world's history of wars contains many such provocations but, by customary bias, conspiracies are what other nations engage in, not our own. Most people in the United States have only a dim awareness of precedents in their own history.

In history, all things considered "unthinkable" -- in the sense of repugnant -- have happened. The denial in considering one's government's actions unthinkable probably comes from children's problems with deception and manipulation by the people they most need to trust -- their caretakers. The problems persist into adulthood, fostering biases. People who adapt by a hostile-fearful orientation toward their caretakers may generalize it to authorities and see government conspiracies where there are none. People who learn scapegoating may see a conspiracy by an ethnic or other group when things go wrong. People who adapt by extending credulity to their caretakers may deny con-

spiracies by their government for which evidence is ample.

Scholars show little acceptance of undocumented conspiracy theories. They do, however, tend to dismiss as conspiracy theories documented historical accounts that attribute deception and manipulation to their own government.

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## Hofstadter Revisited: How Conspiracy Theories and Paranoia Have Become Mainstream

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This essay will briefly review three recent books on the subject of paranoia and conspiracy theories in contemporary thought: George Marcus' edited collection, *Paranoia Within Reason: A Casebook on Conspiracy as Explanation* (1999), Nancy Schultz's edited collection, *Fear Itself: Enemies Real and Imagined in American Culture* (1999), and Timothy Melley's *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America* (2000). None of the books is overtly psychohistorical but they do address topics and questions which are central to the concerns of psychohistorians. What I will do is look at the explanations suggested by some of the authors represented in these books and then try to expand some of these explanations from a psychohistorical perspective.

Melley's *Empire of Conspiracy* presents the thesis that since World War II there has been a boom in conspiratorial ways of viewing events in Western thought and culture. He focuses mainly on novelists and social critics. He argues that the novels of William Burroughs, Joseph Heller, Norman Mailer, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Ken Kesey, Joan Didion, Margaret Atwood, and William Gibson, among others, all share an essentially paranoid view of the world. By this he means that these novels are populated by characters who are the victims of external forces which are both beyond their control and full understanding. He does not address the more overtly conspiratorial fiction such as *The Turner Diaries*

(1978), or the literature on UFOs, alien abduction, or satanic ritual abuse. [Editor's Note: See "A Portrait of the Conspiratorial and Revenge Fantasies," p. 138, for a discussion of *The Turner Diaries*.]

In the area of social criticism Melley discusses various important books that have nourished conspiratorial and paranoid ways of understanding the world, some of which include Norbert Wiener's *Cybernetics* (1948), David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), William Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956), Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* (1951), Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* (1964), Charles Reich's *The Greening of America* (1970), and Michel Foucault's books of the 1970s and 1980s: *Discipline and Punish* (1977), *The History of Sexuality*, 3 vols., (1978-1986), and *Madness and Civilization*, (1988).

What all of these commentaries have in common is that they share an awareness of the individual's sense of loss of control over major aspects of life. Melley calls this "agency panic" which he defines as "anxiety over the way technologies, social organizations, [chiefly government and corporate bureaucracies], and communication systems have reduced human autonomy and uniqueness" (p. 7).

Corey Robin, one of the contributors in Schultz's *Fear Itself*, similarly focuses on what he calls a "near hysteria among intellectuals" over threats to and loss of the individual's autonomy and freedom (p. 17).

From a psychohistorical perspective the most interesting article in the Schultz collection is by Peter Knight, a British academician who writes on conspiracy culture, entitled *A Plague of Paranoia: Theories of Conspiracy Theory Since the 1960's*. Using Hofstadter's classic paper, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," published in 1965, as a launching point, Knight argues that much has changed since that time. Whereas Hofstadter could speak from a liberal, rationalist, and mainstream position about the excesses of the right-wing lunatic fringe, Knight contends that this mainstream consensus no longer exists. As he says: "No longer can the consumption of conspiracy narratives be understood simply as evidence of a paranoid mentality" (p. 28). In his view, conspiracy theories have become mainstream.

Knight, as well as George Marcus, anthropologist and editor of *Paranoia Within Reason*, among others, has pointed to the Cold War and the

establishment of the national security state in the United States, as key historical events which have shaped the creation and acceptance of paranoid and conspiratorial consciousness in the post-World War II period.

Knight cites Frederic Jameson's aphorism that "'conspiracy is the poor person's cognitive mapping in the postmodern age'" (p. 49). This is a good starting point from which to build a psychohistorical account of the phenomenon of the proliferation of "conspiracy consciousness." [Editor's Note: See Peter Knight's new article in this issue, p. 106.]

As Freud has said, there is usually a kernel of truth contained in even the wildest of delusions. If we attempt to explore conspiracy theories as a psychoanalyst would look at a dream, we would want to ask: What piece of truth is being expressed metaphorically by this way of viewing the world? So, for example, theories about being manipulated and controlled by powerful external forces, be they small gray aliens, ZOG (Zionist Occupational Government), NWO (New World Order), or devil-worshipping satanists, might be seen as a symbolic expression of the fact that we are being influenced by powerful external forces including multinational corporations and the governments that act as agents for them, to say nothing of WTO, IMF, and CIA. I am suggesting that using a psychohistorical method, essentially a form of fantasy analysis of the content of any particular conspiracy theory, will give us the best understanding of the popularity of conspiracy consciousness.

The analysis presented by Melley, Robin, and others which views the expansion of conspiracy consciousness as resulting from "agency panic" or hysteria over fear of loss of autonomy is fine as far as it goes, but psychohistory needs to look deeper. Freedom and autonomy are threatened, but the crucial question is: What are the real sources of these threats and why is our anxiety about them at such a high level at this time?

In connection to the question of why now, there seems to have been a qualitative shift in the nature of the threat to our autonomy. Being subject to the influence and control of powerful forces that don't particularly have our best interests at heart is not a new phenomenon. But in times gone by we mostly knew who the oppressors were and what they were up to. Colonialism was pretty transparent. So was slavery, the exploitative actions of the robber barons, and the military goals of Nazi Germany. What is different now is the degree



of mystification which has become standard operating procedure. Advertising, public relations, marketing, spin, double-talk and doublethink have become far more prevalent than they have been in the past. As so many of the novelists discussed by Melley are fond of emphasizing, we are so often puzzled about who, exactly, it is and how, exactly, they are doing it to us. This is fertile ground for nurturing theories and beliefs that abolish the uncertainty and give us the answers.

We seem to have a built-in affinity for the use of projective mechanisms. When we are anxious, disturbed, fearful, or guilty, we seem to move easily into a search for something external on which to blame our discomfort. Thus, scapegoating, moral panics, hysterias, and conspiracy theories flourish.

A full psychohistorical explanation involves looking at the influence of both history (the external) and the psyche (the internal). When a particular form of conspiracy theory or hysteria captures the popular imagination it is most likely because it resonates with both powerful internal anxieties and potent external realities.

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## Historical Evolution of Conspiracy Theories in the West

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*Review of Daniel Pipes, Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From. New York: Free Press, 1997. Paperback: ISBN 0684871114, 258 pages, \$17.00.*

*Conspiracy* offers a compelling analysis and in-depth survey of conspiracy theories since the advent of the modern period in the 18th century. The book, however, operates under two assertions that distort its overall political impact and historical perspective.

The first shortcoming of the book is foundational, deriving from Pipes' very definition of

conspiracy theories. "A *conspiracy theory* is the fear of a nonexistent conspiracy" (p. 21). This definition is counter-productive since it contradicts the very definition of *theory* as a concept or formulation awaiting verification. Further, Pipes does not restrict himself to describing theories that have been thoroughly discredited, such as anti-Semitic claims of a Jewish secret hegemony. He also discusses theories whose truth claims cannot be so easily dismissed, such as the CIA's involvement in drug trafficking. This flaw undermines the political impact of the book.

The other shortcoming in Pipes' work is historical. It involves his thesis that global conspiracy theories (theories that posit the existence of a secret group determined to take over the world) are a product of the modern period. Pipes asserts that, prior to the late 18th century, conspiracy theories were predominately local in scope (p. 22). "One might say that just as the European philosophical tradition consists of a series of footnotes to Plato, its tradition of world conspiracy theories consists of footnotes to the Enlightenment" (p. 66). This assertion, which grounds the concept of a world conspiracy theory in the modern period, cannot stand up to historical evidence, in particular the huge body of millenarian discourse that predates the 18th century, a body of work premised on the existence of a satanic plot for world domination. Furthermore, in the period prior to the 18th century and prior to emerging concepts of nationalism, it is not possible to claim outright that conspiracy theories are not global in their implications.

What saves the book and testifies to its enduring value in the theory of conspiracism is the scholarship it offers. Although the basic assertions of this text impair its overall historical perspective, Pipes nonetheless succeeds in providing an excellent close study of the evolution of conspiracy theories in the West. He is sensitive to the cultural determinants of conspiracism, the factors that shaped and informed this body of thought in different geographical and cultural contexts. Particularly valuable is his lucid survey of two traditions and their merger -- "what began as two wholly discrete sets of fears has gradually, irregularly, but steadily merged. Anti-semitic and anti-secret society phobias began an unrelated phenomena with different appeals; over time they became ever more similar" (p. 141).

Another valuable dimension to Pipes' work is the detailed exploration of what he calls the "distinct patterns of conspiracism" (p. 38). Typical

structures include a predilection for the obscure, the reluctance to divulge sources, and the tendency to overwhelm the reader with a flood of sources and references (p. 41). Other distinct patterns include a basic irony or inversion, in which apparent friends are really enemies, and apparent enemies are secretly friends. These patterns provide more than the means of labeling spurious from credible arguments -- although on this count alone Pipes' work is useful. These patterns provide insight into the discursive structures of conspiracism and the epistemology they support. Out of the format of prewritten scenarios derive predictable ways of perceiving the world.

So while his political impact and historical perspective are disabled by his larger assertions, Pipes works well on the level of the close reading and the fine-grained historical analysis. On this level, his work advances the study of conspiracy theories and is recommended reading.

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## The Paranoid Style: Alive and Well in the 21st Century

**Charlotte Kahn**  
**Private Practice**

Human instrumentality has always been limited and those limits have always engendered anxiety. However, in the past, anxiety was allayed by the mythical powers attributed to human prayers and good deeds intended to induce the benevolent intercession of a Supreme Being on behalf of an individual, clan, or tribe. In the present, the human sphere of action has been globalized and extended beyond the illusion of remaining controllable. But despite the absence of an expectation of control and independent functioning, the extant reality causes at least apprehension, sometimes suspicion and, in the extreme, paranoia.

Conspiracy theories are fears of non-existent conspiracies (Daniel Pipes, *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From*, 1997). Many conspiracy theories

contain "a critique of the contemporary social order [and] assume the coming end of a moment cursed by secret power and a ... new beginning where secrecy vanishes and power is transparent and utilized by good people for the good of all." Unfortunately, the theories fail to indicate "how to move from the end of the uncovered plot to the beginning of a political movement" (Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*, 1999, pp. 225-226).

Conspiracy theories are theories of power, of the ruling individuals' power that controls "virtually all aspects of social life, politics and economics" (*Conspiracy Theories*, p. xiv). Postindustrial developments have had different benefits or detriments for different groups of people and, therefore, different influences on their perception of the increase in technical autonomy relative to their personal autonomy and instrumentality. Doubts "about how knowledge is produced and about the authority of those who produce it" add to the sense of being manipulated (*Empire*, p.10). Conspiracy theories reflect that insecurity resulting from the simultaneously diminishing personal agency and increasing social controls. They are an expression of the anxiety Melley calls "agency panic" (*Empire*, p. 1).

Melley distinguishes the structural controls vested in governmental organizations and corporate bureaucracies from intentional, "malevolent" control by the media "depth boys" (the motivational researchers who employ psychologically-inspired "subterranean operations," for example, to induce a "hypnoidal trance" in shoppers). The conjunction of intentional and structural control may significantly diminish individual agency as a result of individuals having become "emasculated" subjects of external agencies. The (unconscious) realization that the individual is a part of a larger system with a life of its own and the "postmodern transference" that sometimes attributes rationality and motives to systems (*Empire*, p. 40) strengthen the perception of having become victims of outside forces and experiencing exacerbated anxiety. Individuals or groups may defensively develop conspiracy theories. "Multiple, interlocking, heterogeneous systems" that are relatively immutable through outside influences are particularly "subversive of individual agency" and replace the self-relating subject with a self-relating system (Jürgen Habermas quoted by Melley in *Empire*).

Alienated members of a mass society, who may also be estranged from themselves -- from

their unwanted or unknown (unconscious) parts -- may take flight into activism in extreme groups. These "politically disaffected and the culturally suspicious" are likely to subscribe to conspiracy theories. Pipes (*Conspiracy*, p. xii) supports this observation with a reference to Louis Farrakhan, the representative of disaffected blacks, who maintains that "Jewish 'blood-suckers' have successfully blocked black advancement" and who asserts that Jewish participation on behalf of blacks in the civil rights movement was "self-interested." Pipes laments that though "some conspiracy theorists are among society's otherwise most idealistic, accomplished, sensible and friendly individuals," they are, in Walter Lacqueur's words, "fighters of chimeras and phantoms ... who nurse inveterate malice ... [and] use pernicious wiles and stratagems" (*Conspiracy*, p. xii).

Members of fringe groups may resort to activism not for reasons of alienation or estrangement, but in response to their fear of the monolithic mass society that appears to usurp their traditional sovereignty at the individual, local, and state levels. Feeling weak and disempowered, they wish to interfere with or topple the established powers. Militia movements in the U.S. are an example of such a dynamic. According to Kenneth Stern (*A Force Upon the Plain*, 1996, pp. 246ff.), militias are a social movement guided by a belief that the government is ruled by incorrigible, evil, "financial and international" forces which must be "combated with arms." These conspiracy theorists experience themselves as vulnerable victims in need of a posse with "special rights and privileges" (*Force*, p. 246) to protect themselves and their rights. (Yet, they may themselves become part of a conspiracy when they "conspire" to create a "citizens army" to fight the rise of the centralized one-world government they fear.)

The entitlement to a posse with special rights and privileges reveals the obverse of the inferiority implied by the victim stance, namely the grandiosity that entitles them to take the law into their own hands, to take up arms -- justifiably and with impunity, of course! -- and defensively to conspire aggression against the presumed conspiratorial aggressors. Individuals who suspect conspiracies against individualism operating in the society, banding together to form their own conspiratorial organization, blur the lines between conspiracy theorists and conspirators. A case in point is the extreme right-to-life representatives who conspire to kill the evil killers, the physicians who,

by performing abortions, digress from the "right" path.

Since conspiracy theory is frequently unrelated to an actual conspiracy, much as a feared fantasy is unrelated to factual reality, it is important to delineate the differences. Pipes suggest some guidelines for distinguishing conspiracy from conspiracy theory (*Conspiracy*, p. 8). Conspiracy theories are characterized by: complexity instead of simplicity and parsimony; a "taste for the improbable"; a reluctance to divulge information and a reliance on forgeries; inconsistencies and filling in gaps by "piling on" additional conspiracy theories; beginning with conclusions and accepting supporting arguments indiscriminately while dismissing contradictory evidence. Hence, "conspiracies are understood to be hermetically sealed ... and virtually undetectable."

These characteristic ways of constructing and maintaining conspiracy theories are similar to the paranoid process in that both rely more on personal needs than observable events. Richard Hofstadter defines the paranoid style as a "...central preconception [of] the existence of a vast, insidious, preternaturally effective international conspiratorial network designed to perpetrate acts of the most fiendish character" that its exponents believe to be the motive force in historical events (Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, 1965, pp. 14). And he defines fear of a possible conspiracy planned by activist subgroups in the society as "political paranoia" (quoted in *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 3). The conspiracy theories of the "New American Right," represented by Joseph McCarthy and Barry Goldwater, who feared Communist infiltrators, may exemplify political paranoia.

Characteristic of the paranoid style is to project and impute: the tendency to see difficulties and conflicts in terms of external forces, not to acknowledge personal inadequacies, and to displace responsibility from the self to others. These maneuvers preserve self-esteem and assurance of the rightness and truth of one's beliefs. An additional feature of the paranoid syndrome is the grandiosity that serves to deny and compensate for weakness and to sustain the conviction of rightness (W.W. Meissner, *The Paranoid Process*, 1978, pp. 36ff.).

Suspicious guardedness and the practice of assimilating reality data to the paranoid belief serve to protect the paranoid construction, its certainty, consistency, and coherence. In both paranoid and conspiracy-theory dynamics, suspicious-

ness motivates the attempts to “unearth the hidden truth” by interpreting the obvious facts. The danger of interpreting and reinterpreting in order to understand reality is that “reality” more and more resembles a construct. “Fantastic conclusions are argued out along factual lines” supported by the coherence of the paranoid mentality, which is “if not wholly rational, at least intensely rationalistic” (*Paranoid Style*, pp. 34 and 36). Both paranoia and conspiracy theories are based on conviction and are not open to modification; evidence is used as corroboration; invalidating evidence is dismissed or ignored, labeled irrelevant to the issue. This is in contrast to vigilance, a stance based in possibility, probability, and theory rather than certainty.

The rigidity and paranoid aspects of conspiracy theories, expressed in social terms as bigotry, prejudice, and hate, can easily translate into violence. Having imputed conflicts, difficulties, and weakness to others, passionate dislike of or hostility toward those individuals or groups purported to harbor the unacceptable thoughts or impulses comes easily. It is a small step from there to conspire to disempower, even violently to eliminate them. Political extremists are vulnerable to exhortations to act out their violent tendencies, because unlike working politicians, paranoid leaders do not mediate or compromise; “a paranoid leader is a militant leader” (*Paranoid Style*, p.31) who focuses on the enemy to mobilize his group’s inner resources and maintain its purposiveness (*Paranoid Process*, p. 805).

Why are conspiracy theories so preoccupied with Jews, Israel, and Freemasons, as well as Britons and Americans, asks Pipes (*Conspiracy*, p. 151). He answers that “Ironically, high ideals make a people or state into a special target of conspiracies,” and “paranoid fantasies” can be aroused by idealistic establishments. Thus, “anti-Semitism is a distorted testimony to the achievements of Jews” (p. 153), to whom some conspiracy theorists ascribe the Industrial Revolution and the control of money in capitalism. Similarly, successful Freemasons, and the United States as well as the United Kingdom, have become the targets of those less able to deal with modernity. Success is envied and feared, and unconsciously the idealized figure arouses hate because it is experienced as depriving. In this regard, one can speculate that the forged *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* are the externalization of unconscious, murderous fantasies of vengeful individuals, and persecution the

“externalization and enactment of an [internal] catastrophe imposed on others” (Joseph H. Berke, et al, eds., *Even Paranoids Have Enemies: New Perspectives on Paranoia and Persecution*, 1998, p. 2). In this case, the internal catastrophe may well be a sense of inadequacy and an assault on self-esteem in the face of another’s success. Constructing a conspiracy theory that includes a denigration of the successful figure would both heap the catastrophe on the other *and* restore the sense of worthiness in the “conspiracist” (*Conspiracy*, p. 26).

In the end, “paranoia is no protection from persecution, nor is persecution immunization against paranoia” (*Even Paranoids*, p. 1), because Golda Meir was right: “Even paranoids have enemies.”

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## **The Mutilation of the Herms and the Profanation of the Mysteries: An Athenian Conspiracy Theory**

**Robert Rousselle  
Independent Scholar**

Allegations of conspiracies tell us more about those who believe in their existence than they do about the presumed conspirators. Upon close inspection the mere presence of an actual conspiracy can be difficult to identify, much less any of its members. As historians, and students of human motivation, we are more interested in why a group believed in the existence of a conspiracy at a particular time, how it coped with this “knowledge,” and the long-term consequences of its actions.

A few weeks prior to the sailing of the Athenian fleet to Sicily in 415 B.C.E., to conquer Syracuse, an unknown party mutilated most of the herms in Athens. A herm was a four cornered pillar topped by a male bust, with an enormous phallus set off at an angle. They marked roads and borders, and would be found outside homes and temples. They served as symbols of power and protection of those within. Those who have reviewed the ethological literature have remarked on the similarity in function to the males of a species of monkey who sit at the borders of the group's territory, facing outside with erect phalli, exhibiting their potent masculinity to ward off would-be trespassers. Although Thukydides only mentions the mutilation of the faces of the herms, a chance remark in Aristophanes indicates that the phalli were chopped off (Thukydides, 6.27.1; Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 1094).

Considering this to be a bad omen for the expedition, the Athenians began an investigation. Suggestions that a group of young men drunk with wine had committed the act, or that it was done by the Corinthians (Corinth as mother-city of Syracuse was her ally), were ignored (Plutarch, *Alkibiades*, 18.3-4). Most Athenians believed it was the result of a conspiracy, *sunomosia*, literally a group leagued together by an oath, which sought to overthrow the democracy.

Rumors of other sacrileges quickly spread, and soon several resident aliens and slaves reported to the Athenian officials that a group of drunken young men had mocked the Eleusinian Mysteries, one of the most sacred and, to the non-initiate, secret rites in Athens. Implicated in this deed were Alkibiades and several of his close friends, acting as High Priest, Herald, and Torch Bearer. Ambitious, flamboyant, and of questionable moral character, but a daring and at times brilliant general, Alkibiades was one of the most prominent men in Athens. Born into the aristocracy, he was the favorite of many of the Athenian common people. He was also the main proponent of the expedition to Syracuse and one of its three generals. Although he demanded an immediate trial before the fleet sailed, his enemies, aware of his popularity with the troops, postponed his trial until the expedition returned.

The investigation into both acts of sacrilege continued after the fleet sailed. Denunciations were followed by arrests and trials, with those convicted facing execution and confiscation of their property. Diokleides alleged seeing 300 conspirators by moonlight the night the herms were mutilated, and

named 42 prominent aristocrats who happened to be opponents of the democracy. They were arrested and detained, until someone pointed out that the herms were mutilated on a moonless night. Those implicated were released and Diokleides himself was executed (Andokides, *De Mysteriis*, 37-42, 65-66).

An aristocratic woman named Alkibiades and several of his close associates as participants in the drunken mocking of the Mysteries (Andokides, *De Mysteriis*, 16). Alkibiades' enemies engineered his recall from the fleet, dispatching a ship to bring him back to stand trial. Alkibiades managed to elude them, left the fleet, and joined Athens' opponent in the war, Sparta.

Prosopographical analysis breaks down those implicated in the two sacrilegious acts into two main groups. Those alleged to have mutilated the herms were aristocrats, members of small clubs or associations of anti-democratic, pro-oligarchic men. The Athenian fleet was the main support of the democracy, and it was now hundreds of miles away, about to lay siege to Syracuse. One hundred Athenian ships, thousands of Athenian seamen and hoplites, were now unable to protect her from her internal enemies. In the eyes of the Athenian democrats, the mutilation of the herms, the chopping off of the phalli, was a visible, symbolic attack on Athens when she was at her most vulnerable. The perception that this reflected a conspiracy of the oligarchs, while the young, potent military force of Athens was far away, exacerbated their reaction.

The alleged profaners of the Mysteries belong to a different group. Though an aristocrat, Alkibiades had been popular among the Athenian populace and appeared to be a friend of the democracy. This earned him the jealousy of the other democratic leaders, who believed he kept them from achieving the highest political office. However, the recall of Alkibiades required the approval of the assembly, and Thukydides notes that the Athenian populace had become hostile toward him (Thukydides, 6.61.1). The Athenians apparently feared that Alkibiades, with the help of the fleet, might try to become tyrant of Athens if he conquered Sicily.

The political foes of a democracy in ancient Greece were two, oligarchy and tyranny. At a vulnerable moment, the Athenians reacted strongly against what appeared to be an oligarchic conspiracy, the mutilation of the many, the herms, by the few. They were also quick to believe that there was a conspiracy to make Alkibiades tyrant

of Athens, although mimicry of the Mysteries or other religious rites was not unheard of at other times in sophisticated Athens, where sophists regularly attacked or criticized the traditional religion. The profanation of the Mysteries was certainly not a threat to the democracy, and the mutilation of the herms, though probably an attempt to prevent the Sicilian expedition by an evil omen, was certainly not an attempt to overthrow the democracy.

The result of their prosecution of the "conspirators" had grave consequences for Athens. It deprived her of her most charismatic, daring, and successful leader when Alkibiades fled to Sparta. The Athenian fleet, as well as the relief force sent in 413, was destroyed in Sicily, with a devastating loss of manpower for Athens. Most of those killed, captured, or enslaved were the main support of the democracy. Perhaps as a result of the suspicion of an oligarchic conspiracy, the oligarchs deposed the democracy in 411 and set up the Council of 400, which ruled Athens until 410. Soon after, Alkibiades returned from exile to the democratic fleet at Samos, and after the victory at Cyzicus in 410 the democracy was restored and Alkibiades the exile was welcomed back to Athens in 407. Alkibiades was exiled again a year later. Athens soon lost the war and surrendered in 404 to Sparta, who immediately installed a narrow oligarchy, the "Thirty Tyrants," who remained in power until the democratic restoration 17 months later.

Thus we see that the baseless fears of a conspiracy had far reaching consequences for Athens, as she engaged in self-destructive behavior that resulted in the deaths of thousands of seamen and hoplites, the exile of her most successful general, the institution of a brief oligarchic rule a few years later, and the eventual loss of a long and costly war that she should otherwise have won.

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## ***Nemine contra dicente:* The Sponsors of the Popish Plot, 1678-1681**

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Andrew Marvell's *An Account of the Growth of Popery, and Arbitrary Government in England* appeared in the fall of 1677. It bore the imprint Amsterdam, beyond the reach of the censors; in fact, it was printed in London. It proclaimed:

There has now for divers Years a Design been carried on, to change the Lawful Government of England into an Absolute Tyranny, and to Convert the Established Protestant Religion into downright Popery: than both which, nothing can be more Destructive or contrary to the Interest and Happiness, to the Constitution and Being of the King and Kingdom.

By inspiring a fear of change and a loss of rights, Marvell appealed effectively to a political opposition that was fragmented and demoralized. During the previous decades, the Puritan dissenters had seized power and executed the king, only to see their Commonwealth crumble in an interminable civil war. The absurd had come to pass: Charles II had been invited to rule over them, a free people. His sheer presence succeeded in establishing a measure of stability, yet a deep-seated ambivalence remained, rooted in the complex psychological function of the king.

The king appears to have functioned as a receptor of the public's unresolved fantasies of fulfilled and frustrated desires, of parental love and control. The monarchy amounted to a theatrical enactment of Hobbes' natural man: in the figure of the king, the populace vicariously realized that individual whose absolute and infinite desires would never be denied. At the same time, as a divinely sanctioned father figure, he protected an infantilized populace, commanding obedience and love. Yet these roles, even as they promoted peace, inevitably caused public frustration at the loss of individual agency and self-determination. The power bestowed on the king inspired at once an almost religious adoration and intense feelings of hostility

**See Calls for Papers  
on pages 164 & 165:**

**PsychoGeography**

**Psychobiography of Ralph Nader**

**Psychological Uses of Law**

**Crime and Punishment**

and resentment. Whereas the positive feelings could easily be indulged, rage could not safely be unleashed at the king himself. The psychological cost and the fresh memories of the civil wars prevented an open rebellion. The situation called for a suitably designed displacement object.

Reality provided a potent backdrop for the imagination. While the political elites struggled to contain the king's power, Charles himself strove to enlarge it. At the Restoration in 1660, he had been given a generous allowance and powers fit for a king; however, for his continued supply of both he remained humiliatingly dependent on Parliament. France, an unrivalled Catholic and absolutist monarchy, became his secret ally. In a private treaty with Louis XIV in 1670, he agreed to turn his back on the Protestant Triple Alliance, to keep England out of France's territorial wars, and to declare himself Catholic as soon as "the state of his country's affairs permit." In return he got two million *livres* and the promise of 6000 French troops to help quell any resistance. It was, if you like, a plot; the king was prudent enough never to put it into action. While Parliament was kept in the dark, much was guessed and more suspected. These events and their consequences eroded vital trust between the sovereign and his people, preparing the ground for group fantasies of hidden conspiracies.

The budding conflict between the king and Parliament took several years to unfold. Under Danby's ministry, England allied again with Protestant Holland against Catholic France. In early 1678, Parliament passed a bill financing the war, only to discover that Charles II had used the occasion to negotiate another massive bribe for himself from the French king to stay neutral. Matters came to a head; in a symbolic substitution, Danby was impeached, as nobody dared to touch the king. However, the main force of the putative aggressive reaction to the king's deceit was shifted towards his brother and heir, the openly Catholic James, Duke of York. As if to order, an intricately conceived popish conspiracy, fabricated out of whole cloth by Titus Oates and Israel Tong, was dished up to the public imagination and presented in all solemnity to Parliament. Oates had spent time at the Catholic seminary at St. Omer and claimed to have uncovered a vast scheme involving the pope to assassinate Charles II and crown his brother. On October 31, 1678, the following resolution was passed:

Resolved, *Nemine contra dicente* [unanimously], That this House doth declare,

that they are fully satisfied by the Proofs they have heard, That there now is, and for divers Years last past hath been, a Horrid and Treasonable Plot and Conspiracy, Contrived and Carried on by those of the Popish Religion, for the Murthering of His Majesties sacred Person, and for Subverting the Protestant Religion, and the Antient and well established Government of this Kingdom.

The juxtaposition of the murder and sacredness of the king demonstrates the closeness of the two components in people's minds and may indicate the satisfaction of unresolved ambivalent drives in making the two concepts approach each other. Yet this closeness of conflicting components was tolerable only in a fantasy where the aggressive inclination was displaced onto an approved enemy. It is remarkable that Parliament acted on the fantasies of the Popish Plot *nemine contra dicente*, without anyone speaking up against it. One suspects that the capacity to engage in an intellectual debate, potentially facilitating the establishment of differentiated and conflicting views, was disturbed by the intensity of this mobilized ambivalence.

The Popish Plot attained a genuine political significance. Its success as a conspiracy theory can be traced to an explosive mixture of entrenched conflict, political opportunism, and displaced rage. Protestants cherished the memories of the Marian burnings, the papacy's repeated attempts to deprive Elizabeth of her crown, the infamous Gunpowder Plot, and the "popish conspiracy" of the early 1640s. While dissenters and other radicals resented their lack of political power, the collapse of the Commonwealth had eroded their confidence as well as their credibility as a political force. They lacked the courage and conviction to unseat the king; their frustrations could more safely be channeled into "anti-Popery." The aggressive component of their ambivalence provides intensity to the denigration of the Catholics as receptors of their displaced projective rage. The imagined covert threat of a common enemy provided an opportunity for uniting the various oppositional groups into a strong and single-minded political movement.

The person who most clearly realized the potential of anti-Catholicism to form a political base was Anthony Ashley Cooper, First Earl of Shaftesbury, the de facto leader of the so-called Country party, an informal faction. Alarmed by the prospect of a Catholic king modeled on Louis XIV,

Shaftesbury championed the story of the Popish Plot to spur Parliament into proposing a bill to exclude the Duke of York from the succession. Charles II reacted in anger, dissolved Parliament, and called for re-elections. To the dismay of the "Abhorrrers" loyal to the Court, the "Petitioners" of the Country faction returned with an increased popular mandate. "If we do not something relating to the Succession," Lord Russell defiantly declared in April of 1679, "we must resolve, when we have a Prince of the popish Religion, to be Papists, or burn. And I will do neither." Shaftesbury was appointed Lord President of the Privy Council and held daily meetings with Oates and vigorously pursued the allegations.

Shaftesbury and the other Petitioners -- soon nicknamed "Whigs" -- ruthlessly used the mobilization of the masses to put pressure on the king and the court. In 1679 and again in 1680, they staged Pope-burning processions attended by tens of thousands of people. In private, they were convinced Charles himself was part of the plot to return England to Catholicism. In public, the collective fantasy of a Popish Plot successfully turned James and his fellow Catholics into targets of displaced rage. The results were murderous: juries convicted innocent men and women on fabricated evidence. On the strength of suborned accusations, some 35 prominent Catholics were executed as traitors to the kingdom; many more were harassed and imprisoned.

In August of 1680, Tong's son testified before the Privy Council that his father and Oates had invented the conspiracy and forged some of the letters to substantiate it. "No serious historian now questions that the Popish Plot was manufactured" (Richard L. Greaves, *Secrets of the Kingdom*, 1992, p. 5).

The paranoid conviction that high-ranking European and English Catholics were plotting to kill Charles II and make way for his brother James became politically significant for several interacting reasons. Despite the relief and public acclaim that greeted the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, deep-seated hostility towards the symbolic role of the king persisted; the political situation required its containment. During the Exclusion Crisis of 1678-1681, the potential strain of co-existing feelings of adoration and resentment was partly resolved by establishing an approved receptor of displaced rage that would allow the position of the king to remain inviolate. The hysteria of the Popish Plot provided at once a conspicuous display

of solidarity and a safe outlet for hatred. These emotions were cultivated by crafty politicians and put to effective short-term use, propelling Shaftesbury and the Whigs into political leadership.

The unanimous intensity of the initial reaction to the construed conspiracy might be explained with reference to the expediency with which it seemed to solve an array of political and psychological knots. Over the next few years, however, the excesses of the Popish Plot discredited their cause. The ensuing collapse of the Whig protest seems to reflect that the paranoid fantasy facilitating the outburst of constrained tensions failed to serve as a framework for integrating these energies into a functional political organization. The Whigs' reliance on false evidence exposed them in turn to perjury and political murders. By the end of 1683, opposition to Charles had been successfully driven underground and abroad.

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## A Sceptic's Notes on Presidential Assassination Conspiracy Theories

Melvin Kalfus  
Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

In the spring of 1992, I conducted a survey for the International Psychohistorical Association (IPA) newsletter in which I included some questions about the various theories related to the assassination of President Kennedy. These questions were prompted by the controversy surrounding the recent release of the movie *JFK* by Oliver Stone, a film that had all the earmarks of feeding a rip-roaring American group fantasy. Eight years later, I am still astonished by the fact that far more many members *shared* in the group fantasy as presented by *JFK* rather than tried to analyze it (e.g., "Unworked-through grief creates conspiracy theo-



ries"). More than 60% of the respondents believed there *was* a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy -- most of them opting for the most extreme forms of conspiracy involving the CIA, FBI, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, etc. It was the first time that I realized that I was in the minority on this issue not only among my fellow countrymen, but also within the psychohistorical community.

My own experience with conspiracy theories in relation to the assassination of Presidents dates back to my early teens. I was 14 when FDR died of a massive cerebral hemorrhage while sitting for an oil portrait in the "Little White House" at Warm Springs, Georgia. Only a few days later, I began to hear dark rumors that FDR had been poisoned by the portrait artist -- alleged to be a Communist agent. The artist's Russian surname, "Shoumatoff," was apparently the only evidence for this theory, and I cannot remember what reasons, if any, were given for the alleged assassination or for the massive cover-up that would have been involved. Far more vivid in my mind was a similar, and far more grandiose theory, that circulated a few months later and was reported by one of my aunts. According to this theory, Shoumatoff, still the culprit, was a *Nazi* sympathizer and part of a conspiracy (at the highest levels of the government, up to and including Harry Truman!) that not only assassinated FDR but also spirited Adolph Hitler out of his Berlin bunker in the final days of the war and transported him to a magnificent villa atop a mountain in Argentina. My aunt assured me that she knew someone who had actually seen Hitler driving in a motorcar in Buenos Aires!

I knew better than to argue with my aunt, but in the years ahead, I did allow myself to be drawn into debates about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Now it was hardly a secret that there was a real conspiracy involved. However, conspiracy buffs (sometimes but not always also Civil War or Lincoln buffs) assailed the consensus historian position that the assassination was a "simple conspiracy" involving John Wilkes Booth and a small band of ne'er-do-well followers. The truth, they argued, was that only Lincoln was the target of the real conspiracy plotters -- plotters who had used Booth and his friends as mere pawns. Who were these backstage plotters? None other than Edwin M. Stanton and the Radical Republicans. Their motivation, it was claimed, was that Lincoln was far too conciliatory with the South and was willing to bring the secessionists back into the Union with full political rights. In some versions, the

Radicals were said to have acted on behalf of Northern industrialists, who would benefit from Republican supremacy over a weakened Democratic party. (Jim Bishop's very popular 1955 book, *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*, suggested that the War Department, under Stanton, was well aware of Booth and his fellow plotters but did not interfere because the assassination of Lincoln would leave the North thirsting for revenge and in full support of military occupation of the South.) Over the next two decades, as the nation was rocked by the assassinations of JFK, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, I kept encountering various versions of the Stanton-Radical Republican conspiracy theory in magazine and newspaper articles. By the end of the 1970s, this thesis was the subject of a movie called *The Lincoln Conspiracy* -- and similar "documentaries" -- that continue to turn up on television to this day.

It was not until I encountered William Hanchett's article on this subject that I understood the provenance of the Stanton-Radical Republican "grand conspiracy" theories. (See William Hanchett, "The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies: The Assassination in History and Historiography," in Gabor S. Boritt, ed., *The Historian's Lincoln: Pseudohistory, Psychohistory, and History*, 1988, pp. 315-338.) According to Hanchett, the Stanton-Radical Republican theory originated with a Chicago businessman named Otto Eisenschiml, who published his book, *Why Was Lincoln Murdered?*, in 1937. Hanchett credits Eisenschiml with engaging "in the most thorough and imaginative search for assassination materials yet undertaken." The range of his research included War Department files, private collections of papers, newspaper and magazine articles, memoirs, government documents, etc. Hanchett argues that no fair-minded person "could possibly maintain that this pattern [a Stanton-Radical Republican conspiracy] emerged from the evidence." In fact, Hanchett notes, this pattern was "imposed upon the evidence, which was stretched and twisted to establish the pattern" (p. 332). Hanchett then proceeds to demonstrate the way in which Eisenschiml manipulated his arguments to make his unsupported speculations seem like scientifically-proven facts. Clearly, one could make a similar comment about a great many of the books that have been produced about the assassination of JFK.

In his excellent commentary upon the Hanchett article (*The Historian's Lincoln*, pp. 339-343), the Civil War historian, James R. McPherson

lists a dozen "grand conspiracy" theories that had been floated in the century following Lincoln's death. The earliest maintained that Confederate and/or Copperhead (Northern sympathizers with the Confederate cause) leadership instigated the plot and aided in Booth's flight. Some theories even had a role for Andrew Johnson in this evil conspiracy. Other theories attributed the plot to a Catholic conspiracy, or "a consortium of [Jewish] international bankers headed by the Rothschilds," or Lincoln's own Secret Service. Indeed, as McPherson points out, the movie mentioned earlier -- *The Lincoln Conspiracy* -- manages "without blushing to incorporate most of these theories into one superconspiracy interpretation" which includes both Northern and Southern political and business leaders. Again, similar critiques have been made about Oliver Stone's *JFK*.

One thing that has intrigued me is the commonalities of popular culture in the eras that first gave rise to Lincoln, FDR, and JFK conspiracy theories. Each of these Presidents came to power in a period of great national crisis during which there were deep, emotionally-loaded divisions within the American populace -- divisions that made each side believe the other was driven by the most sinister of motives. Each in his own way was a larger-than-life charismatic figure that was either greatly loved or virulently despised by opposing segments of the society. Further, in each case the "grand conspiracy theory" involved U.S. governmental leaders and agencies as well as an alleged massive cover-up. In each case also, there was at hand a representative of a power hostile to the U.S. -- Booth as a Southern sympathizer, Shoumatoff as a "Nazi agent," and Oswald as a Castro sympathizer -- someone that could be employed as a pawn or a patsy.

I am not aware of similar grand conspiracy theories being floated after the assassination of the very popular William McKinley in 1901 by Leon Czolgosz, a self-described anarchist -- an assassination that otherwise meets many of the above criteria. This was during a period of extended social turmoil -- labor violence, vast tides of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, the Populist movement, and grinding poverty in urban slums and subsistence farms. Anarchists had already been blamed for the Haymarket Square bombing in 1886. Emma Goldman's partner and lover, Alexander Berkman, had attempted to assassinate Henry Clay Frick in the midst of the Homestead Steel strike in 1892. Moreover, monarchs in Aus-

tria and Italy had been assassinated by anarchists. Thus, when McKinley's death touched off a wave of arrests and persecutions of American anarchists, it was what we might think of as "reality-based paranoia." Even though the clearly unstable Czolgosz had been turned away by the anarchist groups he had tried to join, one could hardly blame the average American for subscribing to a group fantasy of a nation under anarchist attack. A similar case could be made for the theory that held Confederate leaders responsible for Lincoln's death, or Castro's Cuba for Kennedy's. These, too, could be described as "reality-based paranoia."

Why did the McKinley assassination never escalate beyond that, into the sort of "grand conspiracy theory" that involved officials and agencies of the U.S. government itself? The major reason, I think, lay in the personalities of the assassinated Presidents and the people who succeeded them. Though popular, McKinley was not in the least a charismatic or forceful presence in national life as were Lincoln, FDR, and Kennedy. Furthermore, he was the only one of the four who was succeeded in office by someone who was extremely charismatic, already well-known and greatly admired by most Americans -- Theodore Roosevelt. TR's powerfully attractive personality stands in stark contrast with Andrew Johnson, Harry Truman, and Lyndon Johnson -- none of whom were considered to be the equal of the men they replaced. Thus, Teddy Roosevelt was able to step immediately into the role of delegate and allay national anxieties -- establishing manic rather than depressive group fantasies. Coinciding with the turn of the century and a series of international expositions celebrating America's growing power and the promise of the future, TR's Presidency quickly obliterated the memory of McKinley and brought national mourning to a speedy conclusion.

It is my assumption that conspiracy theories -- whether reality-based or not -- are formed in the paranoid position -- for some people a permanent residing place, for others a place we regress to under the impact of terrible anxieties. The belief in evil figures who plot monstrous actions against us originates in our infancy -- where the monsters that the child fears are the split-off "bad" parts of its parents, leaving it free to love and idealize the "good" parents -- a tendency many of us carry into adult life.

What we have done with our parents, we do with authority figures. To the degree he/she offers us group fantasies that allay our anxieties

and fears, and offer a vent for our suppressed rage, the parent/authority figure/delegate is idealized. To the degree that he/she fails to do so (by disagreeing with our worldview/socio-political attitudes) the leader/delegate can become the target of our paranoid fantasies. We can either idealize such figures or demonize them.

The amazing thing about the "grand conspiracy theories" relative to Presidential assassination is that they fulfill both needs. We are enabled to idealize the assassinated "good father" (Lincoln, FDR, JFK) and demonize the unlovable surviving "bad father" (Stanton and Johnson, Truman, and LBJ). How comforting. No wonder even we sceptics allow ourselves a recreational wallowing in the wildest of conspiracy theories -- especially when they are offered up by talented filmmakers.

The fact is that human life is fragile and contingent, and it unfolds in a messy tangle of strange coincidences and staggering improbabilities. How we hate to deal with the chaotic implications of all this. Yet Occam's Razor should still be our guide. The more layers of complexity one adds to a conspiratorial explanation of life's messy, sometimes tragic events, the more likely it is that the theory is false -- the historic equivalents of all the complicated mathematical convolutions that medieval astronomers went through to make their observations conform to the Aristotelian universe, with the earth at its center. No matter how satisfying it would be to believe so, the earth does not stand at the center of the universe and we do not stand in the center of enormous conspiracies, with casts of thousands, covering up the "true facts" in Presidential assassinations from Lincoln to JFK.

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*theme section.* □

## Assassination, Repression, And Subversion: Grist for the Conspiracy Mills

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Many factors contribute to the belief in and fostering of conspiracy theories. Prevalent among those factors are assassination, the use of repression, and subversion. Assassinations trigger interest, repression helps to foster myth, and subversion raises questions.

Assassinations have played an important part in generating conspiracy theories. John Wilkes Booth, a well-known actor aroused by the prospect of votes for blacks, shot and killed President Abraham Lincoln in 1865. In 1881, Charles Jules Guiteau, a disappointed office seeker, shot and killed President James Garfield.

In 1901, Leon Czolgosz, an anarchist, shot and killed President William McKinley. A national hysteria about anarchists resulted. They were a small and disorganized group and posed no threat to the nation's security. Yet local and federal police hunted down and convicted people, many of who had nothing to do with the anarchists. (These illegal actions ultimately resulted in the creation of the American Civil Liberties Union.)

During the election of 1912, former President and third-party candidate Theodore Roosevelt was shot and wounded during a campaign speech. There were unsuccessful assassination attempts on Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Gerald Ford. Alabama Governor and third-party candidate George Wallace and President Ronald Reagan were shot and wounded in 1972 and 1982, respectively.

On November 22, 1963, President John Kennedy was shot and killed in Dallas, Texas. Within two hours of his death, J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI, made a public statement that the assassin was Lee Harvey Oswald. The conspiracy theories that followed this assassination outnumber all others. Oswald was killed two days later by Jack Ruby in the basement of the Dallas police headquarters, and this fueled even more theories. In the 37 years since that assassination, three federal investigations have been conducted of

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the assassination and hundreds of books written.

Whatever else can be said about Kennedy's assassination, it was a political murder. Theories about it were reflective of many phobias and fears of the times. Because the Cold War was at its height, the notion that Oswald was a Communist was enough for what one author called a "rush to judgment." The general public and mass media accepted, without any critical thought, the government's opinion that Oswald was the lone assassin. Kennedy assassination critics, those who disagreed with the lone assassin theory, came from all sides of the political spectrum and blamed the CIA, the Mafia, or anti-Castro Cubans.

The term *cover-up* came into popular use at this time. Serious investigators into the Kennedy assassination did, in fact, discover cover-ups, and much has been written about the CIA's and FBI's lack of honesty in providing the federal investigators with complete information about Oswald and other matters related to the assassination.

With the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968, and Senator Robert Kennedy on June 5, 1968, the government again insisted on the lone assassin theory: James Earl Ray for King and Sirhan Sirhan for Kennedy. Concerned about these and other murders, such as the deaths associated with the civil rights movement and urban rioting, a national commission on the causes and prevention of violence published *Assassination and Political Violence: A Staff Report of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* (1970). What was important about this study was the revelation that America's history was riddled with political murders and violence. These include the murders of town and state officials, race riots, union strikes, company thug attacks, police violence, Ku Klux Klan killings, attacks on ethnic groups, and even canings and fistfights on the floor of Congress. The mythology of a peaceful and orderly society was shattered by this report.

Any analysis of political murder must be understood in the light of the modern national state whose essential purpose is order and control. The methods applied to maintain "national security" range from benign to brutal, depending on ideology and type of government. All individuals or groups not in sync with the nation state are suspect of subversion and must be watched, investigated, criticized, and, if necessary, jailed or eliminated. The most egregious example of this control appears today in nations dominated by dogmatic reli-

gious and political ideologies. Nationalists and imperialists torture and use chemicals to alter brains and bodies as well as murder their victims.

However, just under the skin of even "democratic" nations, the inclination to suspect and eliminate the "enemy" is a dark and often psychotic force. Throughout American history, this "control" feature has resulted in the systematic elimination and degradation of Native Americans, Yellow Peril fears, xenophobia of all sorts, and the Red Scare. Other examples of the "control" feature include the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, FBI and CIA infiltration of "radical" organizations, and the maintenance of the largest secret agency in the world, the National Security Agency.

The modern nation state with its electronic and global fingers in every pie and eye generates and sustains the conspiracy community. American intelligence agencies, and their associates in Latin America, tracked every step of Ernesto "Che" Guevara. He was hunted down and killed by the Bolivian military completely armed and supported by the CIA. On a larger scale, the 1973 overthrow of Salvadore Allende's government in Chile, by a so-called "generals' coup," resulted in Allende's death and the murder and torture of thousands of people. With the recent arrest of General Augusto Pinochet, the American-backed dictator of Chile after the coup, evidence of subversion now supports what was once simply considered to be a conspiracy theory. It is no wonder, given what nation states have done and are likely to continue to do, that conspiracy theories are so popular and enticing.

In his book, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (1999), Mark Fenster analyzes what he calls the "conspiracy community." He believes that conspiracy theories in modern America have resulted, in part, from a deep cynicism about contemporary politics. This results, partially, from a century-and-a-half tradition of real and attempted political murders, cover-up plots, and nefarious national security operations. This conspiracy community is wide-ranging, and includes Christian apocalyptic theories, white supremacist theories, and anti-One World theories, which are promoted and exploited in novels, movies, and television programs. Listening to just one Rush Limbaugh radio program provides a daily list of shared conspiratorial narratives. They include: President Clinton and others are murderers, feminists are Nazis, environmentalists are ruining the

environment, affirmative action is a Communist plot, Janet Reno likes to kill Christians, the left-leaning media wants to take our guns away, and public education creates stupid kids.

Given the sheer number of assassinations, and the repressive and subversive techniques used by many nation states to conceal the truth about assassinations and other theories of conspiracy, it is of little surprise that conspiracy theories enjoy the popularity they do. When questions arise, answers are desired. When the answers given do not satisfy the questioner, or are masked through a veil of repression and/or subversion, a general distrust develops. It is out of this distrust that conspiracy theories develop.

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## **Conspiracies, Racism, and Paranoia in the African-American Experience**

**Henry Vance Davis  
S. Virginia Gonsalves Domond and  
Tilahun Sineshaw  
Ramapo College of New Jersey**

This article investigates social-psychological explanations for African-Americans' tendency to subscribe to what some term *conspiracy theories*, i.e., "the white establishment is out to get us" attitude. Of additional concern are the implications of such adherence for the new millennium: How will leaders of tomorrow build the community of communities, i.e., the meta-community, in the 21st century given the implications of a conspiracy discussion? We suggest that the consideration of the possibility of conspiracy has an impact and legitimacy in the black community that is of interest.

Limited neither by education, wealth, or location, conspiracy theories among blacks have a long history. Some have proved to be real and some not so real. Dr. Marimba Ani, author of *Yurugu: An African-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior* (1994), an attack on what she calls "European intellectual imperialism," maintains that Europeans have conspired to control the world since Plato claimed the ultimate knowledge of the truth for his culture and Constan-

tine claimed a singular connection to the one true God. While Dr. Ani's 600-page tome may not be convincing to all, the fact of Europe's domination of the world cannot be denied. Certainly, her book has become a favorite of an African-centered intellectual community with a penchant for believing that "the Man" has conspired against people of color for centuries.

While Ani's theories reflect a cultural hegemony, much of the most documented intrigue came from more putative sources. There is ample evidence of the American government's involvement in various conspiracies against black Americans. Clayborne Carson, author of *Malcolm X: The FBI File* (1991), traces the counterintelligence schemes of former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director J. Edgar Hoover to targets such as Marcus Garvey and Asa Philip Randolph in the 1920s. Even nonviolent hero Martin Luther King, Jr., was not spared Hoover's plots. David J. Garrow, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning effort *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (1986), recounts numerous FBI intrusions on the civil rights leader and his supporters.

As inner city after inner city went up in flames in the 1960s, black commentators from columnists such as Carl Rowen to academics such as Professor Harold Cruse began to believe in the possibility of government counter offensives against black militants. Time would often confirm their suspicions. Mary Francis Berry in *Black Resistance White Law: A History of Constitutional Racism in America* (1994) reports that an FBI informant, William O' Neal, gave floor plans for Black Panther leader Fred Hampton's apartment to the FBI's COINTEL-PRO (Counter-intelligence program). O'Neal also indicated when the Panther leader and his followers would be most vulnerable. The Chicago police subsequently fired 83 shots into the apartment, killing Hampton and fellow Panther Mark Clark, and wounding others. Hampton never raised from his bed, and the Panthers fired only one shot in retaliation.

Little wonder that poet/singer Gill Scott Heron's "King Alfred Plan" became a widely-played hit among urban black Americans during the early 1970s. The King Alfred Plan was allegedly a government conspiracy to contain blacks to the Ghetto "when the revolution came." When Heron rapped about the Plan, he was mirroring a long-standing tendency in the black community to consider as possible plots to subvert efforts of eq-

uity and justice that has survived into the 21st century. While the Plan was never proven, the government's supposed machinations against blacks continue to be deliberated. The CIA's involvement in the flow of drugs to South Central Los Angeles received congressional attention in the 1980s. Accusations including redlining of black neighborhoods and profiling of black drivers have been proven as the new millennium opens.

Among the most sinister of the anti-black conspiracies was the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. The "Tuskegee Study," as it is often called, was one of the most morally bankrupt and racist biomedical research efforts ever undertaken in the country. It very strongly suggests the existence of a multi-tiered local, state, and federal conspiracy against blacks.

The experiments began in 1932 when the United States Public Health Service, in the name of science, needed bodies upon which to study the ravages of syphilis. The Public Health Service recruited 399 African-American men from a rural, isolated community in Macon County, Alabama, who tested positive for syphilis. These essentially impoverished, unlettered sharecroppers were supposedly in the tertiary stage of their syphilis infection. This stage often results in tumors and skin ulcers; causes liver, cardiovascular and central nervous system disorders; and induces paralysis, blindness, and insanity. The Health Service doctors were already familiar with the degenerative, gruesome nature of the disease, yet they chose to mislead their patients. The men were told they were being treated for "bad blood." The term, familiar to members of the black community, encompassed syphilis, gonorrhea, and anemia. According to James H. Jones, author of *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment* (1996), treatment entailed hot lunches on the day of any examination, painful spinal taps, bottles of pink aspirin, and nominal burial money of \$35-50. (Half of the burial money was given to an undertaker to secure cooperation at any autopsy.)

Despite the facts that in 1946 penicillin was touted as a cure for syphilis by the same arm of the government that was conducting the experiment and that by 1954 both state and federal laws mandated the use of penicillin for individuals infected with syphilis, these men were denied legitimate treatment for over 40 years. One of the survivors, Herman Shaw, indicated in an hour-long documentary titled "Bad Blood" that he was deliberately pulled out of a treatment line when it be-

came evident that he was one of the Tuskegee Men. The study ended in 1972 in the midst of a national scandal when media reports exposed the project. By then only 71 of the men were still alive.

Undoubtedly, this national disgrace has left an indelible, psychic wound on the black community. Proven conspiracies such as the Tuskegee experiment couple with the widespread disparities between much of the black and white communities in areas such as family income, infant mortality, education, and incarceration to leave blacks ready and willing to consider the possibility, even probability, of sinister plots against their community by "the establishment" in particular and whites in general. Acutely aware of the history of conspiracies against the life and freedom of blacks, many African-Americans have come to accept that vigilance and even resistance are essential to their health and well-being.

An important impact of conspiracy theories on the meta-community can be ascertained by discussing how they contribute to the attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive variations between blacks and whites, i.e., how these theories contribute to why blacks and whites view similar events, processes, and phenomena in markedly different ways. That this is true can be seen in both academia and the daily lives of Americans.

The 1996 *University of Michigan Medical School Cultural Diversity Assessment Final Report* confirms perceptual differences between blacks and whites in the academy. Forty-six percent of blacks surveyed felt they were treated with respect while 88 percent of whites felt they were treated with respect. Sixty-four percent of black faculty agreed that they had witnessed outright race discrimination, while only nine percent of white faculty agreed. Fifty-four percent of black faculty agreed with the statement, "I am afraid to speak out about what I believe are the inequities that women and minorities experience here." Only 19 percent of whites agreed.

Clearly, blacks and whites occupying the same space in the University of Michigan Medical School experience markedly different realities. Misunderstanding this phenomenon makes even well-meaning whites less sensitive, and it makes blacks feel abandoned. One respondent offered an insightful observation concurring with the impact of such differences on the meta-community: "Race and gender discrimination (differential treatment) is, for the most part, subtle and related more to dif-

fering world views than maliciousness. Since white male world views predominate, especially in leadership, ignorance of alternative ones and, hence, differing treatment and discriminatory policies predominate" (p. 19).

These differences are not limited to institutions of higher learning. The OJ Simpson trial provides a less rarefied example of how the difference in black-white perspectives shapes the difference in group fantasies. The vision of the Los Angeles Police Department as conspirators against Simpson was easily accepted in the black community: even a powerful, famous black man can be brought down by a police conspiracy. The white community was as opposed to the notion as blacks were accepting: justice is being done and the police were just doing their job. Thus, while blacks rejoiced at the verdict, whites were appalled; each looked at the other with distrusting eyes.

What is critical to any analysis of the consciousness of black America is the recognition that black beliefs in conspiracies are not abnormal given blacks' reality. They are rational and justified, not paranoid. Failure to clearly factor this understanding into discussions of race will distort the chronicler's findings. In the meta-community then, scholars must, as the old American Indian proverb says, "Never criticize a man until you've walked a mile in his moccasins." Making the journey does not preclude objectivity; it enhances understanding.

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## Conspiracy and Common Ancestry Theory in Japan

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In 1992, Masami Uno, one of the most prolific anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists in Japan, who has claimed, among other things, that the United States is run by a Jewish "shadow government" and that the Jews are out to destroy Japan, published a book (*Kodai Nihon no kokuin* [The Seal of Ancient Japan]) claiming that the Japanese and the Jews are in fact related peoples. In recent years, Uno and other conspiracy theorists have blamed Jews for everything from genocide in Rwanda to the 1995 earthquake that decimated the Japanese port city of Kobe, but the idea of Japanese-Jewish common ancestry seems an ill fit with these ideas. How can it be explained?

The Japanese are a highly educated and cultured people, and as in the West, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories in Japan have, with some notable exceptions, generally been confined to fringe groups. Moreover, the Japanese have historically been fair in their dealings with Jews. During World War II especially, the Japanese refrained from harming the more than 20,000 Jewish refugees living under their control in Shanghai despite Nazi pressure to eliminate them.

As in other countries, however, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories have on occasion burst onto the surface of history and affected the life of society at large. Even as the Japanese government was sheltering Jewish refugees in Shanghai, for example, it was simultaneously promoting anti-Semitic theories within Japan as a means to justify the war and suppress domestic dissent. The assertion that Jews were plotting to destroy Japan helped galvanize the Japanese people during the war. More recently, the Aum Shinrikyō religious cult was motivated in part by anti-Semitic conspiracy theories when it released poisonous sarin gas on the Tokyo subway on March 20, 1995, killing 12 people and injuring more than 5,000 others.

The question that is usually posed -- What are anti-Semitic conspiracy theories doing in Japan, a country that has never had a Jewish population and even today hosts only a tiny community of

**There are no negatives in the unconscious.**

Jewish businesspeople, diplomats, and students? -- makes the wrong assumption. It assumes that anti-Semitism has something to do with Jews. In fact, as Gavin Langmuir has pointed out, properly understood, anti-Semitism is "chimerical": it is a product of the anti-Semite's imagination and has nothing to do with Jews. The Japanese case confirms that this kind of chimerical anti-Semitism (as distinct from what Langmuir calls "realistic" and "xenophobic" hostility to Jews) is an independent, self-perpetuating system of ideas that, while it certainly has the power to affect Jews, does not require Jews to exist.

Apart from whatever "realistic" or "xenophobic" hostility to Jews there may be in Japan, the reason chimerical anti-Semitic conspiracy theories exist there is because they have been useful to a variety of groups over the course of Japan's modern history. Many different groups in Japan have for their own idiosyncratic reasons fantasized about Jews, and the bizarre *mélange* of fantasies, including "philo-Semitic" ones that express a sense of affinity and even kinship with Jews, have been a paradoxical part of the mix.

The concept of psychohistorical dislocation is useful in understanding this strange phenomenon. The fantasies about Jews that have proliferated in Japan have been, among other things, an attempt to adjust psychologically to the seismic shifts that have characterized modern Japanese history. One example will have to suffice here: the theories of Japanese-Jewish "common ancestry" that emerged in the early 20th century.

In 1908, Yoshirō Saeki (1871-1965) became the first Japanese to formally argue that the Japanese were descended from the Jews. A Scotsman named Norman McLeod had made a similar claim in 1875 in his book *Epitome of the Ancient History of Japan*, but the Japanese do not seem to have learned of McLeod's work until much later. Saeki made his startling discovery during a visit to the Uzumasa Temple near Kyoto, where he suddenly realized that the word "Uzumasa" was actually "*Iesu-meshia*," the Japanese pronunciation of "Jesus Messiah." The fact that this putative Christian reference indicated to Saeki the presence of Jews in Japan in ancient times speaks volumes about Japanese ignorance of Jews and Judaism at the time, but it was nonetheless on the basis of this and similar philological "evidence" that Saeki became convinced that the Japanese were descended from the Jews.

A second common-ancestry theorist, Zen-

ichirō Oyabe (1867-1941), expanded on Saeki's work, arguing emphatically that the Japanese and their emperors were descended from the Jews. "The Japanese and the Hebrews are virtually identical," Oyabe wrote in 1929, "particularly in regard to the pious way in which we observe our religious festivals. These exact correspondences convince me that we are in fact one race" (*Nippon oyobi Nippon kokumin no kigen*, pp. 21-22).

A third theorist to share Saeki's ideas about Japanese-Jewish common ancestry was Eiji Kawamorita (1891-1960). His contribution to common ancestry theory was his monumental, two-volume *Study of Japanese Hebrew Songs* (1956-1957), in which he claimed to have discovered in modern Japanese the remnants of a Hebrew language and poetry that had died out in Japan more than a thousand years ago. He wrote in the preface:

I was led to an affirmation of our National Polity [*kokutai meichō*], to wit that our Emperor is the undisputed successor to the eternal throne of the Great King David of Israel, and that without the Emperor System Japan will lose its reason to exist. I announce this to the Japanese public without hesitation and unashamed before heaven and earth as one scholar's cry of conscience (p. 3).

Masanori Miyazawa and I have discussed at length the significance of these and other common ancestry theories in our book *Jews in the Japanese Mind* (1995, rev. ed. 2000). Suffice it here to point out that these philo-Semitic theories were in essence desperate psychological strategies for dealing with extraordinary historical pressures. All of the theorists mentioned above were born in rural Japan during the Meiji period (1868-1912), a time of extremely rapid social change. They received their education at Christian academies and seminaries whose curricula were hybrid and idiosyncratic, and they had lived for at least a while in the United States. Among the first Japanese able to travel abroad, they were obsessed with how to reconcile their Japaneseness with Western culture and how to reconcile their Christian beliefs with their Japanese identity. Like their contemporary, the Buddhist scholar Daisetsu Suzuki (a.k.a. D. T. Suzuki, 1870-1966), who worked to reconcile Zen with the modern world and articulate it in a Western idiom, the common ancestry theorists attempted to reformulate and reaffirm the validity of Japanese cultural identity in Western (i.e., Christian) cultural terms by claiming an affinity with the



Jews. In short, by identifying with the Jews, whose existence antedated Christianity and who were its source, these Japanese Christians were able to claim that their beliefs were not derivative from the West but were authentically and indigenously Japanese. Their identity as Japanese thus did not conflict with being Christian; and being Christian did not compromise their Japanese-ness.

This story has many more twists and turns than can be described here, but in brief, as Japan became more and more nationalistic in the 1930s, the notion that the Japanese were descended from the Jews became anathema. While some remained firm in their beliefs and suffered persecution, others like Zen'ichirō Oyabe began to claim that actually the Japanese were the original and true Jews and that those people who call themselves Jews are either descendants of the Japanese or impostors who claim to be Jews for self-aggrandizement at Japan's expense. Like Christian Identity beliefs in the United States, which similarly claim that their adherents are the true Jews and those people calling themselves Jews are actually "children of darkness" intent on doing harm to them and the world, Japanese common ancestry theories frequently -- although not always -- merged with anti-Semitism. For this reason, in Japan today, it is not unusual to find anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists like Masami Uno citing Yoshirō Saeki and claiming Japanese common ancestry with the Jews. The psychohistorical accommodations some Japanese Christians made a hundred years ago continue to be played out in Japanese conspiracy theories today.

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## Nationalism in Japan: A Fertile Ideological Field

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In the 1980s and into the 1990s some Japanese came to believe that foreigners, either out of sheer ignorance or an irrational dislike of Japan, had it in for Japan. The "conspirators" were vaguely thought to be anyone not Japanese, though often Americans were singled out. This conspiracy

was represented by one term which was invented by a Japan lobbyist: "Japan-bashing," which became a media buzz word on both sides of the Pacific when criticism was leveled against what were regarded as predatory trade policies and practices which propelled Japan's economy.

Before the term "Japan-bashing" was ever used, a general sense that Japan had few friends in the world probably existed among some Japanese despite there being no evidence that there was ever an actual conspiracy against Japan. However, in any case, aware of the "fertile ideological field" within Japan that would produce genuine belief in a conspiracy against Japan, some Japanese leaders and bureaucrats cynically employed and deployed charges of "Japan-bashing." On occasion this was done explicitly, but more often than not, it was carried out surreptitiously by initiating whispering campaigns that were hard to trace. "Japan-bashing" was cleverly used by Japan's economic elites as a way of deflecting discussion from the substance of any criticism to the motives of the critic. Accusing someone of "Japan-bashing" was a tactic that effectively ended many debates about important international issues. A specific hope was that American trade negotiators would change their policies and argumentation in order to avoid being labeled "Japan-bashers." Any journalistic coverage, academic research, or casual comment considered unfair toward Japan was open to charges of "Japan-bashing," implying that anyone critical of Japan did not understand its customs and history, being insensitive to cultural diversity, or, worse, was a racist.

Why did one term, "Japan-bashing," become so supercharged, giving rise to a conspiracy theory? For those who accepted this conspiracy theory, hearing about "Japan-bashing" was like the missing piece of an intellectual jigsaw puzzle that once put in its proper place, made the picture of the puzzle complete. If the missing piece is the key to a more or less coherent view, the other pieces surrounding it constitute the required context, or a fertile ideological field that might encourage belief in anti-Japan conspiracy theories. This accusation received its charge by resonating with nationalist sentiments of "cultural uniqueness" and "victim consciousness" within Japan.

The use of "Japan-bashing" must be understood within the context of nationalist sentiment in modern Japan. *Nationalism* is a term that usually evokes images of marching troops, chauvinistic threats, and xenophobic speeches. However, the

modern national state, depending on the place and historical period, is actually home to a variety of nationalisms, such as linguistic nationalism, racial nationalism, economic nationalism, and cultural nationalism. Some of these nationalisms, lacking the aggressiveness, intolerance, or passion of certain forms of nationalism, have become so much a part of daily life that they may be described as "popular" or "everyday."

One example of popular and cultural nationalism in Japan is what is called "theories about Japanese," or *nihonjin-ron*. The number of works that fall into the *nihonjin-ron* genre is immense. Though this type of work can be traced back to the end of World War II, it became especially popular when Japan began to obtain economic might in the 1970s and 1980s, and seemed to amount to a national obsession.

Key ideas appearing in *nihonjin-ron* include: the inherently hierarchical nature of Japanese social structures, a strong proclivity to work in groups, a lack of individuality, and that Japanese belong to a "homogeneous race/ethnic group." All these notions, however, seem to point to one master idea: the Japanese are unique. The arguments of such works relate the uniqueness of the Japanese to Japan's special environment and ecology, for example, "only Japan has four seasons"; a rice-growing, agricultural tradition; social structures premised on a Confucian legacy; an inexplicable social psychology; or a mystifying language. Much of *nihonjin-ron* is ethnocentric and rests upon unsophisticated theorizing.

In an example of how official nationalist concerns have appropriated and employed manifestations of popular nationalism, the state has supported *nihonjin-ron*. This attempt at cultural policy should not be surprising, since states (some more than others) have regularly attempted to construct sentiments of national solidarity among citizens. The Japanese government has financed the English publication of some *nihonjin-ron* classics for overseas consumption, and the state-funded Japan Foundation and the International Research Center for Japanese Studies has supported *nihonjin-ron*-oriented research. Moreover, corporations have seen value in advocating *nihonjin-ron*, especially those that emphasize cooperation and harmony among workers, loyalty to the company, hard work, and dedication. *Nihonjin-ron* also has links to economic nationalism: the Japanese authorities have justified trade barriers and attempted to settle economic disputes by resorting to racialist

excuses: the Japanese have "different skin" or "longer intestines," and test results for products conducted on non-Japanese are invalid because "Japanese are different from foreigners."

If the beliefs mentioned above that give rise to and motivate *nihonjin-ron* result in cultural exceptionalism, then it is easy to see why a belief might develop that non-Japanese cannot adequately appreciate or understand Japan. Consequently, foreigners might mistreat, even take advantage of, the Japanese people, especially in times of national crisis.

After World War II, many blamed the immoral militarist leaders who took the unsuspecting Japanese people down the wrong path of history. Many of Japan's citizens deplored Japan's bloody rampage through Asia and the heavy price they themselves paid for supporting ultra-nationalism. From this developed "victim consciousness." However, some Japanese give a different spin to a sense of victimhood, emphasizing foreign animosity towards Japan. Some examples are: Japan, forced to defend itself against foreign encirclement and aggression, attacked the United States; the Americans saved the atomic bombings for Japan rather than use them on Germany; the Americans played unfairly with nuclear weapons whose horrific effects went beyond the bounds of conventional warfare. Related to victim consciousness is "peace nationalism" (or more cynically, "one-country pacifism"), which to a large degree is grounded in theories of Japanese exceptionalism, for example, "only Japan has a peace constitution forbidding war" and "only Japan has suffered atomic warfare."

To account for the spread of conspiracy theories, recognition of the ideological atmosphere, which encourages the growth of strange stories, is vital. Sometimes we search for only one element in the ideological environment that promotes a conspiracy theory. The lesson to be drawn is that to be viable, theories of conspiracies do not require one "big lie," but rather a fertile ideological field of small untruths in order to grow. The correct ideological atmosphere can turn one phrase into the most emotive charge, loaded with a visceral impact.

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## The Cosmic Watergate and Possibility Thinking

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Conspiracy theories and flying saucers -- the two seem inextricably bound together. From the very first sightings in the late 1940s, UFOs have been linked to secrets and cover-ups. Today, *UFOlogy* takes it as an absolute that Government -- particularly the United States government -- knows far more than it is telling. A contemporary term which has been applied to this is *Cosmic Watergate*, not in the sense of extra-terrestrial burglary, but as a set of secrets centered on the Oval Office. Indeed, several Presidents are said to have met aliens, and a whole carapace of covert administration is claimed to exist, all controlled by a secret committee known as "Majestic 12." A Secret History is said to have dominated the latter part of the 20th century, with its founding event the crash of a flying saucer in July, 1947, outside Roswell, New Mexico, and the recovery of the wrecked (or intact) craft and its dead (or alive) occupants by the U.S. military.

What the various fringe UFO groups think is important in itself, but it is unlikely to lead to actual political consequences -- no one is likely to bomb the White House because of these fantasies. Equally, it is difficult to imagine that populist demagogues can exploit these beliefs. Nevertheless, the extent to which an acceptance of the *possibility* of a UFO cover-up conspiracy has become widespread in our culture, far outside the ranks of the true believers, is clear. Opinion polls vary, with different surveys claiming that anywhere between 40 percent and 80 percent of the public think that the government is hiding evidence of extra-terrestrial contact. Whatever the numbers, it is clear that a general free-floating belief in a cover-up is out there. Contemporary culture is saturated with images combining contact with the secret and the alien, and in the 1990s dozens of popular movies and television series were premised on this, with only the most famous being "The X-Files." The general notion uniting them all was that extra-terrestrial contact was not something that was

about to take place, but something that had already taken place and been suppressed. So, as one short-lived television show, "Dark Skies," put it: "History is an illusion."

It was the secret messages from UFOs received in 1952 by one Orfeo Angelucci that fascinated Carl Jung and led him in 1958 to publish *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*. In it, Jung argued that the phenomenon represented archetypes taken from a collective unconscious which expressed contemporary concerns about the atomic bomb, the Cold War, and McCarthyism. This formulation, he wrote, "leaves the question of seeing open." This question of seeing (and believing) remains central to the UFO phenomenon.

Why, almost 50 years later, should such a paranoid possibility have assumed this general place of possibility? One often cited reason is the often alleged "dumbing down" of America. The late Carl Sagan wrote an entire book, *The Demon Haunted World* (1997), decrying the decline of science and rationality in the contemporary United States, citing belief in UFOs as one of the prime indices of the malaise. Journals such as *The Skeptic* (U.K.) and *The Skeptical Inquirer* (U.S.) likewise seek to combat the credulity of the public. But it is necessary to perceive that a double-edged scepticism is actually at work in contemporary culture. There is the rationalist scepticism which Sagan eloquently fought for, but there is also a popular, even populist, scepticism at large, which is doubtful and mistrusting about government, about authority, and about official statements on events. The real point to note about the "Cosmic Watergate" is not that many people think it is true, but that many people suspect that it might be -- it does not seem *impossible*.

What is the reason for this, and why should it have the de-politicized UFO phenomenon as one of its meaningful centers? First of all, a decline of the public trust is almost the hallmark of contemporary political culture. As Joseph Nye notes, in 1964 three-quarters of the American public said that they trusted the Federal government; today three-quarters *don't* trust it (Joseph Nye, et al, eds., *Why People Don't Trust Government*, 1997). Doubt extends beyond government to almost all authority -- law, business, the media, and science -- all are regarded with scepticism. The source for this is not difficult to find -- the history of the last 35 years has been dominated by revelations of wrongdoing: Kennedy's links to the mafia, the

Vietnam War, Watergate, Three Mile Island, CIA dirty tricks, and secret radiation and germ warfare experiments. But these are all actual conspiracies, and while they, too, have given rise to paranoid speculations such as those of the patriot-militias about the New World Order, they are nevertheless firmly based in the here and now. Why should UFOs have taken a key place in the popular doubt?

There are three interesting reasons. One is that the history of the Cold War gave rise to a national security culture of secrets, of so-called "Black Projects." Hence the speculations about Roswell, captured alien technology, and secret bases such as Area 51 in Nevada represent a logical continuum in a post-Cold War world.

Secondly, there is a particular component to contemporary UFO imaginings, the so-called "alien abductions." The scenario that thousands of Americans are being kidnapped and subjected to genetic experimentation is frightening enough, but what is often missed is that the rationale asserted for this is that our genetic essence is being given away in trade by our government in return for alien technology. In a post-Cold War world in which the defining ideology of the United States has evaporated with victory, and been replaced by the entanglements of NAFTA, GATT, and WTO, it is not surprising that such barter can be fearfully imagined. This is particularly true of a fear which simultaneously re-asserts the value of the individual while reducing him or her to a commodity in the global economy, one in which clear distinctions between enemies within and without are lost. It is a fearful possibility to imagine.

Finally, if we are to think of post-Cold War doubt, mistrust, secrets, and the frisson of possibility, then what bigger cover-up might there be, than of the fact that we are not alone?

*See author credit on page 106.* □

## **The "Hidden Hand": Notes on the Perpetuation of Jewish Conspiracy Theories**

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Contemporary "International Jewish Conspiracy" theories have their origin in the conspiracy theories which sought to explain the French Revolution. For those devastated by this successful attack on both King and Church, theories about

an obscure Bavarian group, the Illuminati, provided an explanation for the impossible overthrow of a divinely-ordained political and social order. Founded by Adam Weishaupt (1747-1830) and lasting only a few years before being suppressed in 1784, the Illuminati vainly hoped to end government and religious corruption, and to establish a utopian society through secret activities and control of Freemasonry. The widespread introduction of Jews into these conspiracy theories was coincident with full Jewish emancipation and the movement of Jews from the ghetto into public life. Theories in which Jews and "Jewish money" were the "Hidden Hand" controlling the Illuminati, the Freemasons, and the course of world history could thus be harnessed to explain the rise of socialism and the political unrest of the mid-19th century.

By the early 1900s, such theories were well-developed and relatively sophisticated, but always rested heavily on "secret" documents that revealed the alleged Jewish plan for world domination and the destruction of Christianity. The House of Rothschild was often featured as the center of the nefarious scheme, controlling world events through their powerful banking organization. The notorious *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, forged by the Tsar's secret police in the late 1890s, spread rapidly around the globe. The tract purports to reveal the plan for world domination, and serves as an effective legitimization for Jewish Conspiracy theories. The *Protocols* has shown remarkable longevity, despite repeated exposures of the fraud and despite Henry Ford's rather flaccid retraction of his earlier endorsement.

For many Germans at the end of World War I, the claims of the *Protocols* were unnecessary to convince them of the Hidden Hand. The Bolshevik revolution, Rosa Luxemburg's revolutionary Spartacist group in Berlin, and the short-lived Bolshevik republic in Munich in 1919 were viewed as evidence that the conspiracy was closing in, and action was required. It was simple enough to find Jews, real or imagined, among the Bolshevik leadership, as did Hitler and his associates. Although most Germans were relatively disinterested in these issues, the core of the SS promoted the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy as the greatest of all dangers to the Reich. A foundational belief (that has survived to the present among neo-Nazis) was that Roosevelt and Churchill started World War II at the behest of their Jewish masters, while Hitler wished only a "free hand" to deal with the Jewish-Bolsheviks to the East and thereby save

Western Civilization.

Thus, International Jewish Conspiracy theories have always functioned to explain social turmoil and national disappointments, and to provide a sense of order in the midst of disorder. It is often assumed that such theories serve not only a longing for transcendent understanding and a need for simplicity, but also a deep personal pathology. Unfortunately, analysis of the psychological functions served by the idea of a Jewish Hidden Hand tends to direct attention away from two important issues.

First, such theories are created within and preserved by conspiracy communities, not individuals. For example, the Liberty Lobby, founded by Willis Carto in the late 1950s, became the leading purveyor of Jewish Conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial, and neo-Nazi material in the United States. With great energy, Carto built an interlocking set of organizations with newsletters, magazines, books, a publishing house, a government lobbying organization, and even a pseudo-academic body, The Institute for Historical Review. But the success of the Liberty Lobby depended on collaboration with and enlistment of a wide range of apparently respectable public figures, such as Colonel Curtis Dall and novelist Taylor Caldwell. A steady stream of "news," analysis, historical works, and commentary issued from this distinct intellectual community, providing a set of shared texts and shared meanings. The Liberty Lobby held rallies, lectures, and gatherings, as any other activist organization might do, including vacation trips to Rhodesia to view firsthand the benefits of Ian Smith's white rule. To the extent that members were persuaded that the mainstream media was entirely "Jew-controlled," the Liberty Lobby could preach that all outside sources must be distrusted and discounted. The community created a shared version of Western History, especially of World War II, thus providing a basis for group cohesion as well as political action. To outsiders, the Liberty Lobby cry of "Free Rudolf Hess!" during the 1960s might seem quite loony. To insiders, Hess was the "messenger of peace," who flew to Scotland in 1941. His mission was to persuade England to allow Hitler to deal with the Jewish-Bolshevik menace for the benefit of all. Thus, an understanding of the shared narratives of conspiracy groups is essential for avoiding unjustified attributions of pathology.

Second, a focus on the peculiar aspects of conspiratorial thinking tends to encourage the view

that Jewish Conspiracy theories are likely to appeal only to the uneducated or the simple-minded. But careful study of the wider community in which Willis Carto and his co-workers produced and distributed their material suggests otherwise. A number of academics from psychology, history, political science, anthropology, and other fields became active contributors to Carto's groups. Most notable was Henry E. Garrett (1894-1973), the 1946 President of the American Psychological Association and Chair of the Psychology Department at Columbia University from 1941-1955. (See Andrew S. Winston, "Science in the Service of the Far Right: Henry E. Garrett, the IAAEE, and the Liberty Lobby," *Journal of Social Issues*, 54, No. 1, 1998, pp. 179-210.) For Garrett and others, the International Jewish Conspiracy had penetrated deeply into academia. He and his circle, founders of the journal *Mankind Quarterly*, tended to see Franz Boas and his followers as having effected a Jewish takeover of anthropology and the social sciences. In their view, the Franz Boas-Otto Klineberg-Ashley Montagu influence had disastrous effects on the study of race and ultimately encouraged racial intermarriage, which Garrett believed would destroy Western Civilization. He saw integrated schools, which he fought against vigorously, as leading to intermarriage, and thus introducing genetic predispositions to low IQ and high crime into the white population. With a bit of effort, it was possible to believe that the civil rights movement was an essential part of the plan for Jewish world domination, through the fatal weakening of the genetic health of the nation. In this sense, Jewish Conspiracy theories often required complex analysis of historical and contemporary events. What was common to those academics who embraced a conspiratorial *Weltanschauung*, in contrast to their colleagues, was their sense that social change signalled an immediate threat to the "natural order."

Other academic members of 1960s Communist-Jewish Conspiracy theory circles produced speeches, articles, and longer works that helped sustain the early 20th-century ideas of a Jewish plan for world domination, recast within a Cold War framework. Classics Professor Revilo P. Oliver (1908-1994) of the University of Illinois was a leader in this regard, and his work had a tremendous influence on later neo-Nazi groups, such as William Pierce's National Alliance. Analysis of Jews was not a "side interest" for Oliver, but was integrated with his scholarly interests in ancient civilizations and their decline. The development of

the Internet has permitted the preservation and redistribution of his extensive writings. For example, *Stormfront*, a leading neo-Nazi Web site, features no less than 174 of Oliver's articles at <www.stormfront.org>. The notion of an important academic contribution to antisemitism and to National Socialism is hardly new. Nevertheless, it is hard to accept that post-World War II academia, suffused with liberalism, could still be the source of such views. Although no single academic figure now fills Oliver's role, neo-Nazi movements can effectively draw support from a variety of contemporary academic writings, such as the trilogy on Judaism as an evolutionary strategy of Kevin MacDonald (California State University, Long Beach).

I do not mean to minimize the distinct features of conspiratorial thinking and the paranoid style, emphasized by Hofstadter (*The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, 1965), Pipes (*Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From*, 1997), Robins and Post (*Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred*, 1997), and many others. My argument here is that analysis of the psychological features and functions of conspiracy theories must be supplemented by detailed analysis of conspiracy theory communities, including careful analysis of their histories. With sufficient organization, funding, publishing, and recruitment, a conspiracy theory community may be quite self-sustaining. Thus, International Jewish Conspiracy theories may survive long past the social unrest that gave them their original force.

The *Protocols* is still distributed around the globe, now by Internet. For its modern audience, the *Protocols* maintains the power to explain history as an unfolding struggle, although Zionism is now invoked more frequently than Bolshevism as the fountainhead of evil. Contemporary conspiratorial versions of the Jews in Clinton's administration who are said to "rule America" (e.g., see <www.abba.com>) provide the "evidence" for the prophetic veracity of the *Protocols*. In turn, the *Protocols* provides the interpretive framework for explaining why a Madeleine Albright or a Joseph Lieberman is in a position of influence. Although mainstream antisemitism declined steadily in the second half of the 20th century, conspiratorial antisemitism is unlikely to disappear in the 21st. Increased migration, the globalization of commerce, and electronic interconnectedness might be thought to diminish the sense of the alien "Other" that pervades International Jewish Conspiracy tracts, and

therefore to diminish the need for such beliefs. Instead, it is likely that globalized economies and corporate culture will nourish the belief in a Hidden Hand guiding us toward a New World Order.

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## **A Portrait of the Conspiratorial And Revenge Fantasies of Extremist Racist Ideologues in The Turner Diaries and Hunter**

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Adherents of extremist, anti-Semitic, and racist ideologies (generally termed "white supremacy," or neo-Nazism) tend to envision the world in conspiratorial terms. Although there are individual differences among members of a particular supremacy group and among the various groups which comprise the movement, in general, these conspiratorial and paranoid illusions focus on what the extremists believe is the role of the Jews in perpetrating a plot whose aim is the destruction of the "white" race (in this context, Jews are not considered "white"). Those that claim that there is a world-wide conspiracy to eliminate the white race cite growing cultural degeneracy (including homosexuality and race-mixing), inter-racial marriages, and the darkening complexion of people as the immigration of people of color to the United States increases. For a number of supremacists, the great fear is that they will lose their access to weapons as the United States government and liberals, the latter including Jews, strive to disarm the citizenry. These conspiratorial fantasies, which express the illusory and paranoid dreads of supremacists, are countered psychologically by their invoking revenge and rage fantasies that involve the violent destruction of their imagined enemies.

These conspiratorial and revenge fantasies, expressing both sides of a Janus-faced coin, that is, fear on the one hand and wish on the other, may be termed "political fantasies". A number of the political fantasies in extremist, anti-Semitic, and rac-

ist ideologies in the United States can be explored in two works of fiction: *The Turner Diaries* (1978) and *Hunter* (1989). These books are very popular among adherents of the racist Right. Both were written by William Pierce, whose pseudonym is Andrew Macdonald, and both feature paranoia and violence directed against people of color, Jews, and liberals. *The Turner Diaries* and *Hunter* provide a snapshot about at least some of the ideologues and ideologies of the extreme Right Wing in the United States.

Political fantasies of revenge and retaliation are capable of triggering intense pleasure and excitement among individuals to whom the images appeal. Indeed, these fantasies, to the extent that they capture the essential beliefs and experiences of a particular community, may have significant political and cultural impact. Psychoanalytically, political fantasies express the conscious as well as unconscious wishes and dreads of ideologues who make up a particular political group.

*The Turner Diaries* depicts the violent overthrow of the United States government as a "Holy War." The book's revolutionary tenor has captured the interest of a number of disparate racist and anti-Semitic groups. *The Turner Diaries* burst into national prominence after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, when, reportedly, copies of the book were found among the possessions of Timothy McVeigh. In this context, the description of the bombing of an FBI building in the book bears a striking resemblance to the tragedy that occurred in Oklahoma City, both in terms of the methodology used and the destruction that each wrought.

Published some 10 years after *The Turner Diaries*, *Hunter* portends a different and, perhaps, more frightening kind of race "warrior" -- a "lone ranger" -- who wreaks havoc and destruction by shootings and bombings. This hero -- Oscar Yeager -- actually is more reminiscent of Timothy McVeigh and other right-wing extremists, who work alone or in a group with a few others, than of Earl Turner of *Diaries*. The exploits that are described in *Hunter* include the use of an ammonium nitrate-fuel oil bomb and a delivery van. Its storyline includes a television evangelist whose role is to politicize the public against the Jews.

The author of these books, William Pierce, is the founder of the National Alliance, a white supremacy organization, and an avowed racist and anti-Semite. He was involved with the American Nazi Party when it was under the leadership of George Lincoln Rockwell during the 1960s. Re-

cently, the Southern Poverty Law Center reported that Pierce and his National Alliance members are infiltrating more moderate groups in order to influence them to his point of view.

The political fantasies in these novels, I contend, are aimed at rousing the passions and, thus, generating the collective excitement of individuals who are disgruntled with the government. The adventures of the heroes of these books give expression to the apocalyptic and racist/anti-Semitic fantasies of extremist, right-wing groups. These fantasies include the violent destruction of the United States, the elimination of Jews and the non-white populations from the earth, and the creation of a new world order comprised exclusively of the white race, which is imagined to be superior to others.

In both of these explicitly racist novels, there are themes of paranoia, hate, narcissistic rage, and violence. The paranoia is conceptualized in terms of a threatened loss of self-esteem, power, and control, and, thereby, being rendered stupid, impotent, and submissive. I suggest that the violence undertaken by the characters -- in effect, a "fantasy solution" to their dread of inferiority, passivity, and impotence -- helps them to achieve an illusory restoration of their sense of pride, their manhood, and their sense of status and power in the world. Moreover, the Vietnam War and the social changes that occurred in the United States during the last 25 years -- for example, the civil rights and women's movements -- are also pertinent in understanding the motivational basis of the fantasies in these novels.

Retrospectively, it now seems clear that the Vietnam War has been significant in rousing the ideologues of the extremist Right Wing. In the novels examined, the American debacle in Vietnam appears to have influenced, in particular, the revenge fantasies in *Turner* while, in *Hunter*, the hero, Oscar Yeager, is actually a Vietnam veteran. He reveals how his experience affected his perspective on the inherent inferiority of non-white races as well as his sense of powerlessness and reactive rage because of what he considers the defeatist decisions made by the U.S. government. America's loss in Vietnam shattered Yeager's fantasy of American military superiority and this was experienced as a narcissistic injury. Obviously, his experience of killing in Vietnam facilitated his capacity for murder once he was back home.

Indeed, the loss in Vietnam caused a disturbance of America's heroic warrior myth (see J.W.

Gibson, *Warrior Dreams: Paramilitary Culture in Post-Vietnam America*, 1994, who discusses the paramilitary warrior myth and its evolution from early American history). However, in recent years the myth of the heroic warrior has arisen again and in more strident form than ever. In the 1990s, this myth and the fantasies of American military supremacy found expression in the growth of the armed militia movement. These novels, which idealize militias as well as individual warriors who have knowledge of and experience with sophisticated weapons, are expressions of political statements and calls to action. The political fantasies they convey are depicted in terms of a world conspiracy, commensurate with Hofstadter's 1965 description of the paranoid style in politics.

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## Radio Demagogues and the Radical Roots of the "Paranoid Style"

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During their extended war-time exile in the United States, several prominent German philosophers developed a powerful social-psychological theory of paranoia and conspiracy theories -- a theory which reflected far more on their adopted American home than on their self-destructing fatherland. Known collectively as the Frankfurt School, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Leo Lowenthal and others sought to fuse Marxism with psychoanalysis so as to explain the psychological sources, cultural manifestations and social consequences of what they termed *authoritarianism*. Convinced that modern capitalism and the bureaucratic state bred a dehumanizing and manipulative "mass culture," the Frankfurt School argued that Fascism was an extreme resurgence of irrational and barbaric impulses within the most technologically advanced capitalist societies. To advance this anti-Fascist critique, they undertook a series of

projects including several studies of the speeches of American right-wing radio demagogues. Through these speeches, the Frankfurt philosophers closely analyzed the enormous psychological power that the agitator's paranoia and conspiracy theories cast over their audience and mid-century America as a whole.

Upon arriving in the United States in the 1930s, the predominately Jewish members of the Frankfurt School were shocked to find a level of popular bigotry that surpassed their worst memories of Germany. Further still, they pointed to the broad appeal of fascist movements in America, several of which were led by charismatic demagogues like Father Charles Coughlin, the Radio Priest, who broadcast his far right-wing speeches to a national audience. Hugely popular in their time, the radio agitators of the 1930s and 1940s are the forerunners of today's talk radio browbeaters, conspiracy theorists, and Christian Right broadcasters. This combination of reactionary politics and racist agitation with the high-technology communications of commercial radio precisely embodied the contradictions that the Frankfurt School placed at the very core of an authoritarian society. Thus drawn to the subject of radio agitators, Adorno drafted an analysis entitled "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses" (1943). In this essay, Adorno established a topology of psychological "devices" used by the agitator to effect what he called a "psychological racket" or "psychoanalysis in reverse." In other words, Adorno claimed that the agitator is able to build a mass mediated social movement by projecting his own paranoid delusions on to his listeners in what amounts to a manipulative reversal of the healing relationship between analyst and patient.

In 1947, Leo Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman expanded on Adorno's methods in *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator*. Lowenthal and Guterman felt that radio fascists like Coughlin, William Dudley Pelly, Gerald L.K. Smith, and Elizabeth Dilling could only be defeated if their messages and mass appeal could be correctly interpreted rather than merely exposed. "The themes [of the agitator's speeches] cannot be understood in terms of their manifest content," claimed the authors, "they rather constitute a kind of secret psychological language... working from inside the audience, stirring up what lies dormant there." Lowenthal and Guterman labeled this unarticulated frustration and discontent the "social malaise," and insisted that it



was a "psychological symptom of an oppressive system." However, the agitator is incapable of correctly naming the structures of this oppression, instead he offers a rhetorically charged series of delusions, complete with conspiratorial plots and scapegoats who must be eradicated in order to purify the national body. *Prophets* therefore concludes that the agitator "distorts and deepens and exaggerates the malaise to the point where it becomes almost a paranoid relationship to the external world." Lowenthal and Guterman further recognized that the agitator is most successful when he manipulates the audience's suspicions and incomplete understanding of social power and historical change. "The agitator plays upon and enlarges the tendency among people who suffer from a sense of failure to ascribe their misfortunes to secret enemy machinations." In other words, paranoia is not only the product of the agitator's contagious fears of conspiracy, but a deeper *social* paranoia emerges out of the isolated individual's alienation from the enormous social forces shaping modern life. The technologically disembodied, yet deceptively intimate voice of the radio fascist effectively instills paranoid fears and conspiratorial visions in his audience by playing upon the ordinary American's sense of powerlessness.

As the 1950s began, the Frankfurt School turned away from radio and expanded the scope of their thinking on paranoia to include a massive empirical study of the *Authoritarian Personality* (1950), and finally to philosophical explorations of anti-Semitism, newspaper astrology columns and other attributes of the paranoid society. Adorno writes: "People even of supposedly 'normal' mind are prepared to accept systems of delusions for the simple reason that it is too difficult to distinguish such systems from the equally opaque one under which they actually have to live out their lives." In short, Adorno suggests that thoroughly modern people fall prey to mysticism, the occult and paranoia because the social world is itself irrational, conspiratorial and manipulative.

With each extension of their theory, the Frankfurt School's studies of paranoia and conspiracy theories gained in status. By the 1960s, their work was partially absorbed into the methodologies and footnotes of prominent American social scientists. Inspired by the Frankfurt School's skillful use of social-psychology, liberal intellectuals (and former Marxists) like Richard Hofstadter and Daniel Bell appropriated terms like "pseudo-conservative" and "authoritarian" to attack popular

Cold War demagogues like Joseph McCarthy, Barry Goldwater, the John Birch Society and other manifestations of the "Radical Right." Hofstadter's intellectual debt to the Frankfurt School was acknowledged when he compares Populist leaders like Ignatius Donnelly to Lowenthal and Guterman's radio fascists. So too does Hofstadter's now classic study of "The Paranoid Style in American Politics" from 1965 reveals the influence of the Frankfurt School in both its methods and its citations. But this Americanization of the Frankfurt School came at the expense of the émigrés' emphasis upon the social and economic sources of paranoia, replacing it with a normative psychology that reduced all shades of radical dissent into varieties of political pathology. Nevertheless, the power of the Frankfurt School's critique should be sufficient to compel serious reappraisal of their original theories of paranoia, both for their complex dialectics and as the radical roots of the "paranoid style in American politics."

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## Group Psychohistory Symposium

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## Group Process

*Continued from page 102*

argued a homeostatic group principle operating in all species, short of modern humans, through groups so stratified that underlings automatically sacrifice for their superiors as the need arises. Following this publication, group selection was rejected by and large by evolutionary biologists on the ground that, stratification or no, egoists would wipe out sacrificers within any group. It has, however, staged a gradual comeback since the 1980s on the higher ground that groups strengthened by altruists have a competitive edge on groups of egoists only. For the history and present state of the issue in biology, see especially David Sloan Wilson and Elliott Sober, "Reintroducing Group Selection To the Human Behavioral Sciences," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 17, 1994, pp. 585-604, and *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of*

*Unselfish Behavior*, 1998.)

At the same time, to consider that certain members of a group each stand ready to deprive or endanger themselves in whatever way the joint welfare may dictate -- to breed or feed less, to relinquish territory, to tackle predators -- raises prickly problems of versatility and intentionality. Take a sudden need by a nonhuman group to breed less: for starters, do moose or mice, let alone microbes, even know, as "group selection" would require, that their reproductive acts are reproductive? A simpler hypothesis avoids this whole run of problems: that while all of a group's members are equally alert to its needs, those individuals meet them first in any given case who are most tractable or amenable in that particular case. "Group selection" would then hold in reverse, with the group selecting instead of being selected. This is in fact how group process does work in human societies, with no communal altruism showing in adaptive birth control, belt-tightening, or migration, and precious little even in volunteer armies. To recur to the European demographic transition that began in the 1870s, none of its participants practiced birth control for reasons altruistic, on Europe's account, as far as the records disclose; those Europeans who took the lead in baby-budgeting were simply those less eager than their neighbors to reproduce. In sum, biological theory in its present pass has little to teach historians about how individuals pursue group purposes unsuspectingly. This "how" is psychohistorical, and here as elsewhere, psychohistory is on its own.

How did Europeans as a whole in the 1870s pick up unawares on their urgent collective, coercive need to multiply less? The answer, however it reads in biological theory, would seem to lie with a relic of our evolutionary past: a group reflex against rapid population growth in a stable environment. If so, what triggered that European reflex would presumably have been the experience, conspicuous in all social spheres by the 1870s, of more and more children surviving to adulthood. But whatever cued them into the European need for reproductive retrenchment, young European couples sensed and met that need with no more clarity about it than the dumbest social insects have about the choreographic whys and wherefores of the numberless intricate, vital maneuvers they execute in groups. For the group effect is, in a word, instinctive, and instinct is, in another slippery word, unconscious. How that kind of unconsciousness relates to the individual kind is one of the tricky

aspects of group process that cry out to be explored.

Population control is not the only, nor even the main, instinctive adaptive function of human groups. I led off from it because when a clear-cut example is presented in bare outline, such as late 19th-century Europeans defending unawares against a demographic groundswell, its evolutionary source shows through with full clarity. The polar opposite of an adaptive reflex by human groups is likewise of apparent evolutionary origin: their felt need to invite or contrive an intensified renewal of devastating disasters that they prove unable to handle by instinct or reflex. Such traumatic reliving has been more closely explored in individuals than in groups even though its group form, presumably the older of the two, is equally evident from the historic record, and far more portentous. A transparent case of it, when viewed likewise in bare outline, was the military surrender (technically: the bid for an armistice) by the German high command in September 1918 that caught an uncomprehending German public off guard: a generation afterwards Germans followed Hitler in refighting that lost war to a still more devastating conclusion. Of roughly the same vintage is another locus classicus of traumatic reliving by a group: a fictional one crafted to perfection by Luigi Pirandello in his *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, where a mother's shock at catching her husband with her daughter by another man rivets a loose family of six together around an inner imperative to replay their "dramma" (as they call it) to a bloody finale. (On traumatic reliving in Pirandello, see Rudolph Binion, "The Play as Replay or The Key To Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *Henry IV*, and *Clothe the Naked*," in *Soundings Psychohistorical and Psycholiterary*, 1981, pp. 127-55.)

Loose as is this Pirandellian family before it is traumatized -- the legitimate and illegitimate households are wholly separate until that family shocker brings them under a single roof -- it does at least pre-exist in some measure. Just as these two fictional households become one, a trauma will tighten group ties even over and beyond the specific mechanism of group reliving. The Germans' 1918 trauma of defeat forged a national "community of fate" (as the phrase then went) after its initially shattering effect on what had been only a fragile national cohesion. At the outside, no merely adventitious group thrown together however brutally by fate, as in a hostage-taking, will

relieve the experience afterwards in group formation. For the rest, humans are the species most prone to group trauma inasmuch as they alone group promiscuously. Whereas nonhuman animal groups are monopolistic, or exclude joint memberships, humans as a rule identify deeply enough on several sides and several levels at once to incur a group trauma on any one of them. The group identification behind an adaptive, as distinct from a traumatic, group reflex need not be exclusive either: while Europeans as such were cutting their marital fertility way down beginning in the 1870s (including the French, despite their national anxiety about depopulation), nationalism was tearing the continent apart. To be sure, this paradox lapses if the European demographic transition is construed as a set of roughly parallel national adjustments on the ground that its timetable was not quite uniform across the continent and its relative progress within comparable subgroups varied fractionally from nation to nation. But these disparities were no more national than regional. (For its national and regional variations, see Ansley J. Coale and Susan Watkins, eds., *The Decline of Fertility in Europe*, 1986.) Besides, no large-scale human action is all in step across the board, and this one came so close that to deny it its continental identity would be to miss the forest for its various clusters of trees.

Traumatic reliving can be observed in non-human as well as human groups. It would appear to derive from failed efforts to absorb existential blows -- from adaptive dysfunction. That is, where a group is caught horrifically short, it will relive the traumatic blow as if in an effort to master it. I say "as if" because the evidence from human groups is inconclusive as to whether they are ever done with any trauma. Maybe the Germans did cure their World War I trauma through World War II; time will tell. Maybe the four of Pirandello's six Characters who survive the replay of their "dramma" do drain their traumatic abscess in the process. However, individuals who are traumatized (and Pirandello himself was one) find no closure; their reliving resolves instead into a painful, pointless routine that must cast doubt on its original adaptive purpose.

In traumatic reliving no less than in successful adaptive maneuvers, animal groups act in unison toward the surrounding world. But group process also governs their inner doings besides reproduction -- their domestic as well as their foreign agenda. At the extreme, an animal society so con-

trols its members that they perform unthinkably intricate maneuvers together unthinkingly, even as those selfsame members can be individually helpless. Army ants separated from their group in small numbers go suicidally mad: they just run circles until they die (Nigel R. Franks, "Army Ants: A Collective Intelligence," *American Scientist* 77, 1989, p. 139). Human madness and suicide appear socially detached this same way. Yet, personal and idiosyncratic as they indeed are, they register statistically as group functions just like fertility -- their rates strikingly constant, and with the slight inconstancies patterned to boot. The regularity of human suicide rates was the ground for Émile Durkheim's assumption, in his masterly *Suicide* (1895), of a "collective consciousness" (in effect, a collective unconscious) dictating conduct of every kind within each of the multifarious groups and subgroups of human society. Since Durkheim, more obvious social pathology, such as crime, has been the social statistician's delight because of its easy correlation with other social series. Social normalcy is harder to study among humans as an animal function because of the rich rationalizations that surround its works, obscuring their instinctual basis: witness the rhetoric of debates over the likes of labor laws or zoning laws. No deconstruction of the intellectual disguises of human animality tops Friedrich Nietzsche's of the various, ever-varying reasons that the human beast advances for the punishment of criminals (an inner adaptive function par excellence) so as to hide its animal joy in inflicting pain (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, II: 13). Outward group action by humans, especially foreign aggression, is rationalized too, if more flimsily. Army ants forage for dear life; humans wage war for higher causes.

Rationalizing is fun to debunk, but for present purposes the crucial point about it is that humankind added a subjective lining to group process -- that, in a huge new departure, the human species mentalized its evolutionary heritage. The human ideational world hijacked not just normal adaptive functions, but the traumatic adaptive dysfunction as well. Human groups, and ultimately human individuals, thereby acquired the means to relive a trauma figuratively. (More primitive, literal group reliving survives nonetheless. Early in 1975 a Swiss official administering aid to a flood-prone settlement in India told me that efforts to induce flood-stricken survivors to relocate on safer ground had proved counterproductive: they dug in only the deeper.) A striking small-scale model of figurative reliving is the Dance of Death that was staged on

the main squares of towns in the wake of the Black Death. But already in antiquity, age-old rituals of evident traumatic origin played out in symbols as subtly configured as in dreams. Nor is that all. To the starkly physical group traumas in which the mechanism of reliving originated -- the Black Death belongs to this perennial series -- humans added purely mental calamities of their own devising, such as the Death of God. (On this trauma as relived by Christendom see my *After Christianity*, 1986, and *Love Beyond Death*, 1993.) And of still greater historic significance than this all-out mentalization of traumatic reliving is the basic, normal group process to be teased out of crisis-free intellectual and cultural developments that run their collective course heedless of the individual thinkers and artists who run along. How group process on these mental trajectories, rational rather than rationalized, relates to its earthier existential forms is anyone's guess -- until, that is, the question is elucidated through empirical inquiry long overdue.

Such elucidation is psychohistory's job -- its unkept promise. It bears recalling that by the "next assignment," handed down to historians in 1958, William L. Langer expressly meant the application of depth psychology to group phenomena, which he exemplified by the epidemic of religious and cultural pathology that followed in the train of the Black Death ("The Next Assignment," *American Historical Review* 63, 1958, pp. 283-304). Psychohistorians are still pleased to invoke that grand summons. The time is ripe to respond to its terms.

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## Responses to Binion

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As in earlier essays -- "My Life With Frau Lou" and "Doing Psychohistory," for example --

Professor Binion has once again offered some challenging observations on the philosophy and methodology of psychohistory. His essay points us in several directions at once.

He is strategically on target when his argument invokes the inadequate ethological model. Today, media coverage of the human genome project, coupled with what seems to be almost daily announcements of new genetic discovery, have strengthened socio-biological arguments against the argument of environmental causes, traditionally favored by historians. The current biological fashion has, of course, further reinforced the denial defense against unconscious process, itself a constant of group behavior.

Ethology is a tricky business. Psychohistorians above all know how often the discoveries in animal behavior have turned out to be the scientist's own projections. Since people are neither rats, geese, nor ants, prudent scholarship suggests that animal behavior is best approached poetically, as suggestive metaphor.

Still, Binion's attempt to prove that "biological theory at its present pass has little to teach historians" (one agrees in general) had a curiously counterproductive impact on me. His strategic detour into ethology made me think that -- projections aside -- we are indeed animals, share attributes with other species, and cannot divorce ourselves from nature. The trick (as he implies) is disentangling the bio-logical from the psychological, and then seeing where and how they intersect, when they do. However, it is unfair to ask his short essay to deliver more elaborate delineation.

He rightly reminds us that instinct is unconscious, and there's more to instinct than meets the eye. It's not only "slippery," it's mysterious; while unconscious on individual and collective levels, it is somehow bound up, at least in part, with biology. This means the unknown does "cry out to be explored."

How is it to be explored -- as psychology, biology, or psychohistory? These categories are something of a false start, since there is nothing inherently contradictory in biological/psychological causality, even though last night (August 22, 2000) on the Health Channel, a psychiatrist dogmatically declared: "Bipolar disorder and unipolar depression are entirely chemical." Both psychiatry and history -- including psychohistory -- need to look to current scholarly findings. *The New York Times* recently reported: "A study, show-

ing that pain administered in infancy can permanently rewire the nervous system in rats, may have implications for human infants" (July 26, 2000, p. A17). A few days later, it reported a study confirming a physiological connection between childhood trauma, depression, and anxiety.

Women ... who suffered from depression and had a history of child abuse showed levels of ACTH, a hormone secreted by the pituitary gland in response to stress, six times as high as those in women without such histories. They also had higher levels of cortisol, another stress hormone, and higher heart rates than women who had not been abused" (August 2, 2000, p. A22).

Thus, we move from trauma to biology and back. (It is evidence like this, rooted in physical reality, which helps convince students that there may be something to unconscious processes.)

It is in the area of trauma that Binion is at his usual best. As he moves the discussion to individual and collective trauma, and to traumatic reliving in history, I find his essay hints at a newer, richer perspective which organically emerges from his earlier pioneering scholarship. As he puts it with characteristic economy: "human groups ... need to invite or contrive an intensified renewal of devastating disasters that they prove unable to handle by instinct or reflex." The definition has never been better expressed. Even evolutionary biologists will sooner or later have to take account of the evidence.

Here, of course, the critical focus is on groups. Even scholars, physicians, and therapists who think about, respond to, and treat collective traumatic disasters do so most often by treating individuals as individuals, who just happen to be part of a shared experience. An example is the members of the International Society for the Study of Traumatic Stress at the San Francisco earthquake in the late 1980s. Beyond "bonding" (what Binion calls "tighten group ties"), little or no thought has been given to what the consequences might be for the traumatized cohort as a whole. Still less have historians, who regularly describe group trauma and its consequences, applied a systematic model to these processes. Binion's call for more "empirical inquiry" is appropriate, even as it echoes earlier calls which, up until now, have been little heeded.

Perhaps the essay's emphasis on ideas shifts attention away from human actions; one gets

the sense that behavioral outcomes may be less important in the essay than the ideas driving them. Here the message to historians of ideas is clear: since humans can and do "relive a trauma figuratively," intellectual historians need convincing that part of what they are studying is the "mentalization of traumatic reliving," separate and apart from "crisis-free intellectual and cultural developments." The message is clear; for a deeper, richer, more accurate history of ideas, traumatic "mentalizations" need to be studied and integrated into mainstream intellectual history.

When it comes to our own enterprise, Binion is right: "psychohistory is on its own." The evidence for and the consequences of collective trauma have to emerge from our own empirical studies. Research and reflection over the last quarter century have not only tempered some of my earlier enthusiasms, but have further convinced me of the centrality of traumatic reliving in history. One agrees, reluctantly, with Binion's tragic observation that "the evidence from human groups is inconclusive as to whether they are ever done with any trauma." (One thinks of the Holocaust, of the English genocide of the Irish, and of American slavery -- on both sides -- and of countless other intergenerational transmissions as examples to add to that of the German generation of 1918.) Can we ever get over group trauma? What kind of history will we be writing if this perspective is ever fully acknowledged?

Despite an impressive body of research over more than three decades, work that has conclusively demonstrated trauma's central historical role, Binion's kind of psychohistory has been greatly admired, but rarely emulated. His kind of scholarship demands erudition, immersion in the sources, and the ability to make unexpected connections, none of which disqualifies serious scholars from following his lead. What has inhibited psychohistorians from a more serious exploration of collective trauma in the past, I think, has been an over-reliance on the group-fantasy model. Binion is right; if psychohistory is to begin to fulfill its promise, "empirical inquiry is long overdue."

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*The World It Made, is to be published in May, 2001.*

Rudy Binion's paper focuses programmatic statements about group unconsciousness. My paper will make some empirical comments on the three examples he gives. The first concerns itself with the leveling off of Western European population growth (birthrate) around 1870. The second deals with the German collective wish to fight WWI again to make up for 1918. The final statement made by Binion deals with William Langer, the psychohistory of the post-Black Death era, and the Dance of Death motif.

The biggest cause of the leveling off of Western European population growth (birthrate) around 1870 was the availability of rubber condoms, eliminating the need for the practice of coitus interruptus. Condoms became available first in France, where the phenomenon of lower birthrate was initially noticed. Since ancient times, Europeans had wanted to control the birthrate. The upper class Romans had some success, possibly with condom sheaths made from lambskin.

In the early Middle Ages, the problem was underpopulation. There was no need to control the birthrate until the big population boom of 1180-1280. Europeans then had no means of contraception, the population tripled in that century, and all sorts of economic problems followed. These problems were resolved only with the Black Death of 1347-1350.

Binion's second example deals with the German collective wish to fight World War I once again to make up for the defeat of 1918. While this may have some validity, it is my belief that the majority of Germans didn't want to go to war in 1939. Only Hitler and his crew did -- if you believe A.J.P. Taylor. According to Taylor, Hitler blundered into war by inept diplomacy. Because of Taylor, I doubt the value of this example.

The third and final example has to do with William Langer, the psychohistory of the post-Black Death era, and the Dance of Death motif. That the motif appears prominently in art is obvious. However, what is intriguing is how little mention is made in literature. The only detailed reference (about 10 lines of poetry) appears in William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (ca. 1830). Geoffrey Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales* (1395) never mentions the Plague, even though his journalistic human-interest genre would seem to make him focus heavily on it. We have here a negative reac-

tion: forget about the Black Death; concentrate on living. The group unconsciousness wants healing, not gloom. Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1375) uses the Black Death just as a framing device to get the book going. Once Boccaccio gets into his soft-core porn, no more plague. Boccaccio's young Florentines, having fled from the plague-ridden city, are just a bunch of slackers telling sex stories. There is no Dance of Death here. Why so much use of the Death motif in art then? Once medieval artists found a motif that had a market, they mined it forever.

The group unconscious at work during the Black Death is one of bewilderment. This is because of the pandemic after Europe had seen no widespread disease for half a millennium. Where did it come from and why?

There were three contemporary answers to this two-part question. The first is God's punishment for sin, of course! The second answer lies in the weird environmental events involving earthquakes or serpents, and moving from East Asia to Europe. The final answer lies in the realm of astrology -- Saturn in the house of Jupiter. What I see in these three responses is collective anxiety, and that supports Binion's paradigm.

It is good to see my old friend and colleague Rudy Binion carrying the torch for psychohistory and developing its structure. It is too bad he doesn't have the Ivy League chair he deserved for his study of Frau Lou, one of the dozen best history books ever written. If he had, psychohistory would be further developed now.

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Rudolph Binion's "Group Process" forces historians to rethink the dynamics of group behaviour. I wish to begin where Binion ends, with William Langer's "The Next Assignment" of 1958, its call to seek the underlying psychology of group behaviour, and, in particular, the supposed mass hysteria following the Black Death (1347-1351). One question not clearly delineated by Langer or Binion is what constitutes a group within human societies, or the possibility that different groups, or even the same group within a society, might re-

spond to the same external stimuli in radically different ways. Indeed, as much of Binion's work has illustrated, psychohistory demands a comparative approach.

The psychohistory of the Black Death shows a multiplicity of reactions within the same societies, across political and linguistic boundaries, and over time. As Giovanni Boccaccio and contemporary chroniclers, such as the Florentine Matteo Villani, observed, the pestilence in 1348 caused two reactions within Florentine society. While a minority saw in the plague the wrath of God, and thus became more pious and ascetic, others were spurred on to enjoy life while they could. According to chroniclers and preachers across Europe, the new abundance occasioned by the mass mortalities led many who survived to lust after the pleasures of the world, from new indecent fashions in clothing to illicit sex.

Such charges were commonplace across Europe; other differences cut geographically. Despite the impressions given by Langer and others, the Black Death did not unleash, "universally," waves of Jewish pogroms and hysterical marches of flagellants across Europe. Instead, these reactions were specific to certain German- and Slavic-speaking regions, parts of Spain, and southwestern France. It did not occur in Britain, most of Flanders, northern France, or Italy. Interestingly, the German chroniclers spent much more space describing the cremation of Jews, and the bloodletting of flagellants, than the plague itself. Further, in German regions, invariably, the burning of Jews and the mass marches of flagellants preceded the plague. For many towns, there is no evidence of plague before the 1360s or later.

Meanwhile in Tuscany, Umbria, and other parts of Italy, instead of mass hysteria, communes reacted with control. They set up commissions to regulate and record burials, suppressing mass meetings and funeral processions that would lead to further contagion. They also hired doctors to perform autopsies and to suggest measures for containing the plague. In other areas of Europe, such as Flanders, flagellant movements arrived, but failed to arouse a following. Instead, locals viewed them with bemusement or disgust.

Reactions to the plague changed after its first outbreak in 1348. I have studied the plague's psychological consequences for burial, funerals, and notions of the afterlife, arguing that the first time around little changed. However, with the second onslaught in the 1360s (a relived trauma), men

and women in Tuscany and Umbria became obsessed with stockpiling their worldly belongings to insure well-marked, even monumental graves. This included post-mortem masses, and works of art, for their lasting remembrance both on earth and in heaven. I have recently seen similar trends in the north of Europe in places such as Douai, Tournai, and London. However, in these locations, the group to be remembered along side the dying testator was the nuclear family, instead of the male lineage of dead ancestors. (See my *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death: Six Renaissance Cities in Central Italy*, 1992; revised ed. 1997.)

Finally, unique to the first outbreak of plague, was the close connection among the Black Death, persecution of the Jews, and mass religious hysteria. In over 200 chronicles that I have read, I found that this was not a repeat performance. Only in Poland did the 1360 plague unleash a wave of terror against the Jews, but it appears to have happened in places that had not experienced the plague of 1348-1350. Furthermore, the utter despondency and futility of any human response to the pestilence's carnage found in chronicles and medical tracts after the first wave of plague changed thereafter. Doctors, in particular, gained a new confidence about their science. They claimed to have cured hundreds of plague victims, and, because of the plague, to have eclipsed the ancients, Hippocrates and Galen included. As a consequence, the plague tractates became a new literary genre of the second half of the 14th century, which exploded in number and significance through the early modern period.

Here, the character of the disease more than a sub-soil of the unconscious appears to have fuelled doctors' confidence in their plague recipes and techniques of curing, from herbal regimes to lancing boils and bloodletting. As the burial records, last wills and testaments of the laity, and necrologies of religious communities chronicle, the fatalities caused by plague declined steeply over its first century. They declined much more steeply than with smallpox and other infectious diseases. The decline also eclipsed the one seen in late medieval and early modern Europe. It was also far greater than the unfurling of these diseases on virgin-soil populations in the New World.

As the massive numbers recorded of surviving plague tracts attest, doctors as well as other members of society across Europe misinterpreted this success as the result of human intervention. In reality, it was no doubt brought on by natural se-

lection, and perhaps in part by acquired immunity; not by legislative controls or anti-plague recipes. Here, so different from the plague's initial onslaught, when chroniclers and doctors saw prayer and Godly obedience as the only answers, a new strand of optimism and confidence in human intervention emerged. It became associated with Renaissance thought and psychology at the beginning of the 15th century. This conscious reading or misreading of the perceived surroundings changed the psychohistory of Europe, from its art and religious history to its medicine.

For the Middle East, however, the same disease and horrific levels of mortality set off a wholly different historical trajectory -- one of political and economic decline, urban decay, and pessimism. Why the difference? What was the mix of material and psychological factors? The time is ripe for the comparative historian to respond.

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As is well known in psychohistory circles, my good friend Rudy Binion's views on group process are the opposite of mine. While he adopts something close to the traditional Durkheimian "collective consciousness" methodology, I reject the idea that groups have motives. Instead, I insist on examining the historical record of individuals' motives to explain their behavior. Only if the motivations of enough individuals collude to produce viable collective behavior can they be used to explain history. Motives for suicide are always individual, even if historical events trigger them.

Durkheim is wrong to imagine that statistical predictability indicates social causes. Suicide or homicide varies by psychoclass, or childrearing mode. It changes through the centuries, far more than it does by singular socio-historical conditions. (See my chart of suicide, homicide, and war death rates in "War as Righteous Rape and Purification" on <www.psychohistory.com>.)

What I mainly object to when ascribing "instinct" to something like a decline of birth rates is that it simply bypasses the hard work of looking at the motives and behaviors of the human couples involved in making contraception effective. I examine these in an upcoming article in the *Journal*

*of Psychohistory*. As explained in the article, I found that the decline in birth rates was limited to the most evolved parents, who first began to value the kind of childcare they could afford to give. They also began using contraceptive techniques more effectively. Through my historical sources, I have yet to come across a man who withdrew during intercourse because he was worried about France becoming overcrowded. To posit this as the motivation of millions of parents, none of who were aware of their motivation, is simply an *argumentum ex silentio*.

It may be that one war, fought by one generation, is a "traumatic reliving" of an earlier war, fought by their parents. However, a psychohistorian cannot assume the method of transmission between generations. Historians often imagine that children are told about the earlier war by their parents, who rant about a "stab in the back," and "the shame of Versailles," and then go to war. I doubt this. Instead, these appear to me as group-fantasies hiding deeper traumas ("stab in the back" = enemas; "shame of Versailles" = shaming little children). I could be wrong in these conclusions. One can only disprove me by showing different individual motives in the sources, not by theoretical assumption.

Rudy has done a great deal of wonderful research examining individual motives, and making historical conclusions based on them. However, in principle, he avoids childhood as an input to causality of behavior. I think he is mistaken. His psychohistorical methodology remains parallel to mine, as long as he concentrates on decoding individuals' motives, rather than positing long-distance causality between generations.

I am yet to encounter a single person who truly went to war because their parents or grandparents were insulted or mistreated by someone long ago, even if that was their conscious claim. I have always found sufficient reason to mistrust it, and look to more recent events as causes. I must prove my case person by person. Psychohistorians cannot assume one war produces another, simply because they follow one another.

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*Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, is editor of this publication.*

Sir Isaiah Berlin, inspired by an idea of Tolstoy's, wrote a brilliant essay, "The Hedgehog and the Fox" (1977), dividing intellectuals into foxes and hedgehogs (groundhogs). Foxes sniff



around to know many separate things, but not one big thing. In contrast, hedgehogs sit on mounds surveying the prairie in all directions where this panoramic vision results in knowing one big thing. Thus, Berlin found Karl Marx to be a hedgehog, while he himself was much more like a fox.

In examining my own intellectual history, predilections, and style, I find that I am a fox. I delight in knowing many specific things, while maintaining caution about the grand vision of hedgehogs such as Marx.

Such has not always been the case. In my early days of reading Freud, my imagination was captured by grand concepts such as the repetition compulsion and the return of the repressed. Perhaps, I thought, by probing the unconscious, we can understand its full workings, and be able to take steps to better the lives of individuals and society. I was inspired by Lloyd deMause's "The Evolution of Childhood," and also by his concept of fantasy analysis.

Separate decades of training as a historian and as a psychoanalyst have moderated my inclinations to explain things mono-causally. As a profession, historians tend to be quite wary of theory; sweeping theories incline to make most historians even more uncomfortable. While training as a psychoanalyst for a decade, I paid a fortune to control (supervising) analysts who taught me how to understand the needs of my fellow human beings in the most effective manner. Central to this learning is that theories and other grand schemes must be put aside to listen effectively, lest I create a theoretical procrustean bed for my patients to be fitted into at the cost of their amputated limbs. Years of reclining on the couch in my own analysis taught me that I inclined to reach for theory when I felt weak, vulnerable, self-absorbed, or grandiose.

Am I saying I distrust theory, or that I am not the man to write about theories because of my special training? I am not sure what the answer is to my question. I am sure that theories to me are like scents to a fox. They are leads, which might result in a nice juicy, intellectual meal. It makes sense to only follow one at a time to avoid total confusion. I am sure that too many people who do theoretical work do not seem to look at people, and that the people who look and see separate people, like myself, do not usually work in the realm of theory.

I find Rudy Binion's paper to be thought-provoking, but unconvincing. I doubt that the

European population decline he refers to after 1870 was to "defend against an imminent, and unprecedentedly massive, threat of overpopulation." Rather, I incline to see it as a function of the changing role of children in urban society. The biblical injunction to be "fruitful and multiply" made far better sense on the farm than in the city. For example, after their catastrophic defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the French feared domination by the more numerous Germans far more than they feared overpopulation.

The example of population brings to mind the comment by my demography professor at the University of Connecticut, that you could always spot the demographers at sociology conferences because they were the ones blushing as a result of embarrassment over previous predictions. Our textbook focused on America's problem with depopulation at a point when the country seemed to be bursting at the seams with new babies and growth. In the short run, these demographers were certainly wrong. This experience helped confirm my inclination to avoid the temptations of prediction.

Binion's references to instinct worry me, though I must acknowledge being intrigued by his ethological examples. Animal populations, such as the chipmunks living in my garden walls, incline to ebb and flow according to the food supply, the environment, and the existence of predators. The chipmunks thrive on the seed falling from our bird-feeders, do not worry much about our fat old cat, and certainly find the local environment very hospitable. Like our chipmunks, why didn't the human population of France and Western Europe increase with the greater agricultural productivity of the late 19th and early 20th centuries? I suspect the failure to do what had been done so often in the past, when the food supply allowed, reflected a change in humankind's sense of itself, as well as a *conscious* decision based upon the changing role of children in the modern world and family.

Though I do not know the answers to these and many questions raised by Binion's pathbreaking essay, I welcome publishing exchanges about them as a step in the process of further developing group psychohistory.

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Binion's questions concerning group processes go to the heart of group psychohistory. Would it be that I only could provide a set of razor-sharp answers to all these questions and triumphantly declare, à la Fukuyama, the end of group psychohistory. Here are a few tentative thoughts.

Individuals are born into a group that shapes them, just as it was able to shape their parents before them. Because of this actual priority in time and history the group culture is a major factor in the psychological formation of individuals. Even though a good deal of this formative work is carried on by the parents, the primary determinants of the shaping of identity reside nevertheless in the group heritage and culture, be it old sacred lore or newly sanctified myths. Parental conduct and childrearing modes still count but not as much as the historically overriding cultural factor of group belongingness. This is why Jews from Yemen, Poland, and other diverse countries, and largely regardless of child rearing modes, used to share in common the deeply traumatizing conviction that "it is for our sins that we have been exiled from our land."

The domain where group processes occur is the public arena of ideas that contents-wise includes art and politics and form-wise includes the media, public places, and homes. This is where dynamic collective developments take place. Here a myriad of concepts, images, symbols, and slogans float together with powerful prototypical ideas which acquired major historical importance in the life of the group. The group mind, so to speak, is the percolation of an idea or a combination of notions and images to the point of mobilizing group action. When this happens we sometimes talk of the *zeitgeist* or "spirit of the time."

What determines when an idea's time has come is not unlike what can be observed in clinical practice with individuals. When an unconscious idea becomes conscious, or when ideas are acted upon, depends on different factors. The forcefulness of the impulses which the ideas represent is one such factor. Concurrent reinforcements from associated ideas or events that historically happen to take place is another factor. The strength or weakness of behavior controls -- depending on being healthy or worn out either physically or emotionally -- is also very important in either individuals or groups. Finally, a perception of an existential or a narcissistic threat in the form of an impending or repetitious trauma either physical or

symbolic is very likely to compel action or impose paralysis.

But unlike the case with individuals, this dynamic interplay within the group domain plays itself out as a shared activity of the collectivity at large. The individual level of participation in this give-and-take activity at the overlapping public domain of ideas and images varies. Yet, in intricate maneuvers, followers and leaders negotiate and manipulate what is to be prioritized in the *zeitgeist*. In these negotiations some of the messages are quite manifest but many others are delivered through symbolism, associations and reading between the lines. Consequently it is possible for the participants to dance their way toward group consensus and collective action without full awareness of it.

All this raises also the methodological issue of how adequate any sampling of the historical cultural repository of the group with its *zeitgeist* changes can be. When is a sample comprehensive enough to satisfy even the more rigorous methodologists that it does indeed represent its population fairly adequately? My impression is that different scholars may sample differently and come out with different results but that, as long as they do not *a priori* have an ideological axe to grind, it is quite fine. The validity of the results of each work should be judged by whether they manage to come up with novelties which ring true. Of course the criterion of "it rings a bell" (a combination of "face" validity and "construct" validity) is never going to satisfy the adherents of rigorous methodology. But I heard Heinz Kohut once exhorting the audience of psychohistorians "to throw caution to the wind." I took it to mean that if you believe that group psychohistory is a mingling of science and art you can afford to be daring.

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It has been my hope for many years that historians would discover the concept of group process in order to expand the understanding of human motivation in large groups. Historical accounts have too often lacked a sophisticated understanding of human psychology. The concept of group process began in the context of small face-to-face groups, and its application to large groups constitutes one of the basic challenges for psychohistory. Professor Binion's paper provides an important step in the meeting of that challenge.

Binion's focus is stated directly -- people acting in concert toward a given end of which they are unaware. It gets more complicated from there. I would like to call the reader's attention to the distinction between phenotype and genotype, the outward appearance of a phenomenon and the origin of its causality. I do so because this distinction constitutes the basis of my discussion of Binion's examples.

His first example, the decline of fertility across Europe beginning in the 1870s, is a most interesting illustration of group process. It is one that, because of my more narrow interest in psychoanalysis and small groups, I would not have thought of as a prime example of group process. It certainly is, and an interesting one at that. Birth rates, suicide rates, and crime rates do involve a group process of which the individual participant is unaware. However, the understanding of these "mega" events is in a different frame of reference from his later examples, and thus may call for different investigative methods and explanatory concepts. Specifically, I am unconvinced that this example lends itself to psychological or psychohistorical explanation. This week there was a published account of how groups of people react in a panic situation in an enclosed space. According to this study, the laws of physics better predict this behavior than those found in psychology.

Freud made two observations, and both seem relevant here. In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), he cryptically remarked that group psychology is older than individual psychology, a remark based on his own ideas about evolution. Then in his paper, "The Unconscious" (1915), he made a distinction between the dynamic unconscious (based then on repression) and those processes which are unconscious for other reasons and conditions. The dynamic unconscious is made possible by the evolutionarily later capacity in human beings to mentalize.

The mega trends of Professor Binion's first example are certainly historical, and certainly the product of group process as he defines it, but not mentalized in the way he describes his next two examples. The major use of the first example is to demonstrate the inadequacy of the historian's attempt to explain group action by a concurrence of individual conscious motives. However, the methodology of psychohistory to this point does not lend itself to explanation of an example of this type. This better fits into the frame of reference of sociobiology, evolutionary psychology, or perhaps even physics. Binion points to "a group reflex" as an explanatory concept, and he may be right. While phenotypically unconscious, the genesis of this phenomenon cannot be understood as a product of defense, shared fantasy, or a communal dynamic unconscious. I submit that Binion's "instinctive unconscious" is less amenable to understanding by psychohistorical methods just as Freud's instinct is more refractory to understanding by the psychoanalytic method.

Happily, this is not at all the case in Binion's next two examples -- the German military's surrender in 1918 and its effect on European historical group process to the current time, and Pirandello's dysfunctional family saga. For Binion, these examples highlight a sometimes adaptive, sometimes self-destructive reliving of trauma. In these examples, the need to relive trauma can be seen in "mentalized" forms, thus providing an opportunity, if not a necessity, for psychohistorical explanation. The capacity to relive trauma places us squarely, and a bit more comfortably, in a frame of reference which includes many things. They include childhood socialization, the generation transmission of trauma and glory, ideology and propaganda and mythology, shared unconscious fantasies, shared emotions, collective memory and its distortions, and other notions which serve as the basis of a psychodynamic theory of motivation in groups.

While reliving trauma is an evolutionary "adaptive reflex," the particular examples can be analyzed in terms of discrete cause and effect sequences, the dynamic consequence of process. History proceeds in dynamic relation to conditions and events, forming a describable pattern. Progress and regress can be identified and proposals for amelioration can be considered as in clinical psychoanalysis.

For example, the capacity for groups to effectively mourn loss, defeats, failures, and disas-

ters I believe to be a crucial factor in overcoming group trauma. We have learned this from individual psychology, and the analogy in the context of groups seems a powerful one. In this sense, Binion's astute observation about the development of a purely mentalized trauma is a very important one. This kind of mental activity can be analyzed and worked through in various kinds of collective ways -- rituals, literature, film, and even historiography -- toward a more effective adaptation to trauma and death.

Among the many ways I was inspired by this paper, was by a question which pressed itself upon me. It is a question which may only be able to be understood through psychohistory: Could there be a connection between the concomitant decline in European fertility and the increase in nationalism, and the promulgation of a "scientific" anti-Semitism? Why did these trends occur at the same time? Can Binion's concept of a mentalized group process help us understand a possible dynamic relationship in this chronological contiguity? I think it very well might. This is the excitement of Binion's vision.

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As a psychological analysis of group process for historians, Rudolph Binion's paper leaves me adrift. When he discusses demographic birth rate and population decline I look for some consideration of standards of living, generational expectations, and costs of children, including education, medical care, and housing. Despite our differences, I continue, as before, to admire Rudy's intellectual and personal grace.

Jacques Lacan said philosophy has been overtaken by psychoanalysis. We would like to add that positivistic history has been replaced by the sensibilities of psychohistory. The bridge we seek between clinical psychoanalysis and the

"hard" social sciences, represented by number-crunching historians, lies in the demographic precision of generational history. This is coupled with the historical time specificity of trauma, and our new understanding of post-traumatic stress disorder. Such clinical diagnostic features as "intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth ed., 1994, p. 424) are also historical data to be interpreted. While individuals respond to traumatic crises in different ways, wars, famines, genocide, epidemics, economic cycles, revolutions, natural disasters, and changes in political and social structures are the stuff of history that decisively mark, in specific ways, for the rest of their lives those who have lived through them (see my "The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort," 1971, *Decoding the Past: The Psychohistorical Approach*, 1996, pp. 240-283).

Theodor Adorno once said: "In psychoanalysis only the exaggerations are true." A classic psychoanalytical approach to group functioning is based on analyzing leaders and followers. Freud's model has two axes: the followers to the leader, in which he serves as an ego ideal and they give over to him important areas of their volition and control, and the group who identify with each other (Sigmund Freud, "Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego," 1921, James Strachey, et al, eds., *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, 1955, 18, pp. 67-143). The Freud model is paternal and based, as was Max Weber's model of bureaucracy, on the army and the church. I think, however, that Weber's model of charisma, which describes but does not analyze the emotions of internalized object relationships between a leader and his followers, would have been a stronger case for Freud. (See Max Weber, "Bureaucracy" and "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority," 1920, H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills, eds., *From Max Weber*, 1958, pp. 196-252).

Wilfred Bion gave us a model for understanding "leaderless" groups as functioning on unconscious group fantasies or "basic assumptions," or modes of coping with anxiety, which include dependency, the quest for a leader (Kleinian projective identification), pairing (oedipal/amatory, messianic), and fight-flight (paranoid, aggressive) (W. Bion, *Experiences in Groups*, 1959).

Among the richest and most useful model for historians, and one related to the current interest in "deep description" single case studies, is the one using a prominent cultural artifact as a per-

spective to understand a culture. Erik Erikson chose themes from the American folk ballad "John Henry," Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and Maxim Gorky's *Reminiscences* to, in each case, dilate on the historical identity, national myths, cultural fantasies, introjects and projections, and family patterns of the American, German, and Russian cultures (*Childhood and Society*, 1950, pp. 285-402).

There also remains to be culled and psychohistorically operationalized the middle range of theory and applications to communities, small groups, and families, as was done by the anthropologists of Culture and Personality and the Frankfurt School.

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"Seek simplicity and mistrust it," urged philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. That is the (or a) challenge of Professor Binion's rich essay, which takes us to the heart of group formation -- what groups are and what they are for. How does one understand the several kinds of group processes Binion identifies, for example, biologically adaptive group identifications, traumatic group reflexes (historic repetitions, madness, suicide), normal group process, rationalization in human (mal-) adaptation? He asks at the outset, "How can a group of people act in concert to a given end of which they are unaware as individuals?"

There are even different ways of acting in concert. When people began to reduce fertility in the 1870s, they likely did not think of themselves as a group (entity) in the same way that hyper-nationalists did after a humiliating military defeat. If I understand Binion correctly, the former could be retrospectively deduced as a non-self-conscious group based on their similar adaptive behavior, while the latter were an ideationally (ideologically) self-defined, highly self-conscious group. In the former instance, the "group" comes after the fact; in the latter, it is the central fact. The threat of overpopulation (that is, group consciousness of its danger), and altruism in behalf of reducing the danger, cannot be the driving force(s) for fertility reduction, since the same motivation does not occur everywhere. This brings us to psychohistory. Could family life and parent-child relations have

contributed to the change from the emphasis on plentiful progeny to a greater focus on personal individuality?

Even fertility (and its opposite) can and does perform symbolic (ideational, rationalizing) as well as adaptive biological functions or ends. Ethnic, national, and religious groups, for instance, can have ideologies of reproduction to revitalize the present and future, in order magically to undo past losses. Just as human ingenuity can wonderfully address survival, if not flourishing, in the real world, the same ingenuity, drawn from dependent, regressed sources, can develop a policy of "circling the wagons" of group life. It can declare its members to be *the* human beings (Erik Erikson's felicitous term, *pseudospecies*), and spurn reality testing outside the group.

The human symbol-maker who brachiates from limb to limb with visions of sugar plums dancing in his (or her) head may miss the branch in front of him (or her): group life. The functioning of person-in-group (psychodynamically speaking) can heighten or diminish reality testing. Anxiety-free spheres of group life can create; anxiety-driven realms (such as traumatic reliving) can only repeat. Further, traumatic lack of closure directs us to the role of mourning in history. It also leads us to scrutinize notions of trauma and of group causality. How much of historic "trauma" is property of the event, and how much is the detritus of expectations and feelings brought (transferred) to the event from childhood? We are here in the realm of over-determinism rather than strict physicalistic determinism. If we are not careful, Occam's Razor may cut us on the fallacy of misplaced concreteness (Whitehead)! It is often hard to know when "simplicity" is not "simplification" instead. If repetition is remembering in action, what all is being so dramatically remembered, condensed into an historic event and its symbolic eventfulness?

Traumatic group reliving is likely one of the driven-by-emergency responses to anxiety (regression, reorganization via splitting and projection, etc.). To use Binion's evocative image, it sometimes (when?) "hijacks" reality (including historicity) to confirm symbol. It becomes a matter of careful empirical study, mediated by counter-transference, to determine how and how much a calamity is event, and how and how much it is symbol (as in Vamik Volkan's concept of "chosen trauma") that "hijacks" the past to quell anxiety more present in origin.

In sum, there are many forms that group

identification can take, which points to the possibility of typology, so long as the psychodynamic complexity of group process (for instance, Binion's notions of "work" and "basic assumptions" as operating simultaneously at differing levels) is recognized.

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## Rudolph Binion Replies

First fact, Lloyd, then theory. Europe's large-scale marital birth control did not begin with "the most evolved parents." No measurable variables whatever consistently distinguished the early starters. The monographic literature on this point is abundant and conclusive. Paul, if the biblical injunction to be fruitful and multiply "made far better sense on the farm than in the city," how come the peasantry took the contraceptive lead as often as not? As for the rubber condom, Norman, its causality has been written off long since. Ancient Rome depopulated without it. So did the Americans and the French take the fertility plunge without it following their two great political revolutions. When birth control, extramarital since antiquity, went domestic across Europe beginning in the 1870s, mechanical devices and abortion only brought up the rear behind withdrawal and especially abstinence, imposed by wives as a rule and abetted by prostitution: one less intercourse in ten and the transition was irreversibly on.

My question, though, was not *how* fertility plunged, but *why*. As that plunge was collective, I answered in kind. Or rather, to exemplify large-scale adaptive group process I drew on some arithmetic I once did with Patrick Festy at the French demographic institute (INED). I put my findings more graphically at that time:

By the 1870s Europe faced an unprecedented, potentially devastating internal invasion. At the peak rate of increase it was then running, its population of some 330,000,000 in the 1870s was headed toward a couple of billion over the next century -- a truly forbidding prospect. To have stemmed this human tidal wave in the traditional way, by juggling marriage rates and ages, to the extent that it actually did so by conjugal birth control would have called for condemning nearly two out of every three women to celibacy without issue or else forbidding women to marry before their middle thirties -- both options

impracticable from the word go. *That* is why Europeans adopted marital birth control instead, on top of their continuing large-scale emigration. And that radical emergency measure was too little too late at that: they topped it off with the positive check of massive self-slaughter beginning in 1914 (*Journal of Social History*, 27 [4], 1994, p. 691).

Other animals retrench by the group when food or space is running short, so why doubt that humans do too? Of course, Lloyd, the individuals involved don't retrench *for the sake of* the group: you dismissed my point so fast that you missed it. Individual motives aren't group motives any more than particles move like the bodies they compose. As for group memory, if hunter-gatherers reverse direction along a tribal corridor after several generations, what guides their steps back? Not likely oral tradition, since speechless creatures migrate that way too. If we "cannot assume the method of transmission between generations," neither can we ignore the fact of transmission. Or to analogize with "hard" science again, should the law of inverse squares have been repealed over the couple of centuries before quantum field theory finally established how gravitation is transmitted? (By the by, Lloyd, in which individual Germans have you documented that enema behind the "stab-in-the-back," or shaming little children behind the "shame of Versailles"?)

The group in my demographic example is clearcut geographically: all Europeans and only Europeans. But did it pre-exist psychologically? It did at the gut level, Howard, in such basics as the distinctive European marriage pattern, though only now is it gaining self-conscious identity. True, John, Europeans did not mentalize their baby budgeting the way the Germans defeated in 1918 and Pirandello's six Characters mentalized their traumatic reliving. The reason as I see it was not that Europe's aggregate demographic business was "mega" (so was World War II), but that it was adaptive. Both traumatized groups -- Hitler's Germans and Pirandello's six Characters -- literalized their reliving as far as circumstances allowed. While reliving, both were unconsciously back in the original trauma and consciously even thinking *Here we go again*. It remains that only mentally, in the unconscious, is a refought war the same war or a restaged *dramma* the same *dramma*, whereas a reproductive cutback is just that for a population defending collectively against overgrowth. Still in

all, inborn unconscious material is no less mental than repressed material. The two group imperatives of retrench and relive are both alike mental, with retrench even the more clearly defensive of the two. And isn't everything mental the psychohistorian's business?

What a rich harvest I inadvertently reaped by citing Langer's example of symbolic reliving in the aftermath of the Black Death. Langer's is still our next assignment, but one requiring, as Sam shows, a comparative approach to sort out a "multiplicity of reactions" polarized to extremes of abandon and control. May Sam's book and Norman's bring that macabre megatrauma into focus at last through all the convulsion and disarray that went with it. Meanwhile, back with Norman to Germany's simpler, smoother traumatic reliving: for once joker A. J. P. Taylor was nearly right, the German public went to war in 1939 in a spirit not of jubilation as in 1914 but of gloomy resignation. Such was precisely the mood that heralds a traumatic reliving.

Paul, you prefer sniffing around to looking around, but does that make the big picture illusory? If you mistrust demography because of its false prophets, why not psychohistory too? And is ethology at higher risk than psychohistory for researchers' projections? Ignore facts that can be misread and learning is at an end. Demography and ethology are privileged peepholes into our animal basics in the bulk. That bulk is a fact of life even if, alas, it does leave individualizers such as

## Presidential Election 2000

Lloyd, you, and -- to quote Peter -- Peter himself "adrift." □

### Election 2000 Hindsight

**Herbert Barry III**  
University of Pittsburgh

The election of George W. Bush instead of Al Gore as President of the United States is a single choice that will make a large difference for many aspects of national life from tax cuts to Supreme Court appointments. This essay identifies three influences that are the most important reasons (in order) for each of four results: victory for Bush, defeat for Gore, almost victory for Gore, and almost defeat for Bush. [Editor's Note: Article was

submitted November 10.]

**Why Bush Won.** (1) The voters tend to desire a change after eight or more years of the Presidency by the same individual or party. This desire is consistent with the election of Clinton in 1992, Carter in 1976, Nixon in 1968, and Kennedy in 1960. The desire was especially strong because of the highly publicized sexual misbehavior by President Clinton. (2) Much more money was spent on the Republican than Democratic campaign. The Republicans therefore could afford more publicity and paid personnel. (3) Bush displayed a gregarious, friendly personality. His broad appeal was reinforced by his slogan, "compassionate conservative." He attracted votes from many Democrats and Independents.

**Why Gore Lost.** (1) He is generally regarded as deceitful and politically opportunistic. These characteristics were attributed to him mainly because of his association with President Clinton. (2) Nader as an active candidate for President attracted a substantial number of votes from Gore, including in Florida, where Gore would otherwise have won the state's electoral votes and thereby the election. Gore also needed to counteract Nader by emphasizing environmental and liberal issues that alienated conservative voters. (3) Gore is viewed as excessively serious and controlled. His outstanding intelligence and achievements established a barrier between him and some voters. The majority of voters probably felt closer identification with George W. Bush, who is more gregarious and intellectually limited.

**Why Gore Almost Won.** (1) He is the incumbent Vice President during a time of prolonged national prosperity and growth. He has participated prominently in the Clinton administration, and was supported by President Clinton. (2) He is highly intellectual with a background of major achievements. For the past 24 years he was successively a U. S. Congressman, Senator, and Vice President. (3) He campaigned for President primarily as a populist, appealing to the larger number of Democrats than Republicans and to the many disadvantaged people who have been left behind by the national prosperity.

**Why Bush Almost Lost.** (1) His political and other accomplishments are rather brief and meager. His emphasis on social skills is accompanied by a public impression that his intellect is mediocre. (2) His proposals favor the wealthy few and therefore are unpopular with the majority of voters. (3) His emphatic identity as a Texas Re-

publican who opposes federal government interventions antagonized many voters in the Northern cities.

Many more variables contributed to the difference between victory and defeat in the extremely close election. I believe they were smaller or less general influences. An example is Gore's choice of Joe Lieberman, an observant Jew, as his Vice Presidential candidate. This decision almost won the electoral votes of Florida and helped in many other states. The combination of a Christian and Jewish nominee was attractive to ecumenically-oriented people of all religions in addition to voters who advocate strict separation of the federal government from the Christian church. On the other hand, anti-Semitic Southerners might have contributed to Bush's victory in all the Southern states.

The foregoing influences mainly refer to group fantasy or group psychohistory of the voters rather than to the psychobiography or psychohistory of the two candidates. In some respects the rivals are similar. Both are the first son and namesake of a politically prominent father. Both have a strong and prosperous family background. Both campaigns were planned and conducted with the benefit of expert advisors and many public opinion polls. Both candidates made very few mistakes.

There are notable psychological differences between the rivals. A dominant defense mechanism of Bush is denial of grief, anxiety, and guilt. One of the origins was the death of his younger sister from leukemia when he was seven years old. He became closely bonded with his grieving mother and developed a pattern of sociability, humor, and leadership. Symptoms of his denial include mediocre academic performance and self-destructive alcohol consumption. His emotional adjustment is fragile, but his self-control is strong, indicated by his decision to abstain from alcohol following his 40th birthday.

A dominant defense mechanism of Gore is compartmentalization of his personality. In different situations he is an ambitious politician, zealous scholar, loyal subordinate, introspective philosopher, devoted husband and father, and hedonistic prankster. He loyally but ambivalently strives to conform to the desires of his late father, who was loving but strict and demanding. His compartmentalized personality accounts for the erroneous public perception of him as changeable and unstable.

Future elections will be affected by the

very narrow electoral vote victory of George W. Bush despite the very narrow popular vote victory of Al Gore. With the continuation of small Republican majorities in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, members of the Republican Bush Administration will probably try to exploit their control of the federal government, without cooperating with the Democrats. The opposition Democratic Party will be angry and energized to win control of Congress and the White House in future elections, compensating for Gore's defeat this year. I therefore predict that the Democrats will win majorities in the Senate and House of Representatives in 2002 and the Presidency in 2004, and that Al Gore as the Democratic nominee for President in 2004 will again have the opportunity to defeat George W. Bush.

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## Personality Is the Main Issue

**Aubrey Immelman**  
St. John's University

As I write this [mid-November], the outcome of the 2000 Presidential election still hangs in the balance as the nation awaits final results from the state of Florida. In stark contrast to the uncertainty surrounding the result of this closely contested race, various prognosticators and self-proclaimed pundits -- myself included -- confidently predicted a clear outcome to the contest.

At a March 6, 1999, meeting of the Psychohistory Forum (reported in "Why Al Gore Will Not Be Elected President In 2000," **Clio's Psyche**, September, 1999), 20 months before the election, I predicted that Al Gore would fail in his bid for the Presidency, "provided the Republicans field an outgoing, relatively extraverted, charismatic candidate." Specifically, I contended that the Vice President's conscientious, introverted personality pattern augured poorly for his candidacy "in an era where political campaigns are governed by saturation television coverage and the boundaries between leadership and celebrity have become increasingly blurred."



In the other corner, seven academics at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in August forecast a decisive win for Gore. Using predictor variables such as economic growth, the public's perception of economic well-being, the popularity of the incumbent President, and the candidates' standing in public opinion polls, six analysts forecast comfortable victory margins ranging from 52.3 to 55.4 percent of the major-party vote for Gore, while a seventh predicted a Gore landslide, at 60.3 percent.

In retrospect, it appears that Bush's dispositional advantage effectively did cancel out Gore's considerable situational advantage. It follows that Presidential forecasting models can be refined by acknowledging the pivotal role of personality in contemporary Presidential campaigns, and entering it into the political-economic equation.

My interest in political personality assessment is not, however, limited to its potential as a co-predictor of election outcomes. Of much greater import, personality foreshadows a candidate's Presidential performance and proficiency as a campaigner. Briefly -- and focusing only on their shortcomings, for illustrative purposes -- here is how my personality-based predictions fared in anticipating the two major-party candidates' behavior during the 2000 Presidential campaign.

In my March, 1999, profile of Gore, I predicted that his "major personality-based limitations" would be "deficits in the important political skills of interpersonal, charisma, and spontaneity," and that "moralistically conscientious features in his profile" incurred the risk of "alienating some constituencies." That much was evident in the first Presidential debate, which Gore won on raw debating points but lost in the court of public opinion. His debate performance, keenly parodied on NBC's "Saturday Night Live," was widely perceived as supercilious and overbearing.

A critical determinant of whether people form positive or negative personal impressions hinges on their perception of others as warm and outgoing or as cold and retiring, and Presidential politics on television plays a leading role in shaping these perceptions. Since the first televised Presidential debates in 1960, with the exception of Richard Nixon, the more outgoing Presidential candidate with the greatest personal charisma and publicly perceived warmth or likeability has won. Rightly or wrongly, voters tend to perceive the social reserve and emotional distance of introverted candidates as indifference and a lack of empathy,

which elicits a reciprocal response to the candidate. The prototype of the Presidential candidate who fails to ignite the public's passion in an era of "made-for-television" elections, is the conscientious introvert -- a character type that has not occupied the Oval Office since Jimmy Carter, and before him, Herbert Hoover, Calvin Coolidge, and Woodrow Wilson.

In my September, 1999, **Clio's Psyche** profile of George W. Bush ("The Political Personality of George W. Bush," pp. 74-75), I predicted that the Texas governor's "personality-based limitations include a propensity for superficial command of complex issues, a tendency to be easily bored by routine, a predisposition to act impulsively, and a predilection to favor personal connections, friendship, and loyalty over competence in staffing decisions and political appointments."

This inference, too, was largely borne out in the course of the campaign. Indeed, the Gore campaign's most effective weapon against Bush in the run-up to the election was their charge that he lacked the capacity to be President -- usually framed in terms of a lack of experience, stature, or readiness to lead the nation. And at least one commentator attributed Bush's occasional lapses on the stump to boredom with routine. As for impulsiveness, suffice it to say, "major league" (with apologies to *The New York Times* reporter Adam Clymer).

Most telling, however, was the way that Bush predictably stumbled into the pitfall of favoring personal connections and loyalty in his staffing decisions -- a common theme among extraverted candidates. Surely Bush's selection of Dick Cheney as his running mate -- the very person charged by George W. to lead his Vice Presidential search and Secretary of Defense in his father's administration -- must count foremost in terms of Bush's personality-based predisposition to favor friendship and loyalty in his political appointments. The selection of Cheney may well turn out to have been a contributing factor should Bush lose an election as closely contested as this one, whereas Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge may well have delivered his key battleground state to Bush. (Gore, in contrast, made a more calculated selection in his choice of Joseph Lieberman as his running mate. As I wrote in an op-ed article last fall, "What Gore really needs is a running mate who can balance his personal deficits in the politically pivotal skills of easily connecting with people.... Lieberman's disarmingly warm, engaging manner will stand the

Democratic ticket in good stead...." ["Vice Presidential Nominee Helps Gore More Than Bush," *St. Cloud Times*, Sept. 10, 2000, p. 9B]).

In closing, for Gore to have captured a slim majority of the popular vote is testimony not of his strength as a candidate, but of the strength of the economy and the collective contentment of the American people. Toward the end of the campaign, Gore seemed more animated and passionate, if not quite transcending his reputation for stiffness. But his performance in the first Presidential debate, noted earlier, offers scant evidence of real personal growth in the course of the campaign -- not unexpectedly, given the firm roots of his pedantic, moralistic manner in a deeply conscientious character structure.

Much the same can be said of Bush. Although he clearly honed his debating skills, his lack of candor about his 1976 arrest for driving while intoxicated could be indicative of the tendency for outgoing personalities to employ defensive dissociation: a failure to face up to unpleasant reality, accompanied by cosmetic image-making revealed in a succession of socially attractive but changing facades. Predictably, Bush was unable to overcome his lack-of-"gravitas" problem.

No matter who is ultimately declared the winner, the new President will face an uphill battle. Gore will likely have the harder time of it, on situational as well as dispositional grounds. Situationally, he could face narrow Republican majorities in both the House and Senate. Dispositionally, his relative introversion poses an obstacle to the kind of coalition building and forging of supportive relationships necessary for institutionalizing his policy initiatives. Although Bush for his part will be considerably hampered by the slender margins of the congressional Republican majorities, his less ideological, more conciliatory orientation will augment his outgoing, "retail" politician's skills, which could catalyze his capacity to consummate his policy objectives.

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## Presidential Free Associations

Paul H. Elovitz

Ramapo College and the Psychohistory Forum

### The Permanent Presidential Election

About a decade ago, when I started using the term, *Permanent Election*, to refer to endless electioneering for the Presidency, Trotsky's notion of the "Permanent Revolution" always came to mind. Trotsky in 1904 had criticized Lenin's attempt to give the historical processes a push by bypassing the stages of historical development and democracy. In 1917, seeing power to be within reach, Trotsky joined the shortcut by helping to launch a *coup d'état* against the inept democratic Kerensky government. The willingness of Bolsheviks and other revolutionaries to subordinate their democratic ideals to immediate victory contributed to the utter failure of the Communists in Russia.

The lack of conclusion on November 7 to the U.S. Presidential election gives new meaning to this notion of the *Permanent Election*. The electioneering is now being carried out with endless recounts and legal wrangling instead of by rallies, debates, and television commercials. The ultimate loser is also positioned to start running immediately for election in 2004. Both the winner and loser will be scarred by their willingness to use any and all means to claim power in the aftermath of the 2000 election. The American people appear to be the ultimate loser.

### Resistance to Political Psychobiography

In the early summer of 1976, at the first national psychohistory conference, one of four panelists dropped off the panel probing the psychobiography of Jimmy Carter on grounds it was improper to proceed since we might hurt Carter's career. By its very nature, he felt political psychobiography was negative. Prior to my talk, I was approached by the distinguished, pioneer psychohistorian and psychiatrist, Robert Jay Lifton, who told me in no uncertain terms that it was unethical and improper for me to write about a political candidate during an election. I justified my research on the basis of the public's need to know prior to voting, yet I was shaken by Lifton's words.

It is easy to understand the vehemence of his denunciation of the psychobiography of candidates when we think of the hatchet job performed on the Republican candidate for President in 1964. Opponents of Senator Barry Goldwater surveyed members of the American Psychiatric Association about the Arizona Senator's temperament and its suitability for a President. The American Psychiatric Association's subsequent stringent rules against such assessments barred Lifton, as a practicing psychiatrist, from such investigations. He would have preferred to have us banned from the same activity.

When I asked myself why Lifton did not see political psychobiography as worthwhile, I thought back to the roots of the field. Walter Langer's World War II Office of Strategic Studies psychobiography of Adolf Hitler was a fine job for the time, yet the suggested study of Joseph Stalin was rejected because he was an ally, not an enemy. In the minds of much of the general public, the media, and most of academia, the psychobiography of political leaders was and is associated with psychopathology. This is what I call political psychobiography as character assassination.

Thus, when the U.S. was thinking of going to war against Saddam Hussein in 1990-1991, there was an eagerness to read about Saddam's psychopathology. But when a talented Turkish-American psychohistorian wrote about Ocalan, the Kurdish nationalist leader, some of my colleagues characterized it as character assassination by psychobiography.

Intense criticism of discussion of the personality and childhood of candidates surfaced last October 11. It came during a forum on the election at my college. A colleague surprised me by denouncing the whole notion of studying the candidates' character. This was unexpected because she is a psychoanalyst vitally interested in issues of childhood and personality. The essence of her argument, which came from her concerns as a political scientist, is that character and personality are distractions from the real policy, political, and economic issues at stake in the election. They serve to help justify the media's obsession with trivialities of personality. Though I do not think the "baby" of studying personality should be thrown out with the media's "bath water" of trivializing character issues, I do understand her frustration.

Last July, **Clio Psyche's** Call for Papers on the Presidential election created a dialogue with psychology professionals, demonstrating just how

resistant many remain to using the insights of our field to better understand our next President. A Texas psychiatrist immediately sent me, as the signer of the request, an e-mail denouncing the publication of psychobiographical information on the Presidents as "junk science" and "third-hand information" which "insult[s] ... the candidates." His indignant accusations had absolutely nothing to do with the type of research and writing I was engaged in for my lengthy chapter, "The Empathetic and Comparative Approach to the Political Psychobiography of George W. Bush and Albert A. Gore," nor the type of articles I was soliciting.

Consequently, I attempted to educate him as to the reality of the Presidential psychobiography endeavor, advising him what books and periodicals he might read and professional conferences he might attend. The psychiatrist, and some of his online colleagues, seemed surprised that there was a serious scholar doing this work. Without reading any of the substantial psychobiographical literature, or to even carefully read my return response, they denounced our endeavor as unprofessional, unethical, and immoral. We were further accused of "political preference" and "ulterior motives" as we allegedly tried to influence the election process by "speculations" and "diagnoses" about candidates.

My second contribution to the open dialogue was a 1400-word e-mail carefully explaining the field, dealing with the objections, and attempting to put many misconceptions to rest. Though Presidential psychobiography remained the target of an attack joined in by many, a few champions of our cause came to my defense. They argued that the public needs to know the personal capabilities and proclivities of the candidates before they vote.

Not one of the many articulate and talented professional who devoted so much time or energy to denouncing the political psychobiography of Presidential candidates (and often psychoanalysis) appeared to change his mind. None took me up on my challenge to read the September Election 2000 issue so that they could make a more educated vote on November 7 and realize the serious scholarship going into our articles. My recollection is that all ignored my continual mention of my empathetic approach de-emphasizing psychological terminology, always assuming that a psychopathological model was being pursued. As Thomas Kuhn said in his classic, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970), it takes a new generation to accept the new paradigm.

### The Popular Use of Political Psychobiography

Political psychobiography seems to reach the public mostly in diluted form. An incident of October 24 illustrates my point. A producer for a program on National Public Radio called, requesting that I participate in her program. In part, she wanted me to respond to Gail Sheehy, who had recently written "The Accidental Candidate" in the October 6 issue of *Vanity Fair*. She said she was looking for water cooler-type pop psychology to have fun with the idea of analyzing Bush and Gore. She had some concern when I said I would not readily be using psychological terms, because the empathetic approach I took to psychobiography specifically sought to avoid jargon and psychological terminology. I also expressed my apprehension about hearing on the radio that Dr. Paul H. Elovitz "calls Al Gore a \_\_\_\_\_" and "George Bush a \_\_\_\_\_." (I dared not fill in the blanks lest I be quoted out of context.) Though I indicated I would join in via telephone as a commentator on her program, mostly to present a less biased view of psychological analysis, she did not call me at the designated time. Obviously, my approach was going to be too impartial and serious for her purpose. In my personal experience as a psychobiographer, I know that more people expect me to give them the "dirt" (the "goods") on candidates than to provide the type of carefully researched, empathetic understanding of what motivates them that I strive to achieve.

My brief career as a "media expert" in the election was not over. The next week I was contacted by a historian working for United Press International for an article he was writing, "Why People Don't Like Gore." The researcher is a well-trained American historian who has taught at some major universities. Two things puzzled me about the interview. First, he personally had met Gore, finding the Democratic candidate to be very bright, well informed, and with a wry sense of humor, which he liked. He never made it clear as to why he, as someone who liked the Vice President, was doing an article on why other people disliked him. Second, he had so many of his own interesting ideas that he barely heard a word I said. His completed article never mentioned what we spoke

#### The Makers-of-Psychohistory Research Project

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about, demonstrating that my use was really as a sounding board, rather than as an authority on the field.

*Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, is Editor of this publication. □*

## From the Eye of the Hurricane: The View from Palm Beach County

**Melvin Kalfus**

**Psychohistory Forum Research Associate**

My wife, Alma, was one of the first to know there was something seriously wrong. For 10 years she has worked at a local polling station on election day. This was the first year they had a major problem -- and she encountered it bright and early (they opened at 7 a.m.) with one of the many, many elderly people who vote there. Once she became aware of the misleading "butterfly" ballot, she and a colleague (both Democrats) were able to warn all those who signed in at their desks about the proper way to mark the ballots for President. The other poll workers -- all Republicans -- did not alert those who came their way. My wife came home late that night extremely upset, and exhausted. By the next morning, we were aware of the scope of the problem -- across Palm Beach County nearly 20,000 discarded ballots and 3500 votes for Buchanan, who should have received very few.

Television has undoubtedly made all of you aware of what we have been living with down here ever since. It's just several days until Thanksgiving. People have been marching in the streets and holding rallies with Jesse Jackson orating and leading the way. Court challenges have been piling up and manual recounts have been on-again, off-again, with those that have taken place finding more votes for Gore. A nation already divided along fiercely partisan lines seems to be ready to divide even more heatedly. Where is Josiah Bartlett of "West Wing" when you need him? What's a psychohistorian who's emotionally involved to the eyeballs to do? To think? To write?

Everybody's worst nightmare seems to be coming true. Both candidates are fiercely disliked by partisans on the other side -- and anything anyone says only fans the flames and inspires the meanest of group fantasies. Speaking from Gore country (Palm Beach County), the Democrats think

that the brothers Bush and the Republicans are trying to steal an election that they know they lost. No doubt in Bush country the feeling runs just about the same, in the other direction. Each accuses the other of bad faith.

Conspiracy theories abound. One has Republican Governor Jeb Bush conspiring with Palm Beach County Superintendent of Elections Theresa LePore, a Democrat, to create the confusing ballot. Republicans are merchandising tales of fraud and falsification during the manual recounts. Each day brings new twists and turns that only add to the general anxiety, frustration, and anger. Everyone longs for it to be over. Everyone fears a "stolen election." As psychohistorians, we have to remember Lincoln's admonition to his followers in 1860, when he said that the Southerners were only making the arguments that "we (the Northerners) would make were we in their situation, and we are making the arguments they should make were they in ours."

However, as both a citizen and a psychohistorian, I fear the lasting scars that a bitterly partisan fight can cause in the national psyche. After all, each of us is engaged in selecting -- in identifying with -- the single most important "delegate" in American life: the President. To see *our* chosen leader (whether Bush or Gore) deprived of what he seems to have rightfully won, is to witness an assassination of sorts -- a political assassination. And we are going to be asked to accept the empowerment of the "assassins." To feel cheated out of what you believe is rightfully yours, and to have to watch the "cheaters" enjoy the fruits of their "ill-gotten gains," is too much for partisans to bear. It is no surprise, therefore, that paranoid fantasies -- and behavior -- abound. The question is whether paranoid conspiracy fantasies will remain the provenance of the most partisan groups on either side, or whether they will spread through the populace at large -- destroying any chance of legitimacy for the new President.

As far as what local Democrats feel about Nader and those who voted for him -- don't ask! I've been through this twice already. I remember all those liberals who wouldn't vote for Humphrey

in 1968, and they helped to give us Nixon. And they wouldn't vote for Carter in 1980, and helped to give us Reagan. There are group fantasies of all sizes and shapes -- and being members of an elite group that would rather lose the good in pursuit of the perfect is apparently a pretty powerful one.

*See author credit on page 127. □*

## Election Poem: "It Could Be Worse?"

John V. Knapp  
Northern Illinois University

(With profound apologies to Alexander Pope)

[Prologue]

Of slippery George, and his Son, who bade  
Floridians' count delayed, though half-weighed,  
I sing! Note Muse, their instruments of State,  
Called to Impasse by Baker (Nader?) ... And  
Fate?

To the oil bid'nness born, Dubya sits,  
With mein of lemon, and crafted sound-bits.  
Since Dubya was rarely Freudened when Jung,  
He's gifted in English, his own special tongue.

Likewise, Ms Harris stands aloof, b'gosh,  
Dismissing bad chads with smiling panache!  
Citizens, unsettled, questioning, cursed:  
"Would Duncce, the Second, reign like Cynic,  
the First?"

[At the Florida Courtroom]

"O when shall rise a Leader all our own?"  
Sobbed Baker in sad dismay: "Stop the  
Recount!  
Today, certify!" "But," countered Al's koan:  
"Twixt Prince and voter must no barriers  
mount."

And heav'n agreed to save the Gator State,  
Supremely decreeing the count's longer date.  
Then Baker cried: "O forth in folly brought  
This is of electile disfunction fraught!"

In weighed DeLay, with cold visage's fury:  
"Screw the election, WE'RE Judge and Jury!  
If Congress decides, we'll move in a hurry ...  
So Dubya can relax and shouldn't worry!"

[Meanwhile, back at the Ranch]

Great Dubya dreamed: The proud Parnassian  
sneer

The conscious simper, and the jealous leer,

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for the

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in a

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Mixed: his "Victorian" clear. "Surplus return!  
Tax-cuts for the rich; Roe v Wade we'll burn ..."  
Sudden, dream ended. Unconscious, cruel  
Thoughts rimmed his mind, swirling chad-filled  
hot gruel.  
"This prize is tainted; who claims it has foes!"  
E'en worse: What if the Emperor has no  
clothes?

[On the Topless Towers of Illium]

So what IS the answer, all cried to hear;  
"Is it the Dubya? Will the Stock Market  
cheer?"  
Or, "Is it Big Al, the Clintonian heir?  
Can Houston rely on much cleaner air?"  
Dear reader: by publication date You  
Will know far more than today I could do!  
So whoever gains the high laurel crown  
Despair not! This winner's up starts one-down!  
The Republic is strong. We can outlast  
~~Bombastic fury and slippery chads cast.~~  
Hence winning is elastic, Gush or Bore!  
They must again in a very short four.

*John V. Knapp, PhD, is Professor in the  
Department of English at Northern Illinois  
University and writes about psychology and  
literature. He may be contacted at  
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## In Memoriam: L. Bryce Boyer (1916-2000)

**Howard F. Stein**  
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

In the century since the publication of Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, a handful of psychoanalysts have devoted entire careers to the exploration of the unconscious from clinical material together with material gathered via ethnographic fieldwork, historical scholarship, folklore, religion, art, music, workplace organizations, or other "social" institutions and units. On August 9, 2000, L. Bryce Boyer, MD, one of the most fertile minds in this effort, died in Walnut Creek, California, at age 84. To the end, he was developing. His late works read like the Verdi of *Otello* and *Falstaff*, and like the Beethoven of the final quartets.

Although L. Bryce Boyer and I never met, I feel that I knew him and was known by him far

better than many people I have known "in person." I corresponded with him and with his wife, anthropologist Ruth M. Boyer, for nearly 20 years, and we spoke many times by phone. I regard him as a mentor as well as a scholar and example. I shall deeply grieve his loss.

L. Bryce Boyer was born in Vernal, Utah, and grew up Mormon. He received his MD from Stanford University in 1942. He practiced psychoanalysis in Berkeley -- the hub of his work around the world. Initially an orthodox analyst, he was later influenced by Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott, and most recently by David Rosenfeld and Thomas Ogden. At the beginning of "A Conversation with L. Bryce Boyer," Sue von Baeyer asked him to identify "a few ways his thinking had changed over the course of his life work" (in *Countertransference and Regression*, 1999, p. 241). Early in his reply he said,

How can one possibly answer a question like this, if one doesn't talk about the life influence of having had parents who hated each other, and a mother who hated her children, and a mother who tried to torture her children? Tortured me, not her second son. A person who in childhood has lived on a farm, lived on the edge of an Indian reservation, has investigated gopher holes and bird nests and pulled turds out of turkeys that were constipated. I early learned that there was no possibility of believing anything I was told. Nothing told to me by my mother at any rate, and she was the only one who was really important to me. No -- my father, it turned out, was very important to me, even kept me sane, although I saw him very little. But my mother was a chronic liar and thief, and sadist. At the same time I adored her. I learned from my experience with my mother that there was no possibility of believing anything I was told. This was combined with her being always grossly hysteric and periodically frankly delusional. So I had to discard what I was told, and I learned never to believe anything I was told, that I had to find out for myself what I should trust and believe. And I was a scientist. I was always a scientist, and I always believed in secondary logic, secondary process logic. At the same time I was highly intuitive. With my mother, for example, I could make a pretty good guess of when she was going to

have a temper tantrum, or when she was going to have a paranoid attack, or when she was going to come after me with a knife and try to kill me, or wound me in some way. I usually got some glimpses, so that I was able to divert her attention in some way, sometimes I was able to show her that what she had in mind wasn't so. And I actually only got one knife cut deep enough to leave a scar (pp. 241-242).

His clinical writing and scholarship are meticulous. The bibliographies of his papers look like library holdings. At the same time, his writing reveals the presence of writer, patient, informant, and culture. Boyer's work has been especially well-accepted and influential in Central and South America, where he lectured at conferences frequently. Much of his writing has been translated into seven languages. For most of the 30 years from 1965 to 1994, Boyer was an editor in various capacities of *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, a series founded by Géza Róheim. I had the pleasure of co-editing with him and his wife the final volume, Number 19, *Essays in Honor of George A. Devos*.

For 35 years, beginning in 1957, he conducted fieldwork among the Mescalero and Chiricahua Apache, together with Ruth Boyer. He also did fieldwork among the Upper Tanana Indians in the Yukon, the Yukon Delta Inuits in Alaska, the Laplanders in northern Finland, and the Quechua in highland Peru. Focusing on transference and resistance, he practiced psychoanalysis among the Apaches, who adopted him as a shaman.

He pioneered in the cross-cultural application of the Rorschach Test. Noticing immense personality differences between the Chiricahua and Mescalero Apaches, who had markedly different histories, he discovered that the Rorschach corroborated these personality distinctions. He approached the gifted Rorschacher, Bruno Klopfer, who tutored him on administering and interpreting Rorschach inkblot cards. Boyer had a knack for seeking out, and working with, the best in any field.

A theme throughout his clinical and ethnographic work is the role of projection and projective identification in clinical work, in individual life, in family life, and in culture and social structure. It underlies his advocacy of psychoanalysis with regressed patients, people who had been regarded as unanalyzable. He followed Róheim and Devereux in the practice of ethno-psychoanalysis.

As Boyer said in the conversation with von Baeyer, "You must have the personal, emotional interplay of tolerating the introjection of whatever it is that's being projected into you, and you must have the capacity to have the observing analytic third [a concept of Thomas Ogden] at the side of it so that you don't react crudely to it" (p. 245). Countertransference was a powerful tool of understanding throughout Boyer's life work.

Although not officially trained as a psychohistorian, he was one of its de facto practitioners for decades. He deserves to be more thoroughly read and incorporated into its literature. Let me offer some concluding thoughts on why I think Boyer is so important. He never "applies" clinical psychoanalysis in a biological, historical, or cultural vacuum. His research is as broad as it is deep. Both in his clinical and cross-cultural work, Boyer emphasizes the very early, "pre-oedipal," foundation of all human life, and with it, the dire significance of early family relationships. His emphasis is on the relationship and emotional attitudes toward the baby and child. He then explores how childhood experience, transformed into conscious and unconscious structure, underlies such subsequent projective life as folklore, religion, and even adaptation. He includes developmental and group process considerations in all discussions of culture change, acculturation, shamanistic ritual and leadership, and cultural symbolism.

His "clinical" writing is as crucial to any psychohistorian as his "cross-cultural" writing, in its emphasis on the use as well as the limitations of countertransference -- the therapist's or observer's emotional reaction to others -- in understanding other people. One can learn much about the unconscious of others through our sensory, muscular, dermal, and visceral response to the historical situations and material we are encountering and studying. As part of the current social resistance to the unconscious in the form of political correctness, it has become fashionable not to speak of emotional or cultural "primitiveness." Yet in Boyer's clinical and cross-cultural studies alike, one of his persistent messages is the emotional primitiveness in us all.

Were I limited to recommending just two of his hundreds of articles, chapters, and books, I would suggest two books that deserve to be classics: *Childhood and Folklore: A Psychoanalytic Study of Apache Personality* (1979) and *Countertransference and Regression* (1999). He will be sorely missed by those who were touched by his

life. His published words are only part of that legacy.

*Howard F. Stein, PhD, a psychoanalytic anthropologist and psychohistorian, is Professor in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City. He edited the Journal of Psychoanalytic Anthropology from 1980-1988 and is a contributing editor to the Journal of Psychohistory. President of the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology, he is currently completing a book to be published in mid-2001, Nothing Personal, Just Business: A Guided Journey into Organizational Darkness. He may be contacted at <howard-stein@ouhsc.edu>. □*

## Clio's Psyche Publishes Only Original Materials

### An Apology

To the Editor:

An article entitled "Fathoming the Weirdness of History" was printed in **Clio's Psyche**, March, 2000, 6 (4), pp. 144-146, and then subsequently reprinted as "The Weirdness of History" in the *Journal of Psychohistory*, Summer, 2000, 28 (1), pp. 89-92. Unfortunately, there was no citation stating that the article had been previously published and copyrighted by **Clio's Psyche**. This is an oversight which I wish to correct, as I do not wish for either journal to be accused of plagiarism or misconduct.

The article was written for and initially published in **Clio's Psyche**. Afterwards, a lapse of communication seems responsible for the oversight when the article was solicited for reprinting in the *Journal of Psychohistory*. Both the Editor of the *Journal* and I mistakenly thought the other had asked and received permission from the Editor of **Clio's Psyche**.

There was no intent on my part to publish the same article simultaneously or without permission. Please accept my apologies for the absence of credit given to **Clio's Psyche**.

**Jerry Piven**  
Hoboken, NJ

[Editor's Note: **Clio's Psyche's** policy is to publish only original materials. Upon written request, we may grant written permission to republish materials from our pages. If republished, these materials must be part of a much larger work; there must be a clear reference, with a complete citation,

to the original publication in Clio. If you have any questions, contact this editor.] □

## Bulletin Board

The next **WORK-IN-PROGRESS SATURDAY SEMINAR**: On **January 27, 2001**, Jay Gonen, Mary Coleman, et al will present on the role of law in society starting with the Ancient Sumerians. **CONFERENCES**: The **International Psychohistorical Association (IPA)** meetings are on June 6-8, 2000, in New York City. Paper proposals are still being accepted by Henry Lawton at <hwl@ipa.com>. (Note the change of dates from our previous announcement.) The **Center on Violence and Human Survival** held a November 17-18, 2000, conference, "The Second Nuclear Age and the Academy," at John Jay College at the CUNY Graduate Center. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was the featured speaker. **RESEARCH**: **Thomas Blass** reports that his **Clio's Psyche** article (March, 1998, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp.

### Call for Papers PsychoGeography Special Theme Issue March, 2001

"PsychoGeography is the study of human projections upon geographic space and the psychic interaction between people and geography" (Elovitz). It investigates "how issues, experiences, and processes that result from growing up in a male or female body become symbolized and played out in the wider social and natural worlds" (Stein and Niederland).

Some possible approaches:

- The gender of geography (e.g., "motherlands" and "fatherlands")
- Psychogeography of rivers, islands, mountains, etc.
- Borders and borderland symbolism
- Cities, states, and countries as symbols of grandiosity, growth/decay, etc. (e.g., Las Vegas, Florida, California, and Washington, DC)
- Lightness and darkness, day and night
- Travel and exploration
- Illness, hospitals and hospices, and death

500-1500 words, due January 15

Contact Paul Elovitz, <pelovitz@aol.com>



109-112) on Stanley Milgram recently led to his signing a contract with Perseus Press to write a biography of Milgram. **TRAVEL:** **Ellen Mendel** traveled to Germany in October. **GET WELL WISHES:** To **David Beisel**. **PUBLICATIONS:** Congratulations to **Maria T. Milora** on the publication of *Narcissism, the Family, and Madness: A Self-Psychological Study of Eugene O'Neill and His Plays*; **Mary Coleman**, *The Biology of the Autistic Syndromes*, 3rd ed.; **Rita Ransohoff**, on the planned publication in the fall of 2001 of *Fear and Envy: Why Men Have Needed to Control and Dominate Women*; and to **C. Fred Alford**, author of *What Evil Means to Us* (1997) who wrote "Introduction to Evil" for *Mind and Human Interaction's* special issue, "Defining Evil" (2000, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 84-90). **LECTURES:** On September 28, 2000, **Isaac Zieman** spoke on "Universal Lessons from the Holocaust," and on October 2 conducted a seminar of visiting Germans and New York Jews on the Holocaust. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** **Anie Kalayjiana** has been elected Vice Chair of the United Nations NGO/DPI (Non-Governmental Organizations/Department of Public Information) for the 54th Annual Conference to be held in August, 2001. **OUR THANKS:** To our members and subscribers for the support that makes **Clio's Psyche** possible. To Benefactors Herbert Barry III, Andrew Brink, and Ralph Colp; Patrons Peter Petschauer, H. John Rogers, and Jacques Szaluta; Sustaining Members Mel Kalfus and Mary Lambert; Supporting Members Anonymous, Rudolph Binion, and Michael Hirohama; and Members Sander Breiner, Paul Elovitz, Florian Galler, David Lotto, Margaret McLaughlin, Geraldine Pauling, Rita Ransohoff, Roberta Rubin, and Richard Weiss. Special appreciation to **Mel**

**Kalfus** for co-editing (with Associate Editor **Bob Lentz**) this issue's special theme section on "The Psychology of Conspiracy Theories." Our thanks for thought-provoking materials to Herbert Barry III, David Beisel, Rudolph Binion, Thomas Blass, Norman F. Cantor, Michael Cohen, Samuel Kline Cohn, Jr., Henry Vance Davis, Lloyd deMause, Dan Dervin, S. Virginia Gonsalves Domond, Jay Y. Gonen, David G. Goodman, Paul Hamburg, David J. Harper, John J. Hartman, Aubrey Immelman, Charlotte Kahn, Mel Kalfus, John V. Knapp,

### Call for Papers

## Psychological Uses of Law

### Special Theme Issue

June, 2001

#### Possible approaches:

- The diffusion of law into every aspect of life (i.e., "the legalization of life")
- Emotional uses of law (e.g., legal expression of anger, law as intimidation)
- Jury psychology
- Law as a system of gridlock
- Insanity and the law
- Dysfunctional family courts
- Legal rights of children
- The law and individual freedom
- Humor in the law and lawyer jokes

500-1500 words, due April 10

Contact Paul Elovitz, <pelovitz@aol.com>

### Call for Papers

## Psychobiography of Ralph Nader

### Special Theme

March, 2001

#### Possible approaches:

- Psychodynamics and childhood
- Nader's appeal to intellectuals and Independents; his campaign style
- His pro-Arab stance
- The Psychology of Disillusionment

500-1500 words, due January 15

Contact Paul Elovitz, <pelovitz@aol.com>

### Call for Participants

## Role of Law in Society

### Psychohistory Forum Seminar

Saturday, January 27, 2001, NYC

Seeking participants with a legal background and a strong psychodynamic interest.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Call for Papers

## Crime and Punishment

### Special Theme Issue

September, 2001

500-1500 words, due July 10

Contact Paul Elovitz, <pelovitz@aol.com>

Peter Knight, Marcus LiBrizzi, Peter Loewenberg, David Lotto, Fran Mason, William McMurtrie, Brian J. McVeigh, Maria T. Miliora, Tord Østberg, Terrence Ripmaster, Robert Rousselle, Tilahun Sineshaw, Alasdair Spark, Francis Steen, Howard F. Stein, George Victor, and Andrew S. Winston; to Brett Lobbato and Richard Ranaudo for editing; and to Anna Lentz for proofreading. □

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**Call for Papers**  
**Our Litigious Society**  
Special Theme Issue  
March, 2001

**Possible approaches:**

- **Psychodynamics**

**Contact Paul Elovitz, Editor**  
**<pelovitz@aol.com>**

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## Clio's Psyche of the Psychohistory Forum Call for Papers

- Violence in American Life and Mass Murder as Disguised Suicide
- The Future of Psychoanalysis in the Third Millennium (June, 2000)
- Assessing Apocalypticism and Millennialism Around the Year 2000
- PsychoGeography
- Election 2000: Psychobiographies of Bradley, Bush, Gore, McCain, Buchanan, et al
- The Psychology of Incarceration and Crime
- Legalizing Life: Our Litigious Society
- Psychobiography
- Manias and Depressions in Economics and Society
- The Role of the Participant Observer in Psychohistory
- Psychohistorical Perspectives on Loneliness
- 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
- Elian Gonzales Between Two Worlds
- Television, Radio, and Media as Object Relations in a Lonely World
- Kevorkian's Fascination with Assisted Suicide, Death, Dying, and Martyrdom
- The Psychobiography and Myth of Alan Greenspan: The Atlas Who Has Not Yet Shrugged

Many 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.**

## Call for CORST Grant Applications

The Committee on Research and Special Training (CORST) of the American Psychoanalytic Association announces an American Psychoanalytic Foundation research training grant of \$10,000 for CORST candidates (academic scholars) who have been accepted or are currently in training in an American Psychoanalytic Association institute. The purpose of the grant is to help defray the costs of psychoanalytic training. The grant is to be administered by the local institute to be paid over three years of training at \$3,500, \$3,500, and \$3,000 per year, or as needed.

The application is: a.) A brief statement of 1000 words of the research proposed, b.) A letter from a scholar in the field (e.g., department chair, colleague, or dissertation advisor) attesting to the validity and significance of the research, c.) A letter of endorsement by the Education Director of the institute certifying the candidate is in, or has been accepted for, full clinical psychoanalytic training at an institute of the American Psychoanalytic Association, and d.) An up-to-date Curriculum Vitae.

**Applications are to be submitted in three copies by May 1, 2000, to Professor Paul Schwaber, 258 Bradley Street, New Haven, CT 06511.**

## Clio's Psyche of the Psychohistory Forum

### Call for Papers

- Violence in American Life and Mass Murder as Disguised Suicide
- Assessing Apocalypticism and Millennialism Around the Year 2000
- PsychoGeography
- Election 2000: Psychobiographies of Bradley, Bush, Gore, McCain, Buchanan, et al
- The Psychology of Incarceration and Crime
- Legalizing Life: Our Litigious Society
- Psychobiography
- Manias and Depressions in Economics and 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

**Next Psychohistory Forum Meeting**  
**Michael Britton**  
**"Countertransference:  
 Royal Road Into the Psychology  
 of the Cold War"**

**Saturday, September 23, 2000**

**Contact Paul Elovitz, Editor**  
**See page 51**

- Television, Radio, and Media as Object Relations in a Lonely

### Call for Papers

## The Psychohistory of Conspiracy Theories

Special Theme Issue  
 December, 2000

#### Possible approaches:

- Psychodynamics and childhood roots of conspiracy theories
- Case studies of conspiracy theories in American history
- Survey of the psychohistorical and psychological literature on conspiracy theories
- Film and television treatment of conspiracy theories

**Contact Bob Lentz, Associate Editor**  
**<boblentz@cliospsyche.com>**

## 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.

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

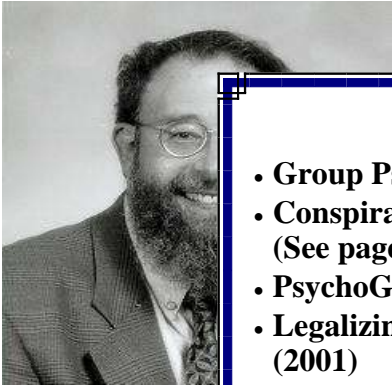
Contact the Editor (see page three).

**Clio's  
 Psyche**  
**Now on**

**Letter to the Editor**

**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 51).



**Howard F. Stein**

(Editor's Note: We welcome scanned pic-

**Call for Papers**

- Group Psychohistory (December, 2000)
- Conspiracy Theories (December, 2000) (See page 100)
- PsychoGeography (March, 2001)
- Legalizing Life: Our Litigious Society (2001)
- The Psychology of Incarceration and Crime (2001)
- Television as Object Relations

Contact Paul Elovitz, Editor  
See page 51

**Book Reviews**

**Life: Our Litigious Society**  
Contact the Editor (see page 3)

**Letters to the Editor**

**Editorial Policies**

**Clio's Psyche**  
Now on the World Wide Web at  
[www.cliospsyche.com](http://www.cliospsyche.com)

Call for Papers on  
**The Psychology of Incarceration and Crime**  
Contact the Editor (see page 3)

**Psychohistorians probe the "Why" of culture, current events, history, and society.**

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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

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

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

**Psychohistory Forum Student Award** • David Barry of Fair Lawn, New Jersey, has been awarded a year's Student Membership in the Forum, including a subscription to **Clio's Psyche**, for his contribution of a fine paper as part of the Makers of the Psychohistorical Paradigm Research Project last June.

**Next Psychohistory Forum Meeting**  
Saturday, January 30, 1999  
Charles Strozier

### 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

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### 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

### Free Subscription

For every paid library subscription (\$40), the person donating or arranging it will receive a year's subscription to **Clio's Psyche** free. Help

### 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.

Contact Paul H. Elovitz, Editor -- see p.

THE MAKERS OF PSYCHOHISTORY  
RESEARCH PROJECT

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 dominance. In the last four years this talented young scholar has been awarded nine fellowships, grants, or scholarships.

### 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).

☆☆☆

### 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.

There are no negatives in the unconscious.

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Contact the Editor (see page 51).

Letters to the Editor

### Call for Papers

#### Special Theme Issues 1999 and 2000

- The Relationship of Academia, Psychohistory, and Psychoanalysis (March, 1999)
- Our Litigious Society
- PsychoGeography
- Meeting the Millennium
- Manias and Depressions in Economics and Society

Contact the Editor at

### 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

### Next Psychohistory Forum Meeting

Saturday, January 30, 1999

Charles Strozier

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

## Call for Nominations for the

### Best of Clio's Psyche

By July 1 please list your favorite articles, interviews, and Special Issues (no

## Clio's Psyche of the Psychohistory Forum

### Call for Papers

- 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

## Call for Nominations for the

### Best of Clio's Psyche

By July 1, please list your favorite articles, interviews, and Special Issues (no more than three in each category) and send the information to the Editor (see page 3) for the August publication.

- 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

## Clio's Psyche of the Psychohistory Forum

### Call for Papers

- Future of Psychohistory and Psychoanalysis in the Light of the Demise of the Psychohistory

## The Best of Clio's Psyche

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

This 94-page collection of many of the best and most popular articles from 1994 to the current issue is available for \$20 a copy and to students using it in a course for \$12.

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

## Call for Nominations

### 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 Her Legacy"

## Hayman Fellowships

The University of California Interdisciplinary Psychoanalytic Consortium announces two \$5,000 annual fellowships to aid psychoanalytically informed research on the literary, cultural, and humanistic expressions of genocide, racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, inter-ethnic violence, and the Holocaust.

The

## 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