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# Clio's Psyche

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

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Volume 11 Number 2

September 2004

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## Psychology of Election 2004 Special Feature

### "Bush Rage" & Its Consequences

Sara Konrath  
University of Michigan

George W. Bush is a president who has polarized people like few others before him: A president many people love to hate. Spend a few minutes discussing President Bush with a politically liberal individual and it may not take long for accusations of his aggressiveness to come up. In the media, he is virtually inescapable. While driving we hear about him on the radio. While walking from the parking lot to our offices, we see his face on newspaper stands. While flicking through the channels, there he is again. What is the effect of President Bush's ubiquitous presence and so many people's hatred of him?

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## Geoffrey Cocks: Historian of Film and Nazi Germany

Paul H. Elovitz  
Ramapo College & the Psychohistory Forum

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## Russian History and *DSM-IV* Special Feature

### Lenin's Personality Profile

Anna Geifman  
Boston University

This paper focuses on Vladimir Lenin's psychological profile rather than on the details of his political career as a professional revolutionary or on his achievements as the head of the Soviet state. I am interested in answering the main questions of any psychohistorian: Why did he do the things he did? What motivated his actions? What were his dominant psychological reactions to the various circumstances of his life? How did they form his personality and behavior patterns. It represents my preliminary work on Lenin's personality.

With this in mind, I focus on three main issues. First, I emphasize those features of Lenin's personality, which seem particularly important in forming his character and influencing his behavior, his decision-making process, and his relationships. Needless to say, not everyone with similar personality traits chose Lenin's course of an ultra-radical subversive determined to overthrow the establishment for the sake of an envisaged "social paradise." Therefore, the second main theme I address has to do with the specific personal circumstances that drove him onto the revolutionary path and eventually into the position of power not only over his Bolshevik faction but also over the millions of citizens of the former Russian empire, subjects to – or perhaps better say, victims of – his "social engineering." Thirdly, I propose several considerations

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– aspects of his personality analyzed in conjunction with ways in which they related to external factors – that in my opinion contributed to Lenin's success.

Among a number of other instruments designed to assess normal-range personality structures and dimensions, maladaptive personality traits, and psychopathologies, the Fourth Edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* of the American Psychiatric Association published in 1994 may be used for initial personality profiling. Leaving aside for the present discussion various assessment issues, including the *DSM's* psychometric validity and its reliability in reference to people long dead and thus unable to provide us with such first-hand psychological material as an interview, I propose that

Lenin closely matches the *DSM* criteria for the "narcissistic personality."

The *DSM* emphasizes the narcissist's grandiosity, and there is little need to emphasize that Lenin suffered from grandiose visions and expectations. In fact, in the year 1903, when he came out with *What Is To Be Done?* and positioned himself as the sole leader of the Bolshevik fraction of the Russian Social Democratic Revolutionary Party (RSDRP), one could, in all honesty, suspect that Lenin was affected by a delusional disorder of the grandiose type (*DSM*, p. 297) – so preposterous did his assumptions seem about the ability of the tiny party of self-proclaimed "professional revolutionaries" to overthrow monarchy in Russia and to replace the centuries-old traditional culture with an artificial social, economic, and political Marxist construction. Moreover, he claimed a monopoly on the know-how of the revolutionary process, ostensibly for his party, but in reality for himself because, from the first days of the faction's existence, Lenin was its personification; indeed, he was Bolshevism incarnate. Guided by his grandiose self-assurance and unwavering sense of infallibility as far as revolutionary decision-making was concerned, Lenin took for granted that he alone knew the most expedient path to the revolution.

Of the various preoccupations listed in the *DSM* – unlimited success, brilliance, beauty, ideal love – his was the preoccupation with power. There was nothing he was unwilling to sacrifice to his ultimate control over the Bolshevik Party, including his own Marxist principles. These he was invariably prepared to alter if such departure from the orthodoxy facilitated his primary goal of remaining in control first of the Bolshevik fraction and then the Soviet government.

Lenin acted as if he were "special," the one who could not be wrong as far as his singular political vision and policies were concerned. Often, his extreme ideas proved shocking even for other revolutionary Marxists, and he was supported only by a handful, but these were the only ones he appealed to, considering them "the chosen ones," who could appreciate his brilliance. Others, in his view, lacked the political acumen and were incapable of understanding his logic, and therefore he simply ignored them as unworthy of his time.

## Clio's Psyche

Vol. 11 No. 2

September 2004

ISSN 1080-2622

Published Quarterly by The Psychohistory Forum

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### Subscription Rate:

Free to members of the Psychohistory Forum

\$25 yearly to non-members

\$40 yearly to institutions

(Both add \$10 outside U.S.A. & Canada)

Single Issue Price: \$15

We welcome articles of psychohistorical interest that are 500 - 1500 words.

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Lenin fits closely the category that psychologists refer to as “cerebral narcissists” (as opposed to “somatic” ones, who are preoccupied with physical appearance and sexual self-assertion); the excessive admiration he required took the form of acceptance of his ideas *verbatim*.

This is related to his narcissistic sense of entitlement, that is, the requirement for “automatic compliance” with his expectations, which lay primarily in the sphere of the (party or state) policy-making, with the total obedience to his will being a must. When others, such as the Mensheviks, contested his claims – or, in psychological terminology, failed to “mirror” his opinions – he caused the split in the RSDRP and remained the leader of (literally) several people who were prepared to cater to his unlimited need for control. From its origins, the Bolshevik faction was reminiscent of a mafia, with Lenin the Godfather ruling over it, as if it were a family-based formation with a rigid and oppressive inner organization.

Under this family-like arrangement, those among the rank-and-file Bolsheviks who showed proclivity for independence (“disobedient children”) were punished by ostracism (“the silent treatment”) or expulsion (“being kicked out of the house”), even if they had been loyal (“good”) in the past. In line with another marked tendency in Lenin’s behavior – to be interpersonally exploitative – others appeared to him as real, live individuals only in so far as they served a purpose. When they refused to provide him with the “narcissistic supply” – total acceptance and recognition of his self-image as the man in charge, whose authority was not to be challenged, they ceased to exist for him.

More frequently, however, Lenin was not satisfied with “exiling” his wayward associates and rarely chose to ignore those who disappointed his expectations; almost always he preferred to strike against them. Rage is a most characteristic emotional reaction of a frustrated narcissist, and this is precisely how Lenin reacted to interpersonal setbacks, which for him was every attempt on the part of another to act independently. He struck out against his adversaries, usually seeking to devalue not their ideas but their personalities and personal qualities, typically as a variation of “bad” or

“stupid” – “cowards,” “traitors,” “judases,” “idiots.” This he did not only in polemical and journalistic articles, heavily punctuated with offensive and insulting diatribes such as Trotsky, “the political prostitute,” but also in theoretical and philosophical works. Perhaps none of Lenin’s contemporaries – politicians or journalists – resorted to such coarse language, peppered with profanities teeming on practically every page.

The narcissist’s lack (or the absence) of empathy and his incapability to recognize the feelings and needs of others was a key characteristic of Lenin’s personality: given his inability to consider another person’s existence as autonomous from his own needs and purposes, feelings of others simply did not matter. All his associations with people were need-based and purpose-related, and his interactions with others were simply not emotional. There was no one that at any point in his life Lenin could call “friend.” Relationships survived only for as long as he could sustain compliance and strict execution of his orders, and thus it is more appropriate to talk about “boss-subordinate” relations than friendships or even collegiality.

Relations with members of his family, although by definition emotion-based, reveal the same exploitative tendencies and lack of empathy. Philip Pomper’s research demonstrates that Lenin’s early family experiences were marked by strict, demanding, and extremely rigid parenting, with love (or, more appropriately, approval) depending on the children’s adherence to their parents’ perception of “a virtuous life – one of unremitting labor, of duty to one’s calling,” and of personal sacrifice. Praise was administered in microscopic doses and admiration was directly related to children’s achievements in education and intellectual excellence generally, as defined by the mother and father in accordance with their own earlier experiences (Philip Pomper, *Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin: The Intelligentsia and Power*, 1990, pp. 6-7). In his childhood Lenin must have internalized his parents’ implicit assumption that sentiments mattered little if at all. Tenderness or indeed any spontaneous expression of emotion was not favored in this austere, disciplined, intellectual household, and sources leave a very strong impression that Lenin did not know what it meant to empathize with the feelings of others; most likely he had little first-hand familiarity with empathy.

Moreover, Lenin's behavior towards family members evinced a perpetual lack of basic sympathy or kindness. In April 1891, when he busily prepared for law examinations, Lenin negligently brought his sister Olga, ill with typhus, to a second-rate hospital, where she contracted erysipelas and died on May 8, 1891. If he did have any feelings of guilt or remorse, Lenin did not show them; nor did he demonstrate any sign of depression over this loss, persevering in his work as usual (Pomper, *Lenin*, pp. 39-40). Regarding others exclusively as the instruments to achieve his objectives, Lenin exploited them, each in accordance with his or her particular capacities to satisfy his needs. This tendency is evident in Lenin's less-than-idyllic relationship with his mother, of whom he continuously took advantage of financially, but particularly in his behavior towards his wife, which showed undisguised emotional lacuna. Throughout their passionless years together, Lenin implicitly insisted on her sole function as provider for his comfort.

Narcissistic people are generally disliked and avoided, as was Lenin – and not only as a result of his unmitigated aggressiveness and cruelty towards “class enemies.” Even those who supported him noted his self-righteous, arrogant, and aggressive attitudes: “He was abrasive with people. Arguing with them, he mercilessly ridiculed them, sometimes even bitterly humiliated them” (Maksim Gor'kii, “V. I. Lenin,” <http://home.sinn.ru/~gorky/TEXTS/VOSPOM/lenin.txt>). Even his family members exhibited very ambivalent feelings towards him. Of all his siblings, only his sister Maria “seems to have genuinely liked him” (Pomper, *Lenin*, p. 34). Lenin was hated because of who he was – a man wrapped up in his cerebral grandiosity, unable to empathize (or indeed see others as truly human and thus deserving compassion), a slave to his deep anger and rage. Unaware of the true causes for this general attitude, it is little wonder that he felt victimized and wronged, perhaps slightly paranoid, assuming that others were out to harm him by outwitting him, to sabotage his efforts, and to misrepresent his ideas. This, in turn, justified his rage and desire to strike at and beat his rivals, to “smack their mugs” (Valentinov, *Vstrechi s Leniny*, p. 212).

It may be noted, albeit retrospectively, that among the early circumstances of the individual

whose life turned into one dominated by a single purpose and meaning, there may be key elements that serve to determine his as yet indiscernible future. In Lenin's case, it is the turbulent relationship with his older brother Alexander (Sasha) that appears to have “forced” or “provoked” him to espouse revolution as an all-consuming life-long occupation. Furthermore, what was probably the most important relationship in his life was dominated by competitiveness and envy.

In the context of their parents' preoccupation with performance and achievement, Vladimir was always “second-best” – not only because he was younger, but also since in the eyes of his parents (and, indeed, everyone else in the family) he never achieved Sasha's intellectual status. Conversely, in his early childhood Lenin's intellectual as well as physical development was slow, causing much anxiety for the parents, who first thought that he might be retarded and then that he was lazy. Although he later came to be a very good student, Vladimir was hardly a star like Alexander. It was Sasha who personified all their parents' aspirations and who was “chosen” as the favorite child, especially by the mother, for whom accomplishment was directly linked to love. In addition, Alexander clearly incorporated the sense of duty that his parents sought to instill in him and in his brothers and sisters; as a child and adolescent, he was invariably docile and respectfully submitted to his parents' rules and values. His dutifulness was interpreted as cordiality and affection, and, in return, his mother classified him as lovable. He certainly was not lovable to his younger brother, due to Vladimir's obstinacy, propensity to contradict, and angry outbursts.

Il'ia Nikolaevich, their father, died of a stroke in January 1886, when Vladimir was a 16-year-old gymnasium student and Alexander was pursuing his studies at the University of St. Petersburg, showing great promise as a young scientist. Even prior to Il'ia's death, Alexander had been invested with the role as the male head of the household because of the father's frequent work-related absences. Although he refrained from inflicting his authority forcefully on the other children, he did criticize his younger brother for his rudeness towards their mother; there have been “serious tensions between him and Maria Alexandrovna,” due to Vladimir's proclivity to behave “arrogantly and

rebelliously” (Pomper, *Lenin*, pp. 22, 34). Vladimir typically took offense and responded brusquely. Consistent with the role imposed on him by his parents, Alexander, who “seemed hypersensitive to any form of ... verbal aggression” (Pomper, *Lenin*, p. 16), reluctantly persisted with efforts to discipline his insolent brother and punished him by silent treatment. He made no effort to conceal that he disliked Vladimir, and the already ambivalent relations between the two brothers would be severed for long stretches of time.

Il'ia's death reinforced Alexander's position as a classic “father-replacement figure” in his mother's eyes, her male “protector” (Pomper, *Lenin*, p. 34). One may suggest that in his relationship with the older brother, Lenin might have been forced to deal with misplaced “oedipal issues,” artificially created by the specifics of his family situation and the exaggerated status attributed to the eldest sibling by the parents, especially the mother. (I am grateful to Christian Kalled, a student in my “Russian Revolution” seminar at Boston University, for making this observation.) His personality shaped by extremely rigid, emotionally detached, and achievement-oriented parenting, Lenin was in a psychologically onerous position of having to face the unresolved oedipal conflicts while simultaneously suffering from multiple narcissistic traumas.

Alexander became involved with radicals at the University of St. Petersburg and took part in a terrorist attempt against the life of Tsar Alexander III on March 1, 1887. Shaken by the news of Sasha's arrest, his family then suffered the shock of his rapid execution. In a famous, although evidently fictitious, episode, canonical in Soviet mythology, Vladimir reacted to his brother's death by what would have been a questionable consolation for his grieving mother when he allegedly said to her: “No, we won't take this path. This is not the path to follow.” According to Pomper, “There was little reason to believe that Lenin would have taken a revolutionary path until he decided to identify himself with, but outdo, his brother. First he had to take Sasha's place at home; then he would succeed where Sasha had failed at a revolutionary profession” (Philip Pomper, “From Russian Revolutionary Terrorism to Soviet State Terror,” unpublished paper, December 22, 2003, p. 9).

In fact, there seems to have been no other

psychological choice for Lenin: the only sphere of activity where Alexander attempted something and failed was revolution. In order for Vladimir to resolve his narcissistic envy and rivalry, and finally to outdo his brother, he had to become a revolutionary and win, demonstrating to his mother – and, most importantly, to himself – who of the two was the true star. He might have been aware that there was no other choice when he said to an acquaintance: “What is there for me to think about? ... My road has been paved by my elder brother” (Richard Pipes, “The Origins of Bolshevism: The Intellectual Evolution of Young Lenin,” in Richard Pipes, ed., *Revolutionary Russia: A Symposium*, 1969, p. 38). His ineffectual and conflict-ridden inner life thus precluded an independent solution to self-realization and set Lenin off onto the revolutionary path – to attain recognition at the expense of Alexander, who, of course, could no longer compete.

Not that Vladimir knew at the age of 17 what the “other” revolutionary path would be. In fact, for a number of years, while reading avidly everything that might have explained his brother's radicalism, he toyed with a variety of radical ideas, for a long time being obsessed with terrorism, specifically with a dream of making an explosive device as small as a walnut. In fact, Lenin “did not really commit himself to the revolutionary profession until August 1893, when he left the family for good and went to St. Petersburg,” although he “had chosen the putatively most scientific revolutionary doctrine, Marxism” by 1892 (Pomper, “From Russian Revolutionary Terrorism,” p. 8).

That Lenin finally espoused Marxism as his credo was quite logical and consistent with his personality requirements of a “cerebral narcissist.” Marxist thought was seen as the most “scientific” and rational of all the revolutionary ideologies available to someone who needed to justify his inner program, to make his inner drives legitimate with the help of a formal theoretical doctrine. Once a Marxist, Lenin no longer needed to struggle with what Russians call “the accursed questions”: What is the purpose of one's existence? How does one deal with the issue of life's finality? What is the meaning for good and evil? How does one go about attaining happiness? Within the Marxist schematic representation of reality, these issues were easily resolved with the ready-made and always-available

answers. Indeed, the artificial, generic, and sterile solutions provided by the Marxist creed suited precisely and conveniently Lenin's own inner life – flat, monotonous, emotion-free, defensive, and rationalized to the point of ultimate unawareness. The newly-acquired Marxist worldview thus became a perfect solution for a narcissist out to assert himself through revolutionary destruction and power. Thanks to his new faith, which blinded him to the complexity of life, as well as to its nuance, he felt empowered to attempt the impossible, the unprecedented.

Key aspects of Lenin's personality and behavior patterns also contributed to his success as a revolutionary leader. His choice to pursue revolution as a profession that became not only a full-time commitment, but also a lifestyle and a dominating compulsion, rendered him determined to succeed at all cost – something that was hardly the case with many other radicals, who were not slaves to similar “one-track thinking,” who allowed themselves alternative engagements, and therefore had less personal stakes in the final victory of their cause as a justification of life's purpose and meaning. For few of them, it seems, was the revolution an emotional issue, stemming from unresolved childhood and adolescent conflicts, to the extent that it was for Lenin. Moreover, not many of them had integrated the parental standards that largely accounted for Lenin's dubious advantages of methodical perseverance and rigidity of purpose, which predisposed him to “pursue the goal of revolution as dutifully and resolutely in the face of every calamity as he had been taught to pursue education” (Pomper, *Lenin*, p. 20).

Lenin's narcissistic needs also contributed to his ability to control with an iron hand the party which, contrary to the Marxist belief in mass participation, came to be the chief instrument for the seizure of power. The principle of “democratic centralism” – Lenin's creation that precluded democratic decision-making within the revolutionary ranks – rendered the Bolshevik faction more tightly-knit, organized, and centrally-controlled than any constituency-based party in the Russian radical camp. When time came to test its ability to seize and retain power, this mafia-type organization proved to be more efficient than representatives of their democracy-oriented socialist rivals.

Lenin's takeover in October 1917 was an

opportunistic venture indeed; yet, it was also an initiative of which no other revolutionary leader found himself capable precisely due to his lack of adventurism, immeasurable self-confidence, or propensity for heedless political gambling. Whereas at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Soviets the moderate socialists admitted that there was no political party in Russia which would realistically be able to assume control over the deteriorating political, military, and economic situation, Lenin, the leader of the seemingly impotent handful, was the only one who volunteered: “There is such a party. The party of the Bolsheviks.” While others hesitated, burdened perhaps by greater ideological and ethical scrupulousness, as well as a sense of responsibility, Lenin saw an opportunity and launched ahead with his extreme political experiment. Similarly, Lenin rejoiced at the news about the outbreak of the First World War; unlike other socialists, Lenin immediately realized that under the new conditions of mass slaughter and economic devastation the chances for the revolution tremendously increased.

When revolution did break out in Russia in February 1917, the Provisional Government and the moderate socialists in the Petrograd Soviet were unprepared to make an impetuous leap into the future at the cost of further disorganization of the country already ravaged by war and revolution. Even members of the Bolshevik Central Committee, such as Kamenev and Zinov'ev, opposed the coup, and perhaps it was Lenin's frustration and fanatical obsession with power that rendered him capable of seeing and acting on the opportunity for a takeover in October. His arrogance and narcissistic conviction in the “irresistible power” of his own political acumen further contributed to his success. His boundless self-righteousness as a revolutionary leader was empowering indeed, especially in comparison with the vacillation demonstrated time and time again by his liberal and socialist rivals. It was not the fanatic adherence to dogma that blinded him to difficulties; rather, it was his exaggerated and defensive mental cockiness based on the narcissistic demand that life conform to his formula that enabled Lenin to dismiss all obstacles.

Lenin's readiness to sacrifice theoretical principles for practical benefits separated him from most of his political rivals and gave him additional advantage. In critical moments when power – Lenin's underlying motive and irrepressible passion

– was at stake, it was easy for him temporarily to renounce any ideological obstacle to his essential goal – a facility that always placed him one step ahead of the other, more levelheaded and conscientious, adherents to the doctrine.

From the earliest days as the head of the state, Lenin's behavior was determined by two factors, intensified by his distinctive emotional response: the fear of defeat – expected within months, if not weeks – and the hatred for those (initially potential) opponents, who might be its cause. Overwhelmed by anxiety and rage, Lenin sought to mitigate his apprehension by unleashing a mass campaign of escalating violence against real, alleged, and would-be enemies. The practice of terror crushed or intimidated his opponents – the more blood was shed the greater was his need to reaffirm his fanaticism. The dominant features of Lenin's personality – his all-consuming narcissism and his strong propensity for antisocial behavior – came to serve as empowering devices in the situation that required the use of unmitigated violence for the sake of retaining political control.

Due to his detrimental emotional circumstances, his desire to destroy the hated present was perhaps greater than that of any other revolutionary leader. Lenin's obvious enjoyment of the very process of destruction probably contributed to his eventual success.

Needless to say, the Russian revolution and Bolshevik victory may not be explained solely by emphasizing Lenin's personality attributes, as political, social, economic, and military factors came to provide suitable conditions for the breakdown of the old order. The ensuing outburst of anarchy and violence inundated the country and provided the extremists with opportunities for a takeover. Lenin was a truly exceptional leader who personified, articulated, and justified feelings within the hearts of his followers, whose interests, grievances, and priorities must be analyzed in connection with those of the Bolsheviks. This, of course, is a subject for a much larger study.

*Anna Geifman, PhD, Professor of History at Boston University, teaches undergraduate and graduate classes on the history of imperial Russia, the USSR, and psychohistory. She is the author of Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia,*

*1894-1917 (1993) and Entangled in Terror: The Azef Affair and the Russian Revolution (2000). She is also the editor of Russia under the Last Tsar: Opposition and Subversion, 1894-1917 (1999). Professor Geifman has authored a number of journal articles and book chapters on Russian political and cultural history, and is currently working on a volume of essays tentatively titled Psychohistory of the Russian Revolution, addressing such themes as psychology of political violence, aggression, and self-destructiveness of political extremists. She may be reached at <geifman@bu.edu>. □*

## **A Dialogue on Applying DSM-IV Categories to Learn Psychohistory: Lenin as Exemplar**

**Paul H. Elovitz**

**Ramapo College and the Psychohistory Forum**

**Anna Geifman**

**Boston University**

**Paul H. Elovitz (PHE):** What brought you to the study of Russian history and Lenin and other revolutionaries?

**Anna Geifman (AG):** I became a student of Russian history as part of my adolescent rebellion against my parents. I was born in Leningrad, U.S.S.R., and immigrated to America with my family when I was 14 years old. Like many Russian-Jewish political émigrés, my parents wished to leave behind everything that had to do with their past in a totalitarian and anti-Semitic state and wished me to assimilate into the new culture as soon as possible. Naturally, the minute I set my foot on American soil, I declared to my dumbfounded mother and father that there was no way I would ever accept the “American way of life” and would always remain true to “Russian culture.” In fact, having met exactly one American at the time, I was not quite sure what I was referring to, and, as an early adolescent, I knew little of the cultural heritage of the rich Russian civilization and its literature, arts, and history. All through high school I was busy reading Russian books, although, admittedly, I did capitulate into learning English and a little about my new country. After having entered

Boston University as an undergraduate history major, with a short detour into French history, I began systematic study of the history of Russia and the U.S.S.R. My first mentor was Professor Norman Naimark, then of Boston University, now at Stanford, an inspiring, patient, and caring teacher, to whom I am always grateful for introducing me to his own research on the Russian revolutionaries and the issues of terrorism and political violence. I investigated these themes since in my junior year in college, in graduate school at Harvard, and in my professional career. Presently, my interest has shifted from political history to psychohistory: political violence and terrorism provide amazing insights into human behavior, particularly aggression, submission, and the collective unconscious.

**PHE:** Your motivation for studying Russian history is interesting and related to my own in focusing on it when I began graduate school. My parents, who came to the U.S. as 13- and 14-year-old immigrants from Eastern Europe, did not want me to know about their European pasts. I rebelled against my father's plan that I should become a medical doctor and became a historian to learn mostly about my father's brief involvement in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution in Poland. How did growing up in Russia impact on your approach to the subject?

**AG:** One obvious impact is that Russian is my native language, and another is that I am intimately familiar with the general social and cultural context of the environment in which all my "characters" operate. I do not mean to suggest that a foreigner cannot appreciate Russian history, but understanding the nuances of culture provides numerous privileges, if only because I know what may be said between the lines and implied as "inner meanings." Being naturally aware of the cultural codes and symbols helps a great deal and also insures against a *faux pas*. Perhaps another – and not such an obvious – advantage of having grown up in the Soviet Union is my understanding of the impact of the collective, as opposed to individualistic, lifestyle – its advantages in the form of special defenses against the vulnerability of individuation as well as weaknesses for the person who strives to live as "I," not "we." I imagine that at times it may be difficult for an American historian – someone who takes individualism for granted – to appreciate fully the im-

port of collective existence on the individual. Yet, in Russia, it is an inherent and dominant trait of culture, where, for example, there is no word for privacy.

**PHE:** In getting your doctoral degree at Harvard and in being affiliated with its Davis Center for Russian Studies, how open have you found the faculty to be to psychoanalysis and psychohistory?

**AG:** I don't think there is a particular "ideology" with regards to psychoanalysis and/or psychohistory either at Boston University or the Davis Center at Harvard, and the attitude depends primarily on the person you talk to. In the initial stage of my interest in psychohistory I felt quite isolated because most of my colleagues in the Boston University History Department and in Russian Studies generally prefer other modes of inquiry, working primarily in political, social, or intellectual fields. In part, the isolation was self-imposed: I hesitated to talk about my work, assuming that fellow-historians would not be receptive to discussion of anything which is not directly stated in the source. Or, I thought, they would be disinterested in issues outside their areas of research. Most likely, I was simply projecting my own doubts onto them. But since that time, I've met a number of colleagues (in Boston and elsewhere) who are either psychohistorians or sympathetic to using psychological methods of analyzing the past. Now the problem is how to find time to talk to the many people who are willing to share their psychohistorical work and to find out about my own.

**PHE:** Many historians, political scientists, and other scholars look to expert knowledge in their search for sound psychological knowledge to apply to their research subjects. Consequently, I am pleased that we can probe the advantages and disadvantages of using the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - Fourth Edition (DSM-IV)* (1994) of the American Psychiatric Association for this purpose. Please tell me about what led you to write the preceding paper?

**AG:** There is, of course, an enormous scholarship on Lenin, but most of it is concerned with his political career as a professional revolutionary and his policies as the head of the Soviet state. In attempts to explain Lenin's behavior, many scholars empha-

sized Marxist ideology as a driving force for his actions. Others stressed his insatiable need for power, for which he was prepared to sacrifice his own dogmatic principles. There have been, however, only a few attempts to understand Lenin as a person – something that could provide multiple clues to his behavior patterns, his political choices, and his decision-making. I think that the best psychohistorical work on Lenin to date is by Philip Pomper, who wrote a compelling analysis of Lenin's childhood, focusing primarily on his family dynamics. Using psychohistorical approaches other than those based on childhood may contribute to solving many riddles associated with this man, and I attempted to do so by looking at the various features of his personality, at what may be called his "personality constellation."

**PHE:** Why do some people have a driving need to change society by any means possible?

**AG:** There could be a variety of reasons, of course, but while writing about revolutionaries I always think of a metaphor: a person lives in a house and hates every minute of his life, every aspect of his home, every detail of his dwelling. He decides to set his house on fire, to destroy it, to burn it to the ground, leaving no traces of it, so that on its ashes, a new, beautiful, and happy home may be built. So he does exactly that – starts a fire in his home. The problem is that he himself is inside, and he will inevitably die in the flame, which he had started because the life in the old house was simply unbearable for him. What I'd like to stress here is that that life was not objectively unbearable – that is, it was perhaps not horrible for other members of the household – but only for the one who set out to destroy it. In other words, as Walter Laqueur noted perceptively, "objective circumstances per se are not a sufficient, perhaps not even a necessary condition" for the escalation of political extremism and violence (*Terrorism*, 1977, p. 145). Therefore, in my own work, I hope to shift the focus from the important external circumstances and even the revolutionaries' rationalization of their own behavior via their ideology and rhetoric to the radicals' personal needs, based on deeper and often aberrant inner states, necessarily analyzed in the context of their social, economic, political, and cultural environment.

**PHE:** What do you think of revolutionaries? Are they, by their very nature, pathological, as your first draft of the "Lenin Profile" seemed to imply?

**AG:** I would not go as far as this generalization, but – keeping the above-mentioned metaphor in mind – I would like to emphasize the importance of the fact that much of their behavior was not only destructive (and by definition anti-social) but also self-destructive. Many of these people, particularly the activists, the actual "doers" as opposed to their ideologists, were prepared to and in fact died in the revolutionary flames. Terrorists are an explicit example. The reasons for their behavior were frequently suicidal, regardless of our opinion about the legitimacy of their cause. Whether or not their behavior may be classified as pathological is also a matter of opinion; mine is that it was.

**PHE:** If revolutionaries are self-destructive and "frequently suicidal," then how do you explain the English Revolutionaries of the 17th Century who created a representational government in the name of popular sovereignty and the revolutionary founding fathers of America who created the most successful and oldest written constitution?

**AG:** By no means do I wish to imply that *any* political activism is self-destructive or suicidal. What I do wish to stress is that the Russian revolutionaries were involved in the process that might be referred to as "social engineering," in which their goals reached far beyond changing a form of government. These extremists sought to undermine their own social and cultural context in its entirety: to do away with all traditional forms of human existence, including people's fundamental values, beliefs, mentality, and even (in Trotsky's case) physiology. They thereby strove to create the new species, "the new man," operating in an environment to be built on the ashes of the old civilization, which – I'd like to emphasize this again – was *subjectively* unsuitable for its destroyers, the radicals. Psychologically unable to deal with the exigencies of their own world, they attempted to obliterate it.

**PHE:** In your analysis, would you differentiate between the ethnic minority revolutionaries – Jews, Georgians, Finns, Poles, *etc.* – whose grievances were much greater and more specific than those of the Great Russians?

**AG:** Yes, but my general point about self-destruction applies to them as well. I did attempt to explain the nuances of their specific situations in my *Thou Shalt Kill* (1993) and will try to extend my analysis in the *Psychohistory of the Russian Revolution*. The topic is too complicated to be dealt with in this dialogue. The important thing here is that even for the Jews, Poles, and other minorities, the incentives for radical participation were more often psychological than political.

**PHE:** How revealing are diagnostic categories?

**AG:** Perhaps they may be seen as initial clues, or “road signs,” pointing to the “right direction.” By looking at a road sign one does not learn what it is like in the town one is going to – what the streets look like; what sort of trees grow there; how friendly or unfriendly the inhabitants are. But one does get a general idea how to get there. So it is perhaps with the diagnostic categories, which provide only clues rather than knowledge about the personality under investigation.

**PHE:** How do you deal with the fact that the *DSM*, which is a bureaucratic formula, arrived at by a committee after long negotiations, keeps changing?

**AG:** I see nothing wrong with it; in fact, I am glad it does. The definitions and diagnostic categories become more precise and, hopefully, reflect our growing knowledge of psychological disorders. The changes also serve as reminders that human psyche is hardly static and thus requires room for flexible re-evaluation.

**PHE:** A problem I have with the *DSM* is that in it only a shadow of the individual shows from the diagnostic categories. It does not show the complexities of the personality under consideration, it is static rather than dynamic. How do you answer these concerns?

**AG:** This is exactly what I meant when I said that the *DSM* criteria were “road signs.” If we take them as clues to discovering a personality, it is then possible to go deeper and try to recreate the complexities of the historical character that is being studied, taking advantage of knowing the general direction for further investigation. At the “*DSM* level,” the individual is indeed a shadow, and his image is reminiscent of a child’s drawing – a rough

sketch, which gives only a very approximate idea of the person being represented. Then one can always try to employ other means of psychological discovery to reestablish a more complete picture. For example, the psychohistorian can ask questions about the childhood and the family dynamics, attempt to determine behavior patterns, talk about leadership style of those in power, look at the character’s emotional relationships, and come up with a more dynamic, as opposed to static, image.

**PHE:** My fundamental objection to using the *DSM* as an important ingredient in working to understand a historical personality is that this guarantees a psychopathological approach. As long as psychohistory is associated with the Hitlers, Lenins, Nixons, Stalins, and other infamous leaders, it will not gain full acceptance in academia and among the educated public. I want to encourage the development of a psychohistory that is not simply focused on the people that society does not like – though it may secretly admire them. My goal has been on how to use psychoanalytic/psychobiographical knowledge to empathetically focus on childhood, coping mechanisms, creativity, innovation, leadership, overcoming trauma, and personality development. What are your thoughts in this regard?

**AG:** I completely agree. To have a complete picture, we do need to consider those aspects of the personality that every human being, whether or not suffering from psychopathology, has to deal with in the course of his life. So, it is very important to address the issue of creativity and to talk about the person’s ability to cope and to overcome trauma, for example. These questions will allow the historian to be more empathetic and perhaps reply on personal emotional experience to understand the problems and solutions the character faces in the course of his/her development. The approach is not dissimilar to that of fiction-writing, where the author has to have deep personal, experience-based “knowledge” of the character’s inner processes to provide the reader with a lifelike, as opposed to a “flat,” image. At the same time, it is important to remember that psychopathologies – if there are reasons to suspect any – do impact personality as a whole and will seriously hinder, for example, the person’s ability to develop or to regenerate after a traumatic event.

**PHE:** A problem I have with your focus on Lenin as a narcissistic personality is that so many people are narcissistic. In my first psychohistorical published paper in 1977, I called Jimmy Carter a narcissistic personality and almost immediately regretted it. This is because, when I stopped to think about it, I realized that virtually all successful political leaders are narcissistic. How do you respond to the possibility that Lenin's narcissism was not at all unique and that other factors might be more important?

**AG:** The issue here is the degree to which narcissism affects (and impairs) personality, and perhaps here the *DSM* may be useful. A leader may have greater or lesser narcissistic tendencies, and his behavior will be more or less affected. If, as it appears to be in Lenin's case, nine out of nine *DSM* criteria for the narcissistic personality disorder seem applicable (*DSM-IV*, pp. 649-650) – based on what we know about his emotional responses, his personal relationships, and his tendency to treat people generally – there is reason to assume that Lenin's narcissism might have played a very significant role in his life and his political behavior. A strong indication that Lenin might have been simultaneously affected by what the *DSM* describes as an antisocial disorder – seven out of seven criteria seem to apply (*DSM-IV*, p.661) – validates a suggestion that this comorbidity not only augments the political implications of narcissistic tendencies but also gives them a particularly venomous quality.

**PHE:** At various points in your paper you relate Lenin's narcissism to his success as a revolutionary leader. What of the downside of narcissism – of being cut off from the feelings, hopes, and needs of other people, of being unable to really give of yourself?

**AG:** The downside of narcissism is multifaceted and is primarily detrimental for personal relationships, although professional and other interactions do suffer as well from the narcissist's tendencies to dominate, to manipulate, and to ignore the needs of others. But I am particularly struck by how harmful pathological narcissism can be in interpersonal emotions-driven situations. This is because of the narcissist's inability to have empathy with, or even to acknowledge, another person's existence as separate from his own, leading to what in my opinion is

psychological murder – objectification of a human being. Yet, someone in an intimate relationship with a narcissist, who is usually extremely skillful in taking advantage of his victim's emotional weaknesses and also in rationalizing dehumanization on intellectual or ethical grounds, is particularly vulnerable to psychological enslavement and disintegration.

**PHE:** Prior to your April 24, 2004, presentation to the Psychohistory Forum, you raised the issue of whether “it would be appropriate to use the *DSM* in conjunction with other personality assessment tools, such as the *Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC)*, which establishes 34 normal and maladaptive personality classifications congruent with Axis II of the *DSM-IV*?” Have you explored this possibility and what are your current thoughts on this issue?

**AG:** Unfortunately, I haven't had a chance to explore this further, but I think that an attempt to juxtapose the *MIDC* classification with the *DSM* criteria may perhaps render a useful method for establishing a more accurate, if only initial, personality profile – to be followed by a more thorough in-depth analysis of character and behavior patterns.

**PHE:** Your reference on page 36 to Lenin being the leader of literally only “several people” in the Russian Social Democratic Revolutionary Party (RSDRP) after he caused its split seems extreme. Is it documented that only a tiny number of people – several represents four or five to my thinking – followed Lenin when he split the RSDRP in 1903 and claimed that he represented the majority – the *Bolsheviks* (the *Bolsheviks*)?

**AG:** It is hard to verify the exact numbers, however, given Lenin's subsequent success, it is striking how few people supported Lenin at the time of the Bolshevik-Menshevik split and, in fact, prior to 1917. The number was always very small. I checked with Phil Pomper who confirmed my judgment.

**PHE:** Our work as psychobiographers is extremely difficult because evidence of early childhood is so limited for historical figures prior to very recent times. Thus I am troubled when you write, “In his childhood Lenin must have internalized his parents' implicit assumption that sentiments mattered little if

at all.” (p. 36). How can you prove this?

**AG:** Admittedly, I cannot prove this. Perhaps I should have not said “must have internalized” but “probably” or “was likely to have internalized,” or something of the sort – a bit less categorical. However, I do think that, like most children, early in his life Lenin did internalize a great deal of what was going on in his household, including, at least in part, his parents’ essential attitudes and values. Although it is very difficult, if not impossible, to prove, it seems that the parents’ emotional positions may be internalized most easily, as the child’s automatic response, requiring no thought-process. I would appreciate any feedback on this idea from our readers, particularly those who are child psychologists.

**PHE:** I agree with you about the probability of internalization and would also note that traditional historians commonly accept many unproven generalizations about their subject’s childhood from well-respected biographers based upon their intimate knowledge of the individual they have devoted years to studying. We psychohistorians are held to a higher standard and usually hold ourselves to one because of our greater knowledge. Let me turn to another subject. When you write of Lenin’s “rage and desire to strike at and beat his rivals, to ‘smack their mugs’” on page 37, I am reminded of just how much he is in the tradition of Marx, who vilified his opponents on a personal level. Do most scholars of the Russian revolutionary movement agree with you that he carried this vilification further than his contemporaries?

**AG:** I would say, “Yes.” Lenin’s rudeness and extreme vulgarity when it came to vilifying his opponents were not customary in polemics at the time and attracted the attention of many contemporaries and later-day scholars.

**PHE:** Please help me understand Lenin’s response to World War I. When you write on page 39, that “Lenin rejoiced at the news about the outbreak of the First World War; unlike other socialists, Lenin immediately realized that under the new conditions of mass slaughter and economic devastation the chances for the revolution tremendously increased,” I am puzzled. This is because I think of his statement, during the war, to the effect that maybe revo-

lution might only come in the time of our children or grandchildren – or something similar.

**AG:** I was referring to Lenin’s singular stand at the Zimmerwald conference in 1915, where a main point of disagreement had to do with the socialists’ attitudes towards WWI. Whereas most radicals denounced the war as an imperialist venture and called for immediate cessation of hostilities, which they perceived to be a new militant form of exploitation of the proletarians by the international bourgeoisie locked in fierce competition for markets, Lenin welcomed the “imperialist conflict,” which, he believed, had the potential to transform into a Europe-wide “class war” after the proletarians of various nations would turn arms against their exploiters. As hostilities continued and the anticipated class war did not materialize, Lenin – I believe this was in late 1916 or very early in 1917 – grew increasingly depressed, disillusioned in his hopes for the revolution occurring soon (or, in fact, in his lifetime), and even talked about emigrating to America.

**PHE:** In 1977, when I was sitting in a psychoanalytic class, *Narcissism and Borderline Conditions*, I felt very anxious about publishing my first psychohistorical article and decided to refer to Jimmy Carter as a narcissist. It did not take me long to decide that using the label was an inappropriate expression of my own anxiety, and perhaps my own narcissism. How do you deal with the feelings that you bring to your subjects and the impact of these feelings on your scholarship – what we call the “countertransference” feelings – which are not induced by the subject?

**AG:** I am absolutely certain that we do not accidentally choose our topics, our characters, and our ways of explaining phenomena. I thought about this for the first time after having completed my psychobiography of Evno Azef, the head of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, Russia and the world’s largest terrorist organization in the first decade of the 20th century, and simultaneously the most important agent of the imperial secret police, in charge of investigating the terrorist activities of the same party. Contrary to all previous attempts to explain Azef’s involvement with both the terrorist and the security forces, in which political observers and historians offered what one may call “rational ex-

planations" – from material interests to power hunger and desire for revenge – I felt that Azef was driven by a set of psychological problems most closely matching a free-floating anxiety. His choice was either to acknowledge his condition or – and this was what he did – to put himself in an objectively dangerous situation, thereby validating his irrational fears. He placed himself in an objectively frightening situation – out between the terrorists and the authorities, thus transforming his anxiety into a fear of something real – of being exposed as a spy or punished by the government for his role among the revolutionaries. To a large degree, this book is about a common response to anxiety, which is rendered justifiable, indeed normal, by constructing artificial jeopardy and thus jeopardizing one's life. I have no doubt in my mind that I chose this particular approach to and this interpretation of the Azef affair largely as part of my attempts to understand and deal with my own anxieties. This said, I think it is very important to investigate the impact of one's own inner issues on scholarship and to learn about countertransference, even if one is engaged in work with historical subjects, people long dead, rather than with patients in therapy. This is one of my reasons for looking into attending a psychoanalytic institute.

**PHE:** Your exploring the possibilities of receiving psychoanalytic training in the Boston area seems to me to be an excellent idea. Such training will strengthen your scholarly work and help you to understand the limits of using the psychiatric categories in your research. I suspect that you would find such categories less appealing after becoming a psychoanalyst. I want to wish you success in this important endeavor.

**AG:** Thank you very much! I am in the process of deciding whether I wish to pursue traditional psychoanalytic or Jungian training and, in fact, am leaning towards the latter. The final decision will be based on a number of intellectual and practical considerations, but it will also be partly intuitive. In any case, I very much hope that analysis and training will enhance my insight and strengthen my psychohistorical work.

*Biographies for Anna Geifman and Paul Elovitz can be found on pages 40 and 48. □*

**There are no negatives in the unconscious**

## **Psychohistorical Questions and Reflections on the Russian Revolution**

**Paul H. Elovitz**

**Ramapo College and the Psychohistory Forum**

### **Revolutionary Background**

Why revolution? Why go through the incredible anxiety, work, and danger of attempting to create a radically different society? Why not simply leave well enough alone? When I teach the history of Western Civilization, I cover the English, American, French, Russian, Scientific, and Industrial revolutions. The history of modern society as depicted in most 20th-Century American textbooks is to a great extent a recounting of revolutions, nation-building, and wars. When as an undergraduate history major I eagerly approached the subject of revolution, I was sure that revolutions occurred because the oppressed could no longer tolerate the oppression of the ruling class. In the great French Revolution (1789-1794) I focused on the Tennis Court Oath, the fall of the Bastille, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the execution of King Louis XVI, Robespierre, and the Terror. Graduate school was a rude awakening. I was soon taught that even the great revolutionary Trotsky acknowledged that oppression and misery were insufficient causes of revolution. Indeed, poverty and exploitation were a constant of history and revolution is a rarity. In reading Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (1965), I discovered that basic to revolutionary change are an alternate ideology, an alternate leadership, and the collapse of the existing regime. My professors focused mostly on the impact of the Enlightenment, the collapse of the old regime, the "Great Fear," and the role of the crowd.

A crucial question became, What happens to a government that loses the support of the privileged elite? Why doesn't the ruling class tenaciously hold onto power, as is usually the case, or at least have it taken from them at the point of a gun? What are the differences between a *coup d'état* and a transforma-

tional revolution? The need to answer these questions helped open my mind to the psychohistorical approach to history. As I approach the subject today, my interest is in the psychodynamics of revolution and the relationship of the leaders and the led. I wonder what psychodynamic ideas are relevant to revolution? Oedipal rebellion, ambivalence, anxiety, the death wish, ego ideals, groupthink, regression, repetition compulsion, and repression are but a few that come to mind. I also think of the psychological discussions of the purge trails and Stalin as well as around the possible effects of swaddling on Russian national character.

### The 1917 Russian Revolution

Revolution occurs only when the existing structure is profoundly discredited. This came about in 1905 and 1917 because of the government's ineptness in the Russo-Japanese and First World wars. The Czarist governments simply lost the hearts and minds of the policemen, soldiers, and bureaucrats as well as of the common people. A government that could not even provide rifles and ammunition to soldiers sent into battle found itself with an eroding basis of support. A dangerous step for the monarchy was the assassination by high aristocrats of the royal favorite Rasputin, in a vain attempt to save the monarchy from itself. The actual collapse occurred months later in early March, 1917, when the police and soldiers lost the will to disband crowds of unemployed workers and women protesting the high cost of bread.

When "our little father, the Czar" abdicated on March 15 it was in recognition of the loss of popular support. People felt abandoned by the government which had failed abysmally in the conduct of the war and they in turn abandoned it. A system of dual government was established which put responsibility in the hands of the Provisional Government and the power that comes from popular support in the hands of the Soviets (democratically elected councils of workers, soldiers, etc.). Kerensky, a young Social Revolutionary, soon came to dominate the Provisional Government but not the Soviets. The democratic Marxism of the Menshevik leaders of the Petrograd (Leningrad) and Moscow soviets precluded their taking control of the functions of government from the Provisional Government since the working class was still a minority (15 of 170 million) in a country of peasants. They felt that they were witnessing a bourgeois (capitalist) revolution and that they had to

stay on the sidelines. To many of the masses the Menshevik "wait and see attitude" seemed an excuse for ineptitude while they suffered. In the unconscious, food usually equals love and the doubling of bread prices in 1917 left average Russians feeling unloved by the Provisional Government and even the Soviets. The average Russian wanted land, peace, and freedom.

"Bread," "Peace," "Freedom" was the program Lenin declared not long after his return to Russia in April, 1917. He soon won his Bolshevik party over to it and subsequently (by the fall) the majority of the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets. Slogans like "All power to the Soviets," "All land to the peasants," and "Stop the war now" were extremely effective in winning popular support. In a sea of revolutionary uncertainty the Bolsheviks seemed like the one group ready to take resolute action. People torn by their own ambivalence over what was happening gravitated to the certainty that Lenin presented. The most important single convert was Trotsky, who at its birth had warned that Bolshevism meant dictatorship, but who now embraced it warmly for reasons of his own.

Revolution aroused feelings of rebirth, of infinite possibility as well as of incredible anxiety and grave distrust of government. The gap between the ideal and reality became enormous. Kerensky, a moderate socialist whose agrarian party could claim to represent the majority of Russians (peasants) soon found that the reality of revolutionary leadership was like riding on the back of a tiger. Though theoretically in charge of the army, he was more of a "persuader in chief," than a "commander in chief": no army unit seemed to follow his orders to advance unless he personally persuaded its members that they had to obey for the good of Russia and the revolution. Yet the fantasy of winning the war was maintained even though the army was so inept that by August 1917 it could not even overthrow the revolutionary government let alone drive back the invading Germans. To many ethnic minorities revolution aroused hopes of freedom from Petrograd's control. Amidst this chaos Kerensky had title more than power; soon his title was taken away with the Bolshevik *coup d'état* of November. Lenin, until the day he died in 1924, saw the Bolshevik revolution as simply the first step in a world revolution. Immediately, the communists faced the problems of holding onto power and creating a new society in the face of the collapse of

all central control, ethnic disintegration, the opposition of the majority of the Russian people, and the invading German armies. Their success had an enormous impact on the history of the 20th Century as did the fact that it was achieved at the expense of the high ideals that had brought many to communism.

### Additional Questions

The success of the Bolshevik Revolution raised many questions which psychohistorians may be able to answer. Why is revolution less an issue of the "have nots" versus the "haves" than of the "have some and want more" versus the "haves?" The answer is intimately connected with the psychology of frustration in a period of formally rising expectations. Is revolution a young man's occupation? What is the relationship of childrearing to revolution? Are there different psychoclasses based on different childrearing modes in the Russia? What is the role of group dynamics in the massive shift of attitudes in 1905, 1917, and more recently under Gorbachev when communism collapsed? What is the psychology of renunciation of power by groups that previously would have fought to the death to hold onto power? What caused the most dedicated of old Bolsheviks to confess to non-existent crimes in the purge trials of the 1930s? Why are there not more good psychobiographies of 20th-Century Russian leaders? Did Stalin's paranoid defenses help him to achieve and hold power? Did Trotsky's failure in his power struggle with Stalin stem from his ambivalence and self-defeating tendencies? How did the incredible human suffering of Russia in the Civil War, collectivization of agriculture, purges, and the world wars effect the psychology of the communist leadership and Russian people? Can Russian's sufficiently break the cycle of dependency on governmental power fostered since the Revolution to allow a significant capitalistic component in their society? Can Russians achieve a real democracy despite the nostalgia for the old ways and the flight from the choices occasioned by freedom? These are but a few of the questions that are worth exploring psychohistorically.

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*was no longer an enemy. He is editor of this publication and may be contacted at <pelovitz@aol.com>. □*

## "Bush Rage" & Its Consequences

*(Continued from front page)*

I am a Canadian doctoral student studying in the United States with an advisor originally from Germany. Being foreign-born, we have a unique perspective on American politics, which was predictably a frequent topic in our research meetings during the Iraq war. My advisor and I, along with an aggression researcher in North Dakota, wondered what effect pictures of President Bush would have on people's thoughts and behaviors. We believed that exposure to President Bush might make people more aggressive.

We decided to use the method of "priming," which has had a short but prolific history in social psychology. Psychologists find that people are constantly being influenced by their exposure to objects and people ("primes") in their environment. For example, when people are unobtrusively reminded about the elderly stereotype they start to walk slower, without even realizing it. Recent research has shown that being exposed to IBM computers can reduce levels of creativity. (Since I am using an IBM to write this article, please be patient as I continue to explain.)

In the first two studies, we exposed people to pictures of President Bush and then asked them to complete various tasks. In order to ensure that participants were unaware that they were being influenced by the pictures they saw, we told them a cover story. Individuals sat at a computer and had to quickly categorize words as "helpful" (for example, *love* or *forgive*) or "aggressive" (*hit* or *murder*) after seeing a picture of President Bush (or a control picture of either a chair or President Clinton). (The faster that people respond to these words, the more heavily associated the picture and the concept is in their minds.) In the last two studies, people completed a survey in which they saw a photo of Bush (or a control picture of President Clinton) and then read an ambiguous unrelated story about a man ("Donald") and were asked to rate his aggressiveness. In the final study, a few hundred participants

were also asked to grade me on my survey after they had completed it, a task they believed was unrelated to the experiment.

The results confirmed our hypothesis, which was that President Bush is associated with aggressive cognitions, perceptions, and behaviours. In the first two studies, people were faster to categorize aggressive words as compared to helpful ones after seeing pictures of President Bush (as compared to a chair or President Clinton). This meant that they associated him, but not a chair or Clinton, with aggressiveness. In the last two studies, they were more likely to rate Donald as aggressive after seeing Bush. Finally, in our final study, people gave me a lower grade if they had seen a picture of Bush rather than Clinton.

However, not all people responded with aggression; we found that it was liberals who were driving our predicted effects. How could this happen to the very type of peace-loving people who protested the Iraq war all over the world? In hindsight, it's simple: according to a popular bumper sticker, "You become what you hate." It is precisely because liberals think of Bush as aggressive that the effects were so pronounced in them.

But don't run out and tell all your liberal friends that they have been "Bush-whacked" just yet. Not every liberal will perceive hostility in innocent bystanders or act more aggressively after seeing President Bush. In one study, we found that our effect disappeared when people became aware of the prime, which is consistent with past priming research. We asked a group of people to list the traits that came to mind after seeing President Bush, and this group did not perceive Donald as any more aggressive than controls. So, the best remedy for Bush rage may be mindfulness.

Reflecting on my research, I wonder if I began this "aggressive" line of research after being exposed to President Bush a little too much last year. Now that I am aware of the potential effects of exposure to him, my friends tell me I have become a much nicer person.

*Sara Konrath is a doctoral student at the University of Michigan. One of her areas of specialization is political psychology using social cognition methods. The research described in this arti-*

*cle was presented at the American Psychological Society in Chicago and the International Society for Political Psychology in Sweden, 2004. The author may be contacted at skonrath@umich.edu. □*

## **Religion in the Life and Politics of George W. Bush**

**Maria T. Miliora  
Suffolk University**

The attacks on America of September 11, 2001, inextricably linked President George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden as adversaries in the history of the 21st century. Since both men are religious fundamentalists, their adversarial struggle may be termed a religious war of potentially global dimensions.

In an earlier paper ("The Psychology and Ideology of an Islamic Terrorist Leader," *The International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2004, pp. 121-139), I described Osama bin Laden as a messianic leader. (Borrowing from Merriam Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*, a messianic leader is "marked by idealism and an aggressive, crusading spirit" and a "sense of historic mission.") I further identified Islamic fundamentalism (*Wahhabism*) as one of the essential elements in bin Laden's evolution as an Islamic terrorist leader who has declared a religious war, a *jihad*, against America, which he calls "Satan." On the basis of his statements and video broadcasts, I also described bin Laden's worldview as Manichaeic, that is, dichotomized into "us" versus "them," and I inferred the presence of narcissistic fantasies in his conscious and unconscious mind such that bin Laden imagines that in committing atrocities against America, described in his words as "Jews and Crusaders," he is walking in the footsteps of the Prophet Mohammed.

In this paper I similarly identify George W. Bush as a messianic leader and, further, suggest that his religion (or, to express it more accurately, his interpretation of scripture) has played an integral role not only in his dichotomization of the world into "good" and "evil," but also in his declaring a war on terrorism, which, in his mind, includes the current and ongoing conflict in Iraq. Bush is an avowed Christian fundamentalist, that is, an evan-

gelical or born-again Christian ("Jesus Factor," "PBS Frontline," April 29, 2004). In the PBS broadcast, Bush is quoted as saying that his "faith in God through Jesus Christ" has given his life "meaning and direction." In the same broadcast, Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention claims that while Bush was still Governor of Texas, he acknowledged to religious leaders that he believed that God wanted him to be president.

The attack on America of September 11 occurred only about eight months after Bush took the oath of office as the 43rd president of the United States. Given the juxtaposition of these events as well as his interpretation of scripture, Bush may have imagined that he was destined to be president in order to fulfill some historic mission of the nation. Bush's speeches after the attack expressed recurrent themes of good and evil. For example, his Pentagon Memorial speech of October 11, 2001, concluded with the words: "This will be a monumental struggle of good versus evil, but good will prevail" ([www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/terroristattack/bush-speech-9-12.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/terroristattack/bush-speech-9-12.html)). In addition, after 9/11, it seemed that Bush had acquired a missionary zeal and had assumed the qualities of a messianic leader. In an address he gave on September 20, 2001, to Congress, entitled "Justice Will Be Done," Bush said that "in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment" ([www.whitehouse.gov/pres/dent/gwbbio.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/pres/dent/gwbbio.html)). This statement suggests that Bush felt inspired regarding his role to lead the nation in its mission of undertaking a monumental struggle against evil.

Heinz Kohut described a messianic leader as one whose sense of self is merged with the idealized superego or the idealized omnipotent and omniscient self (the "self-object"). In Kohut's words, "his self and the idealized structure have become one." In the case of George W. Bush, the idealized is Christ or God. According to Kohut, messianic leaders "display an apparent self-confidence, voice their opinions with absolute certainty, and are able to play the role of the idealized self-object [for those who need one, for example, a nation in crisis]." Moreover, "the maintenance of their self-esteem depends on the incessant use of certain mental functions: pointing out the moral flaws of other people" (Heinz Kohut, *Self Psychology and the Hu-*

*manities* [NY: W.W. Norton, 1985], pp. 195-197).

The President's unshakable self-confidence is evident in the interview of Bush by Bob Woodward (*Plan of Attack* [NY: Simon and Schuster, 2004], p. 420) when he was asked if he had suffered any doubt about the war in Iraq. Bush responded, "I haven't suffered any doubt." Woodward asked, "Is that right? Not at all?" Bush replied, "No. And I'm able to convey that to the people." This last statement expresses the President's wish to act as the omniscient, idealized leader (a self-object) to the people of the United States. Woodward further reported (transcript, "60 Minutes," CBS, April 18, 2004) that after Bush had given the order for war against Iraq, he "prayed for strength to do the Lord's will" and that he might be "as good a messenger of his will as possible." Given what I believe is the coalescence of President Bush's sense of self with Christ, when Bush referred to himself as a messenger of God's will, I speculate that Bush was verbalizing his fantasy that he is omniscient and able to discern the will of God. Accordingly he is absolutely certain that his actions regarding war are in accord with God's will.

Another important element that has appeared in the President's speeches since September 11 is his alluding to the United States as a "beacon." In the President's speech to the nation that day, Bush said, "America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining" ([myfreegold.com/Documents/bush911address.htm](http://myfreegold.com/Documents/bush911address.htm)). As pointed out by Jim Wallace, editor of the liberal evangelical magazine, *Sojourners*, in "The Jesus Factor," this terminology alluding to the Light that shines in the darkness and that darkness will not overcome it is taken from the Gospel of John. However, as explained by Wallace, this Light refers to Christ and the word of God. Wallace states that Bush, in substituting the nation for Christ, has "changed the text" and is guilty of "bad theology." In addition to its being "bad theology," this idealistic notion of America as the "beacon" allows Bush to see the nation as having the God-given right to wage war against people and nations that he judges to be evil.

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## A Second "JFK" Presidency?

**Herbert Barry**  
**University of Pittsburgh**

People who share the same name usually feel mutually affiliated and are perceived by other people as closely connected. President George W. Bush, for example, is obviously associated with his father, former President George Herbert Walker Bush. Nevertheless, differences seem to be more prominent than similarities in the two Bush presidencies. The incumbent President Bush ardently hopes that his potential re-election will be one of the differences.

Senator John Forbes Kerry shares many similarities with President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. A seemingly trivial difference was noted in a recent letter in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. The writer stated that she was too young to vote for JFK for President in 1960 and that she intended to vote for "JFK" for President this year.

John F. Kerry for a long time has been aware that he shares the same first name and the same three initials with John F. Kennedy, as well as the same liberal values and internationalist approach to the world. In 1960, Kerry supported Kennedy for president, contrary to the sentiments of most of the other students at his boarding school, St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire. Kerry met Kennedy briefly a couple of times while Kennedy was President because Kerry was dating Janet Auchincloss, the half-sister of Jacqueline Kennedy. Kerry deeply grieved the assassination of Kennedy.

Presidential nominees Kerry and Kennedy differ in some important respects. Kerry is older, has had a longer political career, and his parents died prior to his run for the presidency. Unlike Kennedy, he divorced and remarried, and his second wife is older, richer, and born abroad, in con-

trast to Jacqueline Kennedy. Kerry's recent prostate surgery is better publicized and a less severe health problem than Kennedy's Addison's Disease.

Kerry and Kennedy are similar in important respects. Both were Democratic nominees for the presidency two years after being re-elected to the U. S. Senate. It was the first re-election for Kennedy, the third for Kerry. Both were the Junior Senator from Massachusetts. The Senior Senator from Massachusetts was Republican Leverett Saltonstall for Kennedy, Democratic Ted Kennedy for Kerry. Both candidacies for president featured their status as war heroes and their Democratic Party affiliation. The religious membership of both is the Roman Catholic Church. Both wrote campaign autobiographies, Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* (1956, during his bid for the vice presidency, reissued in paperback in 1960 during his presidential campaign) and Kerry's *A Call to Service* (2004), stressing service to the country. Both were decorated naval heroes who lacked administrative experience prior to running for the presidency.

A potentially influential similarity between Kennedy and Kerry is that the middle name of both is the maternal family name. Mother Rose Fitzgerald was daughter of a popular Mayor of Boston. Mother Rosemary Forbes was a member of a wealthy and prestigious family. That similarity may have contributed to their emphasis on public service, ambition for the presidency, and popularity among female voters.

The maternal family name was reproduced in the middle name of several presidents of the United States. In addition to Kennedy, they were James Knox Polk, Rutherford Birchard Hayes, Thomas Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Richard Milhous Nixon, Ronald Wilson Reagan, and George Herbert Walker Bush. Biographies of these presidents, who generally exhibited emphasis on public service, indicate special affiliation and similarity of traits between the president and his mother's family.

Sons share the surname in addition to the gender of their father. Presidents whose middle name reproduced the maternal surname generally also developed strong affiliation with the father. President Kennedy imitated the compulsive adul-

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tery of his father. John Kerry imitates the intellect and emotional restraint of his father.

John Forbes Kerry's first name reproduces the middle name of his father, Richard John Kerry. A presidential precedent for dual maternal and paternal names is Rutherford Birchard Hayes. Born after the death of his father, Rutherford Hayes, Rutherford B. Hayes was a heroic Major General in the Civil War. The circumstances of his election as President in 1876-1877 were closely similar to those of George W. Bush in 2000. The inaugural address by Hayes stated that he owed his election to the "zealous labors of a political party" but that "he serves his party best who serves the country best." His highly conscientious, honest, conciliatory, and peaceful presidency is potentially an admirable precedent for John Forbes Kerry, who I anticipate will be our next president.

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## **Ralph Nader: The Political Psychology of a Puritanical Perfectionist**

**Ted Goertzel  
Rutgers-Camden**

Regular readers of *Clio's Psyche* will be familiar with Ralph Nader's childhood history from Peter Habenczius and Aubrey Immelman, "Childhood Denied: The Roots of Ralph Nader's Righteousness," in the March 2001 issue. More details about Nader's childhood are available in several published biographies; his mother's book, *It All Happened in the Kitchen: Recipes for Food and Thought* (1991); and on the Internet in a paper, "Ralph Nader's Childhood Roots" by Annie Bird-

song (<http://squawk.ca/lbo-talk/0008/0394.html>). All draw on a very limited amount of information because Nader places great value on personal privacy and has not shared many childhood anecdotes.

Born in 1934 to parents who had emigrated from Lebanon to Connecticut, Ralph had two older sisters and an older brother, with whom he is described as being very close. His parents were ideal in many ways: socially concerned, health conscious, and valuing education and civic activism. His father, Nathra, coached him to think independently and went out of his way to praise people who spoke up as dissenters in town meetings. Rose, his mother, told the children stories that were full of politically correct heroes and morals. She gave them raw chickpeas for snacks instead of chocolate. Biographer Justin Marin (*Nader: Crusader, Spoiler, Icon* [Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2002], p. 8.) reports that "Whenever the Nader children invited someone over for a birthday party, Rose would dutifully prepare a perfect cake – chocolate frosting, candles, the works. But it was only for display." Then, "before anyone could take a bite, she would strip away the frosting, asking 'You don't really want that, do you?'"

As a child, Nader never rebelled against this puritanical – "goody-goody" – upbringing. As an adult he has lived the life his parents wanted him to live. As he puts it: "I was brought up to aspire to advance justice as an active citizen, not as an elected politician. Not that there was anything wrong with running for office. It was just that my parents instilled in me a sense of social justice that wore no party or political brand" (Nader, *Crashing the Party*, 2002, p. 18). He graduated from Princeton and Harvard Law School, but eschewed a conventional legal career. Instead, he devoted himself to travel and journalism, with only modest success until a crusading publisher helped him to write *Unsafe at Any Speed* (1966) and General Motors foolishly hired private detectives to follow him and try to lure him into illicit sexual affairs. The ensuing scandal made him a celebrity and led to remarkable advances in auto safety and economy. Nader invented the consumer movement as a force for social change.

It's an admirable history, and Nader could have lived the rest of his life as the respected elder

statesman of the consumer and environmentalist movements. He might have even settled down a bit, married, and raised a family. But Ralph is not a man to rest on his laurels. He lives an austere, celibate existence, with no time for any of life's luxuries. He struggles seven days a week, 18 hours a day, against the powerful demon that threatens us all: Corporate America. He's not against capitalism in the form of small businesses such as his father's Highland Arms Diner in Connecticut. He's against businesses that become large, successful, and enjoy the fruits of their enterprise.

Psychologically, Nader is a remarkable example of the Puritanical Compulsive type as described in Theodore Millon and Roger Davis, *Personality Disorders in Modern Life* (2000). He is austere, self-righteous, dogmatic, zealous, uncompromising, indignant, and judgmental, with a grim and prudish sense of morality. Psychoanalytic theorists such as Sandor Rado and Wilhelm Reich believed that "all compulsives experience a deep ambivalence between obedience and defiance which they resolve through sublimation, reaction formation, and displacement. Those who sublimate this conflict seem more normal, those who displace their aggression seem more sadistic, and those who react strongly against their internal anger become self-righteous" (Millon and Davis, *Personality Disorders*, p. 178).

Nader clearly falls into the self-righteous category. Of course, there is much in the world to be critical of and, as Millon and Davis observe, "the final assessment of the puritanical compulsive often depends on which side of the fence you find yourself. One person's orator is another person's idiot." But as Ralph Nader has grown older, the unconscious roots of his behavior have become more and more apparent.

His campaigns for auto safety and better gasoline mileage made sense and did a great deal of good, yet his rhetoric makes it clear that psychologically he was fighting a holy war against the "reckless, unsafe hyper-horsepower-minded automobile industry" (Nader, *Party*, p. 8). Even after winning the war, he has denied himself the fruits of victory. He has never owned an automobile, not even an air-bagged, crash zone-protected Volvo or a gas miserly little Toyota Prius gas-electric hybrid

car.

His assertion that celibacy is forced on him because he is simply too busy for a family is unconvincing. He is not, in fact, the active manager of many of the causes he has inspired, such as the Public Interest Research Groups in every state. There is no objective reason to believe that his causes would suffer inordinately if he set aside a little time for a personal life. Millon and Davis say most Puritanical Compulsives "feel the persistent press of irrational and repugnant aggressive and sexual drives and adopt an ascetic and austere lifestyle to prohibit their own dark impulses and fantasies" (p. 178). Nader fits this pattern well, although he has shared nothing of his inner impulses and fantasies.

His persistence in running for president suggests that his psychological needs are stronger than his desire to advance his causes. His response to critics who point out that his candidacy helped to elect George W. Bush in 2000, and may do so again in 2004, is to point to the Democratic Party's failures to enact the full range of reforms advocated by the Greens. Politically, the Puritanical Compulsive becomes the puritanical perfectionist, the activist who refuses to enjoy modest success by supporting a candidate with a realistic chance of winning. *Crashing the Party* is Nader's book about the 2000 campaign. His greatest fear is that he will succumb to the invitation to join the "party," thus losing the target for his anger.

Nader's childhood suggests that even the most liberal and well-meaning parents may be too controlling and moralistic. A child who is not even allowed to taste the icing on his birthday cake may grow up into an overly austere, self-punishing adult, sadly unable to enjoy the small or even major victories that life brings him. Furthermore, his uncompromising approach causes him to weaken the causes he has devoted himself to supporting and makes him a *de facto* ally of his lifelong opponents.

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*Political Belief and Disillusionment (1992). In 2004 he updated and co-edited his parents' 1962 book, Cradles of Eminence: Childhoods of More Than 700 Famous Men and Women. Prof. Goertzel may be contacted at <goertzel@camden.rutgers.edu>. □*

## **Political Bias at an Academic Meeting**

**Lucian Gideon Conway  
University of Montana**

It troubles me that psychology, and especially psychoanalytic theory, is used at professional meetings for political purposes. For example, at the July 15, 2004, International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) conference at the University of Lund in Sweden, an American psychiatrist claimed that President George W. Bush (Bush 43) was suffering from "oedipal issues" – some sort of unresolved need to best his father – and that this inspired the war in Iraq.

The idea was that because his father (President George Herbert Walker Bush – generally referred to as Bush 41) had also gone to Iraq but had not removed Saddam, this gave Bush the son an opportunity to out-do him. This is an interesting and on the surface compelling idea but at the end of the talk, one of his fellow panelists asked the essential question: "What evidence do you have of this?" The speaker's reply was that, first, Bush denied that he had ever made a mistake as president, and, secondly, that he refused to admit that he had spoken with his father about his decision to go to war with Iraq, despite rumors that he had talked to him once a week.

A member of the audience quite reasonably pointed out that this is not really evidence of some sort of angst about bettering his father. If the fact that Bush refuses to admit mistakes is evidence of an oedipal complex, then it must be a psychological difficulty uniquely ubiquitous among presidents, since this is simply standard political fare and has been for as long as I can remember. By this standard, the vast majority of presidents have probably had such a complex! Bush's refusal to admit conversations with his father also needs no other expla-

nation than that it would be a political disaster for him to admit such a conversation. One might as well say that Clinton had an oedipal complex because he did not want to admit to sexual improprieties, or that everyday employees have oedipal complexes because they don't point out major errors of their bosses. Politicians, like most other people, generally try to avoid saying things that will get them fired. The speaker needed much better evidence to make this point in a viable manner.

So, if not from facts, where did this interpretation come from? Other parts of the speaker's comments laid bare the real meaning of Bush's apparent oedipal complex. In his preparatory comments, he said that he "hoped Bush would not be president after November," and about halfway into his talk launched into some laudatory prose about the glorious abilities of Bush's opponent, John Kerry. (He apparently was impressed that Kerry had dodged some questions on a TV show – in his mind *this* sort of dodging did not seem to indicate an oedipal complex). My own interpretation as a political psychologist with no training in psychoanalytic technique is quite different. The speaker's interpretation of Bush seemed to say more about him than Bush, representing his deep-seated desire to see Bush removed from office. The main thing I learned from his talk is that the speaker did not think Bush was a good president, and that his interpretation of an "oedipal complex" was a means of undermining Bush's credibility. After all, who wants a president in office that takes countries to war so he can out-do his father?

There is something to be said for a speaker, as in this case, making his opinions known openly, so that his biases can be easily seen by others. But what about those cases where presenters hide their biases from themselves and others? They may be projecting onto the politician their own psychological needs and political biases. Political psychobiographers should be aware of and monitor their own countertransference feelings regarding their subject, but how many actually live up to this ideal? Based on what I witnessed at the ISPP, not enough do. I do not appear to be alone in this concern: It was my impression that the distinguished psychoanalytic psychobiographer who chaired the aforementioned session was politely uncomfortable with the speaker's rambling comments, as were at least

one of the panelists and others in the audience.

I have been unable to determine if the presenter, who has a university affiliation, has ever published anything on political psychobiography or if he was simply pontificating outside of his field of expertise in psychiatry. The Code of Conduct of the American Psychiatric Association prohibits psychiatrist members from writing about living subjects without their written permission. Did the speaker have such permission, or did he perhaps feel that he was freed from this canon of his profession because he was an ocean away?

I am not, however, here trying to attack a particular individual, but rather echo a warning that I think is currently on the minds of many political psychologists. Everyone has biases – myself as well as this particular ISPP speaker – and it is impossible to root all these biases out. However, if we are truly to consider psychobiography a scholarly discipline, we must not give up on the goal of being objective; we must try hard not to assume that our hated political rival is more likely to have destructive psychological issues than our pet political icon. We must be ever-vigilant to guard against those biases when they creep in.

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## **Bias, Countertransference, and Father Son Issues: A Response to Conway**

**Paul H. Elovitz**

**Ramapo College and the Psychohistory Forum**

As a scholar of contemporary presidents and candidates, I am quite sensitive to the issue of bias as I struggle to write jargon-free political psychology focused on childhood, coping mechanisms,

empathy, personality, and overcoming trauma. For an example of this, see my article on Bush and Kerry, "A Psychobiographical Comparison of Bush and Kerry," *Journal of Psychohistory* (Fall 2004, pp. 109-142). It troubled me that the biased presenter described by Professor Conway was a substitute for me when I could not attend the International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) meetings in Lund.

However, I must disagree with Conway's claim that the President refused to acknowledge asking his father's advice about going to war with Iraq in early 2003. Though the younger Bush spoke often with his father, it is my sense that he had no reason not to admit he asked about the war: he had no need to ask since he knew his father would want him to continue down the complicated diplomatic road that he had decided to forgo after many months of frustration. Why ask a question when you already know the answer? Similarly, he never asked Secretary of State Colin Powell if he should go to war without renewed UN support (See Robert Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 2004, pp. 269-272).

Regarding the President's oedipal issues, though I do not use this term in my article, cited above, I think a strong case may be made for these, especially regarding the 2003 Iraq War which enabled him to both vindicate his father's 1991 Iraq war and outdo him by deposing Saddam Hussein and occupying the country in the name of liberation and democratization. Professor Rudolph Binion presents the evidence for Bush's rivalry with his father in the context of Bush's war with Iraq as a case of traumatic reliving of September 11, 2001 ("Bush's America Goes to War," *Clio's Psyche*, Vol. 10 No. 1, June 2003, pp. 1-3). That the term *oedipal* is used so loosely in our society is not a reason to dismiss it out of hand.

An additional issue is that I think it is a mistake to see the feelings of the political psychobiographer as simply a problem to be eliminated. Countertransference feelings toward a patient or a subject of research may be an asset as well as a detriment to the work of the analyst. They may provide vital information to the analyst, especially if they are clearly induced by the subject. Even if they are projections of the analyst, they can be informative, if s/he is well analyzed and determined

to understand what motivates the many choices which are made in the course of psychoanalytic and psychobiographical work. Clearly, the individual who prompted Conway's article showed no signs of using this information to improve his scholarship. □

## Geoffrey Cocks: Historian of Film and Nazi Germany

(Continued from front page)

Professor Cocks is the author of *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich: The Göring Institute* (1985, 1997), *Treating Mind and Body: Essays in the History of Science, Professions, and Society Under Extreme Conditions* (1998), and *The Wolf at the Door: Stanley Kubrick, History, and the Holocaust* (2004); editor of *The Curve of Life: The Correspondence of Heinz Kohut, 1923-1981* (1994); and co-editor (with Travis Crosby) of *Psycho/History: Readings in the Method of Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1987), (with Konrad Jarausch) of *German Professions, 1800-1950* (1990), (with Manfred Berg) of *Medicine and Modernity: Public Health and Medical Care in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Germany* (1997), and (with James Diedrick and Glenn Perusek) of *Depth of Field: Stanley Kubrick, Film, and the Uses of History* (2005).

Professor Cocks has been the recipient of grants from the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (1973-1974, 1985); the *National Endowment for the Humanities* (1980, 1987, 1988-1989); the *American Historical Association* (1988); the *International Research and Exchanges Board* (1988); the *Heinz Kohut Memorial Fund* (1991); and the *National Institutes of Health* (1991-1992). He has been a referee for many fine presses, including Cambridge, Harvard, Oxford, and UCLA. From 1994 to 2002 he was *Royal G. Hall Professor of History at Albion College* and since 2002 has been *Rammelkamp Professor at Albion*. Dr. Cocks (GCC) was interviewed in August by the Editor (PHE). He may be reached at <Gcocks@albion.edu>.

**PHE:** What brought you to psychohistory?

**GCC:** I first confronted psychohistory in the form

of a seminar I took my senior year at Occidental College from American historian Andrew Rolle (see "Teaching and Writing Psychohistory: Andrew F. Rolle, An Interview by Geoffrey Cocks," *Clio's Psyche* 4 (1997): 81-86). Rolle was the one who introduced me to Freud's work and, subsequently, to Peter Loewenberg at UCLA, who was just publishing his essays on the Nazi youth cohort and on Himmler's failed adolescence in successive issues of the *American Historical Review*. Since I had always been interested in German history, and in particular the history of the Nazi period, this represented an easy opportunity to combine an old interest with a new one at the graduate level. It was at Occidental that I had decided I wanted to become an historian. This was not only a function of the excellent instruction in history I received at Occidental, but also from the fact that I grew up in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War in a home filled with books and within a familial environment of great interest in history and current events. As for my deeper motivation to explore psychohistory, I think, among other things, I must have viewed my boyhood interest in World War II, the Nazis, and the German military in particular as morally and psychodynamically problematic.

**PHE:** I am always interested in why my students, colleagues, and I choose to study certain fields. Consequently, your description of your interest in WWII and German military history as "morally and psychodynamically problematic" draws my attention. Please explain.

**GCC:** At least that is how I view it from the perspective of adulthood. I still find myself attracted to the study of the absolute worst in 20th-century history and I recognize that such attraction is anything but just a matter of intellectual purity or professional idealism. I still find the history of the Second World War in general (and German military hardware in particular) fascinating, an interest that is, among other things, morally and psychologically problematic. I hasten to say, however, that I think I have very successfully sublimated the relevant unconscious conflicts and aggressions into productive teaching and scholarship. First, I think my interest in psychoanalysis was partly related to my struggles over my interest in the history of Nazi Germany, an interest certainly also stemming from deeper unconscious conflicts. Second, my teaching and scholar-

ship have over the past 20 years been ever more focused on the Holocaust. I have not lost my research interest in those areas of Nazi society not directly related to Nazi persecution and extermination (the professional history of psychotherapy and the social history of illness in the Third Reich), but my study of the plight of Jews and others in Nazi Germany is more than just a reflection of growing academic and popular interest in that particular subject over the past score or so of years. I like to think that, even in the absence of my own personal psychoanalysis, I am working through conflicts much more than acting them out in my work as an historian.

Perhaps this struggle itself, therefore, is one – or even a major – reason why I remain an enthusiastic and effective teacher and scholar. My involvement with students and faculty at Albion and at Alma College since 1999 in restoring the New Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław, Poland, as part of a biennial Holocaust Service-Learning Project is one instance of this in terms of teaching. Even this interest and commitment is in part a psychodynamic function of what Conrad called the “fascination with abomination” that is one danger – although also one motive toward ethical action and education – of the study of evil. On the other hand, being at Treblinka and Auschwitz on these journeys stripped fascination away and replaced it with sorrow and outrage. My basic point here is that such work is not just a function of virtue or interest, but of personal experience and psychological compromise.

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

**GCC:** Though I have written about psychotherapy in the Third Reich, done some psychobiographical work on A.A. Milne and Stanley Kubrick, and edited Kohut's letters as well as a book of psychohistory readings, I do not think I have written a significant psychohistorical work. This is due to the absence of a personal psychoanalytic experience. I never mustered the courage to undergo psychoanalysis, even though I consistently stress to my students the validity of psychoanalytic insight. Perhaps my own guilt and self-consciousness over shying away from something that would be in accord with my intellectual interests and convictions gives me some extra energy in providing students at least some intellectual exposure to psychoanalysis and

psychohistory. Moreover, the argument for psychoanalysis even in the absence of personal experience has intellectual force and one can't spend many years reading psychoanalysis without it having some salutary effect on one's own self-reflection and the ability to teach (and learn) about human beings past and present.

But the lack of personal insight makes me as unwilling as I am unable to produce a purely psychohistorical work. It was during my graduate years that I gave up on Hitler psychobiography. I found the subject too depressing, but it was also the case that I was unwilling to undergo psychoanalysis as a means to understand myself more fully before undertaking to understand someone else on a deep psychodynamic level. Of course, my decision was overdetermined.

As a result of this professional turn my scholarly reputation rests chiefly on the two editions of *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich: The Göring Institute* (1985, 1997), essentially a montage of my two areas of interest, German history and the history of psychoanalysis broadly conceived. This was certainly a compromise formation: if I could not undergo psychoanalysis and exercise full psychoanalytic and psychohistorical inquiry, then I could at least construct the historical context of psychoanalysis at a certain time and place of particular interest to me. This combination was a way of avoiding the prospect of my own analysis and thus confrontation with my own unconscious conflicts, but at least something of scholarly value came of this avoidance. Indeed, it occurs to me now that a defensive pattern of avoidance – of what exactly I can't by definition say – has been part of my whole approach to scholarship. This approach seeks to avoid the usual areas and angles of research to explore unique subjects out of the way of direct confrontation with prevailing schools of thought and scholarly controversies. Ironically, but also logically, my work has occasioned controversy: some criticism was wrongheaded but some was insightful and my work stood up as substantive and defensible. *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich* was one such “unknown” and “impossible” subject; so was the issue of Heinz Kohut himself being the subject of “The Two Analyses of Mr. Z,” his most famous case study; and, to answer the question about the work of mine of which I am most proud (at least at

the moment), so is Stanley Kubrick's all-but-hidden preoccupation in his films with the Holocaust. My work has always been on the margins, consistent with a pattern of avoidance of issues "closer to home," as it were, but also with some scholarly and pedagogical advantages in an increasingly interdisciplinary academic world. Perhaps ironically, it has kept me in close contact with psychoanalysis as a discipline and mode of inquiry since Freudian perspectives have continually been reworked and enriched in a variety of fields, including history, film, literature, and culture.

**PHE:** A psychohistorian for over three-and-a-half decades, I have to strongly disagree with your generalization that one cannot do psychohistory without personal analysis. Even though I consider personal analysis an invaluable asset in doing our work, I must argue against this being a *sine qua non* for psychohistory, and I could give the names of individuals who have written valuable work without it. Why do you think you cannot do psychohistory without personal analysis?

**GCC:** I have doubts that I can do psychohistory adequately and in enough depth. Yes, as a result of relying on empathy and experience some significant insight is available to all human beings. Wilhelm Dilthey's *Einfühlung* or Erik Erikson's "disciplined subjectivity" describe, respectively, the added advantage of historical and psychoanalytic training. My feeling of psychohistorical inadequacy is also probably based on the very same unconscious conflicts that prevented me from undergoing analysis in the first place. I probably do have some of this type of basic and schooled insight into my subject matter. I like to think that my first publication, on A. A. Milne ("A. A. Milne: Sources of His Creativity," *American Imago* 34:4 (1977): 313-26), whatever its limitations as a graduate exercise in the application of Kleinian theory to biography, represents this sort of schooled ability to look into another person's psyche.

**PHE:** I wonder if your being so hard on yourself is related in part to a feeling that you have not lived up to the ego ideal set up by your doctoral advisor, Peter Loewenberg, of UCLA? He encouraged but did not insist upon psychohistory students undergoing psychoanalysis and training at the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute.

**GCC:** I expect that you are right about this. Peter is the quintessential non-directive psychoanalyst. One has to do one's work oneself. He let me go my own way, which has worked out well in terms of my scholarship and teaching. Certainly the opposite extreme of a highly directive *Doktorvater* (doctor father) would almost certainly have resulted in my never stumbling upon the Göring Institute as the subject for a dissertation

**PHE:** What are you working on now? What is its importance and when do you expect to have it published?

**GCC:** I have just (August 2004) published *The Wolf at the Door: Stanley Kubrick, History, and the Holocaust*. This book had its genesis in my attendance at a showing of *The Shining* in the summer of 1980 at the Golden Bough Theatre in Carmel, California. I mention the time and place not only because such is the default setting for an historian but also because Carmel was where my father and mother lived for the last 30 and 39, respectively, years of their lives. In 1980 I was living with my wife and daughter in Carmel while on leave from Albion to write what became the first edition of *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich*. I was not at first impressed much by *The Shining*. I had gone to see it because I had seen an advertisement for it on television (a scene I have since argued is a central Holocaust symbol) and had seen other films by Stanley Kubrick before, beginning in 1964 when my father took me to see *Dr. Strangelove*. What strikes me now about the coincidence of time, place, and event is that *The Shining* (I did not know then) is the most autobiographical of all of Kubrick's films and, not coincidentally, is the film in which Kubrick's approach-avoidance syndrome with regard to the Holocaust leaves its greatest latent traces. The film is essentially about violence within families, the Torrance family of the book and the film and the human family in general. I am not speaking here of violence within my own family – in fact my upbringing was supportive in the emotionally restrained way perhaps typical of those with Anglo-Scottish-German ancestry – but rather of the more general issue of normal problematic dynamics inherent in the subjective realm of human experience. Suffice it to say there was (and is) something going on with respect to my own approach-avoidance with regard to psychoanalysis

and my own family history and the discipline of history I first embraced as a young adult.

**PHE:** It is good that you pay attention to the connections between your life and that of your subject. Tell me more about this book.

**GCC:** I think my book on Kubrick is the best work I have ever done – or at least it has the boldest thesis. It certainly has involved the most thought and the most learning on my part. My first impression of the film had been quickly undermined by a nagging sense that there was much more going on in the film than I had first noticed. It turns out that this is always the case with Kubrick films, for the simple reason that he painstakingly places many levels of meaning into the visual and aural discourse of his films, the detection of which requires repeated viewings and reflection. I subsequently became convinced that there is a striking indirect pattern of symbolic discourse in *The Shining* on history in general and the Holocaust in particular. I published an essay on this in *The Psychohistory Review* in 1987 and another, improved, one in the *Psychoanalytic Review* in 1991. With Kubrick's death in 1999, a flood of information about this reclusive filmmaker became available, much of which seemed to provide strong support for my original insight into Kubrick's interest in history, the Germans, and the Holocaust as represented by and in *The Shining* in particular. Kubrick himself was also very interested in Freud and the screenplay he wrote with Diane Johnson for *The Shining* was largely based on Freud's essay "The 'Uncanny'" (1919) and Bruno Bettelheim's book on fairy tales, *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976). Indeed one of the reasons why Kubrick's films require reflection is that he constructs them like dreams, in which small objects represent large hidden forces of mind and history. *The Shining*, in great measure because it deals – reflexively and deconstructively – with horror beyond all other, surpasses all other Kubrick films in its recourse to this indirect method of exposition and discourse. Once again my background in history and in psychoanalysis was peculiarly appropriate for exploration of subject matter previously unrecognized. Perhaps my own history of approach-avoidance made me sensitive to Kubrick's own approach-avoidance syndrome with regard to the Holocaust.

The book is not psychohistory *per se*, although I make much of what I see as such dynamics as Kubrick's defensive identification with the aggressor, his culturally bred critical insight into the anxious and angry hypermasculinity that underlay much of Nazism, and the Oedipal struggles that are a manifest subject of almost all of his films. I did not know it at the time I began my work on Kubrick, but Kubrick, too, had a fascination with the Germans and their machines of war, an orientation reflected in his films that could well have intuitively generated some degrees of identificatory interest on my part with his struggle over this. As another sign of the reinvigorating of Freudian thought, Chodorovian and Lacanian insights have proved to be important components of recent scholarly discourse on film in particular. These therefore also contribute significantly to my analysis of Kubrick, especially in terms of the pre-oedipal dynamics of masculine fear and desire (*Fear and Desire* was the title of Kubrick's first feature film) revolving around the original female caretaker (Jack Torrance is the nominal "caretaker" of the Overlook Hotel in *The Shining*, but it is his wife who actually does all the work around the place).

My main emphasis is, however, once again historical. I focus on Kubrick's experience as a preternaturally perceptive young Jew born in the Bronx in 1928 and growing up in an era of depression, fascism, and war. All his life he attempted to confront artistically the reality of a dangerous and a contingent universe. At the center of this maze of malevolence lay the Minotaur of the Holocaust. (One of Kubrick's first films was a "Minotaur Production.") His approach-avoidance syndrome with respect to the Nazi Final Solution was complicated by his marriage into a German family that included the infamous Nazi film director Veit Harlan. The result of this confluence of personal and historical is a curiously spasmodic and largely symbolic presence of Germans in Kubrick's films and the absence of Jews. The growing cultural preoccupation with the Holocaust beginning with the Eichmann trial in 1961 and the "Hitler Wave" of the 1970s also played a role in Kubrick's laying of an historical subtext on the Holocaust in *The Shining*. We know the subject was on his mind: In 1975 he told his executive producer to read Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961) and then sent him to ask Isaac Bashevis Singer to help write a

screenplay for a Holocaust film. Singer refused, saying he knew nothing about the subject. Kubrick pestered Hilberg over the years about a source for a film and even wrote a screenplay, "Aryan Papers," based on Louis Begley's *Wartime Lies* (1991), which, however, he never filmed.

To the degree my book on Kubrick represents "psychohistory" at all, it might be in the sense outlined brilliantly by Tom Kohut in a recent essay (the *Annual of Psychoanalysis* 31 (2003): 225-236). Kohut argues that history affects the psyche just as the psyche affects history, that "psychoanalysis ... has demonstrated that we are psychologically constituted through our experience of the environment ... [an] environment that is constituted by history [and that] ... [t]herefore history constitutes our psyches" (p. 226).

**PHE:** What has been the early reception to your Kubrick book?

**GCC:** It's too early to say. I've had some excellent help from a number of film scholars and Kubrick authorities that suggests some interest in my approach and findings. Kubrick biographer Vincent LoBrutto (*Stanley Kubrick*, 1997) is very positive about my book. Kubrick's brother-in-law and executive producer Jan Harlan and his wife Christiane Kubrick are, I think, skeptical about my thesis, although they, too, provided a good deal of important material for the book. I think their skepticism is based on the fact that they are too close to the subject and therefore lack the perspective that distance and disciplinary expertise brings. I have a feeling that the reception will be polarized – significant enthusiasm from some and rejection from others. One disciplinary aspect of this is that film people in general and postmodernists in particular tend to appreciate history less than they should.

**PHE:** What is your primary affiliation?

**GCC:** For the reasons we have already discussed, I think by nature and practice I have always been an historian. But being an historian necessarily makes one open to a wide variety of subject matters and methods. Psychoanalysis is by nature an historical discipline, since it seeks to investigate the past for its own sake and for keys to understanding the present. Film was *the* new artistic medium of the 20th century in which I began and lived most of my life.

I took on Kubrick because he, too, was greatly interested in the history of the modern era and also in psychoanalysis as a means to understand dark human motives and actions. I teach "psychohistory," although I think recent developments in a wide variety of fields including history have rendered that term unnecessary. The irrational as understood and explicated by Freud and others is now as a matter of course recognized as a vital area of human experience. I was never convinced of the necessity of having a separate discipline of "psychohistory" and certainly not as a predictive science like that proposed by Lloyd deMause.

Psychoanalysis or "psychohistory" cannot substitute for history, but rather it must serve history. It seems to me that the crucial thing about history is that it insists on the multiplicity of factors in explaining human lives and events as comprehensively and as meaningfully as possible. For example, I now have a greater appreciation for the possibility that Rudolph Binion's research on Bloch's use of iodoform to treat Klara Hitler's cancer has something to say about Adolf's development. Binion is perhaps right that the Führer's later protection of Bloch was based on denial of his own role in allowing or urging the treatment that Binion concludes killed Hitler's mother, because since Freud we know that the mind can work like that. On the other hand, though, such preferential treatment (see David Beisel's review of Bloch's memoirs in *Clio's Psyche* 11:2 (June 2004): 1, 8-12) does raise the strong possibility that Binion's focus on the treatment of Hitler's mother is not (as) central to an explanation of Hitler's murderous hatred toward Jews. In other words, Hitler's protection of Bloch could have been based on other factors, including (or not) denial of complicity in his mother's death. It is Binion's method that I think is most questionable because of its insistence on exclusive validity in explaining Hitler's obsession with gassing the Jews. This insistence in turn is problematically based on the argument that confirmation of Binion's thesis comes only by means of the same result won by the same empathic immersion in the documents Binion himself experienced. Such conviction and certainty is not in line with the historian's traditional search for multiple conditions rather than single causes or with postmodern emphasis on the inherent multiplicity of explanation. Binion's embrace of Freud's early traumatic model

to the exclusion of all other psychodynamics and theoretical constructs seems risky, particularly when Binion posits a collective German trauma to which Hitler's trauma "linked." In sum, on the principle that in history more things rather than fewer things about a given phenomenon tend to be true, I think Binion's thesis may have *something* to say about Hitler and the Germans, but I am thus also still very unsure about the claim of his thesis to absolute and exclusive authority on the origins and effects of Hitler's hatred for the Jews.

**PHE:** How do you define psychohistory?

**GCC:** I see "psychohistory" as history, since it is impossible to separate the irrational lives of individuals and groups from the other conditions comprising human experience over time. The growing interest in psychoanalytic perspectives in a wide variety of disciplines in my view makes strict demarcation of the "field" of "psychohistory" unnecessary.

**PHE:** What special training was most helpful in your doing psychohistorical work?

**GCC:** Being introduced to Freud by Rolle, who was in psychoanalytic training at the time, was the crucial first step. Andy emphasized psychoanalysis as a means to understanding the motives and actions of individuals in the past. Loewenberg, as both practicing historian and psychoanalyst, deepened not only my knowledge of German history but also the intellectual milieu from which Freudian theory emerged. Peter also had his students attend sessions at the Southern California Psychoanalytic Society. I remember, for example, hearing Fawn Brodie present her initial findings on Jefferson at one of these meetings. I also took a couple of courses at the school of neuropsychiatry at UCLA.

Since I did not undertake formal psychoanalytic training, the most important work I did subsequently was simply to read. In this regard, Freud was and is the most important source for me as a "psychohistorian." This is because my chief area of interest is one in which Freud's emphasis on conflict and irrationality seems particularly manifest. For me, Americans by contrast are still too culturally naive. Erikson was an early inspiration. His *Young Man Luther* (1958) was assigned in my first-year Western Civilization course in college and

none of us read it. But I remember saying to my friends that we would eventually recognize it as an important book. Now, of course, much of its luster has been diminished by subsequent historical critique, but it at least showed the important possibilities for psychological understanding in history. In my seminar *The Irrational in History*, I find Erikson's essay on Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957), read in conjunction with viewing the film, to be an effective and persuasive piece of thinking for young people about individual human lives in their temporal totality and personal relationships. I have also for some years used Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978, 1999) as a means of introducing a gender perspective along with inquiry into pre-oedipal dynamics. Most recently, I have introduced the students to the work of Lacan, utilizing Slavoj Žižek's *Looking Awry* (1991) in conjunction with the Alfred Hitchcock films *Rear Window* (1954) and *Vertigo* (1958).

**PHE:** Your reference to Lacanians interests me. Can you identify some Lacanians with a good clinical and historical sense.

**GCC:** I'm not familiar with clinical or historical work from a Lacanian perspective since my exposure to Lacanian theory has come from film theory in my work on Kubrick. Lacanians tend to cluster in the realms of critical literary theory and semiotics, since Lacan's view is that "the unconscious is outside," that is, the psyche is a function of the use of language between and among people. Lacan therefore tends to be most useful in terms of deconstructing "signs," particularly of the "lack" that exists at the center of all knowledge and personality. According to Lacan, men in particular are consumed by desire for an original union with the mother, which in fact never existed. If accepted, the universal concerns of this theory make it useful for analyzing the common background of all human activity. For Lacanians, as for most postmodern theorists, metonym (a figure of speech) prevails over the facticity on which historians base their work. Freud, Kohut, and Chodorow are more useful to historians since they stress more specific histories – that is, case studies – of individuals interacting with their environment from birth onward. All of these levels of dynamic generality and specificity can be useful when used together by the historian. This is one of the things I have done in my

book on Kubrick; his films can be read on all of these levels. For example, an elevator disgorging blood in *The Shining* can be read as male terror of the female (Lacan, Freud), as the pre-oedipal project of masculine identity as distinct from the dominant female caretaker (Chodorow), as oedipal conflict (Freud), and as historical representation of murder and genocide (Cocks). The whole postmodern movement, of which Lacan's theory is a part, is basically a matter of applying an "uncertainty principle" to human thought and action. As an historian, I would note that this valuable set of insights is also a product of history and largely of that greatest era of the generation of uncertainty about everything, the Second World War and the Holocaust. Interesting in this regard is that Lacan himself worked as a psychoanalyst in Paris during the Nazi occupation of France (Alain de Mijolla, "Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalysts in France between 1939 and 1945," *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 12 (2003): 136-56).

**PHE:** Have you published, or do you plan to publish, an autobiography or any autobiographical writings?

**GCC:** I have no plans in that regard, although, of course, everything I have written reveals something about me. Perhaps the closest I have come to more direct personal revelation is an unpublished novel based on my work on psychotherapy in the Third Reich.

**PHE:** What training should a person entering psychohistory today pursue?

**GCC:** The appropriate training for a "psychohistorian" can vary depending on the individual. In general, though, it is *best* to have formal training both in history and in psychoanalysis as well as to undergo a personal psychoanalysis. Even in the absence of such training in the case of the overwhelming majority of historians, there is potential and actual growth in the field of "psychohistory" due to the natural interests of social historians in emotion and agency apart from or within structural conditions. The poststructuralist emphasis upon perspectives as well calls upon the insights won from a psychodynamic point of view. Within "traditional" psychohistory, the application of Kohut and also – mostly from the direction of

literature and cinema – Lacan has been evident. To encourage such exploration, historians using psychoanalysis must continue to balance psychoanalytic interpretations with conscious, external, and social conditions. In this respect, the importance of childhood to psychohistorical work is not a matter of strict determinism but of a holistic understanding of a life entire. As Freud himself understood, a personality is a unit over time and not just the creation of environmental influences at particular junctures.

**PHE:** What do you mean when you say that "personality is a unit over time"?

**GCC:** I mean that while internal and external change over time matters very much in life and in history, a person largely remains the same person her or his entire life. This view emphasizes the Freudian emphasis on the importance of childhood in human development, but it also stresses the degrees to which human beings exercise agency in shaping their personality on the unconscious as well as conscious level. By this I mean that there is a constant negotiation going on at the interface between the conscious and the unconscious. Likewise, each of us deals in a like manner with our own experience of the external world and its constraints as well as opportunities at our own time and place.

**PHE:** How do you see psychohistory developing in the next decade?

**GCC:** I am sure the subject matter of the unconscious and the irrational will continue to be integrated into the work of historians and into other disciplines as well. German history, my own field of specialization, has long been the subject of psychohistorical inquiry, but in spite of that or rather because of it, we must guard against the loss of sensitivity to the dynamics of the unconscious to the present – and valid – attempt to "depathologize" German history and "historicize" the Third Reich.

**PHE:** Your references to depathologizing German history raises the general issue of pathology and psychohistory. What pros and cons do you see in my efforts as editor of this publication to write a jargon-free psychohistory based on childhood, coping mechanisms (the mechanisms of defense), creativity, empathy, innovation, and psychohistory?

**GCC:** I think your efforts as editor of *Clio's Psyche* are crucial and in line with much of the best work that is being done across the disciplines to integrate psychoanalytic insights into the full range of human experience and explication. After all, one of Freud's great contributions was to break the old 19th-century positivistic psychiatric insistence on the *qualitative* distinction between the "insane" and the "sane," the "abnormal" and the "normal," through his study of *quantitative* differences in human motivation and behavior. Along with this came an empathy for all human beings in having to deal with conflict and "disability," an accurate and, more important, humane divergence from contemporaneous "scientific" attempts to classify human beings as individuals as well as groups into those more or less "valuable," a tendency that of course would have particularly drastic and despicable political effects in the first half of the 20th century.

**PHE:** What is the state of psychohistory in Germany?

**GCC:** I can't rightly say, which is part of the answer to your question in that psychohistory as a distinct entity has, to my knowledge, hardly existed in Germany. Interest in Freud has remained generally strong, with particular impact among psychoanalysts themselves and among literary theorists. To overgeneralize badly, the older postwar historians remained in the Rankean tradition and disregarded theory of all kinds, while many younger historians after 1945 and up to the present day have been drawn to variations of Marxist critical theory to help address Germany's descent into fascism. For example, Hans-Ulrich Wehler in the early 1970s edited a collection of previously published essays on psychoanalysis and history (*Geschichte und Psychoanalyse*, 1971), but except for Wehler's introduction, none of the five essays was by a German; four were well-known pieces by Americans (Hughes, Strout, Alexander and Juliette George) and the other was by Alain Besançon. Wehler was a leading member of the Bielefeld school, which applied social science theory to history, but his and his school's work exploited primarily on sociological and economic theory in order to make a case for German exceptionalism in explaining Hitler. More recently, some good cultural history has taken the role of the unconscious seriously in psychodynamic terms, for example, Joachim Radkau's *Das Zeitalter*

*der Nervosität: Deutschland zwischen Bismarck and Hitler* (1998). In terms of the study of German history generally, British historian David Blackbourn's *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (1997) posits a uniquely strong Prussian/German hypermasculinity as a cultural style. Blackbourn's work reflects the strong current of gender analysis in historical studies on both side of the Atlantic including Germany, which in post-Freudian forms emphasizes the importance of sexuality and sexual identity at all levels of the individual and society.

**PHE:** What do we as psychohistorians need to do to strengthen our work?

**GCC:** Historians in general should seek to respond to outreach programs developed by psychoanalytic institutes and societies. In turn they should offer to teach "applied psychoanalysis," perhaps first as a non-credit seminar and then, perhaps, with experience and further psychoanalytic training, such a seminar could become a regular part of the curriculum at the institute. I do not believe that courses in "applied psychoanalysis" should be taught by analysts who have no training in a relevant additional discipline (such as history, sociology, anthropology, etc.). "Distance learning" via electronic media could offer another way to reach academia and society as a whole, although I as a professor at a liberal arts college value, as of course a psychoanalyst even more crucially must, face-to-face teaching and learning. Popular and scholarly interest in sexuality and gender are natural preconditions for receptivity to psychohistorical analysis. "Psychohistorians" – I use this term and "psychohistory" as convenient shorthand – should also strive to master critical film analysis, not only because movies are rich sources of insight into society and are popular topics of discussion especially among the younger generations but also because it has long been recognized that going to the cinema is like dreaming, something that makes film an excellent source for the understanding of unconscious processes.

There are, of course, still only a very few universities that have graduate fields in psychohistory or colleges that offer courses in psychohistory. Although psychohistorical points of view can influence the education and work of historians outside the boundaries of formal fields or training, it is in

my view important that the older generation of psychohistorians “reproduce themselves” by making sure that their positions are filled with successors who have psychohistorical interests and training. This happens rarely, particularly at the undergraduate level: Tom Kohut replacing Robert Waite at Williams is one of the few exceptions to the rule, of which I am aware. In this respect, moreover, I have rethought my earlier partial agreement with Andy Rolle that undergraduate courses in psychohistory do nothing to advance the field. While it is true that I have never had one of my students go on to study psychohistory at the graduate level, it is also true that I went on to such training as a result of an undergraduate course. I did have one student express an interest in such training, but he did not have the qualifications for graduate school in history. Another student, who was inspired to get a PhD in history as a result of taking my psychohistory seminar, went on to a graduate program that had no psychohistory and was and is actively hostile – or at least indifferent – to psychohistory. As a result, he turned to work not directly related to a psychoanalytic perspective. Just last year, I had a student – who has since undertaken study in Russia and transferred to Hamilton College – tell me that my seminar on the Irrational in History had made him reflect on what it means to be a human being in ways he never had before.

**PHE:** What is the importance of childhood to psychohistory?

**GCC:** It remains crucial, particularly as we learn more from fields as diverse as sociology, anthropology, and neuropsychiatry – more about the ways in which the irrational and emotional is a lifelong phenomenon in human experience

**PHE:** Did what you learned about childhood in studying psychohistory impact on your own parenting?

**GCC:** I think it made my wife and me more sensitive to the importance of affect in nurturing our child's development as a confident and empathic human being. There may too much emphasis lately on raising “superkids” in terms of intellectual achievement and upward mobility, often at the expense of the self-reflection, creativity, and compassion that come with a greater (psychoanalytic) em-

phasis on honest and joyful confrontation with the challenges as well as the opportunities that come with being a human being.

**PHE:** How have your Albion and other colleagues responded to your interest in psychohistory and psychoanalysis?

**GCC:** I have had a few colleagues participate in my seminar, the Irrational in History, originally titled Psychohistory, but I have little contact regarding psychohistory with the Department of Psychology at Albion. I made a couple of presentations to it on psychoanalysis and psychotherapy in Nazi Germany. I don't think this was another academic psychology attempt to further sully Freud's name. The present direction of that department is toward neuropsychiatry along the lines of traditional empirical psychology. On the other hand, as I noted, some current neuropsychiatric research has confirmed some of Freud's hypotheses about the role of memory and emotion, and so there may be some collaboration in the future. But a psychoanalytic viewpoint is still most comfortable in the other social sciences and in the humanities, and so there is even greater potential with colleagues in those disciplines. Finally, the most important cross-fertilization occurs in the minds of students who take courses across the curriculum, taking and bringing their knowledge and perspectives across disciplinary boundaries for their own benefit and that of other students and the professors (see “Teaching Undergraduates Psychohistory,” *Clio's Psyche* 4 (1997): 86-87).

**PHE:** Congratulations on your 2004 Teacher of the Year Award. What is your philosophy of teaching? Has it been influenced at all by your psychohistorical/psychoanalytic education and associations?

**GCC:** I am an enthusiast by nature and I think I can enthuse students about the drama and significance of history and human experience. I think exposure to psychoanalytic thought only strengthens this enthusiasm for discovery in all realms of human life; the subtlety and difficulty of psychoanalysis also sharpens the mind, the effects of which are another boon to students who are looking for insight and inspiration. I also think that the combination of my expertise in modern German and European history with psychoanalysis enhances a certain ethical *gravitas* I regularly feel inside and outside of the

classroom. Both history and psychoanalysis demonstrate that human motive and action can be very difficult and damaging, so the potential and actual joy in life should be treasured while also maintaining the awareness, for ourselves and others, of the dangers of the world.

**PHE:** Has your intellectual knowledge of psychoanalysis and psychohistory helped you with your administrative duties as departmental chair at Albion?

**GCC:** It might be best to ask my colleagues about that! I can say that my administrative style is "hands-off," that is, I try to minimize the amount of administration and allow colleagues to do their own and the college's work. This, of course, resembles the non-directional approach of a psychoanalyst. It also corresponds with my dislike of too much administrative work, which in turn might represent a reaction against my authoritarian tendency to take care of things myself rather than leaving them to others. All of this, I am sure, reveals elements of unconscious conflicts and motives.

**PHE:** What is the Heinz Kohut Fund and what did the grant from it that you received in 1991 support?

**GCC:** The Heinz Kohut Memorial Fund is based at the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis and supports research into the life and work of Heinz Kohut. In my case, a generous grant from the Kohut Fund helped, along with a National Library of Medicine Publication Grant, finance a yearlong sabbatical to edit the Kohut correspondence.

**GCC:** I think Strozier's book is a very well-written and well-researched biography of Kohut (see my review in *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 50 (2003): 1385-90). There are a few errors of fact, some of which are perhaps related to his strong preference for Kohut's self psychology over Freud's drive theory. As Peter Loewenberg points out in this regard, Strozier mistitles Freud's "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915) as "Thoughts on War and Peace." Along the same lines, I think Strozier makes too little of the controversial issue of Kohut himself actually being the patient in his famous case study, "The Two Analyses of Mr. Z" (1979). Strozier is properly skeptical of both sides in the debate, but he soft-pedals his own claim to have early on at the Chicago Institute

argued for the fact of Kohut's "deception." If Strozier was among those who at the time or soon after had intuited Kohut as "Mr. Z," then in my view he deserves more credit than he gives himself by scattering references to the similarities between Kohut's life and that of "Mr. Z" throughout the book to the detriment of the emphasis such a possibility – or likelihood – deserves. It may be that Strozier feels that he is betraying those close colleagues of Kohut who have always maintained that Kohut would never have constructed what they regard as an unethical strategy of deception.

**PHE:** When did you first develop an interest in film and how do you explain the intensity of this interest?

**GCC:** I've always loved film – it was an adjunct to my early interest in reading history. In college I took a course in film, wrote one of my first papers in German history on Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947), and have always striven to use films in my classes. Feature films, particularly those made with intellectual and artistic integrity, can tell us a great deal about a time and place. So can run-of-the-mill entertainment fare, too, as I have found especially in my team-taught (first English, now Political Science) Film Images of World War II. Students, as even more products of a visual culture than I was, respond well to film. They often don't read so well, but they are visually attuned to notice things in the structure of film. The only problem lately is the style of quick-editing pioneered by MTV and advertising media gives contemporary students very short attention spans, so they tend to lose focus unless something different and (thus) "interesting" is happening every few seconds. All the more reason, of course, to have them watch films *and* read books.

As for the "intensity" of this interest, I'm sure it has something to do with my unconscious but I can't tell you what that is. I think, maybe a little like Kubrick, I have always seen film as a curious and compelling window on the world, particularly on that world of the century when film was invented. In a way, a film even more than a book can be like history, a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of words, images, and sounds that represents the world of human experience, filled and overfilled with conditions, choices, and contingencies. At the same time,

I never rely just on film. Books, both non-fiction and fiction, remain the primary complement to, and basis for, lecture and discussion in all of my classes.

**PHE:** How open have you found the historical profession to be to the study of film?

**GCC:** My contemporaries and younger colleagues at Albion and elsewhere take its value as self-evident. Some older colleagues have reservations, but even most of them over the years are at least willing to grant the value of film study even if they themselves don't exploit it.

**PHE:** You rightfully show the connection of dreams to the cinema. In your dreams do you get information you can use in your scholarly research?

**GCC:** I can say that I use dreams in my teaching, particularly by way of illustration of dreamwork in my "psychohistory" seminar. More often, in my scholarly work I've experienced the common phenomenon of inspiration or interpretation coming from daydreaming or half-consciousness, which I suppose operates along similar lines as full-fledged dreams.

**PHE:** In your experience and life, are high achievers more identified with their fathers?

**GCC:** I don't know if high achievers are more identified with their fathers. Is this question meant to apply equally to men and to women, to heterosexuals and homosexuals, to members of all ethnic and cultural groups? I would be uncomfortable with any such generalization. Is identification – however that troublesome term may be defined – the only or most important dynamic in terms of achievement? How do we define "achievement"? Hitler had a life of achievement just as did Freud, but of course the origins, direction, and effects of these respective achievements had to be drastically different. As for me (and my modest achievements), I see much of my father in myself but that is true as well of certain characteristics of my mother.

**PHE:** Following up on an issue raised by Freud, what is the impact of parental loss on your level of achievement and those of subjects you have studied?

**GCC:** My father died in 1991 when I was 42 and

my mother when I had just turned 52 in 2000. I have been fairly steady in my level of achievement in teaching and scholarship over the years, with a "burst" of scholarly publication in the mid-to-late 1980s and another "burst" in the mid-to-late 1990s. I've published less since my mother died, but I don't know if her death had anything to do with it. I assume that if I were doing psychohistorical or, especially, psychobiographical work, the impact of such events on my work would be more evident. My father died, after an extended stay in a hospice, during my work on the Kohut correspondence and I remember Elizabeth Kohut saying that work must be a balm at such times – and she was right.

**PHE:** How do you explain the growth and psychology of fundamentalism?

**GCC:** I have no particular thoughts about issues of fundamentalism, violence, terrorism, or the millennium. Well, yes, I do have one: I find all types of fundamentalism (religious, political, or whatever) disturbing, because of its resort to narrowness of mind and spirit. It lacks the humility and empathy that comes from understanding, as psychoanalysis and history do, that the world and human life are complex and irreducible to the type of certainty that fundamentalism embraces in an attempt to escape the responsibility of facing common human challenges honestly and bravely.

**PHE:** What are your thoughts on the psychology and psychodynamics of violence in our world?

**GCC:** I don't know that I can say anything in brief fashion that has much value. I will say that I am on the political left (social democrat/democratic socialist) not because I believe that human beings are basically good. I think we must strive to take care of each other as best we can, not only because it is the right and kind thing to do but also because my hard-headed Freudian realism tells me that people who are treated badly will be the worst they can be while people who are treated well can be expected to behave better. Peter Loewenberg put this very well once when he spoke about Freud maintaining a *Weltanschauung* that sought for human society a liberty that is not license. A nice balance, that, I think, between agency and constraint and between hope and fear.

**PHE:** How do you understand the psychology of

terrorism? How has 9/11 impacted on our society and what psychohistorical insights do you have about this?

**GCC:** Terror has been pretty universal in human history and it has taken many forms. My concern about *Al Qaeda* is that it is comprised of fundamentalists who see nothing but themselves in their construction of “God.” I would not define terrorism only as Americans now understand it after 9/11. Support for *Al Qaeda* can and does arise from the effects of a history of terror in other forms – in particular, bombing from the air – exercised by Western nations around the world. There is also no doubt that individual psychology, along with history and cultural influence, plays a role in the creation of a terrorist. There is clearly a *passion* within human beings for violence and destruction that can all too easily be mobilized by external conditions. Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) is an excellent study of the type of violent “apocalyptic thinking” based on a hyperrationalized and hypermasculinized war culture that characterized certain segments of the military and political elite of the major powers during and after the Second World War. It certainly overlaps with the mindset of those we more readily label terrorists.

**PHE:** What books were important to your development?

**GCC:** Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death* (1959); Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*; Peter Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past* (1983); Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (1962); Marc Bloch, *French Rural History* (1931); Robert Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution* (1960); I. F. Stone, *In a Time of Torment* (1967); John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939); A. A. Milne, *Autobiography* (1939); Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973); and Paul Carell, *The Foxes of the Desert* (1961).

The last book was one that early on most reinforced my interest in German history, though in the problematic way I have alluded to before. Carell’s book is typical of those at the time (and since) that idealize the German military (for example, “no SS in the Afrika Korps”) in the Second World War. This was – and still is – especially the case with Rommel, who was admired in the West

during and after the war as a “gentleman” soldier and an opponent of Hitler. We now know that this portrait must be corrected by the context of Rommel’s early support for Germany’s rearmament under Hitler and his late and conditional opposition to him for ruining Germany – and not so much, if at all, for exterminating Jews. I do remember, however, somewhat of a *kairotic* moment (the right opportunity) when my boyhood “WWII buddy” in Los Angeles made a joke about the mechanical killing of Jews and I thought *that* was not funny *and* unrelated to my interest in the German military. It was not unrelated, of course, and I think that from that time on I began to doubt my – and my culture’s – convenient division of “good” Germans and “bad” Nazis, a perspective that informed my dissertation research on psychotherapists in the Third Reich and the concomitant trend in the study of Nazi Germany toward more complicated, differentiated, but also more comprehensive assessments of individual and collective blame for Nazi crimes.

I would also add, if I may, the following *films*: *Rashomon* (Akira Kurosawa, 1951); *Blow-Up* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966); *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Robert Mulligan, 1962); *How I Won the War* (Richard Lester, 1967); *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1955); *Ararat* (Atom Egoyan, 2002); *Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974); *Tess* (Roman Polanski, 1980); *Fontane Effi Briest* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1974); *No Regrets for Our Youth* (Akira Kurosawa, 1946); *Orlando* (Sally Potter, 1993); *Rosa Luxemburg* (Margarethe von Trotta, 1986); *The Sorrow and the Pity* (Marcel Ophuls, 1971); *Wild Strawberries* (Ingmar Bergman, 1957); and all of Kubrick’s films.

**PHE:** Who was important to your development as a student of psychosocial phenomena? Did Erik Erikson have an impact on you? What mentors come to mind?

**GCC:** Erikson was an early inspiration – one of my early essays on Hitler used Erikson’s “The Legend of Hitler’s Childhood” as a point of departure both for an analysis of Guy Sajer’s *The Forgotten Soldier* (1971) and an attempt at a Rankian analysis of Hitler’s psyche. Loewenberg’s essays were, of course, the best and most immediate sources of direct inspiration in terms of applying psychoanalytic theory to my major field of German history. My

obvious – and ongoing – mentors were Rolle and Loewenberg. Since I ended up in a small history department at a small college in the Midwest, I did not have the opportunity to work closely with other people in the field of “psychohistory,” but (or therefore) still happily spent a great deal of time teaching and learning European history generally.

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

**GCC:** They are Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Peter Loewenberg, Bruce Mazlish, and Fawn Brodie.

**PHE:** Thanks for an interesting interview. □

## The Causes, Meanings and Aftermath of Violence in Contemporary America

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*Review of Howard Stein, Beneath the Crust of Culture: Psychoanalytic Anthropology and the Cultural Unconscious in American Life. New York: Rodopi, 2004, paperback. ISBN 90-420-0818-0, ix-xv + 137 pp., \$44.00.*

In the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the possibility of widespread violence in the United States is more palpable than ever before. As I commute from my home in New York City to Ramapo College in New Jersey, I occasionally find myself wondering whether the George Washington Bridge will be the target of an attack, and whether this might happen as I transverse it. Many people in the New York metropolitan area share such anxieties, which are fueled by the government's periodic security alerts. This makes the book *Beneath the Crust of Culture* particularly timely. It aims to help us understand the causes and meanings of some of the key crises in American history during the past decade: the attacks of 9/11, the Columbine high school massacre, the execution of Timothy McVeigh, hypernationalism, and corporate downsizing. Even more significantly, the book addresses the issue of how we confront and cope with disasters and loss.

As a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I was not introduced to psychoanalytic anthropology which remains a less common approach in the field. Most anthropologists would agree with the fundamental premise of the book: that the most visible and tangible aspects of culture cannot be taken at face value, and that the deeper meanings of culture must be uncovered through research. Howard Stein employs psychoanalysis as a way of revealing these inner meanings. As he argues on page 121, “psychodynamic processes are often the underpinnings (the ‘core’) of what we observe on the surface as the ‘whole’ culture (the ‘crust’).” Demonstrating the utility of this theory for analyzing culture is one of his main motives for writing this book. While Stein offers many interesting insights into these crises and problems, many anthropologists will remain skeptical of the utility of this approach.

One fundamental problem with Stein's book is that he seeks to analyze American culture as if it were a united and homogenous entity. In this vast country, marked by class, race, regional and other differences, the concept of an American culture is probably best understood as an ideological prototype. People gain the sense that they share a culture through representations, particularly those in the media, as Benedict Anderson argued in his landmark study, *Imagined Communities*. For example, it is primarily through the media that people throughout the country were able to experience and to know the events of September 11, and thus were able to reaffirm the sense that they belong to a wider national community.

It is not surprising then that in his effort to analyze “American culture,” Stein focuses on many events that have been the focus of major mass media attention. Even while he cautions against assuming that there is one meaning of a disaster or other event, he makes broad generalizations about what these events meant to people in America. I believe that this shortcoming stems from the fact that, unlike most anthropologists, he infrequently uses data that is based upon ethnographic fieldwork. Much of the data that Stein draws upon come from these media representations. I believe that Stein could convince many anthropologists to see the merits of the psychodynamic approach if his arguments were more grounded in the experiences of

particular communities and individuals in the United States.

The first chapter focuses on the meanings and causes of the attacks of September 11, 2001, as well as the responses to the attacks. He argues that people bring meaning to disasters and shows how the interpretation of these events drew upon shared unconscious fantasies, fantasies that are sustained in films, videogames and other media. These fantasies were not the direct cause of the attacks; rather they were linked to the attacks through what Stein identifies as a "tacit cultural suggestibility" (p.6). In another section, he uses Freudian theory to analyze the symbols of the attacks and to comprehend the motivations of the attackers. He makes the important critical point that the terrorists were not just responding to U.S. policies and actions, but also to what the United States represents (p.16).

Chapter two investigates the Columbine high school massacre. His central argument here is that the massacre was, in part, a reaction to the feelings of "disposability" generated by corporate downsizing. This is a satisfying theory in that it seeks to historicize this tragic event by relating it to the larger economic context. While Stein's fascinating analysis of the symbolic violence manifested by massive corporate layoffs is convincing, he does not adequately demonstrate whether and how this phenomenon was experienced in the community in Littleton, Colorado. He merely shows that there are parallels between the forms of symbolic violence enacted by corporations and the types of violence carried out by the youths who carried out the massacre. Here, ethnographic fieldwork in this community would provide data to bolster his argument, as would some supporting data regarding the economic context in that particular place. Stein devotes a fair amount of time to analyzing the two youths who carried out these acts, examining their thirst for revenge against high school peers and the meanings of the symbols that were employed in the massacre. Yet he also attempts to link the motivations of these youths to forces in wider society. For example, he shows how social dynamics in high school mirror those in the corporate world. Despite his allegiance to psychoanalysis, Stein eschews the use of narrowly bounded individual psychology as a means of understanding acts like these massacres (p.27). His key point in this chapter is that adoles-

cents who commit such heinous acts are not aberrant monsters but are in some way produced by processes within our society. This is a provocative and important argument that goes against many popular assumptions. Only by taking responsibility for people who commit acts of violence will society be able to address the root causes of such problems.

Chapter three is a brief, five-page interpretation of the execution of Timothy McVeigh. Here, Stein continues the theme that society disavows any connection with those who commit acts of large-scale violence. Most of the chapter reviews McVeigh's life and examines the meaning of the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma for him.

Chapter four addresses hypernationalism and xenophobia, as manifested in corporate America. Here his main agenda is to highlight the parallels between the psychodynamic processes of group formation that function in ethnic and nationalist movements and those that operate in corporations. This is one of the few chapters that draws on ethnographic data, and his vignettes from workplaces illuminate how groups are created by identifying enemies. Stein is on less solid ground when he moves from showing the similarity between dynamics of ethnic and nationalist movements and the corporate workplace to arguing that they are equivalent. His suggestion that the style in which corporations carry out mass firings "illustrates the presence of hypernationalist, xenophobic thinking in ordinary workplaces" seems to overstate the case (p.65).

The focus of chapter five is on how we make sense of disasters. At the end of the chapter, Stein summarizes his important recommendations for dealing with disasters. Disasters do not mean the same things to everyone, he asserts: people employ multiple, competing frameworks for making sense of any disaster. This is an excellent point but it could have been demonstrated with more concrete examples. Furthermore, this point could be brought to bear on his interpretation of the events of 9/11 in chapter one.

In chapter six, "Mourning and Society," Professor Stein shows how mourning is a far more prevalent practice than usually assumed. He argues that "the idea of mourning and of defenses against it

help to account for a wide array of otherwise mystifying phenomena” (p.115). Humans engage in mourning not just following the loss of a loved one or after some other tragic event; rather, mourning is part of ordinary social life. Shifts in scientific theories, for example, are accompanied by mourning, since people must adjust to leaving an old view of the world behind. Wars and ethnic conflict can be explained partially as defenses against mourning, he argues. This is an intriguing argument and can help us to understand the emotional dimension of the experience of social change.

Many of Stein's insights could also be applied to other contexts beyond America. As I read the book, I thought of how a psychodynamic approach might help us to analyze the current Maoist conflict in Nepal, my main research site, where an estimated 10,000 people have been killed since 1996. While it is clear that both the government's army and police forces, as well as the army of the Maoists are to blame for these deaths, the government in Nepal has been quick to label the Maoists “terrorists” and to demonize them. How is the violence, both by Maoists and the government, made possible by other forces in Nepali society? What are the psychological effects of the various forms of symbolic and real violence for people in Nepal? What are the multiple frameworks that people are using to make sense of the trauma of the death or “disappearance” of kin and neighbors, and of the loss of homes, as people flee their homes to escape the violence? How does unresolved mourning perpetuate, rather than resolve, the violence in Nepal? Addressing these questions, inspired by Stein's analysis, would lead to a deeper understanding of the conflict that would supplement the prevalent political and economic analyses.

Although earlier versions of the essays comprising this book have been published elsewhere, collected as a group, these essays provide the reader with a solid sense of the variety of Stein's applications of group psychoanalysis/psychohistory. In sum, this is a compelling and challenging book that will raise many questions for both academics and non-specialists about the deeper meanings behind major crises in American society.

Psychohistory makes the unconscious conscious

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## Creative and Destructive Leaders of Large Groups

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*Review of Vamik Volkan, Blind Trust: Large Groups and Their Leaders in Times of Crisis and Terror. Charlottesville, VA: Pitchstone Publishing, 2004. Hardcover ISBN 0-9728875-2-0, \$29.95, paperback ISBN 0-9728875-3-9, \$19.95; 368 pages.*

Once more, Vamik Volkan has given us an exceptionally stimulating analysis; this time he wrote specifically about large groups, how they function, and how their leaders “use” them for good or ill. Particularly refreshing about Volkan's work is the breath of his insights. He applies psychology, history, political science, and his own experiences with international negotiations in addition to his many interviews.

Especially convincing are Volkan's comparisons between leaders who repair their societies for societal benefit as opposed to those who undermine and even destroy their people for their own personal benefit. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Julius Kambarage Nyerere, and Nelson Mandela are men whom Volkan sees as positive influences for their societies. Not surprisingly, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Slobodan Milosevic, and Enver Hoxha of Albania are his examples of destructive leaders. Between these extremes, Richard Nixon stands as an example in the balance. The discussion on how each of the repairers integrated traumatic childhood and adulthood experiences into a positive construction of his personality and how destroyers attained the opposite result is totally absorbing. The repairers, who are often teachers, turned truly horrid events of their lives, as Mandela did with his extensive prison stays, to insights that up-

lifted both them and their societies. By contrast, the destroyers were unable to integrate their traumatic experiences or the disliked parts of their personalities to this degree, externalizing them instead as abuse and hatred of those whom they learned to despise.

Interesting, too, is how each of these men dealt with enemies. Mandela pinpointed the abusive system of apartheid, and Ataturk, the illiteracy and ignorance of the population as a whole and the traditional leadership. By contrast, Hitler saw the enemies as persons, that is, Jews, Gypsies, and other undesirables, and Milosevic saw them in the Muslim descendants of the men who defeated Prince Lazar in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389.

These discussions about healing or poisoning leaders, largely based on insights regarding narcissism, are matched by equally insightful analyses of Islamic fundamentalism. Very helpful here is Volkan's ability to separate deeply held religious faith, like that of a befriended Russian Orthodox priest in Estonia who tolerates other believers, from fundamentalists of various sorts, including Muslims, Christians, and Jews who react negatively toward "outsiders." The elaborations on Islam, from the earliest days of the Prophet Muhammad, through the Ottoman Empire's defeat in front of Vienna on September 11 (actually 12), 1683, to bin Laden are "a must read" for understanding today's confrontations in the Middle East. Although Volkan warns us to hold off judgment as to evaluations of President George W. Bush's approach to "terrorism," many who have studied ethnic/religious violence, warfare, and recent military occupations, are ready to argue that the U.S. was ill advised in its recent approach to the Islamic world in Iraq.

Volkan's approach is similar to the school of psychohistorians that emphasizes the experiences of childhood and group fantasies as determiners of the course of history. Somewhat in contrast, Volkan very carefully analyzes the childhoods of numerous individuals and the experiences of very specific groups. In doing so, he describes the influences of traumas on personality development and leaders' positive and negative manipulations of children, young people, and adults, including the constructive and destructive energies to which they are

able to harness such experiences. I suspect that this talented psychiatrist and founder of the Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction (CSMHI) might have used to his advantage the insights of this group of psychohistorians.

No doubt, Hitler and his minions endeavored to create a *Volksgemeinschaft* (Community of the *Volk*) in ways that Volkan describes. The National Socialist regime tried to make families serve its needs and to pull children away from their families for the greater good of Germany, a point well illustrated in the film *Europa, Europa*. However, the author overlooks the great variety of Germans and Germanies that existed in the 12 years of National Socialist rule. For example, while he is correct that the number of youths who attended Youth Film Hour increased into the millions by 1943, most of us also attended church on Sundays and were offered *Religionsunterricht* (catechism) in *Volksschule* (elementary school) by a priest or a minister. In reality, only one of my friends and acquaintances who grew up in various parts of Germany in the 1930s and 1940s felt that her family's authority was undermined. Especially in cities, children were glad to get out into "mother nature" and equally glad to be back home for a decent meal.

I am troubled by the consistent misspelling of German words. For example, "*Mutter, erzähl von Adolf Hitler! ... Ein Buch zum ... Nacherzahlen und Selbstlesen für kleinere und grössere Kinder*" (pp. 75-76) [Mother, tell us of Adolf Hitler!...A book to ... retell and read oneself for smaller and larger children] should be "*Mutter, erzähl von Adolf Hitler! ... Nacherzählen ... für ... grössere Kinder.*" The problem that emerges with *nacherzahlen* instead of *nacherzählen* is that *nacherzahlen* could easily be mistaken for *nachherzahlen*, that is, to pay later.

Misspellings sometimes warn us of problems with large group analyses. But none of the above critiques imply more than that in a vast survey – with many different fields, geographic areas, and persons involved – an author will not be in control of every detail. They also do not imply other flaws. *Blind Trust* is a brilliant book that should be read by everyone who is at all concerned with leadership and large groups, and how leaders' child-

hoods and adulthoods create the positive and destructive ways with which they lead their own and other societies.

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## Psychohistory Applied to Military Leadership

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*Review of Robert Pois and Philip Langer, Command Failure in War: Psychology and Leadership. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. Hardcover ISBN 0-253-34378-X, xviii, 283 pages, \$29.95.*

Pois and Langer claim in *Command Failure in War: Psychology and Leadership* to show “that psychology has an explanatory role to play in historical analysis rather than to serve simply as a vehicle for extraordinary generalizations on the nature of man” (p. x). In accomplishing this end, the authors provide us with the first text that concisely examines a process of thought: “military failure due to dysfunctional personal rigidity” (p. ix) across historical events and the individuals that helped form the outcomes of those events. The idea is intriguing and to do it justice requires a tremendous amount of research, which Pois and Langer perform admirably. Through this concept, they open the door of psychohistory even wider, inviting analyses in new and expanding forms. However, I hope that those following in the footsteps of Pois and Langer can refine this new way of psychologically analyzing aspects of history; for although the concept is inspired, the outcome, at times, becomes plodding and repetitive, and their choice of leaders is imbalanced.

*Command Failure in War* includes an evaluation of Frederick the Great at Kunersdorf; Napoleon in Russia; Robert E. Lee, George

McClellan, and John Hood, all of the American Civil War; the British military during World War I; and the German military at Stalingrad during WWII. Herein is my first criticism of the book, their choice of generals appears to be random at best. In their introduction, the authors do acknowledge that they chose military leaders in whom they had a personal interest or background, and “there was no attempt to provide any balance” (p ix). But this reasoning is insufficient; the reader needs to understand why the choice is so skewed toward 20th-century leaders, the American Civil War, and a Western point of view – not merely because it is an “odd sort of read,” but because particular behaviors are influenced by time, culture, and environment. In all fairness, the authors include in their conclusion one mention of Japanese generals in WWII and the impact of different times and cultures on their argument. But the comment comes a little late in the text. Their hypothesis would carry more weight if proven across these variables or if they had addressed the reason for particular omissions from the beginning. How can they successfully argue any common outcome when three of the six chapters of analysis are devoted to Civil War leaders? How do they know that some of the choices made by these leaders were not unique to the particular culture or time? Granted, drawing in non-Western military leadership would probably have been an impossible task, but it would have soothed this reader if the authors had at least acknowledged that battles and leadership mistakes occur in parts of the world other than the West.

Although the authors’ choice of leaders weakens their otherwise promising argument – that rigidity in leadership is the common theme/mistake found across these case studies – they still provide a thought-provoking and groundbreaking analysis. By using various models of in-depth psychology – identity diffusion, group think, field theory, achievement need, cognitive dissonance, frustration-aggression hypothesis, and *folie a deux*, to name only a few – Pois and Langer argue that they always came to the same conclusion: even among generals with a string of successes, the moment of failure occurred because of an inability to adapt to changes in the battle, a lack of flexibility. If this thesis holds true it could have a resounding impact on the training of future military leaders.

In the individual details of the generals and their failures, the book provides deeply complex and thoroughly researched evaluations. Pois and Langer's recounting of moment-by-moment events provide the reader with a vivid sense of each leader's heightened emotions. Their choice of psychological model for any given event is carefully argued and convincing. Sometimes, though, it is too well argued, to the point of becoming tedious. I questioned whether I was missing some subtle point. Perhaps my stronger grounding in history overshadowed my psychology background, causing me to overlook the need for such repetition. But I don't think so. For example, the authors repeatedly refer to McClellan's tendency to avoid actual combat and continue training his men. Granted this is a key part of their analysis, but, unnecessarily, their point was made multiple times. In discussing the untenable situation at Stalingrad, the authors reiterate – three times, in three different ways – that the German Commander Paulus was waiting for a clear order to withdraw and seemed paralyzed to commence the withdrawal without such an order. Again, this is an important point in arguing for the development of groupthink, and his inability to act with only vague orders did result in the destruction of his army. But does the reader need to be told three times?

In regard to the technical aspects of this book, Indiana University Press is to be commended for finding the funding to allow for copious endnotes, a complete bibliographic section, and an index. Given the current financial difficulties of many university presses, it is all the more relevant that a publisher continues to maintain a certain level of scholarly development. If the text were to go into a second printing, however, the reader might find some of Pois and Langer's many battle details more understandable if maps were provided. Not all of the case studies require them, but some of the more complex battles, like the Battle of Stalingrad and McClellan's battle at Malvern Hill, would be easier to comprehend with maps.

In conclusion, although I have made criticisms of the text, I believe that Pois and Langer have contributed a groundbreaking book to the field – groundbreaking in its form of analysis and through its suggestion that rigidity in the field typically results in failure. The premises at the heart of

the book are well argued, and it opens the door to new and more complex studies. Globally, Pois and Langer's book begs the question that if we claim war is dysfunctional, then how can we claim battle strategies and plans to be "functional" – as all analyses of wars implicitly do? If war allows leaders to shine for a moment in their lives, does this infer that outside of war they likely will not succeed because they are dysfunctional? If that is the case, then how do we help these social "outsiders" become functional without war – or, if there is war, and these would-be successful leaders have become functional, can they still succeed? Locally, one could hope that this work will encourage similar studies across cultures, periods, or classes of warfare. Finally, *Command Failure in War* seems to be a fitting memorial for a respected psychohistorian, Robert Pois, who died January 18, 2004, leaving us with a significant final legacy and many new probing questions.

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## A Rich Psychological Meal

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*Review of Leon Rappoport, How We Eat: Appetite, Culture, and the Psychology of Food. Toronto, Ontario: ECW Press, 2003. Paperback, ISBN 1550225634, 224 pp., \$15.95.*

Eating is the primal communal human ex-

perience. From the original placental connection through nurturing nursing to breaking bread and the ultimate ritualized spiritual communion, how, what, and why we eat constitutes an essential component of what it means to be human. It is the reflective experience of this reality of our existence that serves as the focus of Leon Rappoport's volume. He presents the perpetual dialectic between autonomy and dependency with respect to food that each of us has attempted to traverse in our own development. No matter how much we want to be independent, we are eternally dependent upon food. It is the umbilicus of our consciousness of self in a natural world of eating and being eaten.

I feel that Rappoport clearly points out the need for a psychological analysis of how we eat. The "hook" for this reader was already in the Introduction when Rappoport shares his very own journey between the starvation of the Holocaust survivor and the asceticism of the Zen practitioner, which coalesces in the focused attention of the psychological experience of "no food." The meanings of this experience transcend the usual and point to the essential human existential drama of eat/no eat. One by chance, one by choice.

Rappoport takes an interdisciplinary tour of food by looking at historical, anthropological, sociological, philosophical, psychological, and metaphysical perspectives. Such a broad range provides a most interesting perspective. Rappoport tells us, "It took me another few years to realize that, where the meanings of food are concerned, the absence of a central thesis is the central thesis." This becomes a central point of the book. In the absence of meaning, we construct meaning. This leads to the enculturation of food and, via geographical isolation, the almost literal perception of the speciation of food as representations of culture. Culture viewed as absolutely categorical to such an extent that we eventually end up with the view that "What 'we' eat is good, what 'they' eat is bad." This, of course, results in the eventual relativistic assessment of food values.

Having established in the Introduction that the field of psychology has essentially overlooked food, Rappoport goes on to explore its interstices with human experience. He offers a psychological perspective on how we eat as a major organizing

theme. In Chapter 1, "From Myths to MacAttacks," he points out, "It is precisely because so many of our common eating behaviors appear to be irrational that the social and psychological meanings of food are so powerful." For example, the popularity of fast foods among the urban poor is explained as a reaction to the barrenness of life: "...when people are leading boring, unhappy lives, they are not interested in healthy foods but prefer anything that is stimulating, cheap, and convenient." This is a demonstration of how Rappoport uses the psychohistorical approach of taking the obvious and exploring the hidden as well as taking the hidden and making it the obvious. For example, "...children today not only do not eat what their parents ate when they were children but also eat food items that did not exist when their parents were children." Does this "disconnect" have an impact on our continuity of cultural experience? Such are the questions that come to mind as one reads *How We Eat*.

In Chapter 2, "You Are What You Eat," the genderization of food is discussed. Food is an indicator of gender identity: there are feminine foods such as rice, cake, and tea compared to masculine foods such as meat, potatoes, and coffee. This is, of course, all attributable to the psychological principle of conditioned associations, as Rappoport ably points out. There is also an interesting discussion of the "morality" of food. "'Ours' is right and superior and smells good; 'theirs' is wrong and inferior and smells bad, no matter whom 'they' are." This attitude generates the basis for many ethnic slurs in our culture. All of which substantiate the "fact" that "You are what you eat."

Clinically the best chapter is "Feeding Frenzies" (Chapter 3), which offers an up-to-date overview of the psychopathology of eating disorders and their psychological underpinnings, especially as related to the original question of independence/dependence on food. Rappoport presents a compassionate and compelling case for taking a biopsychosocial approach to the current increase in reported cases of eating disorders as a societal response to industrial modernity. He says we have changed our view of our body from "something given to us" to an "object we possess." This then gets warped in the trappings of low self-esteem and frustrations over insecurities during early feeding incidents. Rappoport also introduces, in addition to this psy-

choanalytic analysis, a contemporary feminist analysis of the situation as it relates to young women's rejections of the societal demands of the adult female role expectations as they enter puberty and the option of "dieting" as a means of control and asserting independence becomes possible.

In, "The McDonaldization of Taste" (Chapter 4), the social and emotional exchange value of food is explored, frequently from a Marxist perspective. "Food ideologies influence how we think, and try to persuade us how we ought to think, about" food. Rappoport contends that we no longer have direct contact with our food, that is, an "immediate food experience"; rather, we have a "mediated food experience." We do not directly taste; rather we contextually taste. Whether it is good or not good depends. The three main ideologies presented for analysis are hedonism, nutritionalism, and spiritualism. Rappoport notes that hedonism promises pleasure, nutritionalism promises health based on the modernity of science, and spiritualism promises a metaphysical or moral state of grace. Since all three play contrasting but essential roles in the determination of what and how we eat, Rappoport here helps the reader to embrace the built-in conundrum of human existence by pointing out that the original function of eating is for survival. Ironically, he points out that humans are the only species that engages in ritual fasting and ritual feasting. We flirt with the extremes – a dance of dependence-independence, no doubt.

Another context, the social/political is exemplified by the following: "McDonaldization is the process whereby all or most other social values become subordinated to efficiency, convenience, and immediate gratification of artificial needs. All this, of course, follows from the entrepreneurial profit motive, and never mind the traditional values that get pushed to the wall."

Psychohistorians will enjoy the chapter that explores the history of food, "From the Raw to the Cooked to the Haute Cuisine" (Chapter 5). Herein he explores the theories of Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud, and Claude Levi-Strauss, while examining the development of the open-air food market. How does it satisfy our needs for feelings of security, pleasure, and the primitive connection between the raw and the cooked? I was especially intrigued by

the class distinctions pointed out by Levi-Strauss with regard to why the rich "roast" and the poor "boil." The rich can afford to waste.

There is insufficient space to mention all the topics I enjoyed. Rappoport discusses the development of table manners, food vocabulary, military rations, "nutraceuticals," champagne slippers, and even the "Twinkie Defense." He makes wonderful use of Freud's defense mechanisms to elaborate on the relationships between food and sex and food and aggression.

By the last chapter we have been amply prepared for the answer to the big existential question about food. Rappoport says, "I am suggesting that the critical self-awareness about food relates in *fundamental* ways to central issues of personal meaning in the life course of any person." Self-awareness is crucial: "Without eating there is no being." So one *must* deal with food. *How We Eat* ends with a psychological flair that entices the reader to reflect on self and food, now and forever.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time with this book. I recommend it for general audiences as well as for those with more professional concerns, including chiefs and restaurateurs. Psychologists, psychohistorians, clinicians, and students both graduate and undergraduate will also benefit. For the scholar, it will be challenging to follow up on many of the research results discussed since there are no formal references. There is a list of general sources that will prove helpful as a place to begin.

*Marshall S. Harth, PhD, received his doctorate in psychology from Rutgers University and is Professor of Psychology at Ramapo College of New Jersey where he is now in his 33rd year. He is the convener of the Substance Abuse Minor and former convener of the College Seminar Program. Dr. Harth, who recently has been writing poetry, has a private practice in psychotherapy in New York State. He can be contacted at <mharth@ramapo.edu>. □*

## Bulletin Board

The next **Psychohistory Forum WORK-IN-PROGRESS SATURDAY SEMINAR** is on **October 23, 2004** with the following speakers and presentations: **Jennefer Mazza, PhD** (Ramapo Col-

lege), "Psychological Explorations of the 2004 Election"; Ted Goertzel, PhD (Rutgers University), "Ralph Nader: The Political Psychology of a Puritanical Perfectionist"; Paul Elovitz, PhD (Ramapo College), "Bush and Kerry as Their Fathers' Sons and Contradictory Interpretations of George W. Bush"; and Herbert Barry, PhD (University of Pittsburgh), "Differences Between Candidate and President Kerry." The general topic is "Psychohistorical Aspects of Election 2004" and it is sponsored by the Forum's Research Group on the Childhood, Personality, and Psychology of Presidential Candidates and Presidents. E-mail pelovitz@aol.com for details. **CONFERENCES:** The 32nd Annual Conference of the **National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis** (NAAP) will be held on Saturday, October 9, 2004 in Manhattan. E-mail naap72@aol.com for details. The **Pacifica Graduate Institute's** October 15-17, 2004 conference, "When History Wakes: Cultural and Ecological Memory," is in Santa Barbara. The **Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction** (CSMHI) of the University of Virginia on October 23-24, 2004 is sponsoring the seminar, "Unraveling Trauma: Perspectives of Psychoanalysts, Psychosocial Providers, and Tribunals" in Charlottesville. The 15th Annual Conference of the **International Federation for Psychoanalytic Education** (IFPE) is scheduled for November 5-7, 2004 in Chicago. The 19th Annual Convention of the **German Society for Psychohistorical Research** will be held on March 11-13, 2005 in Zurich, focused on "Fundamentalism in Politics, the Economy, and Religion." The Calls for Papers are listed for the 28th annual conferences of the **International Psychohistorical Association** (IPA) in Manhattan on June 8-19, 2005 and the **International Society for Political Psychology** (ISPP) in Toronto, Canada, on July 3-6, 2005. E-mail contacts are psychhst@tiac.net and felicia.pratto@uconn.edu, respectively. **CONGRATULATIONS** to **Geoffrey Cocks** on the publication of *The Wolf at the Door: Stanley Kubrick, History, and the Holocaust* (NY: Peter Lang, 2004; ISBN 0-8204-7115-1) and **David Beisel** on the hardcover edition of *The Suicidal Embrace: Hitler, the Allies, and the Origins of the Second World War* (Nyack, NY: Circumstantial Productions Publishing, 2004; ISBN 1-891592-15-7, selling for \$30.00. Also, to **Flora Hogman** on

the publication of her article, "Reflections on Resilience, the Press, and the Hidden Children of the Holocaust," which was recently published in the *NYSIPA Notebook* (Vol. 16 No. 4), the official publication of New York State Psychological Association. **AWARDS:** The Psychohistory Forum has available the Young Scholars Membership Award, the *Clio Psyche* Subscription Award, and the Sidney Halpern Award for the Best Psychohistorical Idea or Accomplishment. The last may be granted at the graduate, undergraduate, or postgraduate level. **DEATHS:** **Margaret Brenman-Gibson** (1918-2004), ego psychologist, social activist, teacher, therapist, author, and colleague of Erik Erikson, died on May 10 after a long period of declining health. **Norman Cantor**, a distinguished medieval historian, died in Florida of heart failure on September 18, 2004 at age 74. He had published a small piece in these pages. **John E. Mack** of the Harvard University Medical Center was killed at age 74 by a reportedly drunk driver while in London, where he was scheduled to give a talk on T.E. Lawrence about whom he had written a Pulitzer Prize winning psychobiography. This psychiatrist had headed the Center for Psychology and Social Change and done controversial research on people who reported alien abductions. **OUR THANKS:** To our members and subscribers for the support that makes *Clio's Psyche* possible. To Benefactors Herbert Barry, Ralph Colp, and Mary Lambert; Patrons David Beisel, Andrew Brink, Peter Petschauer, H. John Rogers, Shirley Stewart, and Jacques Szaluta; Sustaining Members Charles Frederick (Fred) Alford and David Lotto; Supporting Members David Felix and Bob Lentz; and Members Suzanne Adrion, Margaret (Peggy) McLaughlin, Geraldine Pauling, Vivian Rosenberg, Charles Strozier, and Richard Weiss. Our thanks for thought-provoking materials to Herbert Barry, Geoffrey Cocks, Lucien Gideon (Luke) Conway, Anna Geifman, Ted Goertzel, Susan Hangen, Marshall Harth, Amy Hudnall, Sara Konrath, Maria Miliora, and Peter Petschauer. Our appreciation to Dick Booth and Bob Lentz for selected editing, Lauren Gargani for help with production and to Jaclyn Dilling for proofreading. □

**Praise for Clio's Psyche:** "I like to think the [*Psychohistory*] Review has been reincarnated in Clio's Psyche!" Charles Strozier as quoted in "A Conversation with Charles Strozier on Heinz Kohut," (*Clio's Psyche*, Vol. 8, No. 2, September 2001, p. 90). "Paul - Its up to you now - good luck with Clio. Larry." This is a hand written note on a May 1, 1999 letter from Larry Shiner,