

# Clio's Psyche

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

**David Beisel Symposium  
on Military and Diplomatic Blind Spots and  
Traumatic Reenactments**

**Rudolph Binion Memorial Issue**

**Featured Scholar Interview**

**Volume 18 Number 2  
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# Clio's Psyche

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627 Dakota Trail, Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417

Telephone: (201) 891-7486

E-mail: pelovitz@aol.com

**Editor: Paul H. Elovitz**

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**Nancy Unger Featured Scholar  
Interview**

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## Psychohistory

*What* happened *why* is the historian's  
Agenda. *What* potentially extends  
To every action of the common man's,  
So that the controversy never ends  
Concerning which bits of the human past  
To privilege. The stakes are high because  
The *what* can shape the *why*. Why empires last,  
Or birth rates fall, or tools emerge, or laws,  
Are loaded questions that construe the *what*  
As empires, birth rates, tools, or laws—that float  
These as the active entities and not  
The people doing what those terms denote.  
All *whats* come down to human doings. See:  
All *whys* thus end in psychohistory.

Rudolph Binion

Written for the annual compendium of *Clio's Psyche*  
and republished in *Flights of Fancy*

# Clio's Psyche

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# **The Psychology of Blind Spots and Traumatic Reenactment Symposium**

## **Military and Diplomatic Blind Spots and Traumatic Reenactments**

**David Beisel—RCC-SUNY**

Late summer 1943—in the midst of the air war over Europe—Luftwaffe fighter ace Adolf Galland informed Hitler that U.S. fighter escorts were now penetrating far into German air space, a number having been shot down over Aachen. Galland's boss, Air Marshal Göring, learned what Galland had told Hitler and became incensed. "What's the idea of telling the Führer that American fighters have penetrated into the territory of the Reich?" he demanded.

Galland replied that things could only get worse, predicting that U.S. fighters would soon be escorting bombers even farther into Nazi Germany. With that, Göring exploded: "That is simply not true, Galland. It is impossible...let me tell you something. I'm an experienced fighter pilot myself. I know what is possible... Admit you made a mistake."

When Galland held to his view, Göring began to scream: "I hereby give you an official order that they weren't there! Do you understand? The American fighters were not there! Got it? I intend to report that to the Führer" (Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 1970, 289-290).

Göring's denials came from a number of motives, not the least of which was the guarantee he'd made Hitler and Germany that the Reich was going to win the air war ("If a single enemy plane reaches Reich territory," he'd said, "you can call me Meier"—a German expression meaning that something is impossible). Göring was also driven by the possibility that failure in Nazi Germany had potential existential as well as political consequences, not just the chance of being removed from power but also the possibil-

ity of death by firing squad or delegated suicide.

As reported by a half-dozen journalists, from Bob Woodward (*War of Denial*) to Seymour Hersh in *The New Yorker*, the George W. Bush White House made it clear to the Pentagon, the CIA, and the White House staff that President Bush didn't want to hear any bad news about the war in Iraq. The Pentagon, the CIA, and the White House staff largely complied.

Consciously constructed self-deceptions like these, along with manipulated denials by others designed to keep heads of state in the dark, are legion in history. When things started going wrong for the Wehrmacht, the information Hitler received at his military briefings was almost always sanitized. Then, there is the now well-known case of Defense Secretary McNamara and General Westmoreland, who repeatedly told President Johnson (himself notorious for surrounding himself with "yes men") that the U.S. was winning the war in Vietnam when they knew in fact it was being lost.

Not wanting to know, a normal part of psychic life, is of course one of the things that makes us human, and since it is an easily recognizable phenomenon in traumatized groups and individuals—Holocaust survivors, say, or Vietnam veterans—it is quite easily accepted by most of my fellow historians. It is other kinds of blind spots we find problematic and difficult to explain, especially those that seem to make no logical sense.

Nevertheless, those kinds of blind spots do sometimes find their way into historical narratives (the why-Hitler-lost-the-war scenarios, for example). Historians are too scrupulous to ignore them entirely, though when they do appear historians usually strive mightily to rationalize them away, either as conscious Machiavellian manipulations, blunders, misperceptions, miscalculations, or the result of some unspecified failing in the historical person's character. Sometimes those irrational blind spots (and the actions they cause or fail to cause) are characterized as simple acts of momentary stupidity—though it is fair to point out that some scholars occasionally confess to being at a loss to explain them at all.

Of course, blunders, misperceptions, and miscalculations do occur in history but can become distorting rationalizations when historians automatically reject the notion of unconsciously motivat-

ed behavior. When we do that, we blind ourselves to the possibility of unconsciously motivated blind spots, too, despite many examples scattered across the historical landscape.

Virtually everyone who has studied the planning of the pre-World War I Austro-Hungarian general staff encounters the extraordinary lack of consideration of Russia's possible reaction to an Austro-Hungarian attack on Serbia. Despite full awareness of Russia's long-standing position as the defender of the south Slavs and the clear knowledge that Russia could not afford to back down in a war crisis a second time (Russia had already done so in the Bosnian Annexation Crisis of 1908), the deliberations of the Austro-Hungarian general staff in the year and a half prior to the July crisis of 1914 never once mentioned Russia. Unconsciously excised from general-staff consciousness, Russia had ceased to exist.

Historians who note this omission are at a loss to explain why. Yet, it seems clear that if Austro-Hungary's military planners had allowed Russia's existence to emerge from the oblivion into which they'd unconsciously consigned it, they would have had to at least reconsider, perhaps even reign in, their profound wish for a Serbian war, which they'd articulated many times in the preceding years. As with so much else in history, emotional demands trumped rational decision-making.

Another well-known example of massive self-delusion is Stalin's blindness in the face of the large number of frequent intelligence reports pouring into Moscow in the weeks immediately preceding Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. All reports clearly indicated a massive German buildup was underway. Stalin systematically refused to believe them, discrediting a report from one such agent just days before the invasion by saying he "should be sent to his fucking mother" (Rodric Braithwaite, *Moscow 1941: A City and Its People at War*, 2007, 54; David E. Murphy, *What Stalin Knew: The Enigma of Barbarosa*, 2005, xv).

Stalin's refusal to acknowledge the threat resulted in one of the greatest disasters in military history. (As but one example, virtually the entire Soviet air force was destroyed within a day, mostly on the ground.) So devastating was the assault that Stalin (despite the few scholars who have argued his absence was a calculated

Machiavellian move) disappeared for several days, taking to his bed with a nervous breakdown.

Common sense and personal experience tell us that when denied and repressed things suddenly take shape, shock and surprise often follow. Acknowledging such phenomena might allow us to more critically examine some of the diplomatic and military crises that the United States has unexpectedly faced since the beginning of the Second World War.

- First, Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, Japanese forces launched a surprise naval air attack on the U.S. Pacific fleet at anchor in Oahu.
- Nine years later, North Korea suddenly attacked South Korea.
- Twelve years on, Soviet intermediate-range ballistic missiles unexpectedly showed up in Cuba.
- Two years later, North Vietnamese torpedo boats caught the U.S. by surprise in what was claimed to be an unprovoked attack on U.S. destroyers in international waters.
- Fifteen years more, Iranian students unexpectedly seized U.S. diplomats, holding them hostage in Teheran.
- Eleven years more, Saddam Hussein surprised the world by suddenly invading Kuwait.
- Finally, another eleven years later came the Pentagon and World Trade Center attacks, 21<sup>st</sup> century America's Pearl Harbor, unexpected attacks by commercial aircraft turned into flying bombs.

Few of my fellow historians would find any relationship between these events. Most aren't looking for repetitions, since most are engaged in researching smaller, more narrowly focused topics. As a result—and despite a flourishing professional comparative history organization—most are preoccupied with writing narratives of specific events, not in comparing them.

This tendency is reinforced by a conditioning reaching back to graduate school days when virtually all of us were indoctrinated with the dogma that because historical events involve different historical figures, each event is unique, unfolds in unique circumstances, and is entire unto itself. Looking for patterns, we were taught, wrongly forces facts into prearranged conclusions, such as the pop-

ular but mistaken notion that history repeats itself.

Historians might learn something from psychoanalysts and psychologists who approach things differently. Anyone in clinical practice hearing a client recount a life in which they were repeatedly blindsided by one monumental disaster after another with which they had nothing whatsoever to do might begin to suspect something more was at work than blind bad luck or abysmal ignorance. Perhaps an unconscious personal dynamic lurks behind those repetitions which appear on examination to be somehow unconsciously arranged. The usual response to this interpretation, of course, is denial.

My fellow historians also react this way. As a result, popular versions of many historical events come to be filled with denials and blind spots, missing pieces put there because they serve several psychological functions: keeping things comfortably simple and allowing normal ethnocentric impulses to flourish by helping the group's members idealize their group and feel good about themselves. Case in point, the crises listed above. Hollywood movies, popular books and magazines, documentary films, and television usually treat them in the same way. The U.S. is always blameless. The U.S. is always a victim. The attacks, sudden and deeply upsetting, are always unforeseen. By looking critically at the complexity of these events, some neglected and ignored realities will be revealed.

### **Pearl Harbor (1941)**

From the very moment of the attack, questions of who knew what, and when they knew it, took center stage and have remained central to our understanding of the Pearl Harbor attack ever since.

We've long known that President Roosevelt saw Hitler as a threat, believing from 1937 on that force was the only thing that could stop him. Roosevelt's hands were tied by political considerations, namely the large number of American isolationists who wanted no part of Europe's quarrels. Thus, it has been argued, FDR failed to alert the commanders at Pearl Harbor in order to get America into a war in Europe that many Americans didn't want.

Except for a small minority of revisionist historians and Roosevelt-haters, this "back-door-to-war" theory has been largely

discredited. Most scholars now correctly exonerate FDR from arranging the Pearl Harbor attack, though this too is connected in several ways to some glaring blind spots.

The fact is that the U.S. government did know a great deal. Cryptographers had broken the Japanese diplomatic code. The U.S. was listening in through wire-taps to exchanges between Tokyo and Washington and had also partly broken JN-25, the Japanese naval code. Government and military officials knew the Japanese Imperial fleet was on the high seas, knew that Japanese embassies across the world were suddenly burning documents, knew it portended something sinister. One day before the attack, events prompted Roosevelt to declare, "This means war" (Robert Sherwood, ed. *The White House Papers of Harry Hopkins*, I, 430). Predictions of a surprise Japanese attack on U.S. forces went all the way back to Hector Bywater's *The Great Pacific War* in 1926, while several naval and military maneuvers in Hawaii in the 1930s were predicated on just such an attack.

The U.S. had transferred half the Pacific fleet to the Atlantic in July, a movement carefully monitored by Japanese spies on Oahu. Moreover, having been on Red Alert for several months, U.S. forces were told to stand down two weeks before the attack, almost as if the U.S. was intentionally letting down its guard at the most crucial moment.

What has also gone missing from most popular television accounts is FDR's embargo on oil shipments to Japan. When Japanese forces occupied southern French Indochina, FDR responded with an oil embargo. The Japanese held oil supplies sufficient to maintain their occupying army in China, run their industrial plant at home, and sustain the Imperial navy for about one year. To them, FDR's provocative action was nearly akin to a declaration of war.

Virtually all U.S. naval personnel in the Pacific were expecting an attack of some kind that weekend. It is now clear that Roosevelt, too, was expecting an attack, but on the Philippines, not Hawaii. Whatever unconscious motives might or might not have been at work for FDR, all the evidence shows that for days after December 7, the attack's destructive scope and cost left him genuinely troubled and seriously depressed.

### **Korea (1950)**

Documents show that North Korea's leader was eager to invade the South. South Korea's leader was also eager to invade the North. Given considerations of the Cold War, the North's wishes depended on Chinese agreement and Stalin's approval. Both were cued by the U.S.

The late David Halberstam's study of the Korean conflict, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (2007, 1), puts it this way: "Some six months [before the invasion] ... Secretary of State Dean Acheson, in a colossal gaffe, had neglected to include South Korea in America's Asian defense perimeter." Historian Timothy Snyder avoids the "colossal gaffe" theory, but notes in passing in his new study, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2010, 361), that Stalin gave permission to North Korea's leader, Kim Il Sung, to invade the south in part because "Stalin knew that the Americans considered Korea beyond the 'defense perimeter' they were constructing in Japan and the Pacific, because the secretary of state had said as much in January [1950]."

Acheson's gaffe, if that's what it was, took place in a post-war world which rightly considered appeasement to have brought on the Second World War and happened when the U.S. was consciously molding its policies around George Kennan's "containment" idea. It is curious that in such an environment one of the U.S.'s chief spokesmen would forget to make it clear to China, the Soviets, and North Korea, "This far and no farther!"

### **Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)**

Forgotten and unmentioned in television accounts of October 1962 are earlier provocations by the U.S., first in the ill-fated CIA-backed invasion of the Bay of Pigs, then in Operation Mongoose (the efforts to assassinate Prime Minister Castro that JFK had entrusted to his Attorney General brother Robert Kennedy). The appearance of Soviet intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Cuba was truly a surprise for most Americans and perhaps even for the Kennedy administration. Yet, the failed invasion of 1961 and the on-going assassination plot (well known to Castro) made a Cuban appeal to the Soviet Union to help strengthen Cuba's defenses almost a foregone conclusion.

### **Gulf of Tonkin Incident (1964)**

Not widely known to the public, but confirmed by the Johnson tapes and other documents, is how Defense Secretary McNamara and President Johnson were able to manipulate the media, Congress, and their own thinking in order to create a cause for escalating a conflict with North Vietnam. Covering up U.S. provocations toward the North Vietnamese, they convinced America and the world of an attack on the destroyers USS *Maddox* and *Turner Joy* that never happened and used it as a pretext for going to war.

### **Iranian Hostage Crisis (1979)**

In 1953, the U.S. engineered the overthrow of a legitimate Iranian government, putting in its place the U.S.-backed Shah who then ruled Iran with an iron hand through his terrorist secret police, the SAVAK, for the next 26 years. During that time, virtually every Iranian family suffered by having one family member or another imprisoned, tortured, or disappeared. Hatred of the U.S. ran high long before the 1979 student uprising which forced the Shah to flee. The Shah sought refuge and medical treatment in the United States, while back in the chaos of Tehran, Western embassies were sensibly closing down and their diplomats were returning home. Appeals from the U.S. embassy to do likewise were repeatedly rejected by the State Department; an embassy request to beef up the Marine contingent for added security was also rejected.

As with the crews of *Maddox* and *Turner Joy*, the diplomats in Tehran felt like sitting ducks. It is hard to disagree with them, considering President Carter's later words. David Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger had appealed to Carter on the Shah's behalf. It must have been them he had in mind when, as he reluctantly signed the order allowing the Shah into the U.S., Carter asked, "When the Iranians take our people in Teheran hostage, what will you advise me then?" (*New York Times*, 11/18/79, 1; *Newsweek*, 11/19/79, 68). The U.S. diplomats were taken hostage six days later.

### **Gulf War (1991)**

Women in many countries have proven outstanding and inspiring leaders. They make equally superb CEOs, ambassadors, foreign ministers, and heads of state. Yet there are those times when putting women into the mix can become problematic.

Sending female ambassadors into extremely macho cultures, like those found in parts of the Arab world, needs to be considered rationally and objectively. Where leaders reflect cultures that disdain and oppress women, the leaders then find appointments of female ambassadors to their countries humiliating.

Saddam was such a man. He experienced U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie's appointment to Iraq in 1990 as an act of disrespect. Many Iraqis felt the same way. At the same time, Saddam was not a stupid man. As one of America's long-standing allies he would never risk alienating the U.S. without first checking to see if a military act against Kuwait would be acceptable, especially if the cause seemed just.

Never mentioned in the media's treatment of the run-up to the Gulf War is the chain of causes begun—it was Saddam's contention—by Kuwait's angle drilling into Iraq, by which Kuwait was illegally siphoning off Iraqi oil.

When Saddam sounded Ambassador Glaspie on America's views, she told him (though later denying it after first affirming it) that the U.S. had no interest in any Arab-Arab conflict. Shortly thereafter, a spokesperson for the U.S. State Department, asked the same question at a televised press conference, gave the same answer: the U.S. had no interest in any Arab-Arab conflict. Can Saddam be blamed for being surprised when his "surprise" invasion of Kuwait was taken by the U.S. as a cause for war?

### **The 9/11 Attacks (2001)**

It is now well known that an August 2001 White House briefing noted that some of the terrorists who eventually attacked the U.S. on 9/11 were learning to fly planes without learning how to land them. These reports were ignored. While hindsight is 20/20, the facts are that the Clinton administration had earlier tried to take out bin Laden with cruise missiles and made sure to warn the incoming Bush administration about the dangers of al Qaeda.

There were other warning signs, too. The World Trade Center had been damaged by an attack in 1993, killing six and wounding over a thousand. Bin Laden publicly declared war on the United States four years later, saying it was every Muslim's duty to kill every American man, woman, and child wherever they found

them. Two U.S. embassies were subsequently bombed. The USS *Cole* was attacked. Television newsmagazines like *20/20* and *60 Minutes* periodically aired segments on how easy it was to plant mock-suitcase bombs in commercial airplanes due to lax security at U.S. airports. Newspapers such as the New York *Daily News* printed cover stories on how easy it would be for terrorists to launch a hand-held missile attack from Brooklyn into lower Manhattan.

Most Americans turned a blind eye to these warnings, escaping any anxiety they may have felt about them in the manic 1990s by obsessive discussions about the extraordinary growth of their stock portfolios.

### **Conclusion**

This short comparison has revealed a few things about these seven 20<sup>th</sup> century events. First, much was known or suspected by government and military leaders before each attack. Second, the U.S. sometimes played a role in provoking them.

These historical realities raise the question of how much of a surprise these crises really were. Given what was known or suspected at the time, perhaps they shouldn't have come as such a surprise, unless large numbers of people were turning a blind eye, consciously and unconsciously, to the realities of what was actually happening. It is also clear from the repetition of these events that it is psychologically important for us to remain innocent victims, again and again.

Unless these events were coincidental, they strongly indicate a pattern of unconsciously willed events that were unconsciously arranged; out-of-the-blue military disasters keep catching us by surprise because massive repression and denial continue to convince us we had no part in the arranging. Logic compels us to conclude at least as a possibility that what we are seeing looks suspiciously like a collective compulsion to relive an original trauma. It seems to call up memories and feelings surrounding 20<sup>th</sup> century America's Ur Trauma, Pearl Harbor.

Historical traumas in general have several recognizable characteristics. Obsession with the original event is one of them. Surely, Pearl Harbor qualifies. Seventy years on, it continues to flourish as an iconic event in the American narrative and maintains

its grip on our national consciousness in the media, memorials, and political rhetoric.

Another characteristic of traumatic events is that the original trauma holds center stage and tends to push all contiguous events aside. Those related events are trivialized. Some disappear entirely. Again, Pearl Harbor qualifies. In popular treatments, only Pearl Harbor matters. Only historians and World War II buffs, it seems, regularly remember the Japanese engaging in simultaneous attacks on Wake and Midway islands and on the British in Hong Kong, all while also invading British Malaya, Dutch Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Clearly, surprise attacks have a history of their own and stand apart from any connection they may have with traumatic compulsion. This essay is intended to call attention to one overlooked aspect of their psychological importance, which does not devalue the surprise attack's significance as a central part of strategic and tactical thinking. The essay suggests, finally, that when historians look to reconstruct the past we need to add considerations of unconscious compulsion and traumatic reenactment to our causal repertoire if we are not to remain blind to the blind spots we still overlook and so often find difficult to explain.

*David R. Beisel, PhD, who teaches history and psychohistory at SUNY Rockland, has authored numerous articles on American and European history. He is a Contributing Editor to Clio's Psyche, and from 1978 to 1987 edited the Journal of Psychohistory. A second edition of his psychological study on the diplomatic run-up to World War II in Europe, The Suicidal Embrace: Hitler, the Allies, and the Origins of the Second World War (2010), was the subject of a roundtable at the July 2011 convention of the International Society of Political Psychology in Istanbul. Professor Beisel may be contacted at [dbeisel@sunyrockland.edu](mailto:dbeisel@sunyrockland.edu).*

## **Moths to Flames: Foreign Policy**

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## **Blindness, Reenactment, and Surprise**

**Francis A. Beer**—University of Colorado, Boulder

David Beisel, in “Military and Diplomatic Blind Spots and Traumatic Reenactments,” suggests that countries that have suffered previous surprise attacks are prone to repeat the experience. They suffer from “unconscious compulsion and traumatic reenactment,” which drive them to repeat the experience. He cites as evidence incidents during World Wars I and II; the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor; North Korea’s attack on South Korea; the Cuban missile crisis; the Gulf of Tonkin incident; the Iranian hostage crisis; Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait; and, most importantly, the attacks on 9/11/2001. The Russian Tsar, it was claimed, was surprised by the revolution because he did not know the desperate situation of the Russian people. More skeptical analysts believe, however, that he would have known if he had wanted to know. Beisel claims a similar dynamic for many foreign policy crises. Political leaders, he believes, could have done a better job of avoiding many historical crises if they had wanted to.

His article raises a number of important questions. Are there foreign policy blind spots? Does foreign policy reenactment happen? What might be some of the mechanisms of reenactment? What remedies might be available? Do political leaders become the blind leading the blind?

As Beisel recounts, the historical record includes many surprises that, with hindsight, look like ignoring the obvious. Blind-side mistakes are usually laid at the doorstep of misperception, misinterpretation, and unanticipated consequences. Political reality is opaque. The dots are not always clear, and their connections are even more ambiguous and fluid. Events do not roll out in a seamless narrative. Further, standard analyses tend to emphasize the danger of forgetting the lessons of the past rather than wanting to re-experience them. Political inertia and complacency also play a part.

The blind spot hypothesis is easier to accept than traumatic reenactment. It is less clear if foreign policy reenactment happens. Historians tend to focus on the uniqueness of political cases. In a

strict sense, reenactment could not happen because new circumstances are always different from old ones. At the same time, Beisel believes that the trauma of a historical surprise attack feeds forward; the experience of being attacked in the past produces an unconscious desire to be attacked in the future. Past crises provide future scripts.

While this smacks of blaming the victim, we may still ask, what might be some of the mechanisms of reenactment? Beisel emphasizes unconscious sources, particularly a desire to relive the trauma of surprise. This formula requires political leaders who want to relive experiences that were not their own, but that happened to those who preceded them. There is a further problem of infinite regress. Beisel focuses on Pearl Harbor as the founding surprise, but what about surprises that came before? If later generations wanted to re-experience the pain of Pearl Harbor, what prior experiences was the Pearl Harbor generation trying to re-experience?

There might also be non-traumatic, unconscious, and conscious sources for reenactment. Psychological factors influence perception, policy, and action. There is an enormous inventory of possible filters. These include, among others, conformity and groupthink; denial of novel or unwanted news, perhaps combined with unwarranted optimism about crisis outcomes; projection of one's own identity, values, or aggression onto others; fear or greed; insecurity or inferiority; anxiety, depression, or another disorder from the latest edition of the DSM; Freudian sexual repression, Oedipal conflict, or the Jungian shadow; the warrior ethic or religious belief; narcissism and delusions of grandeur; escape from boredom and search for excitement; ambition; anger or jealousy; desire for revenge; dominant or submissive personality; authoritarianism or lust for power; sado-masochism, death wishes, or worries about mortality.

Some other reasons for reenactment might include rational calculation. Political leaders might wish to have a context for greatness. Comes the moment, comes the man. Heroic deeds can only be done in heroic times. Surprise attacks can offer possibilities for political action on a larger scale. Followers must die so that leaders can live. Surprise attacks can also help political leaders re-

arrange the preferences of their followers to support policy actions that they might oppose in more normal times. And surprise attacks can generate domestic political support in a “rally ‘round the flag” effect. So the 9/11 attacks allowed President George W. Bush to transform himself into a war president, to undertake a desired war of choice against Iraq, and to achieve reelection on a national security platform. Finally, hard choices between bad alternatives may involve calculated risks discounting the future and opening the way to later surprise. In any case, who can completely distinguish the reality from the rhetoric of blindness and surprise? Surprises for some are not necessarily surprises for all. Bad things happen, by accident or design, to imperfect people.

If blindness and surprise are really true, what remedies might be available? Are we like moths drawn to the flames, programmed forever to fly blindly and willingly into destructive surprises? Blindness may be a problem, but less so than willingness. It is hard to recommend permanent hypervigilance at increasing cost, even in a very dangerous world. Uncertainty can be reduced, but never eliminated. Yet an expanded intelligence architecture may provide a bit more light to mitigate blindness and help us to expect the unexpected. The latest surveillance and communication technology can inform more sophisticated risk assessment and foreign policy planning. Among other things, this may involve better information integration, pattern recognition, crisis alert and early warning, systematic case comparisons, parallel interpretive frames, and alternative futures.

State of the art intelligence may provide better prediction and avoidance of possible surprises if all political actors want to escape them. If, on the other hand, some individuals open the door to surprises and reenactments for rational or irrational reasons, there will be no quick progress toward a surprise-free future. Psychology only offers its insights to those who wish to read them. There are none so blind as those who will not see. The problem is not that the moths do not see the flames. They see them all too well and fly eagerly toward the hot light. The greatest surprise would be if moths stopped flying into it—and if there were no more apparent foreign policy blindness, reenactment, or surprise.

*Francis A. Beer, PhD, is Professor Emeritus of Political*

*Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He has taught and published extensively in the field of international relations, with a particular focus on war and peace. His work is described in greater detail at the website <http://sobek.colorado.edu/~beer/>. He may be contacted at [Beer@Colorado.edu](mailto:Beer@Colorado.edu).*



## **A Psychiatrist Reflects on a Blind Spot in the Battle of Hürtgen Forest**

**Sander Breiner**—Michigan State University

In Europe during World War II, many “blind spots” were constructed and perpetuated by the U.S. military. The following is the most significant in my military experiences in the First Infantry Division (Big Red One), involving my participation in the Battle of the Bulge.

We were in the Hürtgen Forest, for two to three days of re-supplying and special training. There were two divisions ahead of us that were supposed to split the enemy, opening the way for our attack. The technique was completely unusual in that we were supposed to be advancing not in columns in our usual fashion, but moving forward in line along the front, spraying gunfire ahead of us in a sweeping motion. Because our tanks could not readily get through the forest, they were going to meet us beyond it. Our plan was to then jump on the tanks and half-tracks and head directly toward the German city of Cologne. We were still in khaki brown, the skies were heavily overcast, and our planes weren't flying. We began advancing with a relatively unprotected rear area as snow began to fall.

Shortly after our attack began and prior to our tanks arriving, the Germans counterattacked in much greater numbers. Furthermore, they dropped parachutists dressed in white behind us to cause confusion. The advancing German infantry wore white winter clothes and their tanks were painted white—in contrast to our khaki brown, which stood out against the snow. Before my division was decimated, I was hospitalized. When I returned to my di-

vision in January, the Battle of the Bulge had been resolved. In the company of 200 men only three were alive after the battle, plus the four of us who had been hospitalized early on. Now, what does this have to do with “blind spots?”

You do not successfully attack an enemy unless you have and act on excellent information about their strengths and weaknesses and the conditions of the battlefield. This is accomplished by sending out combat and reconnaissance patrols. This was done quite inadequately. Such a large number of enemy soldiers and equipment in a concentrated area, and the approaching snowstorm, should have been respected and should have altered tactics, but were not and did not.

The “blind spot” was created by the officers above division level, who, believing in the invincibility, or exceptionalism, of the American military because of the successful preceding months, which created hubris, were in denial about the enemy’s strength in number of troops and tanks, their use of winter camouflage, and their overall tactical superiority. The “blind spot” meant that only seven out of 200 soldiers in my company survived the Battle of Hürtgen Forest. Fortunately, I am one.

*Sander J. Breiner MD, FAPA, is a Professor of Psychiatry at Michigan State University and Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Wayne State University. At both universities, he trains and supervises psychoanalysts. He is also author of over 100 scientific articles and books including, Slaughter of the Innocents: Child Abuse through the Ages and Today (1990). Dr. Breiner may be contacted at [sjbreiner@comcast.net](mailto:sjbreiner@comcast.net).*

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## Denials and Disavowals

**Nathan Carlin**—University of Texas, Houston

As a fan of psychohistory and psychobiography, my love for this kind of scholarship goes back to my days at Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania. There I wrote my senior honors thesis consisting of a psychoanalytic reading of the auto-

biography of Archpriest Avvakum, a 17<sup>th</sup> century Old Believer in the Russian Orthodox Church.

Not everyone who came to the oral presentation of my thesis was a fan of psychohistory and psychobiography. Indeed, a clinical psychologist who has a strong anti-Freudian bent asked me a series of critical questions, leading up to this one: “What would it take for you to give up Freud?” I wasn’t sure how to answer that question at the time. But one of my mentors, Jeffrey Kripal, stepped in and helped me to answer. He did so by talking about his own work. He said that the advantage of psychoanalytic hermeneutics is that, in certain cases, they can often account for a wider range of data than is usually otherwise possible, such as when interpreting and explaining mystical and erotic symbols found in religious texts. He also said that, if he were to encounter a better tool, one that could explain these mystical and erotic symbols in a satisfying way, then he would discard Freud—but, in the meantime, he knows of no such tool. I’ve always liked that response.

When I read David Beisel’s essay, it occurred to me that he was making two arguments, one general and one specific, and that his general argument was similar to Kripal’s response at the oral presentation of my senior thesis. Beisel writes, “The essay suggests, finally, that when historians look to reconstruct the past we need to add considerations of unconscious compulsion and traumatic reenactment to our causal repertoire if we are not to remain blind to the blind spots we still overlook and so often find difficult to explain.” I find this general argument to be completely convincing.

I find Beisel’s specific argument to be basically convincing as well. What I find particularly useful here is his association of psychological denial and historical narrative—specifically, the idea that, when trouble is on the way, persons and groups in various cultures need to be surprised by this trouble so that they can maintain their innocence. With regard to these dynamics in our own culture, he writes, “It is...clear from the repetition of these events that it is psychologically important for us to remain innocent victims, again and again.” The value of this insight is that it allows us to connect the dots across 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. history, and the line that connects these dots is denial. Military and political blunders and mistakes, which previously could not be satisfactorily accounted for, become

understandable: they are not random and bizarre but are, rather, the product of denial.

While Beisel's observations are compelling, I have a question about his basic insight. What does one do with cases where U.S. intelligence hears threats, does not act on addressing these threats in any substantial way, but nothing happens? If nothing happens, is this still denial? It would not seem to be so. It would seem, rather, to be the right guess and an effective use of resources (governments, after all, cannot afford to chase every red herring). But then, in this context, denial would seem to depend on external factors rather than on internal factors, and this seems problematic. Another way to put the question is this way: What is the relationship between denial and luck?

A suggestion as to how to complicate Beisel's analysis comes to mind. In order to account for an even wider range of data, he could employ the psychoanalytic distinction between denials and disavowals, a distinction that was first pointed out to me by Donald Capps. As I understand this distinction, denial refers to cases where the patient or the subject rejects established facts (as when, to use one of Beisel's examples, Air Marshal Göring denied the facts about the U.S. fighter escorts). In contrast, disavowal does not entail a rejection of established facts but, rather, a rejection of the *importance* of these facts (as when, to use another of Beisel's examples, U.S. intelligence officials hear about plans for a given terrorist attack but do not think that these plans are important). Such a distinction would enable Beisel's comparisons to become as concrete and as specific as his psychological analysis permits, while also enabling him to be as broad and as general as his comparative analysis allows.

*Nathan Carlin, PhD, who teaches at the University of Texas Medical School in Houston, Texas, is co-author of Living in Limbo: Life in the Midst of Uncertainty (2010). He has published a number of articles in Pastoral Psychology and other journals and may be contacted at [Nathan.Carlin@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:Nathan.Carlin@uth.tmc.edu).*

## **Washington Policy Makers Need to Consult with Beisel**

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

Humans are inclined to act surprised at events that should not really be a surprise and shock to us when they involve traumatic elements, such as an attack on our country or the discovery of a cheating husband. At a Congressional hearing a decade before 9/11, there were warnings that terrorists might fly planes into buildings, while a wife whose husband leers at and flirts with other women when they are strolling together should not be shocked when he is discovered having an extramarital affair. Perhaps we should add to the Bard's reference to fear making cowards of us, that denial reflects conflict, cowardice, or delusion. In his brilliant book, *The Suicidal Embrace: Hitler, the Allies, and the Origins of the Second World War*, Professor Beisel has done a superb job of spelling out the role not simply of denial but also of its roots in the victim/victimizer dyad. The time when individuals and nations wake up to the dangers they face is so often based upon issues of denial, grandiosity, narcissism, preoccupation, and a seeming inability to focus on issues unless it fits an emotional need of the moment. David Beisel has written about these issues with incredible clarity and historical data to back up his points.

Regrettably, the limits of space this journal could offer him has meant that in this "Blind Spots" paper he could mostly only give examples of blind spots and traumatic reenactments, rather than a full-fledged discussion of their origins. Perhaps it would have been better had he limited his examples to only two or three rather than the seven listed. However, he could not resist beginning with the marvelous story of the fighter ace Adolph Galland being berated by Göring for having told the Führer of American penetration into German airspace. Though a good story, it is not an example of an unconscious blind spot. Of course, in fairness to Beisel, blind spots need not be totally unconscious; humans have all sorts of ways of knowing and not knowing. Information can be "known" but its importance and implications are not seen or at least not acted on.

Beisel is on firm ground when he comes to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the reaction of Russia to their planned attack on the Russian ally Serbia. The explanation of some traditional historians, who attribute the failure of the Hapsburg military planners to mention the Tsarist-Serbian alliance to the self-interest of officers, is inadequate. Yes, the planners knew that it would hurt their chances of promotion to mention the obvious, but they were also loyal defenders of the realm whose lives could be on the line in a major conflict. His example of Stalin discrediting one of the numerous reports of the coming German invasion in 1941 by declaring that the reporter "should be sent to his fucking mother" is psychologically quite evocative since it raises the possibility of unconscious incestuous feeling related to Hitler.

The heart of the "Blind Spots" paper is the seven examples of Americans' blindness in the face of external threats. As a presidential psychobiographer, I am well aware that our commander-in-chief wakes up every morning being briefed about foreign threats to American safety. His political survival is focused on defending against verbal and political missiles being launched at him by the opposing party, disillusioned supporters, and members of his own party who desire his position. These domestic opponents and supporters do their best to keep him preoccupied with their concerns; typically, they don't care about the rest of the world except in the face of a direct threat or a recent world war. Presidents get elected and reelected by appearing to be strong and decisive while giving in to political pressure, which is why what are labeled as mistakes could more readily be listed as inevitable consequences of a system that punishes being farsighted and rewards presidents with an incredible increase in power when the country is attacked and they can switch from being persuader-in-chief in domestic policy to commander-in-chief with a blank check in foreign policy. American narcissism, as reflected in the belief that the U.S. is an exceptional nation and therefore can do only good in the world, is also a part of this picture.

David Beisel has had a most distinguished career as an internationally recognized, innovative scholar who may have taught psychohistory to more students (7,800) than all other teachers of psychohistory in higher education have taught together. With the

death of Rudolph Binion, Professor Beisel has become our leading psychological historian probing the unconscious tendency to traumatically reenact earlier trauma. Our country would be safer if our policy makers in Washington, D.C. would read and take to heart his work on denial leading to blind spots and traumatic reenactment, applying it to their contemporary decision-making.

*Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, is a presidential psychobiographer who may be contacted at pelovitz@aol.com.*



## **Models in Psychoanalytic Historical Research**

**Karl Figlio**—Psychoanalytic Studies, University of Essex

Professor Beisel has proposed a historiographical framework, in which the repetition of a national trauma accounts for a series of apparent misjudgments or blind spots in U.S. military preparedness. He attributes these miscalculations to an unconscious repetition of an ordinary trauma, the attack on Pearl Harbor. His thesis is important as it invites historians and lay people alike to consider underlying common threads that tie together otherwise seemingly separate events. The cost of not doing so is catastrophic.

One would have to be a psychologically informed 20<sup>th</sup> century military or social historian of the United States to comment on the application of Professor Beisel's argument to the specific case of Pearl Harbor. I cannot, therefore, comment on it. Instead, I would like to propose that we make explicit and debate the models we use to interpret case studies. The more explicit the model, the more a new model can suggest new questions and new areas of research. Beisel's model has a popular antecedent in the idea that if we do not learn our history, we are condemned to repeat it. More technically, it follows a line that goes back to Freud's theory of hysteria: that hysterics suffer from reminiscences—from memories that they don't remember, but are repeating in their symptoms. It comes up again in "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through" (1914) and most famously in the concept of repetition

compulsion in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). It is an approach that I modified in my article, "Historical Imagination/ Psychoanalytic Imagination" (*History Workshop Journal* 45, 1998: 199-221), arguing that lived and written history is an attempt at what Melanie Klein in 1952 called reparation: that remembering is not just recalling but also working through in the form of making good ("Love, Guilt and Reparation," *The Writings of Melanie Klein*, 1, 1975, 306-44).

What I would find helpful, therefore, would be an exposition of the trauma-memory model on which Professor Beisel grounds his interpretation of the repetition of military misjudgment. Next to it, others could put other models forward for comparison and further work. My aim would be partly to test them against each other, partly to find their best fit with different historical situations. More specifically, it would be to refine our understanding of the relationship between processes, such as reparation, recognized in psychoanalysis, and processes recognized by historians.

My model goes like this. I start from Freud's premise that there is an *Unbehagen in der Kultur*—an unease or malaise in society (*Civilization and its Discontents. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 21, 1930, 57-146). This cultural unease, for Freud, was the inherent aggression of the death drive; for me, it includes imminent catastrophes, which evoke defenses within which people live "normal" lives. One form of defense is a mutual projection system, in which external enemies replace a sense of inherent turmoil. Hannah Segal, for example, argues that having an external enemy offers protection against collective guilt ("Hiroshima, the Gulf War, and After," in Anthony Elliott and Stephen Frosh, *Psychoanalysis in Contexts: Paths Between Theory and Modern Culture*, 1995). From this angle, one would ask additional questions of the historical sources. One question might be to ask whether the military roots go back to the U.S. Civil War. Was collective guilt for slavery obscured by dividing the nation into schismatic groups at war, creating perpetrators and victims of the same people in a mutual projection system, in which the "other" side was the perpetrator and "this" side was the victim, equivalent to the slave as victim? In my view, the historian's understanding remains intact, but incomplete without the psychoana-

lytic understanding.

This line of questioning does not probe trauma in the same way as Professor Beisel proposes, but it does explore “remembering” in the sense of interrogating systems of thought within which we build social systems that offer defensive enclaves. Inside these enclaves, we live normal lives and avoid remembering as making good the damage to a good object (say, the United States as a whole people) (Hinshelwood, *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 430-2; Steiner, J., *Psychic Retreats: Pathological Organizations in Psychotic, Neurotic and Borderline Patients*, 1993). The internal *Unbehagen* makes its way into channels through which it is discharged, as in conflict with an externalized enemy. It can lead, as Beisel argues, to conflict that begins with a wound to national pride. In my view, national pride has to be recovered through remembering as reparation.

Perhaps the most compelling example for historians of the process of remembering as reparation would be the post-war confrontation of Germany with its Nazi past as an aspect of German culture. In this case, the process actively involved historians who were provoked into the professional and also very public *Historikerstreit* (historians’ debate) over evading responsibility for the Holocaust by the Frankfurt School philosopher, Jürgen Habermas. In this debate, the whole range of questioning came into a forum to be worked over: responsibility, guilt, victimhood, justification, reparation, pride, blindness.

Immersed as German citizens, the historians still tried to write history, and they struggled with each other. They struggled with models of history. Could one draw an equivalence between the suffering of the Jews and the suffering of Germans at the hands of the Soviet Union or the Nazis? Would such an equivalence constitute an exoneration or would it be essential to reconciliation? How could German memory, corrected by historians, include the Nazi period? How could this memory be secured unless it was also a continuing act of reparation to the Jews and to the blighted German nation (see Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past*, 1997)?

Beisel’s paper is both a case study in the consequences of not remembering and a particular model of it. The *Unbehagen* ex-

ample is another model of collective memory. I think the *Historikerstreit* offers a helpful model of the role and value of psychoanalytic historical research.

*Karl Figlio, PhD, is a professor in the Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies, University of Essex, UK. He is also a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, registrant of the British Psychoanalytic Council. He may be contacted a kfiglio@essex.ac.uk.*



## American Wars and Reliving Trauma

**Ken Fuchsman**—University of Connecticut

David Beisel's paper on blind spots and traumatic reliving intersects with my response to some recent commentaries about American exceptionalism. Are some of us setting up a straw figure by demonizing American leaders and separating our own motives from that of our warlords? Are we falling into an "us and them" pattern? Beisel's piece does not justify my worry as much as some American exceptionalism pieces, but there is enough of an undercurrent in his essay to reawaken this concern.

This is not to give a free pass to American war lovers eager to decimate still another barbarian at the gates. Let us not forget the outlandish behavior warfare inevitably brings out. As a reminder, here is what American World War II veteran, Edgar L. Jones, wrote: "We shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed or mistreated enemy civilians, finished off enemy wounded, tossed the dying into a hole for dead, and boiled the flesh off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts...We mutilated the bodies of the enemies cutting off their ears...and buried them with their testicles in their mouths" ("One War Is Enough," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 177, No. 2, February, 1946, 49-50).

The violations of war are always a viable candidate for traumatic reliving and blind spots. America's numerous military engagements have wreaked havoc on foreign lands, seen our own citizens maimed, killed, and scarred, without always enhancing our

national security. As Beisel indicates, the devastating emotional impact of Pearl Harbor activates our vulnerability. American military actions since World War II look “suspiciously like a collective compulsion to relive an original trauma.” If there is a repeated pattern, what evidence is necessary to ascertain what is an irrational repetition compulsion and what is not? How can I distinguish a blind spot that makes me unable to see the car coming up next to me, hard as I try, from a denial that my own actions have helped bring on the catastrophe I claim I wish to avoid?

Let’s look at the cases Beisel presents. After World War II, the first example given is the Korean War, which began in June 1950 when the North invaded the South. In a January 12, 1950 speech, Secretary of State Acheson had described the defense parameters for the U.S. in Asia, omitted the Korean peninsula from the area of defense, and this was said to be a colossal gaffe that led Stalin to give permission to the North Koreans to invade. There are three questions: was Acheson’s omission a gaffe, was it the cause of Stalin’s decision, and if Acheson goofed, was it a blind spot? There is a case to be made for and against Acheson making a deadly error. Korea was not mentioned by name in the speech, but Acheson said that if there were invasions outside this defense perimeter, the U.N. could intervene militarily. Earlier in 1949, when the Chinese Communists discussed the invasion of South Korea, Stalin did not veto it. His knowledge of Acheson’s declaration might have led him to later give the go ahead, or he might have said yes for reasons related to China and not the U.S. Stalin, too, might have remembered Acheson talked about U.N. action. The North did invade, and the U.N. sent troops. If Acheson blundered, was it because of an irrational blind spot or not? To answer that, we would need to know more about Acheson’s psychology than is discussed by Beisel.

The biggest Soviet-American confrontation of the Cold War era was the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. After the Bay of Pigs, Castro knew the American CIA was trying to kill him, so he asked the Soviets for help. Such a request, Beisel says, was “almost a foregone conclusion.” Castro’s request did not mean his Russian Communist allies would install nuclear weapons in Cuba. Since the start of the Cold War, the Russians had not committed their military

beyond their sphere of influence, as in Korea it was Chinese troops who fought. So coming to the Americas would be a big leap for Khrushchev. President Kennedy knew his Soviet counterpart thought he was weak, and he could well have unconsciously been double-daring Nikita to take him on in the American backyard. The result was the brink of nuclear war, the Soviets backing down, the signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty by the following summer, and Khrushchev being ousted from power due to the debacle over Cuba.

Was this an instance of traumatic reliving and/or the highest stake game of chicken where the U.S. won, the back of the Cold War was broken, and the Soviets never again made a substantial Cold War military venture far outside their sphere? A case can be made that John Kennedy was acting out traumatic reliving, as he was profoundly affected by World War II; men under his command died, his own life was in jeopardy, his brother and brother-in-law were killed. In the immediate aftermath, Kennedy became very disillusioned about war, and wanted to change things. Kennedy's trauma, though, had little or nothing to do with Pearl Harbor. To see if traumatic reliving impacted on leaders, David Beisel would need to flesh out his discussion of the individual lives of the leaders making these decisions and how the public traumas became the vehicle of transfer of their own issues.

His piece is suggestive and provocative, and brings again to the fore how issues of war and peace can reactivate the most basic human dreads, hostilities, and needs to repeat past traumas. As psychohistorians, we need to carefully delineate the various possible causes of actions to show what may be irrational and what not; and to critically examine our own psychology when attributing less than benign motives to others. As humans, it pays to remember that no matter how justifiable the reasons for war, leaders will try to disguise or deny the barbarism inherent in the human universal of armed conflict.

***Ken Fuchsman, EdD**, is currently Assistant Extension Professor teaching interdisciplinary studies at the University of Connecticut, where he has also taught history and been Executive Director of the Bachelor of General Studies program. Dr. Fuchsman is on the Editorial Board of Clio's Psyche, and has written on war*

and trauma for a variety of publications. He can be reached at [ken.fuchsman@uconn.edu](mailto:ken.fuchsman@uconn.edu).

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## **Blind Spots and Seeing Spots**

**Ted Goertzel**—Rutgers University

David Beisel's hindsight is sharp. That is the advantage historians have over policy makers. Historians would be more challenged if they compared cases where blind spots prevailed with ones where unwelcome realities were recognized and dealt with appropriately. They might also examine cases where critics claiming superior insight perceived threats or risks that did not materialize. For decades, the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* argued that the world was only minutes away from nuclear Armageddon, while the defense establishment argued that containment would work. Who had the blind spot and who was seeing spots? Even with historical hindsight, it is difficult to know for sure because, even though we know the outcome, we can't be certain what would have happened had the policy makers acted differently.

Neville Chamberlain's belief that Hitler could be appeased was a famous blind spot, rooted in a quite realistic understanding of the horrible costs of world war and an optimistic view of human nature. It was shared by the vast majority of the British public, which makes it impossible to attribute to individual psychodynamics. Lyndon Johnson's belief that the fall of South Vietnam would lead to a domino effect turned out to be wrong, but as an anti-war activist at the time I remember that many on the left also believed in the domino theory. They simply thought that the falling of the dominos would bring the benefits of socialism to the victims of the American empire. No one predicted that the United States would lose the war and win the peace in the way that we actually did. George W. Bush was wrong in predicting the costs of invading Iraq, but his critics were wrong in predicting the outcome of the "surge" that salvaged the misadventure. Both failures may be due as much to the inherent difficulty of predicting the future as to psychological motives.

When decisions are made by a single powerful individual, it is tempting to attribute them to that individual's psychology. But, as Philip Langer pointed out in the June 2011 issue of *Clio's Psyche*, important foreign policy decisions are usually made by groups of individuals with varying psychological make-ups. Purely individual aberrations are likely to be quickly corrected. Even Adolf Hitler's and Joseph Stalin's blind spots, cited by David Beisel, were corrected by the German and Soviet military commands in response to military realities. More recently, Hosni Mubarak was convinced by his advisors that he was no longer the beloved father figure of his nation. Disabusing dictators of the blind spots in their thinking is an important process that deserves more study.

Blind spots that are rooted in group dynamics, rather than the aberrations of a powerful individual, may be more difficult to overcome. Ideological groups, such as the neoconservatives that crafted George Bush's Iraq policy, enforce blind spots with social pressure and sophisticated ideation and can be highly resistant to recognizing mistakes. I doubt very much, however, that the individuals in these groups share similar personal or family histories. Better explanations can be found in group dynamics as explored by writers such as Karen Horney, Wilfred Bion, and Larry Hirschhorn. These are summarized, along with several case studies, in Chapter Five of my book, *Turncoats and True Believers*.

*Theodore (Ted) Goertzel, PhD, Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University, is the author of seven books and is a long-time Research Associate of the Psychohistory Forum. He may be contacted at tedgoertzel@gmail.com.*

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## **Traumatic Memory, Blind Spots and Remembering**

**Juhani Ihanus**—University of Helsinki

It is human to distance and displace oneself from a painful experience—a traumatic event—by fictionalizing it and developing a narrative about it. Such a process involves being blind to certain realities and dehumanizing the perception of some realities linked

to violence and atrocities. Victims have witnessed a trauma, but those who have not are prone to turn away from the victim-witnesses. Wounded victims are also wounded storytellers, who re-stage and reenact the scenes of trauma that are denied or dissociated but are replayed both according to rational scenarios and according to unconscious rhythms and rhymes. Individual intrapsychic defenses against traumatic experiences are also transformed into group-level defensive maneuvers.

David Beisel makes it clear that historians are not free from such defensive avoidance and outright rejection, and tend to accept “rational” explanations for phenomena pertaining to traumatized individuals and groups that they research. Beisel presents a strong argument in favor of the need to recognize the blind spots that are unconsciously motivated and affect behavior, while “emotional demands trumped rational decision-making.” Beisel’s argument goes even further to propose a strong possibility, “a pattern of unconsciously willed events that were unconsciously arranged.” Beisel’s conclusion leads us to approach historical traumas as manifestations (or hidden expressions) of “a collective compulsion to relive an original trauma.”

Such a reliving of an original trauma at individual and collective levels must be studied as well, not only from the point of view of mostly unconscious defenses but also from the point of view of memory that is located between history and myth. Current memory research is based on the individual memory and its neural-biochemical architecture, brain structures, and neurophysiological functions. The concept of collective or cultural memory has traditionally been used as a metaphor in historical and cultural studies rather than as a strict concept in natural sciences and psychology. The alleged memory of the collectives is challenged from the side of neuroscientific memory research and from the side of historical research. The former doubts the whole existence of collective memory and the latter prefers history over memory (which is deemed an unreliable witness to be corrected by carefully documented and painstakingly source-critical and disciplinary historical research).

Historical traumas can, of course, be memorialized and ritually repeated through cultural artifacts, social practices, and ideo-

logical rhetoric. The traumatic experience is not embodied in them but rather in individual human beings, while practices and politics of memory regulate the collective (social and cultural) aspects of the task of remembering the traumas. Still, as Maurice Halbwachs (*On Collective Memory*, 1925) already pointed out, individual memories surely have social links to the language, conceptualizations, conventions, attitudes, and values of the groups to which we belong.

Thus, both our semantic and episodic memory encodes, retains, and recalls events through the social and cultural filters. No memory is an island, individually determined by the purely cognitive processing of information but reverberating and resonating in the web of group relations and loyalties, including collective deceptions and myths, seductions of remembering otherwise, revisions of historical truths, and additions of mythical contexts. Cultural memory is apt to turn to "travelling concepts" (cf. the myth of Ulysses) that circumvent and modify the affective impact of traumas. Perhaps our human mirror neuron system that has now scientifically been approved of is also tuned to witnessing the impact of the past in our current lives and future goals.

The role of memory does not consist solely of information processing and cognitive patterning; it also involves reflecting on actions, goals, and responsibilities in the present and for the future, accompanied by emotions and metamemory (remembering what, how, and when we remember). Neither individual nor collective memory is a warehouse of stable facts, but a well-spring for the ongoing memory process. The past is continuously constructed through narratives that oscillate between history and myth, providing shared memories and group identities. In collective memorization, we can study how many people share a memory as a myth, as a narrative, or as a history, and how that is related to the crucial question of historical truth. Psychohistorians add to collective memorization the important function of group fantasies that make divisions between "us" and "them."

Pearl Harbor, for example, belongs to both "us" and "them." It is not a static historical encapsulated fact. It is also a state of mind hallowed by time. Its historical truth, place, and status are "located" in between and can be negotiated. The traumatic is em-

bodied in memory and in fantasy formations as physical ailments (that can be mentalized) and psychic anxieties (that can be physically symptomatic).

Forgetting traumas and injustices is nowadays often regarded in cognitive memory theories as a healthy way of adjustment, whereas the use of defenses is seen as more or less “pathological” (an opinion that distorts the developmental continuum between the “normal” and the “pathological”). Actually, memory is alive; it can be retold through cognitive reappraisals, emotional attunements, and intersubjective and group relating.

Remembering traumas binds victims, perpetrators, and even onlookers. Twisting realities by the defensive avoidance of responsibility breeds transgenerational burdens of deadly silence. The magical (or “compulsive”) presence of the victims is incorporated into the daily lives of those who pretend to live without any burdens. Rather than seeking the drug-assisted elimination of the horror embodied in memory, psychohistorical understanding and the analytic-emotional process (through personal and collective remembrance) is more inclined to accept the sufferings of the victims and prepare them an empathic reparation and compensation among people living in the present. In terms of hard scientific enterprise, it can also lead to the increase of the “ratio of excitatory to inhibitory connections in the memory as a whole” (Stanley Palombo, *The Emergent Ego: Complexity and Coevolution in the Psychoanalytic Process*, 1999, 143), thus further priming our capacities to remember and actualize transformative self-reorganizing.

As an example of the collective denial of the traumatic affect, Rudolph Binion used to refer to Chancellor Friedrich Ebert’s salutation to the defeated German soldiers who returned from the front of World War I: “No enemy vanquished you.” Binion knew that history is full of traumatic reliving, both as written fantasies and as deeds. Beisel has again forcefully reminded us of this and of the task of remembering that awaits all of “us” (together, in collaboration, with “them”).

**Juhani Ihanus, PhD**, an adjunct professor at the University of Helsinki and the University of Oulu, is Senior Lecturer and Member of the Board of Directors at the Open University of the Universi-

*ty of Helsinki, and Contributing Editor of the Journal of Psychohistory. He has published books and articles on psychohistory, cultural and clinical psychology, and the history of psychology. Dr. Ihanus may be reached at [juhani.ihanus@helsinki.fi](mailto:juhani.ihanus@helsinki.fi).*



## **The Weight of the Unconscious**

**Paul F. Jankowski**—Brandeis University

If our own humble blunders result from unconscious compulsions, why should not those of statesmen and grandees with war-making powers? And if our memories are somehow self-serving, why should not those of groups recollecting or re-living some earlier collective trauma? David Beisel is surely right to complain that historians dismiss the unconscious too lightly, and that they would do well to search for the kinds of patterns of repetitive behavior that might suggest some powerful underlying motive for the antics and oversights of historical actors. The late Rudy Binion, who did so much to open this field of inquiry, would no doubt agree, and welcome the discussion that Professor Beisel has opened.

It does not necessarily follow, however, that the errors that so often contribute to the outbreak of wars or the precipitation of crises are unconsciously willed; still less that they reflect an unconscious urge to re-live an earlier disaster. To demonstrate this for an individual would require documenting some kind of repetition difficult to explain on any other grounds; for an entire nation, some kind of collective unconscious drive reasserting itself in circumstances that seemingly have nothing to do with each other. Most of the examples that Beisel gives are of the second sort.

The successive entries of the major combatants into what would come to be called the Second World War indeed tells in part a tale of successive errors of wishful thinking by the most disparate decision-makers—by Chamberlain and Daladier, that Hitler could be contained by negotiation, then by deterrence, then finally by retaliation; by Hitler, that they might not go to war for Poland; by Stalin, that the French would resist longer and that Hitler would not

attack the U.S.S.R. when he did; by FDR, that the Japanese would attack the Philippines, not Hawaii; by Hitler again, that he could defeat the U.S.S.R. before the U.S. could make a difference. Must each of these reflect an unconscious wish, when the conscious gamble or calculus, however flawed, speaks for itself? Perhaps, but failing reliable psychobiographical evidence, we are still in the realm of speculation.

Beisel suggests two related patterns in his recitation of American foreign policy disasters between Pearl Harbor and 9/11. The policy-makers had done much to provoke them unconsciously, yet reacted with shock and indignation when they materialized; and popular renditions, in films and other vehicles, rested on a narrative of innocence and victimization. Denial came on top of denial, in short, first among officialdom and then among the public, from the Ur trauma of Pearl Harbor to the outrage of 9/11. It might be objected that the pattern does not apply very well to many of the others—not to the Cuban missile crisis, in which the U.S.S.R., not the U.S., acted irrationally by trying to violate a tacit understanding about the balance of power; not to Vietnam, in which the U.S. escalation reflected a fixation about the country's credibility in the Cold War and deeply divided the country; not to the Iranian hostage crisis, during which many American public commentators pointed to mistakes in U.S. policy since 1953, and so on. The fundamental *cesura*, however, between the acts of the policy-makers and the creations of collective memory, is to my mind sound. Whether the two can be explained by similar psychohistorical factors, determining or over-determining both the crises and the popular transfigurations, remains to be seen. Many historians in recent years have been working on questions of memory, especially the memory of wars, in various parts of the world. They might do well to heed Beisel, and enlist at least social psychology as well as anthropology and sociology in their explorations.

*Paul F. Jankowski, DPhil, Ray Ginger Professor of History at Brandeis University, was educated at Balliol College, Oxford and is the author of a forthcoming study of the battle of Verdun of 1916. His other published works include Communism and Collaboration: Simon Sabiani and Politics in Marseille, 1919-1944 (1989); Cette vilaine affaire Stavisky, Histoire d'un scandale politique*

(2000); *Stavisky. A Confidence Man in the Republic of Virtue* (2002); and *Shades of Indignation. Political Scandals in France, Past and Present* (2008). He may be contacted at [pjankows@brandeis.edu](mailto:pjankows@brandeis.edu).



## Popular Blindness as National Trauma

**Daniel Klenbort**—Morehouse College

Professor Beisel argues that Americans have been repeatedly subject to unprovoked and unforeseen attacks, or to put it more precisely, they have been subject to what they perceive to be unprovoked attacks. Beisel analyzes this belief in psychological terms, arguing that such repetition may reflect unconscious motives. If an individual is repeatedly and unexpectedly rejected by lovers, or repeatedly fired from jobs, we are inclined to investigate what that person is doing to provoke these unfortunate and unforeseen outcomes. In what respect is the person blind to his own role in creating these outcomes and why is he blind to his own part in the drama? Beisel's tentative answer is that Americans have an unconscious need to reenact Pearl Harbor. Let me leave the question of Pearl Harbor to the side and examine some of the issues Beisel raises.

Historians, Beisel tells us, tend to ignore the repetitive character of American crises because they tend to look at each set of events as unique; they study a crisis in-depth and see each crisis as due to particular causes, which makes them blind to more general patterns. Beisel is surely right. Canada and the U.S. follow different trajectories after 1776, but they are now more similar to each other than either is to their 18<sup>th</sup> century predecessors. There have to be some general causes of their parallel development, but this sort of parallel is rarely explored by historians, whose focus is on each country's unique history. Historians are right to see uniqueness, but wrong to ignore the possibility of general patterns.

Beisel discusses political blindness at some length. He gives us a variety of examples, which belong to distinctly different categories, only one of which is relevant to his argument. Göring was blind to potential allied air power, Stalin to German intentions, and

Bush to Iraqi realities. All these cases belong to the psychology of the individual. The Austro-Hungarian general staff was blind to Russia and Kennedy and his advisors were blind to Cuban realities before the Bay of Pigs. These are examples of social or group psychology. Historians and other experts are not blind in this sense. Even non-expert students aren't. In 1955, I was in high school and learned that the American oil embargo was one of the causes of Pearl Harbor and that Acheson's gaffe on Korea had played a role in causing the Korean War. Popular consciousness, however, ignores these complications and it is the blindness of the American people that is the subject of Beisel's concern. This blindness is more sociological than psychological; it refers to Americans' collective identity, not their individual psychologies. It belongs to what Norbert Elias calls their "we" identity.

A sense of national superiority is not an American peculiarity. The British enjoyed the psychic satisfaction that came with ruling the waves and the French were proud of their civilization with its civilizing mission. Jingoism and chauvinism are not American inventions. Americans' pride in their country derives not only from America's power and wealth, but from a sense of moral superiority. America is a democracy; it is a free country in which all men are created equal. Just being an American is a source of satisfaction. The American self-image may be inflated, but it is not altogether false. Many of our parents and grandparents came to the U.S. because it was a country of freedom and opportunity. We can see the limits of the idealized self-image of Americans and still recognize it has some basis in fact. As Beisel points out, Americans derive psychic satisfaction from belonging to a powerful and virtuous nation. But when Americans take the idealized self-image literally, they tend to see international relations purely in moral terms; their outlook becomes Manichean. "They hate us because we're free" becomes an appealing thought. We are an innocent people, so when we are attacked the attack is unprovoked. If we ceased to see the world that way, it would diminish our psychic satisfaction. No wonder we avoid evidence that makes us partly responsible.

Finally, is Pearl Harbor the root of the pattern Beisel describes? I'm not sure. I think the concept of national trauma needs more careful exploration and I would note that America's moral-

istic self image predates Pearl Harbor. Remember Woodrow Wilson.

*Daniel Klenbort, PhD, is a professor at Morehouse College. He may be reached at klenbort@gmail.com.*



## Denial or Selective Perception?

**Philip Langer**—University of Colorado, Boulder

In my comments on Professor Beisel's analysis of historical events, the reader must keep in mind that I am writing from the perspectives of both a military psychohistorian (Robert Pois and Philip Langer, *Command Failure in War: Psychology and Leadership*, 2004), as well as a professor of psychology. In his article, *Military and Diplomatic Blind Spots and Traumatic Reenactments*, Beisel argues that historians fail to recognize that such processes as denial and unconscious motivation may commonly link unique historical events, resulting in "blind spots."

The problem is that while his arguments are insightful, the use of defense mechanisms and unconscious motivation does not really provide for much verifiable analytical evidence regarding group decision-making. To categorize decision failure as an example of denial (or "blind spot") might be an accurate description for an individual's behavior within a clinical setting, but should not be used to categorize a group process. Denial, per se, reflects an individual's rejection of reality and the substitution of wish fulfillment (Leland E. Hinsie and Robert J. Campbell, *Psychiatric Dictionary*, 3rd ed., 1960, 197). In a clinical setting, the therapist is in a position to uncover underlying and uniquely individual causes. For historical purposes, though, you would need to establish within the group as to whom or what individual processes contributed to the decision. As for unconscious motivation, while its existence is postulated among clinicians, it is a dead end for purposes of historical analysis.

Given the complexity of group decision-making, about the only construct even remotely resembling a broad clinical character-

ization is groupthink. This is defined as an overriding group dynamic to seek agreement among its members, at the expense of obtaining accurate, and perhaps negative, evidence. The Bay of Pigs fiasco is often cited as an example of this construct (Saul Kassin, Steven Fein Hazel R. Markus, *Social Psychology*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., 2008, 274-275). Groupthink is not mentioned in the article, though, and it is doubtful that there is any universal application of this explanation in the instances cited.

In fact, the examples presented are really a mixed bag. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss each in detail, but I would like to react briefly to a few. Beisel's paper starts off describing a direct confrontation between Hermann Göring and Adolf Galland. Göring knew very well that American planes had penetrated German air space. But a more plausible explanation for his outburst is that he had slipped into the life of a sybarite, as witness his corpulence. Moreover, he had previously contributed to the debacle at Stalingrad, by failing to adequately supply the Sixth Army. He did not need Galland to go to Hitler, who had by this time assumed complete control of German military operations, and voice a complaint about more Luftwaffe failures. Göring's hysterical reaction more likely reflected an awareness of his increasingly precarious hold on power.

Continuing, it is likely true that Bush did not want to hear more bad news about Iraq. By the very nature of his comments, though, I can only conclude that he was indeed aware of the problems in Iraq, but did not want to be reminded about them. I suspect many of us have been in that same boat.

Stalin, on the other hand, comes closer to providing denial as an explanation. His military was warning him about the massing of German troops and over-flights into Soviet territory. While there was some Soviet reaction to these threats, Stalin was convincing himself in various ways that Hitler was not going to war (Alfred Seaton, *The Russo-German War: 1941-45*, 1971, 20-22). His retreat from governing, immediately after the outbreak of war, suggests the depth of his shock when reality took over.

On the other hand, the idea of a universal process operating in a variety of events is rather intriguing. I would like to suggest

the concept of selective perception as more plausible and observable series of events. It certainly can be used as an explanatory construct, especially when a single individual like Stalin or Hitler is controlling the decision-making. Perception is concerned with two parallel processes. One is *bottom-up processing*, where we choose to consider stimuli from our environment, which is an inductive operation, and *top-down processing*, a deductive strategy based on prior expectations and experience. Not only do both processes operate simultaneously, but also both operations are influenced by the fact that attention is selective (David Myers, *Psychology*, 2004, 193, 231). The reader may perceive a resemblance to denial, but these processes can provide evidence amenable to direct observation.

Actually, medical diagnoses provide a good example of selectivity. It is likely true that during the flu season if you visit your doctor, and your symptoms are flu-like, he may very well begin treating you for the flu. On the other hand, if you present symptoms associated with sickle cell anemia, the physician is more likely to initially consider anemia if you are African-American, as to being Caucasian. The recent outbreak of a deadly strain of *E.coli* illustrates both processes. Researchers immediately identified the disease (top-down), while their search for the sources involved represented bottom-up processing.

On the other hand, using basically a bottom-up strategy, whatever the model of analysis the historian prefers, can focus on individuals involved in the process. Indeed, Gordon Prange, in his book *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor*, does an excellent job of amassing evidence based on individual behavior. On the other hand, using a top-down approach, while simultaneously relegating bottom-up processing to a minor role, might well create a significant number of "blind spots" in the observer, who starts with denial and unconscious motivation as controlling constructs to categorize the outcomes. The validity of a final categorization is questionable.

*Philip Langer, PhD, is a recently retired Professor of Educational Psychological Studies, who includes the study of Freud in his classes. His psychohistorical contributions have been in mili-*

*tary history, with as special emphasis on the American Civil War. He may be contacted at Philip.Langer@Colorado.edu.*

## **Is There More to Psychohistory Than Trauma?**

**David Lotto**—Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

Dr. Beisel's paper reiterates a fundamental aspect of psychohistorical analysis: that we can't understand key historical events without taking into account the operation of irrational processes. His paper focuses on one category of such irrationalities, those in which leaders and policymakers had blind spots, acting as if they were unaware of crucially important information.

Dr. Beisel cites several historical events that fit this description, focusing on seven, starting with the attack on Pearl Harbor, in which the United States was blindsided by a direct or indirect surprise attack that those in leadership roles should have seen coming. He suggests that these seven events can best be understood as traumatic reenactments of the Ur trauma, which lays down the template for subsequent reenactments of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Dr. Beisel, along with a number of other prominent psychohistorians, including Vamik Volkan, Rudy Binion, Dan Dervin, and many others, see trauma and the various reactions to it, including reenactments, and its intergenerational transmission as central to understanding much of what is irrational, and often unconscious, in the motives that determine so many important historical events. Trauma has become the most prevalent topic in recent psychohistorical scholarship. To cite just one of many examples, there is a 1998 book titled, *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, edited by Yael Danieli, with contributions from 38 authors in sections such as the Nazi Holocaust, World War II, genocide, the Vietnam war, trauma to indigenous peoples, trauma under repressive regimes, and domestic violence and crime.

Beisel mentions four other 20<sup>th</sup> century historical events: Göring and Hitler's denial and disavowal of bad military news as

the war turned against Germany; a similar refusal to acknowledge negative military developments in Vietnam by Johnson, McNamara, and Westmoreland; the Austro-Hungarian general staff ignoring the probable reaction of Russia to their attack on Serbia, which started World War I; and Stalin's blindness to the coming German invasion in 1941. Beisel does briefly mention possible psychological motives that may not be trauma related in connection with these examples, as well as the seven events in American history. For example, he says "popular versions of many historical events come to be filled with denials and blind spots, missing pieces put there because they serve several psychological functions," including "keeping things comfortably simple and allowing normal ethnocentric impulses to flourish by helping the group's members idealize their group and feel good about themselves." I would like to suggest that this line of explanation can add a good deal of explanatory power to the trauma reenactment accounting for all the examples.

To expand on Beisel's comments on ethnocentrism and self idealization, I would argue that narcissistic motives and wishes can generate a good deal of irrational behavior, such as grandiosity, assertions of superiority over others, over-idealizing one's own group, demonization of the enemy "other," and the willingness to use force to enact these wishes that are central to understanding the irrationality that drives so much of nations' behavior. As Beisel says, all of these maneuvers are in the service of making the group feel good about themselves. I would argue that all of the events described by Beisel can be understood as examples of expressions of narcissistic wishes to feel more powerful, virtuous, and generally superior to others, particularly those we don't like.

In the case of the United States, these kinds of self-aggrandizing narcissistic wishes are at the core of what has been called "American exceptionalism." This ideology of entitlement and superiority has been present throughout this country's history, from the colonists' treatment of the Native Americans as inferior, uncivilized barbarians; to the Monroe Doctrine claiming the entire Western hemisphere as our sphere of influence; to the belief that this country had a manifest destiny to expand its territory and subjugate all others to our direct rule or dominance; to the World War I crusade to make the world safe for democracy; to our duty to lead

the battle against godless communism; to being obligated, as the world's only superpower, to use military means to impose our will on others.

As Beisel points out about the seven unpleasant surprises this country has experienced since Pearl Harbor, we "sometimes played a role in provoking them." However, one aspect of the American exceptionalist belief system is that we must always, with perhaps a few exceptions, be the good guys. Beisel suggests that it is important that we be in the role of the innocent victim. I believe that the innocent victim stance also facilitates taking revenge on our attackers with a feeling of righteous and justified indignation. Unfortunately, it also aids in suppressing guilt over our acts of violent retribution, as well as helping to avoid any sense of responsibility for our actions that may have provoked the attack.

As described by Heinz Kohut in his paper on narcissistic rage and emphasized by many others, traumatic events can certainly exacerbate the worst kind of narcissistic behavior. However, narcissistic wishes and the actions motivated by them can exist without a prerequisite trauma. For example, without stretching the definition of trauma too broadly, it would be hard to make the argument that the grandiose, entitled, and violent activities of this country from colonial times to the present, most of which occurred before Pearl Harbor, are primarily reactions to or reenactments of a national trauma.

Trauma and its consequences can generate powerful motives which may sometimes be irrational, unconscious, or both, and play a major role in driving much of what happens in the world, particularly when groups or nations engage in violent conflict. Issues related to loss, unresolved mourning, and the desire for revenge and retribution toward those who have harmed them are frequently present in many of the historical events we are trying to understand. My contention here is that too much of an emphasis on traumatic reenactment can lead to downplaying other kinds of motives, which are not necessarily trauma related. In particular, the variety of narcissistic wishes, which can lead to the creation of "blind spots" along with a host of other less puzzling irrationalities.

*David Lotto, PhD, is a psychoanalyst and psychohistorian*

*in private practice in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, as well as a Research Associate of the Psychohistory Forum, who may be contacted at [dlotto@nycap.rr.com](mailto:dlotto@nycap.rr.com).*

## **Psychological Influence Outweighs Blind Spots**

**Richard Lyman**—Simmons College

David Beisel has written a brief but thought-provoking paper emphasizing a number of instances when top decision-makers seemed self-deluded, obsessed, or blinded to what in retrospect we are inclined to call “reality.” His thesis is that underlying psychological factors often overwhelm a leader’s ability to make judgments with clear sight. The strength of his survey is that he has found many instances of this tendency, each with different details but all fitting into a similar pattern. His seven American cases all seem to prove his point.

In research for a longer essay, however, let alone a book, I suspect that Professor Beisel would find examples that demonstrate a contrary point, even within his chosen framework of exploring the continuing power exerted by the Pearl Harbor attack over American decision-making. Just within the World War II years, one thinks of the numerous deceptions perpetrated by the formerly-gullible Allies on the Germans, and from June 1942 (Midway) onward, on the Japanese as well. These ploys often put our intentions, locations, capabilities, and points of attack under disguise. Surely, some of these deliberate deceptions by the once-deceived Americans and their allies played a strong role in eventual victory in both major theaters of war. Together they may well suggest an ability to learn sometimes from previous and recent errors of judgment, omission, and foresight. In any event, by the end of that war, it was the enemy as much as we who seemed befuddled. Could a marshalling of these examples “prove” that shrewd leaders can sometimes overcome the psychological tendencies that loom so large in this paper? What are the elements (both personal and institutional) that preclude self-deception?

In other words, if we are to look at Beisel’s proposition from both sides, indeed from all sides and not just from a blinded-

American-leadership point of view, we might still find elements and remnants of powerful psychohistorical tendencies without falling into the dual traps of seeming to simplify excessively and selecting only examples favorable to the thesis at hand. Of course, the tendencies he describes do often exist, but it is not just American policy-makers who are vulnerable. Consider the recent raid on bin Laden's hideout in Pakistan, an event which seems to have had a "Pearl Harbor impact" upon the Pakistanis. Clearly, collaborative elements in the Pakistani leadership group felt comfortable in shielding the man, apparently confident that we would never have the nerve (or even the capacity?) to carry out with both efficiency and surprise a violation of their territory. It might be an interesting test case of the thesis in this paper to watch South Asian events unfold.

However, if this critique were to be accepted as valid, I am confident Professor Beisel would ask in rebuttal: Then why is there such a disappointing pattern in our own country's history of self-deception over the decades? Doesn't the record indeed show that vulnerability to subconscious manipulation by psychological factors is more powerful than any motivation or ability to learn from the past? I would then respond: Perhaps it would be helpful to the strength of the thesis if, in subsequent explorations, the author feels encouraged to refine and develop both argument and exemplification to include countervailing evidence. After all, it seems of almost equivalent significance that there often exists a compensatory drive to learn from prior mistakes. For example, toward the end of World War II, we were regularly misleading the Germans and the Japanese to our advantage, whether through manipulation of codes or the planting of cleverly selected pieces of misinformation (e.g., about the D-Day landing sites, just to name one famous example) or suggesting to a traumatized enemy people a capacity we did not in fact have. Consider, for example, the number of atomic bombs (zero) actually available immediately after Nagasaki when Truman warned about a "rain of ruin" about to fall on Japan should they not immediately surrender. In the actual event, we were reduced to carrying out a conventional (if devastating) air raid three days after Nagasaki, aimed at Tokyo presumably to influence the Emperor to surrender since Tokyo had already been very heavily bombed in

two severe raids earlier in 1945.

There is no shortage of examples of non-American self-deception in war-making history, including another aspect of the just-mentioned case of Japan's death struggle after Nagasaki. A mere few hours before we launched that last air raid on Tokyo, unbeknownst to us, the Japanese high command had voted 4-4 on the question of whether or not to continue the war. It was only when the Emperor himself (defying precedent) intervened to break the tie that peace began to become a possibility. When many such examples are assembled from many sources, they could serve to explore in a deeper, broader, and more nuanced way Professor Beisel's thesis that psychological factors do indeed often play a role in faulty decision-making.

Further, as a part of an expanded discussion, it is tempting to wonder aloud whether or not there are other moments when clear and courageous leadership did tip the scales in yet another way. Even after all his flaws, faults, and weaknesses are laid bare, is there really any doubt that Winston Churchill provided a different kind of leadership in those desperate days of 1940, to the eventual benefit of the world (John Lukacs, *Five Days in London May 1940*, 1999, and *At the End of an Age*, 2002)?

Psychological influence on decision-making may have been brushed aside for too long, and Beisel's paper performs a good service in bringing it out into full daylight for discussion. But as in all things, there are complications, refinements, exceptions, and nuances. I hope the discussion continues.

*Richard Lyman, PhD, received his degree in Medieval History from Harvard University, which led to a 45-year academic career. Among his New England-area appointments, he served as Chair of History and (founding) Director of Asian Studies at Sim-*

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*mons; later, in a 10-year “retirement” coda, he served both as Lecturer in and Director of Asian Studies at Brandeis. He is now fully and finally retired to western Maine, where he may be contacted at richard.lyman@simmons.edu.*

## **Saving Face, Chosen Traumas, and Chosen Glories**

### **Alice Lombardo Maher—Changing Our Consciousness**

As I write this, the American team just beat North Korea in the first round of the Women’s World Cup soccer tournament. North Korean coach Min Kim explained the loss by pointing out that several members of his squad had recently been “hospitalized with electrocution” as the result of being hit by lightning, but they still managed a good game.

The American media laughed out loud at this obvious, clumsy attempt to preserve self-esteem in the face of a humiliating loss (Will this effort help the team improve its game, or interfere with its performance?). Yet, more subtle and potentially more malignant forms of this phenomenon are ubiquitous—in each of us as individuals, and on the world stage.

As Dr. Beisel points out, the problem extends beyond issues of denial and self-esteem preservation. He addresses the importance of patterns, “unconsciously willed events that were unconsciously arranged,” and that go on to “hold center stage and... push all contiguous events aside.” His model of traumatic repetition brings to mind Vamik Volkan’s theory of chosen traumas and chosen glories. Volkan defines “chosen trauma” as an event that causes a group to feel victimized and lose self-esteem, leading to an unconscious mythologizing of the event. In the paper, “On Chosen Trauma” posted on Volkan’s website, he explains, “The group draws the mental representations or emotional meanings of the traumatic event into its very identity, and then it passes on the emotional and symbolic meaning from generation to generation.” The chosen trauma is not mourned. “When a new conflict—a war or war-like condition—develops, the current enemy’s mental image becomes contaminated with the image of the enemy in the chosen trauma.”

Similarly, a “chosen glory” is an event leading to triumph over an enemy. Volkan refers to leaders’ attempts to play out their personal dramas in national and international arenas, and often doing so by referring to chosen traumas and chosen glories in ways that ignite the emotions of the masses. Eventually truth can no longer be found and no longer matters, as new generations behave in ways that are consciously and unconsciously designed to repair humiliations of the past.

This theory explains why, as Dr. Beisel points out, so often “the U.S. is always blameless. The U.S. has preferred to see itself as always a victim. The attacks, sudden and deeply upsetting, are always unforeseen.” Too many of us want to believe the worldview that “they” hate “us” because we’re good, pure and innocent, despite much evidence to the contrary.

I believe that this model of traumatic reenactment is of vital importance and that all of us need to be educated about it, especially the next generation. We must all come to realize that the unconscious compulsion to repeat is aborted, and strength and momentum regained, only through a process of painful insight into our own history, desires and defenses, followed by mourning of losses. This is true for each of us as individuals and for our society as well.

*Alice Lombardo Maher, MD, is a psychoanalyst and psychiatrist in private practice in New York City. She graduated from Albert Einstein College of Medicine and received her analytic training at the Psychoanalytic Institute at the New York University Medical Center where she also taught for 15 years. Currently, Dr. Maher is founder and director of Changing Our Consciousness, a non-profit organization that confronts intergroup conflict, prejudice, and stigma through the development of emotional literacy and dialogue. Its website is [www.changingourconsciousness.org](http://www.changingourconsciousness.org) and she may be contacted at [alicelmaher@gmail.com](mailto:alicelmaher@gmail.com).*



## **Weak Leaders and Self-Deception**

**Jamshid A. Marvasti**—UConn School of Medicine

Professor Beisel skillfully discusses the normal psychic element of consciously constructed self-deception and denial, using, as examples, the leadership of Hitler, Stalin, and George W. Bush. In my opinion, Stalin was more of a realist, and homicidal, whereas Hitler was suicidal. In fact, there are some psychohistorians who believe that the entire nation of Germany was suicidal. This thinking is not based on the fact that Hitler did eventually commit suicide, but rather because of the belief that Germany would have to have a death wish to attack two fronts, the West and the Soviet Union. Perhaps, instead of it being a “blind spot,” Stalin felt that Hitler would have to be insane (and suicidal) to attack the Soviet Union while already engaged in a full-blown war with the rest of the world. Of course, another possibility is that Hitler and his generals may have been living in a fantasy, where they were the chosen superior race and destined to dominate the rest of the world, on both eastern and western fronts.

Professor Beisel uses Hitler, Stalin, Johnson, and George W. Bush as examples of heads of state who surrounded themselves with a mentality of denial. I would like to add to this list the Shah of Iran. I grew up in Iran at the time of the dictatorship of the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and therefore experienced firsthand all of the indicators of the 1979 Islamic revolution. Just as President Bush instructed his staff not to deliver any bad news concerning Iraq and President Johnson surrounded himself with “yes men,” the Shah of Iran created an entire culture whose mentality included tip-toeing around the king, even to the point where it changed the perception of the truth to reflect news that would not displease the king.

Bad news is a narcissistic trauma to weak leaders because it causes a blow to their self-esteem, grandiosity, and exceptionalist tendencies, and may evoke symptoms similar to PTSD in the form of avoidance and dissociation as an ego defense. Thus, weak leaders may feel a psychological need to avoid bad news.

I would like to expound upon the ways in which this “denial reaction” affects other officials through a process similar to Darwinian natural selection. Weak leaders usually develop positive feelings toward those who are the bearers of good news, and may likewise develop disgust for those who bring attention to negative

news or failure, even when this news may, in fact, be true. Those who bring good news get promoted, while messengers of negative information are filtered out. Therefore, officials quickly learn that in order to please a weak president/king they must distort the news. An Egyptian journalist observed, in comparing the Shah to his father, "No one would dare lie to the Shah's father," but, "No one would dare tell the truth" to the Shah. Consequently, the Shah did not realize the extent of the inflation his subjects were suffering from or the growth of the opposition to his oppressive regime.

A leader who cannot deal with any aspects of his mistakes or failure should not be in a position of leadership. I agree with Beisel when he states that Bush's order to his staff to essentially censor any bad news about the Iraq war is astonishing and irresponsible coming from a head of state.

In regard to the concept of traumatic reenactment, I wonder if Watergate was an unconscious repetition of a childhood abandonment trauma for President Nixon. His final remarks at the White House upon resigning may be the only ones that his speechwriters did not craft. He spoke of his mother, and how consumed she had been with taking care of his older brother, who suffered from tuberculosis, even taking him to Arizona for treatment. Did Nixon experience his overworked mother's absence as abandonment? Did he unconsciously repeat this trauma by setting up a situation in which his wrongdoing would be exposed and he would therefore be rejected by the nation?

My other question is whether the Gulf War falls into the traumatic reenactment category. What was the U.S. government's underlying motive when our Ambassador April Glaspie informed Saddam Hussein that the United States had no interest in an Arab-Arab war? Did the United States' ensuing defense of Kuwait provide us with an opportunity to rework our loss in Vietnam (the "Vietnam syndrome") with a more positive outcome? After all, Iraq always claimed that Kuwait was part of Iraq. In Arab countries, it is believed that Churchill's England did not want all of the oil to be in the hands of one nation. Therefore, the Middle East was divided into separate countries, one of which was Kuwait. In his diary, Churchill boasted, "One afternoon I created Jordan in my drawing room." Every border of every Middle Eastern or North

African country that is a perfectly straight line is considered to be an artificial border made in a drawing room by some superpower. The psychological issue connected to the creation of the first Gulf War was to repeat the trauma of Vietnam, this time with a better outcome. The United States government orchestrated this war to reverse the traumatic effects of Vietnam syndrome.

I fear that the next big war will involve America and China. It would not surprise me if the media were to be used to manufacture a military incident with China. This, we might use as an excuse not to pay them back the trillions of dollars that we owe them, claiming, instead, to spend that money to rebuild their bombed-out cities and bring democracy to their country. Let us hope that this is one traumatic reenactment that does not play out.

*Jamshid A. Marvasti, MD, is a child and adult psychiatrist practicing at Manchester Memorial Hospital, in Manchester, Connecticut. He is an Instructor in Psychiatry at the UConn Medical School and has authored/edited several books and articles. He may be contacted at jmarvasti@aol.com.*



## **The Role of Shock and Surprise**

**Paul Salstrom**—Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College

David Beisel's article tells us that "when denied and repressed things suddenly take shape, shock and surprise often follow." Surely no one familiar with modern psychology would deny that this occurs, at least in people's personal lives. Beisel's point, however, is that a pattern of shock and surprise following on the heels of denial and repression has characterized at least seven "military and diplomatic crises which the United States has unexpectedly faced since the beginning of the second World War." Hence, Beisel asks that we "more critically examine" those seven crises for a pattern of denial and repression followed by shock and surprise. However, some important *non*-psychological facts are missing from Beisel's summaries of the seven crises, so it seems premature to conclude that they do actually all share a psychological pattern of denial followed by repression followed by shock and

surprise.

In Beisel's account of the Pearl Harbor attack, most of what he writes seems to be tangential to these psychological patterns. He begins: "From the very moment of the attack, questions of who knew what, and when they knew it, took center stage and have remained central to our understanding of the Pearl Harbor attack ever since." Here I beg to differ. For most Americans, anyway, the emotional significance of the Pearl Harbor attack has always centered on shock and surprise. In fact, "who knew what, and when" is just a tempest in a teapot. The idea that Franklin Roosevelt ever consciously or unconsciously wanted war between the U.S. and Japan is far-fetched. Starting when France fell in June 1940, Roosevelt ardently sought war between the U.S. and Germany. Neither he nor anyone else thought a U.S.-Japanese war would lead to a U.S.-German war; in fact, it was just the opposite. Thus, Roosevelt was trying to keep Japan's pre-Pearl Harbor aggressions on the backburner of U.S. deliberations, but Secretary of State Cordell Hull out-maneuvered Roosevelt and pushed through anti-Japanese policies that provoked Japan to initiate war with the U.S. Therefore, it's no wonder that (as Beisel concludes his Pearl Harbor section) "all the evidence shows that for days after December 7," Roosevelt was "genuinely troubled and seriously depressed." Until December 11 when Germany, totally unexpectedly, declared war against the U.S., Roosevelt thought his desired U.S.-German war was going to be indefinitely delayed.

Beisel then moves on to the Korean War, implying that North Korea's June 1950 invasion of South Korea was a shock to Americans like the Pearl Harbor attack. I wish Beisel had actually examined such similarities for Americans between Pearl Harbor and Korea, and also had looked at differences between them. Instead, Beisel's point here is that Stalin and China were negligently "cued by the U.S." (in a speech by Secretary of State Dean Acheson) that the U.S. did not "include South Korea in America's Asian defense perimeter." This may be true, but it is not why Stalin supported North Korea's plan to invade South Korea. Stalin didn't support that invasion because he thought North Korea could "get away with it," so to speak, but rather because he hoped it would lead to warfare between the U.S. and China, thereby preventing any

U.S.-Chinese cooperation at the expense of the Soviet Union. Stalin's hope was realized and U.S.-Chinese cooperation was delayed for over 20 years, until Nixon visited China in 1972. As for China back in 1950, its leaders realized at that time what Stalin's true motive was, but Stalin's support for Kim Il Sung's invasion left Chinese leaders with no way to prevent the invasion.

Regarding the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, Beisel says that "the appearance of Soviet...missiles in Cuba was truly a surprise for most Americans and *perhaps* even for the Kennedy administration." I've added emphasis here to Beisel's "perhaps" because finding Soviet missiles in Cuba *was* a surprise for the Kennedy administration—as well as for other Americans. The only reason the U.S. had sent secret U2 spy planes over Cuba was *just in case* some sort of Soviet military aid showed up in Cuba. But regardless of that, the surprise of finding the missiles was not very similar to the surprise of Pearl Harbor or even the surprise of North Korea's invasion, because it was obvious the Soviet motive wasn't to attack the U.S. but to negotiate with the U.S. from a new position of strength.

Beisel moves on to the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Incident, which, unlike the Soviet missiles in Cuba, was not a surprise to the U.S.—instead, as Beisel correctly implies, the second half of the Gulf of Tonkin incident was fabricated by the White House so as to better stampede Congress into granting war powers to President Johnson. Granted that those "attacks" by North Vietnamese naval forces surely came as a surprise to most Americans, nonetheless the small scale of the incident prevented it from being emotionally comparable to Pearl Harbor, and no popular cry for revenge or retaliation followed. Instead, Vietnam was assigned to victimhood solely by the Executive Branch of the U.S. government.

In the Iran Hostage Crisis of 1979, Beisel emphasizes President Carter foolishly, and reluctantly, granting the Shah of Iran permission to visit the U.S. for cancer treatment. Many Americans then were surprised six days later when the American Embassy staff in Tehran was taken hostage by Iranian students. On the other hand, as Beisel points out, many well-informed Americans (including President Carter) were not surprised because they already realized how volatile anti-Americanism was in Iran. (In con-

trast, in December 1941 even Americans who suspected that Japan might attack somewhere and somehow had no idea that Japan might attack Pearl Harbor from the air.)

Beisel's account of how the 1991 Gulf War came about has a lot in common with his account of the Korean War's origins, since here again the U.S. misinformed a potential enemy of its true position, thereby (he thinks) more or less inviting an invasion of a U.S. ally. In the Iraqi case, Beisel is on target, but he doesn't mention the reason why the U.S. virtually invited Saddam Hussein to invade Kuwait. It was because Saddam had refused to reduce the size of Iraq's military after the end of the 1980-88 Iraq-Iran war, and the U.S. resolved to carry out that reduction itself, including by making anti-personnel cluster bombs—the U.S. “weapons of choice” in the Gulf War.

Finally, the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon, where the effects of the attacks and their emotional significance for Americans were both on the same scale as Pearl Harbor. I fully share David Beisel's desire for more study of the psychological similarity, for Americans, between Pearl Harbor and the September 11 attacks, and I agree with Beisel's characterization of Pearl Harbor as “20<sup>th</sup> century America's Ur Trauma.” Psychological similarities between September 11 and Pearl Harbor truly deserve more study after these past ten years of the U.S. squandering lives, assets, and security in counterproductive post-9/11 wars.

As he wraps up, David Beisel draws several conclusions from his seven cases. One is that “it is psychologically important for us to remain innocent victims, again and again.” With this I agree, but it seems applicable to more than just Americans. I also agree with Beisel that when we try to reconstruct the past, “we need to add considerations of unconscious compulsion and traumatic reenactment.”

My disagreement is with how well Beisel's seven cases show “a pattern of unconsciously willed events that were unconsciously arranged,” or show that “out-of-the blue military disasters keep catching us by surprise because massive repression and denial continue to convince us we had no part in the arranging.” I would

like to suggest that most of Beisel's seven cases invite more conventional historical examination before choosing which psychological pattern or patterns they might share in common.

*Paul Salstrom, PhD, teaches history at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College near Terre Haute, Indiana and may be contacted at PSalstrom@smwc.edu.*



## **Do Scientific Geniuses Also Have Blind Spots?**

**Dean Keith Simonton**—University of California, Davis

Professor Beisel provides several fascinating and important examples of diplomatic and military events in which politicians were blindsided by catastrophes that could have been easily anticipated. Although the author's examples all concern dramatic failures of leadership, we might also add parallel instances from the realm of creativity. Some highly eminent scientists have faced intellectual self-destruction because they had their theoretical blinders on. Thus, Albert Einstein wasted the last part of his career in developing a unified field theory that was doomed to fail because of his refusal to acknowledge the validity of quantum mechanics. As in Beisel's cases, we can always engage in counterfactual speculations: What if Einstein had integrated quantum theory with general relativity? How might the history of physics have changed?

Physicist Max Planck once noted, "A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it" (*Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers*, 1949, 33-34). Although the foregoing idea has been called "Planck's Principle," it can just as well be styled "Darwin's Dictum." After all, in the very last chapter of his *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin said that he did not "expect to convince experienced naturalists whose minds are stocked with a multitude of facts all viewed, during a long course of years, from a point of view directly opposite to mine" but instead he looked "with confidence to the future—to the young and rising

naturalists, who will be able to view both sides of the question with impartiality" (1860/1952, 240). Darwin suggested that even the most creative scientist may become increasingly committed to one particular hypothesis or perspective. This reduced openness is illustrated by Sigmund Freud's own admission in *Civilization and its Discontents*: "The conceptions I have summarized here I first put forward only tentatively, but in the course of time they have won such a hold over me that I can no longer think in any other way" (1929/1952, 790). Again, we can engage in counterfactuals; perhaps Alfred Adler or Carl Jung would have met different fates within the psychoanalytic movement had they worked with Freud earlier in his career.

Admittedly, the phenomena that Beisel discusses are far more complex than any example of Planck's Principle I can think of. His events typically involve many interacting agents, and the events probably engage a greater variety of potential causal processes. Certainly, groupthink is far more likely to be involved in some of Beisel's cases than in any of mine. Even so, I would imagine that similar psychological processes are sometimes involved. There is ample empirical evidence that cognitive flexibility and openness tends to decline with age—and that this decline may be intensified by severe environmental stress. As with aging scientists, long-tenured leaders facing an unprecedented crisis would not be well equipped for dealing with the unthinkable. When it comes to aging tyrants, this may be good news! With the overthrow of some of these in the Arab Spring, history has acquired some recent examples.

*Dean Keith Simonton, PhD, is Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Davis, where he teaches courses on the history of psychology and on genius, creativity, and leadership. The bulk of his research uses historiometric methods to study historic figures and events (Clio's Psyche, 2000, 146-148). His more than 400 publications include a dozen books, such as Greatness: Who Makes History and Why (1994) and Great Psychologists and Their Times (2002). Professor Simonton may be contacted at [dksimonton@ucdavis.edu](mailto:dksimonton@ucdavis.edu).*

## **Denial or Mistake?**

**Frank Summers**—Northwestern University

David Beisel's very thoughtful paper documents a series of violent historical events that appeared to come as a surprise, but the pattern of innocence, traumatic attack, and victimization is so repetitive that Beisel justifiably questions whether there is more here than a disconnected series of political blunders.

Beisel sees a pattern of U.S. provocation, denial of the effects of the provocation, and then shock when the consequences appear in the form of a "surprise" attack. For example, missing from American accounts of Pearl Harbor is our oil embargo on Japan, and absent from U.S. narratives of the Iranian takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran is our deposing the only democratic government Iran ever had and imposing in its stead a ruthless dictator. He then raises the question of whether the U.S. was seeking these attacks. Such a record of victimization, he suggests, may be similar to a patient's pattern of arranging unconsciously to be victim of others' aggression.

First, I believe Dr. Beisel is correct to make the analogy between behavioral patterns among individuals and nations. When one can make a list of unanticipated attacks for which warning signals were available but unheeded, there is no reason *not* to question whether such a pattern has meaning.

I can say as a practicing psychoanalyst that it seems shortsighted to not inquire into the meaning of any pattern of national events. However, I believe it is important to make the distinction between the psychological and the motivated. Results from psychological causes are not necessarily specifically motivated by the psychological factors that underlie them. For example, I once had a patient who could not find a suitable romantic partner, but hated being alone. The analytic work revealed not that she did not want a partner, but that her desperation for attachment was so great that her expectations and demands drove men away, leaving her in the state she most feared. The meaning of her loneliness was that her

abandonment anxiety and need to control men drove them away. The result was loneliness, at least until the issues were resolved analytically, but the *motive* was not to be alone, quite the contrary. Much neurosis is this way: the same issues that cause the problem make its resolution difficult.

One may apply the same analysis to the historical events in question. The U.S. keeps being surprised by attacks, but is that because there is an unconscious wish to be attacked or is there another psychological issue in play that results in lack of preparation for invasion? For example, it may be that national hubris leads U.S. leaders to deny there are negative consequences of aggressive U.S. behavior because we do not wish to be limited in our power to control events, even though the behavior is provocative to other countries and results in the U.S. becoming the victim it fears. Many national weaknesses can result in an outcome that is undesirable, and, in such cases the national behavior is meaningful, but not purposeful.

Moreover, the situation is complicated; Dr. Beisel points out that these attacks are often provoked by U.S. behavior, although its provocative nature is not recognized in our country. Indeed, Christopher Bollas' concept of "violent innocence" would seem to fit well the national behavior described here (*Being a Character*, 1992). The term refers to individuals who provoke strong responses from others in a presumably passive, indirect manner so that they appear to be oblivious to the impact of their behavior, resulting in a claim of innocence and victimization. Examples include the sexually provocative woman who seems to be shocked when sexual advances are directed her way, or the cutting insult delivered as a "joke" followed by surprise when the target of the attack takes offense. It seems to me that Dr. Beisel is reporting something analogous in his depiction of U.S. provocations, which are then denied when the object of the provocation responds, and the national response is to feel victimized by an act of aggression for which the U.S. is regarded as innocent.

Such motivated inability to confront reality would not be the same psychological process as Defense Secretary McNamara and General Westmoreland sanitizing the Vietnam War news for President Johnson. Presumably, McNamara and Westmoreland feared

that if Johnson knew the truth, he would want to change policy, possibly even resort to withdrawing troops. While both men were undoubtedly motivated by the desire to pursue a policy on which they had staked their reputations, one wonders what they thought they could ultimately achieve. If the real news was so bad it might have led to troop withdrawal, then how did they expect the war to be won? Their behavior is explainable only on the basis that they did not believe in the reality that was staring them in the face. Confronted with a military defeat that threatened their reputations and judgment, they resorted to magical, omnipotent thinking: if we refuse to believe we are losing, we will not lose. Again, this pathetic denial cost lives—in this case, millions.

Finally, I wish to emphasize that in my view, Dr. Beisel has made a very important contribution. For historians to ignore patterns of historical events and fail to even attempt to discern their meaning is to leave a lacuna where perhaps the greatest benefit of historical analysis could be achieved. Such an abdication of the historian's role to glean lessons from history is to turn a blind eye to historical events and circumstances that are before them. That is, historians are selectively refusing to explore the results of historical inquiry. If historians refuse to acknowledge that such patterns exist and make no effort to understand them, is that not their own form of denial?

*Frank Summers, PhD, is professor of clinical psychiatry and behavioral science at Northwestern University Medical School, training and supervising analyst at the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis, and in private practice of psychoanalytic therapy in Chicago. He may be contacted at [franksumphd@gmail.com](mailto:franksumphd@gmail.com). □*

## **Beisel Responds**

### **Overcoming Resistance to Comparative, Psychological, and Trauma History**

**David Beisel**—SUNY-RCC

History is a mystery filled with clues, far too many to fit

neatly into any one box. They present historians with an enormous complexity, paradoxically one of the joys as well as frustrations of historical research. All of this is well known and widely accepted.

Most historians make a public point of saying they welcome all kinds of historical approaches, imagining themselves as Big Tent historians, when in practice, as every psychologically-oriented writer knows, my fellow historians almost universally condemn or ignore psychologically-informed historical writing. This too is well known.

All psychological writing is then an implicit invitation to historians to consider again the irrational and the unconscious. People outside the historical profession almost always see this psychological approach to history as an exemplary application of common sense and are surprised to learn that historians do not automatically include psychological considerations in their narratives.

What is at stake for historians here (it's worth repeating) is their need to hold fast to two of the dogmas drummed into us in graduate school: that there are no lessons in history; and that history *does not* repeat itself. Each historical event, we were told, is unique.

Both dogmas can be seen as defenses against deep emotional understanding and have the effect of relegating "irrelevant" historical study to the dust bin. In addition, and despite the 30-year existence of a flourishing professional organization of comparative history, historians rarely do comparative work, focusing their research instead almost exclusively on narrow topics with limited timeframes. I was guided here by one of Freud's statements that one of the advantages of psychoanalysis is to discover connections between things that have hitherto been unconnected.

One goal of my essay, as I think I made clear, was to demonstrate that blind spots are far more frequent in history than is usually acknowledged and to remind us once again that the presumptions and built-in indoctrination my fellow historians carry inside themselves means that historical understanding, and the way historians practice their craft, suffer from the repeated failure—one of their own blind spots—to include the irrational and the unconscious in their considerations. I can't see why any respondent

would object to this, and as I read their responses none have.

Objections predictably range across the spectrum. Some commentators find the whole notion of traumatic reliving at fault, others are willing to concede this or that historical example may be driven by a compulsion to relive, while other events, they claim, most assuredly are not. This or that event, they assert, is the result of rational considerations.

Of course, every event must be studied on its own terms, rational considerations—including the *rationalizations* offered by participants and later historians—understood as part of the whole picture. Still, psychological historians have to take a particularly hard-nosed approach to every event. We must insist that emotional outcomes count and that sometimes they are the ones that count the most.

Not all surprises in history are the result of unconscious intentions, of course: among historical groups and decision-makers, arrogance, ignorance and stupidity count too. But when several major U.S. diplomatic and military crises in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are repeatedly accompanied by the experience of a collective surprise it seems only logical to consider that the need to experience surprise is one of the emotionally desired outcomes, especially when foreknowledge of conditions pointing to the likelihood of the event taking place are particularly widespread.

We must also insist that what is sold by participants and historians as a rational decision may in fact have an unconscious intention, or come in some way to feed a desired unconscious outcome. Rational psychological processes on one level do not necessarily exclude irrational motivation on another level, as some of the respondents seem to assert when they offer alternative explanations for what seems a clear repetitive pattern. Though there are always alternative explanations, it's our job as psychological historians to disentangle the rational from the irrational, our own denial from the piece of reality we can see, and decide on the basis of the evidence which ones are connected to unconscious intentionality. Only careful and extensive immersion in the sources can do that.

It is also incumbent upon the trauma historian to produce massive documentary evidence in each case. To even begin to con-

vince historians of the reality of individual and collective trauma requires extensive evidence documenting the emotional consequences of each specific trauma, providing sufficient evidence to show that the consequences of the trauma persist over time, and giving extensive evidence showing how, exactly, the trauma produced the historical event it eventually caused.

The present essay is broad in scope and long in chronology. My charge from the editor was to produce an essay of no more than 4,000 words that might serve to stimulate commentary for a symposium. While I am convinced that the repetitive pattern of diplomatic and military crises I have presented is real and needs considering, I imagined the essay as a modest thought-piece designed to stimulate discussion. Clearly, more evidence is needed for each assertion and will be forthcoming in the book-length study of the traumatic consequences of the Second World War, which I am currently completing.

Several respondents take me to task for what they see as my failure to distinguish different kinds of motives resulting in the denial that produces blind spots. I never intended for each example to be identical and thought different motives were sufficiently implicit in the Galland-Göring exchange and in the McNamara-Westmoreland deception to indicate that some kinds of denial, and the production of blind spots in individual and even collective cases produced by them, are motivated by concerns about keeping one's job or simply remaining in the leader's favor. My mention of the younger Bush and Iraq was meant to move readers along to the phenomenon of the "What-I-don't-know-can't-hurt-me" position then on to the downright irrational denials and complete amnesia regarding Russia practiced in the deliberations of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff before 1914, which I assumed sufficiently set the stage for the rest of the article.

Issues of what is remembered in history and what is forgotten have been a major part of historical research for quite some time. Historians have built up an impressive literature on the subject over the past three decades or more. It seems obligatory for each and every study to ritualistically invoke the ideas of French scholar Maurice Halbwachs as a theoretical underpinning, which tends to guide the explanations of historians in the direction of ra-

tional models. Though the word trauma appears in the writings of historians often enough—it's invoked for stylistic reasons—as a causal factor in historical events, real trauma is nowhere to be found. The overlooked question of traumatic memory needs to find a place in the discussion here.

Nowhere do commentators invoke consideration of the neurological bases of traumatic memories. The role the of non-verbal nervous system, the amygdala, and the like, which though still far from being well understood are now much better understood through brain scans and other research techniques. Full discussion of what these findings are, details of the physiological realities of how and where traumatic memories are stored and how and when traumatic compulsions to act out are triggered, may serve to convince historians and some of the current symposium's respondents that traumatic compulsive reenactments do in fact take place.

Some commentators also seem to mix-up the blind spots at work among individual leaders with those present among groups. Johnson and McNamara knew perfectly well what they were doing when they manipulated the Gulf of Tonkin incident into a pretext for enlarging the U.S. participation in the Vietnam War (though they pulled the wool over their own eyes to some extent in their rush to judgment). My intention here, as with the Cuban Missile Crisis, was to stress the surprise experienced by the *U.S. population* as a whole. This is the collective trauma reminiscent of Pearl Harbor trauma which *everyone* in the U.S. experienced in 1941 as a trauma—JFK included—even those in the know who expected an imminent attack that weekend. (Though Admiral Halsey and the crew of the *Enterprise* heard the radio communications as the attack took place, it did not prepare them in any way for the emotional shock of the massive devastation they saw as they steamed into Pearl the next day.)

It is always important to give credit where credit is due. It thus gives me great pleasure to remind readers of the pioneering role of the late Rudolph Binion in discovering and developing the notion and evidence for traumatic reliving in history, which he did so tellingly in different political and cultural contexts. It is also worth noting that when the notion of traumatic reliving is invoked at professional conferences on psychological history it is usually

rejected out of hand as a historical cause, even (and perhaps especially) among psychologically sophisticated scholars.

The current exercise is no different and seems to have called forth long lists of the respondents' own alternative theories, presumably the ones they have favored in their own work over the years; not that any of them are necessarily wrong, some of which might even causally compliment and interact with traumatic reenactments. Judging from the large number of thoughtful observations, one can hope that consideration of trauma as a causal agent is now significantly on the table, at least for psychological historians, one of the goals of my paper in the first place. □

## Featured Scholar Interview

### Nancy C. Unger: A Life of Asking "Why?"

Bob Lentz—Clio's Psyche

*Nancy C. Unger is Associate Professor of History at Santa Clara University. She was born in 1956 in Seattle and received her BA from Gonzaga University and her MA and PhD (1985) from the University of Southern California. An American historian, Professor Unger currently teaches Women's History, Gay and Lesbian History, and The Progressive Era. She is the author of Fighting Bob La Follette: The Righteous Reformer (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000; revised paperback edition with new preface, Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2008) and numerous chapters, articles, and reference entries, and has published in Clio's Psyche since 2003 and co-edited "The Voice/Personal Experience and Psychology of Women at Work and in Modern Life" (March 2005). She serves on the Board of Editors of Environmental Justice and is Book Review Editor for Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. We are pleased to announce that she has just joined the Editorial Board of Clio's Psyche. Professor Unger's Web page is [www.scu.edu/cas/history/facultystaff/unger.cfm](http://www.scu.edu/cas/history/facultystaff/unger.cfm) and she may be contacted at [nunger@scu.edu](mailto:nunger@scu.edu). The interview was conducted by e-mail in March and April 2011.*

**BL:** From your Jesuit university affiliations, Gonzaga and now Santa Clara, a Catholic upbringing/faith might be assumed. If so, how has it influenced your scholarly work, especially the psychological aspect, and vice versa?

**NU:** By the time I came into my family as the youngest of four children and the third daughter, my parents had withdrawn their children from Catholic school and no longer attended Mass. I attended public schools until college but began attending Mass in high school. Part of the appeal was the notion of a loving father, something I missed in my family.

Gonzaga University turned out to be the perfect place for me: classes were small and most of the faculty were genuinely interested in the intellectual growth and social health of their students. A couple of my professors took a special interest in me, not just as a promising student but as a person. In addition, like most Jesuit institutions, Gonzaga had a social justice emphasis that really appealed to me.

Ironically, it was the social justice emphasis that ultimately drove me from the church. For some years I was a “C&E Catholic,” attending Mass only on Christmas and Easter, but then my parish put a “Yes on 8” sign on church property, supporting the vote on the California Proposition to make marriage only between a man and a woman. That brought an end of even my nominal attendance at Mass. Gay and lesbian rights, abortion rights, and the full equality of women (including within the church) are very important to me precisely because of my immersion in social justice concerns during my Catholic education.

This history has affected my scholarly work in a number of ways. Because I know the impact that a few deeply dedicated professors can make on an undergraduate’s life, I am very dedicated to my own students. We have only undergraduates on my campus, so faculty do all the grading and meeting with students. It limits the time I have available for scholarship, which can be very frustrating. It has also been very rewarding, helping students see the wisdom of Hannah Arendt’s statement: “If we do not know our own history, we are doomed to live it as though it were our private fate.” I have a large file of “thank you for changing my life” letters from stu-

dents.

Additionally, my early social justice training has affected what I choose to teach and to research, such as lesbian and gay history. I am endlessly fascinated by the Progressive reformers at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and their efforts to meet the challenges of the newly industrialized and urbanized United States. Their efforts to tackle crime, poverty, racism, sexism, environmental exploitation, and child labor met with mixed results—which means there is much to be learned from their successes and failures as we face the problems of today.

**BL:** As applied psychohistory?

**NU:** I've devoted my life to the study of history because to me it's a very practical subject. When faced with difficult problems in troubled times, why reinvent the wheel? Why not see how people approached those problems in the past? What worked? What didn't work? The Progressive Era provides a wonderfully detailed study of past reforms that, in many instances, can serve as a blueprint for action today. A century ago Bob La Follette led the fight against political corruption, environmental abuse, unwarranted involvement in foreign affairs, unjust war, unfair treatment of workers, especially people of color, and disparity in distributions of wealth and power. Under his leadership, Wisconsin was the first state to enact a host of reforms, cementing a lasting reputation for progressivism among its citizens and government. As a U.S. Congressman, Wisconsin governor, and U.S. Senator, Fighting Bob left enduring political legacies, including the graduated income tax, the direct election of senators (currently under attack by the Tea Party), child labor laws, environmental protections, women's suffrage, and workers' compensation. In the words of Bill Moyers, "The ideas of La Follette and his fellow progressives are our best hope for countering the reactionary and destructive forces that threaten to dissolve this fragile experiment in self-government which has so much to offer and has so far yet to go."

Because I agree with Moyers, I am dedicated to reaching general audiences as well as other scholars. I write op-eds for the History News Service, an organization dedicated to improving the public discussion of current events by setting those events in histor-

ical context. Links can be found on my homepage to my op-eds that use the Progressive Era and other historical periods to illuminate current problems and issues. Those pieces have appeared in newspapers around the country, generating both fan letters and hate mail. The latter isn't as much fun as the former, but it confirms that I am not just preaching to the converted. I have my own feature on the Web site FightingBob.com. I write not "What Would Jesus Do?" but "What Would Fighting Bob Do?" about current events ranging from war to taxes to education. Every September I speak at the Fighting Bob Fest, an annual Chautauqua featuring progressive speakers, networking opportunities, and entertainment. In the past several years, attendance has ranged from 7,000-10,000 concerned citizens. See [www.fightingbobfest.org](http://www.fightingbobfest.org). I have spoken about La Follette and the Progressive tradition in the state capitol in Madison and in many public talks. Although this kind of activism takes time away from my scholarship, it is very satisfying to facilitate people's finding answers and inspiration in the past.

**BL:** What mentors and books have been important to your development as a historian and a scholar of psychosocial phenomena?

**NU:** Psychohistory was one of my subfields in graduate school at USC. My professor was Mauricio Mazon, who was a student of Peter Loewenberg. Through Mazon I met Loewenberg, whose 1971 "The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort" was one of the first psychohistorical works I read. My interest in psychological approaches to Hitler and the Nazis has never waned, and my subsequent reading has ranged from Robert Waite's *The Psychopathic God*, to Robert Jay Lifton's many works, to Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*.

Of course I read many of Freud's works, and also Karen Horney, Heinz Kohut, and Alice Miller. Some of the early psychobiographies, despite their flaws, probably influenced me the most, especially Fawn Brodie's works on Thomas Jefferson and Richard Nixon. Because of my specialization in the Progressive Era, I was also interested in the psychologically informed biographies of Woodrow Wilson by Juliette and Alexander George, and by Edwin Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson: A Medical and Psychological Biography* (1981). Judith Icke Anderson's study, *William Howard Taft: An Intimate History* (1974), was another biographical approach to a

subject in “my” period that inspired me.

As a young scholar, I was fortunate to have Joe Illick as a colleague during my years teaching at San Francisco State University. Joe thoughtfully critiqued some of my earliest work in psychohistory.

I was excited by the first two articles I read that were psychologically informed and suitable for undergraduates: “She Couldn’t Have Done It Even If She Did: Why Lizzie Borden Went Free” by Kathryn Allamong Jacob, and Kathleen Dalton’s “Why America Loved Theodore Roosevelt: Or, Charisma Is in the Eye of the Beholder.” I used both articles for years in various classes and to great success.

I also learned a great deal over the years from my friend William McKinley (Mac) Runyan. His most thought-provoking works include the article “Why Did Van Gogh Cut off His Ear? The Problem of Alternative Explanations in Psychobiography,” his book *Life Histories and Psychobiography*, and his edited collection, *Psychology and Historical Interpretation*.

**BL:** How do you define *psychohistory* and *psychobiography*? What is your experience and training in psychology/psychoanalysis?

**NU:** Psychohistory is the application of psychological and/or psychoanalytic insights to history, and psychobiography is their application to the life of a single person.

In graduate school, my professors in psychohistory were Maricio Mazon and, for one seminar, Andrew Rolle, who was visiting from Occidental College. I supplemented my education with experience: In my 20s I completed five years of psychoanalysis, four days a week. It was a life-changing experience for me. I had struggled mightily with my difficult relationship with my father and developed harmful behaviors as a result. Analysis helped me to come to terms with my dad’s hostile feelings towards me. As I began to overcome the certainty that his dislike of me was somehow well-deserved, I realized I wasn’t doomed to a private fate of low self-esteem.

I took part in Santa Clara University’s “last lecture” series

in which a professor pretends it's his or her last lecture and imparts the wisdom he or she has accumulated over the decades. It was illustrated by a PowerPoint of pictures from my life. It was recorded—and posted to the Web—when I presented it to the Humanist Community of Palo Alto in November 2010. It includes a discussion of my difficult relationship with my father and my experiences in psychoanalysis. The link is <http://vimeo.com/17180823>.

**BL:** How did you come to be interested in La Follette and the Progressive Era (1890s to 1920s)? How is your La Follette book psychobiographical? What is your psychohistorical understanding of the Progressive Era?

**NU:** When I was casting about for a dissertation topic, Maricio Mazon showed me a textbook with a little paragraph on Robert La Follette. I'd never heard of this great reformer from Wisconsin. When I read of all his progressive accomplishments, I wanted to know why I'd never heard of him. As I learned more, I wanted to know why this man who was so successful as a senator was such a failure at parlaying that success into a winning presidential bid. But I was really hooked when I learned that when he was 39 La Follette, who was just a baby when his father died of natural causes, ordered and witnessed the exhumation of his father's grave, personally examining the bones and hair that had been unearthed.

Other biographies had been written about La Follette, but none tackled the psychological dimensions. They noted his pattern of overwork and then collapse, but made no effort to understand it. The same was true for his penchant for self-righteousness and his unwillingness to compromise.

My book looks at La Follette the man as well as La Follette the politician. I find La Follette's stated dedication to winning the approval of the father he never knew to be particularly important in understanding some of his behaviors that otherwise seem foolish or self-defeating. His relationship with his physically abusive stepfather is also instructive, as is his extreme closeness with a variety of women, including his mother, sister, wife, and daughters.

His righteousness and refusal to compromise raise interesting questions about political leadership. Politicians are endlessly criticized for the compromises they make, but this largely uncom-

promising politician, however popular with his constituents, produced a different set of problems. La Follette was severely limited when it came to forging the kinds of coalitions with others in power that are often necessary to create meaningful change on the national level.

I strive to understand where the personal and the political meet. I have little patience with studies that reduce their subjects to drives and desires established in childhood. Like every person, La Follette was enormously complex and ever changing—and he lived in an enormously complex and rapidly changing time. I tried hard in the book to have a healthy respect for those complexities and to recognize the limits of the biographer's art. For example, I struggled with the role that La Follette played in the life of his oldest son, Robert Marion La Follette, Jr. It seemed to me that La Follette loved his son so much—perhaps literally to death: the younger La Follette took his own life in 1953. La Follette was unrelenting in his pressure that his son live up to extremely high expectations, and the younger La Follette clearly felt weighed down by those expectations even after his father's death in 1925. Yet it would be a disservice to both men to suggest that their lives and relationship could or should be reduced to such simple terms. La Follette, Jr., faced bitter political disappointment (in the 1946 Republican primary he lost his U.S. senate seat of 21 years to none other than Joseph McCarthy), ill health, and a host of other problems that also likely contributed to his suicide. It is, in the end, impossible to know even one's own mind with total certainty, let alone someone else's. The effort to understand unconscious drives is an important and worthwhile one, but requires a large dollop of humility and respect for the complexities of the human psyche as well as the outside world and its influences.

As for psychological insights into the whole Progressive Era: Scholars argue endlessly if there even was a "Progressive period," as the reform activities were so varied and diverse—sometimes to the point of being mutually exclusive. For some Progressives, the sole goal was to remove the impediments to free and open competition. Their methods included breaking the trusts and replacing political machines with democratic measures. They saw the Progressives who fought for moral reforms (such as prohibition

and Sunday blue laws) as antithetical to true liberty and freedom. White progressives were also divided over whether the goal of more equitably redistributing the nation's power and wealth should extend to non-whites. Despite the period's confusion and flaws, for me much of the appeal is its overall optimism, an optimism bordering on hubris. The nation had survived the Civil War and come out all the stronger. Practically overnight, it had gone from a rural, agrarian backwater to an urban, industrial world power. Anything seemed possible. Why not harness some of the energy and expertise that had made the factories so profitable into making them safe and humane as well? The United States had come so far, so fast—why not complete the arch and truly become the City on the Hill, a beacon of righteousness for the rest of the world? In the end, this expanded to grandiose goals that included “making the world safe for democracy” through the waging of the “war to end all wars,” culminating in failure and disillusionment. But that optimistic reform sentiment also resulted in safer working conditions, environmental protections, women's suffrage, and many political measures ensuring a more direct democracy.

**BL:** Please tell us about the courses you teach.

**NU:** Like a lot of scholars in relatively small departments (we have 15 tenured and tenure-track faculty members), I have spent most of my career teaching subjects not in my area of expertise. Years ago, when I was teaching at San Francisco State University, my department chair informed me I'd be teaching California History in the coming semester. I said, “You know, Bob, I've never taken California History, I wasn't raised in California, and I don't know anything about it.” He replied, “You know, Nancy, we don't let little things like that get in our way here at San Francisco State.” This is how I came to teach California History, Women's History, Gay and Lesbian History, Environmental History, Historical Geography, Colonial America, and a number of additional courses for which I have virtually no formal training. However, armed with a PhD in American history and a lot of energy and enthusiasm, and charged to teach only undergraduates, I became a quick learner. And the formal training I did have sometimes proved to be useful. The Progressives, for example, were the first to implement major environmental protections, which gave me a toehold into environmental

history.

Out of self-preservation before tenure, I began studying the role of gender in American environmental history. How and why did gender, along with race, class, religion, age, and a host of other factors, affect the way that people responded to the environment and environmental issues across time? Specifically, how did changing societal gender prescriptions, what men and women are told makes them men and women, affect people and the environment? Psychohistory, then, quickly came into play.

**BL:** What are your thoughts on changing gender relationships since your teenage years? Do you see your students as better or worse off than the young ladies in Belle La Follette's era and your youth when it comes to confronting the issues of individuation and sexuality?

**NU:** One of the reasons I love teaching women's history is learning what my students think about gender issues. Every year, I get a little older, but they never do: they remain about twenty years old on average, so I can see the changes in self-perceptions concerning individuation and sexuality over time. My women's history students, male and female, express delight in the career and lifestyle choices open to them. But they also express frustration, even fear, about the social prescriptions they face. They are very knowledgeable about sex and sexuality, and resent the magazines, television shows, videos, films, and billboards that all urge them to obsess over their physical appearance and to be enormously sexually active.

**BL:** For *Clio's Psyche* (March 2005) you wrote a very nice short article, "The Beauty Myth: Young Women and the Culture of Appearance." Recently, Paul Elovitz' female students appear to be spending less time and money on their appearance. Does this match your experience and, if so, what are your thoughts on it?

**NU:** I continue to assign Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* as a primary document of the early 1990s in my lower divisions Women's History class, because the students continue to respond to it in such visceral ways. When I ask them if things are better or worse for young women in regard to their physical appearance since Wolf published this book in 1991, they are almost unanimous in their

conviction that things are worse and usually cite as new causes of concern the rise of eating and exercise issues and disorders, and cosmetic procedures (with breast implants leading the way). Unlike my generation, which anticipated that the pressures concerning appearance would drop off in their 40s, virtually coming to an end in their 50s, this generation sees the new world of Botox and surgical skin-tightening procedures looming ahead, and anticipates that the pressures to achieve an impossible ideal appearance will be life-long.

When I point out that some of the women are comfortable coming to class without makeup, nail polish, and high heels, they talk about how the ideal beauty standards nevertheless skim a lot of joy off their lives and harm their relationships. They are also very concerned about the increase in pressures on their little sisters, citing manicure parties for six-year olds, make-up products like candy-flavored lip gloss, and a whole line of highly sexualized girls' clothing available in what they have come to term the "junior slut" department of virtually every store that carries apparel. In short, they see girls as well as older women as being aggressively targeted to live out the Beauty Myth, no longer just young women like themselves.

**BL:** Your book in progress is *Beyond "Nature's Housekeepers": American Women in Environmental History* by Oxford University Press. What is its importance and when do you expect to have it published?

**NU:** I am working on the final chapter of *Beyond "Nature's Housekeepers"* and so anticipate its publication in 2012. The idea for the book emerged out of the big variety of courses I have taught. I have read many American environmental histories and many studies on gender in American history. Rarely are the two subjects used to inform the other, although there are the occasional nods. Environmental scholars frequently note that nature has been made feminine, and women's historians note the contributions of women nature writers and the role of women in Progressive-era conservation and preservation movements (the "nature's housekeepers" of the title). My book answers the question: How and why have men and women, even those of the same race and class, frequently responded so differently to the environment and environ-

mental issues throughout American history? I argue that what people think it means to be a man or a woman (definitions that are socially prescribed and changeable) has played a significant role in their environmental consciousness and actions. Gender matters profoundly in environmental history, but understanding of the role it has played too frequently is lost in the sea of other factors including politics, economics, and the law, and more recently, in the emphasis on race and class that dominates most work on environmental justice. Because male roles, values, and actions have dominated American society, they have far more pervasively been the subject of historical study, environmental and otherwise. My work, upon defining gendered differences and tracing their transformations over time, focuses primarily on how gender affected women in their perceptions of, and relationships with, the environment. It explains gendered divisions over environmental issues, and offers an enriched understanding of the powerful interplay between environment and sex, sexuality, and gender in American history.

I have already published some of my preliminary research. Links to the articles "The We Say What We Think Club," and "Women for a Peaceful Christmas" can be found on my website, and the essay "From Jook Joints to Sisterspace: The Role of Nature in Lesbian Alternative Environments in the United States" appears in the edited collection *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, and Desire*. Additional essays in edited collections include "Gendered Approaches to Environmental Justice: An Historical Sampling" in *Echoes from the Poisoned Well: Global Memories of Environmental Justice*, and "Women, Sexuality, and Environmental Justice in American History" in *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism*. In press is my major historiographic essay "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis in Environmental History" for the *Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*.

**BL:** Don Hughes, a long-time member of the Psychohistory Forum, is both an environmental historian and a psychohistorian. In your experience, is this a rarity or do you find that a number of women environmental historians are also open to psychological approaches to knowledge?

**NU:** Like many environmental historians, I have been enormously

influenced by the work of Carolyn Merchant. She has written quite compellingly on the importance of the way that we think about non-human nature. Because of her, I have gotten into some pretty heated discussions about what I argue is the inappropriateness and even danger of terms like “man’s stewardship over the earth” rather than “humanity’s partnership with non-human nature.” I agree with Merchant that the anthropomorphism of nature, making nature female, particularly through terms like “Mother Nature,” “virgin nature,” and “rape of nature,” creates a potentially damaging mindset that is very pervasive. During the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan, I heard several newscasters express shock that “Mother Nature” could be so cruel, which to me demonstrates a lack of respect for the power and “otherness” of nature. I agree with Merchant that we do better when we think of humans as just one strand in the web of nature, rather than somehow above it or as its ultimate purpose. So yes, I think that Merchant and a number of other environmental historians, male and female, are open to psychological approaches to knowledge, and that the resistance they meet is not so much from other environmental historians but from the general public that tends to romanticize non-human nature.

**BL:** How can psychohistorians and psychobiographers strengthen our work to earn more attention and influence in academia and society in general? What subjects or issues should we research and then write and teach about?

**NU:** I think psychohistory has more influence in academia and society than is generally recognized. Whenever I hear a sentence begin with “I’m not a feminist, but...” or “I’m not a racist, but...,” I know the speaker is about to say something feminist or racist. I think today we quite frequently hear the equivalent of “I’m not a psychohistorian, but...” That is, members of the public as well as scholars routinely apply psychological insight in their efforts to better understand a person or event; they just don’t label those efforts “psychobiography” or “psychohistory.” The subtitle of *Clio’s Psyche* is “Understanding the ‘Why’ of Culture, Current Events, History, and Society.” I think most people are very interested indeed in the question of “Why?” but they are put off by psychological terms they don’t understand and/or harbor assumptions that approaches based in psychology are automatically overly deterministic.

I think psychohistorians and psychobiographers do some of their best work when it isn't labeled as such but is presented more in terms of "understanding the 'Why.'" "Psychohistory" and "psychobiography" may be considered obsolete—but "understanding the 'Why'" is thriving. I couldn't find a publisher for my study of La Follette when it was a formal psychobiography. When I translated the terminology of psychoanalysis into lay terms, I got a book contract and was ultimately praised by *The New York Times* for keeping my voice "subdued and objective throughout the book" and allowing La Follette to "leap from its pages."

In another example, for several years I taught a course called *The Individual in American History*. Because I never asserted that it was essentially a psychobiographical approach to American history, I encountered no resistance, no sense that I was teaching a "disreputable" approach. My students were instead very open to learning how and why certain people became who they became, and how and why their fellow citizens responded to them as they did.

In answer to the question of what we should be teaching and studying: I can't think of a subject that wouldn't benefit from an understanding of its "Why."

**BL:** Thanks for sharing your life experience and ideas with a journal devoted to "Understanding the 'Why' of Culture, Current Events, History, and Society." □

## **Elizabeth Edwards: Song and Sorrows**

**Molly Castelloe**—Psychohistory Forum Research Assoc.

Elizabeth Edwards (July 3, 1949–December 7, 2010) reports becoming a different person after her first-born son, Lucius Wade, died on April 4, 1996 on the way to the beach for spring break when a wind blew across eastern North Carolina and flipped over his Jeep. Edwards sat graveside every day for two years praying, conversing, reading aloud from the Bible, from Wade's SAT scores, and—when his class began their final year of high school—every book on his senior reading list.

The death of her 16-year-old was what Edwards calls the central event of her life. She developed online families at GriefNet and Alt.Support.Grief, which gave her a potential space between inside and outside in which she cobbled together various ways to continue parenting her son and also come to terms with his passing (D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 1971). These virtual communities were made of others who felt like Job in an irrational continent of suffering. They provided a web of shared identification, one that sustained Edwards when Wade's absence "came crashing in on me" (Edwards, *Saving Graces: Finding Solace and Strength from Friends and Strangers*, 2006, 97).

Freud describes the loss of a loved person in terms of psychic energy. The libido withdraws from its attachments to the external loved one ("object" in the language of psychoanalysis) and directs itself internally onto the ego. The lost beloved is preserved within so the loved one need not be relinquished. "Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego" ("Mourning and Melancholia," Freud, *General Psychological Theory*, 1917, 170). Carrying her son's memory was a task that echoed childhood fears for a father precariously situated in life.

Raised in a military family, Mary Elizabeth Anania's earliest years were saturated with trauma or the fantasized threat of it. Her father, a U.S. Navy pilot, routinely disappeared on reconnaissance flights over "Red China" or North Korea during the Cold War. As a little girl, she had no previous knowledge of when he was leaving or if he would return. She recalls sitting with her mother and siblings in pews of the base chapels in Iwakuni, Japan, for memorial services—watching her friends bury their fathers.

Elizabeth was the eldest child of three, born to a girl from Mississippi [Mary Elizabeth Thweatt (1923-)], and an All-American football player [Vincent Anania, (1920-2008)] of Italian descent with a "voracious appetite for life" (Jay Anania, brother, interviewed in New York City on 4/13/11). She (the daughter) describes her father as a courageous hero with "cannonballs for shoulders... He used to lift women up—my mother and her friends—and twirl them head over heels like batons. Proper women in 1950s shirtwaists ignored the fact that their garter belts had been on display, and they giggled to be treated as girls again." She remembers

that “he carried my brother, my sister, and me all at once on his wide shoulders upstairs to bed when we were youngsters as if we were stuffed animals” (*Resilience: Reflections on the Burdens and Gifts of Facing Life's Adversities*, 2009, 4).

The author opens her second memoir with such glorious stories about her daddy and the idealized conviction that he “always reflected the sheer majesty of living” (*Resilience*, 2009, 8). She recaptured this larger-than-life image in the figure of John Edwards (1953-), a textiles major and, later, superstar trial lawyer, who took Elizabeth out dancing on a first date at the Holiday Inn and won her over with a fatherly kiss on the forehead at the end of the night. There was appeal in his sexual reserve: “In an era of fast-forward sexual relationships, I was used to the fight at the door, or worse, in my apartment” (*Saving Graces*, 2006, 75). (John Edwards became her idealized husband, until his very public betrayals could no longer be ignored.)

Mary Elizabeth Anania was president of her class at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and editor of the *Law Review*, where she flexed a robust intelligence and had the chutzpah “to get kicked off the cheerleading squad for talking back to a teacher” (*Saving Graces*, 2006, 65). As an undergraduate she experienced a “click” moment of political awakening when she protested the killings at Kent State and the Vietnam War. She declared, “I pushed aside my impotence” as she challenged her father’s moral choices at a time when he headed up the local Navy ROTC unit (*Saving Graces*, 2006, 69). She loved American literature, particularly that of Henry James, and studied medieval literature in graduate school for three years before switching to law school and marrying the four-year younger John Edwards.

In many ways, her mother’s life was a prequel to her own. At age 13, Edwards found her mother’s journals hidden under a mattress in the guest room and discovered that she suspected Vincent had been unfaithful. “She was serially pregnant in the late 1940s and early 1950s... and my mother believed, rightly or wrongly, that my father had found other companionship while she was buried in babies” (*Resilience*, 2009, 179).

Edwards writes of the “flexibility” of her mother, a navy

wife who denied much of herself to be with her spouse. The family was subordinate to the mission. Edwards moved her senior year of high school because her father's rotation schedule demanded it; "I moved to a cadence set by someone else... what was happening in my life really didn't, couldn't, matter" (*Resilience*, 2009, 202). This became the pattern of her marriage, including when her career as an attorney became secondary to the ambitions and needs of her husband and family. At times, Edwards describes feeling outside herself, like a puppeteer to her own body.

In her late 40s, she underwent fertility treatments to replace her lost son and bore a daughter (1998), and then son (2000), while consciously disavowing the surrogate child syndrome. She felt a lump in her breast the size of a plum just prior to her husband's 2004 vice presidential election, but campaigned for another week before obtaining treatment once he'd lost. Following John's acknowledged infidelity with a campaign videographer and his fathering of a child out-of-wedlock, she wrote, "I am sixty years of life that once made a picture... and I am trying to see what puzzle picture I can create from those pieces that remain" (*Resilience*, 2009, 220).

Edwards had a gift for cultivating communities around her. She struggled to sublimate her disillusionments, the devastating injury inflicted by the narcissistic husband whose career she had done much to advance, into generative, life-affirming acts. She was advisor to John as a political candidate and likely collaborated on his case summaries in his early years as a lawyer, which were renowned for captivating the emotional tenor of a trial (Jay Anania, personal interview). While combating her own illness, she advocated passionately for children's rights and health care reform. Gay equality was another ardent cause.

Having learned the cancer had spread to her lymph nodes in 2005 and would soon metastasize, Edwards returned to a habit she had nurtured since Wade's birth: that of writing down the lyrics to songs that she knew. These verses were typed and alphabetized by her, then bound in a collection of over 5,000 scores of folk, country, bluegrass, swing, children's songs, and old rock-and-roll. Her "Songbook" was kindly thrust into hands of supporters, friends, press—everyone on the bus for her husband's campaign across Io-

wa and New Hampshire. She orchestrated intergenerational harmonies and had X-generation staffers crooning “How’d You Like to Spoon with Me?” (composed in 1905). She could get people to sing!

But in her last years there was lingering sadness. Freud says melancholy is characterized by a sense of unknown loss (“*Mourning and Melancholia*,” 166). While they know that they have lost a child, the ideals of husband, nation, even flesh, they do not consciously perceive what it is they have lost in these experiences. Edwards kept remaking her traumas —through law, literature, music —in order to know what loss she had endured and reaffirm life’s joys.

*Molly Castelloe, PhD, a North Carolinian like her subject, received her doctorate in theater and psychoanalysis from New York University. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, and when not caring for her four and six year-old sons, she is a Psychohistory Forum Research Associate, creator and moderator of its online forum, and blogger for psychologytoday.com. Dr. Castelloe may be contacted at msc214@nyu.edu. □*

## **The Rudolph Binion Memorial**

### **The Life and Art of Friendship of the World-Renowned Psychohistorian Rudolph Binion**

**Paul H. Elovitz—Clio’s Psyche**

The death of Rudolph Binion (January 18, 1927-May 19, 2011), Leff Families Professor of Modern European History at Brandeis University, Editorial Board Member of Clio’s Psyche, and a most distinguished scholar, was a great loss to our field and to his many friends within and outside of academia. Rudy (as he was called by his friends) had fought many a courageous battle for life and health. As a young man he was stricken with life-threatening dysentery in Tunis and later in Mexico. In 1983 he survived a most serious bout with bowel cancer and sometime after-

wards suffered from a botched operation from a broken hip and leg from a mugging. He had extremely serious heart problems, and he suffered from an excruciatingly painful back, and gout. More recently, he suffered from kidney stones and because of kidney failure, he spent his final year on dialysis, administered at home by his wife Eléna—a nurse. In the end, his body could not tolerate the dialysis, several infections, pneumonia and, finally, chronic heart failure.

Although he once complained to me that he felt like a “baby” when it came to issues of health, he faced death with courage and grace. Several weeks before his demise, he e-mailed friends that his end was near. On the telephone, he explained that the doctors said that it could be a matter of weeks or hours. He also prepared a wonderful card showing him at about three years of age smiling, wearing Tyrolese lederhosen. Within the card, he wrote and Eléna reproduced in lovely calligraphy, “My only family and dearest friends: / Alas, with my decease our story ends / Would that the universe might make amends. [Signed,] Rudy.” On the back of the card was affixed the favorite poem he wrote and published in *Flights of Fancy*, entitled “Bach.” It included reference to “A sonic temple measurelessly high/ Above the limits of our earthly space/... Serenity beyond the human pale/...So seems it to an unbeliever.” When Bob Lentz named his Clio’s Psyche Featured Scholar Interview, “The Courage of Rudolph Binion,” he had in mind the characteristic shown in facing both life-threatening disease and intellectual challenges (1, 3 December 1994, 7-12).

Rudolph Binion’s brilliance was recognized around the world, as he often lectured in Europe in English, French, German, and Italian and on occasion in Australia and China. His professional and scholarly accomplishments are enormous. He taught at Rutgers, MIT, the Collège de France (as a guest lecturer in the autumn of 1980), and Columbia, culminating in his 44 years at Brandeis. He was scheduled to retire in 2012 after being on a half-time appointment for several years.

His books include *Defeated Leaders: The Political Fate of Caillaux, Jouvenel, and Tardieu* (Columbia 1960, Greenwood 1975); *Frau Lou: Nietzsche’s Wayward Disciple* (Princeton 1968, 1969; paperback 1970); *Hitler among the Germans* (1976, 1979);

"...daß ihr mich gefunden habt" (1978; paperback 1984); *Soundings: Psychohistorical and Psycholiterary* (Psychohistory Press 1981); *Introduction à la psychohistoire* (1982); *Introducción a la psicohistoria* (1986); *After Christianity: Christian Survivals in Post-Christian Culture* (1986; Spanish edition); *Love Beyond Death: The Anatomy of a Myth in the Arts* (1993); *Hitler et l'Allemagne, l'envers de l'histoire* (1994); *Freud über Aggression und Tod* (1995); *Sounding the Classics: From Sophocles to Thomas Mann* (1997); *Past Impersonal: Group Process in Human History* (2005); *Flights of Fancy* (2009); and *Traumatic Reliving in History, Literature, and Film* (2011).

Symposia organized around Binion's lengthy articles in *Clio's Psyche* include "Group Psychological Symposium" (December 2000); "De Gaulle as Pétain" (September 2005); "What Made Europeans European" (June 2009); and "Reliving with Freud" (June/September 2010). He also wrote some other articles such as "Bismarck's Alliance Nightmare" (June 2005). Several important pieces for understanding him are his "My Life with *Frau Lou*," in L.P. Curtis, Jr., ed., *The Historian's Workshop* (1970, 293-306) and the Lentz interview mentioned above. Recognition for his accomplishments was widespread. These included awards from the American Historical Association (twice), the American Council of Learned Societies, the Camargo Foundation (twice), and Columbia University, as well as a Collège de France medal, a 1991 Fulbright Research Fellowship, and a Pulitzer Prize nomination.

Unbeknownst to some of his colleagues and friends, there was a poet lurking in his heart. As his sister Gertrude Hames writes, for her "only one of his books reflects the real Rudy, *Flights of Fancy*. He was a born lover of poetry. From about the age of two, he would walk about the house spouting rhymes. As soon as he learned to read he would regale us with Edgar Allan Poe's poetry—all from memory—and not many years later it was with Shakespeare. Fortunately, Rudy's *samizdat* [secret documents] can be read in *Flights of Fancy*, and there we who have known him from the beginning can enjoy the most precious, the most creative, the innate talents, the indelible memories" (personal communication, June 11, 2011). Rudy was enormously proud of this book, comprised of his poems and short stories. It was printed in Italy and he

graciously sent copies to some of his friends.

Rudolph Binion was born in New York City as the second son and youngest of three children of a mother who left the Jewish ghetto of Odessa at age five and a Hungarian nobleman who arrived in America in 1910 at age 25. Both music and literature were important to the family; his mother worked for a literary magazine as a proofreader and secretary. His father, who was quite musical, became a circulation manager at Hearst publications and later started a business raising money to start Catholic colleges. Business kept his father in Chicago most of the time and, although Rudy had a fond memory of his father helping him with his homework, he died when the boy was 13, preventing a closer relationship. At an early age Rudy had an adored German nanny named Rosa, who cared enough about him to visit him in Paris decades later. His mother and the three children lived in the Pocono Mountains of New York State for the sake of the health of the older brother, and then after the death of the father, they moved to Brooklyn. There were times when the Binions had lots of money, but experienced leaner times, especially after the death of his father. Rudy's mother did some export/import business, taking him to Europe with her. He loved to read and his sister reports that travel created his interest in history.

He attended public schools in New York State and graduated from James Madison High School in Brooklyn in two years after scoring very high on the Regents examination. As a student at Columbia University he was mentored by Jacques Barzun. Binion would earn the following degrees: a BA in 1945 after attending Columbia College for three years, a Diplôme in 1949 from the Institut d'Études Politiques in Paris (1947-49), and a doctoral degree from Columbia University in 1959, which he also attended in 1946-47 and 1953-58. His education was interrupted by service in the United States Army in 1945-46 and work as a statistical assistant for UNESCO in Paris from 1950-53.

Professor Binion, who was widely recognized as brilliant, erudite, humorous, innovative, inquisitive, and warm-hearted, had an extraordinary capacity for friendship and mentorship. Indeed, his friendships spanned the globe. He was extraordinarily generous in not only mentoring his students, but also fellow scholars, includ-

ing independent scholars who shared some of his interests. His friendships stretched far and wide, reflecting his openness to different cultures and his willingness to travel around the world to give distinguished lectures as well as to do his own research. He was quite comfortable inviting colleagues to sleep on his couch in Brookline and when giving talks, despite his bad back, to sleep on the couches of colleagues such as this author. Rudy maintained contact with an enormous number of his former students and colleagues. So many of them were awed by his erudition and collegiality and were delighted to call him a friend. Although he taught at prestigious universities, he never fell into the trap of the academic snobbery in which friendship and attention are focused on more prestigious academic settings and ignore those who haven't made it so far up the academic ladder.

Graduate education at top notch universities is quite demanding and many talented individuals drop out, partly because their professors and dissertation advisors provide little time, direction, and encouragement. Peter Loewenberg wrote insightfully on this in the "Emotional Problems of Graduate Education" (*Decoding the Past: The Psychohistorical Approach*, 1985, 48-58). Binion's students were most fortunate in that he was quite responsive and helpful to them, as well as being an extraordinary role model. Many graduate students were drawn to him because of his ability to bring together so many different aspects of knowledge, but few realized that it was his psychohistorical approach that provided the framework for this comprehensive approach to knowledge.

Genuine intellectual exchange was Professor Binion's cup of tea, as reflected in the four symposia we published in recent years. Regrettably, his pain was far too extreme during the last symposium for him to respond in detail and at length to each of the commentators. The marvel was that despite extraordinary physical problems and pain he was able to respond at all.

Although Binion was careful with his financial resources (he would walk a fair distance to avoid having to pay a parking fee at a garage), I've never known or even heard of a colleague nearly as generous with his time and intellect. He could be enormously responsive to his students, moving into new areas of research, such as the study of Freud, at the request of a student. When he left Co-

lumbia University, rather than leaving graduate students writing dissertations in the lurch, as so many professors have done, he worked with them until the completion of their doctoral degrees. He told Bob Lentz that “a number of people honor me by sending me their drafts and asking for comments and I love that” (11). In fact, he assisted independent scholars such as Jay Gonen, Deborah Hayden, David Lewis-Hodgson, George Victor, and Irvin Yalom in researching, writing, and rewriting their books, in all cases offering invaluable advice and guidance.

Binion wrote in English, French, and German with what appears to be equal facility, and the first language he spoke, thanks to his German nanny, was German. While his professorship was in modern European history, the depth and breadth of his knowledge was extraordinary. It included art, the Black Death, cinema, the classics, death, demography, disease, French politics, Freud, Hitler, leadership, literature, and love. Once Binion focused on a subject he was like a bulldog that wouldn't let go. In fact, 52 years after beginning his research on *Frau Lou: Nietzsche's Wayward Disciple* (1968), he was still wrestling with many of the issues involved.

Rudolph Binion was unusually straightforward about his intellectual transformation within psychohistory. He had “originally taken psychoanalysis as the orthodox straight approach to understanding human life” and so was “an out-and-out Freudian” (Lentz, 8; Binion, “My Life with *Frau Lou*,” 296). However, as someone who had no psychoanalytic training and apparently no therapy, he thought he could psychoanalyze as a purely intellectual endeavor both a historical subject like Frau Lou and a young lady of his “close acquaintance” (Binion, 304-05). Not realizing that psychoanalysis is not possible without an analyst (“the transference object” in psychoanalytic terms), he had initially believed Lou Salomé's claim to have analyzed herself in print and felt deceived when he realized that she had recreated her history to fit a Freudian mode. Like Nietzsche, he felt betrayed by Frau Lou (see Deborah Hayden's article on page 209) and decided to put in the conclusion of *Frau Lou* “that my whole method was wrong.” He found himself “a revisionist Freudian psychobiographer” (Lentz, 8) using this approach in his work on Hitler and Leopold II, but he eventually came to believe that applied psychoanalysis is “a big mistake.” To

Binion, "psychoanalysis was the childhood of psychohistory" (Lentz, 8-9). In his later years he especially came to appreciate the work of Pierre Janet.

Focusing on traumatic reliving was a creative way to turn his psychohistorical talents to groups, avoiding the difficulties of uncovering the traumas of childhood and of unreliable recollections of it, such as Frau Lou's. Only a small number of colleagues had tackled group psychohistory, and none brought the extraordinary depth of cultural, demographic, and historical knowledge to the task that Binion did. Rather unusually for a professional historian, he believed in the independence of psychohistory, rather than seeing it as a subfield of history. Had he the health and time, he would have liked to apply his theory of traumatic reliving to some aspects of the recent history of the Middle East.

The ideal that Rudolph Binion lived by as a historian, psychohistorian, and scholar was to follow the evidence that he had found to its conclusion, no matter what the cost. In writing about Hitler and other subjects, he held to this standard. In this journal, which he served so well as a member of the Editorial Board and trusted advisor, our goal has been to provide as full a sense as possible of what the colleague we are memorializing was like as a person. What this means for a colleague as important to our field as Rudolph Binion was, and for a colleague whom I personally loved, is that you write honestly about all the aspects of the individual, not simply their strengths. He accepted this principle in this journal, which he always declared to be his favorite and the only one he read from cover to cover. That is the spirit in which this is written, and I think of Rudy with his twinkling eyes and engaging voice as I write this.

As a human being, Rudy was subject to the frailties that are a part of our nature and which he explored so well in his books. As a teacher, he could start out by being so intimidating that one former graduate student reported that another seminar member left the course and university after being critiqued. A colleague who has had a most distinguished and productive career was deeply offended when a letter of recommendation for tenure he requested from Professor Binion was written so as to weaken his candidacy. Two years ago Rudy volunteered to review a colleague's book that he

had praised privately, and then was highly critical of it. Our friendship blossomed despite his being markedly critical of some of my work on Jimmy Carter's childhood, and I found him to be an excellent friend. Sometimes, with his usual engaging manner and high-pitched voice, and in this case with a conspiratorial tone, he would speak of our "dark art" of psychohistory.

As an editor of a new, interdisciplinary publication with articles coming to us with many different formats and styles, I found myself setting up categories as I trained editorial assistants. The "Binion Rule" was established as a directive not to make any change whatsoever, not even to correct the most obvious mistake (not that Rudy allowed one except on the rarest of occasions!), without the expressed, written permission of the author. In establishing this category and naming it the "Binion Rule," my memory went back to the wonderment a group of colleagues and I experienced when the editor of the *Journal of Psychohistory* complained that he had to stop the presses because Rudy, who was on vacation in an isolated part of Sicily, had traveled many miles to find a fax specifically to protest a very minor change that had crept into the article he was then proofing.

When, despite being forewarned, I had suggested what seemed to me a most innocuous change to something he had written, he responded in the strongest terms that I was overstepping my prerogative as an editor. Little did I know that in fact this most meticulous of authors, who could spot a misplaced comma faster than anyone I've ever known, had already shared his submission with colleagues and debated virtually every possible way of improving it. If only more of our authors were like my late friend, my editorial job would be infinitely easier. When he inquired once about something I was writing on Obama, I e-mailed him a copy for his interest of what I thought was a totally polished paper only to discover that his sharp eyes picked up typographical errors and incongruities like nobody else I'd ever encountered.

Professor Binion was a wonderful stylist, but his style was more characteristic of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century than of contemporary times. Most regrettably, this resulted in my undergraduate students having a difficult time reading his *Hitler among the Germans* and the necessity of assigning a far inferior book (which he had written

a devastating review of) that they had less trouble getting through. He had become quite enthusiastic about his *Sounding the Classics*, thinking that he would get a large readership for this as an assigned text and be able to finance some of his travels. At reading this fine volume, my heart grew heavy as I realized that despite my best efforts I would be unable to get my colleagues to assign it in their classes: the wonderful prose and the ideas were just way over the heads of our students.

Binion's best work was when he trusted his intuition, utilizing family and adolescent materials as well as adult trauma, such as in the case of Adolf Hitler. *Hitler among the Germans* is an extraordinary work that combines these elements with incredible archival research that took him to East Germany during the Cold War. As with his *Frau Lou* book, this tour de force would also create many problems for Rudy, since what he wrote was misinterpreted. It was wrongly claimed that he was blaming Dr. Bloch, the Jewish doctor who treated Hitler's mother Klara for breast cancer, for Hitler's irrational hatred of Jews and the Holocaust.

When it comes to highly emotional issues, even quite intelligent and somewhat psychologically aware individuals can quickly lose the difference between what is unconscious motivation and conscious motivation, which is precisely what happened in that case. Although Dr. Bloch's grandson, the late George Kren, who was a veteran psychohistorian and member of our Editorial Board, recognized the value of his colleague's research, many members of his family and the academy did not. Rudy faced not simply the threat of lawsuits, but someone following him around the country at his public lectures, denouncing him and his Hitler work in the question and answer sessions. Binion took it in stride as simply one of the prices he had to pay for his path-breaking research. Fortunately, he was cautious in dealing with journal editors and publishers, making it easier for him to publish his erudite and unique findings.

At Brandeis University there is a Rudolph Binion Collection, covering papers from 1882-2008 from his Hitler research. The disposition of most of his papers has not yet been determined and is in the hands of his executrix, Alice Binion. Binion was childless although he married three times. First, quite briefly at a very early age, then to Alice for over 40 years, and finally to Eléna.

He maintained a close friendship with Alice, as illustrated by their buying a house together on Cape Cod some years after the end of their marriage.

I wish to thank Alice Binion, Eléna LaGrange Binion, Gertrude Hames, Deborah Hayden, Katherine Long, Jane Kamensky, Laura Mason, and the many friends and colleagues of Rudy Binion who assisted me in the researching of this memorial. Naturally, as author I bear full responsibility for any errors of commission or omission.

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

### **My Own Identical Twin**

I am my own identical twin  
Faithful in sameness through thick and thin,  
Loyally standing by my side,  
Nay, closer still, astride my hide;  
Alike in all extrinsics; more,  
Intrinsically to the core  
Mistakable for my true self;  
Retrieved from a redundants' shelf,  
A pinch hit for the real McCoy,  
Which claims an exclusivity  
Though stitch for stitch, son of a bitch,  
There's just no telling which is which.  
In sum, I know not which is me  
And which myself in effigy.

*[Editor's Note: Rudolph Binion's poem, previously unpublished and untitled, was written several months before his death..] □*

### **Rudolph Binion's Traumatic Encounter with Frau Lou**

**Deborah Hayden**—Independent Scholar

"I was too hard on Lou," was the first thing Rudy said to me when I showed up at his office at Brandeis in 1992. Since my 20-year friendship with Rudy began, and ended as well, with our mutu-

al fascination with Lou Salomé, I thought readers of *Clio's Psyche* might like to review with me how Rudy's theory of traumatic reliving grew out of research for his biography, *Frau Lou: Nietzsche's Wayward Disciple* (1968), and developed over a half century. Rudy described his experience as Lou's biographer in the final chapter, "Beyond Frau Lou," and again two years later in an essay, "My Life with Frau Lou" in *The Historian's Workshop* (1970). A brief summary follows.

In the spring of 1959, when he was 32 years old, Rudolph Binion chose Lou Salomé as an "irresistible biographical subject" for a summer grant from Columbia. Lou captivated him with her "grand inner life that showed through her essays on art and letters, on religion, philosophy, and psychology, on women and love; her novels and stories and dramatic verse; her published letters and diaries; and finally, that seeming last word in self-disclosure, her autobiography." Lou had close relationships with so many of the cultural elite of the time, in particular Nietzsche, Rilke, and Freud. Rudy wrote, "She was to theorize with a passion, continually and sublimely: in the whole history of thought there are few men and no women to match her on these counts." Lou's life, both outwardly and inwardly, was among the richest on record.

With a year's fellowship, Rudy traveled with his wife, Alice, to Gottingen, where Lou's papers were kept under the stern eye of her literary executor, Ernst Pfeiffer. Returning home with a partial teaching load, he fused his notes, which "numbered grotesque thousands upon thousands in their helter-skelter heaps," into a massive first draft.

That Rudy was then "an out and out Freudian" and Lou "had psychoanalyzed herself in print to boot" added to her appeal. In 1913, Lou used her own childhood diaries as material for a Freudian self-analysis. But in working with her papers, Rudy discovered something that made him question his own Freudian orientation: he came to believe that a traumatic event—Nietzsche's vicious rejection of Lou in 1882—was the pivotal experience she not only relived in her later relationships and fiction, but also in her own analysis of her childhood adulation of and rejection by her father. This adult trauma, relived consciously and unconsciously, forward and backward, became the theme of *Frau Lou*; hence the

subtitle, *Nietzsche's Wayward Disciple*.

Then Rudy experienced a shock. Lou had said that before the breakup of their friendship, Nietzsche had proposed marriage, but Rudy discovered documents that led him to believe that she had lied about that. If she lied there, he asked himself, what else had she said that was untrue? In a scholarly frenzy, he began to revisit and question everything she wrote, working out of a growing anger at what he found to be on-going errors, omissions, and fabrications in Lou's self-told story, correcting as he went on his massive typed first draft. "For two days and nights and then another two I pursued Lou's latent associations as if driven at dizzying speed in all directions at once."

If at first Rudy had wanted to focus on Lou's Freudian years and not rehash "the stale Lou-Nietzsche story," this big discovery refocused him on the events of 1882. At this time, Lou was a 21-year-old from Russia traveling for her education with her chaperoning mother. She met Nietzsche, who was 37 at the time, in Rome. Nietzsche's stated goal with Lou was "to acquire a pupil in her and, if my life should not last much longer, an heir and one who will develop my thoughts." He was clear that there was nothing of the erotic in his attraction to her; he wrote to his friend Peter Gast, "You'll surely do us both the honor of keeping the notion of a love affair far removed from our relationship. We are *friends* and I intend to hold this girl and her trust in me sacred." Nietzsche spent three weeks with Lou in Tautenberg, sometimes talking ten hours a day, like "two devils conversing." He called her courageous, high-minded, sharp as an eagle, brave as a lion. Then in October, Nietzsche suddenly blamed Lou for dangerous gossip that had originated at the first performance of Wagner's Parsifal in Bayreuth. He wrote to her: "If I banish you from me now, it is a frightful censure of your whole being...You have caused damage, you have done *harm*—and not only to me but to all the people who have loved me: this sword hangs over you." He called her "this thin, dirty, evil-smelling little monkey with false breasts—a fate!" He dismissed her protests and they never spoke again. Lou went on to become close personal friends with Freud and to spend her last years as an analyst.

To his early praise, which remained intact, Rudy added a

layer of pejoratives about Lou's untruthfulness and pathology. He called her a moral monstrosity, a distraught fabler, and a sick fraud. He said that she was even unreliable in her rituals. The spell she cast over her friends kept them from seeing the warped side of her. His summary: "At all odds, *every* autobiographical formulation of Lou's was misleading in some way or other, if not outright false." Nietzsche had felt betrayed and responded with excessive anger; Rudy now did the same.

Despite the massive rewrite, the text of *Frau Lou* remained full of questions and contradictions. "My inclination was to redo it altogether during my coming sabbatical, but there was no telling where that could lead. So I decided to inventory the loose ends in a conclusion and move on." He left the text "discontinuous and inconsistent just so as to underscore its inconclusiveness" and he summarized it all in a final wrap-up chapter concluding, "So it is as well that I drew the line where I did: I am in enough of a methodological mess as it is."

After submitting the manuscript with its unwieldy thousands of footnotes to several publishing houses (at one, the editors "went plain hysterical" and a colleague dismissed it as fit only for scrap), *Frau Lou* finally found a home at Princeton University Press and was published in 1968—at 587 pages. Walter Kaufmann wrote a foreword and *Frau Lou* was released to mixed reviews. The historian Norman F. Cantor called it "one of the dozen best history books ever written."

Having put Lou behind him—or so he thought—Rudy's next projects involved applying his theory of traumatic reliving to new subjects, both historical and literary, from Leopold III of Belgium to Pirandello's characters and finally to Adolf Hitler. His final application of the theory was *Traumatic Reliving in History, Literature, and Film* (2011).

In the "Binion Symposium on Traumatic Reliving with Freud," (June/September 2010 issue of *Clio's Psyche*), Paul Elovitz reflected on Rudy's obsession with traumatic reliving: "To me, the great unanswered question is what in his own psyche and life experience brings my friend Rudy Binion to devote his powerful intellect and enormous erudition to the issue of traumatic reliving in in-

dividuals and groups? In the spirit of the Viennese master, it would be good if he tackled this question directly.”

Rudy provided a tantalizing partial answer to this question in the foreword to *Traumatic Reliving in History, Literature, and Film*. The first case he encountered in his historic researches, he wrote, was Lou Andreas Salomé’s “routinized rehash in life and letters of her traumatic breakup with Friedrich Nietzsche. Ever since this first encounter with traumatic reliving in history I have been prone to hit up against it repeatedly whether on the individual or the group level.” He continues, “My own repetitive pattern was not, then, itself trauma-induced—or did Lou’s trauma set it going?” He ends, “So I finally resolved to consolidate my findings on traumatic living in fact and fancy—for the prospective benefit of learning, to be sure, but also in the hopes of finally kicking the curse.”

*Kicking the curse.* Rudy wrote, “Felt fatality is therefore arguably integral to traumatic living, even its defining feature, for its course is indeed preset.” Rudy described the mechanism of traumatic reliving: “All too simply put, it is the occasional felt need to repeat, to re-enact, to relive an unbearable experience . . . What needs adding is that the repetition is unconscious.”

It rings true when Rudy suggests that his own repetitive pattern began with encountering Lou’s trauma—but not when he wonders if he was merely piggybacking on Lou’s trauma. What about his own very real anger at her? Young Rudy, the historian, obsessed with getting every detail of Lou’s life correct, was foiled by her at every step. Young Rudy, the perfectionist, had to publish a methodological mess of a text full of unanswered questions and contradictions, inconsistencies and possible inaccuracies. (Rudy was such a perfectionist that he recalled every copy of one of his books when he discovered that the publisher had added an extra “s” to all his possessives.) He resigned his job at Columbia “chiefly because of *Frau Lou*: enough said”—no small decision for someone early in an academic career.

Rudy agreed with Nietzsche in his denunciation of Lou rather than sympathizing with her. His own carefully catalogued traumatic experience revealed how Lou betrayed *him*, lied to *him*—her loyal biographer-to-be, and in so doing turned his neat biog-

raphy topsy-turvy.

Could it be that Rudy had forgotten about or repressed the trauma that set him off on a life-long search for examples that fit his theory and kept him fascinated by Lou's story, right up until his last days? For a traumatic reliving to qualify for Rudy's model, it must be without conscious knowledge. If so, is Rudy not illustrating the very basis of his theory of unconscious traumatic reliving in missing how much Lou's perceived betrayal affected him?

"Lou's impress on history, such as it was, came of her traumatic wrestling with Nietzsche's ghost," Rudy wrote. Did Rudy wrestle traumatically with Lou's ghost? To accept the premise that Rudy could have experienced a life-changing adult trauma with Lou that played out for the rest of his life depends on believing that a biographer can have a powerful posthumous relationship with his subject.

Once his *Traumatic Reliving* manuscript had found a publisher, and feeling he had wrapped up his scholarly contribution on the topic, Rudy turned to fiction. He experienced having a Muse who dictated delightful complete stories, some autobiographical, and sonnets which he called his *Flights of Fancy*, the title of a book he published in 2009 through an Italian press, Aracne editrice.

Rudy shared with me his rule for writing: "Break new ground with each keystroke!" Those who knew him can visualize his bright blue eyes, his grin, his shrill voice, vigorously pointing a finger in the air as was his habit when he was making a special point.

When I told the sad news about Rudy to my literary agent, Rosalie Siegel, who was also Rudy's agent, she responded, "Rudy was a gentleman scholar of the old school. It is indeed the end of an era." Sadly, so it is.

**Deborah Hayden**, author of *Pox: Genius, Madness, and the Mysteries of Syphilis* (2003) and "Nietzsche's Secrets," in Jacob Golomb et al., *Nietzsche and Depth Psychology* (1999), is an independent scholar who had an intense editorial friendship with Binion. You may read about her at [poxhistory.com](http://poxhistory.com) and contact her at [debhayden@sbcglobal.net](mailto:debhayden@sbcglobal.net). □

## Recollections of Rudolph Binion

### A Pioneer of Psychohistory and Cultural History

Those of us who knew Rudolph Binion will remember his teaching, his scholarship, and his friendship. I met him when I was a first-year graduate student at Brandeis University in 1975, and he supervised my doctoral thesis. I did not follow his path into psychohistory but wrote on French regional history. As a young student, like those hundred others whose theses he supervised, I was struck and initially intimidated by his extraordinary intellect, but soon heartened by the kind and encouraging attention he gave to all. His enthusiasm for sharing knowledge—whether lecturing on a text of intellectual history that he knew by heart, testing a new idea for his own work, or engaging with a student’s novice research—made him an exceptional teacher. He gave us graduate students a feeling of a teaching reaching back to his own mentors, Jacques Barzun at Columbia and Louis Chevalier at Sciences Po in Paris, and reaching out to the “universal company of scholars.”

As a scholar, Binion’s contribution was enormous. One of the first to respond to calls for the systematic integration of psychological theory into historical writing, he became a pioneer of psychohistory and he showed a great capacity to grow and innovate within this field. Not all of his techniques and arguments won consensus amongst colleagues, but all respected the depth of his research and the originality of his interpretations.

In a brief tribute, it is impossible to sum up Binion’s scholarship, but *After Christianity* seems emblematic of his work (and remains one of my favorites of his books). Here, Binion took a major theme in the new social and intellectual history, the secularization and de-Christianization of Europe, and mapped three central examples of the transmutation of Christian beliefs in the post-Christian world: notions of the last judgment, original sin, and absolute truth. Here was Binion at his best, grappling with large issues, displaying the long view of history, and writing on the cusp of the new cultural history. Cultural studies was a field that perhaps never claimed him, though he was one of its leaders *avant la lettre*—reading the classics against the grain, interrogating texts, identifying transnational connections, and using an interdisciplinary

method.

Rudy, teacher and scholar, was also a dear friend. It was a pleasure to see him in Boston, Paris, and on two occasions in Sydney. In one visit, he gave his brilliant analysis of Romanticism as a conference paper, and in another he offered his striking insights into the Black Death as a keynote conference address. While he was here, we discussed ideas on two seminal French political figures that became, in these pages, "De Gaulle as Pétain," and I tried out thoughts that eventually turned into my books. In between, we went for walks along the Sydney Harbour foreshore, and with Eléna had a trip to Queensland, where they enjoyed the beautiful scenery of Australia's tropical north.

Rudy performed many acts of kindness for students and friends through his long career, and his influence remains. Not only will I continue to reread his writings with pleasure and receive from them great insight, but each time that I write something myself I will visualize his handwriting in the margin exhorting me to clarity of thought and clarity of prose.

*Robert Aldrich, PhD, Professor of European History at the University of Sydney, may be contacted at robert.aldrich@sydney.edu.au.*



## **Appreciating Rudy**

I'd heard about Rudolph Binion long before I met him. Back in the mid-1960s, a colleague of mine (we were both young graduate students in our first full-time college teaching positions) was a PhD candidate of Rudy's in European intellectual history at Columbia. My friend would occasionally share a lively story about his mentor's brilliance. When Rudy moved on to Brandeis University, my friend, through Rudy's generosity, was able to finish his degree at Columbia.

I finally met Rudy face to face at an American Historical Association Convention in New York City. It was sometime around 1969 or '70. He was presenting a paper in an early panel on psychohistory (in the days when the American Historical Association still welcomed psychohistory panels). He offered his audience

some new ideas centered on the “dual path” in Hitler’s unconscious contract with the German people. It was based on his then fledgling notions about adult trauma and adult traumatic reliving which he’d begun to explore in his psychobiography of Frau Lou. I remember asking him after the presentation, “How do you do this work?” He replied, “You just immerse yourself in the documents and wait for the psychological insights to emerge.”

My next encounter with Rudy’s ideas was through a series of pieces published in early issues of *The Journal of Psychohistory* that led to his provocative study *Hitler among the Germans* (1976), which I still use as required reading in my advanced psychohistory course. I was also powerfully influenced by several essays he published later in his collection, *Soundings: Psychohistorical and Psycholiterary* (1981).

There followed some personal interactions at summer workshops of the Institute for Psychohistory, but I really began to get to know Rudy during an automobile ride to and from the first all-psychohistory conference held at Stockton State College in October 1978. Lloyd de Mause did the driving. I sat in the back seat. On the long drive down and back, I witnessed a lively debate between two friends, Lloyd blaming everything in history on the evolution of childhood, Rudy arguing for adult traumatic reliving, both occasionally asking, “What do you think, Dave?” with me trying to sort it all out.

Like so many others, I admired Rudy’s scholarship: his extraordinary grasp of historical facts and interpretations, literature, art, film, and intellectual history, as well as his mastery of languages, but I grew to admire most his remarkable generosity and commitment to his profession. Early on, unsure of my own footing as a potential psychohistorian, Rudy encouraged me to submit something I’d written even though I was convinced the editor I had in mind wasn’t interested in the piece. “You might be misreading him,” he told me on a drive from LaGuardia to Manhattan. “Submit it anyway.” He was right. It broke the ice and started me on the interdisciplinary road I’ve been pursuing ever since.

Over the years, we became good friends. He invited me to visit him in Massachusetts, arranged for me to speak at Brandeis, and was interested in offering a prompt critique of any writing I

wished to send him. We disagreed on many things, but always with good humor and respect for each other. I cannot recall all the many, many times I ran into people in the historical profession who sooner or later mentioned that Rudy had taken the time to look at their book-length manuscript, had made telling comments, and had improved their work. It seems to run into the hundreds. Yet he never boasted about any of it: he just went about his business with a quiet dignity and a genuine desire to help.

Thanks to the initiative of Paul Elovitz, we were able in the past few years to do some psychohistory panels together in New York and Paris. I was happy to participate in two or three symposia on Rudy's work in *Clio's Psyche*. In the last decade, my wife, Sheila, and I got to know his wonderful wife Eléna. We continued to marvel at the depth and breadth of his scholarship and continued to admire his persistence in maintaining the highest scholarly and intellectual standards. Not long ago I was pleased to be able to dedicate a paper to Rudy as a token of thanks for all he'd done for me and for so many others.

We talked for the last time in a long phone conversation just a few days before his death. He told me he was exhausted, that all he could do was move a single finger, and that he was heading home to hospice care in a couple of days. Despite it all, he said with a twinkle in his voice and I'm sure with a twinkle in his eye that if I'd written anything recently I should send it along to him! I'm sure he would have given it his best effort. My life, like that of so many others, is dimmed by his passing.

*David Beisel, PhD, is a distinguished psychological historian who has taught psychohistory to over 7,800 students at SUNY-RCC. His biography may be found on page 133.*



## One of a Kind

Immense and wide-ranging intellectual pleasure is what I associate with Rudy Binion. An evening with him would be a lively discussion and argument on an incredibly large range of topics of which he had great depths of relevant information at his fingertips.

He was a clear thinker and an elegant writer. His concepts of traumatic reliving by groups inform my political thinking to this day.

His enormous generosity in helping other scholars was matched by his brilliance. He was one of a kind.

*Mary Coleman, MD, Medical Director of the Foundation of Autism Research, is a student of the causes of war, most recently discussed in Blood of the Beloved. Her e-mail is marycolemanmd@yahoo.com.*



### Passionate Outlier

I met Rudy at the beginning of my first year teaching at Brandeis in the fall of 1979. It was not the spring before at my interview, as he was fond of reminding me: “Had I been there you never would have got the job.” As marginals and outliers, Rudy and I became allies in the department, and perhaps because of this, he read a draft of my first book written at Brandeis, *Death and Property in Siena, 1205-1800: Strategies for the Afterlife*. Unbeknownst to me, one of the book’s central theses was “relived trauma”: the double reaction to the Black Death—the second strike of 1363, not the big one of 1348, which triggered a long-term shift in mentality across social classes in Siena and later, I discovered, across many regions of Europe.

From then on, Rudy neatly and at great pains set his angry red pen against every book manuscript that I drafted (barring my last, when compassion persuaded me to let him off the hook). Though at first I was startled by all the red and the objections he raised, I soon welcomed them. The direction of our intellectual exchange was certainly uneven, but not one-way. Rudy would bark his commands: “Find this” and “What about that?” On moving to Cambridge, my soon-to-be wife was alarmed one midnight when a Brooklyn accent crackled down the line (I was away at a conference). The day before I’d told Rudy about notes I’d taken on a source. At midnight, he felt the urge to consult them, and to this woman he’d never met came his demands: “I need *it*; I need *it*; I need *it*!” (The “*it*” referred to my notes.)

My last e-mail to Rudy on Friday May 13, 2011, when I

knew he was on his last legs, held a confession: "You have influenced me more than anyone intellectually. Of course, given the product, this might make you feel less well." (The first version read "might kill you," but, given the realities, I edited it.) Rudy was wont to complain that he was never cozy at home in any field, but rather raced from one to another: antiquity to heavy metal, calculations of French fertility to literary criticism, art history, and much more. It is this model of scholarship that has inspired my hopscotching from one period to the next and across disciplines, leading to deep academic insecurity.

I have been away physically from Brandeis and Rudy since 1993 (officially, 1995); yet when I lecture and write, Rudy's cut-to-the-quick remarks and style regularly ring in my ears. These messages will live on with many of us and through his writings will instruct and inspire many now unknown others, long after we've left the scene.

*Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., PhD, Professor of Medieval History at the University of Glasgow was born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1949. He took his doctoral degree at Harvard (1978); taught at Wesleyan University (1978-9), Brandeis (1979-95), and since 1995 at Glasgow. He has published 11 books and may be contacted at Samuel.Cohn@glasgow.ac.uk.*



## **An Insufficiently Recognized Scholar**

Rudy was a dear friend. He was affectionate, humorous, and generous to a fault with his time and energy. Therefore his company was usually not only great fun but also presented a challenge because of his habit of questioning other persons' thoughts in addition to his own. He thus influenced me not so much by the force of his personality as by the force of his ideas.

His book *Hitler among the Germans* was so titled in order to set the focus on the relationship between the individual and the group. For me this work served as a prime illustration of the validity of Freud's famous assertion in the first paragraph of his book on group psychology that from the very first, individual psychology is at the same time group psychology as well. What is more, Rudy's

emphasis on the reliving of traumas on both the individual and group levels struck a responsive cord in my heart. We developed a particular interest in each other's thoughts. Looking at German history I saw plenty of trauma underlying the German aggressive behaviors and looking at Jewish history he saw lots of current aggression springing out of historical trauma. Consequently toward the end of his life he planned to write a book on Israeli aggression fostered by the Holocaust but, sensing perhaps that his life was growing short, he switched plans and wrote instead a summation of his studies on the compulsion to relive traumas.

I was sometimes disappointed by the fact that he did not receive more recognition than he actually did. He certainly deserved more of it if only for his multidisciplinary erudition. He shocked me in being more knowledgeable than me with Plato and Aristotle even though I studied them in college. And his book *Sounding the Classics*, which treats the issue of what makes a literary work a classic, should by itself be a recognized classic in the field of literary criticism. I have recently written my own literary criticism manuscript, which I planned to dedicate to my school teacher and literary critic, Baruch Kurzweil. Since Rudy made generous editorial contributions to this work I am now going to dedicate it to both of them upon publication.

*Jay Y. Gonen, PhD, is the author The Psychohistory of Zionism, The Roots of Nazi Psychology: Hitler's Utopia Barbarism, Yahwah Versus Yahwah, and the recently completed manuscript, Self and World in Early Twentieth-Century Literature, who may be contacted at [jygonen@gmail.com](mailto:jygonen@gmail.com).*

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### **Observing a Binion Eureka Moment**

As a first-year graduate student in Rudy Binion's seminar at Columbia in 1964-65, I came the closest I'll likely ever come to observing a "eureka" moment. The occasion was a student paper on Belgian neutrality submitted by Walter Barge (died 2009 after a career of teaching history), who was at Columbia as a U.S. Army officer. Walter had written his paper from the perspective of military-diplomatic history, but had included biographical information on Leopold III, including the automobile accident in which the king

was at the wheel when his wife, Queen Astrid, was killed. Rudy described the particulars of his dilemma and his intellectual breakthrough in "My Life with *Frau Lou*," in the anthology *The Historian's Workshop* (1970).

What I primarily want to recall here was the moment when Rudy strode into the seminar, a gleam in his eye, and—as if it were the very moment of insight or revelation—rolled out the psychological connections between that auto accident and high diplomatic history. In addition to his sheer brilliance, and an omnivorous mind that encompassed and saw the psychological underpinnings of art history, literature, films, and demography, in addition to the usual stuff of history, it was that sense of almost naïve enthusiasm that, to me, characterized his scholarship: a gleam in his eye.

*Amy Hackett, PhD, a graduate of Southern Methodist University, entered Columbia University graduate school in 1964 and received her PhD in 1976 with a dissertation on the German women's movement from 1890-1919. After several years of teaching, she left academia and worked as an editor and translator, then in development for a number of non-profit organizations. She currently lives in Brooklyn and works as a free-lance editor and may be contacted at [hackett.amyk@gmail.com](mailto:hackett.amyk@gmail.com).*

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## A True Friend

Hospitality, humor, wit, and whimsy are some of the qualities of Rudy Binion I recall during my long friendship with him. In 1973 when my late husband David and I first arrived in the Boston area, the Binions were the first to invite us to dinner. A mutual friend had told Rudy of our moving from Wisconsin to Cambridge. Over the years the Binions and the Herlihys spent many pleasant days at the beach and evenings playing games with our young children. In Italy, as in Massachusetts, we had heated discussions about politics, art, and literature lingering over several glasses of wine. Rudy was always engagé and engaging—I treasured Rudy's friendship.

While he deeply enjoyed life, he also endured serious illnesses with an admirable stoicism. I salute my departed friend in

sorrow and with affection.

**Patricia Herlihy, PhD**, *Brown University Professor Emerita of History*, is currently affiliated with centers at Harvard and Brown. Included in her books are *Odessa: A History, 1794-1914* (Harvard U. Press, 1986), *The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka and Politics in Late Imperial Russia* (Oxford U. Press, 2002), and *The Global History of Vodka* (in press). Dr. Herlihy may be contacted at [patricia\\_herlihy@brown.edu](mailto:patricia_herlihy@brown.edu).

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### **Rudy the Man and the Lasting Gift of His Friendship**

I knew Rudy Binion well. I knew the man of letters, whose erudition and originality opened a new domain of psycho-cultural history and yielded creations that will outlive all of us. I knew the man of words, who delighted in language, read his colleagues' and students' drafts with undisguised interest and attention, and unfailingly improved them. I knew the man of the classroom, who inspired and helped his students and those of others until the very last weeks of his life. And I knew the man, who gave to some of us the lasting gift of his friendship.

**Paul F. Jankowski, DPhil**, *studied at Oxford University and is now Ray Ginger Professor of History at Brandeis University. His biography may be found on page 155.*

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### **A Wonderful Conversationalist**

When in 1983 or 1984 I had Rudy Binion lecture at the University of Oxford in a public lecture series on psychoanalysis, he kept the audience enthralled, speaking without notes about his work on Lou Andreas-Salomé and Adolf Hitler. We formed a deep link based on our mutual academic interests. Although he had already established himself as a senior professional and I had only just begun to enter the field, he treated me as an equal colleague and he offered immense practical encouragement to me over many years.

Since Rudy traveled to Europe frequently as part of his many research trips to endless Continental archives, we usually met in London and always had enjoyable meals together. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, we would meet at least once yearly, and I came to know Rudy increasingly well. He was an extraordinary conversationalist, always proving to be the most engaging and captivating of interlocutors: he seemed to know everything about everything and to have read every book in its original language. He had absorbed everything he read with profundity, wearing his erudition very lightly. I never ever had a sense of Rudy boasting about his scholarly achievements and, unlike many others, he had a huge capacity to have a mutual conversation.

With remarkable fluency, Rudy spoke French, German, Italian, and probably several other languages, allowing him to become a citizen of the world. Consequently, he exuded a sense of camaraderie transcending national and international borders in his personal and professional relationships. Not only did Rudy delight us all with his wonderful conversational skills and lingual abilities, but he could also be extremely funny, and he never failed to make me laugh. He had the rare capacity to be funny without offending anyone else in the process.

When the Atlantic Ocean kept us from meeting directly, Binion never failed to send many postcards as well as letters. Knowing of my interest in the history of parent-infant interactions over the centuries, he always sent me a postcard of a rare painting, usually Medieval or Renaissance, from a tiny museum from some remote corner of, for example, Bavaria, which I had never seen before. Thanks to Rudy, I now have a collection of several hundred obscure photographs which document the way in which the Winnicottian “holding” and “handling” of babies by their mothers has improved across six centuries. Rudy’s thoughtfulness in remembering this particular research interest of mine touched me greatly.

Fortunately, Rudy did have the pleasure of seeing his last book, *Traumatic Reliving*, appear in print earlier this year from Karnac Books of London. I feel quite pleased to have introduced Rudy to Oliver Rathbone, the publisher of Karnac Books, who immediately saw the genius of Rudy’s study of “traumatic reliving,” and who offered to publish it on the spot.

*Brett Kahr, a clinician, historian, and psychohistorian, is Senior Clinical Research Fellow in Psychotherapy and Mental Health at the Centre for Child Mental Health in London who holds many other positions and may be contacted at Kahr14@aol.com.*



## My Friend Rudy

Rudy Binion was one of the most engaging men I have ever known. The secret of his charm was his innocent love of life, culture, and friendship. Though his critical faculties were in sharp relief in his scholarly work, he had a great deal of common sense and was often the person to whom one turned for practical advice about career and family, as well as advice about books, one's own work, or almost any aspect of humanistic interest. He was a devoted friend who never failed to answer an e-mail, who was always there with a kind remark, and upon whom one could rely in time of need.

I wrote my master's essay with Rudy when he was at Columbia in the early 1960s. He was my teacher as well as my friend. When I taught at Wesleyan, he lectured about Leopold III and acted as the outside reader of my tutees' exams. We spent time together in Paris—walking, eating, talking.

I remember Rudy most as a conversationalist. Though I believe we agreed about the larger things, we disagreed *ad infinitum* about smaller things: were movies collective events or dominated by individual directors; historiography only concerned itself with how things happened and not why things happened; Paris was despoiled by La Defense; who was the better teacher, Jacques Barzun or Lionel Trilling.

For various reasons, probably because our lives followed different paths—I left academia and worked in government—I lost track of Rudy for many years. About five years ago we got back in touch and Rudy invited me to Brookline and we made plans to go to Cape Cod to be near the beach and swim. Even after some 30 years, we were still the same good friends. Rudy's conversation was as fluent, learned, and brilliant as ever. He greeted me as if I had just stepped around the corner a few hours before to buy some groceries. We talked about our work: I had begun writing a histori-

cized autobiography; he had just finished *Traumatic Reliving*. He showed me some of the stories and poems that had “popped out of his head” like magic. We both marveled over Eléna’s cooking.

I never expected Rudy to die such an untimely death; I thought he would live way into his nineties or past 100. Just a few years ago, he was as hardy as a boy. In many ways he never stopped being a boy—as intellectually curious, as avid for experience, as full of high spirits, and as quietly mischievous as a boy in his early teens. He was a great spirit, whose youth and light will survive his passing.

*Wallace Katz, associate editor of Globality Studies Journal and a Visiting Scholar at SUNY-Stony Brook, may be contacted at [Wally.Katz973@gmail.com](mailto:Wally.Katz973@gmail.com).*



## **Scholar, Teacher, Friend**

My friendship with Rudy began one glorious fall day in 1964 at the Columbia University sundial, when, after his seminar on European intellectual history, we co-analyzed Rousseau—I supplied the biography, he, the psychoanalytic theory. Over the decades, our friendship developed at increasingly warm meetings from Chicago to Paris. He inspired me as a teacher, friend, and scholar.

He pulled me through my dissertation on Freud and then continued to read my manuscripts, while I in turn read his. Reading the manuscript of *Hitler among the Germans* in the third-floor study of his home in Brookline, I began to separate myself from Rudy’s towering influence by marking whatever I did not understand. For example, I urged him not to use the word “irrecusable” because no one would know what it meant. Rudy insisted that it was the right word—which it was. He searched for the right word as diligently as did Flaubert and would not give it up for any reason once he found it. His language was unusual and precise, a delightful mixture of scholarly rigor and playful street talk.

An early memory of our friendship is of a march in 1965 from Central Park to the United Nations Building to protest the war in Vietnam. Most protestors were in jeans, but he was in a suit and tie. When it started to pour, most participants ducked into shops,

but he fixed his powerful jaw and said, “I came here to march to the U.N. building, and I’m not going to let a little rain stop me.” So we slogged on together, his shoes squishing with every step. I was proud to be studying under someone with such determination and moral integrity, as well as scholarly achievement.

Our friendship blossomed after my student apprenticeship years. When I wondered why I was spending thousands of hours researching books, I thought of his regular ten hour days as I remember them from one summer together in Brookline: at work early every morning, lunch at 1:00, dinner at 7:15, then a couple more hours after dinner until a beer around 10:00. How lovely those cold beers were at the end of hot summer days. How he worked me without knowing it, because I was too ashamed to knock off early, and so pushed on, knowing that he was in his study hammering away. His scholarship was magnificent, written with exemplary concision and endlessly inventive phrasings.

The empty skies he refers to in his poem called “Bach”—his favorite—well describe the sense I have of a scholarly world without Rudy Binion. His work inspired me as a monument to what is possible at the highest levels—prodigious research, penetrating thought, delightful imagination, and elegant writing. Personally, I will miss most his abundant warmth, sharp wit, deep humanity, and love of life.

*Stephen Kern, PhD, Humanities Distinguished Professor of History at Ohio State University, is the author of The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918 (1983, 2003), The Culture of Love: Victorians to Moderns (1992), A Cultural History of Causality: Science, Murder Novels, and Systems of Thought (2004), and, most recently, The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction (2011). He may be reached at kern.193@osu.edu.*

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## A Generous and Superb Scholar

I first became aware of Rudy’s work and ideas some 30 years before we eventually met, through his articles in the *History of Childhood Quarterly: The Journal of Psychohistory*, on which he was a contributing editor. Later in the 1970s, while studying the

psychology of the Third Reich, I read his excellent and meticulously researched book *Hitler among the Germans* (1976).

When in 2000 I was researching my biography of Dr. Edmund Forster, the neurologist who treated Hitler (most likely for hysterical blindness) in 1918, I approached Rudy, out of the blue, to request his assistance. Not only did he willingly make his extensive research archive available to me, but his kindness even extended to inviting me to stay at his apartment while reviewing the material. It was an act typical of Rudy: warm-hearted generosity, an aspect of his personality I came to appreciate ever more strongly in the years that followed our first meeting.

Rudy was an exceptional individual who was fortunate enough to find in his wife Eléna a kindred spirit and devoted companion. He was a superb scholar, an outstanding historian, and a true friend. My world—our world—is all the poorer for his passing.

*David Lewis-Hodgson (aka David Lewis), DPhil, wrote The Man Who Invented Hitler: The Making of the Führer (2003) and may be contacted at [david@drdavidlewis.co.uk](mailto:david@drdavidlewis.co.uk).*



## History, Acting, and Tomatoes

Despite having seen Professor Binion in the hospital shortly before his death, it still came as a shock—not least because he was someone that I felt probably would live forever. Such was the immensity of his person. It is no easy task to put to pen my thoughts and feelings for someone who holds a special place in my mind and heart: he was both a good friend and a supportive, ever patient, mentor. I will miss him dearly.

I am grateful to Professor Binion for introducing me to psychohistory. Though I have yet to complete my dissertation, it will benefit from the insights of psychology. He willingly considered all my theories and worked with me to better understand what I saw. You couldn't ask for more in a supervisor. All who knew him would also agree that he wielded his red pen with finesse, fairness, and a sharp critical eye.

As his former teaching assistant, I will always regret his un-

willingness to record his “Thought and Culture” classes: they were an intellectual treat to every student in the room whether or not they realized it at the time. Not only did Professor Binion have high expectations and demand much of his students, he was exceedingly generous with his time and ever willing to help out any student in need. Indeed, his generosity towards his graduate students extended well beyond the campus to countless dinners, social gatherings at his own home (even more after meeting Éléna!), and a happy willingness to attend social gatherings organized by his students.

While I have many memories of him, I would like to share two. The first is of a party hosted by his graduate students in honor of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday: I was one of five students together with his friend Alvin who performed a play he had written some years earlier. He supervised the rehearsals and “worked with us” until we got it right. The play was great fun and very entertaining for the many partygoers. I don’t think anyone who was present will have forgotten.

The second memory involves a neighbor, a tomato plant, and ripe tomatoes. I had a meeting planned with Professor Binion late one morning. He arrived at his office breathless and perturbed, worried that his driving had been overly erratic on his way to Brandeis and he told me this story: prior to leaving home, a neighbor suggested that he avail himself of newly ripened tomatoes. Liking tomatoes, he agreed and proceeded to place ripe tomatoes on the floor of his car behind the driver’s seat. Having loaded all the tomatoes he thought he could use, he drove off. However, every time he came to an abrupt stop (a typical stop for Professor Binion!), tomatoes began to roll forward under the seat and under his feet. Panicking as more and more tomatoes continued their forward roll, he began to toss them out the window—finally having to resort to opening his door to scoop them out onto the road, even as he feared the sound of police sirens in response to his driving. I remember little more of our meeting because by then we were laughing hysterically.

*Jennifer MacDonald, MA, is a Canadian pursuing her graduate work at Brandeis. She lives in Amherst, Massachusetts and is currently a Program Coordinator for the Center for Teaching and Learning of Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, while*

*actively working to finish her dissertation, Family Crime on Trial: The Côte-d'Or in the Nineteenth Century. She may be contacted at [mac2302@verizon.net](mailto:mac2302@verizon.net).*

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## Fondly Remembering My Mentor

When I was a student at Columbia in 1964, I met Rudy. I took his course in Modern European Intellectual History and it changed my life. Because of his influence, I now have a PhD in history from Brandeis and a teaching career. He was my mentor; I was his humble student. I could never approach his depth of knowledge, his facility with languages, or his commitment to the life of the mind.

For all his powers of the intellect, Rudy nonetheless was the sweetest of souls and the kindest of hearts—a real *mensch*. I hadn't seen him in more than two decades, but we kept in touch long distance. When I heard of his passing, I felt an enormous loss for myself and for this world.

*Paul Monaco, PhD, is a film historian, filmmaker, and professor of film studies at the University of Montana who may be contacted at [monaco@montana.edu](mailto:monaco@montana.edu).*

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## The Most Profound and Ready Reply

Rudy Binion was my advisor in the Comparative History doctoral program at Brandeis University from 1989 to 1997. Subsequently, we had a lot of contact by letter, email, and occasional visits until his death. I still cannot quite believe that I will not be hearing from him again. His replies invariably would be prompt, considered, informative, witty, and responsive. If the reply was not virtually immediate, he would apologize. Simple availability and good manners were the outward sign of some defining aspects of Binion's nature and character.

Rudy was a gentleman, in the sense that he was honorable and well-mannered as well as urbane and socially skilled. He was as open and interested in discussion from the first day I met him until the end. From first to last he was knowledgeable and sincere,

as well as wryly good humored. To say he was the same person as a professor, colleague, and friend is not to denigrate his professionalism but rather to underscore his integrity, the wholeheartedness of his commitment to intellectual endeavor, and to personal links with others at various stages of it. There were not different Rudolph Binions for different people. He was too much of a scholar and thinker, and too decent a person, to be a snob or a game player; he was who he was. When he was my advisor, particularly when I was writing my dissertation, Rudolph Binion's quick turn-around time never ceased to amaze me and was enormously helpful as I sought to complete my degree.

Thirdly, as a teacher, advisor, and historian, his careful, in-depth responses to what I wrote, which routinely came back within days of any submission, enabled me to keep my momentum and enthusiasm. This was true even when he pointed out weaknesses, which always came with specific suggestions such as "please take these proposed corrections to heart." The careful, clear, and coherent critique that he provided in a critically timely fashion is one reason he was an excellent teacher and dissertation advisor. While it was very responsible of him, I never felt it was a strain for him; history and working with future historians may have been his professional duty but it was also his keen interest. His letters of recommendation, one in particular on short notice, were enormously helpful in my career.

There are so many other aspects of Rudy Binion—his spacious and inclusive ideas about history and his willingness to tread new ground and allow his students to do so also are but two important ones—but here I have mentioned what particularly stood out about Rudy, he of the profound and ready reply.

*Melanie Murphy, PhD, teaches Modern European and World History at Emmanuel College in Boston and is the author of Max Nordau's Fin-de-Siecle Romance of Race (2007) and a variety of articles. She may be contacted at [murphym@emmanuel.edu](mailto:murphym@emmanuel.edu).*

### **A Great Loss**

The death of Rudy Binion deeply affected me; a brilliant scholar and a great loss to all of us.

*Peter Petschauer, PhD, Appalachian State University and*

*Editorial Board Member who may be contacted at petschau-erpw@appstate.edu.*



## **Memories of Rudy Binion**

In 1980 I moved to Waltham, Massachusetts to work on a PhD in Comparative History at Brandeis University. At least ten years older than most graduate students, I was also unaccustomed to academic life. Among the most erudite scholars at Brandeis was Rudolph Binion. Over the course of the 1980s we gradually became friends and I learned that Rudy wasn't merely erudite but very considerate—willing to overlook a great deal in order to be of help to all sorts of people in any possible way.

Yet Rudy wasn't a doormat! When his psychological sleuthing led to solving the historical mystery of Hitler's compulsion to destroy Jews, he made his findings known—despite the personal attacks which he surely knew would follow, attacks to which he was very sensitive.

As his teaching assistant I was totally enthralled by his lectures on the inner dynamics of the lives of cultural innovators. As his research assistant I observed how he organized and distilled source material for his 1986 book *After Christianity*. From Rudy's example I learned to write about history the way a detective pursues hunches and to focus on the hunches I most cared about.

But what Rudy most cared about was never clear to me. He was obviously idealistic but I lacked knowledge enough of his background and life experiences to try to guess why. Among my previous friends none had been anything like him. I would like to see photos of Rudy throughout his lifetime; maybe they would help me understand him better.

One formidable obstacle to understanding him was his intelligence. I had never known anyone so brilliant. His invariable wit surely enlivened many days for *each* of his friends. His interior monologue must in fact have afflicted him with more brainstorming than he could manage to even jot down in his myopic scrawl, not to mention to fully develop for publication. But he didn't sink under the weight. Whether to edify editors or humor his own perfection-

ism, Rudy kept putting at least some of his brainstorm in print.

I feel he succeeded best in his last book to appear in print, *Traumatic Reliving in History, Literature, and Film* (2011). Each of the historical cases of traumatic reliving that he summarizes there is a gem—Lou Andreas-Salomé, Otto von Bismarck, King Leopold III of Belgium, the 1800s’ European revolutions modeled on the French Revolution, the Black Death, Jewish history, and an entire chapter on Charles de Gaulle maneuvering in the shadow of Marshal Pétain during the French political crisis of 1958. I wish Rudy had used even more of his psychohistory case studies there, especially his study of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 still living under the shadow of Prince Rudolf’s 1889 suicide at Mayerling.

Who will take on Rudy’s mantle? Who *can*? We have lost not just a kind and faithful friend but a peerless psychohistorical innovator.

*Paul Salstrom, PhD, teaches at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College and may be contacted at PSalstrom@smwc.edu*



## **On Losing a Special Colleague and Teacher**

It is so devastating to realize that teachers and colleagues are gone. Rudy Binion was sparkling with agile and sad humour, he was a brilliant intellectual in everything that he did: teaching, writing, publishing and lecturing. Psychohistory in Belarus moves on. Historians and other intellectuals “plunge in” and ask themselves Binion’s questions: “*Why* is this happening?” “What’s going on here unconsciously?”

*Olga Shutova, PhD, is an associate professor in the History Department of Belarusian State University in Minsk. She was a vice-president of the Belarusian Psychohistorical Association and may be contacted at olga@shutova.com.*

### **My Ego Ideal**

Fortunately, over 20 years ago I had the satisfaction of being personally able to express my appreciation to Professor Rudolph Binion at a psychohistorical conference. I told him how pivotal an impact his direction had had on me. It began in 1960 when

I took my master's seminar with him at Columbia University in modern French history with a class of ten students. I recall that soon after the course began, he spoke to us in a grave and inspirational manner regarding the research we were about to embark on. He advised us to select a topic of great interest to us, since we would be working on it for a long time. I recognized that this was a serious business, as we were preparing to become professional historians.

Clearly, Professor Binion was an eminent historian himself and a role model for all of us. I considered several topics and then became motivated to study Marshal Pétain! Significantly and pertinently, he was the most controversial figure in French history, and I did not like him. We were instructed to write a paper and submit it to the entire class as well as to the professor. When my turn came, the class collectively responded benignly to my work but Professor Binion was critical. Privately, he asked me if I was going to write a condemnatory essay on Pétain. He said that I was being polemical. I was jolted, but I recognized that he was right—a consequential moment for me.

Professor Binion made a lasting impression on me. His class was like no other I had ever had. We were seated around an attractive, rectangular table, which served to enhance discussions. He was a humane, fair, decent, erudite, well-intentioned man, and he had a purpose to prepare us for a life of scholarship. The class was not easy, but I respected him for holding us to high standards. One person, upon being critiqued, just dropped out of Columbia.

In the course of my professional career, I often heard the following aphorism: “A good teacher is a tough teacher.” Professor Binion was a good teacher. Yes, he was demanding—and outstanding. I feel fortunate that he was my teacher and had an enormous influence on me. To his credit, when I was defending my doctoral dissertation, one of my examiners said to me, “I see that you have no ax to grind with Pétain.”

I feel privileged to have had this remarkable man as my teacher and mentor. He was an “ego ideal” for me. Thank you, Professor Binion.

*Jacques Szaluta, PhD, is Professor Emeritus of History at*

*the United States Merchant Marine Academy, a graduate of the New York Center for Psychoanalytic Training, and the author of Psychohistory: Theory and Practice (2002). He may be reached at SzalutaJ@USMMA.edu.*



## **We Were All His Students**

What astounded me over the years was Rudolph Binion's mastery of so many areas of scholarly pursuit, from the history of ideas and politics to culture, society, and historical demography. The ease with which he made connections between art, literature, politics, and population was dazzling.

We met in 1976, when I enrolled in the comparative history doctoral program at Brandeis University. That year he co-organized a seminar in family history, and the experience led me to my dissertation on old age in 18<sup>th</sup> century France. He put me in touch with leading French scholars and there was never any tension between their advising and his. His attention to my prose and his advice about my argument were essential contributions to the dissertation and the resulting book. At that same time he was also advising students writing on economic development in Burgundy and censorship in Hesse-Cassel, which gives a sense of his breadth. It would be hard to identify what tied those projects together, except perhaps his seriousness toward our work and his ability to support even as he challenged.

Rudy was an extraordinary combination of head-in-the-clouds intellectual and down-to-earth friend, colleague, advisor, and editor. He was a spellbinding lecturer, speaking in whole explosive paragraphs while gazing toward the heavens (and the ceiling), and a generous, intense conversationalist, completely focusing his blue eyes and total attention on his interlocutor. Our conversations continued for years, unlimited by geography. We corresponded by e-mail, but receiving snail mail in his inimitable, crabbed handwriting was a special pleasure.

Primarily I work in social and cultural history, but Rudy's example allowed me to think more broadly—he disdained sub-disciplinary categories and fashions. In his late works, which

ranged from psychohistory and demography to literary, art, and film history, he simply followed his curiosity. His enthusiasm for research was infectious, but so was his enthusiasm for the arts, which he included in much of his historical work. We talked about our archival projects, art, music, literature, and the theater. In recent years we would meet up at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

His generosity and hospitality were well known. He always spoke with interest of former advisees' work, but took particular joy in the brilliance of his latest students. His students became colleagues, but some of his colleagues felt they were also his students. When I invited a former colleague of Rudy's to speak to my students, he remarked upon our both having studied with him, even though he had been a faculty colleague of Rudy's at Brandeis. Another colleague, a former college president, commented on Rudy's masterful editing and writing over the years. We were all his students and will all miss him.

*David G. Troyansky, PhD, is Professor of History at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of CUNY. He has been a Fulbright Fellow, a visiting faculty member at the Université de Limoges, and a professor at Texas Tech University (1984–2005). Among his publications are Old Age in the Old Regime (1989), The French Revolution in Culture and Society (1991), and Transnational Spaces and Identities in the Francophone World (2009). He may be reached at [troyansky@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:troyansky@brooklyn.cuny.edu).*



## **A Generous and Realistic Friend**

The subject line of one of Rudy's last e-mails to me was simply: "My demise." I mention this to show that, while Rudy's death is a great loss, it was anything but a shock. More than anyone I have ever known, he faced death with a mind unclouded by wishful thinking of any sort. The content of the e-mail focused on his plan for his beloved wife Eléna to accomplish the transfer of a gift iPod she had no use for to me, who had lost mine.

That was *echt* Rudy. Completely unsentimental about himself, utterly nurturing toward a former student, no matter how way-

ward—I had never completed my dissertation at Harvard and had become a public junior high school teacher.

After taking a fascinating trip with Rudy and his then wife Alice to Eastern Europe in the mid-1960s, I had lost contact with him for 20-some years, assuming he would have no interest in pursuing a friendship with so disappointing a protégé.

When I became a documentary filmmaker, I needed a letter of support from a “humanist” for a grant application. Knowing few other academics, I contacted him again. He immediately wrote a glowing letter of support, full of freshly researched detail about my project and me, which materially helped me get the grant.

What made his own work so extraordinary was that he was both an original thinker on a grand scale and a tireless researcher of minutiae. This mastery of both *grande* and *petite histoire* made him unique. His brilliant deciphering of Hitler’s mother’s doctor’s and pharmacist’s near-illegible notes, as an example of the latter, and the original conclusions he drew from them, as an example of the former, are incandescent.

Interestingly, in his last months he once said, wistfully, he would have become a novelist or a poet by choice but financial prudence initially caused him to become an historian. To that repressed impulse I think we owe the wondrously novelistic style of his historical writing. Every budding historian should be urged to read his *Frau Lou*.

For every small kindness he was given in his years of failing health he was exaggeratedly grateful, while continuing to give more than he got at every turn. He loved women, beautiful women even more. He would hold forth with arm upraised and finger pointed toward the sky when my wife and I visited him, declaring “Karen,” followed by some outrageous claim made with a twinkle in his eye.

We will not forget him; my wife and I will plant a tree similar to the tree he looked out on when he was writing at his home in Brookline in a place worthy of his memory.

*Tim Wright, ABD, after taking one course with Binion at Columbia in 1963, was influenced to change his major, subsequently studying European history at the University of Chicago and Harvard as a graduate student. He is currently a video producer and a*

*teacher of media and visual literacy at Emerson College and other institutions. He may be reached at t.k.wright@comcast.net.*

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## **A Generous Colleague Even As He Faced Death**

Rudy Binion was kind enough to read my recent novel that has a subplot set in Nazi Germany. No matter how arcane the question he inevitably seemed to know the answer and graciously offered me considerable time in the last weeks of his life. I'll think of him and pass along his gift when I am next asked for help by a writer.

*Irvin D. Yalom, MD, Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry at Stanford University, is a well-regarded innovator in group therapy as well as a novelist who may be contacted at [iyalom@gmail.com](mailto:iyalom@gmail.com).*  
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## **Wolfenstein Memorial**

### **The Life of Victor Wolfenstein (1940-2010)**

**Paul H. Elovitz**—The Psychohistory Forum

**Bob Lentz**—Clio's Psyche

Eugene Victor Wolfenstein was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on July 9, 1940 and died in Los Angeles on December 15, 2010, five months after a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. A dedicated teacher, he still chose to teach what would be his last fall semester, submitting his grades just five days before his death. He was a distinguished professor and scholar as well as an active psychoanalyst and deeply committed social activist. Professor Wolfenstein was the author of *The Revolutionary Personality: Lenin, Trotsky, and Gandhi* (1967), *Personality and Politics* (1969), *The Victims of Democracy: Malcolm X and the Black Revolution* (1981), *Psychoanalytic-Marxism: Groundwork* (1993), *Inside/Outside Nietzsche: Psychoanalytic Explorations* (2000), *A Gift of Spirit: Reading the Souls of Black Folks* (2007), and *Talking Books: Toni Morrison Among the Ancestors* (2010 and available online at

www.talkingbookswolfenstein.com), as well as numerous articles, book chapters, reviews, and presentations. An avid reader of Clio's *Psyche*, he was involved in editing *Free Associations*, *Gender & Psychoanalysis*, *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, and *Psychoanalytic Studies*.

Professor Wolfenstein was a passionate teacher whose courses covered political theory from the ancients to the moderns, including the Marxists, Malcolm X, and African-American freedom. Despite the hard work in his demanding yet rewarding classes, his teaching evaluations were consistently stellar. Throughout his 45-year professorship at UCLA, he asked his students to think about their relationship to the world around them along with learning the course materials. For Wolfenstein's achievements, he was the recipient of a number of awards: the 1991 UCLA Mortar Board "Faculty Excellence Award," given in recognition of "dedication to teaching and the pursuit of academic freedom"; the 1992-93 Outstanding Teacher Award of the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute; the 1994 UCLA campus-wide Harriet and Charles Luckman Distinguished Teaching Award, with special mention for distinction in graduate teaching; and a Meyers Center Award for the Study of Human Rights in North America in 1994 for *The Victims of Democracy*. Wolfenstein was instrumental in working with his colleagues to establish the Race, Ethnicity, and Politics major in the Political Science Department at UCLA.

As a practicing psychoanalyst, Wolfenstein taught at the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute from 1988 to 2002. From 1984 on, he saw patients for an average of 20 hours a week on top of his responsibilities as a political science professor. For Wolfenstein, work in political theory and the practice of psychoanalysis were not separate endeavors. Rather, as exemplified in his writing and teaching, the two fields provided a range of theoretical elements which he used to provide deep explanations of the human experience.

Victor Wolfenstein had a family background in higher education, psychoanalysis, and political radicalism as well as a history of tragic loss and resilience. Both his paternal great-grandfather and father had doctoral degrees and his mother was studying psychoanalytic psychology at the time of her death from cancer before

her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. He was a “red diaper baby,” since both of his parents were communists in their late teens and early 20s, and his mother’s father was a socialist. His parents divorced when he was five. His father went to fight in the Israeli War of Independence, took a PhD at the Sorbonne, and then lived in France as a mathematics professor with a second family.

Meanwhile, the ten year-old was raised in Toledo, Ohio, by his loving maternal grandparents, who made a home for him until his graduation from high school, while helping him through his emotional upset and guilt over the death of his mother. Later, after his own psychoanalysis, he was able to speak of his lost but internalized mother as “an internal presence and resource that I have done my best to cultivate.” In his Featured Scholar Interview Wolfenstein remembered her as “a remarkable woman—loving, life-affirming, and intelligent, with a wonderful imagination and sense of humor.” He goes on to say, that “There is sadness in me, and sensitivity to suffering, that grows out of the experience of losing her” (Bob Lentz and Paul H. Elovitz, “Victor Wolfenstein: Psychoanalytic-Marxist Scholar,” *Clio's Psyche*, December 2006, 165). This sensitivity to the suffering of others was an important motivation for his work as an author, teacher, and citizen social activist, who cared profoundly about poor blacks, Latinos, immigrants, and others.

An important person in his life was his father’s older sister, Martha Wolfenstein, the child psychoanalyst and scholar of great range, who did important work on the reaction of children to the death of President Kennedy. She was a constant emotional presence in his life and the de facto supervisor of his PhD dissertation. A high level of academic achievement was a given in his family. He earned a bachelor’s degree (*magna cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa–1962) from Columbia College and master’s (1964) and doctoral degrees (1965) in politics from Princeton University. In 1984, Wolfenstein received a doctoral degree in psychoanalysis from the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute. A fuller account of his life and ideas may be found in his *Clio's Psyche* interview.

Life for Victor Wolfenstein was not simply about teaching, scholarship, and social action. He was enormously devoted to his wife and his children. He hated to be away from Judy, his compan-

ion of 42 years and second wife, for even a weekend. Physical fitness was also important to him: swimming a mile three to four times a week in the UCLA pool, bicycling until he had a nasty accident, walking daily, and running the perimeter of the campus with his poodle Béla, who he would even bring to faculty meetings and office hours (but not class). His exercise regimen served a dual purpose. It off-set the many sedentary hours of writing, research, and psychoanalysis with physical activity and also provided time for processing ideas and emotions. When writing, this was especially important to him. He had season tickets since 1968 for the UCLA basketball that he loved. Music was an important enjoyment, from jazz and hip-hop to the Grateful Dead. He also loved his 1966 red Triumph Herald and drove it daily to UCLA.

We wish to express our condolences to his widow Judy; his children Laura, Leonard, Gabriel, and Moses; four grandchildren; and his half-siblings. A public memorial at UCLA was held in the Winter quarter. We would like to announce that any monies donated in his name to the Psychohistory Forum (our address is on the inside of the cover) will be used for Victor Wolfenstein Award Memberships and Subscriptions for graduate students and recent doctoral students. Our appreciation to Judy Wolfenstein and Peter Loewenberg for their assistance with this memorial.

*Bob Lentz is an independent scholar on the Editorial Board of Clio's Psyche and Paul H. Elovitz is Editor of this publication. They may be contacted at [lentz@telusplanet.net](mailto:lentz@telusplanet.net) and [pelovitz@aol.com](mailto:pelovitz@aol.com). □*

## **Remembering Victor Wolfenstein**

**Peter Loewenberg**—University of California, Los Angeles

Victor and I started our careers at UCLA together in 1965 and initiated our psychoanalytic training at the Southern California

Nancy Unger  
has joined our Board of Editors

Psychoanalytic Institute shortly thereafter. We came to know each other well in a psychoanalytic study group on leadership with a number of local analysts and social scientists, including Fawn McKay Brodie, Elizabeth Wirth Marvick, and Alexander George. (If you would like to know about this group, see Peter Loewenberg, "An Interdisciplinary Psychoanalytic Study Group on Political Leadership in Los Angeles," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, July 1969, 271-72.) Later, there were annual Arrowhead meetings of the University of California Interdisciplinary Psychoanalytic Consortium, where Vic always presented and often served on the Planning or Program Committees.

Vic had an emotionally hard life. His parents split up when he was five. His mother died of cancer when he was only ten. His father, a socialist idealist, fought and was wounded in the 1948 Israeli War of Independence and moved to Paris. So, Vic was largely raised by maternal grandparents and his aunt Martha, an eminent child analyst. Vic was nurtured in a Marxist and psychoanalytic culture which he integrated in various personal and intellectual ways throughout his too-short life. The quality and success of this synthesis was in no small part due to his supportive partner of over four decades, a very smart and peppy history graduate student, whom he affectionately called "Jude."

I recall the 1979 International Society of Political Psychology conference in Mannheim, Germany, when Vic and Judy were leaving for Paris with their sons Gabe and Moses, where he was anxiously looking forward to re-connecting with his father after 23 years and meeting his three "new" half brothers and sisters from his father's second marriage.

Vic became a practicing clinical analyst who adjusted his fees to make treatment possible for what people could afford. I know this because I referred to him people without much money. One of them, a grateful scholar of modern Europe, said to me: "Strange to have a Marxist analyst!"

Vic was an inspiring and charismatic teacher, both at UCLA, where he had a large following and received the Luckman Distinguished Teaching Award, and at the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute (SCPI), where he regularly co-taught a be-

loved and exceptionally provocative seminar which is summed up in a report stating that the course “was many things, stirred up many feelings, provoked rage and terror and resentment and growth. Not bad for 8 weeks!”

This takes us to the abrasive, “in your face” side of Victor. People are not divisible. We are not made up of detachable parts. Love is not only about the sweet—if you love a person, you love all of them, including the irritating side because personality is integral. I was Vic’s dean for five years at the Psychoanalytic Institute. I wish to suggest that the rough “edge” many of us experienced with Vic is the sharp edge that made him unique and effective in psychoanalysis, teaching, and politics. With that I want to share with you a brief letter Victor wrote to the SCPI Dean John Peck in June of 1985, with the approval of Judy, who with her inimitable acuity said: “It will cut the treacle!” Vic’s letterhead proudly states:

**REGISTERED RESEARCH PSYCHCOANALYST**

Dear Dr. Peck:

I regret very much that I will not be able to attend the graduation ceremony this coming Sunday. Although I am not a ceremonial type (I don't even choose to stand on it very often), I had looked forward to this one. But I am involved in the Sanctuary movement for Central American refugees, especially the people who are fleeing the violence of life and death in El Salvador and Guatamala [sic]. This Sunday a “Freedom Train” begins here and in Phoenix, Arizona, traveling north to Seattle in the one case, east to Northhampton, Mass., in the other. The Sanctuary organization of which I am a member is joining this demonstration for the LA to Santa Barbara segment of the West Coast action. And so, therefore, am I.

Sincerely yours,

It is like a dream—Vic is all there in this one letter: the provocative condescension, the contempt for institutional hierarchies and gratuitous ceremonies, the assured didactic self, and the burning radical politics of social justice. Vic devoted a major part of his creative life to the space where the social and political meets and

interacts with the personal and psychodynamic. This was the work of the Frankfurt School in the 1930s to the 1960s in explaining fascism. It is precarious ground, fraught with difficulties—but Vic mastered it with determined success. Vic was a brilliant synthesizer of psychoanalysis with Marxism, critical theory, and the social sciences.

Victor, in his work and in his life, articulated a vision of human emancipation. It is particularly fitting that the UCLA Political Science Department is establishing an award in “Dialectical Thinking” in his name. (To donate, checks are to be payable to: the UCLA Foundation. Wolfenstein Award. and sent to: UCLA Political Science Department 4289, Bunche Hall, Box 951472, Los Angeles, CA. 90095-1472.) His widow is donating a part of Victor’s personal library to the newly launched International Psychoanalytic Association training program in Shanghai. How appropriate that Vic, whose life was dedicated to exposing and mitigating exploitation, should have his books enlighten and deepen the understanding of students in one of the most exploited areas of the world.

If, to some degree, this world of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is a more humane place with greater social justice than in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when Vic was born, it is due to Victor, his wife, his work, and his vision “that the realm of human freedom can be and ought to be enlarged.” He lived the young Marx’s injunction: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.”

**Peter Loewenberg, PhD**, Professor of History and Political Psychology, Emeritus, at UCLA, is the author of numerous books and articles, including *Decoding the Past: The Psychohistorical Approach* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1996), *Fantasy and Reality in History* (1995), and *100 Years of IPA: The Centenary History of the International Psychoanalytical Association, 1910-2010 - Evolution and Change* (with Nellie L. Thompson and forthcoming in December 2011). A former Dean of the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute and past Co-Dean and Training and Supervising Analyst of the New Center for Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles, Loewenberg received the first Edith Sabshin Award of the American Psychoanalytic Association (1999) for excellence in the teaching of psychoanalytic concepts. He is a member of the Editorial Board of this jour-

*nal and has received various awards, including holding the Sir Peter Ustinov Visiting Chair for the Study of Prejudice at the University of Vienna in 2006. Increasingly his attention has turned to nurturing psychoanalysis in China, where he is chair of the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA). □*

## BULLETIN BOARD

**CONFERENCES:** The next **Psychohistory Forum Work-In-Progress Seminar** will be on **October 1, 2011** with **Alice Lombardo Maher** presenting on how to apply psychoanalysis to change societal consciousness. The National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis (**NAAP**) 39<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, “Trauma and Resilience-Family Matters,” will be on October 22, 2011 in Manhattan. The Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society (**APCS**) will hold its annual conference at Rutgers on November 4-6, 2011. The International Forum for Psychoanalytic Education (**IFPE**) will meet on November 11-13, 2011 in Fort Lauderdale. The University of East London has launched a distance-learning MA program in **Psychosocial Studies** (<http://www.uel.ac.uk/study/apply/>). **NOTES ON MEMBERS:** **Nancy Unger** had a remarkable two week family safari in Tanzania in June, followed by a visit to Anne Frank’s secret annex in Amsterdam. **Denis O’Keefe** has assumed the presidency of the International Psychohistorical Association. **David Beisel** had a good trip to Israel after his presentation at the ISPP in Istanbul. We welcome new member **Joel Markowitz**. **OUR THANKS:** To our members and subscribers for the support that makes Clio’s Psyche possible. To Benefactors Herbert Barry, David Beisel, David Lotto, and Peter Petschauer; Patrons Andrew Brink, Peter Loewenberg, Alice Maher, Jamshid Marvasti, and Jacques Szaluta; Sustaining Members George Brown, Tom Ferraro, Eva Fogelman, Ken Fuchsman, Philip Pomper, and Nancy Unger; Supporting Members Dick Booth, Sander Breiner, Susan Gregory, Bob Lentz, Joel Markowitz, and Hanna Turken; and Members Michael Britton, Harry Keyishian, and Geraldine Pauling. Our special thanks for thought-provoking materials to Robert Aldrich, Francis A. Beer, David Beisel, Rudolph Binion, Sander Breiner, Nathan Carlin, Molly Cas-

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*We Wish to Thank Our  
Prompt, Hardworking,  
Anonymous Referees  
and Diligent Editors*

## *Call for Papers*

### **Creative Lives: Psychobiographical Approaches The December 2011 Special Issue**

*Psychological Insights on Lives of Creativity (broadly defined), including:*

- Childhood origins of artistic creativity; interactions with mother, father, siblings, and caretakers
- Genetic versus environmental aspects of artistic creativity
- Emotional and psychological consequences of parental dysfunction or loss
- Self-discovery through art
- Creativity as an act of individuality and a resistance to conformity
- Art as sublimation
- Creative illnesses of artists
- Psychological issues of specific artists through their work
- Gender and identity issues for artists
- Case studies of artists' lives and works, for example:
  - playwrights Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, or Henrik Ibsen
  - painters and sculptors Judy Chicago, Lucian Freud, or Georgia O'Keefe
- Autobiography and the artist
- When and why in Western history the inner life of an artist came to be seen as the core of creativity
- Artists' role and status in American society today compared historically
- Artists and their work: effect (cause) or reflection (mirror) of changes in society's values?
- Artists in different historical eras and their work as expression of the psychohistory of their times
- How societal catastrophes—war, economic depression, political revolution, epidemic, natural disaster—affect artists' creativity and creative output, and the market for art
- Balancing older Freudian concepts regarding creativity as pathological with a more positive approach
- Insights on creative lives from the theories of Freud, Adler, Jung, Sullivan, Winnicott, and others
- Do artists make different analysts and, if so, how does this impact the countertransference of the analyst?
- Does psychotherapy add to or interfere with artistic creativity? If so, how and why?
- The new frontier of creativity: where psychoanalytic theory joins neuroscience
- Reviews/review essays on relevant books, exhibits, films, plays, or shows

**Due October 1, 2011**

Articles of 500-1,500 words are welcome.

Contact guest editor Bob Lentz at [lentz@telusplanet.net](mailto:lentz@telusplanet.net).

Clio's Psyche  
627 Dakota Trail  
Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417

