

Clio's Psyche

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

Special Issue
**The Psychology of Remembering 9/11:
The Uses and Abuses of Trauma**

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627 Dakota Trail, Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417

Telephone: (201) 891-7486

e-mail: pelovitz@aol.com

Editor: Paul H. Elovitz, PhD

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The Psychology of Remembering 9/11: The Uses and Abuses of Trauma

A Psychohistorical Retrospective on September 11, 2001

Paul H. Elovitz—Ramapo College

Psychoanalytic and psychohistorical concepts provide useful tools for gaining insight into the reactions to and impact of 9/11. Living 26 miles away from the George Washington Bridge, the Manhattan skyline is in plain view in the normal course of my doing errands. As a psychoanalyst, I have been trained in using my own feelings, fantasies, and experiences to understand those of others, while as a psychohistorian I use the methodology of an Eriksonian participant observer as my prime investigative methodology. Terror is something I had experienced during the Cuban Missile Crisis decades before the events of 9/11. In studying the motivations of Islamic terrorists I realized that they communicated their own sense of anger, fear, and rage onto America and me. The terrorists had achieved their goal to the extent that in the aftermath of 9/11 we in the metropolitan New York area awakened fearfully, feeling angry, and thinking of retribution. As much as we hated the thought, they had won.

In response to the World Trade Center attacks I did what I have trained to do as a psychohistorian and psychoanalyst. I focused on the emotions those around me and I felt. I intensely studied terrorism and its impacts; I deepened my study of Islamic society; I published on the impact of terrorism and the Bushes' wars in the *Journal of Psychohistory*, I published articles on psychological issues including mourning and the terrorists mostly in 2001 and 2002, I sponsored

meetings on these subjects from 2002-2009, and on four occasions I taught a course on the subject. I examined Islamic demonization of the U.S. and similar tendencies by Americans. "Educational therapy" helped me deal with the powerful emotions induced by terrorism. I also wanted to set an example for my students, whom I had counseled for hours after my college closed on September 11th. Helping students to understand their own fears, feelings, and fantasies in courses, including War, Peace, and Conflict Resolution; 9/11 and the Psychology of Terrorism; and Psychohistory was also part of getting them to go from feeling like passive victims to active learners in the global drama of terrorism.¹

Psychological insights are necessary to explain how such an educated society could be so blind regarding the threat of international terrorism. The terrorism of September 11, 2001 came as a tremendous shock to America and has had an enormous impact on New York City, the United States, and the world. While it is true that we can say that these attacks should not have been a shock because of the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center, bombings of U.S. forces and interests in the Middle East and Africa, and two 1999 books warning in their titles of dangers from Osama bin Laden who had declared war on America, the fact remains that they were a surprise because of the enormous power of the mechanism of defense of denial.

Denial, displacement, projection, intellectualization, regression, repression, and suppression are some of the defense mechanisms utilized by people in metropolitan New York City and America. These coping mechanisms and other psychological concepts help us understand the events of 9/11 and their impact. Although it is tempting to condemn or feel superior to those utilizing denial and certain other defenses for short sightedness, it is important to note that in itself denial can literally save the lives or the sanity of individuals in the face of catastrophe, combat, death of loved

ones, or genocide, by enabling them to function effectively amidst the worst horrors of life and death.

Denial took many forms. The denial of a talented colleague whose apartment building in lower Manhattan is alongside of the Twin Towers was striking. She was going about her morning routine on 9/11 with her two-year-old daughter when she heard a large noise she presumed was a car accident. When she saw people looking up from the street she assumed there was an explosion in one of the towers, prompting her to call her mate to tell him that “we were fine, nothing to worry about.” Friends and family immediately started calling and again they were reassured that “everything was fine, there was just this fire in one of the towers but it was going to be put out soon.” She called her “mom” in Europe to assure her “that no matter what she heard on the news, we were okay.” In reassuring others she was attempting to assure herself that the safety of her home would not be violated.

A second noise led her to run to the window to see “another huge ball of fire coming from the second tower.” This prompted her to go to the windowless kitchen to avoid the disturbing sights and to make waffles—a comfort food. When she did look out a window the “things”—they seemed like “pieces of paper”—she saw flying out of the holes of the towers would turn out to be people jumping, but in her state of excitement and denial, this did not register at the time. When what was before her eyes was too horrible to acknowledge, denial shielded her from it. When the news referred to a third plane coming she ran to her neighbors and only reluctantly left her apartment building after the thunderous sounds of the first tower collapsing to go through a swirling dark cloud of smoke and dust as she fled to New Jersey carrying her baby.²

It was no lack of intelligence causing the multiple in-

stances of denial of the dangers demonstrated above by this highly intelligent and sophisticated colleague, educated in Greece, France, and the U.S. Rather, it was a reluctance to think about the unthinkable. This disinclination was general in our society on the morning of September 11, 2001. In their ten-page "Reaction Papers to 9/11" invariably my students spoke of their denial as reflected by some of the following comments. One wrote, "I could not believe my ears...I yelled 'Holy shit!' [it had to be] simply an accident..." Another wrote that, "We both laughed it off." A third, "I behaved in total denial by pulling the covers over my head and burrowing under the covers for the comfort of blessed unconsciousness." A fourth student's "mind could not register" that the people in the towers were all dead.

Denial extended (and in so many ways continues to extend) to every level of our society. The highest officials of our government declared for at least a month that no one could imagine terrorists flying planes into buildings even though this scenario had been discussed in testimony by terrorism experts in congressional hearings as early as the late 1980s. The endless repetition of images of the two planes flying into the World Trade Center served numerous psychological needs, not the least of which was to combat the inclination of viewers to deny—to think (and hope) that this was all just a bad dream from which they would soon awaken. Seeing the actual extent of the damage also helped to limit the apocalyptic fears provoked by the attacks. The wildly inaccurate statistics bandied about in the media on 9/11 served the same purpose. Even if 10,000 people were killed in the attacks this meant that all of New York's over seven million people were not dead! Apocalyptic fears diminished over time.

In the face of the horror of the devastatingly successful attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, people felt an overwhelming need to connect with loved ones, each

other, and the victims. Knowing that others were experiencing the same catastrophe somehow made it more real. The phones rang off the hooks and the cell phone networks were overwhelmed. There were contradictory impulses both to get close to the destruction and to run away from it. As the World Trade Center buildings burned and began to fall, police and people fleeing from them in terror literally had to warn women pushing baby carriages running toward the towers,³ as people have run to the scenes of fires and other catastrophes since time in memorial. On television the nation and world could emotionally run to these disasters in the safety of homes, colleges, restaurants, workplaces, and so forth.

Some people felt compelled to go to Ground Zero even as the buildings were falling. A student just “had to go” despite his mother’s attempt to restrain him. As he wrote in his “Reaction to 9/11 Paper,” he had to be there when “the world changed,” going from New Jersey on that Tuesday afternoon with a friend at a time when only vital personnel were supposed to be allowed into Manhattan. “Covered in pure hell” [the dust of the site] he and his friend were mistakenly thought to be amateur rescuers and sent home. He then “felt stunned and somewhat catatonic.” His motivation appeared to have been the desire to see the destruction himself so he could say he was a part of an historic event.

A former student, who had been a rescuer at the 1993 World Trade Center Terrorist bombing as a volunteer ambulance corps member, had to be specifically ordered in the strongest terms not to go with her ambulance corps because of her obligations as a police dispatcher in the suburbs. Subsequently, her life was organized around going to the funerals of firemen (she is also a firefighter and comes from a family of firemen), police, and medics killed in the collapse of the towers. Her motivation was based on her identification as a rescuer, intense desire to be part of the *action*, and then solidarity with her deceased “brothers.” Completion of

her college degree became a casualty of 9/11.

While some people were drawn to the events and site of the attacks of September 11th, others were repulsed. Three phobic responses come to mind. The young adult son of a neighbor across the street left his job in “dangerous” New York City to move to San Francisco where he thought he would be safer. The mother who worked in a Manhattan high-rise building, whose young child was in my daughter’s care during working hours, quit her job and refused to ever go back into “the City.” A student was so terrorized by uncertainty about her father’s safety at his job in mid-Manhattan that after 9/11 she developed a phobia making it difficult for her to drive to college and to sit in a classroom. Determination, psychotherapy, and “writing therapy” enabled her to stay in class as long as she sat in the seat closest to the door.⁴

Identification is a powerful coping mechanism. From our infancy we learn by identifying with our mothers, fathers, siblings, caretakers, teachers, and others around us. On September 11th my goal was to use the terrorist attacks as an “educational moment” working to set an example for my students of rational inquiry amidst societal hysteria.⁵ Though the students talked of their disbelief, shock, fear, and anger, the most intense focus was on who had a parent, relative, friend, neighbor, or acquaintance working in the World Trade Center, lower Manhattan, New York City, and the Pentagon with whom they identified. Individuals and groups got caught up in a type of “victim Olympics”—presenting their wounds, their traumas, as evidence of greater suffering entitling them, in their minds, to special status and treatment.⁶

There was identification with the aggressor on and after 9/11. In some parts of the Arab world, among Palestinians on the West Bank for example, there was some cheering

as the events unfolded. After Osama bin Laden became famous for 9/11 there were widespread reports of Osama becoming the most popular male name in the Pashtun sections of Pakistan and some other Islamic areas. Rumors of glee in the Arabic section of Paterson in New Jersey abounded, but were not confirmed. It is unclear to me if this phenomenon represented pure projection on the part of Americans wanting to find an enemy closer to home than Afghanistan, or if some reactions of a few immigrants and resident aliens were hushed up by the government and media wanting to avert a lynch mob mentality. In America, there have been several cases of people converting to jihadist Islam.

Conversion to Islam in the U.S increased sharply for reasons that are not clear to me beyond most Americans becoming much more aware of its existence and impressed with the religious devotion of many Muslims. Two years after 9/11, I spoke with a student in my Holocaust course about her recent conversion to Islam. This very nice, blond-haired, blue-eyed, suburban girl of distant Germanic ancestry said that she had converted because she was extremely impressed with the religiosity of the Islamic family that lived next door to her. America discovered that there are some millions of its citizens, immigrants, and resident aliens who looked to Mecca for religion. The President and the media worked hard to distinguish between “good Muslims” and terrorists making public appearances with Islamic leaders.⁷ Nevertheless, several Sikhs were killed by bigots who mistakenly thought they were Muslims. Similarly, a historian colleague at my college with a Muslim name had Islamophobic graffiti written on his office door on a regular basis. Partly in response to these hateful actions, at my college in public forums, political correctness was loudly voiced in insisting that *jihad* means internal spiritual struggle, thus making it difficult to speak realistically about the relationship of Islam to terrorism.

Projection runs rampant in moments of crisis and trauma as in desperation, people project their fears and hopes onto the situation. My colleague who lived across from the Twin Towers finally fled with her baby when she believed the fantasy, the rumor bandied about in the media of a third plane flying into the towers. On the day of the Oklahoma City bombing, popular talk radio programs projected guilt for the terrorism on an Arabic businessman, fantasized to be the bomber, who flew across the U.S. and then to London. To their surprise, the perpetrator was an American named Timothy McVeigh who had been awarded medals for his service in the 1991 Persian Gulf War against Iraq. When President Bush got word of the second plane flying into the World Trade Center, he declared, "We are at war!" Of course he did not know with who we were "at war." He projected his own cowardice onto the 19 suicide bombers of 9/11 when he denounced them as cowards.⁸

The need for enemies was never as apparent to me as on that beautiful September day marred by suicide attacks. When in June 1999 as a campaigner for the presidency, George Walker Bush had commented that it seems strange to no longer have the Soviet Union as our enemy, I wondered if he had a need for enemies, but I refused to rush to judgment. After learning of his first reaction to 9/11 from a statement by Karl Rove, there was no doubt that he needed enemies in times of stress. Enemies can be a great advantage to politicians because they make it easy to provide a simplistic black and white view of the world to the public. Social scientists have long known that the clarity of life in wartime is quite reassuring to most people. Indeed, in World War I and II, America's home-front death rates went down and there was less illness. George Walker Bush found enemies in Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. To capture and punish the Saudi Arabian terrorist he declared he wanted "Dead or Alive" and for whom he posted a twenty-five million dollar

reward, he only sent the CIA, some Special Forces, and some Northern Alliance soldiers. By contrast to *get* the Iraqi President, who had nothing to do with causing September 11th and who had no Weapons of Mass Destruction, our commander in chief sent the full force of the U. S. military.

Attacking Hussein was a case of displacement, but not in the classic case of the defense mechanism of displacement, which often takes the form of kicking your dog when you're mad at your boss, but as a political slight of hand. Bush's enmity focused on the Iraqi president because of his personal need to both avenge and surpass his father who had defeated, but not gotten rid of Hussein.⁹ However, the American president could *only* do this because of the anger felt by the citizenry in response to 9/11. In effect, he was given a free pass to go to war. Though Bush subsequently insisted that he did not say that Saddam Hussein was responsible for the attacks on New York and Washington, as late as 2004 up to 70 percent of Americans still thought this was the case because of his insistence that the war on Iraq was vital to the war on terror.

The grant to President Bush of the power to go to war was also a reflection of regressive tendencies in society. Americans rallied around the flag and its main standard holder—the President. September 11th prompted an enormous surge of patriotism as represented by U.S. flags on buildings, cars, lawns, pins, and tattoos. In times of crisis, danger, and fear, leaders are granted far more discretionary power because their increased strength lessens the fear and trembling among the followers. This shift in power encouraged the fantasy that all was possible in the White House of our 43rd President and encouraged the millennial fantasy, as expressed in the 2002 State of the Union Address, that he had the power to confront the worldwide “axis of evil.” John Rogers, writing for “The Psychology of Terrorism and Mourning September 11th” Special Issue of *Clio's Psyche*,

argues that the enormous emphasis on the heroic firefighters and police of New York City represented a collective regression: Americans became like children in their idealization.¹⁰

Finding enemies and going to war enabled people to suppress or repress the enormous fear that surfaced with the attacks. For many people, the conscious effort at suppression of fear slips into an unconscious repression over time. Of course, repressed feelings are inclined to break through, much to the surprise of those who thought they were forgotten. Fears are often covered by grandiosity. A grandiose sense of self and power, whether individual or collective, is a cloak for disclaimed fears and other feelings. In the late fall of 2001 the virtual disappearance of the Taliban and Osama bin Laden without even an initial American casualty,¹¹ encouraged the fantasy that American power was unstoppable. Totally ignored was the history of warfare in Afghanistan, mountain regions generally, and the American Revolution against Britain. In these situations of asymmetrical power, guerrilla war involves receding from the field of combat and then subsequently "bleeding" the much stronger enemy. Before long the Bush administration was planning its next war, indeed, the war they were talking about as soon as they took over the presidency in January 2001.¹² In 2004, after the easy victory over Saddam Hussein's army, leaders in our administration were thinking of going to war against Syria or Iran because of a grandiose sense of unlimited power.

On September 11th the U.S. was shocked and awed. It was no accident that the policy for defeating the armies of Saddam Hussein was called "Shock and Awe." For the pain caused to Americans, especially the American military with its proud tradition, there was a strong desire to retaliate by shocking and awing the enemy in Iraq. This easy victory made Americans feel so strong that former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld thought he could radically reshape the Army while ignoring the pleas of Secretary of State Powell (a for-

mer Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and of General Shinseki, Chief of Staff of the Army, who got fired for his honesty in stating the military requirements of the situations.

Intellectualization is a mechanism of defense used quite extensively. For example, military planners discuss collateral damage without reference to flesh and blood human beings who are killed in the process. Such collateral damage contributes to why, in public opinion polls, a majority of Iraqis consider it proper to shoot at American soldiers. The killing of American soldiers by “friendly fire” is another intellectualized, propagandistic manner, of describing killing by your own forces. One of Freud’s greatest contributions was to heal the split between mind and body that has plagued Western thought since Descartes. We psychohistorians are not immune from these tendencies. As intellectuals, we need to be careful that we do not fall into the trap of intellectualization, totally separating feelings from thought and mind from body.

Ground Zero, which became a sacred site, had mesmerized the country while burning, collapsing into a pile ten stories high and smoldering. The vaporization of thousands sanctified the site turning it into a tourist attraction and a source of great controversy as different people and interest groups struggle to use it for their own ends. President Bush used it on September 14, 2001 when at it, he put his arm around a fireman with U.S. warplanes flying overhead and vowed that “the people who knocked these buildings down will hear from all of us soon.” The nonpartisan 9/11 Commission skillfully used the emotional appeal of the testimony of the relatives of those killed at Ground Zero to help influence public policy regarding terrorism. The identity of a younger generation is declared to have been shaped by the events. In the fall of 2001 *Newsweek* was discussing the “9/11 Generation,” Reissman soon wrote a book on it, and in

2007, Rudolph Giuliani used the term on the campaign trail as he ran for president as "America's Mayor."

Psychohistorians and psychoanalysts become experts in getting past the self-delusions and reaction formations clouding reality. Sadism and especially *schadenfreude*, the pleasure at the displeasure of others, are strong impulses growing out of September 11th however, much disclaimed by the government, media, and American public. Americans had suffered and they wanted *al Qaeda* and all those harboring its members or sympathetic to its goals to suffer. This popular desire for vengeance encouraged some guards at Abu Graihb to not only humiliate and torture prisoners, but also to proudly photograph these abuses. Sadistic abuses increasingly delegated to the Iraq army and police, under "rendition" of prisoners in foreign countries, and at the Guantanamo Bay Detainment Camp have mostly been kept quiet. This is precisely why the Bush administration has used these in an attempt to avoid international agreements and constitutional restrictions on interrogation and torture. Expert psychological testimony that the interrogation methods used in Iraq are amateurish and not very effective, tend to miss the point of the sadism behind them.¹³

Before the smoldering fires of the World Trade Center were put out, I was soliciting articles on the question of how the people of the U.S.A. felt and how they might mourn this devastating event. It was my faint hope that examining the emotional reactions and the question of grief might lessen some people's inclination to turn hurt, loss, and anger into the desire for vengeance, which empowers a president to go to war. These efforts, and those of various other psychohistorians and psychoanalysts, may have immunized some people against the virus of war. Yet, they were but a drop in the bucket of public opinion as the Bush administration fed the flames of fear, hatred, and war.

How did it happen that Americans were taken so by surprise? During Clinton's second term, millions of Americans had narcissistically assumed that, having "won the Cold War," their country could indulge in the voyeuristic pleasures of examining his sexual dalliance with Monica Lewinsky as a basis for impeachment. September 11, 2001 shattered America's sense of invulnerability and threatened its self-image as the one superpower in the world. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, Americans bought into the grandiose fantasy that terrorism required a war, rather than intelligence information from around the world and police actions.

The desire of Mayor Giuliani, President Bush, Environmental Protection Administrator Whitman, and others to assure New Yorkers that lower Manhattan was safe after 9/11, encouraged clean-up workers, public employees, and the general public to not take the necessary precautions to protect themselves from a toxic environment. Consequently, many have paid a high price for going along with this collective denial. However, by comparison, the price paid for the psychological costs of the attacks is harder to establish but far more widespread. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is rampant and mostly untreated. Millions of New Yorkers living in what Charles Strozier calls the "zones of sadness" have been left to struggle with the demons within them released by the collapse of the Twin Towers.

The purpose of this article is to show how the events of September 11, 2001 changed the lives of Americans, especially in the areas most directly impacted by the attacks. Starting with the concept of the scholar/professor utilizing disciplined subjectivity to access conscious and unconscious feelings and fantasies, I have examined some responses to this societal trauma from the perspective of the individual, student, group, and country. Psychological tools drawn from psychoanalysis and psychohistory, especially the mechanisms of defense, enable my students and all of us to deal

more effectively with the horror and powerful emotions stemming from this catastrophe.

Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, editor of this journal and director/convener of the Psychohistory Forum, taught at Temple, Rutgers, and Fairleigh Dickinson universities before joining the Ramapo College faculty as a founding member. He teaches history, psychohistory, and interdisciplinary studies and may be contacted at pelovitz@aol.com.

¹Paul Elovitz, "Teaching About War in Bush's 21st Century America," Vol. 31, no. 1 *The Journal of Psychohistory*, pp. 2-48.

²Vasiliki Flenga, "Fleeing With My Baby," *Clio's Psyche* Vol. 8 no. 3 (December, 2001), pp. 159-160.

³Charles B. Strozier, "The World Trade Center and the Apocalyptic," p. 46, in Jerry S. Piven et al, eds., *Terror and Apocalypse: Psychological Undercurrents of History*, Vol. II (Lincoln, NE: Writers Showcase, 2002).

⁴Jaclyn Dilling, "Holding onto 9/11," *Clio's Psyche* Vol. 10. no. 4 (March, 2004), pp. 154-155.

⁵This was the automatic response of a seasoned professor and psychohistorian. I did not feel especially successful at the time.

⁶Usually, "victim olympics" is discussed in terms of ethnic and national groups but the same psychological processes apply to individuals. In groups, this can readily lead to the mistreatment of others, as in the case of the Serbs under Milošević. Vamik Volkan writes about this most extensively in a variety of books including *Killing in the Name of Identity: A Study of Bloody Conflicts* (Charlottesville, VA: Pitchstone Publishers, 2006).

⁷There was subsequent embarrassment as some of the "good Muslims" were tied to funding terrorist organizations in the Middle East.

⁸Herbert Barry, "Denigrating Terrorists as Cowards," *Clio's Psyche* 8,4 (March 2002), p. 195.

⁹"Teaching About War," p. 9.

¹⁰H. John Rogers, "The Infantilization of the American People," *Clio's Psyche* Vol. 8 no. 4 (March 2002), pp. 200-201.

¹¹The first casualty occurred in a prison where an undercover operative was killed.

¹²Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (2004).

¹³Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti, "Advisors Fault Harsh Methods in Interrogation," *New York Times* (May 30, 2007): A1-A12.

American Exceptionalism and the Apocalyptic Dimension of 9/11

Charles B. Strozier—Historian and Psychoanalyst

This brief essay summarizes the key themes in my recently completed book-length manuscript on New York and 9/11. It is the New York story of the World Trade Center disaster through the words and experiences of survivors and witnesses. The disaster, as the *New York Times* once pointed out, is finally a local, particular event. My focus is the human perspective on things. Many respondents enter into my narrative: men and women, young and old, black and white, and of several ethnic backgrounds. My respondents are ordinary people who stumbled on an extraordinary event. In their carefully listened to stories, lies what I feel is the best history possible of the World Trade Center disaster.

There are other important aspects of 9/11. Washington was also attacked and a plane went down in Pennsylvania. Two wars have been fought in its wake, one in Iraq that included my youngest son in the Army. Our embrace of torture has become commonplace. There have been serious consequences in terms of domestic surveillance. After 9/11, the culture of fear has become such an integral part of our landscape, and has led to many radical changes in our institutions. But New York City was the crucible of the disaster. My story is an attempt to explain where the world we live in came from.

September 11th was an incredible surprise. American exceptionalism has always blessed, or cursed, us with a sense of entitlement and security. We never feared attacks from foreign shores. The most important document in our political history about the danger of tyranny, Lincoln's "Young Man Lyceum Speech" in 1838, argues that because we face no threat of foreign invasion, the danger is that domestic unrest

(the mobocratic spirit) will loosen our attachment to our democratic institutions and cause the emergence of a dictator (Roy Basler, et.al., eds., *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1, 1953, p. 109).

It is an analysis that seems almost quaint in the wake of the World Trade Center disaster. But Lincoln's idea of our security from attack was deeply imbedded. What we founded was a city on a hill, a moral beacon for all humanity. Ours was the first and greatest democratic republic that insured civil and political liberties for all. We had the richest soil and best institutions. Our military became the strongest, and so on.

American exceptionalism did have a dark side; violence was rampant on the frontier and elsewhere. Millions of Africans lived in slavery because they were deemed inferior, and it was both profitable and convenient. God, it was argued, sanctioned expansion (Manifest Destiny, first named in 1845 almost in passing) that led to the final destruction of Native Americans, and we clothed such violence in hypocritical and self-righteous rhetoric. Lincoln noted ironically that we were an "almost chosen" people, while G.K. Chesterton called America "the nation with a soul of a church." Our triumphs in the world wars of the first half of the 20th century left us rich and mighty, though soon in the throes of an enduring cold war for half a century with the Soviet Union. After 1990, however, we were absolutely hegemonic in the world. One of my respondents, Kyle, a man in his early 30s, said, "You know, we've been untouchable my entire lifetime." Such security led to dangerous feelings of invulnerability fed by an expanding economy that some carelessly said would never reverse itself. America then had reached a pinnacle of absolute power and confidence. American culture completely suffocated global heterogeneity and American power after our so-called victory in the Cold War left us with absolute dominance. Our arrogance was supreme, and

nowhere was that sense of invincibility more supremely centered than New York, and no single image more concretely symbolized American power, authority and dominance than those giant towers reaching into the heavens.

To attack and actually crumble those towers was to demolish in a heart beat all that security. It literally rocked the ground of our being. We could not have been less prepared psychologically. The most common phrase used to describe the attacks—“unbelievable”—was in some ways profoundly wrong. Terrorism was everywhere in the world before 9/11. Weapons of mass destruction were in our lives for half a century. An apocalyptic cult in Japan just six years earlier actively tried to initiate Armageddon. There was a very serious bombing of those very same towers in 1993, and Osama bin Laden oversaw assaults on our embassies in Africa and the battleship *Cole* off Yemen in the late 1990s. We had even lived with homegrown terrorism in 1995. What Timothy McVeigh let loose was on a vastly smaller scale, but what he aspired to in the way of beginning an apocalyptic process was much greater. We ignored all this information, these signals and signs, out of excessive confidence, indeed arrogance. It is fair to say that before 9/11 we lacked an appropriate level of fear of the apocalyptic potentials of modern terrorism. After it, we lived in a state of panic and hysteria.

Two themes dominate my work. One is what I call “zones of sadness,” a term I borrow from my colleague, Michael Flynn. In psychology we are accustomed to think of trauma in terms that locate it vertically in the self. What matters are the early, especially childhood, experiences that create vulnerabilities in relation to later events. I argue that, while such an orientation remains important to keep in mind, there is also a horizontal or topographic dimension to the experience of this disaster. It mattered where you were in relation to the death (including watching it on television). The zones of sadness are of course moral and psychological

spaces in the self, and the trauma of 9/11 was ubiquitous. But the zones of sadness are also real spaces in the city moving outward from Ground Zero north into Manhattan, east into Brooklyn, south into Staten Island, and to a degree west into New Jersey. I track the meanings of these zones with great care, moving from the experience of survivors, to witnesses, to participants, to onlookers (via television).

The second theme of my work is the systematic exploration of the apocalyptic way in which we *experienced* the disaster. My respondents caught in the cloud of debris all talked of the end of the world. Most evoked nuclear imagery and felt a nuclear bomb had exploded. One woman cried because she was convinced all her loved ones were already dead. Many in the moment saw the cloud that emerged from the collapsed towers as looking like a mushroom, which it decidedly did not. And the culture reinforced this imagery. The site of the disaster became spontaneously “ground zero,” the technical term for the spot where a nuclear bomb explodes from which the violence radiates out in concentric circles of gradually and predictably declining levels of destruction.

It is this apocalyptic dimension of 9/11 that made it have such a profound influence on the course of events that followed. It mattered, of course, that 9/11 happened with an authoritarian U.S. administration bent on ideological change in ways not previously seen in American history. In this sense 9/11 fell like manna from heaven into the lap of George W. Bush. But even without Bush, our experience of 9/11 stirred a vast culture of fear that became the rich and fecund soil for all the changes at home and abroad out of which we are only now slowly beginning to dig ourselves.

Charles B. Strozier, PhD, educated at Harvard, the University of Chicago, the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis, and the Training and Research Institute in Self Psy-

chology (TRISP), is Professor of History at John Jay College and the CUNY Graduate Center, as well as Director of the Center on Terrorism of John Jay College. In addition he is a psychoanalyst and a training and research analyst at the Training and Research Institute for Self Psychology (TRISP). Besides three edited volumes with Michael Flynn, his books include Apocalypse: On the Psychology of Fundamentalism in America (1994, 2002), Lincoln's Quest for Union: A Psychological Portrait, 1982, 2001), and Heinz Kohut: The Making of a Psychoanalyst (2001, it won the NAAP Gradiva Award, the Canadian Goethe Prize, and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize). Strozier, who was the founding editor of the now defunct Psychohistory Review, has completed the book New York City and 9/11: A Psychological Study of the World Trade Center Disaster and is co-editing The Fundamentalist Mindset for Oxford University Press. Professor Strozier may be contacted at charlesbstrozier@yahoo.com.



The Collapsed Twin Towers: The Symbol for a Culture Adrift

Tom Ferraro—Private Practice of Psychoanalysis

For many New Yorkers, including me, the Twin Towers had always been like two proud parents who had stood side by side and watched over their city. They were built in 1970 by one of the world's leading architects, Minoru Yamasaki, and meant to symbolize monumentality and power. When they were destroyed early in the morning of 9/11/01, America went into shock. As I look at a recent photograph of the lower Manhattan skyline without the Twin Towers, the city seems smaller, weaker, diminished. The symbolic value of the Towers was profound. There could not have been a more meaningful target with the exception of the

White House. I would like to suggest that the collapse of New York City's World Trade Center Towers now serves as a screen memory for the collapse of authority within our culture and perhaps for the world.

A screen memory is considered to be a memory of something that is unconsciously used to repress recollection of an associated, but more distressing problem. Freud first wrote of screen memories in 1899 to describe and explain the formation of phobias. I believe this process is what Paul Elowitz eluded to when he began to notice that after a year his students' personal reaction essays on 9/11 were becoming less their own and more a shared cultural memory. This may reflect a mass cultural use of the collapsed Twin Towers as a screen memory of a more insidious terror that has occurred and continues to evolve in our culture.

In 1979, Christopher Lasch wrote *The Culture of Narcissism*, where he observed that authoritarian control was slowly collapsing. This was the time of the world's great social revolts that gave birth to the women's movement, the sexual revolution, gay rights, disabled rights, the drug revolution, etc. He predicted that the electronic revolution through print, television, radio and film unwittingly destroyed every known form of authority including presidents, priests, and parents. This was done with moral verve and a sense of its entertainment value for us. In a footnote, Lasch went on to predict that to be in a culture without authoritarian restraint would force the populace to revert to its own, far harsher, primitive superego controls. Welcome to the world of 2009.

We can see the shift most obviously in films. In 1986 Matthew Broderick in *Ferris Beuller's Day Off* played a high school wise-guy who made fools of his teachers and parents. Or go back to 1982 when, in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, Sean Penn played Jeff Spicoli, a pot-smoking cool surfer dude who got it over on his teachers. Fast forward 25 years

to 2007, where in *No Country for Old Men*, Javier Bardem played Anton Chigurh, a psychopathic killer; Bardem's performance was so chilling it won him an Oscar. In the 2007 film *Funny Games*, Michael Pitt and Brady Corbet played Paul and Peter, two psychopaths who kill for the fun of it. Mild conduct disorders have suddenly transformed into malignant narcissism.

Last week I was strolling through Central Park in Manhattan on a beautiful spring day. Four very good looking young males about age 16 zipped by me on their skateboards. They could have passed for young male models judging from the grooming and the builds. As I observed them they slowly spied two folk singers playing for tips from the passersby, with a pile of money in their guitar case. The folk singers kept singing and the skateboard gang closed in to take the money, just for the fun of it. Not a funny game to the singers.

I am beginning to see this same form of malignant narcissism in my practice. These patients from well-to-do upper class families have been indulged and now show total disregard and disdain for authority. They will curse their parents in front of me and in the next breath expect to get their \$100 per week allowance.

This trend, which Lasch wrote about in 1979, has been escalating since the late 1960s and continues today. Authority has been dismantled and is in a state of collapse. We are all left with our harsh angry primitive superegos and its unquenchable thirst for more. We are a vicious group and live in a vicious world. We respect no one and nothing. The collapse of the Twin Towers is a perfect symbol of our current state of affairs. It serves as a screen memory of a leaderless world. The heroes are in ashes down at the World Trade Center and we sense that no one is in charge. We look up to

no one, we respect no one, we are alone. Hope and respect have vanished in the ashes of the World Trade Center.

Barack Obama shows signs of real leadership. His campaign slogan read simply, "Hope." I hope that we will all find direction and meaning through him but I somehow doubt it. Terror, and the loss that characterizes it, is the legacy of 9/11. The collapse of the Twin Towers symbolizes more than the hatred and nihilism of Osama Bin Laden. It also symbolizes a culture adrift with no one to look up to and no one to guide us. It's every man for himself.

The last scene in *No Country for Old Men* is haunting. The recently retired Sheriff Ed Tom Bell, played by Tommy Lee Jones, describes a dream he had the night before. In it he and his father are riding horses through a snowy mountain pass. He watches as his father passes him by carrying a horn with fire. He knows that his father "is going on ahead and fixin' to make a fire" in the surrounding dark and cold. When Bell gets there he knows his father will be waiting. This is the wish that we all have. Someone is out there who cares and that will protect us from the dark and the cold. This is an encapsulated version of *Waiting for Godot*, with a happier ending. That's the way it is in dreams: it all ends well. However, the reality is that the Twin Towers are gone and the world is largely without heroes and without leaders. There is really no one out there waiting for us with a warm fire. These are tough times indeed.

Thomas Ferraro, PhD, a psychoanalyst who practices on Long Island in New York State, publishes both in Asia and the U.S. on economics, sports, and terrorism. He can be reached at drtferraro@aol.com.

Health care in America is a matter of life and death, yet there is little discussion of the psychological obstacles to reforming it. See page 219 for a Call For Papers on this vital subject.

Healing and Living with PTSD and Terrorism

Reflections on the Effects of My Psychotherapeutic Work at Ground Zero After 9/11

Irene Javors—Yeshiva University

There are times when I find it hard to believe that eight years have passed since the tumultuous events of that September 11th morning when the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center came tumbling down like a poorly supported Lego construction. Whenever I am driving into Manhattan from the Queensborough Bridge, I still automatically scan the landscape in search of the Twin Towers, despite knowing that they no longer occupy a place in the skyline.

Within 24 hours of the terrorist attack, I became involved with offering counseling to those who were employed in and around the Twin Towers. For nearly six months subsequent to 9/11, I traveled down to the area within blocks of “Ground Zero,” working with employees who had witnessed the buildings collapsing as well as those who had seen people jumping out of windows in their futile attempts to escape the flames. At that time, I was also working with private patients at my office, many of whom lived downtown. They were struggling to cope with the contaminated air, ongoing smell of smoldering debris, and burned bodies emanating from Ground Zero.

In the days immediately following the attack, with my focus on helping my new patients, I thought very little about what all of this exposure to such overwhelming trauma was doing to me both physically and mentally. When I first trav-

eled to Ground Zero, I was told by the authorities that I did not need to wear a facemask and that everything was safe. As a result, I did not wear a mask until I heard in the news in late September that it would be advisable to use a facemask when going to downtown Manhattan. Similarly, I was not mindful of the emotional toll all of this was having on me. Between doing therapy with the survivors and my private patients, I was continuously listening to traumatic narratives.

By early January 2002, I stopped working at Ground Zero. I had developed an eye infection of unknown origin and I was completely "burned out." During the time that I was at Ground Zero, I did not deal with my own traumatization by the events nor was I aware that I was being continuously re-traumatized every time I listened to a patient's Ground Zero story.

For the rest of 2002, I attended several trainings on trauma and took part in a therapist support group. I found these activities extremely supportive and validating. I realized that my prior training as a therapist had not given me the skills that were needed to deal with an event of such magnitude. I had been trained to work within my own office where clients came to me. When I saw survivors, I went to their work situations, in large corporate offices contained within skyscrapers.

My experiences at Ground Zero changed the way that I see trauma and its treatment. First of all, any therapist working in the field of trauma needs to be involved in some sort of ongoing peer support system that would help her or him deal with continuous exposure to trauma and its resultant burn-out and/or compassion fatigue. Also, the events of September 11th have taught me that we need to be trained in therapeutic models that encompass an understanding of traumatic grief, multiple losses, physical exposure to toxic materials, delayed mourning due to missing bodies, loss of hous-

ing and work settings, and the continuous experience of imminent threat or danger.

I am still questioning how to best deal with trauma. Do we deal with trauma as a diagnostic category that needs a cure or as a wounding that requires a healing through meaning-making and integration? Do we “treat” those who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as patients with a mental illness of intrapsychic origin or as victims of horrendous acts of political and social violence? An author on the subject states that after September 11th, “mental health professionals will have to continuously re-define and re-classify existing disorders, develop new categories, and generate new treatments.” She goes on to encourage therapists “to enlarge their roles and sense of social responsibility” and that clinicians consider “abandoning their traditional stance of clinical anonymity...[and that] they may choose to testify that sociopolitical violence engenders widespread psychological casualties” (Karen M. Seeley, *After Terror: 9/11, Psychotherapists, and Mental Health*, 2008, pp. 195-196).

Over these eight years since that fateful September morning, I have asked myself many times just how my work as a psychotherapist helped those who sat across from me in those corporate offices turned into makeshift therapy rooms. My immediate response: “I bore witness to their story.” By writing this short essay, the reader is now a witness to my story and the story of all those I have written about. Herein, I believe, is the key to the healing of trauma: bearing witness to individual stories and their place within history.

Irene Javors, CSW, MED, a licensed mental health counselor in private practice in New York City and a Diplomate of the American Psychotherapy Association, also teaches at the Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, Yeshiva University. She has a specialization in the areas of loss and bereavement. She writes an ongoing column for the official

journal of the American Psychotherapy Association and sometimes contributes to Clio's Psyche. Professor Javors has written articles on a wide variety of cultural topics from art to cinema to jazz to opera and can be contacted at ijavors@gmail.com.



Learning from 9/11 First Responders How to Live with our Fears

Robert Quackenbush—Psychoanalytic Practice

In an article published in the March 2002 issue of *Clio's Psyche*, I wrote about my work as a therapist with children from the vicinity of "Ground Zero," who had witnessed with their own eyes the collapse of the Twin Towers. Through the organizations Mentors USA and the American Red Cross, I set up programs in the local community centers to show children how to write and illustrate books about safe places to be. In their books, the children expressed their thoughts, feelings, and worries about the event through their writings and drawings, whereas before, they were unable to put them into words. They found peace through the creation of their books. Then, when children at Ground Zero saw that their parents, caretakers, and teachers were going back to work and moving forward with their lives, they did too, and my work at the community centers ended within a year.

What I did not cover in the former article about my work with the children in the vicinity of Ground Zero was another program that I was involved with simultaneously. I believe that it is important to mention it for this article about my view of what we New Yorkers—both adults and children—have become after the events of 9/11. In retrospect, my experience in that program was to me like a premonition

about how people would defend themselves emotionally from their fears during these turbulent times of terrorism, war, and global recession.

The program was established by the New York City Police Department (NYPD), the Police Foundation, and Columbia University's Department of Psychiatry. It was to coordinate the care of all of the 55,000 police officers and staff who were impacted by the disaster. There were two phases to this program: group "debriefing town meeting" and a treatment phase paid for by the Police Foundation for anyone who wanted it. I was assigned to the first phase—enlisting volunteer clinicians to participate in "town meetings" throughout New York City's five boroughs.

Stress management was the focus of the "town meetings" in order to alert police officers and staff to signs and symptoms that might need aftercare, and how and where it could be obtained. Attendance at each "town meeting" was mandatory for the police officers and staff because the culture of the NYPD at the time was that unless the sessions were mandatory no one would come. A volunteer clinician together with one or two trained police peer counselors led each two-hour meeting. I led several of these confidential "town meetings." The one I am writing about now is made public only because I was asked to write about it by the participating police officers. Besides, I don't believe I am revealing any confidential material that was discussed at the two-hour meeting when I give a summation in the words of Jim (not his real name), one of the 20 male officers in attendance.

This particular meeting was held in the middle of March 2002 in a restaurant near Ground Zero that had closed its doors to the public in order to feed free meals to the rescue workers. Jim and the other police officers were all rescue workers who had been digging at Ground Zero without a

break since 9/11. These men had been working on long shifts for as much as 14 hours. Tough, tall, and proud, they were dressed in rough work clothes, ready to go to work on their next shift after the meeting. They said their work would end when they found their "last brother." After everyone there had a chance to talk, Jim gave his summation, saying, "A lot of the problems people are having were there before 9/11. What 9/11 did was to stir them up and bring them to the surface." Although he was referring to the needs of the police officers at this meeting, I thought he was also speaking for every person in this world who was somehow affected by what happened in New York City, Washington, and Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001. "You're speaking for everyone," I said to Jim. "You're right on target."

Jim's words were like a premonition that no one would ever be the same after the events of 9/11. I wondered at the time if people would come to realize, like Jim, that we need to know whether or not the problems that confront us were there before and never resolved. As I said in my previous article, I am convinced that children know how to lead the way. They know how to find ego strength when faced with adversity by finding the right adult role models to follow, just as the children did at Ground Zero, and go on with their lives.

Adults need support, too, in order not to become their fears. In New York City, where I live, since 9/11 I come across people every day who show what people do when they become their fears. They are fearful of losing their jobs and homes, and they are worried about the future. People are smoking again and eating more. For some, their defense against their fears is to withdraw into themselves and to become less aware of people around them. As a bicyclist, I have noticed an increase of suicidal behavior from such people. They walk into the street looking neither to the right nor to the left, and they talk on their cell phones while driving

their cars or standing in the middle of traffic and hailing a cab. They speak in loud voices on their cell phones on the city streets and buses, not bothering to consider that they are disturbing others around them. My impression is that unconsciously they are calling their mothers who were not there when they needed them as children.

In “Losing Control” Daniel Arst writes, “Too many of us appear to be bent on slow-motion suicide” (*Wall Street Journal*, May 15, 2009). He is referring to people’s unhealthy eating habits, lack of exercise, and smoking and alcohol abuse, resulting in close to half of the 2.5 million annual deaths in America being preventable if people simply led healthier lives. Daniel Gilbert, a professor of psychology at Harvard, writes about a new survey result from the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index (*The New York Times* Op-Ed, May 21, 2009): that “Americans are smiling less and worrying more than they were a year ago, that happiness is down and sadness is up, that we are getting less sleep and smoking more cigarettes, that depression is on the rise.” He attributes this to fear of the unknown happening since people feel worse when something bad *might* occur than when something bad *will* occur. “Our national gloom is real enough,” he concludes, “but it isn’t a matter of insufficient funds. It’s a matter of insufficient certainty.”

In this climate of fear and uncertainty, teaching children has become more difficult. At the root of their resistance to learning and trying new things is anger and frustration that they have learned from their parents, siblings, and caretakers. This is where we are now. I wonder as a therapist when people will learn to accept their feelings of fear and depression and not act on them or run away from them in suicidal ways. When we accept our feelings, both positive and negative, we can then go on to new feelings. My idea is that people who can’t tolerate all their feelings should follow Jim’s rule of getting to know themselves.

One Jim rule that I try to follow is to take each day as it comes. I try not to think about tomorrow because it hasn't come yet. When I take each day as it comes, I realize that it is a gift and I try to enjoy every minute of it. Years ago when I was traveling by myself touring Europe, I learned a valuable lesson about living one day at a time. I would begin with a plan such as going out to shop for a certain pen or notebook I needed to record a journal I was keeping of my travels. That search for a pen would lead to many adventures throughout the day, which I would record in my journal at night. Even today, when I wake up in the morning with feelings of uncertainty about what I want to accomplish that day I will go out and search for a particular item that I need to start the day. I think Jim would approve.

Upon ending this article about the "town meeting" and Jim, I am feeling sad, wondering if any of those police officers at the meeting lost their lives as a result of their mission at Ground Zero because it has been reported that some rescue workers have since died of lung diseases and other illnesses; I hope not. I will remember Jim and the others, always. I will especially remember Jim, and his great summation that gave all of us at the meeting a lot to think about.

Robert Quackenbush, PhD, is an artist, writer, psychoanalyst, and educator living in New York City. He has written and illustrated over 200 books for children and has written many articles for professional journals, including Clio's Psyche, related to his private practice as a psychoanalyst and educator. The day after the September terrorist attacks he volunteered with the American Red Cross and in the next month he trained at Columbia and New York universities in preparation for his counseling work with first responders. Dr. Quackenbush's e-mail address is Rqstudios@aol.com and his web site address is www.rquackenbush.com.

Learning from Israel: Open to Life

Danielle Knafo—Long Island University

When I first arrived in Israel in 1972, I immediately had to become accustomed to my bags being opened and checked every time I entered a government building. The omnipresence of soldiers and guns made up a new visual landscape for me. I came to see them as signs of safety, security blankets as well as constant reminders of the threat to my survival.

The Yom Kippur War broke out in October 1973. My cousin, an ex-army officer with whom I stayed at the time, was frustrated at not being able to fight because he had lost his leg in the previous war. One of his young sons appeared to compensate for this inability through war games in which he launched repeated violent assaults on the “bad Arabs.” His second son, the more overtly sensitive one, was visibly terrified and rolled his eyes while standing rigid and mute whenever the sirens called us to the bomb shelter. The war took the lives of another cousin, whose wife was expecting a baby, as well as my then boyfriend’s brother. After the war I moved to Tel Aviv to study at the university. My roommate suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and woke me up nightly with blood-curdling screams from persecutory nightmares. My best friend at the university was a man who had been blinded in the war; he eventually committed suicide. These are only a few recollections of my first year in Israel, my introduction to living with terror and trauma.

After living and working in Israel for over 12 years, I returned to the United States. In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, I was asked by dozens of people: How do the Israelis do it? How do they cope? How do they live under constant threat of terrorism? Psychoanalysts, in particular, have confessed feelings of inadequacy and lack of exper-

tise, wondering whether their skills and training are relevant and useful. I realize that in editing my book, *Living with Terror, Working with Trauma* (2004), I was simultaneously working through the complex myriad of feelings I had to the events of September 11 as an American and an Israeli.

As stated by an anonymous source, "Israel is a battered spouse and America is a raped virgin." Israelis have become accustomed to seeing photographs of their dead posted on the front pages of the newspapers. They know that if they do not listen to the news for one hour during the day they might miss a very important item, one that might alter their lives indefinitely. Israel is comprised of bereaved family members and friends: Holocaust survivors as well as their children and grandchildren; civilian and military victims of combat and terrorism, children who have lost their parents, and parents who have lost their children. Everyone is affected. Israelis have been embattled for decades. There are layers of trauma, multiple traumas, and serial cumulative traumas. To complicate matters further, trauma victims are constantly being re-traumatized by the unremitting exposure to the persistent political and physical threats to security, which minimizes attempts at repression or, conversely, results in increasingly massive defensive efforts. "It's no longer possible to mourn the dead, because within a few hours there are more dead," says Avi Bleich, head of Tel Aviv University's Psychiatry Department, commenting on the effects of the routinization of terror in Israeli life (in Yossi Klein Halevi, "Living in the Shadow of Death," *Jerusalem Report*, March 25, 2002, p. 14).

Whenever I have been asked about the main difference between my practice in the U.S. and that in Israel, I have always replied with one word—trauma. Israel is a country that was created out of the trauma of the Holocaust. The survivor mentality is in its fabric. Yoram Kaniuk, author of *Adam Resurrected* (1971), describes the sudden surreal

apparition of concentration camp survivors on the shores of Jaffa and Haifa, converting Israel, in his words, into the “largest insane asylum on earth.” In his book, survivors are huddled in the desert town of Arad, where they are led by Adam, a man who was leashed on all fours as the concentration camp commandant’s dog, forced to amuse and delude the prisoners in line for the gas chamber—among them his wife and daughter—during the Holocaust. “Life is so sad without God,” cries Adam, who, although now free, continues to believe he is a dog. Other survivors are the soldiers in A. B. Yehoshua’s *The Last Commander* (1977) who ask: “Is there ever a moment without war? Is there any rest?” Confronting the dream of Israel, the Promised Land, in the harsh sun, the soldiers follow their “mad” commander as they try to walk out of history.

There is no escape from history. Terrifying experiences that rupture people’s sense of predictability and controllability result in the pervasive ways victims view themselves and their world. Here is an example from a graduate class in adult psychopathology that I taught in Israel. As a preface, suffice it to say that Israeli students are very lively and opinionated, even when they have not read their assignments. In fact, as a teacher, one often has to interrupt them to get a word in. So imagine my surprise when, one day, there was complete silence in response to my question, “What is stress?” I was about to speak about stress disorders and wished to define stress first. Not one hand went up; not one voice was heard. In fact, I looked out at a sea of puzzled faces. What was going on, I wondered, and I asked again. The same thing happened for the second time. This time the silence went on for several minutes. I asked what the problem was; whether no one knew what stress was. Finally, one student offered, “But what is life without stress?” It was then that I understood that for Israelis, stress is normative and therefore impossible to perceive as a disorder. An abnormal

reaction to an abnormal situation can be normal behavior. Psychopathology, as other fields, must be understood within a cultural context.

Americans thankfully do not have a history like that of Israel. In fact, that is one of the reasons most Americans have been so traumatized by the events of September 11. Knowing that so many have died is clearly disturbing, even when one knows no one personally. Yet, a big part of the American reaction is shock, the shock that has shaken an American sense of invulnerability. Israelis are accustomed to being hated, to having people wish they were dead, even to having people try to annihilate them; Americans are not. It has been noted that the incongruence of an experience can itself cause trauma reactions (A.Y. Shalev & R. J. Ursano, "Mapping the Multidimensional Picture of Acute Responses to Traumatic Stress," in Roderick Ømer and Ulrich Schnyder, eds., *Reconstructing Early Intervention after Trauma*, 2003). By incongruence, I mean novelty and contrast with what had been believed in, expected, or experienced beforehand. This is often the most difficult part of the trauma for many survivors, and certainly for Americans who now speak of before and after September 11, as if their entire worldview has had to change; and it has.

Following the tragedy of September 11, our world can never be viewed as it once was. In Portuguese, there is a word that has no direct translation: *saudade* (pronounced sow dod ji). It refers to nostalgic longing. Anyone familiar with Brazilian music knows that the word *saudade* is heard over and over again. The long-term mourning that Americans are currently immersed in involves learning how to live with loss and grief, learning to live with a longing for the time before our lives were so traumatically disrupted. If we are lucky, we will be able to transform our pain into something comparable to the soulful, rhythmic music of Brazil, a music that never tires of singing about *saudade*.

I personally continue to be inspired by victims of terror who, besides living a life that reverberates with the inevitability of loss and suffering, show resilience of spirit and the ability to be creative once more. On September 11, we all got a glimpse of an apocalypse, a taste of what the end of the world might look like. However, the word “apocalypse” has a second meaning, and that meaning is to open up. The challenge we increasingly face as we learn to live a life that incorporates the possibility of terror and trauma is how to protect ourselves while remaining open to life, joy, and experience. “When He created man,” writes Eli Wiesel, “God gave him a secret and that secret was not how to begin but how to begin again” (in Danielle Knafo, *Living with Terror, Working with Trauma: A Clinician’s Handbook*, 2004). Once again, Wiesel reveals the wisdom of one who has lived through the worst of traumas.

Danielle Knafo, PhD, a professor in the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program at Long Island University’s CW Post Campus, is Associate Clinical Professor and supervisor at New York University’s Postdoctoral Program in Psychoanalysis and in Derner’s Postgraduate Programs in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy. Dr. Knafo’s books include: Egon Schiele: A Self in Creation, Unconscious Fantasies and the Relational World, Living with Terror, Working with Trauma: A Clinician’s Handbook, and In Her Own Image: Women’s Self-Representation in Twentieth-Century Art. She maintains a private practice in Great Neck, New York and can be contacted at dknafo@liu.edu.

Forthcoming in the December Issue

Ken Fuchsman, “The Transformations of Barack Obama” and “An Elovitz/Fuchsman Exchange on Barack Obama’s Family Background”

Academic Studies

The Impact of 9/11 on American Psychology

Ann L. Saltzman—Drew University

The events of September 11, 2001 have deeply impacted our country, precipitating highly significant policy changes, wars, and increases in bias against people perceived to be Muslim; they also elicited PTSD symptoms in countless people both in the United States and elsewhere. As an academic discipline embedded in American culture, American psychology has also been affected. One window into these effects is to analyze what has been cited since 9/11 in *Psychological Abstracts* (PSYCINFO), an electronic database that provides systematic coverage of the psychological literature including but not limited to those sub-disciplines considered part of the academic field of psychology; also included are abstracts from areas such as communication studies, nursing and residential rehabilitation, police and legal personnel.

The current paper reports on a content analysis of the titles of English-language articles referenced in PSYCINFO which included the key words “September 11” and “9/11,” and were published between 2002 and 2006; dissertation abstracts, book reviews, calls for papers, editorial introductions to special journals were excluded, yielding a data base of 455 article titles. The assumption in focusing on article titles only—as opposed to articles that referenced 9/11 in both their titles and texts—was that the events of September 11th were fore-grounded in the former and not merely background for discussion. Similarly, the assumption in focusing on the first five years was that these years give most insight into

how the immediacy of the events following 9/11 impacted psychology as a discipline.

The author and a senior psychology major (Lara Fidalgo) at Drew University independently coded the titles. If the article title did not have enough information, abstracts were reviewed; this was the case for 171 articles (or 37.6% of the total data base). An initial inter-rater agreement rate of 80% was obtained; disagreements were subsequently discussed until 100% agreement was reached. The table below shows the six coding categories we developed and summarizes the overall findings.

Distribution of all articles by topic and year

Topic	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Social Psychology	25	30	38	34	15	142 31.2%
Clinical Psychology	17	19	16	13	16	81 17.8%
Social-clinical Psy-	21	20	15	14	9	79 17.4%
Cognitive Psychology	0	13	5	5	4	27 5.9%
Developmental Psychology	7	8	11	11	7	44 9.7%
Professional Development	21	25	14	13	9	82 18%
Totals	91	115	99	90	60	455

As can be seen, the distribution of articles with

“September 11” or “9/11” in their titles was relatively even across the years 2002-2005 with a peak number in 2003 and a significant decrease in 2006 ($\chi^2=17.6$, $df=4$, $p<.01$). Also evident is that the largest number of article titles fell into the generic category of “social psychology.” This included articles that focused on attitudes, media, group interactions, communication, identity, and political issues. Among these topics, the most prevalent, representing a little more than half of the social psychology titles, reported on how American attitudes were being shaped—or in the extreme manipulated—by the media, political rhetoric, and public discourse surrounding the events of 9/11. A sample title included in this category is “Charisma under crisis: presidential leadership, rhetoric, and media responses before and after the September 11th terrorist attacks,” published in *Leadership Quarterly*, 2004. Interestingly, the largest proportion of social psychological articles were published in 2004-2005, the years leading up to and just following (post-mortem) the 2004 presidential election. In addition, the greatest percentage of articles published in 2004 and 2005 fell into this category.

The table also indicates that the second most prevalent group of article titles related to professional development; these titles implied therapists’ self-reflection on how some psychotherapeutic modalities were no longer viable after 9/11; existing psychological theory did not adequately deal with the type of crises precipitated by the attacks, and new models needed to be developed (e.g., “Moving forward from September 11: A stress/crisis/trauma model,” published in *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention*, 2002). Also included in this category were articles in which psychologists wrote about how other professions had been similarly impacted by 9/11, e.g. “Review of preventing surprise attacks: Intelligence reform in the wake of 9/11,” published in the *Journal of Psychiatry and Law* in 2006. The early peak of

this subset of articles (2002-2003) reflects the immediacy of 9/11 and the ability of psychologists to both identify the need for new approaches and to then develop them. Related to this were articles which seemed to meld the areas of social and clinical psychology, a subgroup of articles that also peaked in 2002-2003. These focused on coping through the use of support groups, psycho-education, community mental health programs, or focused on 9/11's effects on specific social-cultural-geographic groups, thereby melding sociological and psychological analysis. Also included in this category were articles researching how specific personality characteristics such as optimism or resilience were related to more positive mental health outcomes.

Collectively, these titles suggest that the trauma inflicted by 9/11 was all-encompassing and that psychologists recognized the need to mobilize community resources to help people weather the immediate crises. Also implied is that some groups and individuals seemed to be better able to do this and that perhaps their approaches and abilities could be modeled for others. Representative titles included in this category are: "Asian American families' collectivistic coping strategies in response to 9/11" (*Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 2006) and "Empathy and interpersonal style: A meditational model of secondary traumatic stress symptomology following 9/11" (*Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 2005).

In addition, the table shows that the "pure" clinical articles were about equally distributed across the years until 2006, when it represented almost 27% of the articles published that year. These titles suggested that the articles focused on the impact of 9/11 on specific diagnostic groups or specific interventions developed to prevent clinical behaviors or the trauma experienced by specific occupational groups such as first responders. A sample title from 2006 is: "Persistent post-traumatic stress disorder following Septem-

ber 11 in patients with bipolar disorder,” published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*). One final noteworthy finding from the table is the paucity of articles focusing on how 9/11 affected children.

So what does this analysis tell us about how American psychology as a discipline was affected by the events of September 11, 2001?

First, it suggests that the focus of research and publication shifted during the first five years after 9/11, as different effects emerged. Early on, clinicians seemed to be struggling with how to deal with the new post-9/11 American society that had been created; numerous articles identified the shortcomings of existent theory and models and reflected on the need to develop new psychotherapeutic approaches. Emphasis seemed to shift from intra-personal dynamics to the importance of social support systems, community mental health, and psycho-education. Authors also explored how various social/ethnic/national/geographic groups were differentially dealing with the crises precipitated by 9/11.

At the same time, the research focusing on the chronic needs of those with specific diagnoses or of “first responder” groups remained fairly constant throughout 2002-2005, increasing somewhat in 2006. The one “high need” group which is notably missing from the literature, however, is children, a finding that is difficult to interpret. In contrast, social psychological concerns became more prevalent several years later as empirical evidence was being gathered to document what many people were informally observing, especially during the years leading up to the 2004 presidential election: that social-political attitudes were being manipulated and biased media coverage was “whipping up” prejudice and stereotyping.

Second, the overall findings document how psychology, as represented by what gets published, is impacted by

the very same forces that shape the society in which it is embedded. Along these lines, it is interesting to note the decline in the total number of articles with “September 11” or “9/11” in their titles to 60 by 2003. A PSYCINFO search reveals that these numbers decline even further to 50 in 2007 and 29 in 2008. The author suspects that during more recent years the impact of 9/11 on psychological research has not actually waned; rather it has become part of the background within which psychology—and American society—continues to operate. For psychology this would mean that September 11 is now referenced in the texts of articles rather than foregrounded in their titles. Only additional research will confirm this hypothesis.

Ann L. Saltzman, Ph.D. is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study at Drew University, Madison, NJ where she teaches courses in Social Psychology, History of Psychology, Psychology of Women, and Holocaust and Genocide. A version of the current paper entitled “Psychology after 9/11”: The First Five Years” was presented at the 2008 Annual Meeting of Eastern Psychological Association and arose out of an assignment she asked her History of Psychology students to complete. Her most recent publications include a co-authored article “Current perceptions of Marital Rape” in the Journal of Interpersonal Violence (2008) and ““Obedience to Authority” in Understanding Genocide,” Clio’s Psyche (2007). Prof. Saltzman can be contacted at asaltzma@drew.edu.

The Next **Psychohistory Forum Work-In-Progress Saturday Seminar** will be on **September 12**, when **Danielle Knafo, David Beisel, and Paul Elovitz** will present on “**The Psychology of Remembering 9/11: The Uses and Abuses of Trauma**”

Variable Effects of Terrorism: From the Lab to the Real World

**Francis A. Beer, Alice F. Healy,
and Lyle E. Bourne Jr.**—University of Colorado

For over 20 years, we have run a series of psychological experiments, examining how individuals react to simulated news reports of international conflict and terrorist attacks. Obviously, the laboratory is not the real world, nor are its participants real victims. At the same time, participant reactions reflect more general human tendencies. To begin, we shall briefly describe the nature of the experiments and the size of the sample, and then discuss what we found.

Our research program has consisted of a series of laboratory experiments focusing on the responses of young adults to simulated media reports on international conflicts and terrorism.

We administered questionnaires to samples of between 40 and 100 mostly undergraduate university students. One experiment used undergraduate and graduate students to rate a set of items and establish a scale of the degree to which the items reflected international conflict and cooperation. In other experiments, undergraduate participants were shown a priming vignette and/or a background scenario describing a situation of conflict or friendship between nations. Participants, who were residents of the United States, were then given a newspaper report of a military or terrorist attack on a nation allied with the United States. After that, they were asked how the United States should respond to that attack. Anticipating (even before 9/11) that repeated attacks would lead to escalated reactions, we next gave participants a second newspaper report describing another attack and again asked for their reactions. This procedure was iterated for a

total of five or six successive rounds. Finally, participants were asked to respond to questions probing their personality attributes and demographic characteristics such as gender, religion, and ethnicity.

Our experiments make it clear that people react to terrorist attacks in diverse ways. There are, for example, variable emotional effects; individuals respond with different levels of fear and anger to terrorist attacks. Usually such attacks make individuals fearful. Real-world terrorist attacks certainly confirm this finding. After commercial aircraft were flown into the Twin Towers of New York's World Trade Center on 9/11, some people inside jumped from the flaming buildings while others were immobilized. Israelis, Lebanese, Palestinians, and Iraqis have all recently huddled in shelters to escape missiles overhead.

Fear and confusion are natural effects of terrorist attacks; but not always and not for everyone. Our research reveals that terrorist attacks generally produce anger. In the real world, too, we have seen that those attacked may undertake aggressive counter-measures. In one of the hijacked planes on 9/11, passengers rebelled and assaulted the terrorists, crashing the plane. Similarly, Londoners did not unravel in 2005 when terrorist bombs detonated in the Underground, nor did they passively give in during the Nazi bombings of the World War II blitz. More at a distance, but still connected through the media, some people are afraid for their own safety following terrorist attacks; but others are wildly angry, swear revenge, see an attack as a challenge, are determined to strengthen security so that it will never happen again, or vow to rebuild.

Attacks, over time, produce cumulative reinforcement and extinction effects. Experimental participants received reports of terrorist attacks both inside and outside the laboratory; and these combined to stimulate conflictual and emo-

tional responses. Within the laboratory, when reports of terrorist attacks were repeated, they primed the pump of intense reaction. Fear and anger also increased dramatically after several attacks, whereas forgiveness declined. In addition, subjects were influenced by external context outside the laboratory. The real world events of 9/11 had strong effects on our participants. Their responses to simulated terrorist attacks were less combative before the attacks of 9/11, more forceful soon afterward, and less inclined to conflict again as time passed. In the absence of continuing external reinforcement, conflict tendencies inside the laboratory seemed to decline.

Attacks also had consequences that differed depending on their perceived agent or target. Reports of attacks by terrorists stimulated more escalation of conflict in responses than did reports of attacks by formal military forces. Perhaps counter-intuitively, terrorist strikes on military targets generally provoked more forceful subject responses than did attacks on cultural or educational targets. We explain these findings in terms of an image theory of international relations. According to this theory, individuals form general mental images of countries or groups as enemies or allies, and these images guide their decisions about how to respond to actions by those groups. An attack on a military site is more likely to be viewed in terms of an act of war. An attack on a cultural or educational target sends a less focused signal.

Our experiments further disclose personality, gender, and relationship effects. The escalation of conflictual responses to ongoing terrorist attacks was especially obvious in the responses of individuals who scored high on personality measures of dominance, as opposed to submission. Our experiments also confirm that gender matters. When men read reports of terrorist attacks, they generally wanted to strike back in kind. Women, on the other hand, tended to have less inclination to react with conflict. Furthermore, men tended

to be angrier and women more fearful in response to terrorist attacks. There was, however, an exception to this rule.

Gender effects seem to vary with a perceived prior relationship. When terrorists were reported to come from enemy nations, where there was no prior positive bond, women reacted more harshly, at least after repeated attacks. When terrorists came from friendly countries, democracies for example, men tended to react more punitively to perceived betrayal after repeated attacks. Women tended to be more forgiving and respectful of established political relationships. As this interaction of gender and prior relationships suggests, the effect of gender is more complex than the common sense of folk wisdom would have it.

Gender, however, is overridden by personality. In our experiments, men tended to score higher on dominance and lower on submission measures than women. But men and women are not equally dominant or submissive. Many women are very dominant, and these women responded forcefully to terrorist attacks in the experiments. Similarly, there are many men who are quite submissive, and such men respond less forcefully to terrorism.

Our experimental findings are relevant for real world events. Obviously, there are different kinds of terrorist attacks with different cognitive and emotional meanings for the perpetrators and the victims. Individuals fit these attacks into their own personal, group, and national images and stories. Terrorism, by definition, is designed to produce terror, but it does not actually do so all the time, in all circumstances, for all individuals. Repeated terrorist attacks arouse dominant individuals to respond not with fear but with the sword. Those who would inspire terror, or even “shock and awe,” might consider the complex unanticipated consequences of their actions.

With all sympathies toward the real-world victims of

terrorism, from a psychological perspective ongoing political events also represent a form of experiment. Past, present, and future attacks test the validity of laboratory findings in the real world. For example, the 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai was not a simple event. It had complex effects on multiple actors. Political leaders and followers in varying national and local settings did not react uniformly with terror. Victims in the Mumbai Taj Mahal Hotel reacted very differently than did hotel owners in Karachi, officers in the Pentagon, or social scientists. Further, each actor's reactions varied over time. They are not the same today as they were yesterday, or as they may be tomorrow.

Psychological experiments and real-world experiences inform each other and broaden our knowledge about the effects of terrorist attacks. In a different world, this is not knowledge that we should wish to have. In our times, however, it can be useful. As we learn more about the effects of terrorist attacks, we increase our abilities to manage their aftermath. We increase political leaders' abilities to cope with the very complex web of terrorist effects on their populations and to connect with various types of citizens whom terrorism may affect very differently. Even more importantly, we are better able to shape long-term strategies for democratic responses to terrorism in the emerging, dangerous environment of the 21st century.

Francis A. Beer, PhD, is Professor Emeritus of Political Science. He has taught and published extensively on war, peace, and terrorism. His work is described in greater detail at <http://socsci.colorado.edu/~beer/> and he can be contacted at beer@colorado.edu. Alice F. Healy, PhD, is College Professor of Distinction in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience. She is also Director of the University of Colorado Center for Research on Training. Her work, which is focused on experimental cognitive psychology, is described in greater detail at <http://>

*psych.colorado.edu/~ahealy/home.html. She can be contacted at alice.healy@colorado.edu. **Lyle E. Bourne, Jr., PhD**, is Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Neuroscience. He is former Chair of the Department of Psychology and Director of the Institute of Cognitive Science. His work is described in greater detail at <http://psych.colorado.edu/%7Elbourne/>. He can be contacted at lyle.bourne@colorado.edu. □*

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The Absurdity of Terror

Matthew H. Bowker—Medaille College

Over the past year while teaching in Singapore and the United States, I have conducted lengthy interviews on the topic of absurdity. The purpose of these interviews was to investigate how participants contended with what they perceived to be absurd experiences and events. Participants were asked what “it means to say that something is absurd, to picture someone doing something very absurd, to tell about a time when you felt absurd,” to describe “the opposite of absurdity, to tell about a time when you felt not at all absurd,” to assess whether absurdity is controllable, changeable, good, bad, and whether “life is absurd, to tell about a time when life seemed absurd,” and to describe how talking about absurd things “makes you feel.” Perhaps not surprisingly, acts of terrorism, such as the attacks of 9/11, were seen as manifestly absurd. My sample was comprised of 26 individuals (9 males and 17 females) between the ages of 18 and 44 (with a median age of 22.3 years). Nine participants were from the U.S. and 17 from Singapore (the numerical similarities are coincidental). This essay describes how participants articulated the absurd quality of terror and how that quality influenced their moral outlooks.

Because the similarities between American and Singaporean participants' responses were more remarkable than their differences, this essay does not distinguish between the two citizenship groups. While all were affiliated in some way with a university or college, the participant group as a whole represented highly diverse cultural, ethnic, economic, educational, and religious backgrounds and experiences. The relative consistency of participants' responses, then, suggests that their comments may carry considerable relevance for young people in both countries, perhaps even in others.

When prompted to give "an example of something absurd," over two-thirds of the people I spoke with discussed terror or violence. They spoke about 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the student murders at Columbine High School in Colorado, the Burmese government's rejection of foreign aid for typhoon victims in 2008, the Indonesian riots of 1998, and the Nazi Holocaust. More abstract examples of absurdity included "killing a person without a reason, firing a shotgun into a crowd, public raping, committing suicide without feeling unhappy," economic inequality, racism, and self-mutilation. Memorable images were of strewn body parts, "ashes and bones," the swastika, armed robberies, being thrown from a tall building, "running down the street naked," and the Edvard Munch painting, *The Scream*.

With few exceptions, participants designated acts of terror and violence as "absurd" when they were highly public and seemingly unmotivated. Thus, it was not the act of murder that participants found absurd, but the act of "firing a shotgun into a crowd"; not the act of rape, but "a public raping"; not acts of physical violence, but the spectacle of prolonged, televised warfare. Similarly, it was not suicide that was absurd, but "committing suicide without feeling unhappy." It was not killing that was absurd, but killing without reason.

Although participants implied that they were repulsed by these horrific events and images, their narratives about absurdity evinced even greater distress about the perpetrators' flagrant violations of social norms. That is, participants considered public transgressions of law and conventional morality to be absurd not primarily because of the undeserved suffering of victims, nor because of the implication that they, too, might be victimized, but because such acts were "abnormal." While I assumed that victims' suffering was part of participants' consternation over acts of terror, very few said so. More typical were explanations which emphasized only that "normal people don't do it," that "it's not supposed to happen," or that "I can't understand the reason." To my surprise, no one offered an ethical or philosophical definition of absurdity. Rather, over 75 percent claimed that "absurd" meant simply "out of the ordinary, out of the norm," or "unusual to me or my community."

Ambivalence was remarkable in most participants' accounts of absurdity. Many associated absurdity with violence and terror, only then to express a desire to be more "open" to absurdities, which could be accomplished by reducing the power and scope of one's "self-monitor." A number of participants described not only violent, but sexually evocative acts when prompted to picture "someone doing something very absurd." Some described absurdities that appeared to contain hidden wishes, such as a young woman who had been engaged in a painful combat with her strict family over the expectations they associated with her gender. To her, absurd acts were "parents and children arguing in public, disclosing family secrets (including the sexual habits of the parents) to everybody, child prostitution," and "a gay family." All may be interpreted as highly subversive possibilities in the context of her family.

In the end, over 95 percent of participants, including those who described terror and violence as absurd, said that

absurdity was “not bad,” but was “good” and/or “natural.” They found it to be “good” because without absurd events life was imagined to be intolerably boring; “natural” because absurdity was seen as an essential part of human existence. Needless to say, these definitions and attributions contrasted sharply with the horrific events described moments earlier in the interview.

I doubt that participants’ ambivalence and their emphasis on perpetrators’ moral rebellion signified a lack of concern for victims. Rather, it seemed to be indicative of participants’ experience of a world in which terror is supposedly unthinkable, yet is constantly thought about, discussed, and displayed. The young people I spoke with did not seem to view terror as evidence of the “primitive hostility of the world,” nor even “the fact of man’s own inhumanity” (Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, 1955, pp. 14-15). Terrorists were somewhat more understandable than that. Indeed, participants’ descriptions of terror and violence as merely “unconventional” implied that terror was thinkable, and that thinkable terror may produce greater moral anxiety than unthinkable terror.

Many young people also seemed to live with subtle terrors of their own, as their economic “survival” seemed to require the mastery of conventional skills and roles, while their personal “survival” depended on “being themselves,” being authentic, and being free. Since many participants imagined terrorists and other criminals to be released from both sets of demands, what may have been troubling about absurd behavior was that it signified the potential for non-rational, destructive, and transgressive acts to reconcile contradictory impulses, perhaps offering freedom from the pressures of ordinary life—an ordinary life which participants regularly denigrated as “just chasing money, a dog’s life,” or the time to “just dive into the crowd and follow the robots.”

Some participants suggested a surprising strategy to contend with the disturbing emotions they associated with witnessing or remembering an absurd act. A significant percentage took it upon themselves to normalize and justify absurd events. When asked to imagine something absurd, one young woman said, "Nothing. I can rationalize almost anything that people do... Absurdity is from your own perception. If you have no quarrel with anything, then there is nothing absurd for you." Others echoed this view: "Even if absurd things happen to me, I will convince myself that they are not absurd." This nearly stoic outlook framed absurdity as a quality of perception and not a political or social reality, rationalizing absurd acts perhaps in order to sustain beliefs in the justice and reliability of conventional social arrangements (Melvin Lerner, *Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*, 1980).

A somewhat different response to absurdity was expressed in the slightly smaller number of participants who spoke of joining forces with absurdity, as it were, to claim its power. One young man described his physical assault of a military officer and his habit of driving at intentionally reckless speeds as evidence that he had integrated absurdity (and a bit of terror) into his way of life. More than one participant said that committing crimes would not be absurd if one were paid or compensated for them because, then, the crime would have a purpose. Such calculations even led one young man to reflect that while terrorism may be "abnormal" to him, terrorists must have their reasons, so perhaps terrorism is reasonable.

These interview accounts of the absurdity of terror suggest that rather than remarking on the absurdity of needless suffering or loss, most young people were troubled by witnessing or recalling a highly publicized transgressive act. Participants implied that those who rationalize or commit absurdities suffer none, freeing them from ambivalent feel-

ings about secure yet confining social roles. Participants' greater interest in resolving doubts about the motives of perpetrators likely reflect doubts about the fairness of conventional moral and social expectations as well as the ever-widening distance at which the victims of 9/11 and other acts of terror are remembered. Their responses suggest that it is important to understand witnesses' reactions to the absurdity of terror as something distinct from victims' reactions to traumatic events, for while very few interview participants appeared to be traumatized by the terror they had seen or read about, many seemed deeply conflicted about how to integrate the possibility of committing absurd violence into their moral outlooks.

Matthew H. Bowker, PhD, earned his doctoral degree in political philosophy at the University of Maryland, College Park and is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Humanities at Medaille College in Buffalo. His current research examines the moral and political implications of the literature, theatre, and philosophy of the absurd. He may be contacted at mhb34@medaille.edu.

Consequences

Playing the Trauma Card after 9/11?

Dan Dervin—University of Mary Washington

The sight of a large aircraft flying low over Manhattan's skyline drove thousands of New Yorkers out onto the streets, their faces registering terror and panic. But no, this morning in the spring of 2009 was not a replay of 9/11; only a bureaucratic snafu out of Washington. But if nothing else, it demonstrated the lasting power of mass trauma and the underlying fear of repetition.

Key elements in this process are the fear of the original traumatic event recurring as well as the individual's tendency to repeat or reenact the original circumstances for relief or mastery. Unlike physical trauma's blunt force causing loss of consciousness, in psychic trauma the individual is overwhelmed by an experience he/she cannot assimilate: in psychoanalytic terms the usual defenses are breached and the ego's mediating capacities are shut down, resulting in a state of helplessness (See Burness Moore and Bernard Fine, *Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts*, 1990, p. 199; and Jerry Piven, editor, *Terror and Apocalypse*, 2002). In psychic trauma, the precipitant may be external, internal, or a combination; but unlike physical trauma, where the external assault produces uniform effects, psychic trauma spans a wider, less predictable range. Identical events do not necessarily affect everyone similarly. Soldiers can be traumatized in combat, take it in stride, or thrive on it—depending on the individual. This may be in part, one surmises, because traumatic events in adult life are more internally disruptive the more profoundly they resonate with earlier, usually childhood, trauma.

To whatever extent mass trauma occurs it further complicates efforts at understanding, although the above incident suggests its tenacity. One's relative physical as well as emotional proximity to Ground Zero would likely gauge the degree of intensity. I have friends in the Midwest who watched the horrible spectacle on TV and calmly boarded an eastbound flight that weekend, while a New Yorker friend canceled a vacation to Italy scheduled for the next summer.

Against this backdrop, we can consider whether key figures in the government were sufficiently traumatized in the aftermath of 9/11 to have their decision-making capacities affected. Across the Potomac a third jet smashed into the Pentagon, and a fourth, intended for the White House, was prevented due to the heroism of three passengers.

Vice President Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, and other

top officials watched the original crashes at 8:46 and 9:03 on television from their White House offices before being hustled off through a tunnel to an underground bunker and conference center. Unsuccessful in reaching Bush, Cheney took charge of operations. "By many accounts," writes Barton Gellman in *Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency*, 2008, p. 118, "he was the coolest head in the room. 'He was holding the fort,' recalls a White House observer, 'the man in charge.'" In fact, he was pretty much running the country. Next to him, although they weren't conferring (and didn't get along), was Condoleezza Rice who "saw herself as organizing and coordinating the rest of the NSC" (Gellman, p. 118). An hour had passed before Cheney reached Bush on Air Force One—the two may have spoken briefly around 9:30 (Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, 2002], p. 18). In Woodward's account, Secretary of State Colin Powell was in Peru having breakfast with the president. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (a former Navy pilot) was in the Pentagon holding an intelligence briefing when the third plane struck. "He felt the building shudder and darted to the window" but could see little. "He went outside and followed the rising cloud of smoke to the crash site, helping with the rescue effort before a security agent urged him to get out of the area." Instead, he returned to the war room and then to his office where he began preparing for Bush's return. (Woodward, 2002, pp. 24-5)

Bush himself on that fateful morning, as is well-known from Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11*, was reading to second graders at a public school in Sarasota, Florida. At about 9:15, Chief of Staff Andrew Card stepped in and whispered in his ear, "A second plane hit the second tower. America is under attack." In Woodward's account, Bush had a "distant sober look, almost frozen, edging on bewilderment" (Woodward, 2002, p. 15). In a later rendering by Robert Draper (*Dead Certain*, 2007, p. 135), Bush was informed of the first plane crash as the motorcade pulled up

to the school—apparently some kind of freak accident. According to Draper (p. 136), at the report of a second attack, “Bush’s head keened slightly, as if in reaction to an electrical surge. His eyes narrowed and lost focus.” He finished the reading lesson, lingering in the classroom and posing for photos before conferring with aides, jotting on note cards, and then at 9:30 entering the school auditorium where he was expected to speak on No Child Left Behind. Instead, he curtly announced, “This is a difficult moment for America. Today we’ve had a national tragedy.” After citing the attack, he warned, “Terrorism against our nation will not stand,” called for a moment of silence, and then left to be escorted onto Air Force One (Draper, 137).

Both Draper and Woodward heard the son’s echoing of his father’s words over Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait: “This aggression will not stand.” Asked about the familiar wording, Bush replied, “What you saw was my gut reaction coming out” (Woodward, 2002, p. 16). Unlike the responses of Cheney, Rice, and Rumsfeld, Bush’s deer-in-the-headlights expression and delay in assuming control raise the prospect of traumatizing effects. The adaptations of his own personality seeming to falter, he summoned a fallback position contingent on his vexed identification with his father.

Revisiting those critical moments, Bush recalled he was thinking, “They had declared war on us, and I made up my mind at that moment that we were going to war” (Woodward, 2002, p. 15). Some may view this as self-serving revisionism, and Bush is prone to spinning his past, as evident when he put a gloss on his troubled childhood by boasting of his father’s “unconditional love” (*Washington Post*, 2/11/08). He has also been unflatteringly portrayed as being upstaged by Cheney’s and Rumsfeld’s determination in the run-up to the Iraq war. In any case, the next day, he stepped outside the White House to declare, “This will be a monumental struggle of good versus evil. But Good will pre-

vail.” Two days later, at a memorial service, he promised “to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil.” In a press conference at the end of the week, he used “‘evil’ nine times in thirteen minutes” (Jacob Weisberg, *The Bush Tragedy*, 2008, pp. 102-3). After his initial call for a crusade was hushed by his aides, he maintained the theological polarity and religious certitude of his righteous cause—the central theme and title to Draper’s *Dead Certain*. Weisberg similarly found cognates of “resolute” to be “key terms” of his post-9/11 presidency.

Was this stark polarizing of the world into opposites along with the rigidity of purpose and the hunkering-down refusal to own up to errors a symptomatic reaction to trauma? At the most it resembles a state of quasi-paralysis, and at the least it suggests a regressive level of self-organizing in the fallout of a destabilizing crisis, and most likely re-enforced latent or not so latent personality trends. After a spell of post-election euphoria in 2004, he grew increasingly isolated in his second term and more disconnected from the larger world, his lofty fixity of purpose being perceived as blinkered obstinacy. His poll numbers sank, but there were never massive protests as in the Vietnam War period. For those who have suffered mass trauma, the leader who can best voice their dire condition sounds most normal; the leader who can also embody their trauma assumes great power. But this is a loan not a gift, for it is predicated ultimately on revenge, and payback can only be delayed for so long. Bush promised vindication, but Osama bin Laden proved elusive; flushed out of his wormhole, Saddam Hussein offered a woe-ful Satan; and convenient composites like “Axis of Evil” and “Islamofascists” dissolved in the fog of war.

From all reports, Bush out of office is at peace with himself; but such is not the case with some of his key players who appear to be flailing out at the restless ghosts of wars spawned by 9/11. Richard Clarke, national coordinator for

security and counter-terrorism under Clinton and Bush, wonders if Rice and Cheney are experiencing a form of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and he is having none of it as the title of article, "The Trauma of 9/11 Is No Excuse" (*Washington Post*, 5/31/09, pp. B1-2) makes clear. He quotes Rice defensively responding to a student's question about torture as claiming, "Unless you were there, in a position of responsibility after September 11, you cannot possibly imagine the dilemmas that you faced in trying to protect Americans." After watching "Americans drop out of eighty-story buildings," Rice was determined to do everything she "could that was legal to prevent that from happening again." Cheney, likewise feeling the heat on torture issues, has gone on the offense via the talk-show circuit. For him that day was a "defining" experience that "caused everyone to take a serious second look" at threats to America. Interestingly, Clarke doesn't deny the possible impact of "trauma" on Rice or Cheney, having himself glimpsed the "day's horror on his face." His point is that if Cheney and Rice were surprised, they should not have been. There had been numerous briefings through the spring and summer by Clarke and CIA's George Tenet warning of imminent attacks from al Qaeda. Their warnings went unheeded because the White House and the NSC (National Security Council) were in denial. For those in power, this externally-induced trauma had internal preconditions which affected, perhaps intensified, their responses and precipitated what many see today as a headlong rush into preemptive war against the wrong enemy.

Dan Dervin, PhD, is a prolific psychohistorian. His publications include Enactments (1996), Matricentric Narratives (1997), and numerous articles in these pages and elsewhere. He is a Research Associate of the Psychohistory Forum and a professor emeritus of literature at the University of Mary Washington. Professor Dervin may be contacted at ddervin@umw.edu.

Ambivalence and Apathy Regarding Post 9/11 Torture

Jerry S. Piven—Case Western Reserve University

It is curious that the nation seems so generally ambivalent, if not apathetic, about the fact that over ten thousand civilians—not only legitimate terror suspects—have been imprisoned and often tormented at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. Indeed, why is there such ambivalence and waffling about whether to prosecute those who needlessly and wantonly tortured captured civilians? Why do we hesitate before prosecuting those who deliberately engaged in superfluous tactics that they knew would garner little actionable intelligence, but would only put their victims in a state of traumatized, abject pain?

Before proceeding, let me discuss some relevant issues. First note that in making my points below, I am not speaking of all Americans when I write “we.” Indeed, I recognize that millions of Americans were repelled at a conscious and unconscious level by the tortures. I write of dominant impulses in our society. This paper is a summary of ideas presented in much greater detail in my 2007 book, *Terror, Sexual Arousal, and Torture: The Question of Obedience of Ecstasy Among Perpetrators*. I take my statistics and much information from the following sources: Mark Danner, *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror*, 2004; and Jane Mayer, “The Memo: How an Internal Effort to Ban the Abuse and Torture of Detainees Was Thwarted,” *New York Times*, 2/27/06.

It is, in fact, well known in military circles that torture is generally an ineffective and inefficient means of garnering actionable information (Danner, *Torture*; Ali Soufan, “My Tortured Decision,” *New York Times*, 4/23/09). Inflict-

ing pain may be an expeditious technique of gathering information, but such techniques often backfire because prisoners will say virtually anything to placate their tormentors. Fictitious confessions blurted out to appease the torturers are often as unreliable as the confessions of accused witches. Inundation by the nerve-wracking drama of television's *24* (a popular action/adventure series devoted to an imaginary war on terrorism) may confuse us into believing that terror suspects have information about attacks that will occur in minutes, and that we should not cringe before the patriotic necessity of scooping out a terrorist's eyeball to save a sleeping car full of innocent nuns. However, this is a false dilemma. The problem here is not that this couldn't happen, but that there is rarely evidence that the terror suspects have information about attacks that will occur in minutes. Worse, many of us romanticize torture and deride humaneness as despicably cowardly.

Both the dread of imminent attack and the contempt toward humaneness are psychologically crucial here. The rationale for torture often rests upon the false dilemma mentioned above, that one must either torture someone right now or a disaster will happen, along with the subsequent accusation that those who abjure torture are too weak and pusillanimous to do what is necessary. The conceptualization of good and evil becomes black and white, while prisoners are ineluctably evil and deserving of punishment. This is the Manichean thinking Stephen Diamond writes about in *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic* (1996). It is a mode of paranoid demonization of actual terrorists and of ordinary civilians who are perceived as threats that must be killed. Those among one's own peers who refuse to castigate the forces of evil are also seen as despicable.

On a characterological level this conviction of imminent disaster and contempt for those who express compassion—perceived as weakness—reflects a profound dread and

hatred of one's own vulnerability. The dread of enemy attacks can also be culturally and politically induced. What becomes especially relevant here, however, is the way in which we as Americans become complicit in torture because we have also become terrorized into a reactively violent paranoia that renders us far more susceptible to perceiving enemies and believing that we must do anything to protect ourselves. Mark Landau's experiments demonstrated that liberals who explicitly abjured the policies of G.W. Bush, and not just right wing Republicans, could be unconsciously manipulated into supporting those policies if exposed to "mortality salience inductions" ("Deliver Us From Evil," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30, 9, 2004, pp. 1136-1150). The sinister implication here is that our perceptions of good and evil are not under conscious control, and that the most "humane" and "rational" among us can be induced into a kind of paranoid reaction that supports violence, despite our protests that we perceive things accurately.

Perhaps this may shed some light on why we as a nation remained strangely unaffected even after seeing photographic images of naked, squalid prisoners subjected to degrading treatment at the hands of gleeful guards. The guards in Abu Ghraib took photos of themselves happily tormenting their prisoners by placing leashes round their necks and forcing them to get on all fours naked like a dog, stacking them in naked body pyramids, and coercing them to masturbate. This is a pornography of torture, a lascivious delight in the shame and abjection of the other, photographed merrily and interpolated with other shots of the guards having sex. This is why notions that guards were just fulfilling roles or following orders are so jejune and simplistic. It doesn't explain the use of ineffective tactics, much less the sexualized joy of humiliating violence.

Humiliation and debasement were the goals, not retrieval of information. Information from Raphael Patai's *The*

Arab Mind (1976), not brochures on effective interrogation, was circulated so that guards would understand just how susceptible their prisoners were to sexual shame and degradation. Cordoning and capturing thousands of civilians is an absurd means of garnering information, but it is a seductive way of subjugating people and fulfilling the fantasy of dominating a people into submission, demonstrating one's superiority, and breaking their wills so that conquerors can feel the surge of triumphant power over the defeated.

Herein lies the psychological strategy of treating others sadistically: one can revel in their humiliation as a way of projecting one's own inner abjection, pain, and inferiority into them. One can reduce them to the same self-loathing; torment them with one's own darkest shame and history of humiliation. To find physical and psychological ways of externalizing one's own emotional wounds, embarrassment, and detested aspects of the self that are the secret aspects of one's identity, all the mortifying pain inflicted by others throughout life now become the other in all his despicable inferiority and evil. It is a quintessential act of disavowing one's self-loathing and punishing it in the other, the effigy and surrogate for one's own detested self (Walter Davis, *Death's Dream Kingdom*, 2006).

This reflects the dark side of our culture in the wake of 9/11, and the sinister, disavowed violence that we are all too willing to inflict on innocents by terming them terrorists or agents of evil. There *are* genuine threats, but when we demonize the other and find absurd excuses to torture them, we reveal our own domination fantasy, the dedication of intelligence to self-deception, and displacement of ethical responsibility. Commenting on Dostoevsky's masterpiece *The Brothers Karamazov*, Freud (1918) wrote that it did not actually matter who killed the despicable old father, since everyone wished him dead.

We too may mask our fear and desire, but when we hesitate before prosecuting those who willingly took action, whose deliberate purpose was the excruciating pain and subjugation of other human beings, we reveal the secret gratification we achieve in the fantasy of crushing our enemies, making them suffer for what they did to us, demonstrating our superiority, and even disgust for their inferior way of life. We pause before admitting to ourselves that terror drove us to lash out against innocent civilians completely unrelated to those who really harmed us. We pretend that it was necessary to torture others to defend ourselves, even when we see images of joyful abuse. We defend atrocity as patriotism, and fall back on the same rationalizations about the casualties of war, a few bad apples, following orders, and necessity, deriding and shaming those who dissent as bleeding hearts, weaklings, unpatriotic, or even complicit with the terrorists. With no sense of irony, we may echo Jack Bauer—the main terror-fighting character in TV's *24*—and accuse those who object to the infliction of sadistic violence of being unwilling to stand up to evil.

We need to interrogate and doubt ourselves, we need to acknowledge our own propensities to commiserate with violence, to lash out when afraid, to victimize others because we feel victimized, and to project our inner torments on others. To allow such things to happen means we sacrifice truth and human life to our own pleasure in rendering others abject, wallowing in infinite excuses when the reality has much more to do with our own dread, and pleasure in inflicting our own demons on others.

Jerry S. Piven, PhD, teaches in the Department of Philosophy at Case Western Reserve University, where his courses focus on philosophy and psychology of religion, existentialism, and metaphysics. He is the editor of The Psychology of Death in Fantasy and History (2004) and Terrorism, Jihad, and Sacred Vengeance (2004), and author of Death

and Delusion: A Freudian Analysis of Mortal Terror (2004), *The Madness and Perversion of Yukio Mishima* (2004), *Nihon No Kyoki (Japanese Madness, 2007)*, and numerous articles on psychoanalysis, religion, and history. He is completing work on a new book titled *Slaughtering Death: On the Psychoanalysis of Terror, Religion, and Violence*. Prof. Piven may be contacted at jpiven@earthlink.net.



Nancy Kobrin's Journey from Psychoanalytic Practice to Combating Terrorism

Paul H. Elovitz—The Psychohistory Forum

Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, PhD, is a psychoanalyst, scholar, and linguist who does most of her research in Arabic, English, and Hebrew and has varying degrees of competence in fourteen other languages. Dr. Kobrin has made herself an expert on terrorism, leading to her writing The Banality of Suicide Terrorism: The Naked Truth About The Psychology of Islamic Suicide Bombings (Potomac Books, winter 2010). Immediately after 9/11 she started writing for Clio's Psyche about terrorism using her unique skills, starting with "A Psychoanalytical Approach to Bin Laden, Political Violence, and Islamic Suicidal Terrorism" and "A Select Bibliography on Suicidal Terrorism" Vol. 8, No. 4 (March 2002, pp.181-184, 189-195). On June 20, Dr. Kobrin went to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas to train on a Human Terrain Team for four to six months, and then will go into the combat theater, probably to Afghanistan since she has been studying Pashto. She could be there for as long as ten months.

Our interviewee was born in Evanston, Illinois; grew up in Lincolnwood, Illinois; and went to high school in

Skokie. She did her undergraduate work at Indiana University (1966-1969) majoring in Spanish and Portuguese with a minor in Latin American Studies; took a masters degree with honors at Roosevelt University in Chicago (1970-72); was awarded a second bachelors, with honors, in Jewish Studies and Hebrew from Spertus College of Judaica in Chicago (1972-75); did postgraduate work at Portland State University in Biblical Hebrew (1976-78) and Ladino (private tutorial); and earned her doctoral degree with honors at the University of Minnesota in comparative literature (1978-83). Dr. Kobrin's studies at the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis led to her become a graduate analyst (1978-85). In 1992 she won the juried Eissler Prize for her article, "Freud's Concept of Autonomy and Strachey's Translation: A Piece of the Puzzle of the Freudian Self" in The Annual of Psychoanalysis. Dr. Kobrin is writing her memoir, Allah Willed It: Forty Rules Derived from Living with Terrorists (tentative title). She can be contacted at nhkobrin@mac.com.

PHE: What is the relationship between 9/11 and your decision to give up your life in Minneapolis, practice of psychoanalysis, and clinical supervision to train with the United States Army at Fort Leavenworth in preparation for being assigned as a private contractor to go to Afghanistan or wherever they need you most?

NHK: First let me begin by saying that I am honored to be interviewed by you for Clio's Psyche since it was here in these pages that I found a home for my analytic thinking which continues to be met with a lot of resistance. This tells me, however, that I am going down an important road.

I have always been a very practical person and have felt that if a theory doesn't work in practice, it isn't any good. Therefore, as I became more involved in counter-terrorism, I sought opportunities to learn on the ground in real time what is going on. This has means that I have been to rebel territo-

ries like Tamil in Sri Lanka, and I have done prison interviews, though not to interrogate but rather to explore the level of violence that was experienced by the detainees in early childhood. I have also taught law enforcement and the military, even presenting at NATO. Here in Minnesota, the Sheriff's Deputies whom I taught invited me to ride along with them into the Somali community, as there are many problems concerning their integration into American society. I have presented at Rand on the Somalis. As you may know, we have the largest population of Somalis outside of Mogadishu and there has been tremendous concern since some 20 youths returned to Somalia to fight. The first American suicide bomber was a Somali who detonated in Somalia. The world is so small nowadays with the Internet and travel that what goes on over there, reverberates here. We even have the Somali youth gangs.

PHE: Why did you decide to commit to a Human Terrain Team (HTT), and did the Psychohistory Forum help you at all with networking?

NHK: Individuals in the U.S. Army at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri discovered my work online after Sander Breiner of the Psychohistory Forum had read my book manuscript and wrote a lovely letter in support of it. I shared that letter with Phyllis Chesler who wrote about it online, and the same people in the Army read her piece. They had been looking for someone to explain to them the devalued female who is routinely beaten, honor murdered, etc., and its relationship to suicide bombings. I created a theory of imagery to explain the Islamic suicide attack as related to Western domestic violence's murder-suicide or serial killing by proxy because of the body parts and Islamic honor killing. They told me that they had had a British commander of a special operations mission who lectured his troops that the murder-suicide of the suicide bombing was a form of domestic violence. The problem was that this British commander never wrote about

it. He came from Britain and my guess is that he was exposed to a healthy dose of psychoanalytic object relations theory, which I also draw upon. Of course, there are differences between Western domestic violence and the Middle Eastern type, where murder-suicide is less common and you have more beatings and out-right murder; but it taps into our universal terror of death and the wish not to die alone.

PHE: What is the nature of your Fort Leavenworth training and what will you actually be doing when assigned?

NHK: I will be trained to be on a Human Terrain Team. The Team is the cultural interface for a brigade. I hope to work with the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Office, but I won't know until I get there. I probably will be able to talk more about it after I am done. I hope to keep a journal.

I told the representative of the Army that I was interested in going in theater and the Human Terrain Team became a possibility. I want to see it on the ground. I have a particular interest in the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Office, dedicated to dismantling IEDs—the roadside bombs. I have a hunch that we could develop the nonverbal language of the terrorists and then factor it in with the ideologies in order to do better profiling and interventions. I liken this language to that of play therapy for a child. As a psychoanalyst, if you see a child ramming a toy car into a toy truck over and over again in play therapy, you might consider the possibility that it is a reflection of anal rape. The anal rape of children is very common in Afghanistan. I also think of Abby Stein's wonderful work *The Prologue to Violence: Child Abuse, Dissociation, and Crime*. While I have studied many languages, we are more alike than we are different and all behavior is potentially meaningful. Too often the researchers become too focused on the ideologies and unwittingly ignore the making of meaning from the very atavistic nonverbal behavior.

PHE: As we see pictures and hear news reports of people being blown up by road-side bombs and otherwise being killed, issues of fear and safety come to mind. Aren't you afraid?

NHK: Yes, I am terrified, but I have lived with terror all my life so this is the only language that I say that I am truly fluent in; I get it. Gavin DeBecker has written a great book called *The Gift of Fear, and Other Signals that Protect Us from Violence*. I feel that I am expanding on that work. If I might be so bold, I have the gift of terror. Terror is different from fear—it is earlier developmentally and it is nonverbal—somewhat embedded in autistic pockets. I wrote a paper with Norman Simms called *Jihaditism? Parallels between Autism and Terrorism*. The terrorists love hard objects and bombs. They are quite autistic. Right now I am in the middle of writing my memoir, which is tentatively titled *Allah Willed It: Forty Some Rules Derived from Living with Terrorists*. It's modeled a bit on Robert Greene's *The 48 Laws of Power*.

PHE: How do you manage your anxiety?

NHK: I just finished reading Irv Yalom's newest book *Staring at the Sun: Overcoming the Terror of Death*. It has helped me a lot in turning down the volume on my anxiety about going in. I have lived a good life and I am now a grandmother, so I have a legacy. I would of course like to come out of Afghanistan alive, if that is where I am sent. Most likely I will be okay. I already have had two near-death experiences, so I should be dead. One was a very bad swimming accident while studying in Mexico in 1969, and the other a horrific road accident in India in 1996—no seat belts.

PHE: Travel seems to be an important part of your life; in the eight years we have known each other, you traveled to do anti-terrorist work in Great Britain, Israel, Germany, Spain, and Sri Lanka. Do you like traveling, and has it always been a part of your life?

NHK: Yes, traveling is important to me. I studied in Mexico, Brazil, Portugal, and Israel as an undergrad and graduate student. I enjoy it despite the near accidents. Experiencing the cultural context helps me understand the acts of terrorism. I lectured the Madrid police in Spanish after the train bombings, and I also went to Sri Lanka where I lectured police and military. A colleague of mine took me into rebel territory. It makes a difference in how you understand the terror. You get to use your other senses, such as smell, which is very, very important to traumatic memory and also Islam, as well as the other senses.

PHE: Most people and scholars I know who travel a great deal do not begin to have your linguistic capabilities. How did you develop knowledge of 13 languages other than your native English?

NHK: As a child I was spoken to in Yiddish and Romanian, so I already knew some of them—and this must have developed my ear for language. I studied and passed exams in Spanish, Portuguese, French, medieval Italian, Ladino and Aljamía (a language of Spanish Moriscos—Muslims forced to convert to Christianity in 15th century Spain), Latin, German, Hebrew, and Arabic. Then I have studied on my own Aramaic, af-Somali (I wanted to be able to say at the very least “please,” “thank you,” “my name is,” and “I am sorry for your loss” when I did prison interviews), Rosetta Stone level 1 Farsi and level 1 Pashto. I can give a Power Point presentation in Spanish, Portuguese, and Hebrew. A leading Israeli Arabist calls me a shy philologist. Of course, I am not fluent in all those languages.

PHE: Did terror first become an important issue to you as consequence of your concern for Israel?

NHK: This is a very good question; it is key. You hit the nail on the head. My first trip to Israel took place in June 1972, several days after the May attack at Lod Airport by the

Japanese Red Army and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Over 100 people were injured and 24 were murdered, many of them pilgrims from Puerto Rico. The reception hall was still pock-marked with machine gun bullets. The Israelis had not yet repaired the walls. It was a visual I will never forget. It made a huge impression on me. I had gone to Israel to learn Hebrew intensively at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. That summer there were a series of bombings in Jerusalem, including one at the grocery store where I shopped. Then at the end of the summer was the Munich Massacre. I will never forget watching it on TV and listening to the radio. New meaning was brought to me concerning news broadcasts—you listened to them all the time.

However, the most significant experience was my final exam in Hebrew. My class had to translate the introduction of a book in the sciences. Besides the fact that it was like hitting my head against the wall to translate the preface after only nine months of Hebrew (I never went to Hebrew school as a child so I make the joke that the language was never ruined for me), it made a lasting impression on me.

As for Israel, I have a huge identification with the country as I was born within the 30-day period of the creation of the State. I grew up in a completely secular Jewish home and my father was a self-hating Jew. This taught me a lot about projection. I was not given a Hebrew name at birth, but in my 20s after this trip to Israel and with no exposure yet to psychoanalysis, I took the Hebrew name Atzmaut, which means independence. Every time I get off the plane in Israel people start talking to me in Hebrew. I feel completely at home and after my work in Afghanistan, I will make *aliyah*—emigration to Israel. My portfolio is all set to go. It's a good thing because I also wouldn't be safe in Minnesota after my book is published. I was already threatened by a Somali and a Sudanese when I did the jail interviews, and terrorists mean what they say.

PHE: What is your basic approach to terrorism?

NHK: I try to listen and watch very closely. I use the skills that I developed during my analysis and have evolved them further. Everything interests me. Prior to training in psychoanalysis I did my PhD in comparative literature; romance and Semitic languages, especially Aljamía, Old Spanish in Arabic script (I had done years of work in Ladino); and semiotics. I consider psychoanalysis to be a subfield of semiotics.

I am very interested in the nonverbal language of the terrorists and how they use their senses because it is predatory behavior. This is key, and that is why the ideologies will only take you so far—though they are important because they provide structure for hating. In Islam the ideologies mask the aberrant behavior because the splitting is so deep and the ideologies function like a girdle for a fragile personality. Terrorists are nothing more than bullies, albeit they will kill you.

PHE: How has psychoanalysis helped you to become an expert on terrorism?

NHK: Because psychoanalysis is a meaning-making endeavor, it allows for a lot of exploring and detective work. I feel that tuning into what you are experiencing internally really helps a lot in reckoning with how terrorizing this stuff is; it is very toxic. Here I think of Joan Lachkar's invaluable contributions through her work on terrorism and borderline behavior. In my opinion, she is the best theoretician and clinician concerning paranoia. What we are dealing with is political paranoia as Robert Robbins and Jerrold Post have written in *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred* (1997), yet they failed to discuss the maternal relationship. In paranoia, it is always about the mother and the baby. The mother because of her past traumatic history cannot trust the baby, and the cycle gets repeated as the mother experiences the baby as attacking. Early childhood development and ma-

ternal attachment are not subjects that counter-terrorists feel comfortable with—it takes them way, way outside their comfort zone, so you have to go very gently with them. The majority of counter-terrorist experts are not going to have a psychoanalytic background and usually they are former military, especially special ops and law enforcement. They “get it,” but it is hard for them to articulate the dynamics and see in detail the symbolic communication. That’s what I find challenging and why I love working interdisciplinarily with them.

PHE: Please tell me about your collaboration with psychoanalyst and feminist author Phyllis Chesler, and its impact on your thinking and work.

NHK: Well, it is so special to work with Phyllis. She has taught me so, so much and I am deeply indebted to her. As you know, she lived in Afghanistan and Israel, so she has that experience. I had read much of her work before I met her. As I described above, things really got going when Sander Breiner read the book manuscript, but I had gotten in contact with Phyllis because of her experience being shunned by feminists who were politically correct, especially in academia. It resonated with my experience in academia so I wrote to her and then I said: oh by the way, I have this book manuscript which might interest you. She actually helped me connect the dots concerning the terrorists—that they cannot get their heads around the idea that they are born from the body of a devalued female.

I enjoy working with Phyllis immensely and I hope to continue that work while in Afghanistan, though it remains to be seen if there will be time for that.

PHE: What new things have you learned about Osama bin Laden’s psychology since first publishing in our journal in March 2002?

NHK: I feel that we have more information about the Bin Laden family. I found Steven Coll's *The Bin Laden's: An Arabian Family in the American Century* quite informative, but I would say that overall the new details dovetail with my thinking about the psychology of the family and the devalued female and over-idealized *ummi* (Arabic for mommy). I would hasten to add that bin Laden is the minor player; now it is Ayman Zawahiri who is really in control. He is an eye doctor. The eyes of the mother are perceived as accusatory in paranoia, and you see this played out in the cruelty and sadism in Arab culture—also in Afghanistan—such as blinding as punishment. I have a special interest in Zawahiri. He once executed the 15-year-old son of a crony in front of his father.

PHE: What is the meaning of Al Andalus (the parts of the Iberian Peninsula ruled by Arabs between 711-1492) to bin Laden and most Arabic terrorists?

NHK: They want to reinstitute the caliphate. They believe in irredentism and hence any land that they have conquered then becomes theirs forever. Al Andalus is the toehold into Europe, but now it is what Bat Ye'or calls Eurabia—a Europe infiltrated and capitulating to Islamism in the manner of the Munich appeasement. (Ye'or is an Egyptian-born British citizen who wrote *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*.)

PHE: What does this have to do with America?

NHK: It is also here in America; most people are not aware. One day several years ago, I was sitting reading my morning newspaper, *The St. Paul Pioneer Press*, having my proverbial cup of coffee. This was before I taught the Sheriff's Deputies about Radical Islam. I nearly spit out my coffee when I read that ten minutes from my home, there is a charter school receiving public funding named Tariq Ibn Ziad. I passed this news-worthy item on to Daniel Pipes. I said to myself that no one in Minnesota knows who Tariq Ibn Ziad was. He in-

vaded Spain in 711 A.D. To me, it was like naming a school after Hitler. I since found out that there are other schools by this name throughout the world—sort of like the Muslim Brotherhood's equivalent of Montessori. In fact, the mosque that Muhammad Bouyeri, the murderer of Theo Van Gogh, attended in Holland had a day school attached to it by the same name. What I find so troubling is that these schools are not being monitored for anti-Semitism. From my extensive work, there is probably much incitement and teaching of hatred going on, but it is so terrifying that people don't really give it its due. Every memoir written by a Somali that I have read has discussed how anti-Semitism was routinely taught to them. I corresponded with the last two Jews of Mogadishu who live as Muslims like Marranos (secret Jews in Spain after 1492), and the son told me that the anti-Semitism in his privately-funded Saudi high school was indescribable.

PHE: What have the Israeli intelligence experts taught you about terrorism?

NHK: They have taught me a lot; I remain deeply indebted. Yoram Schweitzer, who was the first to identify Osama bin Laden in the West and author of *The Globalization of Terrorism*, mentored me in the history of terrorism and he encouraged me to seize opportunities as they came out and even create them by volunteering. One of Israel's top Arabists, Reuven Paz, who identified the recruitment of jihadis over the Internet and who calls the Internet "The Open University of Jihad," taught me how to research an immigrant Muslim community, such as the Somalis, and to understand that it only takes a few bad apples to become radicalized by the Arabs and the Muslim Brotherhood. Anat Berko—who did extensive work interviewing foiled suicide bombers, their handlers, and recruiters—taught me a lot about the dynamics and how the handler is considered to be the most nefarious because they have the closest and last contact with the suicide bomber as they send him or her to their death. She calls the

suicide bomber victim-victimizer; they are not victims as the press would have it. She did a comparative study of them to murderers and petty criminals. She was the former head of the Israel Defense Force's (IDF's) women's prison. Anat is a fine criminologist and used Kohlberg in her assessment—truly innovative. Her book *Path to Paradise* is a must-read.

I feel so fortunate that they helped me. However, I was a bit surprised that while Israel has a very strong community in psychoanalysis, there seemed to me to be a lack of psychoanalytic thinking in counter-terrorism. Now, I could be wrong because I am not completely on the inside track. Yet my hunch is that there were politics about who controlled access initially to the foiled suicide bombers, and also that the Israelis have just been so chronically exposed to terrorism that it is hard to see the forest for the trees—that they are simply dealing with paranoia. This question segues into your next one, so allow me to continue there.

PHE: What is most valuable and new in the book *Islamic Terror: Conscious and Unconscious Motives* (Praeger, 2008) by Avner Falk, the Israeli psychohistorian with whom you have worked?

NHK: First, the entire library of books that Falk has written truly informs the study of terrorism; his concept of the maternal fusion is key. I am deeply indebted to his writings and to him. The maternal fusion is the main concept in my theory of imagery—the merger of one with the other in a death fusion; hence murder-suicide. The body parts are the psychic representation of the un-integrated picture of the early mother; we see this all the time in serial killing, but in Islamic terror there is a culture obsessed with and drenched in the production of body parts which keeps the mother as un-integrated yet for good mental health, one needs the possibility of having an intact picture in one's mind of mother.

As I have mentioned, *ummi*, the Arab mother, is larger than life. You are never, ever supposed to separate from your mother. Foiled Palestinian suicide bombers have said that they carried out the bombing because they wanted to get money for their mothers who have essentially been financially abandoned by their fathers who practice polygyny.

I believe that it has been hard for Israelis to understand the role of *ummi* because the Israeli mother is so important in Israeli society; the mirror image creates a blind spot. Falk intuitively understands this, though he doesn't explicitly say so. It took me a while to get it, but the Israeli Jewish mother is not the Yiddisha mami nor the American Jewish mother; she is very burdened. Why? Because she is tasked with sending her children off to war so the bond is much more significant and the reality is much more terrorizing.

PHE: Sending their children off to war and possible death must be hard for all mothers, including Arab and Israeli mothers. How does this relate to terrorism?

NHK: Ironically Yalom, in his new book mentioned above, talks about the mother's lap. The lap plays a big role in Arabic culture. They repeatedly talk about wanting to sit in *ummi's* lap—we know that Mohammed Atta sat in his mother's lap until he went to college. But what does this mean psychologically? Yalom puts it quite simply: that it is the blissful merger with the mother, but it also represents and speaks nonverbally, visually revealing their terror of death. Of course Yalom is speaking about this in universal terms and not specifically in terms of Arab culture, but I believe it is applicable. Terrorism is a projection of the terrorists' terror of death.

PHE: Tell me some more about Falk's book.

NHK: Falk is peripatetic and so his newest book is extremely inclusive, giving a first-class survey of the different

theories. His is an excellent attempt to put the issue of the terrorist's behavior on the table as seemingly rational when it is not. They are not mutually exclusive, the allegedly rational and the unconscious; rather they are coextensive and enhancing in the production of terror. I like the fact that he focuses on the role of the attitudes of the terrorist to their behavior. There is a split, ironically, though it should not surprise us, in criminology, which carries over into counterterrorism: Is it rational or unconscious dissociated behavior? Just as Raine's *The Psychopathology of Crime* is a seminal text for understanding the behavior, Falk's *Islamic Terror* will become one too.

PHE: What does your family think and feel about your current activities and plan to emigrate to Israel?

NHK: I don't have any real family save for my two adult children. They are both married and I am incredibly proud of them. Just as I have always encouraged them to follow their passion, so they feel the same way for me. Of course, they are concerned about my safety but we never know in life anyway. Every day when I get up on the morning I say the Hebrew prayer for having been preserved to this moment. Each day is a new season for me, as if I am tasting a new fruit. I say this though I am not even particularly religious, but I am grateful.

PHE: Thank you for an interesting interview. I wish you well in your new life. ◻

Some article topics on which we would welcome submissions:

- The history of political psychology and psychohistory
- A psychologist's assessment of "In Treatment"
- Political humor and presidential politics
- A psychological assessment of the Sotomeyer confirmation hearings

Historical and International Terrorism

Terrorism's Cult of Death Against Children in Beslan

Anna Geifman—Boston University

As a historian of Russian 20th-century political violence, I have encountered death in all colors, shapes, and forms. Documents depict “oppressors and exploiters” torn to pieces in bomb explosions. Archival photographs show faces disfigured by the sulfuric acid terrorists poured on “despicable traitors,” time and again projecting deep fear and hatred onto designated political enemies. A key feature of modern-day terrorism, which escalated over the past century, is that “the enemy” has been predominantly the civilians, killed randomly and *en masse*. The extremists’ fundamental goal is no longer to punish individuals responsible for particular misdeeds, the way they had in the past.

Terrorists seek to inflict fear—to terrorize, cause anxiety, and demoralize—society at large. Witnesses of violence thus find themselves in an aberrant relationship with their potential killers, for whom terror has become a modern form of social communication. Acts of murder serve as perpetrators’ messages, circulated by sensational media coverage.

Justifications for terror vary in accordance with its proponents’ specific political agendas; yet, behind the rhetoric emerges an essential common incentive: terrorists find life outside their clandestine cells insufferable. Contemporary terrorism is a form of death-worship. Psychohistorian Moshe Hazani called it “modern secular instances of thanato-

philia” (“Red Carpet, White Lilies: Love of Death in the Poetry of The Jewish Underground Leader Avraham Stern,” *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 89, 2002, 47). The Beslan massacre in North Ossetia stands as its metaphor.

It had begun on September 1, 2004, amid the annual back-to-school festivities across Russia, when 32 heavily armed, masked hostage-takers detained nearly 1,200 children, their relatives, and teachers inside School No. 1 in the town of Beslan. Vague television reports showed snapshots of horror-stricken parents waiting and praying in the schoolyard. Hours passed in fruitless negotiations; the captors refused to give children food or water. It was a stalemate.

In the gym, where hostages were assembled, people were crushed together, sitting on each other or standing for hours, barely able to breathe, and with automatic rifles pointed at them. Some children hallucinated and lost consciousness. The terrorists did not allow medical help, declaring, “Let him die. We are the terrorists, we’re here to kill.”

Chechen separatists in Beslan had nothing personal against the children, their parents, teachers, or the Ossetins generally, who were neutral in the lingering Russo-Chechen conflict. Success in hostage-taking presupposed that human beings were only a means to achieve political objectives. Organizers of the school seizure could not expect the crisis to cause Putin’s government to succumb to their main demand—evacuations of Russian troops from Chechnya. Still, they were prepared to stop at nothing because for the terrorist, the final end is struggle itself as the *raison d’être*. The all-out battle is a defining factor of his identity, which is affirmed by relentless violence.

Small children screamed for hours out of fear and cried for food, while older ones tried to be brave. They would have given up food for a drop of water, which was just around the corner, but their guards denied access to it. Moth-

ers peed in empty baby bottles and offered their toddlers a drink of “beer.” Most people had almost no clothes on; even teenage girls had stripped to their underpants—the heat was so intense it felt like they were inside an oven.

Although they seemed to be familiar scenes from the Holocaust, they were not. Nor was it a replay of “Sophie’s Choice,” when the captors allowed 11 women to leave with their babies but did not permit them to take their other children to safety. Yet, Beslan School No. 1 became a mini-replica of a concentration camp.

When guards were bored, they entertained themselves by teasing children. They let someone drink and refused the others; they offered kids chocolate and said that it had been poisoned. The captors tore off the children’s baptismal crosses and laughed, “Pray to whoever you want. Those who’ll get out of here alive are beloved by Allah.” Like the Nazi servants of their 20th century death cult, their successors in Beslan shot a video to commemorate death’s triumphant appearance in the 21st century.

On September 3, several blasts shook the school. Minutes later, as the Russian security forces were making their way inside the burning building amid smoke, screams, and confusion, cameras followed scores of half-naked boys and girls jumping out of windows and running to safety. Children ran for their lives; the terrorists aimed and methodically shot them in the back from the rooftop. Casualty estimates escalated, multiplying with every passing hour. Altogether, at least 339 people died, including 176 children, and over 700 were wounded.

What is one to think about armed men shooting point-blank at boys and girls stripped of their clothes? Where before have we seen the children’s defenseless nakedness and the scores of stunningly composed, otherworldly faces? Their ash- and blood-covered bodies all looked so skinny af-

ter only three days in captivity. The ruins of that school, where hundreds of people suffered from unbearable heat and dozens perished in flames are not just the site of another terrorist act; they are a symbol of mass homicide, akin to the chimneys of Auschwitz.

A CNN report on February 3, 2005 quoted Chechen warlord Shamil Basaev: his men were planning operations similar to the school seizure in the future. Beslan was not “an accident,” but a “normal,” if imperfectly handled, terrorist act, he said. Nor was it “a tragedy,” maintained journalist David Brooks, “It was a carefully planned mass murder operation.” Whatever the Russians’ “ineptitude in responding to the attack, the essential nature of this act was in the act itself. It was the fact that a team of human beings could go into a school, live with hundreds of children for a few days, look them in the eyes and hear their cries, and then blow them up” (“Cult of Death,” *New York Times*, 9/ 7, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/07/opinion/07brooks.html>).

The first victims of terrorism—even before it strikes against “the enemy”—are terrorists themselves, exactly the way the first victims of Nazism were ordinary Germans, turned into homicidal tools. Before the SS men could start the process of murdering children, terrible things had to happen to the killers—dehumanization, which barred them from acknowledging humanity in a living child. Psychiatrist Salman Akhtar underscores that a salient sign of dehumanization is the deprivation of empathy, which the masterminds of terrorism employ as its integral feature.

The first doctor to enter the building described in his diary: every inch of the floor is covered with “bits and pieces of kids’ holiday clothes, shoes, aprons, ribbons, school supplies...ripped and charred bodies of children and adults...” Many Beslan residents blame Russian security forces for the

botched rescue effort because numerous hostages lost their lives in “friendly fire” directed against the terrorists. Yet, “it wasn’t Russian authorities who stuffed basketball nets with explosives and shot children in the back as they tried to run away” (Brooks). The longer the hostage crisis lasted, the greater was the chance for a catastrophe; one of several explosive devices had to go off sooner or later. A bomb that the terrorists sloppily attached to the basketball hoop miraculously did not fall down for two days; on the third day it did.

Terrorism, as it revealed itself in Beslan, is a form of genocide. It is essentially different from terrorist acts in the past, including several against children, such as the 1974 assault on a school in the northern Israeli town of Ma’alot and the 2001 suicide attack in the “Delphinarium” discotheque in Tel Aviv. Beslan is a town of relatives; everyone has familial ties to everyone else. By orchestrating a school seizure, the terrorists aimed at the entire population, at every family. Psychologists refer to Beslan as a “special place,” a “death zone,” where everyone has experienced dying. There is an “infected space,” explain the locals; it’s like living in a cemetery. Even the live feel dead—at least a part of them is. Every resident is affected for life, as are Holocaust survivors.

Throughout the 20th century, terrorism evolved as a particularly brutal form of counterculture. It directed itself persistently, if not always explicitly, against the epoch’s intrinsic principles. The health and safety of children are among the few remaining values, impervious, perhaps sacred, in our skeptical post-modern reality. The choice of targets in Beslan could not have been more explicit in the terrorists’ message about the profundity of intended destruction.

The adherents of a universal murder cult loathe life’s spontaneous mobility, “filled with ambiguities,” noted Jungian psychologist John Haule during our conversation in the summer of 2004. They want “a static thing, where every

piece of reality is pinned down. And that would be death,” to which terrorists cater, as they seek to recast dynamic living—complex, filled with contradictions and ironies—into the stillness and single-mindedness of a graveyard. In their primitive belligerence, they strive to obliterate being, with all its perplexing, yet vibrant, manifestations. Predictably, terrorism as a form of thanatophilia strikes against children—the quintessence of vitality, of sparkling aliveness, the very symbol of life.

Anna Geifman, PhD, is the author of Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917 (1993) and Entangled in Terror: The Azef Affair and the Russian Revolution (2000). She is the editor of Russia under the Last Tsar: Opposition and Subversion, 1894-1917 (1999). Her last major publication is La mort sera votre dieu: du nihilisme russe au terrorisme islamiste (Paris, 2005). Dr. Geifman is Professor of History at Boston University where she teaches undergraduate and graduate classes on the history of imperial Russia, the USSR, and psychohistory. She may be reached at geifman@bu.edu.

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Editor's Introduction To State Terrorism

Terror and terrorism are not just phenomena of the 21st century. Right now the world is focused on the attacks of small groups of stateless terrorists who kill relatively few people but spread terror around the world. The reality is that most who have been terrorized and died in terror throughout history have suffered at the hands of governments—their own or others. In reading R.J. Rummel's *Death By Government* (2000), you will be shocked by the 262 millions killed as a result of the actions and policies of Mao Zedong, Joseph

Stalin, Adolph Hitler, Chiang Kai-shek, Pol Pot, Genghis Khan, and so many other leaders (Rummel, *Death*, p. v). Throughout history leaders have terrorized their subjects in the quest to secure or hold onto power, and in many cases, for their own sadistic and psychopathological reasons.

However, once in control of government, political power is best maintained not by terror, an expensive instrument to utilize, but by custom, ideology, and law. I invited Richard Lyman, who I met at psychohistory meetings almost three and one half decades ago, to write on some aspect of terror or terrorism. Below are the results of his erudition.

The Uses and Limits of State Terror in Classical Greece and Rome

Richard Lyman—Simmons College

There are thousands of cliché images of violent episodes where terror tactics were employed in classical history. When I was a child, there was a fleeting tendency to congratulate our victorious civilization on having outgrown those tendencies. Unfortunately, we have mainly learned how to be more devastating on a larger scale with greater physical distance between perpetrator and victim. Any sensitive person would be appalled at the hacking, slashing, thrusting, beheading, and throat-slitting that characterized the slaughter of ancient warfare. However, we know there is no real moral difference in the consequences to human flesh from a sword used at close range and a bomb dropped from great height onto an unseen enemy.

A closer examination of two great pieces of classical war literature gives us a somewhat different impression than the movie-driven image of that blood-soaked world. Although even before embarking on any reflections on classical

slaughter and the terror it evoked, one must concede a certain revulsion at the images of people by the hundreds, even thousands, being “put to the sword” in the methodical post-battle execution of a recently defeated and now helpless enemy. These were not even “collateral damage” victims but once-armed opponents whose continued survival was seen to be threatening, inconvenient, or impolitic. So let us agree at the outset to honor our discomfort as we look at ancient violence, but to set aside self-congratulation and present-mindedness. The two texts under consideration here are among the greatest pieces of literature from the ancient world, Thucydides’ *The History of the Peloponnesian War* and Caesar’s *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*. It is worth noting that both these authors had front-line combat experience with violent warfare. As with all writing, the outlook and bias of the author may be reflected, and each work is self-promoting in its own way.

Most liberal arts students of my generation have been exposed to the soaring rhetoric of Thucydides when he puts the eloquent ideal of the Athenian society into the mouth of Pericles (the Funeral Oration). For at least the last two centuries, there has flourished this image of a noble, open, and wonderful Athens, standing up to the harsh Spartan military machine. The legends are indeed charming, and fully developed in many surviving masterpieces of literature, but there are two other speeches given by Pericles, and they have a very different tone indeed. For example, in contrast to the eloquence and lofty rhetoric of the Funeral Oration, (Book 2, 60 et seq., Walter Blanco translation), he notes that, “You must stop thinking that you are fighting about just freedom versus slavery. It is also about the loss of the empire and about the danger you are in from being hated because of that empire. You hold your empire like a tyranny by now. Taking it is thought to have been criminal; letting it go would be extremely dangerous.” Lest we miss his point, Thucy-

dides elaborately lays out two incidents, the Melian Dialogue and the Mitylene Debate, both of which show us a harsher image of the Athenian spirit. Finally, with unmistakable clarity, Thucydides displays how even the beloved Athenians succumb to the temptations of power, and are corrupted and destroyed by it in the end. The moral of his tale could not be more clear, or stark, and demonstrates that, as E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), argues in a modern classic book, the Athenians so mishandled the challenges and responsibilities of freedom as to set that cause back for two millennia.

Let us therefore take a moment to look at these other critical pieces of Thucydides' great work. These are so often overlooked in the rush to find an ancient Athenian analogy for the open, democratic, progressive "good guys" we presume ourselves to be; locked in a life-and-death struggle with militaristic, repressive, and totalitarian "bad guys." Currently, fanatical religious fundamentalists have assumed the bad guy mantle. In the case of Mitylene (Book 3), before long-term war-making had corrupted the outlook of the Athenians, the order was first sent out to kill all the residents in the aftermath of a revolt, but "[t]he very next morning the Athenians were seized by regrets and second thoughts. They realized that the decision to destroy a whole city rather than just the guilty parties had been sweeping and cruel" (36). An extensive reconsideration pitted a hotheaded view against a moderate view, whereupon the more moderate view narrowly prevailed. A second ship was sent out, which arrived just barely in time to avert the general slaughter of the population. In the Melian Dialogue, which took place later in the slide of Athenian moral corruption, Thucydides creates an obviously artificial discussion, point by point, with the leadership of Melos (Book 5, 84-116). It makes his key point, with horrifying and stark prose. The Athenians tell the people of the island Melos, "Each of us must exercise what

power he really thinks he can. Those who have power use it, while the weak make compromises. You would benefit by surrendering before you experience the worst of consequences, and we would benefit by not having you dead.” The Athenians declare “this isn’t a contest about manly virtue between equals, or about bringing disgrace on yourself. You are deliberating about your very existence, about standing up against a power far greater than yours.” They go on to say that Gods and men “both are always forced by the law of nature to dominate everyone they can. Don’t you see that expediency is safe, and that doing the right and honorable thing is dangerous?” Thucydides reports that after a siege “they agreed to terms whereby the Athenians could do with them as they liked. The Athenians thereupon killed all the males of fighting age they could capture and sold the women and children into slavery.”

By this brutal conclusion to the negotiations with the Melians, the Athenians demonstrated that they had entirely abandoned their original policy of enlightened openness in favor of terror and total repression. The first great historical democracy punished those who stood in its way and sought to spread terror among others who might be tempted to do so.

When we turn to Julius Caesar, we have to look past the images supplied by Shakespeare, in order to get back to the real man in his actual times. He was physically brave, even reckless, highly visible to his men on the field of battle, rushing to points of danger or even swimming through dangerous waters to rally and lead his troops in person. Therefore, we absolutely must concede that he knew about bloodshed first-hand, but he also knew well how to restrain the use of terror and violence.

In Julius Caesar’s early life he heard about and witnessed the carnage of The Social War against the longtime allies of the Romans. Originally, these non-Roman Italians

had revolted in order to gain full Roman citizenship rights, but they were harshly opposed and put down with great bloodshed. Ironically, at the end, the rebellious former allies were forced, as a condition of their surrender, to accept full citizenship rights. In retrospect, it is hard to imagine a more futile or stupid use of military violence. Perhaps having learned from this horror, in Gaul against a dedicated and resourceful foe Caesar indeed won out, but imposed a peace upon the conquered that was beneficent enough that Gaul became a key bastion of Roman rule and order for centuries thereafter.

There is a remarkable moment during Caesar's pursuit of his rival Pompey across Greece when city after city closed its gates to his troops (thus depriving them of critical supplies such as food and water). Further, he had just lost a skirmish or two, his army was starving, and his fortune seemed to be in decline. If he stopped too long to plunder supplies in a foray, the enemy he was pursuing would get away, regroup, set traps, and thus win out against him. So he created an exemplary assault. He took an otherwise militarily insignificant city and turned it over to plunder (as was the custom) and violent repression of the population. As a consequence, Caesar found eager cooperation from other terrorized city dwellers and their leaders as he continued onward to Metropolis and beyond into Thessaly in his pursuit of Pompey. "Not a single state in all Thessaly subsequently refused adherence to Caesar or compliance with his demands" (F. P. Long translation of *The Civil War*, 163-4). He was fully intending to win regardless of what got in his way. His use of terror tactics in this instance was relatively restrained, and definitely purposeful rather than merely irrational and habitual as has often been the case in history.

Indeed, one could argue thus: the tranquilizing restraint and pacifying openness famously and successfully shown by his successor Octavian (Augustus) had already

been exemplified for him by his uncle Julius Caesar. Violence and terror were tools to him as they were to Julius, definitely to be used as a last resort and only to be used with restraint and for highly specific purposes. They might be seen as analogous to a lever; one might choose to push on the terror end but only for very specific goals, and for a limited time. Indeed, under Octavian, exile was frequently preferred to physical punishment. The humane conduct of that most inhumane activity of our species, warfare, is critical to the establishment of lasting peace. Restraint, precision, and respect for the humanity of the foe are key elements that lead to long-lasting hegemony for Rome or to a short-lived golden realm for Athens that frittered away its glorious promise at great and ongoing cost to whole civilizations and their millions.

Richard Lyman, PhD, took his doctoral degree in Medieval history at Harvard University in 1974. He began his teaching career at Simmons College where he covered a wide variety of subjects, mostly in early European history. His courses included historiography, the history of childhood and the family, and New Approaches to History which stressed subjects such as the history of violence and oppression as well as psychohistory. Then he turned most of his attention to instructing students in Japanese and world history until his retirement in 1998. In that same year Professor Lyman began a second career teaching Modern Japanese history at Brandeis University from which he has also retired, although he continues to do some lecturing. His publications include a few co-authored books, a number of articles, and about 100 book reviews. Dick Lyman may be contacted at richard.lyman@simmons.edu. □

Gorgias, the Encomium of Helen, and the Trauma of War

Lawrence Tittle—Loyola Marymount University

A giant warrior at Marathon, a flaming cross at the Milvian Bridge, the Angel of Mons—these are only a few of the strange, mad phenomena of war that might be cited. What are the explanations of such apparitions? Why do soldiers across the ages report miraculous and strange visions? The answer surely lies in the stress of battle, and perhaps the first person to relate to battle-rattled soldiers was the philosopher and rhetorician Gorgias, perhaps better known as a rival of Socrates and foil for Plato.

From Leontini, Sicily, Gorgias arrived in Athens (c. 427 BC) on a diplomatic mission in the midst of the great Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta (431-404 BC), requesting aid for his hometown against the aggressions of neighboring Syracuse.¹ A talented and brilliant speaker, Gorgias' rhetoric explored the power of words and moral responsibility. One speech Gorgias composed about this time is the *Encomium of Helen*, an exhibition piece designed to absolve Helen of blame in abandoning Menelaus for Paris, a speech once described as "an essay on the nature and power of *logos*."² While the date of Gorgias' *Helen* is uncertain, it seems clear that the speech belongs to the wartime conditions of the Peloponnesian War. While arguing for Helen's innocence, Gorgias observes that "when warriors put on their armor and weapons, some for defense, others for offense, the mere sight of these terrifies the souls of some, who flee panic-stricken even from anticipated dangers as if these were really present." He goes on to declare "And [later] some of these [men] lose presence of mind, and others become unable to work, suffering terrible diseases or incurable madness."³

The value of this testimony is its reflection on the trauma of war. Beginning with the reference to soldiers preparing for battle, Gorgias' concern is to relate the consequences of war as an example of the power of sight and how this affects the mind. His intent is not to address the actual horrors of battle, of which he and those listening to his speech were only too aware. His primary goal is to expound on his view of the nature of logos and persuasion, which he takes a lighthearted theme to illustrate—defending Helen. But in doing so, he employs an oblique argument based on what people see (to continue his own imagery) in the world around them, in this case one suffering from the scourges of war.

Skeptics might argue that Gorgias is just playing with words. Editorial limitations do not allow for a thorough rebuttal of this position. Although an intellectual interested in philosophy and rhetoric, Gorgias was also a man of action; a diplomat and ambassador who was experienced in real-world issues (hence the embassy to Athens). Like his contemporaries, he knew what happened to those caught up in the bloody business of war and, as revealed in the stories told of the Athenian Epizelus and others described below, that survivors of it were radically changed by the experience.

In passing, then, Gorgias makes a statement about the psychological effects of war. The importance of this comment on the costs of war is the nature of the evidence provided. In terms of the use of primary evidence, that which is unintentional is the “purest” form primary evidence can take. Historian Arthur Marwick argues, for example, that a primary source is most valuable when the occasion of its use is furthest from the purpose of the historian.⁴

Written amid the trauma of war, Gorgias reflects unconsciously on the sights and realities of wartime Athens and Greece, where survivors of battle would have spoken of the

horrific things they had seen, where stories of others who had not survived would have been told. Examples of these have long been known. A famous one is Plato's account in the *Symposium*⁵ of Socrates calmly walking off the battlefield of Delium, a battle that took the lives of a thousand Athenians (comparable to some 16,000 American soldiers dying in a day in Iraq).⁶

Gorgias' reference is of importance first for its reference to sight and the horrors of war that the soldier sees and which he must always live with. He notes that seeing awful things causes some men to lose presence of mind or apparent control over their mental faculties. Examples of what Gorgias alludes to may be found in the battlefield experience of the Athenian Epizelus at Marathon who, on seeing the man next to him cut down, goes blind.⁷ Among the corpus of Epidaurian miracle inscriptions is the account of one Anticrates of Cnidus, which records "This man had been struck with a spear through both his eyes in some battle, and he became blind and carried around the spearhead with him, inside his face. Sleeping here, he saw a vision. It seemed to him the god pulled the dart and fitted the so-called girls (i.e., the pupils of the eyes) back into his eyelids. When day came he left well."⁸

While today these instances of hysterical blindness are easy enough for us to diagnose, contemporaries of these men would not have known or understood the physiology that induced these reactions to horrific sights. Herein lies the value of Gorgias' testimony. He actually senses a connection, though he could not have explained it, between the effects of going into battle, seeing horrific things, and how these affect the mind and changes the man. Again his words are worth reviewing: "many have become unable to work, suffering terrible diseases or incurable madness." In other words, experiencing war's violence breaks some who give up on life, becoming unable to function in a meaningful way;

others suffer breakdowns of the psyche that manifest themselves differently too. Essentially, Gorgias' description refers to the change of character, and if put alongside Jonathan Shay's list of symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, would compare favorably in many respects.⁹ Examples in the ancient literature of the sort of thing Gorgias relates would include Xenophon's account of the march of the 10,000 into the Persian Empire in 401 BC. A sober but illuminating story involves the Spartan commander Clearchus who is just about the unhappiest veteran I have ever run across, in reading or in real life. Xenophon describes a man who matches the picture of ruined life that Gorgias relates. You will recall that Gorgias refers to how many have fallen victim to useless labor, hardly curable illnesses, and madness. Compare this with Xenophon's portrait of Clearchus. A philopolemos, or "war-lover," Clearchus could have lived in peace but chose instead to make war; in fact, he dedicated his whole life to the pursuit of war, preparing for it in every way possible, relishing the experience of battle. Not only that, but he was a hard man, a brutal disciplinarian, incapable of personal relationships, and intolerant of authority.¹⁰

What Gorgias relates, and what the example of Clearchus reveals, is that the trauma of war manifests itself differently. Some, like those mentioned by Gorgias, are left debilitated physically and psychically. Others like Clearchus might still function as serving soldiers, but their social skills, their ability to lead a "normal" life, has been impaired. This reality has not changed. When I arrived in Vietnam in spring 1970 as a green and inexperienced infantry officer, I met and served with veteran soldiers like Clearchus, and watched them do things I thought just plain crazy—now I know differently. While time has mellowed the Vietnam veterans (and claimed many through drugs, violence, and Agent Orange) nearly 40 years later, our newspapers report stories of

another generation whose responses to the experience of war in Afghanistan and Iraq are no different as reflected in suicide rates in excess of the national average and in violent homecomings, inspiring films like “In the Valley of Elah” (2008). This, however, would not have surprised Gorgias, perhaps the first intellectual in the western tradition to observe and make a connection between war and its traumas.

Lawrence Tritle, PhD, Professor of History at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, a Vietnam combat veteran, and the author of numerous works, including Phocion the Good (1988), From Melos to My Lai: War and Survival (2000), and A New History of the Peloponnesian War (forthcoming, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). He may be contacted at ltritle@lmu.edu. □

¹ See W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Sophists*, 1971, p. 270.

² L. Versényi, *Socratic Humanism*, 1963 p. 44; for date of the speech, perhaps as late as c. 420-415 BC, see G. Calogero, “Gorgias and the Socratic principle *nemo sua sponte peccat*,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77, 1957, p. 16.

³ Text and translation in D.M. MacDowell, ed. and trans., *Gorgias. Encomium of Helen*, 1982/93, pp. 16-17. I have adapted the translation to make it clearer.

⁴ A. Marwick, *The Nature of History*, 1971, p. 177.

⁵ Plato, *Symposium* 221b.

⁶ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 4.94.1, 101.2 tells that 7000 Athenian hoplites fought in this battle and nearly 1000 died. This would have been a shocking loss for the general Athenian population, similar to that of thousands of Americans dying in Iraq (figure based on approximately 130,000 troops in Iraq, July 2009).

⁷ Herodotus, *Histories* 6.117.2-3.

⁸ L.R. LiDonnici, *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions*, 1995, p. 109.

⁹ J. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, 1994, p. xx.

¹⁰ Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.6.6-15; see further L.A. Tritle, “Xenophon’s Portrait of Clearchus: A Study in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” in *Xenophon and His World*, ed. by C.J. Tuplin, 172, pp. 325-39.

The Value of Psychohistory

What is Psychohistory Good For?

David R. Beisel—SUNY at RCC

When the question of what the uses of psychohistory are comes up in my classes—as it surely will—I begin by saying that practitioners of psychological history, as in all the social sciences, divide into two groups on this question, as they do in anthropology, psychology, and sociology.

First are the *pure researchers* who argue the work is worth doing for its own intellectual rewards and necessary to add to the store of human knowledge. Then there are those who argue that research must also have *practical value* and that the scholar's responsibility extends to using that knowledge to actively work for social, political, and economic change. A prime example of this is Robert Jay Lifton's work with Vietnam veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and his efforts to abolish nuclear weapons. Similarly, Vamik Volkan traveled to "hot spots" of seething violence, working to lessen the enmity of ethnic, national, and religious groups, especially after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Others have worked on several practical ways to improve childrearing and educate parents. Psychological anthropologist Howard Stein of the University of Oklahoma uses his understanding in many ways, including helping groups mourn losses and work through the inevitable administrative changes that take place in companies.

In addition, psychoanalysts rank at the top, or near the top, in the professions with the highest percentages of those who, anticipating the possibilities of a Nazi-occupied Europe, escaped to the U.S. in the 1930s. It is arguable that the insights implicit in psychoanalysis were spontaneously used in

a kind of personal “applied psychoanalysis” at least partly responsible for this decision.

Furthermore, psychological insight, wherever it comes from, can help in both our professional and private lives. It’s also important to improve childcare by raising awareness of contemporary child abuse and what was done to children in the past.

Knowing about trauma and the compulsion to relive it and how large and small groups behave, to give only two examples, can help us understand ourselves, why people in history and today do what they do, and keep us saner and calmer in crisis. Finally, I am reminded of Viktor Frankel’s personal concentration camp remembrances in *Man’s Search For Meaning*, where he observed that when fellow prisoners in the Nazi camps stopped collecting and trading cigarettes (the prisoners’ spontaneous currency), it signaled they had given up the will to live and would be dead in a few days. They came mostly from people who did not understand why the Nazis put them there. Aside from luck, survivors with enough psychological insight into the irrational had an advantage. In short, psychological history can help us survive.

David R. Beisel, PhD, has taught psychohistory to over six thousand students and may be contacted at dbeisel@sunyrockland.edu. □

How Will You Use Psychohistory?

Paul H. Elovitz—Ramapo College of New Jersey

Individuals derive different benefits from psychohistory. Denis O’Keefe was an accounting major at SUNY-Rockland when he was inspired by David Beisel’s psychohistory courses to turn to psychological knowledge and human services. Today he is a psychotherapist in private practice beginning his doctoral dissertation and delivering yearly

annual professional presentations to the International Psychohistorical Association (IPA).

Nancy Kobrin was a psychoanalyst in private practice in Minneapolis who was moved by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks to research and publish on the subject in *Clio's Psyche* before writing a book on the psychology of terrorism. In the summer of 2009 she gave up her therapy practice to train with the U.S. Army in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas for four to six months prior to being assigned to Afghanistan as a private contractor using her unique psychological and linguistic skills.

Evan Brown, Ravi Gurumurthy, and Matt Heitman are three Ramapo College students who decided to do a psychological independent study on the first 100 days of Barack Obama's presidency. This led them to present on a special student panel of the IPA's 2009 meetings at the Fordham University Law School in Manhattan, leading them to win an award with a monetary stipend. The paper they wrote on the subject is currently being anonymously refereed for publication, along with articles by professors from a dozen major universities.

How you will use the knowledge in these pages and in our field is a choice you must make. You can integrate it into your general knowledge, adding a valuable perspective. You can become a psychohistorical scholar and teacher—researching, teaching, and writing. If you are entering business you can use psychological insight to help you achieve success, as has been the case with a number of individuals who also made significant contributions to psychohistory. Perhaps you would like to become a popularizer for the subject, bringing our unique and valuable knowledge to the general public, just as Rachel Carson (1907-64) popularized the global environmental movement and Carl Sagan (1934-96) popularized astronomy and astrophysics.

How you will use psychohistorical knowledge is up

to you. Why not consider using it to open new perspectives on the world around you and the people in it, and finding a role in a valuable movement?

Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, has taught explicit psychohistory courses since 1972 and may be contacted at pelovitz@aol.com. □

Book Review

Education for Life: Berman's Use of Death to Teach About Life

Judith Harris—George Mason University

Review of Jeffrey Berman, Death in the Classroom: Writing about Love and Loss. Albany: SUNY Press, 2009. 283 pages, ISBN: 0791476316 (hardcover) at \$74.95, ISBN: 0791476324 (paperback) at \$24.95.

Jeffrey Berman is no stranger to taking risks in the composition classroom. His use of psychoanalysis as a tool in composition has resulted in a series of pedagogical works that examine the impact of writing and reading about traumatic subjects. Praised by traditional and innovative critics alike, Berman's method continues to be groundbreaking, allowing the students to speak for themselves, through journal and diary entries. This is his riskiest book, demonstrating how their writing about death and bereavement affected classmates and teacher alike, leading to educational and psychological breakthroughs.

Death in the Classroom is structured similarly to his earlier books, *Diaries to an English Professor*, *Surviving Literary Suicide*, *Risky Writing*, and *Empathetic Teaching*. The subject of each book is based on a course Professor Berman has taught and, after much reflection and research, which he

synthesizes into a compelling study of the writing classroom. He assigns reading material (typically literary works) that become catalysts for self-disclosures interspersed throughout the pages of the text. He also includes detailed syllabi, bibliographies, appendices, and letters from past students looking back on how the course influenced or transformed their lives, giving them psychological insights into their lives.

Throughout, Berman demonstrates the vitality of a teacher and critic immersed in the process of teaching, and understanding what and whom he is teaching. His willingness to openly examine his own life is infectious among the students—as each in his or her own way follows a line of inquiry that he or she may not have done before—becoming a more thoughtful and fully realized human being. Yet, Berman takes many risks in encouraging students to delve into their most private thoughts, remembrances, and fantasies—in order to mine material that is painful, drawing, understandably, negative attention as well as positive. Teaching writing is probably, aside from individual psychoanalytic treatment, the most favorable setting for pursuing psychoanalytic practice and research. Yet, one might still wonder if a psychoanalytic “writing cure” is appropriate for all students. Furthermore, should a teacher, or a “lay psychoanalyst” be using psychoanalytic techniques in the classroom that deliberately probe controversial topics such as sexual abuse, addiction, suicide, eating disorders, AIDS, or betrayals of trust?

Professor Berman is the first to acknowledge that he is not a trained therapist and he is not interested in psychoanalyzing his students. His belief is that when students are engaged into topics that are truly personal to them, they write better essays. As an individual and as a society, we can use the psychoanalytic process to avoid unwittingly repeating past patterns that are detrimental to our self-development and transformation.

It is important to see Berman as a researcher who draws from a vast fund of psychological literature and scientific studies of the benefits of cathartic writing. He is no novice, having served as a research scholar at the Training Institute of the National Association for Psychoanalysis (NPAP), giving him a background for writing his early literary analysis. In *The Talking Cure* (a study of representations of psychoanalysis in literature), Berman showed an appreciation for how the reader fills in the gaps in the text with his or her own understandings through the filter of his or her own biases and unconscious identifications.

Professor Berman innovatively turned the focus of his teaching of writing through literary analysis from interpreting literature to relying on the students themselves to a greater extent. Their thoughts, feelings, and fantasies about the subject matter of the text became more of the focus as they thereby disclosed as much about themselves as about the meaning of the text. From here, it is easy to see how Berman moved to the next step by encouraging students to reflect on the trauma represented in the literature through empathizing and examining their own life experiences. In my view, the procedure is akin to the psychoanalytic process in which the analyst's job is to reflect back to the patient what is learned from his or her transference and defenses—making the “text” all about the patient (or reader). Consistently, Berman sheds light on a process that is powerfully insightful and meaningful to students in ways that writing academic essays will never be.

This professor is not alone in his conviction that personal testimony, or first-hand experience, can be extended into larger social ramifications in research projects. Aware of how volatile topics such as anorexia or AIDS may be, Berman takes measures in order to protect student privacy. He assures his students that diaries are confidential and do not contribute to the final grade; he protects anonymity. Stu-

dents can always opt out of having a diary read by their professor or classmates. He does not address the content of the diary, only the mechanics or grammar errors that obscure or hinder a writer's communication with his reader. His books, such as *Surviving Literary Suicide* (1999), *Risky Writing* (2002), and *Empathic Teaching* (2004), encourage college students to write safely on a wide range of subjects often deemed too personal or too dangerous for the classroom, from grieving the loss of a friend to confronting sexual abuse. His focus is on the safeguard flowing from the non-critical empathetic approach to the experiences, feelings, and thoughts of others in the classroom. Through a discussion of several well-known stories, such as *Goodbye Mr. Chips*, Berman discusses how teachers who are regarded as trusting, supportive, and dependable become attachment figures, influencing students to be more sensitive to and connected with their classmates' lives. As Berman succinctly puts it, empathic teaching leads to empathic learning: an education for life.

In 2002, Berman's wife of 30 years received the devastating news that she had terminal cancer. Anguished and in shock, Berman tried to cope with his pain, finding some relief in teaching, immersing himself in the lives of his students. At times, he drew on his own resources as a catalyst for students writing about grief, or the loss of loved ones through death or abandonment. Two years after his wife's death, he published a stunning memoir *Dying to Teach*, which takes an unflinching look at dying, and spousal bereavement. Writing, Berman reasons, is the only way we can memorialize those who have gone from us, by giving presence to what has become irremediably lost. *Death in the Classroom* comes out of this experience. No one is spared the inevitability of death, and hardest of all is accepting the actuality of one's own death. We may return to it cyclically, or through a process of forgetting and remembering. Berman

writes that we cannot so much teach death as much as “that we can teach our own perceptions of death, our own experiences with the dying, and we can learn from others’ experiences. Students who shared their essays on death also learned from classmates’ experiences.” Consequently, “students discovered that their anger, sadness, confusion, and guilt are part of the process of grieving.”

The book is divided into sections in which students are encouraged to explore their own feelings about death through very unusual means, such as asking students to invent obituaries of each other or to write an eulogy for a loved one. While these assignments may strike some readers as being too depressing or prompting of students’ painful emotions, many of the students reported feeling better after writing. Writing the eulogy made them feel closer to the lost loved one, or helped them make necessary reparations, or eased their grief by allowing language to absorb and distract them from uncontrollable grief. The classroom discussions following Berman’s reading the eulogies aloud proved useful in helping students to empathize with others and realizing that they are not alone in their conflicted feelings about death. As Berman quotes one student, “It’s an important thing in the grieving process, and helps you gain a perspective. It’s therapeutic.”

In Chapter Four, students read “The Book of Job” in order to raise conflicts one feels about death—how unfair it is—and how to justify a God who can bestow life only to take it away. Such a discussion naturally turns to issues of faith and religious belief and Berman reports that one student became angry with him and accused him of being a “false prophet.” Here I think Berman is on his riskiest ground because he has already disclosed to the students that he is an agnostic, setting up a potential problem regarding a student’s wish to emulate her teacher. A chasm as deeply separating as religious conviction and agnosticism may pose a threat to

the student's sense of self. A more affecting chapter involves students reading *Wuthering Heights* and imagine being Cathy Heathcliff, whose mother died in childbirth, writing a letter to her deceased mother about this deep deprivation in their lives—enabling students to again cycle through feelings about the value of life and its richness when seen through the glass darkly—of the loss of life. How would life differ if one had no mother?

Chapter Seven returns to the classroom dynamics. Here, the self-disclosures of the teacher about his own grief over his wife's death help students to be more empathetic towards their classmates. Although death is the anxious object, something to be feared, talking and writing about it as a group provides the kind of solidarity among students that grief groups offer participants—but this is through reading other writers' works, including a novel that deals with the topic of euthanasia, a particularly heated and controversial topic.

In “Ten Things to Do Before I Die” students became more aware of what constitutes living than what constitutes dying. The final chapter devoted to “A Teacher's Self-Elegy” is perhaps the most moving entry in the long series of Berman's books in which he articulates a life project. He writes of himself as identified with a pedagogical relationship “based on reciprocal trust and, within professional boundaries, love.” He does “not regard himself as a master” and is “keenly aware of the deficiency of his education.” He does not “regard his students as disciples” since he believes he learns “as much from his students as he hoped they learn [ed] from him.”

As with all of Berman's books, *Death in the Classroom* deals with an extremely important topic. Through the publishing of student essays as literature rather than as case studies—our attitudes toward taboos can be understood if not

transformed, helping students, through reading, writing, and classroom discussion, to reflect on their lives. Jeffrey Berman states his professorial credo quite clearly: “Writing is one of the very best ways to confront a problem, because writing something often allows us to see a solution to a problem we hadn’t seen before. Writing will identify a problem and then find ways of responding to that problem.” Yet his books are about so much more. They restore our belief in the human contract, that is, we understand what is meant by the golden rule. There is no discourse alone that can teach us how to love or how to die, but there is the discourse that teaches us how to learn.

Judith Harris, PhD, who teaches at George Mason University, is the author of Signifying Pain: Constructing and Healing the Self through Writing (2003), two books of poetry published by Louisiana State University Press, and a wide variety of pieces on psychoanalysis and writing. Her latest poems have been published in Slate, The New Republic, and The Atlantic Monthly. Professor Harris can be contacted at jlha@gwmail.gwu.edu. □

Psychohistory Meeting Report

Exploring the Psychobiography of an Elusive Artist

**Cassandra Langer, Irene Javors,
and Paul H. Elovitz**

Probing the childhood, creativity, and life of the elusive artist Romaine Brooks (1874-1970) was the focus of the January 31, 2009 Psychohistory Forum Work-In-Progress meeting. The presenters—Cassandra Langer and Irene Javors—are an art critic/art historian and a psychotherapist.

The paper they had sent out prior to the meeting was focused on Brooks' childhood and presented partly in the form of a dialogue between the two collaborators who are writing a book on the subject. This essay includes a discussion of the meeting and a thumbnail sketch of the life of this émigré American artist.

Beatrice Romaine Goddard was born in 1874 in Italy as the fourth and youngest child to parents who came from prominent American families. Her brother, who later became schizophrenic, was the favored child; one sister died in her first year; and she makes almost no mention of her other sister, who shared in her inheritance after the death of her mother in 1902. There is a formal family portrait depicting her as a one-year-old, which was made not long before her parents divorced. Her abusive mother was constantly moving the family from hotel to hotel, neglecting her daughter to the point of leaving her with a laundress in Philadelphia when she went to Europe and pursued a cure for her son. The laundress allowed Beatrice to paint, which her mother did not, and cared for her despite money not being provided for the several years that the child was in her charge prior to being claimed by a grandfather. When her life with her mother resumed, it included additional abandonment taking the forms of placement in an Episcopal boarding school for several years and a convent in Italy where she attempted suicide as a 14-year-old. As a young woman, Beatrice briefly married the homosexual John Ellingham Brooks—taking his name. Throughout her long life she appeared to have an unstable identity living in the shadows, as is depicted in some of her artistic work.

In the normal format of our Saturday Work-In-Progress meetings the paper was sent out some weeks ahead of time with a cover letter so that all could read it and be prepared to have a discussion rather than to simply have a paper read at them. As usual, participants introduced themselves

and asked questions, which were answered by the presenters in the course of an extensive and far-reaching exchange. Some questions were on the nature of the sources available and why the dialogue was not more extensive. References were made to Beatrice Romaine Goddard Brooks having written an unpublished memoir, *No Pleasant Memories*, in the 1930s. Her letters are mostly written from Tulsa, Oklahoma and Italy.

Romaine Brooks is not better known as an artist for a variety of reasons. One, because of her independent, inherited wealth, very few of her paintings ended up in museums, since she had no need to sell them. Two, she was on the wrong side in World War II. In the First World War, she had been awarded a Legion of Honor by the French government for her contributions to their cause. However, in World War II, her pro-Fascist, anti-Semitic inclinations made her a very unpopular person after the fall of fascism.

Javors and Langer raised many interesting issues regarding Brooks' psychology. These included her stoicism, her elitism and idealization of the great men leading to her ultimate attraction to Italian fascism, and her sense of being a social pariah who felt superior to those condemning her as a social pariah because of belief she was an outsider genius artist. They also raised questions about her sexuality and its relationship to her art. A lively discussion ensued regarding her links with various famous figures of the 20th century, including Ezra Pound, Man Ray, Bernard Berenson, Ida Rubinstein, Gertrude Stein, Somerset Maugham, Virgil Thompson, Gabriele d'Annunzio, Martha Gelhorn, and Natalie Barney, with whom she had a 50-year open relationship.

There was considerable interest in Brooks' anti-Semitism. She associated Jews with the modernism she detested. She also had a good deal of contact with Jews, including her lover of 50 years, the writer Natalie Barney who

was “one quarter Jewish.” To her, Jews express their emotions readily, which made her uncomfortable. However, like her mother, she could be very strongly influenced by those around her, apparently at times despite her attempts to resist. This was very clear, as in the case of the Jewish playwright Henri Bernstein who she despised as an outspoken Jew. Yet, when approached by him to redo his Paris apartment, she was persuaded to undertake the renovation while complaining about his lack of taste to a friend. This very emotional woman was quite fearful of the open expression of emotions, perhaps relating to the mental instability of her mother and schizophrenia of her favored older brother. Irene Javors suspects that sexual abuse was a factor in her fear of opening up. She was dark and “looked like a Jew” or gypsy, who at the time also occupied outsider status within European culture. Romaine was an outsider as a lesbian. So, it is interesting that she felt she had to find a group that she could discriminate against.

The psychoanalyst Robert Quackenbush asked why the authors have such an intense interest in Brooks. Langer was fascinated by the art and Javors was interested in the psychology of her fascist positions and how all of this played out in the art. The artist's gender ambiguity is also of interest.

Further discussion involved an analysis of Brooks' art. Her work was certainly not avant-garde which had something to do with her dislike of Gertrude Stein, whose Parisian circle/salon was quite avant-garde. In the 1920s, which might be considered the golden age of modernism, Stein was the center of a non-avant-garde circle in Paris.

An interesting aspect of Langer and Javors' search for the art of the expatriate American was a trip to a chateau outside Paris after years of letters to an elderly eccentric who is the major collector of Romaine Brooks' art. The woman has

a treasure trove of work from many different periods, which for three hours she showed to our authors without ever offering them a drink of water, cup of tea, or bathroom facilities. She was even reluctant to allow them to leave because of the shared appreciation, despite having to work through a translator, of this insufficiently known artist. Our hostess, the psychologist Flora Hogman, who travels regularly to Paris, expressed considerable desire to find out more about Brooks' collection, the eccentric enthusiast, and the chalet itself.

We then went on to a discussion of Brooks' many creative gifts. Romaine Brooks had a beautiful voice and loved to sing. Javors and Langer see a definite tie-in between her art and her musicality. Robert Quackenbush experienced the singing as a call to the mother. Even so, he paradoxically wondered if her art was also designed specifically in opposition to her mother. Moreover, he raised the possibility of multiple personalities based on the considerable variation between her sketches, illustrations, and paintings.

The role of color, or rather the unusual lack thereof, in the paintings under discussion was an important focus. Most of Brooks' work was done in shades of black and white. Her early sketches had lots of color, but it disappeared as she struggled to put a lid on her emotions. The 1923 *Self Portrait* shared with the group reflected gender ambiguity. (See <http://jssgallery.org/OtherArtists/RomaineBrooks/Self-Portrait1923.htm>.) The eyes are in the shadows, reflecting a woman who was incredibly ambivalent about being seen; who wavered between exposure and concealment here and throughout her life. She also stands very much in the foreground of the portrait, befitting a narcissist, quite apart from the backdrop of an urban, people-less, ruined landscape.

Her 1930 *Caught* (graphite on paper) reflects her fear of engulfment (See <http://mommalibrarian.vox.com/library/>

photo/6a00fae8d762f0000b0110164fd54d860c.html.) In it a barely female figure (as indicated by longish hair and tiny breasts) is struggling against three animalistic semi-human demon-like creatures as she teeters at the edge of a ledge. One, with a pig-like snout, is pulling at her and another standing on her body has its mouth almost attached to her lower face. Her foot is on one of the creatures, which appears to be subdued, in sharp contrast to the other two who are attempting to subdue her. Several interesting aspects of the sketch are that all four creatures appear to be together and the female is in the light while the demons are mostly in gray areas of darkness. Everyone felt clearly that this is another self-portrait of this very conflicted, self-referential woman. The signature is on the lower left, rather than the right, side of the sketch, with the "B" for "Brooks" coming before the "R" for "Romaine."

Upon her mother's death at the beginning of the 20th century, Romaine did a powerfully emotional mourning picture titled *Self Portrait* in which she is enveloped in veils. Robert Quackenbush spoke about the level in which an artist is influenced by mood, going through different periods of intense work and then becoming emotionally blocked.

By the end of this extremely interesting discussion, Javors and Langer pointed out that although Brooks continues to be a mystery, she emphatically stated on her tombstone "Here remains Romaine-who Remains Romaine!" Clearly she knew what if we do not.

Cassandra Langer, PhD, is a former senior fellow of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., author and co-author of six books, many articles, and numerous catalogs and essays. She has taught at Hunter College, Queens College, School of Visual Art, The Feminist Art Institute, Florida International University and the University of South Carolina. Dr. Langer is currently working on a criti-

cal study of Romaine Brooks and can be contacted at doc-noir@hotmail.com. Irene Javors' biography is on page 131. Paul H Elovitz, PhD, is Director/Convener of the Forum and can be contacted at cliospsycheeditor@gmail.com.

[**Editor's Note:** The reader can view some of Brooks' work online at: <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/results/?page=1&num=10&image=1&view=0&name=&title=&keywords=&type=&subject=&number=&id=599.>]

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Due January 10, 2010

Articles of 500-1500 words (and two long ones) are welcome, as are additional suggestions. Contact Co-Editors Peter Petschauer at petschauerpw@appstate.edu or Paul Elovitz at Pelovitz@aol.com

BULLETIN BOARD

CONFERENCES: The first **Psychohistory Forum Work-In-Progress Saturday Seminar** will be on **September 12**, when **Danielle Knafo**, **David Beisel**, and **Paul Elovitz** will present on “**The Psychology of Remembering 9/11: The Uses and Abuses of Trauma.**” On November 7, 2009 the next meeting will be on **The Psychology of Health Care and Reform** with papers by **David Lotto**, **Denis O’Keefe**, et al. At the 32nd Annual International Psychohistorical Association (**IPA**) meetings at Fordham Law School in Manhattan papers were presented by a variety of Psychohistory Forum members including David Beisel, **Irene Javors**, **Henry Lawton**, David Lotto, Denis O’Keefe, and **Charles Strozier**. At the IPA panel on the Obama presidency, sponsored by the **Presidential Research Group of the Psychohistory Forum**, there were presentations by **Ken Fuchsman** and Paul Elovitz. At the June 26-30, 2009 International Association for the Study of Dreams (**IASD**) conference in Chicago **Mena Potts** presented “Psychohistorical Dreamwork” and her husband **Dominic Potts** delivered “The Dialectical and Rhetorical Role of Language in Montague Ullman’s Language of Dreams.” At the same session **Judy Gardiner** presented “A Journey in Fragmentation and Wholeness” and **Wendy Pannier**’s paper was on “Working with Healing Dream Imagery.” All of these presentations, and others, were building on the contributions of and dedicating their research to the memory of the late **Montague (Monte) Ullman**. **Peter Loewenberg** is among our members who presented at the **July 13-17, 2009** International Society of Political Psychology (**ISPP**) conference at Trinity College in Dublin. The Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society (**APCS**) will meet on **October 9-10, 2009** at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. Among those who are expected to present or serve on roundtables are **Fred Alford**, David Beisel, **Marilyn Charles**, Paul Elovitz, **Tom Ferraro**,

and **Hanna Turken**. The National Association for Psychoanalysis (NAAP) annual conference will be in Manhattan on **October 17, 2009**. **PUBLICATIONS:** On June 10, 2009 **Flora Hogman** gave the talk, "The Therapeutic Virtues of Chocolate: A Controversy in History," to the annual gala conference of American Association of French Speaking Health Professionals. Charles Strozier reports that his book, *New York City and 9/11: A Psychological Study of the World Trade Center Disaster* is scheduled to be published this winter. **NOTES ON MEMBERS:** We welcome new members **Kristina MacGaffin** and **Edward Rickert**. **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 Terence O'Leary; Sustaining Members Dick Booth, Judith Gardiner, Peter Pet-schauer, and Jacques Szaluta; Supporting Members Fred Alford, Rudolph Binion, Andrew Brink, Tom Ferraro, John Hartman, Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, Hanna Turken, and Nancy Unger; Members Willa Bernhard, Dick Booth, Bob Lentz, Kristina MacGaffin, Peggy McLaughlin, Ruth Neubauer, and Edward Rickert. Our special thanks for thought provoking materials to Francis Beer, David Beisel, Lyle Bourne, Matthew Bowker, Dan Dervin, Paul Elovitz, Tom Ferraro, Anna Geifman, Judith Harris, Alice Healy, Irene Javors, Danielle Knafo, Cassandra Langer, Richard Lyman, Robert Quackenbush, Jerry Piven, Ann Saltzman, Charles Strozier, and Lawrence Tritle. To Matthew Reed and Brian Todd for their work on the Psychohistory Forum's Wikipedia Project. To Brian Todd and Caitlin Adams for editing, proofing, and Publisher 2003 software application. Our special thanks to our numerous, overworked referees, who must remain anonymous. ◻

Call for Papers
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- Assisted suicide struggles
- Legal and illegal drugs
- Health classification and self-identity: mental illness, hyperactivity, and so forth
- The role of psychoanalysis in health care systems
- Probing the psychobiographies of leading health care leaders and innovators

Due October 10, 2009

Articles of 500-1500 words (and two long pieces)
are welcome.

Contact Paul Elovitz at pelovitz@aol.com

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

