Clio’s Psyche
Understanding the “Why” of Culture, Current Events, History, and Society

The Flame of Trauma Symposium

A Holocaust Survivor & Psychohistorian

Brazilian Bolsonaro Is No Trump

The Anderson/Strozier Lincoln Dialogue

A Male Response to the #MeToo Movement

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The Flame of Trauma Symposium

The Flame of Trauma

Peter Petschner—Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

Abstract: This essay explores the acute distress disorders and subsequent traumas of seven individuals during and after WWII. Besides me, four of the individuals are men and three are women; aside from me, one of the men and two of the women are alive. Two of the men were German soldiers and prisoners of war in eastern Siberia; one was an SS officer and prisoner of war; one of the women dealt with living as a Jew in Nazi occupied Warsaw “in plain sight”; two of the women dealt with the murder/death of their brother; and one man saw his father maligned for years. Each dealt differently with the consequences of their stressful experiences, that is, their trauma.

Keywords: acute-stress-disorder, authoritarians, David H. Barlow, fathers-and-sons, Howard Stein, intergenerational-trauma, Nazis, prisoners-of-war, Sabine Bode, trauma, WWII

Two examples for individuals accepting, even embracing traumatic experiences, come from two family friends; one lived near Munich, the other near Düsseldorf, Germany. Both men were captured in Eastern Europe in 1944 during WWII and spent more than ten years in Soviet captivity in Siberia. Benno Herrmannsdörfer was a young Wehrmacht soldier (Germany’s unified armed forces during the Nazi period) who took to the experience with gusto and learned to work successfully as a mason and developed other skills in freezing temperatures. Franz Battré was a Wehrmacht tank officer who somehow managed to survive by working as little as possible. After returning in 1955, with successful careers in the reemerging Germany, both died in their early 90s. I met them soon after their return from Siberia.

For some survivors of horrendous situations, trauma simmers as they disassociate themselves from it for extended periods of time and then, because of a specific trigger, it returns full force and possibly inspires a helpful resolution or becomes destructive. For still others, the flame never dies down and consumes them.

Benno, from a Bavarian farm family, told me several times of two key survival strategies he learned in Siberia: one, “always
clean up your workplace when you leave in the evening so you can start fresh the next morning,” and two, “mix salt in the mortar if you want it to hold at below freezing temperatures.” Franz, descendant of a prominent German Huguenot family, reported that he did not usually have to leave camp for work because the women who checked the men’s rear cheeks to see “if we still had sufficient meat for us to work” usually let him stay behind; after all, “I have a French ass and there was never any fat on it.” He also managed to survive sporadic shootings; every so often the Soviet guards shot every tenth officer.

After he returned from Siberia, Benno could do almost anything, including building a house for himself and his friends. Franz picked up his major sales job with renewed energy and lived life to the fullest. (A similar story is featured in Birgitta Gottlieb McGalliard’s Tears Stolen by the Russian Gulag: My Father’s True Story [2016].)

Aside from the unique stresses of Siberian captivity, several other men whom I met were unable to deal with it afterward; once lit, the fire of trauma burned them up. Two committed suicide soon after they returned from Siberia, unable to find anything positive in the camp experience and unsuccessful in their attempts to reconnect to their wives, families, and German society. Unlike the first two men, who seemed not to carry away deep trauma from the ten years of captivity under the most brutal circumstances imaginable, one could say as David H. Barlow did that these other men had either “general biological vulnerabilities,” a “generalized psychological vulnerability,” or a “tendency to focus anxious apprehension on the perceived danger of specific events, thoughts, or objects.” (Elaborated in Thomas A. Widiger and Maryanne Edmundson, “Diagnoses, Dimensions, and DSM-5,” in David H. Barlow, ed., The Oxford Handbook of Clinical Psychology, 2010, 286.)

Difficult Adjustments
Four other accounts tell of difficult adjustments after a trauma-creating event, or series of events, and how the individuals of whom they speak dealt with the rekindled flame. The first pertains to Zohara Muschinski Boyd, a very close Jewish friend and colleague of mine at Appalachian State University, who survived in plain sight from 1942 to 1945 with her father, mother, and her mother’s younger sister in Warsaw and thus escaped the Nazi genocide. Aside from the threatening experience as a whole, the collapse of a basement during a bombing raid and two German sol-
diers wounding her father were particularly stressful.

During the particularly massive raid, the family, along with many others, cowered in the basement of a massive apartment building. A bomb, named “cow” for its mooing sound, directly hit the building; one side of it collapsed and killed everyone in it. Boyd’s side stayed upright and the family survived. She never forgot the choking dust and suffered fears of it overwhelming her, especially at night when a cold seemed to choke her.

The two soldiers who shot at her father most likely thought that he was placing a bomb in a trash can near their apartment complex, not desperately foraging for food. After it turned dark, as a three-year-old, she recalls a figure crawling toward the complex and her mother’s flowery dress turning completely red as she lifted the figure; it turned out to be her father. A bullet had glanced off his back and “blood seemed to be everywhere.”

For years, Boyd had two unique dreams about this event. One in which a coachman of a stagecoach in the West was attacked by robbers and shot in the back; every time, a red splotch spread across the back of his white shirt. The second dream was about a bank robbery in which a white shirted guard was hit by a bullet, a red splotch spreading.

For Dr. Boyd, the flame never burned out; sometimes she approached it, but for the most part she stayed away from it. For years, she did not speak about her uniquely stressful experiences in the Warsaw of WWII. She finally was able to deal with this past when she began teaching a Holocaust course with a colleague from Appalachian State University’s History Department and then by speaking later about her experiences with me in elementary schools, high schools, colleges, and universities. The painful traumatic flame was in a sense fully reignited, but as an intellectual, she was able to approach it and reached a specific solution: she taught and spoke about it. She became a witness for those who could speak no more.

The second story took place in June 1945 when three former Wehrmacht soldiers arrived at the Egarter Farm in Afers/Eores of South Tyrol with the news that Albert Clara, the owner, had been killed in Yugoslavia. Three of us, Agnes (Neas), Maria (Moitz) Clara, and I sat at the cold water trough by the entrance of the main house, the firehouse, and listened to the men talk about their experiences and the man who was the girls’ beloved brother and my role
model. On this sunny day, I remember tattered uniforms and awful news.

The young women at the trough were known as the “Egita Gitsch’n” (the Egarter girls). Their mother, the Egarterin, had borne 13 children; Neas and Moitz were two of the four surviving daughters. Albert had been the only surviving son. As one of them put it many years later, they stored the death of their brother in a drawer and let the flame simmer, so to speak. Then suddenly it was there again, fully lit.

Neas, the older, barely remembered the soldiers at the trough in front of the house until 10 years later and then again 30 years later when the whole agony reemerged. The first conversation with a survivor brought the case back for a few months and then 30 years later, another survivor told her the story about her brother’s horrific injuries and death in a military hospital.

For Moitz, the youngest of the Egarterin’s daughters, the issue also simmered until the time I began research on In the Face of Evil around 2013 about her mother and sister Neas. Moitz was by then in her late 80s. In several conversations with her and one of her nieces, she brought up her brother several times and hinted that I should discover the place where he died. One could say that I rekindled the simmering fire, but she let it return to simmer or maybe even become extinct when I reported to her that he had died in Madonna del Neve at the Sella Pass, near Bistiriza, and that a nurse had attended to him until his end (In the Face of Evil, 2014, 104). I never told her that Albert was most likely murdered after the end of the war when Yugoslavian partisans tortured and killed thousands of German soldiers.

In June 1945, at the scene at the trough, I was barely six years old, and yet it is one of my first memories. For me, too, the significance of this moment only came a lifetime later and along with it my understanding of a unique perspective of trauma; that is, the aftereffects of an acute stress disorder.

This set of stories would not be complete without two others. I have written about aspects of each, but never in the context of their coping with the acute stress disorder. One is about my father, Erich Patschauer. Today we call him a perpetrator and his trauma was surprisingly different from that of the others. His life-changing events began when he visited Dachau in July 1944, continuing with Germany’s loss of the war, his three-year captivity in
13 American prison camps, and its culmination in his expression of
disappointment with the National Socialist regime 20 years after the
end of the war. In a letter dated March 25/26, 1967, he wrote to me
that:

There was a time in my life in which I was full
of enthusiasm for that which at the time was
called Volksgemeinschaft. Later I realized that it
was not a peoples’ community at all, but rather one
characterized by fear, hate, envy (see the Seven
Deadly Sins) and the continuing abuse of all
the other divine laws.

As much as he tried after his visit to Dachau to disassociate
himself from the ugliness of what he had seen and all that followed,
the flame burned on and in the end burned up his body with dia-
tes and blindness. He tried to cope with it all and spoke about his
disappointment as the first postwar Fasching Prince in Amberg; he
joined the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD, Na-
tional Democratic Party of Germany) as a way to save what he
thought remained of Germany, but he left the party in 1968 when it
became, as he wrote to me, “too brown.”

Even as the intellectual he perceived himself (his PhD was
in journalism), he published neither about his stressful experiences
nor the aftereffects, which was almost equivalent to PTSD. He
only spoke about it a great deal with his second wife, Micky, and to
me over one long weekend in 1972. His stint in the SS in a very
real sense became my adopted or chosen trauma and, as an intellec-
tual, I took the route of writing about it.

The fourth story tells of Gerhard Waldheim, the son of Kurt
Waldheim, former head of the UN, and president of Austria. When
I met Gerhard, he was still deeply concerned about rescuing his fa-
thor from the accusations of having been a Nazi who participated in
war crimes. He had collected every shred of evidence that showed
his father was being accused falsely, even if he served as a first
lieutenant in the Wehrmacht in Russia and Yugoslavia, of being a
Nazi or having had positive opinions about them. As we spoke, I
realized that I could help him exonerate his father, just as many oth-
ers had before, but with the tools of a historian who has a reasona-
ably good understanding of psychology and trauma; that is, both
with a thorough investigation of the sources and psychological in-
sight.
In other words, this account is not about the father, but the son. Here was, and is, a decent man who was deeply offended and profoundly upset about the attacks by various groups in Austria and the U.S., and the misuse of documents and other evidence; all seemingly for no other purpose than political gain. I sensed that his highly developed sense of justice was being violated for purposes that had nothing to do with the man who was his father. “It is just not right,” he said many times.

Even before I wrote the most significant piece about his father (Peter W. Petschauer, “Uncomfortable Realities: Drs. Erich Petschauer [1907-1977], Gerhard Bast [1911-1947], and Kurt Waldheim [1918-2007],” Life Writing: Taylor and Francis, 12[3], July 29, 2015, 341-52), he let me know one day that “I cannot do this anymore; it is hollowing out my core and hurting my family.” He realized that his wife was being deeply affected by his unrelenting quest and that it was unfair to her and his children to be drawn into it. Worse, the flame was “eating him alive,” as one would say in some parts of the U.S. He had taken on this assault on his father, and indirectly of course on him as well. If he wanted to stay healthy, he either had to lower the intensity of the flame or turn away from it. His turn away from the defense of his father was a healthy response; he had done all he could.

But alas, when his mother died in February 2017, an article appeared about her having been a member in the BDM (Bund Deutscher Mädchen), that is, a Nazi. The reality is that Waldheim senior insisted that she leave the organization before marrying him. So much for disassociating oneself from the flame!

Reflections Regarding Individual Trauma

As Howard Stein indicated to me in a phone conversation during November 2017, we all write our lives and our history; we do so continuously and tend to disassociate ourselves from unpleasant experiences. We paint a rosier picture, for example, of experiences from our childhoods, leaving out the abuses we embellish. I especially like the German verschönern (beautify); it captures the process well. Also, different sorts of individuals deal with it in very different ways.

Some people look at it carefully, maybe talk about it, write about it, dream about it. Still others transform it so people can understand it. Then there are others who approach it in the guise of another topic. Others put it onto others, maybe blame them. The
way people deal with their past stressful events may have a great deal to do with their personalities and with other experiences they bring to the events.

It seems also that some individuals literally do not recall the entire traumatic event itself; they simply, say in a rape case, recall a ceiling or man standing in a door. In this case, something like a national debate, an analyst, or a close friend, may much later reig-nite the flame.

The intellectual may write about it, but the writing may not be specifically about the stressful event itself or the trauma that followed; it can be another topic altogether, but is somehow related to the trauma. Stein suggested that the professor may engage in related research. The salesman may do that with other people, talk it out literally. The artist may paint it, or something related to it. The director may conduct certain types of music.

To put dealing with a life-altering event in another way, they may put the poison that lingers from it or the heat from the flame outside of themselves. They could be looking at it from there or endeavoring to avoid it altogether, only to find it still exists.

Some people keep their trauma inside for decades and often lure themselves into thinking that the fire will never burn again, but in old age some are willing to let it burn hot once more. Finally, acute stress disorder—in other words, a life-changing and influencing experience of a child—can create later adulthood behavior. For example, if a father/mother beats, rapes, and otherwise abuses a child, he/she may later also beat, abuse, and rape. If this is widespread behavior, a society can thus be left with devastating consequences.

Parting Thoughts

The above stories are individual and immediate, yet they are also societal and ethnic. That is, they are German, South Tyrolean, Jewish, or Austrian stories, with effects on/in those societies, that came about because of violent authoritarian leaderships and their oppressive behavior and policies. In any way some were also chosen; that is, they became more than simply a powerful event in a person’s life. They can even be a constant unwanted or wanted presence and can be passed on from one generation to the next through accounts of the distressing event itself and the trauma, or changes in the human body. Some authors speak of “Transgenerational phantoms” and a meaningful example of that is Françoise Davoine
and Jean-Max Gaudilière’s History Beyond Trauma (2004) and the first volume of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok’s The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis (1994).

Because of my background, two books in German speak to me quite directly: Sabine Bode’s The Forgotten Generation: The Children of the War Break Their Silence (2012) and The Grandchildren of the War: The Heirs of the Forgotten Generation (23rd ed., 2017). Bode has interviewed hundreds of children of the German war generation and their children and has come to the conclusion that trauma is indeed transmitted from one generation to the next. It makes sense even in my family’s case. My father shared and passed on his trauma to me and I in turn have shared it with my daughter, his granddaughter. She was additionally affected by the stories that her grandmother told her many a night about the unrepeatable brutalities of the war in Yugoslavia.

Quite obviously, these stories deal with war and war’s surrounding circumstances, including the stressful events that those affected directly by war carry with them in some fashion or other. As Dr. Boyd empathetically said about her experience: “No one came out of that mess intact, regardless of age or circumstance.”

Peter Petschauer, PhD, Dhc, is Professor Emeritus of Appalachian State University. Among his numerous books are A Perfect Portrait: A Novel in Eighteenth-Century Weimar, Germany (2016) and a forthcoming book of poems with ORI Academic Press and MindMend Publishing (2018). He may be reached at petschauerpw@appstate.edu or peterpetschauer.com.

Trauma with a Silver Lining in the Middle Ages

Samuel Cohn—University of Glasgow

Keywords: Black Death, Francesco Petrarch, Italy, plague, plague-tracts, testaments, wills

Pious bequests in hundreds of last wills and testaments in central and northern Italy from the mid-14th to the early-15th century chart a traumatic reliving of the Black Death of 1348 with its first recurrence in the early 1360s. In testaments from the nobility to the peasantry, nothing much changed with the Black Death, except that
the number of wills and testaments skyrocketed. The patterns of bequests remained largely what they had been over the past 70 years or more. Regardless of the lives they lived, on their deathbeds, testators practiced what the mendicant preachers preached. Before and after 1348, citizens and peasants alike sought to dissociate themselves from their earthly attachments by ordering the executors of their estates to sell off great portions of their worldly holdings. The proceeds of these sales then were ordered to be distributed in small sums over a wide landscape of charitable beneficiaries, from individual walled-up hermits to large monasteries. In this way they prepared for the afterlife by blunting their obsessions with the ego, or, as Saint Catherine of Siena (1347-80) more zealously expressed it in a letter to Fra. Batolommeo Dominici in 1375, “I desire “to see you wholly consumed in the fire of His charity, for I know that this burns up all thought of self”” (Kenelm Foster and Mary Ronayne, eds., Selected Writings of St. Catherine of Siena, 1980, 67-8).

However, when plague returned in the 1360s, testamentary patterns changed abruptly. Now, testators stockpiled their pious offerings to leave instead only a few large bequests to secure their remembrance both before God and their fellow parishioners. This was done by commissioning objects to bear witness to their lives, such as painted beds for hospitals, bearing the testators’ coats of arms or a panel painting to adorn their place of burial. The testators demanded to be painted in their very likeness (ad similitudinem) at the feet of their selected patron saints.

Similarly, amongst the leading thinkers of the late Middle Ages, a parallel change in attitudes can be detected. The hundreds of letters to friends, patrons, and long-dead philosophers of antiquity, crafted by Francesco Petrarca, sketched in detail his philosophical and emotional autobiography. In 1348, he painted in dark hues the plague’s destruction, the dissolution of society physically and spiritually, and his near-total loss of friends and relatives. With other-worldly contempt, he decried his earthly “chains,” declaring that those who lost their lives to the plague were the lucky ones. With the return of plague in 1362, Petrarch’s passions turned abruptly. Now, in letters to Giovanni Boccaccio, Emperor Charles IV of Bohemia, and friends at Avignon, Petrarch saw earthly life as all too short; action in the present secular sphere suddenly was of essence, whether it involved the Holy Roman Emperor crossing the Alps to Italy to restore order or Boccaccio and himself increasing
their scholarly output and ensuring that their libraries would be preserved to inspire and teach future generations.

Physicians too changed their minds. In the face of the Black Death in 1348, they suddenly found the cherished teachings of Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna, along with other doctors and philosophers, to have been utterly useless in the face of the Black Death. All that could be done was to turn to God for forgiveness. Yet with the plague’s return in the 1360s and successive ones into the 15th century, physicians’ new genre of medical writing—the plague tract—multiplied rapidly in number and increasingly was written in the vernacular and for the laity. By the last decades of the 14th century, these works exuded a new confidence—even hubris—as doctors claimed their skills and experimentation had cured or prevented the plague. A doctor at Padua toward the end of the 14th century, for instance, proclaimed that his generation of physicians had gone beyond the ancients and even beyond nature itself.

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How My Greatest Trauma Helped to Shape My Life

Paul H. Elovitz—The Psychohistory Forum

Keywords: childhood-terrors, emotional-trauma, Friedrich Nie-
A close psychoanalyst friend asked me what the greatest trauma was in my life. My instant response surprised me as I declared that it was when, as a four or five-year-old, I felt terrified and desperately in need of my mother. The images that came to mind were of intense combat and fears of the rats running on the metal ceilings in the apartment over the family’s store in a terrible neighborhood to raise children. The uncertainty of what I saw one evening was a terrifying nightmare or a visual image that continued after I opened my eyes. As a little person, I was inconsolable, screaming for my mom. She came, comforted me, and sought to create a safe image of a perfect world with a fence around it. A calming world of neat houses, stores, and a train station. Indeed, to my young self, this world was the perfect miniaturized railroad community that was visible in store windows or the movie billboard at the corner. I calmed down and ultimately was better able to tolerate the dangerous neighborhood in which I was being raised at that point and my internal demons that had shown themselves in my waking or frightening night dreams. Yet as a frightened and sometimes sickly little boy, I longed for maternal comfort and reassurance. A consequence of this early terror is a subsequent lifelong inability to have a visual memory, except in dreams. I am saddened by my inability to visualize my long dead parents, brother, sister, and people and events that have touched my life.

The other part of my trauma collage is while my older brother and sister were off at school and I was sick in bed trying not to bang on the pipe, which was my signal to my mother below to care and comfort me. I must have been ill because had I been healthy, even as a very small boy, I would’ve been downstairs underfoot in my parents’ work areas as my dad worked on his machines and my mother did various needlework, paperwork, and, when a customer arrived, sales in the front of the store where I was not allowed and in fact too shy to go if strangers were there. I would desperately try not to bang on the pipe because it was “a bad thing” to do unless I was just too sick. But how is a lonely four or five-year-old to know how sick he is? I do know that I would feel badly if when my mother rushed up the steps in her always hurried way, she found my head to be cool or only warm rather than hot with a fever. I believe that she tried not to be impatient with me, but how could she be otherwise? She was torn between my needs.
and the requirements of her never-ending work; her need to be in
the store should a customer come because my father was nearly in-
capable of writing a receipt in English and was indeed very poor at
customer relations unless he was called down to conclude a sale as
the expert furrier. (I have followed her example and become a
workaholic. Indeed, prior to my analysis, like her I would deny my
own bodily needs when feeling ill.)

My childhood revolved around the currently politically in-
correct fur business at a time when the warmth of animal skin coats
was prized by women waiting for buses on street corners in our in-
dustrial city. For more affluent women, these coats served as a sign
of glamor. As a very small boy playing between racks of coats
waiting to be stored or remodeled, I could identify most newly
made coats by their smell, which greatly amused my father.

The collage of frightening events and memories of my
childhood surprised me when it came to mind as being my greatest
trauma. There certainly were other contenders: when as a five-year-
-old I almost died of a misdiagnosed ruptured appendix when I was
treated at home for three and a half days before being rushed to the
hospital at the point of death; the failure of my first marriage; and
the discovery that my utopian dream of creating a perfect institution
of learning at the brand-new college where I am a founding faculty
member collapsed into shades of dystopia. The fear that the U.S.
Army used during basic training to try and shape me into a soldier
was not in contention as a trauma because as a young man I was
eager to prove myself in the face of its heavy-handed approach.
(After all, I knew what to expect and had the comradeship of other
draftees). While it is possible that my separation from my mother
when I was hospitalized for about three weeks as a premature baby
may have been a greater trauma than the one discussed in this es-
say, I am pessimistic about getting a grasp on this preverbal trauma.

Peter Petschauer, Inna Rozentsvit, and other colleagues are
interested in developing the notion of “traumatic growth.” Certain-
ly, there was some truth in Nietzsche’s aphorism “that which does
not kill us, makes us stronger.” Since Nietzsche ultimately went
insane (was that caused by his syphilis or his own psychodynam-
ics?), perhaps he is not the greatest advocate for this position. Ne-
evertheless, I think this early traumatic collage of lonely terrors
played a role in shaping who I am. Perhaps there is an element of
fighting my early loneliness in my professional devotion to con-
necting people as a psychohistorical author, educator, and editor. I
found elements of this trait of wanting to connect positively with people even as a young college student when I went to New York to watch plays. There, I attempted to make personal contact through eye contact and a friendly exchange with strangers on an elevator, subway, or on the street.

My need for maternal reassurance led to becoming my mother’s helper as she shaped me to achieve what had been denied her as an immigrant girl who seemed to have had only a few years of night school. Although I would not promise to become a college professor, as she requested on her deathbed, it was already clear that I would fulfill her dream of pursuing education. Repeatedly telling me that I had two left arms, two left feet, and that if my head was not attached, I would lose it may or may not have been a conscious part of this agenda. Consequently, I found myself to be inept at athletics and inhibited in fighting anti-Semitic bullies by her frowning on fighting as wrong. I dreamed of having an adventurous life like that of my father who grew up amidst war and revolution before escaping to the U.S. at age 14 as a political refugee. It was in history books, not reality, where I could encounter war, revolution, and the fascinating things that I dreamed of doing.

Mom educated me to be a secular Yeshiva Bucher (Jewish Scholar of the Old Testament), which was in keeping with her family’s conversion from Judaism to Marxism (although I only knew her as an FDR and Stevenson Democrat). I certainly followed in her steps as a workaholic. The Army was as close as I got to the adventurous life I longed for as a boy and young man, although I have a most adventuresome intellectual life based on my choice to take the road less traveled by historians as a psychological scholar and advocate for psychohistory.

The term trauma was coined by ancient Greeks to refer to a physical wound, but now it is emotional wounds that one hears about mostly these days in the intellectual world. Sometimes I wonder if the concept of psychological trauma is being watered down to the point of having less meaning. Certainly, the idea of trauma has become much more common in recent years. Almost any hurt out of the ordinary is now called a trauma. What used to be referred to as a setback to overcome, a moral injury, a life crisis, or life’s turning point is now called an emotional trauma. Whatever we humans choose to call it, it can be life changing.

Without the advantage of a long and deep psychoanalysis, I
would not have uncovered the collage of early trauma that shaped my life in significant ways.

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Response to Peter Petschauer’s Paper: “The Flame of Trauma”

Ruth M. Lijtmaer—Private Psychoanalytic Practice

Keywords: dissociation, Holocaust, intergenerational-transmission-of-trauma, PTSD, silence, totalitarian, trauma

In this heartfelt article, Peter Petschauer explores the trauma caused by a totalitarian ideology curtailing the human rights of seven individuals. Even the German soldiers, as prisoners of war, suffered trauma. The stories are not only about individuals, but also have societal and ethnic implications.

Like Hitler’s regime and other totalitarian governments, they chose a group that deviated with regard to religion, ethnicity, language, appearance, and sexuality as the scapegoats responsible for the state of things. They were regarded as a threat and danger to the majority group’s actual survival and existence. The phenomenon of deprecating and dehumanizing the minority group affects the person so as to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other symptoms that made it difficult for them to function in society. Some had nightmares for years; many were unable to speak about the atrocities they had suffered. Others found ways to survive the tragic conditions that they endured. This trauma is transmitted to the next generations, creating intergenerational transmission of trauma.

How did these people manage and cope with the trauma of being exiles who were forced to leave behind their dying or dead European community? What about the trauma of being interned in concentration camps and surviving? They did it through silence and dissociation. The historical impact of the Holocaust on psychoanalysis bears striking parallels to the silence found in survivor families. Many remained silent about their experiences of trauma because “their traumatic state cannot be represented” (Dori Laub & Nanette C. Auerhahn, “Failed Empathy—A Central Theme in the
Survivor’s Holocaust Experience, *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 6, 377–400, [1989]). This inability to talk about their experiences (some took 20 or more years to verbalize them openly) showed the impact of trauma on memory and the ubiquity of dissociation in everyday life, a dissociation not necessarily pathological, but one that exists on a continuum from more or less volitional or conscious ways. Many patients and psychoanalysts did not speak about these experiences.

Anna Orenstein, who relied on elaborate fantasies about her mother’s cooking and the richness of her early life in a Jewish traditional home, used those memories to cope with her Auschwitz experience. But she explained this in her memoir that was published in 2004, 70 years after she experienced the trauma. She was unable to talk about it at an earlier time. Another psychoanalyst, Henri Paruns, said: “I did not ‘come out’ as a Holocaust survivor until [the] 1990s... I remembered things and had access to my past but it was terribly painful...” (personal communication with Emily Kurilloff, 3, 2014). One more example is that of Wilfred F. Bion, in 1958, accompanied by his wife, Francesca, who returned to the site of the 1918 Battle of Amiens, France, in which he had bravely served as a 20-year-old tank commander. The war was an incredibly traumatic experience for him that remained undigested for 40 years. As he stated, it left him with “an abiding impression of unrelied gloom and profound dislike of himself” (F. Bion, Foreword in *All My Sins Remembered: Another Part of a Life and the Other Side of Genius: Family Letters*, 1985, 6). It was after this visit to the battleground that Bion started writing about the carnage in graphic detail in *War Memoirs (1917-1919)*, leaving the reader to wonder how anyone manages to metabolize such horrors.

From the seven individuals who Peter Petschauer described, there are stories of survival. Peter mentioned Benno and Franz, who survived their captivity in Siberia, Benno by learning skills to survive in freezing temperatures and Franz by working as little as possible. They are both exceptions. However, it is not clear to me how that experience affected them internally. To be psychologically able to survive, did they resort to dissociation? Peter Petschauer quoted David Barlow as an explanation, saying that these men had either “general biological vulnerabilities,” a “generalized psychological vulnerability,” or a “tendency to focus anxious apprehension on the perceived danger of specific events, thoughts, or objects.”

Peter Petschauer also talked about his father, Erich, who
spoke about his trauma to his second wife and later, in 1972, to Peter. Erich never wrote about his memories of his stint in the SS, which showed all the signs of PTSD as well as Peter’s chosen trauma.

The second story is about Peter himself with two women who were sisters, Agnes (Neas) and Maria (Moitz) Clara, who witnessed the arrival of soldiers with the news that Albert Clara, the only surviving son, had been killed in Yugoslavia. Neas, the older, barely remembered the soldiers at the trough in front of the house until 10 years later and then again 30 years later when the whole agony reemerged. For Moitz, the issue stayed silently with her, until Peter began researching her mother and sister Neas around 2013. In several conversations with her, Peter revived her memories; then she let them vanish. Peter, at six years old, remembered this much later in life. Here we have again the issues of silence and dissociation that helped the victims deal with such traumatic experiences.

Another story is of Gerhard Waldheim, the son of Kurt Waldheim, who tried to clear his father’s reputation from having been involved as a Nazi intelligence officer participating in war crimes in Greece and Yugoslavia. In a 2018 film Waldheim Waltz, filmmaker Ruth Beckermann documents the process of uncovering former UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim’s wartime past. It shows the swift succession of new allegations made by the World Jewish Congress during his Austrian presidential campaign, the denial by the Austrian political class, and the outbreak of anti-Semitism and patriotism, which finally led to his election. Gerhard had to give up the defense of his father because it became too painful for him and his family.

After shared massive trauma, some transgenerational transmission of its images does occur, becoming intertwined with the core identity and self-representation of each member of subsequent generations. An individual traumatized deliberately by others has the tendency to “remain in the basement.” The sense of shame, humiliation, guilt, and helplessness may become internalized, complicating survivors’ individual fates (Ruth Lijtmaer, “Violations of Human Rights: Trauma and Social Trauma - Can We Forgive?” in Phillip Fenton, ed., Psychoanalytic Theory, 2014, 57-71).

The seven vignettes presented are good examples of this happening, since silence is traumatic. Maurice Apprey talks about
“transgenerational haunting,” a process of unconscious communica-
tion between parent and child (“A pluperfect errand: A turbulent
return to beginnings in the transgenerational transmission of de-
structive aggression,” Free Association: Psychoanalysis and Cul-

Children of survivors often grow up in an environment that
is mysteriously permeated by the traumas of their parents, yet in
which the harrowing events are never spoken about. Thus, these
children are confronted with a paradox. Lacking their parents’ di-
rect experience of devastating atrocities, they are faced with the
task of assimilating such realities into consciousness through their
own imagination. I wonder what the descendants of these stories
made of their previous generations’ experiences, since knowing of
the trauma consciously or unconsciously takes place over time,
both pulling it forwards and pushing it away.

The Socratic ideal of the examined life is just as important
for the history of individuals as it is for the history of organizations:
those who ignore their past are doomed to repeat it. Every persecu-
tion has its victims and its perpetrators. The latter and their heirs
should welcome historical exploration because perpetrators are
prone to the same disease as victims: chronic post-traumatic stress
disorder.

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Psychoanalytic Societies, 2017), “Untold stories and the power of
silence in the intergenerational transmission of trauma” (American
Theme: Immigrants or Exiles, Refugees or Asylees” (Psychoanalytic
Review, 104, 6, 2017), and “A Latina Immigrant’s Response” (Clio’s
Psyche, 25, 1, 2018). Dr. Lijtmaer may be contacted at rlijt123@gmail.com.

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Considering Childhood Acute Stress and Adult Trauma in a Historian’s Life Story

Jean Oggins—Consulting and Research/Evaluation Services

Keywords: childhood-acute-stress, intergenerational-trauma, trauma, uncertainty

In “The Flame of Trauma,” historian Peter Pletschner “explores the acute distress disorders and subsequent traumas of seven individuals during and after WWII,” as well as that of an eighth person: himself. In June 1945, six-year-old Peter was present when former Wehrmacht soldiers brought news of the death of two young women’s “beloved brother and my role model.” Pletschner writes, “On this sunny day, I remember tattered uniforms and awful news!” Only a lifetime later, he writes, would he understand the impact of an acute stress disorder, defined as “a life-changing and influencing experience of a child.” Yet he does not say how this event affected his own life.

On that June day, could Peter’s loss of his role model also have stirred fears about his own father—or did the memory encapsulate various childhood fears? His father, a German SS officer, was tried at the Nuremberg Trials and imprisoned in American prison camps for three years after WWII ended in Europe in April, 1945. For Peter, not knowing what might happen to his father in war, the trials, or prison could itself have been traumatic, perhaps unconsciously so.

Given such early uncertainty, a historian might address uncertainty by studying positive, negative, and mixed outcomes of WWII and prison camps for German men or their children. “The Flame of Trauma” begins with two case studies of German soldiers who survived Siberian prison camps and thrived in society afterwards. Surviving cold, hunger, and random shootings in the camp were primary challenges. Yet Forbes et al. reported that trauma associated with natural disasters or nonintimate others is less severe than trauma involving intimate others (“Trauma At The Hands Of Another: Distinguishing PTSD Patterns Following Intimate And Nonintimate Interpersonal And Noninterpersonal Trauma In A Nationally Representative Sample,” Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, 7 [2], February 2014, 147-53).
In case studies 3-5, German men were injured or died during or after the war, with children or sisters suffering acute stress reactions and later trauma regarding the nature of the men’s injury or death. In case study 3, a civilian father was shot while scavenging for food; his daughter later dreamed repeatedly of a robber being shot. In case studies 4 and 5, a brother’s death represented another postwar outcome: probable murder by Yugoslav partisans. The sisters in these case studies felt later trauma about how their brother might have died. Petschauer also reports distress hearing of the man’s death but does not connect the stress to his own trauma.

Instead, Petschauer claims that he “adopted” or chose his trauma as an adult. Case studies 6-7 pertain to trauma in father-son pairs for adult sons whose soldier fathers succeeded in postwar Germany but had later problems. Petschauer’s father (case study 6) survived prison camps and went on to a successful political career but later experienced post-traumatic stress disorder, diabetes, and blindness—something Petschauer attributes to “the flame of trauma.” Although his father did not write or speak publicly about effects of being in the SS (and spoke with his son only once about being tried at Nuremberg), Petschauer interviewed him and did tell his story in “Father, Son and Uncertain Solutions: Conversations and Reflections About National Socialist Germany” (Biography, University of Hawai’i Press, 7[3], Summer 1984, 189-205), including noting his father’s shock on visiting Dachau’s concentration camp in 1944. “His [the father’s] stint in the SS in a very real sense became my adopted or chosen trauma and, as an intellectual, I took the route of writing about it” (Petschauer, this issue, 233).

Petschauer also applied his knowledge of history and trauma to reduce uncertainty about another man’s wartime experience and help his son through trauma. Case study 7 mentions Gerhard Waldheim, whose soldier father Kurt Waldheim became a successful postwar politician but was later charged with being a Nazi war criminal. His adult son endured trauma in defending his father and responding to charges made in a way that violated Gerhard’s “highly developed sense of justice.” Petschauer writes of trying to exonerate Kurt Waldheim “with the tools of a historian who has a reasonably good understanding of psychology and trauma; that is, both with a thorough investigation of the sources and psychological insight.”

Yet while Petschauer could locate documents to exonerate Kurt Waldheim, he lacks personal knowledge about his own father,
who only spoke with him once over one long weekend about trauma participating in the SS. Uncertainty remains, perhaps similar to the uncertainty Petschauer felt studying the village Afers: “I do not have all the sources to satisfy my compulsion for certainty…. While the externals can be recovered through documents, including the unavoidable physical being of the church, tracing the internal responses has been characterized by every historian’s challenge, or nightmare” (“The Outside and the Inside: Stability and Change of ‘Mentalität’ in a Small Village,” Journal of Social History, 23[4], Summer 1990, 715-734).

To summarize, although Petschauer states that acute stress reactions in childhood could contribute to adult trauma, he does not specify how that happened for him, but instead claims he “chose” his trauma as an adult. However, it seems possible that a six-year-old’s acute stress in hearing about a role model’s death could have been related to unconscious trauma if he also worried about his father’s survival. As a historian conducting WWII-related research on his father and others, Petschauer could clarify various wartime and postwar outcomes. Yet, some questions about his father remained unanswered. Studying others’ trauma could also have contributed to vicarious trauma, to intergenerational trauma in sharing family stories with his daughter, or to worry that trauma’s effects might surface in his own life later.

Indeed, the article’s last reflections ask: What unpleasant childhood experiences are beautified or forgotten, or how might trauma surface late in life? How has intergenerational transmission of trauma affected Petschauer’s family or others’ children and grandchildren? A child’s acute stress about the uncertain fate of a loved one could remain as a ghost of trauma for an adult historian with greater contextual knowledge but continuing uncertainty.

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Trauma in Late-Life Perspective

Paul Salstrom—St. Mary-of-the-Woods College

Keywords: forgiveness, Holocaust, Nazis, Peter Petschauer, survivors, trauma, World War II

Peter Petschauer introduces us to six Germans and one Pole who experienced trauma connected with World War II. His opening abstract tells us that “each dealt differently with the consequences of their stressful experiences.” As someone well up in years, I’m personally most interested in how Petschauer’s subjects dealt with their war-related trauma when they reached their elder years, and Petschauer does discuss this. He describes two German friends of his family who spent the first postwar decade in Siberian labor camps and then, after their release, managed to re-enter German society very productively. Both of these men lived beyond age 90 without the “flame” of their trauma reigniting enough to debilitate or apparently even hamper them.

However, Petschauer also mentions meeting two other Siberian labor-camp survivors who did not readjust to German society and who then committed suicide. He broaches the question of how those two men may have psychologically differed from the two successful survivors.

Petschauer then introduces his Jewish colleague Zohara Muschinski Boyd, whose wartime near-death bombing experience in Warsaw would deeply trouble her whenever it was reignited—until late in her university teaching career when she began co-teaching a Holocaust course and also, with Petschauer, began telling her experiences to young people at all educational levels. That did reignite the flame, but apparently did so therapeutically. Petschauer says “she became a witness for those who could speak no more.”

That brings to mind one of my elderly friends in Terre Haute, Indiana, who at age 10 barely survived one of the experiments that Dr. Josef Mengele perpetrated on child twins at Auschwitz. Her name is Eva Kor. In 1995, at age 61, she opened a small Holocaust museum in Terre Haute and began speaking at local schools and colleges about her Auschwitz experiences. This did help her psychologically, but her big change occurred when a fellow survivor asked her to bring a Nazi doctor to a memorial event at Auschwitz where she was scheduled to speak. This led her to Dr.
Hans Münch, who had gone public in Germany as having been a SS doctor at Auschwitz, and as having been present at the opening of gas chambers in order to sign group death certificates.

Dr. Münch willingly appeared with Eva Kor at the Auschwitz event and he signed a statement about what he personally knew firsthand. This led Eva to forgive Dr. Münch, and also a few months later to forgive Dr. Mengele. Eva says that as soon as she forgave Mengele she felt like an enormous burden (of which she’d been unaware) had lifted off her shoulders. She found herself unable to consider revoking her forgiveness, lest the burden return. At that time (in the mid-to-late 1990s) she called her forgiveness personal but naively said she personally forgave everything Dr. Mengele and other Nazis had done. I vividly recall her refusal back then to acknowledge, or even ponder, the ethical boundary she had crossed. At least twice I pushed a copy of Simon Wiesenthal’s *The Sunflower* (1969) into her hands and explained Judaism’s position on forgiveness, to no avail. In fact, like many survivors, she had long ignored Judaism, if not since the Holocaust, at least since she came of age. (More recently, Eva carefully nuances her forgiveness statements, saying she is only forgiving the effect upon herself of the things Dr. Mengele and other Nazis did.)

Many survivors are surely hampered not just in finding but in justifying a course of action that might somehow make constructive use of what they can’t erase or ignore. Of the two German soldiers who committed suicide after their labor-camp years in Siberia, Petschauer says they were “unable to find anything positive in the camp experience and [were] unsuccessful in their attempts to reconnect to their wives, families, and German society.” It’s interesting that Petschauer juxtaposes those two facts—because what you can’t erase from your inner life, you maybe somehow have to find use for.

Forgiveness might sometimes play a role in this, but there are many ways people re-purpose psychological baggage they can’t shake off. The “wounded healer” theme comes to mind. Our lives include not just external changes—like from a Siberian labor-camp to freedom in West Germany—but also include inner changes. When we enter a new stage of life, major aspects of our inner life are then re-purposed or left behind. A book full of insights on this is *Outliving the Self: Generativity and the Interpretation of Lives* (1984; revised in 1996 with the changed subtitle *How We Live on in Future Generations*). There the narrative psychologist John N. Ko-
tre documents a late-life stage when people compulsively remember and evaluate their personal lives, ardently trying to reach a self-verdict of “mostly good.” Kotre places this life stage in people’s late 60s through their mid-70s, but surely such compulsive remembering can continue far longer if someone has difficulty deciding their life was “mostly good.”

Peter Petschauer mentions his father’s visit to Dachau in July 1944, which sowed cognitive dissonance in that SS officer. Petschauer says his father had a PhD in journalism but that “he published neither about his stressful experience nor the aftereffects, which were almost equivalent to PTSD.” Petschauer seems to wonder whether, if his father communicated publicly about his inner trauma (as Petschauer himself has done), perhaps then the “flame” might have subsided. But instead, “as much as he tried after his visit to Dachau to dissociate himself from the ugliness of what he had seen and all that followed, the flame burned on, and in the end burned up his body with diabetes and blindness.”

Petschauer ends his article with cogent insights, including his remark that “some people keep their trauma inside for decades and often lure themselves into thinking that the fire will never burn again, but in old age some are willing to let it burn hot once more.” This sounds like Kotre’s late-life stage of compulsive remembering, except that Kotre would say the flame will indeed “burn hot once more” whether we are willing or unwilling.

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Managing after the Loss of Trust in the World

Sverre Varvin—Norwegian Psychoanalytic Society

Keywords: attachment, avoidance-behavior, childhood, depression, Holocaust, nightmares, Peter Petschauer, trauma

Why do some people “manage” life after experiencing extreme atrocities while others succumb to the burden of terrorizing nightmares, intolerable anxieties, and devastating social isolation? This is a question to which we have no good answers—and proba-
bly never will really understand. Peter Petschauer uses the metaphor “flame of trauma.” It can slumber, but suddenly light up. Below are some examples of trauma that are relevant to our discussion.

Miss A had managed reasonably well for 10 years after experiencing continuous atrocities and warfare in her home country, including a time in prison where she was abused. While in exile, she had raised two children and worked. One day one of her children was abducted by a pedophile. He was saved but the mother felt there was no help from police or other authorities and felt desperately alone and frightened—and angry. She became ill with anxieties and nightmares. In therapy, the shame and extreme humiliation she had felt came to the surface—as well as her deep sense of being betrayed.

Mister B managed an escape from one of his country’s worst prisons—a place where few survived. He managed for 20 years an apparently good life, establishing a family with four children and managing a flourishing business. He said nothing about his sleeplessness and recurrent nightmares to his close ones and spent a large amount of his fortune and his energy to help others in an attempt to alleviate his profound feeling of guilt. Depleted of energy, he sought therapy in his late 50s.

Jean Améry, a survivor of the Holocaust and torture, wrote:

...I am certain that with the very first blow that descends on him he loses something we will... call ‘trust in the world’. Trust in the world includes... the certainty that by reason of... social contracts the other person will... respect my physical... being. The boundaries of my body are also the boundaries of my self. My skin surface shields me against the external world. If I am to have trust, I must feel on it only what I want to feel. At the first blow, however, this trust in the world breaks down.... He is on me and thereby destroys me... with the first blow... a part of our life ends and it can never again be revived.... Whoever was tortured, stays tortured. Torture is ineradicably burned into him (Jean Améry, At the Mind’s Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities, 1980, 27).

The trust in the world is lost, Améry said. I think this is at
the kernel of the situation of those who have experienced traumatiza-
tion at the hands of other human beings. These break the bound-
ary between self and others, evoking a deep, catastrophic anxiety
where the fear of losing all contact with any empathic and comfort-
ning other in the internal and external world is threatened. It is not a
flame. The flame is more of a defense geared by the extreme ag-
gression many feel. Most often this aggression is directed toward
the self and deep depression is a regular result. What threatens is
emptiness; nothingness.

What we call trauma is a myriad of effects in the internal
world of extreme dehumanizing experiences. They are signs of the
mind-body attempts to survive a threatening nothingness. Night-
mares are spectacular attempts to reestablish some meaning and
relations in the internal world—which fall in regular, repeating ca-
tastrophes. Avoidance behavior is the opposite attempt: to get
away. Depression is often a masked grief but also an attempt not to
direct destructiveness at others and cause new catastrophes. The
word trauma gives an illusion that we know something and an idea
that there is something inside the person we can treat. But the idea
of a “trauma” often functions as a “theoretical” defense that helps
us avoid the terrible, primal, catastrophic anxiety that the English
psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott described as lurking in the back-
ground when the newborn attempts to make first contact with the
mother. It seems that we all have this primal fear in our psyche—
and severe traumatization tends to break down the defense against
this fear.

Miss A tried night after night to conquer her helplessness in
relation to the “dark” man, coming to her in hallucinations and
nightmares, who had harassed her in prison—and she experienced
similar frights in relation to her therapist. She fought the herculean
fight to avoid the deep shamefulness and nothingness she had ex-
erienced. Mister B heard his comrades in the prison screaming for
help almost every night. His guilt was an attempt to restore and
keep some humanity in himself. It was as the fate of Sisyphus:
endless work.

I am talking here about people who have been traumatized
in an extreme way as a rule over time and in malignant, aggressive
milieus. These experiences can never be forgotten. They will lurk
in the mind and can be activated by later experiences. In the best of
circumstances, they can be encapsulated like a tubercle bacterium.
The question is, how is it possible for so many to manage life? Are there individual factors, like genetic disposition? We found in a research study that early childhood experiences that severed attachment played a bigger role than adult experiences of severe traumatization for psychic well-being (Marianne Opaa and Sverre Varvin, “Relationships of childhood adverse experiences with mental health and quality of life at treatment start for adult refugees traumatized by pre-flight experiences of war and human rights violations,” The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 203 [9], 2015, 684-695). Hans Keilson showed, however, that what happened after atrocities was of utmost importance in his study of child-survivors of the Holocaust (Hans Keilson and R. Saraphie, Sequentieller Traumatisierung bei Kindern: Untersuchung zum Schicksal jüdischer Kriegswaisen psychosozial [Translation: Sequential Traumatization in Children: A Clinical and Statistical Follow-up Study on the Fate of the Jewish War Orphans in the Netherlands], 1979).

It is here, I think, that the hope lies of repairing the “loss of trust in the world.” Meaning and relation was somehow restored for many of these children. This calls for a realistic Sisyphean approach to restoring a belief in sanity for those who have survived the hell of torture and other atrocities. It takes time—and may last the rest of their life. Some even manage to develop and use the experiences for growth and creative endeavors.

Acknowledgment is needed during personal contact with the therapist, by the family, and by society. This does not always happen. Some, as Mr. B did, isolate themselves and never talk. Many others are ignored by society, specifically by political leaders and the health care system. In that case, they may withdraw—or let the body take the toll, which is shown dramatically by the frequencies of somatic illness and early death in this group of people. In the present situation many surviving refugees rot under dehumanizing circumstances in refugee camps inside and outside western countries due to closed borders. Many are exposed to extreme traumatization during flight—or they die.

Our relation to fellow humans who have been traumatized is ambiguous and it is too easy to keep them out of sight and forget their destinies. One root of this is the extreme fright of nothingness and extinction evoked by these living testimonies. Traumatization is an interpersonal matter—both during atrocities and afterwards. History is full of examples of how traumatized people have been
neglected and rejected.

We need also a common discourse on the fright and anxieties involved. It is difficult, however, to talk about something that is not possible to comprehend. There are many questions here without answers, and as Anne Michaels said, “Questions without answers must be asked very slowly” (Fugitive Pieces, 1997).

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**The Influence of Trauma**

**Neil Wilson**—Psychoanalyst in Private Practice

*Keywords: Donald Trump, George H.W. Bush, post-traumatic-stress-disorder (PTSD), psychoanalysis, trauma, walls*

The topic of trauma is powerfully encompassing. All human beings experience trauma at various points in their life. It is difficult to define. Essentially, trauma is an experience of often overwhelming input that is difficult to absorb and put in perspective. Over the years, many authorities have cited the trauma of birth as the initial stage. The fetus arrives in the world suddenly exposed to glaringly new stimuli that would be experienced as overwhelming. Most mothers intuitively seek to heal and protect their newborns. Below I will discuss the traumas of some of my patients, veterans, and of two of our presidents.

In a brief overview of a few of my patients’ recent traumatic experiences, one was in a traffic accident, through no fault of his own, and still has nightmares about it. We are slowly examining how this ties in with how his older brother would often suddenly assault him out of the blue. Another patient recently learned that
her spouse was having an affair. It emotionally crushed her. In her early life, her father similarly cheated on her mother. Did she unconsciously marry a man who would repeat the behavior of her father? Perhaps. We unconsciously tend to repeat early traumas unless we are aware, conscious, and non-masochistic. A new patient revealed that she was sexually assaulted as a child but doesn’t want to know anything about it. Her presenting problem was a lack of intimacy with all men. Clearly, the pain is so great that she is not ready to face the root causes of her lack of intimacy with men. This is an example of how the repression of trauma is harmful.

It is crucial to review and reexperience a trauma rather than burying it. It used to be that soldiers were told to bury and forget their painful war experiences. Now PTSD is better understood and we have learned that the painful review and even reliving wartime experiences can eventually be a freeing process.

The late President Bush was a war hero. His plane was shot down over the Pacific and two of his mates bailed out but both died in the process. Starting at age 70 and continuing every five years, he parachuted out of planes to celebrate his birthdays. Probably advancing age played a role in this activity aimed at attempting to master his war trauma.

President Trump was the fourth of five children and the second of three sons in a successful, highly competitive family. His oldest sibling, retired Judge Maryanne Barry, said he was “a brat.” A startling example of his early style of handling his feelings is in his 1987 book, The Art of the Deal, when he reports that in the second grade, he punched his male music teacher, giving him a black eye. The reason given was that the teacher didn’t know anything about music. One must assume that his teacher attempted to correct little boy Trump’s music. For Trump, almost all criticisms are experienced as traumatic. So many of his late-night tweets are in response to that day’s disagreements and attacks on him. He grew up in a walled home and is obsessed by his need to build a wall at the Mexican border, keeping out allegedly dangerous characters. This ties in with his inability to handle trauma, which he experiences whenever he is challenged. Symbolically, he desires, but can’t, build a wall around himself, even if he gets the country to spend billions building a bigger one than we already have on our southern border.

All humans face traumas, starting with the trauma of birth.
At the personal level, psychoanalysis is an invaluable way to help people deal with their traumas and their often counterproductive efforts to avert them. Presidents could also benefit from analysis.

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Moral Injury as Moral Trauma

C. Fred Alford—University of Maryland

Abstract: Moral injury occurs when people feel shamed by their victimization. It is most likely to occur when people in power deny the experiences of those beneath them. The result is that people deny their own experiences of victimization, blaming their hurt and pain on themselves. It is most likely to occur when the connection between word and deed is broken, when lies become the currency of everyday life. There is a connection between post-traumatic stress disorder and moral injury, but the connection is primarily historical, with moral injury first being studied among groups of soldiers.

Keywords: Civil Rights Movement, Jonathan Shay, moral-injury, Primo Levi, post-traumatic-stress-disorder (PTSD), shame, themis

Moral Injury in Everyday Life: A New Way to Think About Trauma

Moral injury is a new category but an old experience. In so far as psychohistory is concerned with the psychology of everyday life for ordinary people—not just leaders—then moral injury is a useful category. As has been said about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), it is not just a clinical category; it is a moral judgment. Its advantage is that it has given us an unparalleled ability to talk about the violence of the world. I believe that the category of moral injury provides this same opportunity, particularly because it is concerned with the unseen violence of everyday life.

Moral injury has become something of a hot topic among those who write about the trauma experienced by soldiers at war. So far, I can find nothing written about moral injury that applies to experiences of civilians in everyday life. Yet, there is no reason it shouldn’t, particularly if it is interpreted properly as the misuse of
political power to deny the experiences of others. There is no more powerful or pernicious political power than this, for it works directly on the psyche, shaping the self-image of its victims.

**Themis**

The term moral injury seems to have been introduced by Jonathan Shay in *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Un-doing of Character* (1994). Shay defines moral injury as a violation of themis, a term he borrows from the ancient Greeks. As Shay uses the term, themis means what’s right, proper, and customary. It is the mark of civilized existence.

Shay’s most poignant example of the violation of themis is that of a soldier who was awarded a medal for mistakenly killing children and fishermen. Command knew; it just didn’t care. The colonel just wanted “body count.” It made the soldier crazy. He knew he had done nothing honorable, but the standard of honorable had been turned upside down. The result, says Shay, is not only moral confusion, but disorientation, as soldiers were told, in effect, “you didn’t experience it, it never happened, you don’t know what you know.” Civilians have similar experiences.

**How Could Moral Injury Apply in Civilian Life?**

Here is a short list:

- Politicians lie.
- Corporations promise to keep present employees after a merger and they don’t.
- Bosses exploit and mistreat their employees.
- Husbands beat their wives and their children, a pattern that can go on for generations.
- People are paid less than a living wage, generally for hard work. They see others earning millions of dollars.
- In a land of plenty, millions go to bed hungry. Millions can’t afford their medicine, or to see a doctor.
- Old people are isolated and devalued.
- Not many people question that these things occur, though there is surely disagreement about how often, and who is at fault. The question is whether we want to consider them as falling under a new category: moral injury.

**Shame**
If we think about moral injury as primarily an experience of shame and guilt, then the examples I have drawn on suggest that it is primarily the shame and guilt of the powerless. Primo Levi wrote about shame in *Survival in Auschwitz* (1947). He puzzles over why men who had been subjected to such cruelty and powerlessness, as well as their Russian liberators, should feel shame:

It was the same shame which we knew so well, which submerged us after the selections, and every time we had to witness or undergo an outrage: the shame that the Germans never knew, the shame which the just man experiences when confronted by a crime committed by another, and he feels remorse because of its existence, because of its having been irrevocably introduced into the world of existing things, and because his will has proven nonexistent or feeble and was incapable of putting up a good defense (74).

While there are multiple sources of shame, Levi’s insight into shame’s origin in the powerless is important, and sometimes the extreme illuminates the normal. Every example of moral injury among civilians listed above evokes feelings of powerlessness, whether it is the powerlessness of the average worker before his or her employer, the powerlessness of children, or the powerlessness felt by the average citizen in the face of corporations and government.

**Moral Injury and Moral Narrative**

Moral injury destroys the meaning of life because life is fundamentally moral, as are most of the stories we tell each other. The narratives of human life are moral narratives not in the sense of admonitions to be morally good, but because we all live in a moral universe, a universe of meaning. In a moral universe there is a connection between what people say and what people do. It is not hopelessly naive to believe that “there are people in charge who know and care, even if they sometimes make mistakes,” or “the people who love me would not deliberately hurt me.”

Life is not built on a lie when these beliefs can be counted on to be generally true. Not always true—there are lots of exceptions—but generally true. Moral injury occurs not when one is lied to (though it may if the lie is important enough), but when the connection between words and deeds is severed. Promises made and
kept are perhaps the most important connection between word and deed. When promises are kept, word and deed become one. Honesty is a promise.

For some, the earth moves when they discover that people in authority routinely lie. Once one knows this, one lives in a new world. Some people remain aliens in this world forever. The result is demoralization.

**It Takes a Group to Overcome Moral Injury**

Consider African Americans in the American South during the era of segregation. Recognizing the injustice of segregation, and organizing to do something about it, first required the recognition of moral injury: that the narrative of those in power was a lie, and it resulted in generations of African Americans feeling less deserving, worthwhile, and human.

Because moral injury is alienating and isolating, it is best addressed by group action. It is particularly helpful when existing institutions can take on this function, in this case the African American church. In such circumstances, inspirational leaders can arise, and many are stirred to action. Cooperative action heals moral injury, as does talking and working with others. Moral injury thrives on alienation and anomie. Much as “rap groups” among Vietnam Veterans became and remain among the best treatments for PTSD, so groups of the morally injured are the best defense against demoralization.

**Conclusion: PTSD and Moral Injury**

It is much easier to identify invisible injuries among soldiers than among wide swaths of the population. Soldiers are legitimate victims of injury, even if it took generations to recognize invisible wounds. To talk about moral injury among civilians is to criticize our way of life, a combination of mass democracy and corporate capitalism. But if moral injury is a form of violence inflicting shame and demoralization upon its victims, then it would be careless, in the literal sense of being uncaring, not to recognize its presence among us all. Some carry more than others, but it is everywhere. This does not mean that everyone needs to be “treated.” As the example of the desegregation movement suggests, the best treatment is the organized action of afflicted groups.

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Conclusion of the Psychology of Trauma Symposium

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Keywords: combat, Holocaust, moral injury, National Socialism, prisons, trauma, World War II

I am very grateful for the comments offered to my essay on the flame of trauma. Let me start on the personal level. As psychohistorians we need to be open about our involvement in our findings.

If I had known about it, my first serious issue was supposedly being born with emphysema in Berlin in 1939; WWII started soon after. Concerned about my well-being, my parents had me transferred from a small birthing center to the Charité, still a major hospital in the city. According to a note from the attending doctor to my father, my recovery was uneventful.

Another issue was this one: by the time WWII progressed into 1942, we had lived in Brixen/Bressanone, where my father was stationed, for over two years. The farm family with whom I spent the summers suggested that I stay with them permanently. My first memory is of standing in the hallway of the Egarter farm and being told that, “You must obey mother”—that is, the female owner of the farm, Mutter Egarter. She made the offer to take my brother and I in. In Lloyd deMause’s terminology, our parents abandoned us. In my later understanding, they did what many European parents thought necessary: save their children, their future.

Then came the death of Mutter Egarter, after a botched throat operation. It deprived all of us on the farm of a stern, yet decent and kind, leader. She was in her mid-50s, and I see her laid...
out in the living room, surrounded by candles. This was my initiation to the job of the alter boy; I spent many nights watching over the “ripening” dead.

The death of my brother, Klaus, of diphtheria followed a few months later in the middle of the winter. He died quietly in the arms of Agnes (Neas), whom I mentioned in the lead article, on the way to the hospital in Brixen. Even if our horse had dragged the sled faster, little could have been done for him there. I still see him stretched out on a board in what had been the Egarterin’s bedroom, his hands bound together with rope to hold them in a praying position. The morning sun was shining eerily on them. Then came the news of Albert’s death, which I have recounted. There were other issues, including failure in three monastery schools.

Why did these drastic events not lead to trauma? Or, why did I not accept them as traumatic? It is not because, as deMause would probably have said, I beautified or denied the horrors of my childhood. It was because of the positives that surrounded me.

Although my parents were usually not part of my life, the care and love of Mutter Egarter and her daughters Katharina (Kat’l), Neas, and Maria (Moitz) overcame this loss. Kat’l yodeled gloriously and played the accordion like no other. Neas and her younger sister Moitz, whom I mentioned by the truth when the former Wehrmacht soldiers reported about their brother’s death, became mother and sister to me. Moitz and I are the last survivors of the household of that time period.

I overcame these terrible occurrences in addition because of a sense of being at home. I learned the local dialect and still speak and write it fluently; in other words, I was included and felt safe. Important as well, on the farm we never went without food, clothing, or a roof over our heads. There were other forms of inclusion, like bringing the eggs from the chicken coop, carrying in firewood and water, and watching our five cows in the high Alps in the warm summers; a joy without bounds that still lingers with a sense of inner jubilation. Then there is our Baroque church that has some of the finest ceiling and wall decorations in the area with a choir in which most of my adopted family members sang and still sing.

In other words, my fate was not like that of the children who were truly abandoned, including those who were deposited on farms throughout Germany, or the Jewish children who were shipped by train from Austria to London. Many never saw their
parents again or did not find common ground with them after the war, if they survived.

Dr. Zohara Boyd said many times publicly: we did not know that the bombs, in her case in Warsaw and in my case in South Tyrol, were anything unusual. Nor did we think our lives were unique; we did not discover that until later. That is when we realized that some of the agonies that plagued us were our trauma and that we had the capacity to handle it.

It was my father who caused that discomfort and dismay. We saw each other after ten years in Nuremberg, after he had been out of American prisons for three years and I was 13. He took me around the city, but I did not understand the meaning of what he recounted at the former National Socialist (NS) sites. Nor did I consciously see the many parts of the city that still lay in ruins. I looked up to him; sons tend to do that.

After I emigrated in 1957, we entered a correspondence that lasted until his death. In March 1964, he wrote about his disappointment with having joined the NS regime and complained bitterly about having been deceived by the criminals who led it. He wrote that they committed every one of the deadly sins familiar from the Catholic faith. Although I understood his dismay, he did not yet tell me then that he had served in the SS. That came in 1972 on his only visit to the U.S. He probably thought I was by then old enough to understand his decision to join the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) and later the Schutzstaffel (SS).

I was not prepared to find out about this part of his past. He had been a part of my good memories; the news felt like a betrayal. I carried the astonishment and resentment with me for years and only gradually overcame it through writing and speaking about his decisions and his tribulations.

The more I learned about prisons and camps, and the horrific stressors that our fellow human beings underwent in them, the more I began to understand his trauma. He wrote in the same letter that his life had basically been a waste and, if it were not for art, music, literature, his second wife Micky, and me, he would long since have given up on it.

The literature is filled with reports of the detrimental effects of miserable childhoods or the bending of children to a certain
ideology. Aside from the inherited inner resiliency, a supportive childhood is indeed a major reason some people cope, that is, avoid constantly relighting the fire that simmers underneath and can all too readily be rekindled. I did everything one can do to not reinvigorate the flame and yet, when a colleague sent a 1942 photo of my father in Brixen that I had not seen before, the flame burst out as if it had never been subdued (see Peter Petschauer, “Never Without IT,” in *Hopes and Fears. Past and Present*, 2018, 61-62.)

The effect on a community or a nation that has many children who neither have inner given strength nor a supportive childhood will undermine a whole society’s ability to cope with detrimental experiences like moral injury, combat, prisons and prison camps, the murder of family members and close friends, trekking along as refugees, or losing everything in a bombing raid.

Most children of perpetrators and children of victims never realize what their parents did or what they suffered. Some children’s unwanted realization that their parents had been perpetrators or victims shaped the denial that runs through their societies. Most could not express their frustration, thus leading to guilt and trauma. It still shapes Jewish families in this country and German society; there it is in part connected to the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Let me add a comment about the thousands upon thousands of perpetrators in Germany and other European counties, including Poland, France, Czechoslovakia, and even Italy, who survived the war. As Minna Falk, a beloved professor at New York University, wrote in her *History of Germany* (1957), it was simply impossible to arrest and try all of these perpetrators (a word not used then).

So what happened? Unless they emerged as high profile cases, like those tried in Nuremberg or later highlighted for political purposes like Kurt Waldheim, some of the vilest criminals once more became judges, policemen, and served in other important positions in the countries in which the NS regime held sway. They held back the democratic impulses in these societies and in Eastern Europe today they still do. Unlike some of the children who were traumatized by these men, few seem to have felt remorse and thus probably avoided trauma to the detriment of their societies. I consider myself once more one lucky son whose father saw through the NS elite’s chicanery and disassociated from it. Because of that, he suffered a trauma whose flame rarely simmered and usually burned
with an all-consuming vengeance.

Allow me to offer a few additional reflections about Professor Fred Alford’s point about moral injury that is also reflected in his *Trauma, Culture, and PTSD* (2016). He writes that it takes a group to overcome moral injury; his point is well taken and yet one might want to add to this perspective.

My first response deals with Primo Levi’s quote (4). My dear friend Zohara, who survived Warsaw in plain sight and whom I mentioned on several occasions, felt guilty for some time about having survived when so many millions of others were incarcerated and murdered. With time though she worked herself through to realize that she survived for a purpose: to offer testimony and honor the others who did not “make it.” She spoke out, she taught, she wrote. Others followed. She now says she can “live with myself.”

The other example is of Franz Herda, whom I honored in the poem, “Franz Herda-American-German” (Petschauer, *Hopes and Fears*, 62-63). He spoke out against National Socialist Germany and married a Jewish woman; they survived because he was an American citizen. I don’t know if Herda felt guilty, but we know that he felt ashamed about the NS politicians’ activities. He represents the tip of an iceberg. By 1943, the Security Service of the SS reported subtle and open opposition to the regime throughout Germany (see, in German, *Reports from the Reich. Selections from the Secret Situation Reports of the SS Security Service, 1939-1944*, ed. Heinz Boberach, 1968, 313ff). A significant number of ordinary individuals and some officials made the point: aren’t you ashamed? A few were arrested; but the protests—for example, not wearing the NSDAP pin or not using the NS salute—are to me an indication of an individual protest that was taken up by an increasing number. Herda fits right in and it took men and women like him to stand up. They felt morally injured and spoke up, even at personal risk.

I am thinking as well of the many voters who felt morally injured and possibly traumatized by Donald Trump’s immoral behavior and voted Democrats into Congress in November 2018. This breakthrough, or this spurning of a trauma, came as individuals could not tolerate the immorality any longer and ran for governmental offices.

My point is that it does indeed take a group of persons to overcome a moral trauma, just as Alford argues. We are speaking of trauma like that inflicted by the NS regime and the current...
American administration. Nevertheless, individuals constitute groups. It is these persons who had or have the courage to stand up and through this enable others to do the same. The flame of trauma may still simmer and may relight, but at least for the time being it has been contained.

Finally, this: the first realization that there is such a phenomenon as trauma goes back to the American interviews of German and Italian prisoners of war at the end of WWII as they were about to return to Europe. In the meantime, Western democracies have carried out wars in several places and have been able to refine the understanding of the phenomenon. That is, we have had peace at home and thus the luxury to explore post-traumatic stress disorder for other wars and to expand and elaborate the definition of trauma. In other words, without peace at home, we would not have been able to pursue these contemplations.

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PTSD and Moral Injury as the Consequences of War Trauma

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Abstract: In this article we aim to shed some light on the various experiences combat veterans have gone through and what they continue to go through after returning home. This can include PTSD, moral injury, and the memories of war that cannot be wiped from one’s mind. Additionally, there is a section of the military, drone operators, who are a population possibly neglected by mental health professionals as they have not been deployed to the combat zone, but instead the combat zone was brought to their office. We have focused on them and illustrate how they also may develop war trauma.

Keywords: combat-trauma, drone-operator, mental-health-professionals, moral-injury, PTSD, war-trauma

Consequences of War Trauma

One of the possible consequences of war trauma is the de-
velopment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a neurobiological and hormonal imbalance. Unfortunately, untreated PTSD will almost always become worse and one response may be to self-medicate through alcohol and street drugs. Furthermore, PTSD from combat often has co-morbidities including: depression, suicidality, interpersonal difficulties, and reactions of rage. Soldiers in war may become well acquainted with death and atrocity, which is hard to leave on the battlefield.

Robert J. Lifton described the intense intrusion of the reality of death into the mind of young veterans as “death’s imprint” (“Understanding the Traumatized Self: Imagery, Symbolization, and Transformation,” Human Adaptation to Extreme Stress: From the Holocaust to Vietnam, 1988). He clarified that it could be extremely challenging for young soldiers to assimilate what they saw and experienced. Lifton put forth that outside of combat, men and women are unlikely to face their mortality in such a brutal way. Living in a space where one alternates between the fear of being attacked and an uncompromising readiness to destroy another speaks to the heart of war and the shadowy side of humanity.

Reviewing the research reveals that there are two military populations that are at high risk for developing PTSD. One group being those who are traumatized by the severity of combat and are considered victims, and a second group being those who participated in activities that they saw as immoral, such as the atrocity of killing innocent people and torturing or executing captives. These veterans are at risk to develop psychiatric symptoms including depression, suicidality, PTSD, and moral injury.

Syndrome of “entering a bombed village”

Before troops enter a village that they assume is enemy territory, their artillery unit may bomb the village from a distance. Afterwards troops enter the enemy territory for occupation. They are exposed to the numerous injuries/deaths of civilians, which their own unit had caused. Because of this, some troops develop feelings of guilt, shame, and devastation. Nightmares disturb them at night. Flashbacks trouble them during the day. As one soldier reported, “I have repeated nightmares of dead Iraqi children chasing me, calling me a murderer.” This was a soldier who had volunteered to go to war with the desire to become a “freedom fighter.”

Moral Injury and PTSD

Looking at the research articles, it is clear that moral injury
differs from PTSD. Moral injury may not have a specific traumatic event that precedes it. Additionally, PTSD is a medical diagnosis and the only major psychiatric disorder with a known etiology. Moral injury generally has “a slow burn quality.” To be morally injured one should have a stable brain that can experience empathy and sympathy, create a coherent memory narrative, and be able to comprehend ethical and moral reasoning (Rita Nakashima Brock, “Moral Injury: The Crucial Missing Piece in Understanding Soldier Suicides,” The Huffington Post, 2012). The veteran who suffers from moral injury will feel shame, guilt, sorrow, regret, grief, and/or a change in self-image—no longer feeling innocent or like a hero, but, as one of them reported, rather like a monster or criminal. Recent research conducted on approximately 900 National Guard troops revealed that experiencing both moral injury and PTSD increases the risk for suicidal thoughts and actions (Craig J. Bryan, AnnaBelle Odette Bryan, Erika M. Roberge, & Fecia R. Leifker, “Moral injury, posttraumatic stress disorder, and suicidal behavior among National Guard personnel,” Psychological Trauma, Research, Practice and Policy, 10[1], 2018).

Definition of a Hero: One Who May Not Develop Moral Injury?
A combat veteran described one experience in Iraq with his sergeant. They were chasing a suspected enemy through the streets of Baghdad. The suspect was driving fast but eventually came to a roadblock and had to stop. His sergeant took his gun and went over to the car, ordering the suspect out. The sergeant then discovered this was just a regular civilian and he let him go. The sergeant’s behavior went against military recommendations that the Army taught, as this suspect could have been carrying a bomb, and at times, one may need to shoot first and ask questions later. Yet this sergeant’s actions could be seen as heroic, to put himself at risk, rather than harm an innocent person. Additionally, he prioritized his moral guidelines over military instructions. His actions were in alignment with his beliefs about what was right and therefore would not cause moral injury (Jamshid Marvasti and Anton Power, “Veteran Suicide, War Trauma and Moral Injury,” American Journal of Forensic Psychology, 34[3], 2016).

Drone Warriors and Moral Injury
The use of drones has opened up another source of moral injury. Eyal Press researched and published an extensive piece on this topic in the New York Times Magazine (“The Wounds of the
Drone Warrior,” June 13, 2018). Drone operators, while not on the ground, are still greatly impacted by the consequences of their actions in war. There has been concern that using drones in warfare creates the illusion that terrorism can be fought by pushing a button, and that those who have this role may act as “‘joystick warriors,’” disconnected from war’s moral gravity. However, research conducted at an Air Force base in Ohio showed that 75% of the 141 analysts and officers involved in remote combat experienced grief and remorse (Press, “Wounds”). Additionally, these drone operators are exposed to greater graphic violence than most forces on the ground.

Given that these drone pilots are not in the field, where we’d typically expect them to be exposed to direct physical and emotional trauma, it may be easy to overlook the emotional and psychic strain that they experience from viewing these graphic images daily. However, it is pervasive and crippling, as evidenced by the high rate of burnout.

**Drone Pilot Life and Statement**

One previous drone operator shared of a strike execution that left the “terrorist” dead, but spared his child who had been walking next to him. The operator then saw a horrific scene, as the child went to pick up the pieces of his father to try and put him back together.

These pilots experience an intense back and forth transition, going from dropping missiles on the enemy, to 20 minutes later picking up milk on their way home to see their family. Some drone operators feel they are making a difference with the work they do, but they may still struggle with stress, suicide, divorce, and inner conflicts around what they do—namely, “moral injury.” They are consistently viewing horrifying images, often based on their actions or when they failed to act. One study at Langley Air Force Base reported that overall, their personnel had pride in their missions; however, they also struggled with distress and interactions with their family and friends, emotional numbness, and trouble sleeping due to disturbing images (Press, “Wounds”).

One drone operator shared that the computer feed clarity could vary. On a good day, when all the environmental and technological factors came together, it was more clear who they were looking at. However, other times it was a grainy image and therefore hard to distinguish a civilian with a walking stick from an in-
surging with a gun. Those days, one had to guess.

**Frequency of Drone Attacks**

While drones have become an essential piece in warfare, information about them is covered in secrecy, with the public not having much of a sense of how, when, or with what consequences they’re being used. Non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) and independent monitors have reported that the U.S. acknowledges a much lower number of strikes and civilian causalities than its own reports. Since 2010, U.S. drone strikes have killed between 8,000-10,000 people with around 750-1,500 being civilians in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia, according to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism in London. The U.S. government claims instead only 64-116 civilians were killed by drones between 2009 to 2016.

Drone operations, nicknamed “kill chain,” expanded greatly under President Obama. During his presidency, he authorized around 500 drone attacks *outside of active conflict areas*, which was 10 times more than President George W. Bush. This is not including drone strikes in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria (active conflict areas). President Trump has further expanded drone operations, authorizing five times the number of strikes in his first seven months than President Obama had in his last six months in office (Press, “Wounds”).

**Impact of Killing**

Shira Maguen, a researcher and psychologist with the VA (Veterans Administration), found the distress soldiers experienced was less about surviving attacks by the enemy and was more connected to their actions that may have crossed their internal ethical boundaries. One soldier relayed that he thought he was doing the right thing, killing a car full of enemies, but later found out there was only a family inside. In her research, Maguen found that regardless of different experiences in combat, “killing was a, ‘significant, independent predictor of multiple mental health symptoms’” and social impairment. One Army chaplain who served in Afghanistan eventually resigned as a military officer. In his resignation letter to President Obama he shared that, “he could not support a policy of ‘unaccountable killing,’ that granted the executive branch the right to ‘kill anyone, anywhere on earth, at any time, for secret reasons’” (Press, “Wounds”).

**Moral Injury: Not Accepted as Diagnosis**
While research suggests moral injury is a widespread experience, it is still contested in the military and psychological community (Jamshid Marvati, “Moral Injury and suicide among warriors,” Clinical Psychiatry News, June 2014). It is a threatening idea to the military that war could cause moral injury because it may put soldiers in a position where they must do something that they feel is wrong. One drone operator shared that the images he saw on the screen could be so hard to read that he could not tell if something was a chicken or a child. He also relayed the pressures he felt by his superiors to be certain of things he could not be, such as verifying if there was anyone else besides a Taliban commander in a compound. Sometimes he would just say “no” because he knew they did not want to hear “I don’t know” (Press, “Wounds”). In the Vietnam War, some veterans reported that they were told to count any dead body as Vietcong, including children and even animals, like monkeys.

**Moral Injury and Drone Operators**

Additionally with drone warfare, operators may “get to know” their target more so than someone in the field. They may watch their movement for days or weeks, seeing them buy food at a market or play with their children. Then the risk of moral injury may be greater because even if they are the enemy, the drone operator has seen their humanness as well. Enemies considered nonhuman may allow soldiers to more easily physically and emotionally kill them.

One drone pilot shared that one of the hardest challenges in recovering from doing this type of work was acknowledging that a part of him enjoyed this power to take life and the excitement that came from it. Yet along with this feeling was a sense of shame and grief. Furthermore, while in the beginning he had felt connected to his missions, over time, he saw them as short successes that fueled hatred in those targeted, and provided ongoing profits for military contractors, which benefited from war’s perpetuation (Press, “Wounds”).

In traditional warfare, soldiers are on the ground, fighting someone who could fight back. A soldier’s own life is at risk. However with a drone program, the risk is only in one direction. Lawrence Wilkerson, a retired Army colonel, shared his concern that this kind of remote warfare takes away a certain ethic. He stated, “if you give the warrior, on one side or the other, complete immunity, and let him go on killing, he’s a murderer. Because you’re
killing people not only that you’re not necessarily sure are trying to kill you—you’re killing them with absolute impunity”’ (Press, “Wounds”).

Sharing Their Story to Heal

One soldier shared how he enlisted after growing up in a violent home and wanted to defend the defenseless. He was an intelligence operative and during a mission in Iraq, he saw gunfire from a house and he ordered a missile. After the smoke cleared, he could not see a clear target, only the 19 dead bodies of men, women, and children. He shared this story while in tears at a VA chapel in Philadelphia, where others have come to share their story. After the veterans gave their testimonials, there was a circle formed around them to share a message of reconciliation. The psychologist and minister who facilitate these meetings share how important it is for there to be audience participation. They shared that “moral injury is as much about society’s avoidance and denial as it is about the ethical burdens that veterans bear” (Press, “Wounds”).

Response to Combat

Research shows that one of the ways combat veterans with PTSD struggle when they come back to civilian life is the perception of neutral situations as an actual threat. When startled or during a flashback, they may enter immediately into combat mode, which could result in a violent response. When these criminal cases are brought to court it is vital to determine if the person was capable of knowing, in that moment of violent action, that what they were doing was wrong and whether they were incapable of conforming their behavior (Jamshid Marvasti and Fatima Syed, “PTSD and the Justice System,” American Journal of Forensic Psychology, 36[3], 2018).

While some veterans may act out, others may struggle with suicidal thoughts. This violence and self-destructive behavior has been linked to PTSD. Research has shown that trauma survivors may repeat the trauma they experienced in order to establish ego mastery. A victim of PTSD may repeat the trauma on themselves or others, which may result in becoming desensitized and help them become a master over the trauma they themselves experienced. A victim to victimizer process may occur as the victim may identify with the aggressor (victimizer) in order to feel strong. It is a way to change from feeling powerless to powerful. This is similar to a child who fears monsters, becoming a monster himself during play with his siblings, in order to overcome this fear.
Someone who has suffered through an atrocity and trauma may face several possible outcomes. These could be to gradually integrate the trauma and lead a healthy life; to stay identified as a victim; to become an offender themselves by identifying with their aggressor; and to become part victim and part offender.

**Drugs and Alcohol Consumption**

Combat veterans have been exposed to life or death situations and the threat of annihilation is the ultimate trauma. Armies have used drugs to calm the warrior and alleviate symptoms of PTSD. For example, in the Vietnam War soldiers at night, when on duty, might take amphetamine to stay awake, and be hypervigilant and hyper alert. In the morning, they would use alcohol to counteract the stimulation effects of the medication in order to sleep. It was documented that the Nazis gave their forces an amphetamine drug called Pervitin. In recent years, U.S. pilots were given amphetamines to help complete their bombing missions. This information only came to light when it was revealed by one of the pilots’ lawyers after he mistakenly bombed Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. During the trial, his lawyer blamed the amphetamine drug for causing the fatal mistake (Josh White, “Air Force Pilot Who Bombed Canadians Is Fined $5,672,” Washington Post, July 7, 2004).

Sleep problems are one of the most painful side effects of trauma, and can cause cognitive functioning problems. A military psychiatrist told me that as he walked along the front line of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, he was giving out medication for insomnia/nightmares “as if it was M&M’s for kids.”

**Psychotherapy Focusing On: Self-Forgiveness, Guilt, and Self-Blame**

Is there any effective special therapy for moral injury? Unfortunately, there is no scientifically confirmed treatment for moral injury. To the best of our knowledge, there is no medication or virtual exposure treatment that can repair moral or ethical damage to the psyche of the warrior. However, there are clinicians who focus on self-forgiveness and try to decrease self-blame and feelings of shame and guilt. Clinicians working with veterans’ war trauma may benefit from the following recommendations. Guilty feelings are a normal reaction in human beings. Clinicians can use these guilty feelings as an engine for amendments/compensation and self-forgiveness, rather than attempting to eradicate it.
When clinicians are working with self-blame, they can help veterans understand that accountability and culpability should be distributed. Blame may be divided among the Commander in Chief, Congress, and their immediate superior who directed combat actions. Some veterans may feel betrayed by their commanders. This should be acknowledged and, if justified, may be dealt with through actions. Actions could include disclosure through writing to journals, social news media, and government officials. In psychotherapy, venting to one’s therapist can provide relief. The issue of killing the enemies and/or civilians should be discussed in treatment. Some veterans may hide their dark feelings and the therapist can softly explore their guilt around their actions in combat. This must be done from a space of nonjudgement. Although religion may be an important subject for some people in therapy, it is not helpful to tell the veteran, “It was God’s wish that you survived the enemy fire.” This could give the impression to the veteran that their co-fighter died because of God’s wish.

Therapists may explain the difference between guilt and shame. Feeling guilt is a normal human reaction and only a psychopath would not experience guilt. Veterans may have made mistakes in combat, and they may feel shame or guilt around this. Therapists can explain that coming from a place of guilt would be, “I am a good person, but I made a mistake.” However, a shame perspective would be, “I am the mistake.”

At times, “self-blame” should not be pathologized, as alternatives to self-blame may be powerlessness and helplessness. A person may feel that tragic events happen and that he/she has no control over it, which creates the image of a scary world. Many veterans may experience “survivor guilt,” when their comrade dies but they survive. This type of guilt should not be pathologized. One can explain in therapy that “bullets do not discriminate.” Someone with survivor guilt can utilize this guilt as an engine to help the family of the lost comrade or become an activist in peace organizations. Although veterans volunteered to join the military, they should be reminded that they did not create the war. Additionally, while in combat they were “ordered” not “invited” to shoot (Jamshid Marvasti and Anton Power, “Veteran Suicide, War Trauma and Moral Injury,” American Journal of Forensic Psychology, 34[3], 2016).

Conclusion
As General Sherman declared, “War is hell.” We believe our veterans go through hell and may return back with injured souls and bodies. Our servicemen/women face grave physical and emotional risks while patrolling war zones, carrying 120 pounds on their backs in 130 degree temperatures in the Middle East conflicts. I believe the label of “battered soldier syndrome” is appropriate for those involved in combat: a place where civilian casualties and the death of comrades are occurring in front of their eyes. Additionally, moral injury and PTSD can still happen to drone operators while they are fighting the war from their offices.

Although the proverb states, “there are no atheists in foxholes,” there are those who survive the battleground that have lost their faith, and wonder where God was when they were exposed to the massacres and atrocities of war (Jamshid Marvasti, War Trauma in Veterans and Their Families, 2012, 299-300).

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Jacques Szaluta: Witness to History, Psychohistorian, and Psychoanalyst

Ken A. Fuchsman—University of Connecticut
Paul H. Elovitz—Ramapo College and Clio’s Psyche

Jacques Szaluta emigrated as a young boy from Europe to the United States in 1946. After high school in New York City and serving in the Army, he graduated from New York University in 1959 and in 1969 was awarded a doctorate in European history by Columbia University. In 1994, Dr. Szaluta earned a Certificate in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy from The New York Center for Psychoanalytic Training. Dr. Szaluta is currently a licensed psychoanalyst in New York State. In 1965 he began teaching history at the Merchant Marine Academy and retired in 2001 as a full professor. The college recognized him for distinguished teaching in 1994 and as an emeritus professor he continues to be actively involved in its activities. He is a Research Associate of the Psychohistory Forum and for many years has served as moderator of its meetings. His
book Pétain For and Against: A Survey of the Historical Debate was published in 1973, followed by La Psychohistoire in France in 1987. He co-edited Psychoanalysis and the Humanities in 1996, and published Psychohistory: Theory and Practice in 1999. This last book won the Gradiva Award from the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis. Dr. Szaluta has published many articles and presented at numerous professional conferences throughout his distinguished career. He (JS) was interviewed in 2018 by Ken Fuchsman (KAF) and Paul H. Elowitz (PHE).

KAF: Each of us have experiences that have led us toward psychohistory. You, though, had special circumstances as a youngster. Would you tell us about your early childhood?

JS: I was born in Paris, France, on August 22, 1933, to Polish-Jewish parents, who met and were married in France. Unfortunately, World War II broke out in September 1939 when I was six years old and in June of 1940 German forces had captured much of northern France, including Paris. By 1941, there were mass arrests of Jewish men including my father, who did not survive the war. In my case, my mother anticipated what was to come, as even before the mass arrests occurred, all Jews, children included, were required to wear a Jewish star pinned to their garment, to mark them. Eventually, I lived a secret life. Through a friendly neighbor who lived in an apartment next to us, I went into hiding in the village of Dollon, not far from Normandy.

KAF: How long did you stay in Dollon?

JS: I lived there for about four months with Monsieur and Madame Richefeu. One day a man from the French underground with a photograph of me came to the Richefeu house to take me to a safer location in Limoges, in Vichy, France. This was a dramatic, dangerous trip. At one point when we had no choice but to walk on railroad tracks, a policeman situated on top of a hill suddenly demanded to know where we were going. My "passeur," or "passer" as he was designated, responded and the policeman allowed us to continue. Everything was risky. We got very little sleep, and eating was rare, until a train took us to Limoges. As we were walking to the address where my mother was living, I saw her in the distance walking toward us. When I began to run toward her, my feet could not carry me—I was too exhausted. I never had such an experience. But we were reunited. My mother and I bade goodbye to our passer and thanked him profusely. After living in Limoges for
about two weeks, my mother and I moved to a village nearby, Saint Sulpcie Les Feuilles.

KAF: Did this remain a safe haven for long?

JS: In November 1942, I saw a group of German soldiers coming up the street. I ran back into the house and told my mother. My mother, who now had false papers, and I were now headed to Grenoble, held by Italian forces. Grenoble was teeming with refugees and for all of them the conversations now turned to getting out of Grenoble. A frequently mentioned destination was Switzerland. In the fall of 1943, my mother decided to attempt to smuggle me into Switzerland. She took this risk to save my life. I was ten years old.

One early morning, my mother and I went to the Grenoble railroad station, where I was to board a train, and there I met the members of my group. When we pulled away, I was warned, by my mother, not to wave goodbye, nor could she wave to me. Indeed, the situation was dangerous.

When we arrived at our destination near Switzerland, we left the train and walked for an hour to a small barn to hide in near the Swiss border. Later in the evening, when it was very dark outside, a man suddenly came into the barn and introduced himself as George. He told us that he was going to take us to an opening in the barbed wire separating France and Switzerland, and that after we crossed over, to keep walking until we were met by a Swiss guard. We left and finally we arrived at the border where the barbed wire was torn, and George cheerfully said goodbye to us. I recall that in this group I was the last person to cross into Switzerland, and I tore my overcoat. We walked for perhaps five minutes when suddenly a guard shouted “Halt!” I had never heard such a loud sigh of relief as I did from our group. A Swiss guard approached us, very pleasantly, smiling, and he had a pipe in his mouth. We then went to a small guard house, where our names were taken. Moments later, a small bus arrived which took us to a police station in Geneva.

KAF: What happened then?

JS: After two months in camps I was selected, apparently because of my age, to go live with a Swiss family in Canton Bern. This became another very meaningful sojourn for me. The family I now lived with was comfortable. The head of the household was Mr. Hans Berger, and in his shop, called the Kaserei, he produced Swiss
and other cheeses. In this family, there were three children. The day after my arrival, although I did not speak German, I went to school. It was just a two-room school, one room for the lower grades, and the other for the upper grades. The two teachers were married to each other, Frau Ruef and her husband, Herr Ruef. Frau Ruef was an exceptionally kind, caring, and pleasant person, and I enjoyed being in her class. Fortunately, Frau Ruef made me feel comfortable in her class and I learned German quickly. After I went to the upper grades, with Herr Ruef, there was one event that was to have a decisive effect on me later in life. I was very conscious of how it made me feel at the time, but I did not realize its effect on my choice of a career until several years later.

**KAF:** What was that experience?

**JS:** One day, perhaps two months after I became Herr Ruef’s student, he asked the class to write an essay. Perhaps two days later, Herr Ruef told us that he was now going to read the best papers to all the students. To my great surprise, the paper I had written was the second one that he read. I was shocked. I had never had such an experience. I felt ecstatic, for now I had not been just writing for the teacher, as in the past, just doing an assignment, but I was writing for an entire class—the students all listened in rapt attention! I had an audience! This became a momentous event for me. Such an experience became a decisive event and this became a regular occurrence, that Herr Ruef would read my essays to the class. Also, I was writing in German. Not only that, but after I had been his student for one year, twice Herr Ruef spoke with me privately, to ask me if he could learn about my story, my past, to write about me, and to publish a story about me. I agreed, as I certainly respected him. Unfortunately, his intention could not come to fruition because after living in Switzerland for over two years, I suddenly left for the United States.

**KAF:** When did you come to America?

**JS:** I arrived in New York in 1946. I first boarded with relatives, then had other living situations, and eagerly learned to speak English. I was eventually drafted into the U.S. Army, and in 1953 I was sent to be stationed in Germany. At my first opportunity, I went on furlough for one week to visit the Berger family and Herr and Frau Ruef. I was invited to have lunch with my former teachers—an outstanding event. One of the first things Herr Ruef said was that I was the best writer in the class, a recognition I certainly
appreciated. Ultimately, while I was stationed in Germany, I had an epiphany. Later, while I served in the military police in Germany, junior high school students would come to practice their English with American soldiers. One day, during one of my walks, I saw the children dismissed from school that afternoon, and as they left school, they were shouting cheerfully. I was impressed by their exuberance. Suddenly, I had an eureka moment: after I left the Army, I would study to become a high school teacher. Later on, due to what had happened to me, I thought I would become an historian.

**KAF:** After you were out of the Army, did you follow through on this decision?

**JS:** Yes. I graduated from New York University in 1959, where I majored in history and education. I later attended graduate school at Columbia University in the 1960s and the subject of psychohistory was in the air, which meant that frequently in our conversations, among graduate students, we recognized that this was a novel, more encompassing approach to the study of history. By the time I received my PhD in 1969, I felt that I was going to delve into this interdisciplinary approach to the study of history.

**KAF:** What led you to be drawn to psychohistory?

**JS:** I took the required master’s degree seminar in modern French history, and it was with Professor Rudolph Binion, who made a most favorable impression on me. Professor Binion was an eminent historian, who impressed me as erudite and charismatic; a role model. I recall how he advised us to select a subject of great interest to us, since we would be working on it for a long time. Ultimately, I decided to write on Marshal Philippe Pétain (1856-1951). As the course progressed, after making numerous additions and some revisions, Professor Binion approved my master’s degree essay, and the culmination of this initial effort with him was that it led to eventually writing my doctoral dissertation on Pétain. As a child, I lived in Vichy, France, whose government was headed by Pétain. I will allow myself a pertinent association. When I was about nine years old, living in Saint Sulpice Les Feuilles, one day my mother was speaking with several women when one woman declared authoritatively and emphatically that all the problems France was having now were the fault of Pétain! Wow! Her pronouncement made an impression on me. I believed her!

**KAF:** After you earned your history doctorate, did you pursue your
interest in psychoanalysis and psychohistory, and if so, how?

**JS:** By this time, it was the ‘70s, and I learned that psychohistory was growing, so I applied to and was accepted at the New York Center for Psychoanalytic Training, which was founded and directed by Dr. Reuben Fine.

**PHE:** How did your psychoanalytic/psychotherapeutic experience alter your vision of the world?

**JS:** In attending the New York Center for Psychoanalytic Training, my “vision” changed extraordinarily. In attending this institute, a personal psychoanalysis was mandatory. Most importantly, a personal psychoanalysis gives one insights and perspectives that those who have not had this experience cannot comprehend. It helps to resolve, or contributes to attenuating, personal problems. I recall my first patient, a young man in his mid-20s, who, when he had his third session with me, said that he had had a dream. By my attitude toward him and what he said, it was clear to him that in the treatment this was a significant event. I already knew that he had issues with women and that he liked to imbibe alcohol, but he was not an alcoholic. The dream he had was that he was with a woman who was naked. Then he went on to say that she was lying down and he noticed that she had teeth protruding from her vagina. Well, I gasped to myself. I thought to myself, there is an unconscious, that it is real, and it made me feel a high esteem for the field of psychoanalysis and for Sigmund Freud! Coincidentally, at some time thereafter of this patient having this dream, I went to see the film *Jaws* (1975), directed by Steven Spielberg. This film was so popular that people waited in long lines to see it; a new word was coined for it, and this word was “blockbuster.” I went to see it, and I was astounded at the connection I made, or saw and connected in this film, and then interpreting it. Yes, I was stunned by what I saw in this film and its connection to my patient’s dream.

**KAF:** Did you complete your psychoanalytic education and did you practice?

**JS:** With regard to my training to be a psychoanalyst, I studied there from 1977 to 1984, took a brief discontinuation in 1984 and resumed in 1987 until I completed it in 1994. I received my Certificate in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in 1994 and my Certificate in Psychoanalysis in 2004, and when the law on the practice of psychoanalysis changed it led me to be licensed as a psychoanalyst in the State of New York in 2001. I have been a practicing psychoan-
alyst for over 40 years. What has struck me especially as being most consequential is that psychoanalysis is, for all that I have noted above, liberating. It just makes you feel better about yourself and more insightful.

**PHE:** Were there other activities that helped you develop your outlook and career?

**JS:** I also joined the International Psychohistorical Association (IPA) and was active in this group to the extent that Professor David Beisel asked me to write an article for *The Journal of Psychohistory,* of which he was the editor, in the 1979/80 issue, which I enthusiastically entitled, “On to the Third Annual International Psychohistorical Association Convention.” At this time, I also had been reading Sigmund Freud’s works, especially Freud’s essay, “Some Reflections on Schoolboy Psychology” (1914) Freud writes that some students were helped by the instructors they had, but others felt impeded by them, meaning that some felt ambivalent about them. He also says, “At bottom we felt great affection for them if they gave us any ground for it.” Freud accords teachers an enormous importance. I should like to point out that in a teacher/student relationship there should be a degree of idealization of the instructor, as there should be in a psychoanalytic therapeutic relationship. If it does not exist, it will hinder learning, or change, as is the case in a psychoanalytic therapeutic relationship.

**PHE:** After you became immersed in psychohistory, you ended up writing a psychohistory textbook in French in 1987. What led you to this project?

**JS:** By 1980, Professor Binion’s reputation had spread to Europe and he was invited to teach at the Collège de France, the most prestigious university in France. He was to teach psychohistory. At this time, we also began to correspond with each other, and in one of his letters he told me that he used my work on Pétain, my psychohistorical articles, in his course. I felt flattered. Not only that, but he had published a book in French, *la psychohistoire.* Furthermore, the publishing company Presses Universitaire de France asked him to write a book on this subject for a most distinguished and highly popular series in the French-speaking world that is available in libraries, bookstores, and even department stores. In his correspondence, Binion asked me if I would be willing to write such a book in French and I replied that I would when I was free of other commitments in a year. I accepted, and then he wrote to the
publisher recommending that I write the book. The following year I went to Paris, met the publisher and presented my proposal, including a table of contents, which was accepted. I must say that I never anticipated or imagined when I was in graduate school of going to Paris and conducting such a line of business—and all in French! I worked on writing this book for about two years and presented it to the publisher. It took the publisher two years to publish it, which displeased Professor Binion. The first edition of the book was in 1987, consisting of 16,000 copies, followed by another edition in approximately 1991.

**KAF**: You were a writer on psychohistory, a professor, and a member of two psychohistory associations. Were there other ways you sought to promote psychohistory?

**JS**: In 1988, I organized a panel at the American Historical Association, which was to meet in Cincinnati, Ohio. It was accepted. The title of this panel was “Psychohistory and Psychohistorians: The First Fifty Years.” As was noted in the program, this was a “Joint Session with the Group for the Use of Psychology in History.” The chair was Charles B. Strozier of John Jay College, City University of New York. Louise E. Hofmann, from Penn State, presented the paper, “Rudolph Binion: A Critical Appraisal of His Work.” Richard L. Schoenwald, from Carnegie Mellon University, presented “Norman O. Brown and the Legacy of Freud.” David J. Fisher, from the University of California, Los Angeles, presented “The Historiography of Frank E. Manuel: Toward an Integration of Psychoanalytic and Intellectual History.” My paper was “Erik H. Erikson and the Development of Psychohistory.” Geoffrey Cocks of Albion College gave the “Comment.” Subsequently, I wrote to the president of the American Historical Association and the editor of the *American Historical Review* protesting their steps against psychohistory.

**PHIE**: Of which of your work are you most proud?

**JS**: I would like to say that I am “proud” of all the books I have written, of all my articles that I have published, and of my book reviews. I also enjoyed giving papers at professional conferences. My first publication was a small book, *Pétain: For and Against: A Survey of the Historical Debate* (1973), which presents and compares the historical controversy over Pétain. I was pleased that colleagues in the IPA told me that they were assigning my *Psychohistory: Theory and Practice* book to their classes. I co-edited a book
with Professor Laurie Adams, PhD, Psychoanalysis and the Humanities, also subtitled as Monographs of the Society for Psychoanalytic Training, published in 1996. With regard to my book, Psychohistory: Theory and Practice, the first edition was published in 1999. In your history of psychohistory, you wrote that my book is “the only textbook of the field.” Additionally, I have also received scholarly awards. I received the Gradiva Award for “Best Book in the field of psychohistory in 2002.” This is when a second edition was published and when I submitted my book for consideration; it was presented by the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis for Psychohistory: Theory and Practice. Also, I was “Honored for scholarly distinction by the International Psychohistorical Association” at the 39th annual conference on June 1, 2016, at New York University.

**PHE:** Why did you decide to write on Sigmund Freud?

**JS:** After I completed my graduate studies, I decided to read Freud, and I selected his leading work, The Interpretation of Dreams (1900), a most innovative and progressive study of the mind. As I was completing my first paper on Freud, I had another eureka moment. I became unexpectedly motivated to write a book on all of Freud’s ego ideals. This resulted in my writing several additional articles, over a period of several years, while I was simultaneously working on other subjects, giving papers at a variety of international scholarly historical societies, studying at the New York Center for Psychoanalytic Training (which led me to acquire a small practice), and teaching at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. This resulted in my writing and publishing “Sigmund Freud’s Biblical Ego Ideals” in the Psychohistory Review (Summer 1994). Then, in 1996, my article titled “Sigmund Freud’s Philosophical Ego Ideals” was published. In December 2004, I wrote an article titled “Sigmund Freud’s Medical Ego Ideals.” This paper was followed by “Sigmund Freud’s Heroes and the Concept of Ego Ideals,” in Clio’s Psyche (March 2010). My last paper was “Sigmund Freud’s Literary Ego Ideals” in the Journal of Psychohistory (Spring 2014). With regard to my work on Freud’s ego ideals, I plan to resume working on him next year, in 2019, to write two to three more chapters, and have all these essays published in a book.

**PHE:** You have written extensively on film. What does the study of film contribute to psychohistory?

**JS:** Films reflect the larger issues, problems, and fears in a country
or society. I already touched on this issue or question when I discussed the film Jaws. The fears and problems my patient had were also unconsciously reflective of what was being felt by the American public. I will discuss one more film, based on my 2015 article, which is “Steven Spielberg’s Munich, a Film for Our Time: A Psychohistorical Perspective.” The title is because the fear of terrorism is now an accepted fact of our lives, and we have constant reminders of this threat. For example, almost all who travel by air have to go through lengthy and tedious checks at the airports. Security checks have become a ubiquitous feature of our existence; hence Spielberg has tapped into our existential realities. As Munich (2005) opens, Arab terrorists stealthily attack and capture innocent Israeli athletes while they are sleeping, and soon murder them. The film portrays this act as harrowing, gruesome, horrific, and barbaric. The story takes place during the 1972 Olympics, an international athletic event devoted to fostering peace among nations. This carefully planned terrorist act led to the murder of 11 Israeli athletes. The film raises the question: how do you respond to such a deed? All films, essentially, reflect their national culture, and those that become popular tap into an audience’s unconscious, or group fantasies. Films deal with people’s fears, anxieties, hopes, and wishes, or reflect what may be called the zeitgeist. Munich taps into the concerns, fears, and apprehensions of people in the United States and throughout the Western world. To date, the most destructive terrorist attack occurred on September 11, 2001, perpetrated by Arab Muslim extremists. Pertinently, shortly after the attack on 9/11, the French newspaper, Le Monde, carried an editorial titled “Nous sommes tous des Américains” (“We are all Americans”). Due to limitations of space for this interview, I cannot go into further details here, but will do so in my published article. As the film comes to an end and as the camera panoramically pans the Manhattan skyline, there is a curious and enigmatic sighting of the World Trade Center. What does this mean? What does Spielberg suggest? In the 1970s, the World Trade Center was standing, but with the September 11, 2001 attack, this monumental symbol of American wealth and technology was destroyed. Again, at least to an American audience, this can arouse feelings of anger and the seeking of retribution. Does this not also raise the question of how to respond to such a horrific act? Since 9/11, there have been numerous terrorist acts, which are misogynistic and reactionary. Spielberg has attempted to transcend and universalize basic questions of human existence: how do you curb aggression and how do you pro-
mote justice?

PHE: Please define psychohistory.

JS: In my book, Psychohistory: Theory and Practice, I define psychohistory as the application of psychology in its broadest sense, or psychoanalysis in a specific sense to the study of the past, to history. The benefit and the promise of the application of psychoanalysis to the study of history is that it enriches our understanding of the dynamics of the past, adding new dimensions to our perspective of historical processes. In comparison, the method heretofore employed by historians was based on a subjective personal judgment known as “common sense.” Traditionally, then, historians, in conjunction with their stress on what they thought were objective, verifiable, and documentary data, have depended on their intuition for understanding and interpreting individuals, collective behavior, and events. In other words, factors of causation were considered to be political, military, social, or economic. But the introduction of psychohistory has changed this personal and traditional approach by providing a more systematized method of studying the past. Furthermore, psychohistory deals with issues, subjects, and topics hitherto neglected, if not avoided. Basically, psychohistory is concerned with the question of motivation in human behavior, whether of the individual or of the group. As psychohistory has revolutionized the study of history, it has been very controversial and meets with much opposition. However, with Freud’s discoveries in the early 20th century, a whole new way of probing man and his past was founded. However, what has not changed, despite the availability of the new tools, is that the historical product, or narrative, still depends ultimately on the ability, training, sources, and openness of the individual historian. Fundamentally, the psychohistorian seeks to understand why something happened not just what happened.

PHE: As faculty, what are your accomplishments?

JS: I have been a professor for over 50 years and have long promoted psychohistory. I was able to include in the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy’s Catalogue a psychohistory course entitled “Leadership in Modern Times: A Biographical and Psychohistorical Approach.” In time, this became a required course. In teaching, I used the “directed discussion method” in all my courses. This approach has its basis in Progressive Education, popularly known as the Socratic method. The administration selected me to
provide peer mentoring in all departments at Kings Point and seminars in teaching to all faculty. I have received numerous awards for teaching from the administration and students. In 1999, I was unique in receiving the Bronze Medal for teaching from the U.S. Maritime Administration in Washington, D.C.

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

**JS:** Sigmund Freud was the founder of psychoanalysis and the first psychohistorian. Dr. Reuben Fine made outstanding contributions to psychohistory and Professor Peter Loewenberg is the premier psychohistorian whose corpus of publications has been prodigious, consisting of several books and numerous outstanding articles and reviews. Erik H. Erikson is also the preeminent psychohistorian of our time who, as a pioneer and leader in the application of psychoanalysis to society, may be considered the founding father of popular psychohistory. Dr. Laurie Adams of John Jay College was not only a prominent art historian, but also wrote important works in psychohistory, including *Psychoanalysis and the Humanities* (1996).

**PHE:** Do you plan to write an autobiography?

**JS:** It is not likely. This interview is autobiographical. It has contributed to making me think about my past, the present, and the future. Thank you.

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**Lincoln**

**A Dialogue on the Psychology of Lincoln**

Charles B. Strozier—Graduate Center of CUNY
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**Strozier (CBS) and Anderson (JWA)** conducted this dialogue during the winter of 2018 by email.

**JWA:** You told me, Chuck, that you are working on an extended article that could become a book about Abraham Lincoln and his relationship with his father—and with the Founding Fathers. I’ve been investigating Lincoln’s childhood; so, the relationship of son and father seems like the place to start. I’m sure we’d agree that Lincoln had a troubled relationship with his dad. I have a concept I’ve thought of in relation to Lincoln, that he had what I call a “contra-identity,” an identity built in part on his intention of being unlike his father. A key text for me is a report from William Herndon, his law partner. Lincoln remarked in about 1850, according to Herndon, that he believed his mother was the illegitimate daughter of “a well-bred Virginia planter or farmer.” From this man, according to Lincoln, came his “power of analysis, his logic, his mental activity, his ambitions.” He also thought that his “better nature and finer qualities” came from this ancestor whom he never met (Jesse W. Weik and William Herndon, *Herndon’s Life of Lincoln*, 1888, 2-3). We as psychoanalysts, of course, are not primarily interested in whether his grandfather was indeed a well-bred Virginian, but rather we’re intrigued that he had such a fantasy. Lincoln’s comments here offer an entrée into his identity; they tell us what he valued about himself. It is striking that all the characteristics he names are contrary to what his father was like. His father lacked ambition, powers of analysis, and so on; he certainly did not have
the “finer qualities” of Lincoln, such as Lincoln’s compassion for others and appreciation of poetry. Unlike his father, who struggled just to get by, Lincoln was determined to be a man of importance, someone who would have accomplishments that would be remembered.

I wonder whether you agree or disagree with this construction and what you would add about Lincoln and his father.

CBS: First, thank you, Jim, for engaging in this discussion. I do want to note and thank my researcher, co-author, and friend, Wayne Soini, in the project. I do know of your deep interest in Lincoln and, of course, your longstanding commitments to psychoanalysis and psychohistory.

I would say that Lincoln’s idea of his maternal grandfather as some Virginian planter and a distinguished figure was not entirely pure fantasy. One of the things that Wayne and I have found is that his biological mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, had a very clear image of her distinguished father throughout her chaotic childhood. This remarkable woman, “intellectual” by ALL accounts, even though she was illiterate, kept alive in her mind the image of the “Virginny blood” that separated her from what Lincoln called her “lascivious” relatives (William Herndon, Herndon on Lincoln: Letters, eds. Douglas Wilson and Rodney Davis, 2016, 204). It seems clear that she imparted that sense of his inherited greatness to him, and he in turn developed the core childhood fantasy that he was heir to Washington or Jefferson. That was a fantasy that was to have powerful meanings in terms of Lincoln’s political thought.

JWA: That’s significant, because the evidence of his mother’s image of “Virginny blood” suggests Lincoln’s aspiration to specialness might also be a fulfillment of what he imagined his mother would have wanted of him. But still, let me hear about your take on Lincoln and his father, and your reaction to my “contra-identity” concept.

CBS: Lincoln certainly developed an identity that was in contrast with that of his father. Thomas Lincoln, who was a perfectly respectable but somewhat hapless farmer, was for his son inadequate and unworthy to the task of serving as the fatherly source of idealized greatness for his own soaring ambitions. That, of course, tells us much more about Abraham Lincoln than about Thomas Lincoln. But that sense of shame in his father led to Lincoln’s core fantasy, based, it seems, on his mother’s shared image of the Founders’
blood in them. In time, Lincoln’s thought—from the Lyceum speech in 1838, through the debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858, the Cooper Union speech in 1860, the farewell speech at the Depot in 1861, the First Inaugural the next month, Gettysburg in 1863, and the soaring Second Inaugural not long before he died in 1865—developed around the idealization of the Founders. It can be said he brought new meaning to the Declaration of Independence that became, in his thought and work, inseparable from the Constitution. Psychologically, he connected at deep levels with the Founders. They were, after all, family.

JWA: You’ve mentioned Lincoln’s mother Nancy Hanks Lincoln. We might speak some about her. Her death, when he was nine years old, had a profound impact on him. There is evidence of his deep sadness afterwards. I am not alone in being convinced that his lifelong tendency to severe depressions, especially after severe losses, owes much to her death. Would you care to comment on what stands out for you about Lincoln and his mother?

CBS: Yes, she was the lodestone of his life, intensely idealized, and her sudden death when he was nine was almost surely the source of his lifelong melancholy. Lincoln once described his mother to his law partner as “a heroic woman” (Herndon on Lincoln, 83). Furthermore, Lincoln felt Nancy acquired stellar qualities, despite the fact that she was surrounded by unchaste and unreliable relatives. For Lincoln, the Hankses were “lascivious – lecherous – not to be trusted” people (204). Lincoln seemed to bear a grudge against the Hanks family, which led Herndon to avoid mentioning the family name in Lincoln’s presence. Herndon did add that Nancy, though “badly and roughly raised,” was an “intellectual woman – sensitive and somewhat sad” (307).

Most certainly, of Lincoln’s two parents, Nancy was the “smart one.” Nobody ever called Thomas Lincoln “intellectual,” although most everybody who knew Nancy called her so. That is an interesting comment on frontier life, for she was illiterate. In that oral culture, she knew the Bible, for example, and could recite its stories for her adored and talented son. Nancy, however, had a chaotic childhood. It seems her mother Lucy’s unwed pregnancy at the hands of a local distinguished planter forced the original move from Virginia. Lucy then surrendered her baby—or abandoned her—to be raised by her parents.

Nancy’s early years with her grandparents included a num-
ber of older children who were her aunts and uncles. After her
grandfather’s death when she was about nine, Nancy bounced
around for the next decade and grew up in no fewer than three
households. It seems her absent biological father long resided in
her imagination and gave her hope during all this chaos. She cre-
eted, it seems, a fantasy father of whom she could be proud, though
it is not impossible that the identity of her biological father was
well known to her (and therefore later that knowledge was shared
with Lincoln).

JWA: Since I’m focusing on Lincoln’s childhood, I’ve thought a
 lot about his mother, whom, as you note, he idealized. Biog-
 raphers, like Herndon, have tended to see her as angelic, perhaps
 influenced by his having referred to her once to Herndon as his
 “angel mother,” though I note that I see the phrase as referring pri-
 marily to her being dead (in contrast to his living stepmother), ra-
 ther than to her being virtuous or kind.

She was known to be affectionate, and it may well be that
she had a deep love for her son, but I picture Nancy’s regard and
approval as being highly conditional. Some pieces of evidence
point in that direction. An early playmate recalled that, after he
and Lincoln fell into a creek, Lincoln tried to dry his clothes but
feared that no matter what, he’d get a “thrashing” (Michael Burlin-
www.knox.edu/documents/LincolnStudies/
BurlingameVol1Chap1.pdf). When she was on her deathbed, she
told Lincoln and his sister, Sarah, “to be good & kind” to their fa-
ther, to each other, and to the world (Douglas Wilson and Rodney
Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants: Letters, Interviews, and State-
ments about Abraham Lincoln, 1997, 40). One might see it as a
question in her mind whether her children would behave well.

There is abundant evidence that later in his life, Lincoln
was exquisitely sensitive to the feelings of women, and that char-
acteristic may have derived from his concern about pleasing his
mother. What comes to mind are the two absurd letters he wrote to
Mary Owens in 1837. He wanted to call off their engagement but
couldn’t bring himself to do so. He argued in one letter that he
would be willing to marry her, but she would be better off deciding
not to marry him. In the other he stated, “I want in all cases to do
right, and most particularly so, in all cases with women” (Douglas
L. Wilson, Honor’s Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lin-
coln, 1998, 136). There is a parallel to what happened after he
broke off his initial engagement with his future wife, Mary Todd. Some months after the break, he wrote his friend, Joshua Speed—I note here for the readers that you, Chuck, wrote a superb book about the Lincoln-Speed friendship—that his making Mary sad “still kills my soul” (Lincoln to Speed, March 27, 1842, from https://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/lincoln1/1:298.1?rgn=div2&view=fulltext). Lincoln’s struggle to be good and kind, to master his tendency to aggressiveness and rage and attacking others, is a theme I’d like to get to later. But here I think we have to say something about Lincoln’s other parent, who in her own way may have been as important as the other two: his stepmother, Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln. Would you care to comment about her?

CBS: She came into Lincoln’s life when he was ten. He and his sister, Sarah, were scruffy and not well cared for after Nancy’s death. Sarah immediately brought order to the bustling household that now consisted of her and Thomas, her three children from an earlier marriage, Abraham, Sarah, and Dennis Hanks, the illegitimate cousin who had been living as a member of the family for some time. As Dennis later put it, “Abe and his sister were wild, ragged and dirty... she [Sarah] soaped, rubbed and washed the children clean, so that they looked pretty, neat, well, and clean” (Herndon’s Informants, 41). In general, Sarah could not have been a more loving, kind, and nurturing stepmother to the talented but sad young Abraham. She also kept Thomas at bay when he wanted to make his son work in the fields and stop reading, and in many ways that we can only guess at made Lincoln feel as happy and settled as he could be.

Later, when he lived in Springfield, Illinois, and the Thomas Lincoln clan lived 90 miles away near Charleston, Lincoln regularly passed through Charleston twice a year on the circuit he rode as a lawyer. He often stopped by to see Sarah and only grudgingly greeted Thomas and the rest of the family. Lincoln also made a special trip to see his stepmother in early 1861 just before traveling to Washington for his inauguration (Thomas had died a decade earlier). It was a moving parting that both knew portended much. He and his stepmother had a special understanding. She told Herndon in 1865: “His mind and mine, what little I had, seemed to run together, more in the same channel” (Herndon’s Informants, 106-109). Carl Sandburg put it well: Sarah was “one of the rich, silent forces” in Lincoln’s life (The Prairie Years, 1926, 1:50).

JWA: But fortunately, she wasn’t always silent; in the 1865 inter-
view with Herndon, to which you refer, she opened up. I find Herndon’s notes on that interview to be possibly the most incredible and moving document among the rich materials relevant to Lincoln’s life. To think that we have this woman who, as she said, cooked his meals for nearly 15 years (although it wasn’t that many years), telling us what he was like during the second half of his childhood. One passage that stands out: “He was dutiful to me always—he loved me truly I think. I had a son John who was raised with Abe.[J Both were good boys, but I must say—both now being dead that Abe was the best boy I Ever Saw or Ever Expect to see” (108). Clearly, she preferred Lincoln to her own son.

I doubt that anyone made more of a difference in Lincoln’s life than did his stepmother. He had lost his mother; he had a strained relationship with his father. The rest of his childhood would have been dreary indeed if she had not come into his life. They developed a deep love for each other.

In the latter part of this dialogue, Chuck, I thought that you and I might refer to some of the chief psychological themes we see in Lincoln’s life. I’ll start by expanding on the theme I mentioned earlier, the dynamic interaction between his explosive aggressiveness and his determination to be good and kind, a determination that drew on his deep empathy for others.

Usually Lincoln kept his hostility in check, but when there were special circumstances in which he felt he had a right to let himself go, he could be ferocious. Here’s one of my favorite episodes. In 1840 an opponent in the election for the Illinois state legislature, named Jesse Thomas, criticized and made fun of Lincoln, who then no doubt felt he had a right to reply. With Thomas sitting nearby, Lincoln went all out. A skilled mimic, Lincoln exaggeratedly imitated Thomas, including the man’s awkward way of walking. Continuing, he made a fool of Thomas and held him up to ridicule. The audience was yelling and cheering. Lincoln’s performance was remembered as “the ‘skinning’ of Thomas.” Thomas was so overwhelmed he started crying. Lincoln felt remorse afterwards and apologized (Herndon’s Life, 159-160).

We can see the same dynamic during the war years. Lincoln believed deeply in preserving the Union and opposing the extension of slavery, and he directed the army to fight fiercely, but he hated the bloodshed and mourned the Southern dead while being mortified over the Union losses. As I see it, he was in pain
throughout the war and challenged to come to grips with his having played so central a role in bringing about and executing the Civil War.

I have more to say, but I’ll stop here and ask you, Chuck, would you care to comment on what I said, or might you discuss one or more psychological themes that for you stand out in Lincoln’s life?

**CBS:** I must say I have to question any idea of Lincoln’s “explosive aggressiveness.” I know that is a theme in the work of Michael Burlingame, whose work I question. The most famous example is the one you quote, “the ‘skinning’ of [Jesse] Thomas,” but I think it is interesting only by way of contrast with his normal way of relating to the world. Lincoln was a mimic. As a child, he loved to repeat the preacher’s sermon in humorous ways for the other children. He could be very playful. For some reason Jesse Thomas got under his skin, and Lincoln’s mockery of him went too far. Lincoln immediately felt bad, apologized, and never repeated such an attack (the exception might be his mockery of James Shields in the late summer of 1842 that almost led to a duel, something I describe in detail in my book on the Lincoln-Speed friendship, but the whole Shields affair and his not illegitimate distain for him was an artifact of his courtship of Mary Todd and should be seen in that context). There are precious few other such examples. He was much beloved in court on the circuit, in large part because he never spoke down to his fellow citizens, who were mostly illiterate. He was also nearly always funny and empathic with friends and colleagues, in speeches, and in politics at all levels. In fact, I would say it is his empathy that shines forth brightly from his life, not his aggressiveness.

What is true was his constant moodiness and depression that always lurked at the edges of his self-experience. That was surely connected with the trauma of losing his “angel” mother at nine, as we noted before. It left him uncertain about love and intimacy. He seemed to fear at some level that those he most loved would die. He postponed love, sex, and intimacy into his early 30s, and managed to work through those issues to a remarkable degree because of his loving (but not sexualized) relationship with Joshua Speed. That male friendship provided the bridge to his marriage with Mary Todd. After that, he remained prone to depression but was never again suicidal or clinically depressed. Incidentally, “the ‘skinning’ of Thomas” occurred during his worst emotional crisis around these
larger issues.

**JWA:** This wouldn’t be much of a dialogue if we didn’t differ on anything; so, I won’t discuss Lincoln’s aggressiveness any further, and I’ll just accept that on this issue we can agree to disagree.

Now I’ll turn to something more specific, a formulation I’ve come to about the Lincoln of the war years. It builds on my view of the dynamic within Lincoln between his aggressiveness (which I realize you, Chuck, dispute) and his capacity for empathy (with which you heartily agree).

In the Second Inaugural Address, Lincoln declared, years into the blood-soaked Civil War, that, if God so decided, the war might continue for some time, and he revealed his idea of why there had been so much carnage, both in the North and the South:

> If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

Lincoln’s belief was that God willed the war—and its immense devastation—as a kind of gigantic punishment to both warring sides for the offense of slavery. The war was also God’s way of removing slavery. One only needs to think about this passage for a moment to realize that God needed an instrument on earth to spearhead this chain of events, and that there is only one person who could be that instrument: President Abraham Lincoln. There is no way Lincoln truly could know God’s purpose; he formed what I
will call an imaginative construct to provide a master explanation for the Civil War and the freeing of the slaves. As a psychologist and psychoanalyst, I consider this question: why would he create this construction? What role did it play in his psyche?

My hypothesis is that Lincoln was threatened with the possibility of experiencing overwhelming guilt during the Civil War. He could feel that he was responsible for the war. The states that became the Confederacy seceded specifically because of his election. He may well have thought that he could have done more to make peace with the southern states before the fighting broke out. His inner tendency to aggression, especially when he felt justified, could have contributed to his willingness to make military decisions that resulted in thousands of deaths. A sense of his inner hostility might have exacerbated his guilt. But with his empathy, he found the rivers of blood to be excruciating.

There is extensive evidence for these factors, such as his guilt over the deaths of the Civil War. I will give just one small anecdote here that is illustrative. While in the White House, Lincoln often met with people who came to talk with him. He instructed his secretaries not to let widows in to see him because he felt unable to resist any requests they might make (Herndon's Life, 262). I see both his empathy and his guilt over his role in these deaths at work in this anecdote.

In unconsciously forming his imaginative construction, I argue, Lincoln found a way to avoid suffering from guilt about the devastation of the Civil War. He did not have to feel, “I am responsible for all this death.” He believed, as indicated by what he said in the Second Inaugural Address, that God chose him as His instrument to accomplish two divine purposes: first, to free the slaves and second, to bring a just punishment on both the North and South for the centuries of suffering heaped onto the slaves. The effect of Lincoln’s explanation is that he is not responsible for this war in which more than 620,000 soldiers died (William F. Fox, Regimental Losses in the American Civil War, 1889). Instead, Divine Providence is responsible. Lincoln gets the credit for being the person through whom God acted. Lincoln, who long desired to make a mark on history, can see himself as having done so through his central role in a surpassingly valuable achievement: the emancipation of the slaves.

Chuck, you are free to comment or not on my thesis, but, in
any case, you have a final opportunity, as we near the end of the space allotted for this dialogue, to comment on Lincoln’s motivations as you see them.

**CBS:** I agree it is good to have some respectful disagreement. On his guilt, I would basically agree, though I would frame it somewhat differently. He was, in fact, responsible in a real sense for the war. Others would have compromised in 1861, from every Democrat in the land and many in the middle opposed to slavery but hating the idea of war. He felt it would be inconceivable, as he says in the First Inaugural, for the Union to break apart and for there to be two countries from one. Unlike a married couple who can divorce, he says, we cannot separate. Why not, one can ask? Europe is certainly a patchwork of countries on one land mass. But he retained this mystical sense of the Union that made it impossible to let the Confederate States of America—a fully formed country by the time Lincoln assumed the presidency—go its own way. Since the North won the war AND the point of the war was to become one for human freedom, few now question his impulse to preserve the Union at almost any cost. But he knew well and owned his responsibility for the policies (including a strategy of demanding unconditional surrender) that directed the war. That left him with a measure of guilt and remorse for the enormous suffering and death as the war progressed. He reflected on things in general and understood his all-important role in making the war that unfolded. The best manifestation of his torment was less those letters to widows than his fascination with _Macbeth_ (1604). Always his favorite Shakespeare play, he turned to this greatest portrayal of guilt in the English language with increasing frequency as the war progressed, quoting from it, attending performances of it, and corresponding with one of the leading actors of the day (James H. Hackett) about the interpretation of various lines in it.

As for the Second Inaugural, certainly he turns to God in it for an explanation of the deeper meaning of the war. As I put it, the war brought him eye to eye with the Founders, those intensely idealized others who had sustained him through his childhood and adulthood as an alternative to his disparaged biological father. One can see the change in Lincoln’s thought as early as his farewell speech to his friends and neighbors in Springfield from the back of the train on February 11, 1861. He had a task before him, he says, greater than that which rested upon George Washington. As the war progressed, I would argue, his gaze drifted upward, and only
God could provide ultimate meanings. But note that, in the part that you quote of the long third paragraph, Lincoln actually speaks for God to explain what the war was all about (“every drop of blood drawn with the lash”). It shows, I think, more than a touch of grandiosity. He speaks as an Old Testament prophet, and, as they did, he explains what God’s purpose was in bringing the war and all its misery, namely the end of slavery. Then in the final paragraph, the one all about “with malice toward none,” he adopts more the tone of Jesus and the New Testament. That sequence was not lost on his audience steeped in biblical discourse.

There is so much else to discuss, Jim. We could make a book of this conversation.

**JWA:** As I see it, you bring in (convincingly, I might add) the political factors that complement the inner psychological factors that motivated Lincoln. Your mentioning “with malice toward none,” prompts me to say something more about my thesis of the dynamic within Lincoln’s psyche between his aggressiveness and his determination to be good and kind. I see him as continually struggling to hold his aggressiveness at bay. His admonition of “with charity for all” is all the more striking if we picture him as endeavoring to contain his own malice (along with the malice, of course, of a great many Northerners, including Congressmen and cabinet members who were enraged with the South). I also look to his famous appeal to “the better angels of our nature” in the First Inaugural Address. His overt message is an encouragement to his “dissatisfied fellow-countrymen” to find a way to preserve the Union. But I imagine Lincoln turning to this image because he himself was aware of his struggling against the worse devils of his nature.

While you may not agree with my final point, Chuck, I’m sure you agree that Lincoln is endlessly fascinating. He was far from the benign, simple “rail-splitter” and “Great Emancipator” of his public image, but rather a complicated, brilliant, empathic, at times troubled and afraid, driven, and ambitious human being, and I think we have taken some small but significant steps in getting at the flesh-and-blood Lincoln. ☐
Lincoln's Grandiosity in Saving the Union
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Keywords: Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation, slavery, Union

Chuck Strozier, in his dialogue with Jim Anderson speaks of the grandiosity in Lincoln’s reference to God—and by implication Lincoln’s seeing himself as God’s agent—in the Second Inaugural when comprehending the causes and costs of the Civil War. Chuck juxtaposes this not immodest Lincoln with the President’s clear struggle with guilt for his role in provoking and pressing a war that new estimates conclude was responsible for 750,000 deaths in a population of 30,000,000. Historians, like Lincoln’s contemporaries, continue to debate the relationship in Lincoln’s mind between ending slavery and saving the Union. In his persistently forceful rhetoric and framing of a narrative to foster a wider understanding of the war, Lincoln had given direction to this debate in his response to Horace Greeley on August 22, 1862 (Roy P. Basler, ed., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, 1953, Vol. 5, 388-389), asserting that what he, himself, did about slavery he did to save the Union. If he could save the Union without ending slavery, he would preserve slavery. If by ending slavery he could save the Union, he would emancipate the slaves. We now know what Greeley did not then know: that a draft of the Emancipation Proclamation was already on Lincoln’s desk when he gave this response to the publisher.

However, we also know that Lincoln, even as a young man, connected the fate of the new experiment in self-government created by the Founders with the fate of slavery, the greatest source of conflict for the new nation. Lincoln’s evolving (or shifting) attitudes toward slavery and what should be done about it have been the focus of an enormous amount of scholarly debate in the last half century. Linked to the slavery issue in these debates have been Lincoln’s shifting attitudes to race, specifically toward African Americans.

We know that whatever shifts and turns he made about slavery as a politician—and these shifts and turns were crucial to his successes and failures in Illinois politics—the institution of slavery made him miserable. It also provided him the opportunity to be the
defining political leader during America’s greatest crisis. As Frederick Douglass said more than a decade after Lincoln’s death at the dedication of the Freedmen’s Memorial to Lincoln, he “was preeminently the white man’s president…. Black Americans,” on the other hand, were his “step children by adoption.” “We saw him, measured him, and estimated him…by a broad survey, in the stern logic of great events” and concluded that the “hour and the man of our redemption had somehow met in the person of Abraham Lincoln” (Frederick Douglass, “Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln,” April 14, 1876).

Lincoln’s “Address Before the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois” (Basler, Vol. 1, 108-115) on January 27, 1838, a few weeks before his 29th birthday, reveals essential dimensions of this future-defining leader and, by consensus, our greatest president. The address is an encomium to the success of the Founders in creating and passing on to Lincoln’s generation “a political edifice of liberty and equal rights” (Basler, Vol. 1, 109). That edifice was at risk because of the increasing evidence of mob rule, demonstrated by the hanging of gamblers in Mississippi, the public murder in St. Louis (he does not use the word lynching) of a mulatto man convicted of murder, and the murder of the anti-slavery publisher, Elijah Lovejoy, whose printing press was thrown into the river in Alton, Illinois. To underscore his belief in the rule of law as the only way the Founders’ edifice could be sustained, Lincoln observed that there was no grievance that was a fit object of redress by mob law.

In any case that arises, as for instance, the promulgation of abolitionism, one of two positions is necessarily true; that is, the thing is right within itself, and therefore deserves the protection of all law and all good citizens; or, it is wrong, and therefore proper to be prohibited by legal enactments; and in neither case, is the interposition of mob law, either necessary, justifiable, or excusable (David Lowenthal, The Mind and Art of Abraham Lincoln, Philosopher Statesman: Texts and Interpretations of Twenty Great Speeches, 2012, 13).

Lincoln acknowledged that his generation did not face the “field of glory” enjoyed by the generation of the American Revolution, which succeeded against great odds in fulfilling a proposition, for all the world to see, “the capability of a people to govern them-
selves” (Basler, Vol. 1, 114). They were successful beyond all expectations. For his generation, “This field of glory is harvested, and the crop is already appropriated” (Basler, Vol. 1, 114). What glory will there be henceforth for those who merely work to maintain this new government? A seat in Congress, a gubernatorial or a presidential chair—

...such belong not to the family of the lion or the tribe of the eagle. What! think you these places would satisfy an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon? Never! Towering genius disdains a beaten path.... It denies that it is glory enough to serve under any chief.... It thirsts and burns for distinction; and if possible it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves, or enslaving freemen. Is it unreasonable then to expect, that some man possessed of the loftiest genius, coupled with ambition sufficient to push it to its utmost stretch, will at some time, spring up among us? And when such a one does, it will require the people to be united with each other, attached to the government and laws, and generally intelligent, to successfully frustrate his designs (Lincoln’s Lyceum Address cited in Basler, Vol. 1, 115).

Lincoln then concludes with this warning: “Distinction will be his paramount object; and although he would as willingly, perhaps more so, acquire it by doing good as harm; yet, that opportunity being past, and nothing left to be done in the way of building up, he would set boldly to the task of pulling down” (Basler, Vol. 1, 115). To this analysis of potential danger from unchecked passion, whether from a mob or from such a dictator, young Lincoln counsels “Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason [must] furnish all the materials for our future support and defend[e]” (Basler, Vol. 1, 116).

For Lincoln, that support and defense would be as a lawyer and as an active, even impassioned, politician. After a period in the Illinois Legislature and a single term in Congress, Lincoln’s political efforts were invested in building the new Republican Party. In the wake of fellow Illinoian Stephen Douglas successfully passing in the Senate the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, with its doctrine of popular sovereignty, allowing voters in territories moving toward statehood to determine whether they would be slave or free, Lin-
coln re-entered the political fray. With lawyerly logic, he spoke out in public against the growing power of the slaveholding South and its increasingly impassioned defense of slavery, which threatened the self-governing creation of the Founders.

These political efforts came to a head in his Illinois senatorial campaign against Stephen Douglas in 1858, occasioning the most significant public political debates in our history. During their seven face-to-face debates around the state, these two men, who knew each other well—they had both dated Mary Todd—teased out the tortuous challenges facing the nation over slavery following the Dred Scott decision of 1857, which appeared to allow slaves to be kept in slavery even in free states, thus, as Lincoln would suggest, nationalizing slavery. Lincoln opened the campaign on June 16, 1858, with “‘A House Divided’: Speech in Springfield, Illinois” (Basler, Vol. 2, 461-469). After determining where the country was, and whither it was tending, Lincoln declared—in words that the newly established telegraph quickly carried throughout America:

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.” I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new—North as well as South (“‘A House Divided’: Speech in Springfield, Illinois,” 1953).

Senator Douglas was arguably the most powerful political figure in the country, more than the hapless President James Buchanan of Douglas’ Democratic Party. Douglas was assumed to be the next President. In taking on Douglas against the issue of slavery, Lincoln teased out the contradictions between Douglas’ support of popular sovereignty (the Kansas-Nebraska Act) and of the Dred Scott decision, which Douglas was forced to support as the likely Democratic Party candidate for president in 1860. The debates proved to be a full dress rehearsal for the nation’s impending
crisis. Lincoln was beaten in the Senate race by a narrow margin, losing among his own Springfield and Sangamon County constituents. Douglas had successfully tied Lincoln to support of Negro equality, a charge Lincoln ruefully sought to deny, while also defending the Declaration of Independence and its affirmation that all men are created equal.

Springfield was the state capital and like most towns of any size had competing newspapers based on loyalty to specific political parties. Lincoln’s paper was the Illinois State Journal, Douglas’s paper The Illinois State Register. In capturing how Lincoln appeared to the Douglas Democrats of the State Register, the following analysis by his fellow townsman, Charles Lanphier, publisher of the Register, a month after Lincoln’s “House Divided” Speech, charged that Lincoln’s position threatened war between North and South.

“How did Lincoln expect slavery to be abolished in the states where it legally existed?” Lanphier may have suggested during this time that it was unfathomable how Lincoln could expect slavery to be abolished in states where the practice was legal. Lanphier may have also argued that a house divided is one that will not stand. That his wishes are that all should be free he cannot deny. Mr. Lincoln’s sincerity in the opinions he puts forth in relation to the “extinction” of slavery, and the rights of the “negro,” makes him all the more dangerous. How easy it is for a man of his ardent temperament, who starts with an “expectation” of a certain result and who zealously labors to obtain the victory for his own views, to desire and strive for the result, when he perceives his own failure. The “expectation” that this government cannot endure half slave and half free cannot exist in a mind like that of Mr. Lincoln, unless accompanied by the belief that it ought not to exist (Christopher Breiseth, eds. Cullom Davis, Charles B. Strozier, Rebecca Monroe Veach, and Geoffrey C. Ward, “Lincoln, Douglas, and Springfield in the 1858 Campaign,” The Public and Private Lincoln: Contemporary Perspectives, 1979, 118-119).

While Lincoln lost the election to Douglas, he became almost instantly a key contender for the Republican nomination for president in the forthcoming 1860 election. He sealed that position with his “Address at Cooper Institute, New York City” on February 27, 1860 (Basler, Vol. 3, 522-550). If his 1858 campaign had emphasized the Declaration of Independence, in the Cooper Institute speech he emphasized the Constitution and the actions of the
signers in dealing with slavery. In unrelenting detail, he showed that overwhelmingly the original signers, not only in 1787, but in subsequent amendments and interpretations of the Constitution, did not abandon the Federal Government’s control of slavery in federal territories. Even where some of the original 13 states in the South ceded parts of their territory to newly created states (Mississippi) or with Louisiana, which joined the Union through the Louisiana Purchase, and slavery continued, the Federal Government maintained control over such matters as disallowing slaves to come into the new states from foreign parts except with owners moving there as settlers. He cited Washington and Jefferson in support of his position that slavery was restricted from being extended into the territories.

He challenged the assumption of the Southern States that the Constitution gave them a right to take slaves into the federal territories and hold them as property:

But no such right is specifically written in the Constitution. That instrument is literally silent about any such right. We, on the contrary, deny that such a right has any existence in the Constitution, even by implication. Your purpose then, plainly stated, is that you will destroy the Government, unless you be allowed to construe and enforce the Constitution as you please, on all points in dispute between you and us. You will rule or ruin in all events (Basler, Vol. 3, 543).

Lincoln ended his address after assuring the Southern states that slavery should be allowed to continue where it already existed, but insisted that Northern votes will prevent the spread of slavery into the territories to avoid free states being overrun by slave states.

The Southern States took Lincoln’s election in November as the cause to secede and create the Confederate States of America. Then in April of 1861, at Fort Sumter, the war came.

I would argue that Lincoln’s preparation for this moment of critical leadership included his crystal clarity about the Constitution and about the intentions of the Founders on the issue of slavery. He also was deeply committed to preservation of this last best hope of earth, the self-governing Republic of the United States of America. Breaking up what the Founders had put together was an unacceptable sacrilege. While Lincoln recognized that the existence of slav-
ery was the profound cause of the Civil War, as his Second Inaugural makes clear, what he did in emancipating the slaves and securing support for the 13th amendment outlawing slavery he did to preserve the Union. The pain he felt at the horrendous loss of life and limb was great, as the Gettysburg Address made clear. However, he was not conflicted in pursuing the war until he achieved total surrender by the Confederacy.

To that end he authorized the harsh, scorched-earth military policies, which General Grant conveyed to General Sherman, enabling his “March through Georgia.” Lincoln at the end ascribed God’s purpose in bringing the war as a means of ending the sin of slavery. Implicitly Lincoln saw himself as God’s instrument in that effort. The question remains how Lincoln had the toughness and the self-confidence in managing this horrible carnage to be that towering genius he described in the Young Men’s Lyceum Speech in 1838. In preparing the nation for war and in its execution, Lincoln had disdained the beaten path and sought distinction in a brutal Civil War by not only saving the Union but doing so by emancipating the slaves.

Christopher N. Breiseth, PhD, has had a distinguished and varied career. Currently Treasurer of the Frances Perkins Center in Damariscotta, Maine, he is President Emeritus of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute in Hyde Park, New York. He served as President of two institutions of higher education, Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and Deep Springs College in California. Before assuming those positions, he was Professor and Chair of the History Program at Sangamon State University in Springfield, Illinois. A scholar of Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Breiseth was also active in the NEH-funded Lincoln Sites Project in the late 1970s and published articles on Lincoln. He can be reached at cnbreiseth@aol.com.

[Editor’s Note: We wish to thank Jim Anderson for adding citations to Breiseth’s article.]

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An Ego Ideal of My Youth: Lincoln’s Foreshadowing Dream and the Question of Guilt

Paul H. Elovitz—Ramapo College of New Jersey

Keywords: Abraham Lincoln, ego-ideal, forewarning-dream, guilt, suicidal-depression, unconscious-death-wish

As with millions of other American boys, Abraham Lincoln was an ego ideal of my early youth. His birth in poverty in a log cabin, harsh life on the frontier, hard work, self-education, and overcoming failure and early loss prior to attaining the White House inspired me, as did his leadership in the Civil War. As a young boy I believed the tale that “Honest Abe” had walked miles to return a penny a customer had inadvertently overpaid him. This was the Lincoln of my childhood who I saw as the greatest and perhaps the most tragic American president. He represented the dream of American freedom. As an adult, Carl Sandburg’s Abraham Lincoln (1926) reinforced my idealization, though it was not until after I became more interested in psychological history that Abe Lincoln’s struggles with depression and suicide were things I was willing to confront.

Charles B. Strozier’s Lincoln’s Quest for Union: A Psychological Portrait (1982) helped me to deepen my understanding, so I readily assign it to students. Chuck’s second Lincoln book, Your Friend Forever: The Enduring Friendship of Abraham Lincoln and Joshua Speed (2016) was a joy to read. As an editor it was a great pleasure that Jim Anderson, with his usual energy and zest for interviewing people on important subjects, arranged for this dialogue.

Jim’s reference to Lincoln’s guilt brings to mind the question of how he handled it. Given the backdrop of his earlier suicidal depression, it is my thought that while he may not have been overtly suicidal on April 15, 1865, his guilt over the enormous losses in the war led him to be insufficiently self-protective because of an unconscious death wish. It should also not be forgotten that he had to bear the burden of the loss of his young son, William, in 1862, and a troubled wife.

The lack of self-protectiveness is revealed in two incidents. One, his minimal concern for his own safety nine months before his
assassination (in 1864) when a shot was fired as he was riding alone to the Old Soldiers’ Home. His horse was spooked, and his hat was subsequently found with a musket hole in it. The 16th President dismissed it as a probable hunting accident.

The second incident revolves around a dream, relayed by a former law partner, who was occasionally his bodyguard during his presidency. The partner recalled that Lincoln dreamt that there was a commotion in the White House, and the President went from room to room in search of it. In the East Room he finally saw soldiers and people sobbing around a casket, leading him to demand, “What happened? Who died?” A soldier reported that the president had been assassinated. Dreams can help us become aware of that which we consciously deny; in this case, the specific dangers of assassination. Had Lincoln listened to the message of the dream and not been indifferent to the dangers of assassination, on April 15 he could have kept his bodyguard at the Ford Theatre from going next door to a saloon during the performance of “Our American Cousin.” Because each of us is the author, director, and actors in our dreams, I would hypothesize that the thought of being assassinated, however bad for the nation, the freed slaves, and ultimately the South, represented a relief from the terrible pressures of the war. Therefore, his behavior may have reflected an unconscious death wish.

The Lincoln of reality, rather than the idealized one of my childhood, was a man of enormous complexity who had struggled with depression and was insufficiently self-protective. He may also have been so burdened with guilt that he failed to listen to the unconscious warning in his “The President Has Been Assassinated Dream.” I commend Jim Anderson and Chuck Strozier for increasing our knowledge of him.

Paul H. Elvitz, PhD, grew up in an immigrant family in Bridgeport, CT, which stressed the value of education and the ideals that the young Lincoln represented. He is editor of this journal and may be contacted at cliospsycheditor@gmail.com.

Forthcoming in the Fall 2019 Issue:
The Many Roads to Insight of the Builders of Psychohistory
Thomas Lincoln’s “Goodness of Fit” with His Son

Paul C. Holinger—Rush Medical College

Keywords: Abraham Lincoln, goodness-of-fit, parent-loss, psychoanalysis, Thomas Lincoln

I want to thank James Anderson and Charles Strozier for their fascinating dialogue on our 16th president. Now to turn to the issue of Thomas Lincoln. He seems usually to be negatively presented, although there are historians who feel he has been unfairly denigrated. There are far more positive assessments of Abe’s two mothers. Certainly, this is how Abe felt. Clearly his father, Thomas, physically punished Abe (“slash” for reading instead of doing chores, said Abe’s cousin Dennis Hanks who lived with them), as well as using him for heavy work and “enslaving” him by hiring his son out to other farmers.

Psychologically and developmentally this had an impact on the future president, but where did it come from? Thomas Lincoln himself suffered from parental loss. At about eight years of age, he watched his own father being killed by an Indian, which perhaps contributed to some of his difficulties as a father. As a result of modern studies, today we know something about parental loss and its impact on the capacity to parent. Perhaps some of Thomas’ frustration and anger resulted from his son having a father when he did not—this amid all he did for his family to survive.

One might make the case that in those days, Thomas was a rather remarkable man. Land was what was valued on the frontier in his lifetime. Thomas’ moves reveal a very proactive, strong man trying to find the best land he could, moving further west into the wilderness, in the best of the pioneering tradition—often against remarkable odds. He is remembered as a pretty good carpenter, despite his failing eyesight, which was at least part of the reason why he relied on his son’s labor. Then he faced the problem of the death of Nancy Hanks, his young wife, leaving him alone with two young children. She died of the “milk-sickness,” caused by an animal eating the white snakeroot plant, which blocks an enzyme and kills humans who drink the animal’s milk. For six months Thomas left his children alone on the frontier with their young cousins, which had to be awful for them, while he courted another wife and
mother, the widowed Sarah Bush Johnston, who had three children of her own. He may have been motivated by his own loneliness as well as an awareness that he was unable to properly care for his children alone. Perhaps finding a second mother for his children was partly out of some guilt for bringing his family to land that had the milk-sickness. His motivation was probably multi-determined. Thomas had to make these decisions without having a model of what it means to be a father. He found a remarkable woman, married her, and convinced her to come west, providing his children, including the young genius, with a terrific mother. Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln must have seen something in Thomas! He moved away from the milk-sick land to better land.

Finally, it seems clear Thomas resented and depreciated Abe’s intellectual capacities, specifically his desire to learn, separate, and move ahead in a different way. Here I might suggest the notion in psychoanalytic child work of “goodness of fit”—the idea here is that neither the parent nor the child is either bad or good, but that they are very different, which can create real problems. One sees this especially with aspects of temperament; when one is very active and proactive, the other is much more laid-back and passive. Both have their attributes, but the differences are very great and cause difficulties.

In the case of Thomas and Abraham Lincoln, one can see the positive in each, but the “goodness of fit” is a real problem. The son is brilliant and motivated to learn and expand his mind, while the father is much more geared to a physically active style of survival. Furthermore, Thomas has no model of a father who can tolerate self-and-object differentiation and establish a sense of empathy for his son’s interests. In this sense, Thomas has a serious arrest in development, perhaps understandable given his own parental loss (which, again, was earlier than Abe’s and involved his own father, with probable impact on his own capacity to father).

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Psychologizing Lincoln

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

Keywords: Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson, childhood, National Republican, politics, psychology, Whig Party

The Strozier-Anderson dialogue about Abraham Lincoln’s youth is very welcome, not least because it stops short of psychologizing Lincoln’s political career. I’ll explain here why I support Strozier’s and particularly Anderson’s caution in that area.

It would be very easy to over-psychologize Lincoln’s political career. After all, he was subject to deep depressions. However, as a purpose-driven politician, Lincoln was constrained by his own chosen goals and by many other restrictions—political, cultural, and economic—not to mention frivolous constraints that his coworkers and even enemies imposed. But the agenda for the U.S. that Lincoln tried to advance had been set in stone by the previous generation’s political leaders—specifically by the previous generation’s National Republican and Whig Party leaders. Admittedly, Lincoln’s personal psychology may have influenced why, as a young man in the 1830s, he aligned himself with the Whig Party led by Henry Clay rather than becoming a Democrat aligned with Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren.

Psychologically, in fact, Lincoln doesn’t seem to fit the Whig mold. Andrew Jackson and the Democrats stood for the kind of freedom the youthful Lincoln surely must have craved—freedom from outside demands. Strozier and Anderson say that Lincoln spent his youth harassed by economic demands from his father Thomas; albeit simultaneously the young Lincoln was emotionally nurtured by his step-mother Sarah. Why didn’t his father’s oppressive demands predispose him toward Andrew Jackson’s hands-off philosophy of governance? Jackson wanted Americans (white males) to simply be left alone, free to pursue their own goals. Within limits, of course.

In November 1832, when John C. Calhoun and other South Carolinians solemnly nullified U.S. tariff laws within their state, Jackson suddenly became anti-permissive! However, when Congress in January 1833 overwhelmingly passed Jackson’s Force Bill, and most of the country cheered Jackson’s hard line, he then immediately let Calhoun and Henry Clay devise a new Tariff Bill that
gave South Carolina what it had wanted in the first place: far lower U.S. tariffs. Jackson then went back to his rudely interrupted refrain about just leaving Americans alone (white males anyway) to do what they wanted. Jackson even favored states’ rights if they stopped shy of challenging federal authority. Thirty years later would come South Carolina’s next paroxysm of nullification, faced by Lincoln in 1860-61. That proved harder to placate or isolate.

In the meantime, Lincoln did not adopt the Jackson-Van Buren Democratic theme of leaving Americans alone. The Democrats claimed their hands-off policy would keep the U.S. united because what Americans wanted above everything else was their personal freedom. Lincoln, despite his lifelong resentment against his father, chose the opposing Whig Party theme of Henry Clay, which preached that keeping America united required steady guidance and planned improvements.

Lincoln wanted improvements to transportation and other infrastructure not just in the West of his day (e.g. Illinois), but all over the country. He wanted steady improvement, too, in people’s personal prospects. As late as his first State of the Union address (in December 1861, well into the Civil War), Lincoln championed labor against capital. He said, “labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.” He painted his economic ideal as “men, with their families—wives, sons, and daughters—work[ing] for themselves, on their farms, in their houses, and in their shops, taking the whole product to themselves.” He added that,

many independent men everywhere in these States a few years back in their lives, were hired laborers. The prudent, penniless beginner in the world labors for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself, then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This is the just and generous and prosperous system which opens the way to all—gives hope to all, and consequent energy and progress and improvement of condition to all.... [So] let them beware of surrendering a political power which they already possess, and which if surrendered will surely be used to close the door of ad-
vancement against such as they and to fix new dis-
abilities and burdens upon them till all of liberty shall
be lost (Lincoln, “Annual Message to Congress,”
December 3, 1861).

Alas, little more than a year later (in February 1863), Lin-
coln found his options so tightly constrained by the Civil War that
he signed the National Bank Act, destined to undermine small-scale
enterprise in the U.S. and to glorify capital at the expense of labor.
(As of 1860, the top .016% of U.S. families held only 3.6% of U.S.
wealth, but by 1890 the top .016% held 9.6% of U.S. wealth.) Lin-
coln still looked elsewhere for improvement, hoping, for instance at
Gettysburg in November 1863, that the slaves’ emancipation would
foster a “new birth of freedom” for the United States.

Perhaps Lincoln’s stubborn hopefulness was a psychologi-
cal trait? Or maybe he just needed a sort of knee-jerk optimism to
keep his depression within bounds? Either way, his country needed
more of his masterful governance. Had Lincoln survived to oversee
Reconstruction, I think it would basically have succeeded, ex-
slaves coming out of it with more genuine rights than they actually
did, and the South and North becoming more genuinely reconciled
than they actually became. As one result of Lincoln’s survival, we
present-day Americans would now have a more unified legacy beh-
ind us as we face our country’s uncertain future.

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Strozier’s Final Thoughts on the Lincoln Commentaries

Charles B. Strozier—Graduate Center of CUNY

Keywords: Abraham Lincoln, Christopher Breiseth, Jim Anderson, Paul
Elovitz, Paul Holinger, Paul Salstrom, psychohistory, slavery, Thomas
Lincoln

I want to thank Jim Anderson for his thoughtful questions in
our interview. Jim brought his own deep knowledge of Lincoln to
bear in our conversation. I am also grateful to Paul Elovitz for or-
ganizing this forum in the pages of Clio’s Psyche. These kind of
extended discussions of topics in psychohistory stretch the bounds of our field in creative ways. I hope to do justice in my response to the four excellent and diverse comments on my interview with Jim Anderson.

Paul Holinger reminds us that the actual life experience of Thomas Lincoln is relevant for considering his relationship with his famous son. Thomas’s own parental loss at eight years of age, when his father was killed by Indians, left Thomas without a fatherly model, which could have helped him relate better to his talented son. Thomas also had a number of admirable traits, despite his downward mobility over the course of his life. He was an excellent carpenter (and better at it than farming), a strong wrestler (which mattered in the male atmosphere of the frontier), had a robust sense of humor, and was an interesting enough man to attract two outstanding women as wives. But something was missing in Thomas as a father that led him to resent and deprecate “his son’s intellectual capabilities,” as Holinger puts it. The idea that this father and son didn’t have a “goodness of fit” and thus neither is bad or wrong is an interesting way of phrasing things.

I would only note, something I have written about at length in both my Lincoln books is that the current focus in much of the literature on the real or actual Thomas, while an important corrective, is the end is less important than the image of Thomas in the mind of his unusually talented son. That image contrasted sharply, and unfairly, with the person Thomas appeared to be. From this psychological point of view, Abraham saw his father as shameful, a ne’er-do-well, lazy, a piddler, and sometimes mean. Certainly, Lincoln’s law partner and later biographer, William Herndon, channeled Abraham’s disdain for Thomas in the unrelentingly negative portrait of Thomas in his enormously influential biography of 1889. But it is also telling that Lincoln’s dearest friend as a young man, Joshua Speed, also later testified to Lincoln’s scorn for his father, whom he refused ever to talk about. I wonder (but can only speculate on this) if what lay at the root of Lincoln’s shame for his father was his mostly unconscious (and irrational) blame for letting his beloved mother, Nancy, die when Abraham was nine years of age. That was the great trauma of his childhood and probably laid the seeds of his lifelong depression.

The significance of that depression cannot be underestimated. Lincoln was vulnerable to loss throughout his life, but in my book on him and Speed I argue it played out in ways that led to his
broken engagement with Mary Todd and all the drama surrounding that crucial event in late December 1840. The way Joshua Speed then served as the vicarious healer for Lincoln is one of the great wonders of the Lincoln story. Sorting all that out is of course the point of my book. It shows, I think, at the granular level, how a psychological perspective on history makes possible a fresh read of familiar sources.

Abraham’s confused feelings about his father led him to seek idealized surrogates in his political thought. To the extent the actual father was degraded, those founders were elevated to an exalted status in Lincoln’s mind. That mattered in a country hurtling toward civil war. One can trace this flow in Lincoln’s thought from his early speeches, especially the Young Man’s Lyceum speech in 1838, through his major pronouncements in the 1850s, and of course in his memorable First Inaugural, Gettysburg, and soaring Second Inaugural addresses. Before Lincoln, Americans kept separate the Constitution and the Declaration. For Southerners, the notion of human equality was a toxic idea. They valorized the Constitution, which before the 13th and 14th Amendments, protected and enshrined slavery. But the mainstream politics of the North, too, wanted to keep dangerous ideas of freedom out of the public discourse. Lincoln’s contribution to the American political tradition was to make the Declaration and the Constitution integral and inseparable founding documents.

As Christopher Breiseth wisely notes, Lincoln’s ambition, evident from an early age, contained within it, from a psychological perspective, important elements of grandiosity. In the age of Trump, one has to tread carefully in talking about grandiosity as a positive motivator and not something to be pathologized. Maybe the Lincoln story will help prevent us from conceptually throwing out the baby with the bathwater. As Breiseth notes in his lead, I argue in Lincoln’s Quest for Union (1982) and in my Anderson interview that the course of war brought Lincoln to a place of psychological equality with those idealized Founders. All his life he yearned to define them as models of fatherhood to replace the impoverished image of Thomas. As the war drew to a conclusion, it was startling for Lincoln to stand face to face with the Founders. His gaze drifted upward. Only God then could serve his idealizing needs. In the Second Inaugural, Lincoln speaks for God in making sense in explaining the war as divine punishment for the sin of slavery. He speaks as an Old Testament prophet. The transition to the
last paragraph on banishing malice and calling for forgiveness moves in a symbolic sense from the Hebrew Bible to the New Testament, from the Father to the Son, from an often angry and violent God to Jesus.

On a personal note, Chris Breiseth hired me for my first job at Sangamon State University in Springfield, Illinois, in 1972. We taught together for most of the 1970s and talked for literally thousands of hours about the issues of slavery, Lincoln, and the war that he aptly summarizes in his comments. As my mentor then, and dear friend ever since, I have little to add to his informed assessment of Lincoln’s views on race and slavery. It is only worth underlining that Lincoln never wavered in his hatred of the institution of slavery. If anything is wrong, he would say repeatedly in the 1850s, slavery is wrong.

His attitudes on race are more complicated. My recent book about Lincoln and Speed suggests a perspective on those complications. Speed was Lincoln’s best friend and the only man he truly loved (though it was not, as I argue at some length, a sexualized relationship). Speed himself grew up on a large plantation near Louisville, Kentucky. After returning to Kentucky in 1841, he ran that plantation for a while, and then he turned it over to a sibling so that he could concentrate on his businesses. He would become a hugely rich man, and he continued to own house slaves until 1865. Lincoln knew the Speed plantation (Farmington) well, as he spent several weeks there visiting Speed in late August and early September 1841. He was assigned his personal “boy” to attend to his needs and witnessed for the first and last time directly how a large plantation works.

Speed epitomized Lincoln’s constant refrain in the 1850s that he fully understood the dilemma of liberal Southern slaveowners who were caught up in a noxious institution that they had no idea how to abolish. In such speeches, Lincoln showed much greater empathy for the slaveowners than the slaves. He wants slaves to be free, to be sure, but in an obnoxious line from his 1858 debate with Stephen Douglas, he says that doesn’t mean he wants to marry one. Lincoln’s relationship with Speed—in other words, his great friend and the source of the vicarious healing of his depression—is also a window into the complexity of his views about slavery and race.

Paul Elovitz’ interesting discussion of Lincoln’s guilt raises
all kinds of questions that have bothered historians for years. Some, like Edmund Wilson, raise the issue as a way of branding Lincoln a tyrant. That unnecessarily pathologizes the issue. I would ask, how could he not, as a sensitive human being and wise leader, feel guilt for drawing a line in the sand over a compromise in 1861 that led to a war with such massive suffering? Elovitz notes that Lincoln may even have been deliberately incautious at the end and had some dark foreboding of his death. Was that related to some underlying guilt?

Paul Salstrom notes Lincoln’s “stubborn hopefulness” as a model for all of us in our troubled age. That is hard not to affirm. He suggests, however, something of a dichotomy between thinking psychologically about Lincoln’s childhood and extending that perspective to his political career. But isn’t that what psychobiography is all about? If we restrict the psychological to the psychobiographical, our project gets trivialized and banished to the margins of the historical imagination. We need at least to attempt to think bigger than whining from the dusty corners of the profession.

Charles B. (Chuck) Strozier’s biography may be found on page 290.

Anderson Responds

James William Anderson—Northwestern University

Paul Elovitz notes that Abraham Lincoln provided an ego ideal for him in his youth, as Lincoln did for millions of other American boys. I was one of those boys. Studying Lincoln with increasing sophistication in my adulthood, I realized he was hardly an ideal of how one would want to be with, for example, his depressions and what I see as his load of aggression and anger. But I find him all the more admirable, in part because of his ability to manage, and even make constructive use of, these obstacles to his well-being. As a child, I was presented with what I now see as a simplistic Lincoln: honest, eager to learn, skilled at splitting logs, born in rural poverty, and wearing pants that were always too short for his long limbs. The more complex Lincoln who struggled with himself; who used his empathy to rein in his aggression, who employed humor at times to disarm possible conflicts, at other times to punish his adversaries; who had virtually no formal education but always was the smartest man in the room; who brilliantly found a
way to free the slaves—this Lincoln is far more compelling than the idolized bearded man on the five-dollar bill.

I enjoyed the commentaries and learned from each of them. I have some reactions but no sharp areas of disagreement.

My mentioning Lincoln’s finding a way to free the slaves, though, brings to mind an odd disagreement I have with Christopher Breiseth. Odd because the evidence he adduces seems to support with my position and oppose his own. He writes, “what [Lincoln] did in emancipating the slaves and securing support for the 13th Amendment outlawing slavery he did to preserve the Union.” Yes, of course, Lincoln’s priority had to be to win the war and preserve the Union. The Southern states had cleaved the country and precipitated the bloodiest war by far in our nation’s history. But, in my view, he had a hatred of slavery that can be seen as a red thread through much of his life, and he was determined to find a way to get rid of it when he had a chance. Breiseth notes some of the evidence of Lincoln’s dislike of slavery. Then he clinches the argument—that is, my argument, not his—when he tells us about Lincoln’s comment to the editor of the New-York Tribune, Horace Greeley. Lincoln claimed to care little about ending slavery; he would do so if it would help preserve the Union and he would let slavery continue if that would help preserve the Union. But as Lincoln made this argument, Breiseth observes, the draft of the Emancipation Proclamation was already on his desk. As I see it, Lincoln was feigning indifference to Greeley, as he already had the machinery of emancipation underway. He says to the public, many of whom hated and dehumanized African Americans, “Don’t worry guys, I’m not one of those fanatical Abolitionists and Negro-lovers. I’m on my way to freeing millions of slaves just because it will help the war effort.”

As I look at Breiseth’s commentary, I notice he quotes an amazing passage from a speech Lincoln delivered shortly before his 29th birthday. I will discuss the quotation, because I see it as central to my conception of who Lincoln was. Lincoln notes that men who aspire to nothing more than being a governor or a president

belong not to the family of the lion or the tribe of the eagle. What! think you these places would satisfy an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon? Never! Towering genius disdains a beaten path.... It denies that it is glory enough to serve under any chief.... It thirsts
and burns for distinction; and if possible it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves, or enslaving freemen. Is it unreasonable then to expect, that some man possessed of the loftiest genius, coupled with ambition sufficient to push it to its utmost stretch, will at some time, spring up among us?

(Basler, Vol. 1, 115)

I submit that Lincoln found himself talking about such ambitious geniuses because he had a sense that he was one of them, that he had stupendous abilities. And also he had developed a purpose to become someone far superior to his father, someone similar to the idealized Founding Fathers. As I noted in the dialogue, “Lincoln was determined to be a man of importance, someone who would have accomplishments that would be remembered.”

My talking about that passage reminds me that another of the commentators, Paul Salstrom, also provides a quotation that I think bears our looking at. My portrait of Lincoln, as put forth in the dialogue, emphasizes that he wanted to be unlike his father, that he developed what I call a contra-identity. A chief reason for that development was his resentment of his father for forcing him to become a hired laborer and then, as was allowable for a father of a son not yet 18, pocketing the earnings.

In his first “Annual Message to Congress,” Lincoln talked about the great value of the system of hired labor in these words:

many independent men everywhere in these States a few years back in their lives, were hired laborers. The prudent, penniless beginner in the world labors for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself, then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This is the just and generous and prosperous system which opens the way to all—gives hope to all, and consequent energy and progress and improvement of condition to all (Basler, 5, 52).

This passage, to my ears, reflects Lincoln’s deep feelings about the way he saw his father as exploiting him. The value of the system of hired laborers is that it enabled the laborers to receive wages and eventually to use their earnings to set up their own farms or other businesses. It is just that which Lincoln’s father denied him, the
right to benefit from his strenuous labor.

Now I come to the topic of the methodology of psychobiography. I use that phrase with some hesitancy, because I fear it might cause you, Dear Reader, to go to sleep or to give up on paying attention to my comments. It is an area I have specialized in, and it simply refers to the question of how to go about doing psychobiography.

Elovitz and Paul Holinger made remarks, central to their commentaries, that allow me to discuss a facet of the methodology of psychobiography. Central to methodology—sorry for using that word again—is the question of the use of theory. Elovitz and Holinger both organize their commentaries around a theoretical concept. Elovitz brings up what has been called passive suicidality. He wonders whether Lincoln might have been “insufficiently self-protective because of an unconscious death wish.” Holinger posits that Lincoln’s poor relationship with his father may have been, in part, because they lacked “goodness of fit.” With both commentators, I am not sure whether I agree or disagree, but I applaud the approach they are taking, which fits perfectly with the approach I have advocated in my methodological writings. For ideal psychobiographers, theoretical concepts come to mind as they immerse themselves in the subject’s life. They use theory to help themselves see what they otherwise might overlook. Then they, as Elovitz and Holinger did, make their best effort to examine the evidence to see whether it bears out their application of the theoretical concept.

Finally, I wish to recommend the book I happen to be reading just now, Ron Chernow’s insightful biography, Grant (2017). In my part of the Dialogue, I made what might be seen as a leap. In discussing Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, I wrote as follows:

Lincoln’s belief was that God willed the war—and its immense devastation—as a kind of gigantic punishment to both warring sides for the offense of slavery. The war was also God’s way of removing slavery. One only needs to think about this passage [in the Inaugural Address] for a moment to realize that God needed an instrument on earth to spearhead this chain of events, and that there is only one person who could be that instrument: President Abraham Lincoln.

My leap was in supposing that Lincoln viewed himself as God’s instrument for removing slavery. One could say that that might
seem logical, but is there any concrete evidence? In my reading this past week, I came across a relevant passage in Chernow’s book.

When Lincoln toured Richmond after the Union troops had taken over the city, African Americans flocked to him and exalted him and cheered. “One elderly black man exclaimed, ‘Glory, hallelujah!’ and knelt reverently at his feet. Lincoln stood chagrined. ‘Don’t kneel to me,’ he admonished the man tenderly. ‘That is not right. You must kneel to God only and thank Him for the liberty you will hereinafter enjoy. I am but God’s humble instrument’” (Chernow, Grant, 495). I was quite pleased when I came across this passage, especially because Lincoln actually used the very word, “instrument.”

In conclusion, I am grateful anytime someone reads what I write, and I appreciate even more what happened here. Four thoughtful scholars—Breiseth, Elovitz, Holinger, and Salstrom—took the Dialogue that Chuck Strozier and I participated in and used it as the springboard for their own creative forays into understanding that supremely complicated and generative man, Abraham Lincoln.

Abraham Lincoln’s Maternal and National Affiliation

Herbert Barry III—University of Pittsburgh

Abstract: Abraham Lincoln is best known as “The Great Emancipator” during the Civil War. His foremost intention, especially as President of the United States, was to preserve the Union. The childhoods of Lincoln and two other important supporters of the Union during the Civil War, Ulysses Simpson Grant and Andrew Johnson, reveal that they were more affiliated with their mothers than with their fathers. In the Revolution of the American Colonies against the “Mother Country” England, George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson during childhood were more affiliated with their fathers than with their mothers. Parental affiliation can provide some valuable insights into some of the decisions made by our leaders.

Keywords: Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Civil War, George Washington, John Adams, parental-dynamics, Thomas Jefferson, Ulysses Simpson Grant
Political and social behavior in adulthood may be influenced by early childhood affiliations. A young child who is strongly affiliated with the mother but not the father may develop loyalty to the government in adulthood, adopting maternal loyalty to the family and its continuity. A young child who is strongly affiliated with the father, but not the mother, may develop rebellion against the government in adulthood, adopting paternal self-reliance and hostility against being governed.

Abraham Lincoln was one of many members of the Whig political party who shifted to the Republican Party, largely because it opposed slavery. Lincoln, the first Republican President of the United States, is now most known as the “Great Emancipator” of the slaves. Rather than ending slavery, his primary goal was actually to preserve the Union. In his first inaugural address as President, he tried to dissuade the southern secessionists:

In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn oath to “preserve, protect, and defend it.”

For more than five weeks after his inauguration, President Lincoln procrastinated, deferred action, and tried to negotiate with the southern secessionists. A subsequent historian wrote that the southern secessionist leaders should have waited for the Union forces to fire the first shot, even if they had to wait forever. Lincoln apparently adhered to that advice but on behalf of the Union. On April 12, 1861, Confederate artillery fired on Fort Sumter in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. On April 15, Lincoln called for the recruitment of 75,000 Union soldiers. The Civil War had begun.

President Lincoln’s principal purpose was to preserve the union, not to abolish slavery. His letter to newspaper publisher Horace Greeley, dated August 22, 1862, included the following: “My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it, and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that.”
Most mothers have the prime purpose of preserving the family to benefit their children and grandchildren. Most fathers have the prime purpose of improving their status and wealth to benefit themselves and their family. This difference between mothers and fathers might lead to differential predictions. Children who are more affiliated with their mothers will more often support their nation. Children who are more affiliated with their fathers will more often lead a revolution by their subordinated colony against the mother country.

The three principal supporters of the Union during the Civil War (successive Presidents Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Grant) had maternal affiliation. The three principal supporters of the Revolution against the mother country (Washington, Adams, Jefferson), who became the first three Presidents of the United States, had clear paternal affiliation. The research on their relationships with their parents occurred afterward. *The Complete Book of U. S. Presidents* by William A. DiGregorio (6th Edition, 2005) contains brief information on the mother and father of each President. More extensive information is in *The Presidents’ Mothers* (1968) by Doris Faber and in *The Fathers of American Presidents* by Jeff C. Young (1997).

President Abraham Lincoln in childhood was more affiliated with his mother and stepmother than with his father. Two of Abraham Lincoln’s principal supporters in the Civil War, General Ulysses Grant and Vice President Andrew Johnson, also in childhood were more affiliated with their mothers than with their fathers.

Abraham Lincoln’s mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, was, according to accounts, quite devoted to her children, including Sarah, who was two years older than Abraham, and Thomas, who was two years younger and died at the age of two. Their mother died in 1818, when Abraham was nine-and-a-half years old. Their father married Sarah Bush Johnston, widow of Daniel Johnston, two months before Abraham turned ten. She had three children from her first marriage and was quite supportive of her stepson Abe.

Abraham Lincoln’s writings and recorded conversations in adulthood indicate that despite the hardships of frontier life, he had good maternal care by both his mother and stepmother. He stated that before he became an independent adult, his father hired him to do chores for neighbors without sharing the money he received for his son’s labor. He thereby treated his son as a slave. Abraham in
adulthood avoided his father, not even going to his funeral; clearly, he felt more maternal than paternal affiliation.

Ulysses Simpson Grant, originally named Hiram Ulysses Grant, was the first of six children. Ulysses hated his father’s occupation as a tanner, converting skins of animals into leather. His father was flamboyant and financially successful. Ulysses resembled his devout, fatalistic, socially inhibited mother. Although throughout adulthood he was seldom together with either parent, he felt more affiliated with his mother. Grant graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. He served as a young subordinate officer in the Mexican War (1846-1848). After that war, excessive alcohol intoxication during peacetime military assignments forced him to resign. He was unsuccessful in several civilian occupations. When the Civil War began, he strongly supported the Union and recruited volunteers in Illinois to join the Union army. His previous military experience helped him become the commander of increasingly large and successful forces.

Andrew Johnson was the last child in a family of three children. His father died a few days after Andrew’s third birthday. Andrew remained affiliated with his mother and with her second husband until her death in 1856.

Johnson became a Democratic politician in Tennessee. Beginning in 1857, he was an elected Democratic member of the United States Senate. When Tennessee seceded, Johnson was the only southern Senator to remain loyal to the Union. He helped prevent eastern Tennessee from helping the Confederacy’s war effort. In 1862, President Lincoln appointed him military governor of Tennessee. In 1864, President Lincoln chose him as the vice-presidential nominee of the National Union Party. Andrew Johnson became President of the United States when Lincoln was assassinated less than two months after their inauguration.

These three leaders of the Union during the Civil War can be contrasted with three leaders of the American Revolution against the “Mother Country,” England. These leaders were George Washington of Virginia, John Adams of Massachusetts, and Thomas Jefferson of Virginia. Each of them had better paternal than maternal relationships.

George Washington’s mother, Mary Ball Washington, was the second wife of his father, Augustine Washington. Their marriage occurred about three years after the death of Augustine’s first
wife, Jane Butler Washington. George, the first of his mother’s six children, was born almost a year after the marriage.

Mary Ball Washington was described as a domineering mother. She forbade George’s desire to enlist in the British navy. He was forced to obey but spent as much time as possible with his older half-brothers. His father died before George was 11 years old. The death of his father prior to George’s adolescence probably strengthened the son’s affiliation with his male parent, especially because of his mother’s domination. The adult George Washington disliked his mother. He was very seldom with her, although she survived until 1789. He supported her financially, though she petitioned Virginia’s legislature for a pension she did not need.

John Adams of Massachusetts was a strong supporter of the Revolution and especially an advocate of George Washington as the commander of the Continental Army throughout the war. John Adams’ mother was from a wealthier family than his father’s. She tried to dominate her husband in addition to her children. The son, John, given the same name as his father, was the first of three boys. John initially desired to follow his father into farming, but he was persuaded by his father to go to Harvard College instead. John became a lawyer and later a member of the Continental Congress, where in 1776 he was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Contrary to his father’s quarrels with his mother, John had a harmonious marriage with his wife, Abigail. She was a devoted wife who had feminist sympathies.

Thomas Jefferson was the third of ten children of a prosperous Virginia planter. His mother, Jane Randolph Jefferson, was a member of a wealthier Virginia family. A similarity to George Washington is that the father of Thomas, Peter Jefferson, died when Thomas was 14 years old. This paternal loss probably strengthened the son’s identification with his father. Thomas became responsible for his younger siblings; his mother became an authoritarian head of the wealthier Randolph family. Thomas, who wrote prolifically about many topics and people, wrote very little about his mother.

Abraham Lincoln has been the subject of many biographical accounts. This brief essay focuses on the fact that Lincoln’s principal interest, especially as President of the United States, was to preserve the Union. Psychohistorical evidence indicates that three principal leaders of the Civil War, which preserved the Union, had
more childhood affiliation with their mother than with their father. Three principal leaders of the revolution of the American colonies against England, the “Mother Country,” had more childhood affiliation with their father than with their mother.

A boy who is more strongly affiliated with his mother does not necessarily become effeminat. If he is a leader of a nation from which some states have seceded, he applies his maternal desire to protect the family and its descendants by preserving the national union. A boy who is more strongly affiliated with his father does not necessarily become a misogynist. If he is a leader of colonists, he applies his paternal desire for independence and higher status to the revolution against the mother country. Lincoln’s maternal affiliation was a factor influencing him to preserve the union.

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Two Young American Male Murderers

Ken Fuchsman—University of Connecticut

Abstract: This article profiles two young male American murderers and places their actions in cultural context. One is an African American who killed at age 18, the other is a white American who murdered at age 20. Globally, 95% of homicides are committed by men, and in the U.S. over half are perpetrated by adolescent and young adult males. Their stories give a human face to lethal activities enacted by young men.

Keywords: American-culture, emotional-disorders, homicide, men, psychological-shaming

Murder is serious business. There is nothing more consequential that one person can do to another than kill them. Humans are more likely to use violence to take the lives of adults of their own species than most any mammal (Ed Yong, “Humans: Unusually Murderous Mammals, Typically Murderous Primates,” The Atlantic, September 28, 2016). Homicide is a human universal and
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across the globe there are vast differences in the frequency of killing (Melvin Konner, *The Evolution of Childhood: Relationships, Emotion, Mind*, 2010, 717).

In advanced industrial societies, the United States has the highest rate of murders, three times higher than Canada and five times higher than France and Germany (Myriam Miedzian, “Why Our Homicide Rates Are The Highest Of Any Advanced Industrialized Country: It’s Not Just About Guns,” *Huffington Post*, February 25, 2013). Murder may be an individual act, but it always occurs in a cultural-historical context. It cannot be seen as a primarily psychological event, but benefits from psychohistorical understanding.

In this paper, I will look at murder through the lens of two case studies of American homicides. Some groups of people are more likely to kill and/or be killed than others. In the U.S. in 2016, more than half the homicide perpetrators were under 30 (U.N.R.I.C., “Homicide,” 2014; Statista, “Murder Offenders” 2017). In 2015, 13.3% of Americans were African Americans, yet they made up 52.3% of all murder victims (Matthew Cella and Alan Neuhauser, “Race and Homicide in America, by the Numbers,” *U.S. News and World Report*, September 29, 2016). In the U.S. between 2001 and 2010 around 5% of gun-related homicides are committed by those with a diagnosed mental illness (Jonathan M. Metzl and Kenneth T. MacLeish, “Mental Illness, Mass Shootings, and the Politics of American Firearms,” *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 105, 2015).

Both of the murderers profiled here were young men; one was 18 at the time of his lethal action and the other 20 years of age. One had been diagnosed with a mental disorder, the other had not. One is white, the other black. These two case studies of individual murderers represent populations with higher prospects of being lethally violent.

My goal is to go beyond the statistics and show how these distressing human tragedies are both individual and entwined within their social-historical setting. *The Naked City* film (1948) and television episodes (1958-1963) ended with, “There are eight million stories in the Naked City. This has been one of them.” There were over 14,000 homicides in America in 2012 and 2013. This is the story of two murderers.

The first case involves a young African American man, T. J. Mitchell, who later became captain of his high school football team
in the predominantly black suburb of Bloomfield, Connecticut. When this athlete was 15, his stepbrother introduced him to Ronald Taylor, a 24-year-old African American man, who provided him with pot and induced him into a sexual relationship. As the initial sexual act allegedly occurred when Mitchell was younger than 16, under Connecticut law Taylor would have committed statutory rape.

To some males a homosexual encounter is an affirmative experience, to others a stain on their masculinity. As Mitchell’s identity was connected to the hyper-masculine world of football, he became the latter. After a few years, he ceased being sexual with Taylor. But the older man would not accept this change. To retaliate, Taylor posted on Facebook that Mitchell was a gay football player, but after a few hours removed it. Taylor, though, threatened to again publicly expose Mitchell. The adult was blackmailing an adolescent to be sexually subordinate.

A viable solution for the victim of rape and exploitation would have been to go to the police. Mitchell was likely scared to turn Taylor in to the authorities as he would have to reveal the homosexual acts. As well, blacks are unlikely to put their faith in the police. Among African American youth, less than half trust the police compared to over 70% of whites and Asians, and close to 60% of Latinos (Jann Ingmire. “Young People of Color Mistrust Police” UChicago News, 2014). After all, blacks endured slavery and were later subjected to lynching, police brutality, and a higher rate of incarceration for committing the same crimes as whites. As a young black man in America, not surprisingly Mitchell would be less likely to turn to the legal system with his problem. If he had, his life might have turned out differently.

Instead, he took matters into his own hands. He wanted Taylor to stop shaming him. The two met in Taylor’s car on November 21, 2013. Mitchell brought a steak knife with him in case things got out of hand, which they did. There was a struggle, Mitchell took out his knife, and stabbed the older man, who leapt out of the car. The adolescent could have stopped there, could have prevented himself from going over the brink. Instead, his rage led him to make the fatal decision to pursue Taylor, whom he caught, stabbed, and murdered. Mitchell later pleaded guilty to first degree manslaughter with a sentence of 12 years (Christopher Dempsey, “Former Bloomfield Football Player Pleads Guilty,” Hartford Courant, October 17, 2014; David Moran, “Emotions Run High As

This homicide grew out of a young man being abused and subject to social blackmail. The murderer must have been afraid of being outed, shunned, and branded. Mitchell’s being seduced into a homosexual relationship led to much self-division. He did not want to think of himself as being an African American gay man. There is a stigma among many African American males associated with being homosexual (Anthony Lamelle and Juan Battle, “Black Masculinity Matters in Attitudes Toward Gay Males,” *Journal of Homosexuality*, Vol. 47 [1], 2004).

As mentioned, the hyper-masculine world of football that Mitchell inhabited is less tolerant of gay men, and few homosexual football players ever come out. Still, if he had been white rather than black, there would have been a greater chance of his turning to the police, and finding a less self-destructive consequence to his dilemma. In killing Taylor in a rage, Mitchell was attempting to exorcize the homosexual part of himself. Yet the price he paid for his murder was to get himself imprisoned in an all-male jail where he could well be pressured into performing homosexual acts. Homicide can be tragic for both the victim and the perpetrator.

The other murderer was from an affluent, white suburban American family. His parents married in 1981, and he had a brother who was four years older. The father was an executive in a Fortune top 15 company who earned over $400,000 annually; his mother took care of their sons. The couple separated when one son was 13 and the other nine, then divorced when our future perpetrator was 17 and his brother 21.

At age 13 the younger brother was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome. Also, at age 13 one hospital reported that he suffered from overwhelming anxiety; the next year another medical facility diagnosed him with obsessive-compulsive disorder (Andrew Solomon, “The Reckoning,” *The New Yorker*, March 17, 2014). His mother ignored the psychiatric evaluations and rejected the medication suggested. By this time, during the week the mother and younger son lived alone together. She was devoted to her troubled offspring’s care, often acceded to his frequent demands, and thus enabled him. At times, anxiety about her health led to a role reversal. She would confide to her child her worries about herself. Surviving emails show the boy comforting his mother. Still, his
own troubles dominated. After two years attending the town’s high school, he dropped out, soon after completed three courses at a nearby state university, then around 17 stopped taking classes. He subsequently remained at home where he was solitary, phobic, and depressed. He blacked out all the windows in his bedroom and also became anorexic (Alaine Griffin and Josh Kovner, “New Report on Lanza: Parental Denial, Breakdowns, Missed Opportunities,” Hartford Courant, November 21, 2014; Alison Cowan, “Adam Lanza’s Mental Problems ‘Completely Untreated,’” New York Times, November 21, 2014). He spent much of his waking hours online obsessed with aberrant actions (Ray Sanchez, CNN, October 26, 2017).

This young man became disillusioned with humanity, writing “I incessantly have nothing other than scorn for humanity” and “have been desperate to feel anything positive for someone for my entire life.” He also made dire interpretations of relatively routine incidents, writing that as a child medical doctors would routinely touch his penis, then adds that he and “every child” were “raped by doctors” (Josh Kovner and Dave Altimari, “Documents Reveal Dark Descent Into Depravity,” Hartford Courant, December 9, 2018).

When he was 20, his mother decided to go out of state by herself in the middle of the week and visit friends. The son objected. She went anyway and returned on Thursday. On Friday morning, December 14, 2012, using one of his mother’s weapons, he shot and killed her while she slept. The shooter, Adam Lanza, proceeded to drive to his former elementary school, killed 20 first-graders and six adults, then executed himself in the Sandy Hook Massacre.

In any case, Adam was a troubled individual who for years had toyed with being a mass murderer. Medical agencies recognized Adam had mental disorders but for whatever reasons his mother would not deal with her son’s severe problems. She allowed Adam to be an unemployed dropout who did not receive sufficient medical and psychological treatment.

It is also striking how similar there is between Adam Lanza and the profile of serial murders the FBI developed in the 1980s. These males who committed multiple homicides over time often came from economically comfortable families, originally with both parents in the home, but in 47% of the families the father
moved out before the son was 12. Less than half of serial killers finished high school, and almost three-quarters had a psychiatric assessment detailing mental disorders. Before their murder sprees they had become isolated with aggressive fantasies (R. Emerson Dobash and Russell P. Dobash, *Why Men Murder Women*, 2015, 106-107). Many such males did not engage in serial killing or the one horrendous atrocity Lanza inflicted on first-graders and school officials.

We likely will never know what propelled Adam Lanza to go over the edge. At some point years before he arrived armed and loaded at his former elementary school, something cracked in his psyche. He became preoccupied with mass murderers and imagined himself as being part of that infamous circle. Adam had closely studied the 1999 killings at Columbine High School in Colorado where two students killed 12 fellow students and a teacher. Adam had a very large mass-murder spreadsheet, including what looks like a complete copy of the official Columbine investigation (Manny Fernandez, Julie Turkewitz, and Jess Bidgood, “For ‘Columbiners,’ School Shootings Have a Deadly Allure,” *New York Times*, May 30, 2018).

Unlike the poet John Keats who was half in love with eauyful death, Lanza was fully in love with vengeful, violent slaughter. As there are war lovers, Adam became a lover of hate and murder. Adam is one of too many who both fantasize about slaying others and then commit an atrocity that usually results in their own demise. His hate of himself and others dominated Adam’s turmoil existence. In returning to his elementary school to enact his long-fantasized project, he was symbolically killing himself.

Individuals as disturbed and destructive as Adam are not unknown in other societies. Contemporary America has resources that can help those with Adam’s level of disorder and has other cultural patterns that would not stop his path to mass murder. Psychiatric research has given us an increased ability to diagnose and treat mental disorders. Yet medical alerts did not penetrate his mother’s defenses.

Adam refused to see his father, his older brother was on his own, and other kin lived out of state, leaving Adam and his mother residing alone in a 3,100 square foot house on over two acres of land. A single female parent living alone with a 20-year-old son is relatively new. Through much of history humans tended to live
with or near extended families. A divorced mother in her early 40s with a young adult child in her home and getting over $200,000 alimony annually was until recently an extremely rare phenomenon. Who knows if having Adam’s problems being addressed by a larger nearby familial structure would have made a difference? In the past his mother would likely not have been the sole one actively concerned on a daily basis with Adam’s disturbed psychological state.

In the Internet age isolated in his darkened room, Adam surfed the net and found multiple sites concerned with violent atrocities that reinforced his deadly fantasies. The recent phenomenon of the web gave Adam a channel for his darker impulses that may not have as easily gotten the same reinforcement before the personal computer was widely available.

Also, Adam Lanza lived in a rabid gun culture. Among developed countries, the U.S. has by far the highest per capita rate of firearm related murders. Americans are 20 times more likely to be killed by a firearm than individuals living in other economically advanced nations (Marc Fisher, Steve Vogel, and Steve Hendrix, “Gunman kills mother, then 26 in grade school rampage in Connecticut,” Washington Post, December 14, 2012). The lowest rate of gun ownership in the industrialized world is in Japan, which has the least number of gun related deaths (Sarah Boseley, “High Gun Ownership Makes Countries Less Safe,” The Guardian, September 18, 2013).


Manny Fernandez and colleagues report that that “school shootings have become the American equivalent of suicide bomb-
ings — not just a tactic, but an ideology.” These violent endeavors appeal to adolescents and young men who may be “depressed, alienated or mentally disturbed.” They see school shootings “as a way to lash out at the world and to get the attention of a society that they believe bullies, ignores or misunderstands them” (Fernandez et al., NY Times, May 30, 2018). This American phenomenon of copycat school shootings is made easier in that, in 2016, there were about twice as many guns per capita as in 1968 (Scott Horsley, “Guns In America, By The Numbers,” NPR, January 15, 2016). Our rabid gun culture presents an ideology and opportunity for disturbed men to slaughter school age youngsters.

Among these two Connecticut crimes, we have one young man who killed as a defensive-aggressive gesture to stop an adversary from shaming him, and another highly disturbed individual committed an atrocity in imitation of other school shootings. The acts that led to both killing incidents were aided and abetted by this technological age. It was Taylor’s posting on Facebook that Mitchell was gay that precipitated the lethal confrontation, and Lanza was active on Internet sites about school shootings and found the Columbine plans online.

Both also in part are products of historical phenomenon. For many non-blacks who were raped, turning to the police would have been an easy choice. For blacks such as T. J. Mitchell, law enforcement have been perceived as oppressors rather than equal enforcers of the criminal statutes. Adam Lanza lived with one parent rather than two, isolated from other relatives. His family constellation was more common in the 21st century than in most of human history. The human tragedies of these and other homicides cannot be understood separate from their psychohistorical context. For instance, as individual as Adam Lanza’s actions were, they were as much a product of his society and time as of his disturbed personality. American mass school killings most often take place in affluent white communities by disturbed young white males in the equivalent of suicide bombings. Adam Lanza’s and other comparable mass murders are preventable tragedies. They recur in a culture that would rather endure youngsters being slaughtered in school than taking actions that would effectively control the right to bear arms.

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Jair Bolsonaro Is a Brazilian Bovarist, Not a Trump Clone

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Abstract: Brazil’s authoritarian populist President-elect copied some of Donald Trump’s electoral techniques, but his personality and ideology are different. He can be described as a Bovarist, a syndrome characterized by a tendency to identify with more powerful and accomplished individuals, which is a form of identification with the aggressor.

Keywords: authoritarian-populism, Bovarism, Brazil, Donald Trump, election-campaign, Jair Bolsonaro, social-media

Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil’s new president, is sometimes referred to as the Brazilian Trump, but this is superficial. Bolsonaro’s use of social media in his campaign was modeled on Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign. However, his background and personality are quite different from Trump’s, and Brazil as a country has much in common with countries such as India, Turkey, and the Philippines, which have also elected authoritarian populists. While Bolsonaro modeled his campaign strategy on Trump, different personalities and national priorities suggest there will be differences in his style of governing.

Brazil is actually suffering many of the socio-economic problems that Trump falsely claims are happening in the United States: an economic crisis, rising crime rates, and outrageous corruption scandals. But Brazil does not have one issue that has been central to Trump’s politics: illegal immigration (except for some isolated areas along the border with Venezuela). The most hopeful possibility is that Brazil’s acute problems will give Bolsonaro’s government impetus to enact realistic policies, something that does not concern Donald Trump. So far, at least, Bolsonaro has not suggested building a wall on Brazil’s border with Venezuela. Trump has illusions of being a financial genius and has, in fact, accumulated a lot of money in sleazy business deals. Bolsonaro has no business background and no illusions about his economic gifts. This is
to Brazil’s advantage because he has turned management of the
economy over to his finance minister, Paulo Guedes, a conservative
economist who is well qualified for the appointment.

Bolsonaro and Trump have the same unrealistic answer to
crime, encouraging citizens to use guns and the police to be unin-
hibited in using their firearms. The difference, however, is that
Brazil, unlike the U.S., actually has a very serious crime problem,
which may force Bolsonaro’s government to do something to mod-
ernize and reform the criminal justice system. Bolsonaro’s decision
to appoint Judge Sérgio Moro, who led the highly effective prose-
cutions against high officials of the Workers Party government and
the state oil company, as Minister of Justice, is encouraging. By
contrast, Trump is at war with his own justice department and
shows no interest in criminal justice reform. It is hard, on the other
hand, to see anything positive in either leader’s environmental poli-
cies. Bolsonaro may be imitating Trump in promising to leave the
Paris Climate Agreement, but he is also responding to strong Bra-
zilian business interests.

Bolsonaro’s campaign most resembled Trump’s in its use of
outrageous sound bites, often spread through Twitter and
WhatsApp. His sound bites received an enormous amount of atten-
tion, such as telling a woman he wouldn’t rape her because she
wasn’t attractive enough, that he preferred for a homosexual son to
die, that the military regime in the 1960s should have killed 30,000
more people, that former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso
should be executed, that his opponents will have to choose between
exile and prison if he is elected, and so on. However, his support-
ers insist that these were not to be taken literally; they were meant
to get attention. As Brazil’s recently elected president, Bolsonaro
has not shown any inclination to act on any of the outrageous state-
ments he made during the campaign. These statements were in-
tended to get attention and to communicate feelings, not as policy
proposals. He told one journalist, “if I hadn’t said Fernando Hen-
rrique should be shot, you wouldn’t be interviewing me right now.”
His technique was to “privilege polemic over argumenta-
tion” (Author translation: Clôvis Saint Clair, “Discourse and Exac-
eration: The Biography and the Semiotics of the Cavalryman,”
2018). This technique was highly effective, in part because his
Workers’ Party opponents took his statements at face value, warn-
ing that his election would usher in an unprecedented fascist dicta-
torship. Other analysts think this is exaggerated, that Brazil is more
likely to return to the milder form of authoritarianism it has experienced many times in its past. Bolsonaro is at war with the left, not with Brazil’s establishment. Fernando Henrique Cardoso isn’t the least bit worried about facing a firing squad.

Bolsonaro’s personal history and psychological makeup are quite different from Donald Trump’s (Author translation of Maria Rita Kehl, Brazilian Bovaryisme, 2018). He was born to a large family of modest means in the interior of the state of São Paulo. His father suffered the humiliation of being denounced for illegally practicing as a dentist. When he was 14, the Brazilian army came into his neighborhood in pursuit of Carlos Lamarca, a captain who had defected to the Marxist guerillas. Bolsonaro had absorbed the anti-communist ideology taught in his school and claims to have given the military information about Lamarca’s whereabouts, but psychoanalyst Christian Dunker argues that he admired Lamarca when he escaped the military siege (Author translation: His Own Shadow, 2018). Drucker thinks that these feelings may have been rooted in Bolsonaro’s sympathy for his father’s persecution for illegal dentistry. Dunker observes that “a father who was humiliated and persecuted generally leaves as a trait persistent desires for revenge” (His Own Shadow). Trump’s father, by contrast, was a very successful real estate mogul, and Trump’s psychological challenges may have been keeping up with him.

One of the military officers enticed the young Jair to pursue a military career, and he graduated from a military academy as did Trump, though Trump was sent there to be disciplined. He rose to the rank of captain in field artillery and parachutist units, while Trump was a draft dodger. However, Bolsonaro was rebellious, protesting low pay for military officers and denouncing one of the generals as a racist incompetent. At the end of his military career, he was being investigated as part of a plot to place bombs in the military academy to sow confusion and prove the commanders incompetent. Dunker observes that this showed “traces of the communist captain Lamarca” (His Own Shadow). He left the military anticipating that he would be discharged and possibly prosecuted; instead he won a position as Congressman, which offered immunity from prosecution. In Brazil’s proportional representation system, strong support from one group can win a seat in Congress. Bolsonaro’s core support came from soldiers who appreciated his advocacy of higher military pay.

Bolsonaro served for 27 years as a backbench congressman,
what Brazilians call the “lower clergy.” The little national prominence he had came from being an ideological outlier and making extreme statements, and for advocating military pay raises. He was not consistently right-wing and expressed admiration for Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, seeing him as an anti-establishment figure. Christian Dunker says that leaders are substitute fathers who are both feared and submitted to for protection. Dunker argues that “love and hatred for his father coexist in Jair, just as small Captain Bolsonaro loved and hated the Army, just as he obeyed and betrayed his superiors” (His Own Shadow). These angry feelings motivated the angry public statements he made, attacking the left, which made him seem more genuine than the typical politician.

Dunker says that Bolsonaro’s “hatred is genuine, but the externalization to the enemy is false. For this reason, his speech is relatively empty, elusive, and repetitive and lends itself to being embodied by anyone who has similar indeterminate feelings of revolt” (His Own Shadow). Social media provided an excellent medium for brief, angry statements that were often managed by his sons. His campaign got an unexpected boost when he was stabbed by a disturbed man at a campaign rally. His injury gave him a reason to skip the scheduled television debates, which he continued to do even after he was sufficiently recovered. His advisors counseled him to avoid pinning himself down to concrete policy positions or answering technical questions where his ignorance would contrast with the sophistication of his Workers’ Party opponent, Fernando Haddad. Bolsonaro’s appeal was emotional, not intellectual (Saint-Clair). The contrast between Bolsonaro and Haddad has similarities to that between Trump and Hillary Clinton. Haddad is a policy wonk and a social democrat with strong academic credentials. Bolsonaro is an advocate for military spending with no academic interests or expertise on public policy.

Like Donald Trump, Bolsonaro has been married three times and is prone to making sexist remarks. His statement that a Congresswoman was “not worth raping, she is very ugly,” is exactly like one of Trump’s statements. When Bolsonaro fathered a daughter, after four sons, he remarked that he had conceived her in “a moment of weakness.” (These and similar remarks about homosexuals and the poor are referenced in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jair_Bolsonaro.) Trump, by contrast, is not homophobic and seems happy about having fathered two daughters.

Bolsonaro is not known for bragging about his sexual con-
quests, his looks, or his accomplishments (all of which seem modest). The characterization of "narcissistic personality" so often applied to Donald Trump does not fit Bolsonaro. He can be more convincingly described as Bovarist, a term derived from Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856). Bovarism denotes a tendency to identify with more powerful and accomplished individuals or groups. This is similar to the psychoanalytic concept of identification with the aggressor, although the idealized individuals or groups may not have been personally aggressive toward the subject. It can be expressed in escapist daydreaming that leads to ignoring unpleasant realities. Haitian leader Jean Price-Mars used the term "collective bovarylisme" to refer to the Haitian elite’s tendency to identify with European whites. In Bolsonaro’s case it is expressed as an identification with the leaders of wealthier countries, a disdain for his own country’s institutions, and a belief that Brazilian reality can be changed merely by wishing to do so. Asked for a solution to Brazil’s economic woes, he advocates doing what the successful countries do. He may, indeed, see himself as Brazil’s Donald Trump, but this is mostly style, not substance.

Bolsonaro was inaugurated on January 1, 2019, midsummer in Brazil. Very little political activity takes place between the New Year’s holiday and Carnival, which ended on March 9, and it is too early at this writing to judge his regime. Bolsonaro’s most important actions during this period were his cabinet appointments. He had promised to cut the cabinet to 16 positions, from 29 in the proceeding government, but actually appointed 22 ministers. Seven of his appointments were military officers, seven have technocratic backgrounds, and eight are politicians. Only two are women and none are black. Ministries that were cut back included science, the environment, and protection of native Brazilians. The appointments suggest that Bolsonaro, like Trump, is responsive to the conservative establishment.

The most important change has been in foreign policy where Brazil has joined the United States and Colombia in recognizing Juan Guaidó as the legitimate president of Venezuela. Under the Workers’ Party, Brazil had tried to maintain an independent foreign policy and had been sympathetic to Nicolás Maduro. This suggests a Bovarist tendency to identify with a dominant superpower.

A revealing incident occurred during the Carnival celebration. Bolsonaro posted a video on Twitter showing a man pleasur-
ing himself and enjoying a “golden shower” (being urinated on for sexual pleasure). Bolsonaro used the incident to condemn licentious excesses at Carnival, blaming them on decades of socialist government. His attack on a very popular national institution was widely ridiculed and served no discernable political purpose. One commentator opined that “we must take the unconscious into account. My hypothesis is that the president (and his team) had a profound desire to participate in Carnival and did so by means of the eschatological video.”

Bolsonaro’s prudish personal psychology contrasts with Donald Trump’s lasciviousness; they are very different people. Their political bases, however, are similar. Both appeal to religious conservatives who oppose gay marriage, abortion, and women’s liberation and are uncomfortable with social change. Trump’s supporters overlook his personal values; Bolsonaro’s need not do so. Both find support from the military and from the business elite. Bolsonaro’s personal psychology is perhaps more congruent with that of his political base, and he has the advantage of having won the presidency by a landslide. He can claim a strong mandate, but he lacks a strong partisan base in the Brazilian Congress, having been elected without the support of any of the major parties. Trump has been dependent on the Republican establishment in Congress for his policy successes. In both cases, authoritarian populist campaigns served to win popular support for a regime dedicated to the economic interests of the wealthy.

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Meeting Report

The Male Perspective on Sex and Power in the Age of #MeToo Meeting Report

Paul H. Elovitz—The Psychohistory Forum

Abstract: The author describes the Psychohistory Forum’s presentation, “Sex and Power in the Age of #MeToo,” and the reaction to the subject. He shares presenter David Lotto’s perspective and delves into the reactions and discussion that ensued after the presentation. The author lists several key topics brought up during the discussion, including Donald Trump and the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Colleagues went on to discuss the attitudes they observed in society, the double standards among men and women, and representation in movies. The author states that David Lotto’s paper will appear in Clio’s Psyche and the journal is still searching for a distinguished female colleague to write a companion paper to submit alongside of it.

Keywords: Donald Trump, double-standards, Equal Rights Act, #MeToo Movement, Psychohistory Forum, sex, Women’s Rights Movement

There was some concern among colleagues that the Psychohistory Forum’s presentation, “Sex and Power in the Age of #MeToo,” was just too controversial a subject for us to hold a Psychohistory Forum Work-In-Progress seminar about. As in the past, this proved not to be the case: on January 26, 2019, the participants delved into many different aspects of this complex issue with considerable sensitivity to the nuances of the subject as they focused on one element after another.

David Lotto, our presenter, describes himself as an advocate of the #MeToo movement focused on fairness to all parties involved. In presenting a clearly male approach to the subject, he spoke of the situation of several of his patients who had felt victimized by the movement. His main thesis is that since women in countries such as the United States are usually in control of when sex does and does not happen, that some men have a strong reaction. Much of the bad behavior from certain men is a consequence of their feelings of anger and sexual frustration by not being the dominant partner in a relationship. Men as a rule are much more eager for sex than are women, resulting in an uncomfortable relationship. Incels are part of an online subculture of men, some living in sexless marriages, who complain of living in involuntary cel-
The Forum group sitting around our seminar table recognizes the greater complexity for women who run the risk of not simply pregnancy but being seen as a “slut” if they express their sexual desires too freely and are inclined to be even more involved than men in the emotions and relationship issues around sex. In their lives, girls and women are labeled as “sluts” or “nasty” if they have sex when they’re too young, with multiple partners, or have “too much” sex—this perception can negatively impact their entire lives.

David Lotto wrote, without yet getting an answer from the pioneering scholar Carol Gilligan, wanting to get her opinion about the role of sex and the transformation of girls. Pre-adolescent girls are usually more and at least as achieving as boys. David argues that it is female ambivalence about their sexuality and relationship with boys that holds the girls back: they are stuck as to their sexuality and they start falling behind boys developmentally. They are afraid of being labeled as a prude or slut. There is also ambivalence about marriage, as reflected by 40% of U.S. children currently being born outside of marriage.

Inevitably, Trump was brought into the discussion because of the dichotomy between his sexual misconduct and the reality that 52% of white women voted for him in 2016 (although a majority of all women did not). There was some heated discussion of the defeat of the Equal Rights Act (ERA) by women who wanted to maintain a separate status and certainly didn’t want to be equally drafted into the military. There was a discussion of the different types of power between the sexes, with women’s power no less important than male power, but certainly subtler. Phyllis Schlafly, who was offended by the notion that there might be no legal difference between males and females, successfully led the crusade against the ERA. Schlafly defended traditional femininity and felt that women would be worse off with “equality before the law.”

There was discussion of female identification with the aggressor as one of the motivations impacting some women, who are drawn to sexually abusive men like Donald Trump—whose behavior in bragging about grabbing female genitalia with impunity was exposed during the election campaign in the Access Hollywood tape by Billy Bush.

A psychoanalyst who was in the business world in the ‘70s spoke about the almost overwhelming difficulties women had when
they tried to advance. It is now easier for women to advance, but there is still far from complete equality. It was noted that during the presidential election, at Trump’s rallies, many women yelled, at the mention of Hillary, “lock her up.” Part of why Hillary didn’t get elected was the baggage that she brought as a wife who had not divorced her adulterous husband, therefore enabling him and condoning his behavior. It was mentioned that prior to Bill running for president, Hillary and other close friends had gone to about 15 women with whom Bill had been involved sexually, and got them to sign non-disclosure agreements that they would not speak out about their sexual involvement with him should he run for president. The psychiatrist in the room sees Hillary as a perversion of feminism and Trump as a perversion of masculinity.

The double standard of expectations regarding the male and female candidates in 2016 are striking. As the longstanding presidential psychobiographer in the group, I spoke about the difficulties of the first woman seriously running for president because she’s expected to be both tougher than the men and at the same time somewhat effeminate. I referenced my article on cliospsych.org/archives in the 1990s, “The Second Woman President,” in which the first woman president of militaristic countries like the United States had been threatened with foreign or civil war. The examples included Margaret Thatcher (UK) tested by the Falkland’s war as well as Indira Gandhi (India) tested by war and later assassinated. The experiences of Sri Lanka’s Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Pakistan’s Benazir Bhutto, and the Philippines’ Corazon Aquino also illustrated this point. More recently in 2016, Brazil’s President Dilma Rousseff was impeached and removed.

Different participants spoke with considerable emotion about certain movies that had touched them. In On the Basis of Sex (2018), Ruth Bader Ginsburg is walking with her 15-year-old daughter and construction workers are catcalling to them. Her daughter breaks away and confronts the men, asking, “Would you want this done to your mother?” The men physically back away. Another participant brought up the movie Tootsie (1982) in which Dustin Hoffman, an out-of-work actor dressing as a woman to get a part on a daytime soap opera, was told by the Jessica Lange character he worked with in his female impersonation clothes that she wished men would be direct and say, “I find you very attractive, and I’d like to go to bed with you.” Hoffman, not in costume, would later see Jessica Lange at a party, and repeat her own words,
resulting in a drink tossed in his face. Clearly, women are very ambivalent about many issues regarding sexuality.

David Lotto spoke about cultural differences to a group that included a fair number of Jews. He said, with the apparent approval of the other Jews in the room, that in Jewish families, women are likely to have the power. Men go to work and “huff and puff” about their importance as the leaders of the household, but this is not their usual reality. In the traditional Eastern European shtetls that most Jews come from, women generally handled everything to do with business and men focused on studying the Torah. These patterns persist in America. He felt that you had to look at the particular cultural group to know where the power lays, as well as the individual family and couple.

Adults asserting their power over children leads to a negative reaction among some men. Clearly the mother interjects and certain interjections bring this to the fore. These totally unconscious feelings certainly get in the way at times of lustful sexual vitality. The historian of the human condition in the group brought up the issues of how humans differ from most of our mammalian relatives, except for some other primates. Most mammalian females have to be in estrus to have sex. However, he spoke of female chimpanzees having eight partners a day and the sex lasting seven seconds! Matriarchal bonobos use sex to control male aggression and females combine to punish bad behavior. There were general smiles when someone said that clearly in our society, sex involves a tango and it takes two to tango!

All agreed that one of the very good things about the Women’s Rights Movement generally and the #MeToo movement in particular is that women are asserting their agency. There was a historical discussion of how there was traditionally formal courtship for the better off in society, and then in the 19th century, separate male and female spheres of influence, followed about 100 years ago by companionate marriage as the ideal. More recently, the ideal of a marriage being created by soulmates came into existence. Today, some speak of our sexual “hookup society” among young people. A participant in his late 60s or early 70s said that this was the case for many when he was young. It was referenced that some sociologists have argued that there is a combination of togetherness and separateness in the relationships of females and males.
One male member of the group argued that women accepting sex has to do with acquiescence partly because they are trying to meet the emotional needs of their partner; they’re afraid of losing him, rather than acting on their own sexual desire. This author spoke of the powerful impact of male counter-dependency regarding women since beneath commonplace male bravado about their alleged dominance over women is the unconscious wish to return to the cared-for dependency of early childhood. As boys, separating somewhat from their dependency on their mothers, they denigrated females, and as men they complain of their lack of sexuality. This certainly is not likely to make them attractive sexual partners and good lovers of girlfriends and wives. Another male argued that women are now and since the beginning of historical time suppressed and held back.

The female psychiatrist/psychoanalyst pointed out that a major difference in regard to sexual activity is that men have to “keep it up” (their penises) for sexual purposes, whereas women do not. This brought to mind When Harry Met Sally (1989). In the movie, Harry (Billy Crystal) declares he can always sexually satisfy his lover, and Sally (Meg Ryan) not only declares that women can successfully fake it, but illustrates her point with a head-turning rendition of a phony orgasm that has everyone in the busy restaurant staring at her. The psychiatrist pointed out that women’s ability to give the impression of orgasm and pleasure brings up the question of the varying motivations of men and women. The psychiatrist noted that women are much more comfortable in themselves, while men need to go out and change the world. I argued that the female ability to make and nurture babies is a major factor that brings great satisfaction, which males are less inclined to have. Another man said that men have the power in society, but the subtext is women’s power. This is partly related to the fact that men are physically stronger than women.

Most symposium participants continued this valuable and civil conversation (as well as other talk) at the Rosa Mexican restaurant nearby. Thanks to Inna Rozentsvit’s generosity the meeting may be viewed and heard on ciospsyche.org. The conversation will continue in a future issue of Clio’s Psyche where David Lot-to’s paper will appear since it has been approved by our referees as a symposium paper for which we are eager for commentaries. We also are searching for a distinguished female colleague to write a companion paper to submit alongside of it. We welcome submis-
Book Reviews

*Imagining Mary: A Major Contribution to the Psychohistory of Religion*

Dan Dervin—University of Maryland Washington

*Keywords: group-fantasy, Holy Trinity, Jesus, psychohistory, religion, theology, Virgin Mary*


Emeritus Professor of Russian History at the University of California, Davis, our author Daniel Rancour-Laferriere (RL for short), is familiar to readers of psychohistory, most recently with *The Sign of the Cross: From Golgotha to Genocide* (2011). You might say this latest work extends his religious topography from the Savior’s crown of thorns to his impaled foot on the cross where his sorrowing mother is shown on the jacket cover. Mary’s appearance here also bookends her central position in Church history between crib and cross. In tracing her various roles throughout history, RL’s first counterintuitive insight is the otherwise minor part she plays in biblical texts. This elision enables theologians, clergy, nuns, and laity to more than amply fill in the blanks, even though the efforts may reveal more about us than about someone of whom very little is known. How far do the additions extend? Maurice Valency’s throwaway line from a university Renaissance Literature class that in the 12th century God became a woman has long intrigued me. Undoubtedly over the centuries, Mary has meant many things to countless believers. Hence this thoroughly researched project promises a major contribution.

“In the New Testament,” RL writes, “Mary is a simple peasant woman from Galilee” who “receives little attention from the authors,” while others “felt obliged to praise her to the skies” (18). But her scriptural presence is highly scripted and mostly fleeting as, for example, the Presentation in the Temple and her marriage feast of Cana request. In fact, “neither Mary nor Joseph plays much of a role in the gospel drama over all” (11). Never named, she is not shown greeting her resurrected
son (1). But since her Savior was “born of woman,” as St. Paul has it (2), her role must be officially addressed. Thus arises a central crux in Christianity—the virgin mother: mystery or mismatch? Jesus cites only his immortal father, never the mortal one (10-11). Mary’s virginity is secured by having her impregnated, often portrayed at her pre-dieu, via the ear by the Holy Spirit in the form of a sacred dove. Her fiat constitutes her miraculous conception (9). Joseph’s misgivings over cuckoldry are laid to rest by an angel entering his dream.

Adding to the general confusion, brothers and sisters of Jesus crop up in the gospels who, RL speculates, may be “full siblings, half-siblings, cousins, or others” (9). Jesus never mentions them and plays instead the Divine-origins card in asserting oneness with the Heavenly Father (11). Church fathers, who would consider the origin’s riddle through a Divine Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, succeeded in stirring endless disputes over an orthodoxy secured by heresy trials and religious conflicts. For her part, Mary is further set apart from our common humanity with an Immaculate Conception exempting her from the inherited stain of Original Sin, and her “Virgin Birth” of Jesus preserving her hymen’s integrity. Thus purity prevails over flesh and blood as theology supplants nature.

Slighted in the Gospels, she is elevated by her literal Assumption (58-62), stationing her beside the ascended Lord. RL elaborates on the poetic tradition of the couple united beyond the grave as heavenly bride and bridegroom (13-14) and observes that, by the 5th century, she was being represented as a “kind of goddess” (23), transformed by mariophiles (devotees of the mother of God) into a “powerful deity” (56), and, in effect, “deified” (63). Popes and Church councils didn’t go quite that far. All the same, she inspired among the faithful a flourishing “cult of Mary as Mediatrix” of Grace and prime intercessor with the Lord (81; interesting word-choice, cult, connoting an alternate belief-system).

Such bestowed honors may have meant to compensate for her exclusion from the androcentric privilege of administering the sacraments (a recuperative gesture in postmodern terms). As it is, the gendered sequence of Divine access may comport with children’s developmental stages of going through their maternal attachments prior to engaging the paternal domain (Protestant churches have never taken to her intercession benefits). At this point my own Catholic background kicks in with a cautionary, “Watch your step, son.” For his part, RL has disengaged from his Catholic Canadian past: a declared atheist, not a Mariophile, but a genuine Mariologist. Having so far only drawn on portions of this brilliantly erudite study, I can confess (former habits die hard!) to veering out of my depth. Foregoing absolution, I will resort to my adopted homediscipline of psychohistory where other textual connections emerge.

Our author perceptively addresses the Holy Family’s convoluted
eccipal themes stemming from a father/son unity bound to a virginal mother impregnated by an ambiguous third member of the Holy Trinity (12-18, 63, and 236-8); the Holy Family also computes with Freud’s “Family Romances” (Standard Edition, Vol. 9, 235-241). At the risk of slipping reductive, I have also been struck by the psychodynamic import of the Freudian “primal scene” of human origins as fueled by the child’s exposures to and fantasies about parental intercourse. The historicity of the Bethlehem birth story with Herod cast as the arch villain has been questioned by scholars, but the perennial Manger depictions assume a subjective coherence in part from child-development sequences that rework early conflicts over precocious exposure to adult sexuality.

Central to the religious birth scene is a blissful mother-child dyad. If on one level it is painfully perceived by an older sibling, it is also joyfully endorsed by angels, shepherds, and livestock, with the nominally oedipal father, Joseph, passively converting to the Immaculate Conception/virgin birth dogmas. He beams with paternal pride in modern calendar art, but is traditionally posed bearded and bald, crouching over a staff at a distance. The arrival of the Wise Men on the scene bearing gifts may reduce young observers’ anxieties over exclusion and stem from anal transformations of the infant’s first “gifts” to please/placate the nursing caregiver. The infant may thus serve as an idyllic self-projection or a disturbing image of a newly arrived sibling rival—hence the prevalence of babies stolen from today’s cribs in outdoor Nativity scenes and ending up crushed or abandoned on highways.

Regardless of the primal fantasy and the jealous vandalism, the key early dynamic between Jesus and Mary is one’s becoming human through mirroring exchanges that ground future attachments and various forms of desire—filial, erotic, platonic, narcissistic, etc. (see Margaret Mahler, The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant, 1975; Donald Winnicott, “Mirror Role of Mother and Family in Child Development,” in The Visual Behavior of Infants in the First Year of Life, Peter Lomas, ed., 1968, 26-33; and Lomas, ed., The Predicament of the Family, 1967, 111-18). This—call it miraculous—maternal reflective power may underpin Mary’s archetypal Madonna/Child images; such profound wishful components may fuel this artwork’s magnetizing, transcendent appeal.

As RL demonstrates, Mary as Virgin Mother “has been and continues to be many things to many people(s),” acquiring “countless salutations, honorific titles, poetic epithets, hyperbolic expressions, biblical typologies, and tutelary titles” (20). As self-sacrificing breast, she “provides herself (her milk) to her son, who will in turn provide himself (the Eucharistic bread),” thus rendering Manger and Altar equivalent (146 -51). Psychodynamically, she personifies the weaning infant’s “good breast” (in Melanie Klein’s parlance), but in a role reversal she is also the daughter of Jesus (63). She is the Mother of God, “Madonna of Humility” (144-6), the Queen of Heaven, emblem of obedience, and model of
selfless suffering. But as virgin, bride, mother, and saint, she incorporates contradictory images. Such far-reaching over determinisms suggest she incarnates all things to men and women alike; all, that is, except for the traditional female role of sexual partner. Taken together, these traits, along with that libidinal hiatus, comprise an enduring, manifold religious group fantasy. It is fed not only by historical realities, e.g., Mary as nurturant caregiver during social famines, but is also a product of unconscious ideation not bound by logical and perceptual contradictions.

She induces all of these and more. To her formal religious offices, we can add the psychohistorical role of delegate for purity. Nestled within an enveloping group fantasy are agendas promulgated by a chaste hierarchy to desexualize women into disembodied spiritualized ideals. We can inquire to what extent young men’s lives constrained by celibate vows provide a refuge from fears, e.g., of engulfment, emasculation, etc., by dangerous females. One may also wonder if this defensive strategy of idealized chastity as the hallmark of virtuous fidelity may, to some, offer cover for various sexual abuses fomenting the current crises in Catholicism. On these pressing issues, Imagining Mary provides an invaluable sourcebook for further research.

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Kleinian Wild Psychoanalytic Speculations on Trump

Paul H. Elovtz—Clio’s Psyche

Keywords: Barack Obama, Donald Trump, George W. Bush, hatchet-job, Justin A. Frank, pathological-approach, speculation, wild-analysis


This Washington psychiatrist and psychoanalyst begins his book quoting Einstein’s statement that “Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters” (vii). This warning applies to Justin Frank. As a presidential psychobiographer, I am inclined to be distrustful of the work of any colleague who approaches their subject based overwhelmingly on their own speculative theories, a pathological approach, and inadequate research on primary sources. Wikipedia
lists 18 books by Trump—usually with the ghostwriters credited. So, despite their repetitious nature, there are lots of sources, although Frank cites only four in his bibliography, excluding one of the most useful. The “dearth of biographical detail” on Trump’s early life and mother gives Frank free rein to speculate about the President’s early development (4). Most of his numerous speculations on this and the better-known parts of his life are best classified as wild analysis. Presidential psychobiography is given a bad name by such irresponsible pathological labeling.


Of course, as with any shotgun approach, some of his buckshot may hit on important issues. As a psychoanalyst, his chapters start with “Mother” then move on to “Father,” “Brother,” “Rivals,” “Pathologies,” “The Psychology of Lying,” “The Psychology of Narcissism,” “The Psychology of Destructiveness,” “The Psychology of Racism,” “The Psychology of Sexism and Misogyny,” “The Language of Donald Trump,” and finally, “The End of the Beginning.” If you would like an introduction to some basic psychological terminology, Frank’s glossary is worth reading (239-257). For most of what this author writes, he does not present any serious evidence, and he has an enormous number of modifiers. Trump on the Couch is Kleinian free-association on steroids!

Dr. Frank reports that “Trump on the Couch” is a book I never expected to write” and that “It is my last book analyzing sitting presidents” (xiii, 265). I hope he keeps his word because he has a proven record of poor scholarship that gives presidential psychobiography a reputation as a useful psychopathological tool to do a hatchet job on disliked presidents. He doesn’t seem like any recent ones; thus, in one of his two previous “on the couch” books, he found George W. Bush to show indications of poor mental health, including symptoms of megalomania, sadism, and the rigidity of a “dry drunk.” He found Barak Obama to have the nonexistent disease of “obsessive bipartisan disorder.” His acknowledgments became just plain silly as he devotes 35 words to his dogs, with even two of their “dog friends” mentioned by name (270).

As an advocate for and practitioner of psychobiography as an invaluable methodology for understanding the family backgrounds, childhoods, coping mechanisms, creativity, innovations, interpersonal relation-
ships, overcoming of life's traumas, personalities, values of our subjects, as well as their pathologies, I am repulsed by Trump on the Couch.

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Robert Louis Stevenson’s Complex Quest for Identity

Marian W. Margulies—Psychologist in Private Practice

Keywords: creativity, ego, Freud, id, integration, Jefferson A. Singer, psychobiography, psychological-novel, repression, Robert Louis Stevenson


After reading Jefferson A. Singer’s psychobiography of Robert Louis Stevenson (RLS), I understood why such stories as The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) and Treasure Island (1883) have stood the test of time with such universal appeal. We learn much more about why RLS’s classic works are so treasured after reading The Proper Pirate.

Singer shows us how the author’s works of fiction are in fact great psychological novels. In writing this psychobiography, Singer draws on the author’s voluminous writings as well as his own background as a clinical psychologist and researcher in narrative psychology. In particular, Singer focuses his clinical lens on the psychological conflicts RLS struggles with throughout his life and details how he works through them in his quest to define his identity. Writing provides Stevenson (1850-1894) the perfect outlet for working through his conflicts. What made his writing so appealing to readers for well over a century is that we, his readers, resonate with his identity struggles, his conflicts of everyday life.

In the early chapters of The Proper Pirate, we learn much about RLS as a child and young man. He was born in the late Victorian period in Edinburgh, Scotland in a well-to-do family. Often bed-ridden due to his respiratory problems, he had plenty of time to cultivate his rich and lively imagination. His parents, Thomas and Margaret, were devout Calvinists; they instilled in him a fear of being sinful. This fear was exacerbated by his nanny who exposed him to religious teachings that put the fear of God in him. She also exposed him to overly stimulating pirate
stories that were both frightening and exciting at the same time. These early experiences related to pleasure, excitement, and sin made their way into some of Stevenson’s most notable stories, such as _Treasure Island_.

Stevenson often found himself in conflict with his father whose puritanical, self-sacrificing, and moralistic views collided with Stevenson’s leanings toward a bohemian and artistic life. Because of his father’s critical feelings about the arts, Stevenson was often filled with shame when he pursued pleasure through art, imagination, and fantasy. Singer suggests that Thomas’ strong ties to Calvinist beliefs led him to feel a deep sense of unworthiness and persistent shame, planting the seeds of shame for his son. Singer also notes that Thomas’ inhibited desires may have been due to sexual repression or his own literary ambitions, unrealized. Further fueling the tension between father and son was Stevenson’s refusal to become an engineer, following the family tradition. He didn’t feel at peace being financially dependent on his parents.

Singer’s book focuses on different periods of Stevenson’s life and follows him as he matures into a young man, pursuing a more bohemian life and rejecting religion, much to his father’s disappointment. As he struggles to reconcile the different sides of his personality—the side that feels connected to his parents’ world of respectability, piety, and honor and the side that wants to pursue a more artistic, adventurous, and sensual life—his thinking writing evolves. Over time, he becomes more independent as he pursues his passion of writing and the arts. He also pursues an unhappily married woman who eventually divorces her husband, marries him, and has three children with Stevenson.

The most compelling chapter in his book, “The Gothic Gnome and the Worm of Conscience,” focuses on Stevenson’s well-known book, _The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde_. In this tale, he is able to write about the identity splits in his own personality in the form of two main characters who are really one, each one representing a different side of him. When Dr. Jekyll conducts a series of experiments, he unleashes his baser, more animalistic appetites onto Mr. Hyde, the part of himself he’d rather not see. In contrast is Dr. Jekyll, an esteemed doctor who is respectable and honorable. Dr. Jekyll, similar to Stevenson, had to repress his secret desires and sensual vices to maintain his dignified image.

Here, we see something like the phenomenon of repression going on, which Freud was able to flesh out in his theory. Other pre-Freudian concepts also seem evident. Freud’s theory of the id, ego, and superego appear in a more primitive form here. One might say Mr. Hyde’s id runs rampant. It would take some years before the ego makes its appearance to moderate the id’s appetites and the superego’s demands. Had he met with Freud, he would see there was another way out. Rather than reject those hated parts of himself, he might integrate them without feeling he’s a terrible and despicable person.
In his symposium paper on artistic creativity, James William Anderson argues that the wellspring of an artist’s creative works draws from his or her most personal inner conflicts (“The Psychology of Artistic Creativity,” Clio’s Psyche, Vol. 18, No. 3, December 2011: 249-259). Anderson cites an excerpt in Tolstoy’s diary that captures the essence of this point: “Art is a microscope which the artist fixes on the secrets of his soul and which shows to people these secrets that are common to all.” Singer demonstrates how Stevenson, through his writing, bares his soul, shares his secrets, and takes tremendous risks to be who he is.

As Stevenson shows progress in life and in writing, he is able to break free from his father, financially and psychologically. Beyond defining himself, he lends a hand to help others, thus reaching Erikson’s stage of generativity. We see an increase in his involvement in causes beyond himself as he tackles societal issues, exposing hypocrisy in high society and exploitation of the lower classes. In his last years before his death at age 44, he moves his family to Samoa in the South Seas and becomes a spokesperson for and advocate of the rights of the native people who are exploited and discriminated against by the ruling class.

Overall, I was impressed by Singer’s deep well of knowledge and scholarship in writing this psychobiography. I also enjoyed his excellent skills as a writer, which made the reading about Stevenson’s life even more enjoyable.

The only thing I felt was missing was an exploration of possible connections between Freud and Stevenson, who were contemporaries. For example, I wondered if Freud read any of Stevenson’s work and, if so, was he influenced by them in any way? It seems to me that both were keen observers of human nature and came to similar views at roughly the same time. In fact, Freud held the view that artists, through their imagination, attained the same insights that he himself arrived at through scientific investigation. Freud wrote to novelist Arthur Schnitzler, “I have often asked myself in astonishment whence you could have taken this or that secret knowledge, which I had acquired through laborious investigations” (Peter Gay, Freud: A Life for Our Time, 1988, 317).

In The Proper Pirate, we see how Stevenson learns to integrate the splits within himself. His courage in exploring his conflicts and painful self-perceptions and working through them serves as a model for countless readers to do the same—to hold the magnifying glass closer to see aspects of ourselves we may not like but can still accept and, if we so choose, change as part of our journey toward growth and development.

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**Reflections, Reverie and Analytic Meditation: Eigen’s Way**

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Keywords: analytic-meditation, Buddhism, consciousness, distinction-union, Michael Eigen, psychoanalysis, psychopathy, unknown-realities


Michael Eigen is a welcome and lively presence, all the while continuing to explore, evolve, evoke, share, and ripen in style, substance, and elegance. His most recent book is testimony to his breadth, depth, generosity, curiosity, creativity, subtlety, and grace.

The *Challenge of Being Human*, in keeping with the spirit of Eigen’s other writings and his practice, is rich in wisdom and experience. It touches on a host of subjects, including murderous feelings, the many forms and faces of destructiveness, and the wonders of emptiness. But still, for all his sage observations, Eigen is also playful, nimble, and in the words of Bob Dylan, “forever young.”

The book, like the author, consists of many parts and interrelated themes; among the foremost is the emotional value of partnering with diverse—sometimes contradictory—tendencies. Throughout, Eigen highlights the many benefits that can accrue from psychic democracy, especially when contrasted with top-down, bottom-up domination or predator-prey relations. He suggests finding ways to honor warring voices as a means of deepening experience.

Not surprisingly, one of Eigen’s favorite poems is Rumi’s “The Guest House,” in which the 13th century sage-poet advises readers to greet their full range of emotions as welcome guests, even if some arrive unexpectedly and are nettlesome. This is not easily done, Eigen acknowledges; rather, it’s an ongoing challenge. In this spirit he notes that we actually have a powerful “fear of the psyche, of emotional reality” (78). But continuity of effort within a rhythm of faith, he advises, is well worth the time, struggles, and frustrations. “We are made up of multiple capacities that confuse us,” Eigen writes. “It is not a matter of doing away with any so much as learning to work together, an evolutionary task of becoming partners with our capacities” (60).
Like every person, each chapter of this book consists of various parts—many asides too—offering a rich variety of opportunities for reverie and musing on an array of subjects, some appearing only briefly and delightfully, akin to a continuously blooming rose bush with many flowers and petals. Or perhaps a more apt metaphor would be a lotus, deeply rooted, floating on a clear spring water pond. Within the realm of Mahayana Buddhism there’s a practice referred to as “analytic meditation.” Clearly those monks weren’t thinking of Sigmund Freud when they came up with this particular term, but that’s precisely what we can witness when in Eigen’s presence. Unlike those monks, he is very much thinking of Freud as well as Wilfred R. Bion, and Donald W. Winnicott, sometimes reflecting on Carl Jung and Marion Milner as well as Gautama Buddha and Lao Tzu while engaging in his particular style of analytic meditation. In addition, Eigen deliberates on his own thoughts, drawing on his own experiences, ones that are distinctively his but which he doesn’t claim exclusively; while we, in turn, can readily see and discover similar thoughts, feelings, and tendencies within ourselves. Then too, sometimes Eigen seems to write from within an ecstatic state, going with the flow of his associations, flying, surfing, soaring, diving, skateboarding, skipping, sprinting, riffing, playing, and dancing with the rhythms of infinity. Quite an exhilarating, contagious ride.

With a light and skillful touch, Eigen returns to certain themes that he weaves throughout the entire piece like threads and refrains, appearing, disappearing, reappearing, getting worked and reworked, among them: our many tendencies, some of them in conflict; our destructiveness, our creativity, and our continuous births and reboirths, most only partial, many aborted; various combinations of aliveness-deadness within our very being; our dilemmas, the diverse ways in which we deal with feelings and experiences of being trapped, caged; the ways in which we do and don’t develop our capacities; our connections with infinity and the challenges presented by “alternate infinities”; ways in which we are alike and different, what Eigen calls our distinction-union structure.

Eigen also explores some of the distinguishing features and characteristics of psychoanalysis itself, a relatively new chapter in the human history of healing, with its noteworthy contributions and enigmas. “I do not know that there previously existed such a nuanced sense of self-other interweaving and exploration, experiencing experience and investigating it as it happens moment to moment over time, hot off the psyche” (71). Still substantial challenges remain within the field and, for Eigen, one of the most pressing and consistent in our day is psychopathy, a problem to which he returns repeatedly. “We are challenged by our own aliveness,” he declares (105). Under such arduous, sometimes bleak, contemporary circumstances, Eigen recalls the words of one of his own therapists from years past, “We can only try” (109). Psychoanalysis, he concludes, is “a work in progress” (128).
As if to demonstrate how this spiritual-analytic music of the spheres manifests in the consulting room—which, Eigen reminds us, Bion referred to as an atelier (42)—three chapters in the book are devoted exclusively to such dyadic interactions and interludes. The picture is moving, sometimes harrowing, other times tender, inspiring, and paradoxical, but Eigen manages to stay engaged, or at least he returns even after seeing himself “writhing on the floor” (111), helpless, mortally wounded. He survives, remains patient, vulnerable, devoted, and open to contact in the moment, to exploring impossible places with another, notwithstanding his ongoing sense of aloneness and his abiding fears. “Staying with no way out is a way out. Something opens in no-opening” (116). In another chapter he succinctly asks, “Where are we going?” (37-45).

At times Eigen calls to mind a Buddhist adept, witnessing and describing impermanence in the guise of its many psychoanalytic manifestations: “The psyche never stops” (63). But, of course, he’s more than that. He’s also a Kabbalist, a Christian, a Taoist, a Sufi, a cave dweller drawing on a wall, a poet, a jazz musician, a husband, a father, a modern-day psychoanalyst, a mentor, and just another guy strolling down an avenue in Brooklyn, making brief contact with this one and the Other.

In the end—if there is an end—Eigen reminds us that we live in a mystery. Both knowing and unknowing are parts of the challenge, each valuable, each subject to distortion, misuse, and exploitation. Each can be destructive. Balance, moderation, and awareness are helpful, but there’s more to it than that. “We work the fields that sustain us,” Eigen writes, “and, as Saint Paul discovered, are taken to we know not where” (62). Even consciousness is only a part of the puzzle, “No matter how we explain consciousness, something unexplained remains... Consciousness sees and hears but cannot be seen or heard. More broadly, Eddington’s [1929] remark about the universe, ‘Something unknown is doing we don’t know what’” (65).

In openly exploring, sharing, and musing on his own moment-to-moment experiences, Eigen tenderly but insistently holds up a mirror to the reader: look into your infinite face, he caringly implores, make room, be patient. In the presence of an Eigen book, one has an opportunity to see you in me, and M.E. in you, I-Thou playing, wrestling, partnering in unknown realities—soul talk, psyche talk, a meditative dance for the ages.

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CONFERENCES: Recent Psychohistory Forum Work-In-Progress Seminars included Larry Friedman (Harvard) on “Erik Erikson Retrospective” (April 13) and Brian D’Agostino (Int. Psychohistorical Ass.) on “Sacred Cows and Scapegoats: Displacement, Ideology, and the Future of Democracy” (March 9). In the fall Alice Lombardo Maher (psychoanalysis/psychiatrist) will discuss her 2018 book’s methodology for reducing hatreds among people and nations. Ken Fuchman (UConn) will be commenting. Seminars are announced as details are finalized after a paper is submitted, screened by a committee, and accepted. As usual, Jacques Szaluta is expected to serve as moderator and Harold Takoosian will be our host at Fordham University’s Lincoln Center Campus. The 27th Annual UCNCPIHC “Lake Arrowhead” (California psychoanalytic) meeting was on May 3-5, 2019. The International Psychohistorical Association (IPA) will hold its 42nd annual conference from May 22-24, 2019 at New York University. Featured speakers include psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow, psychoanalyst Michael Eigen, organizational psychoanalyst Michael Diamond, historian David Greenberg, and Director of the Object Relations Institute Susan Kavaler-Adler. A major focus will be on the contributions of Michael Eigen. For more information go to psychohistory.us or email kfuchsm@gmail.com. Additional conferences related to psychohistory include the International Society for Political Psychology’s (ISPP) conference on July 12-15, 2019 in Lisbon, Portugal; the Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society (APCS) conference at Rutgers University on October 25-26, 2019; the 30th annual Interdisciplinary Conference of the Forum for Psychoanalytic Education (FEP) will be on “Borders” at the University of Toronto on October 17-19, 2019; and the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis (NAAP) will be in the Fall of 2019. CONGRATULATIONS: To Paul H. Elovitz who was certified as a “Research Psychoanalyst” on May 5, 2019 by the New Jersey Institute for Training in Psychoanalysis where he continued his psychoanalytic training for over eight years starting in 1973 after beginning at the National Association for Psychoanalysis (NPAP). DEATH: Fred Greenstein (Princeton), a June 2008 Featured Clio’s Psych Scholar and presidential historian, died at age 88 on December 3, 2018 of complications of Parkinson’s Disease. For details, see our interview and “Fred Greenstein, 88, Dies; Political ‘Psychologist’ Assessed Presidents,” New York Times (December 14, 2019). WELCOME: New member Susan Nimmanhemininda. Thanks also to our members and subscribers for the support that makes Clio’s Psych possible. To Benefactors Bill Argus, Herbert Barry, Tom Ferraro, Peter Loewenberg, David Lotto, Candace Orcutt, Billie Pivnick, Mary Peace Sullivan, and Jacques Szaluta; Patrons Fred Alford, David James Fisher, Eva Fogelman, Ken Fuchman, Alice Lombardo Maher, Peter Petschauer, and Inna Rozentsveit; Sustaining Members Peter Barglow, James R. Booth, Lawrence Friedman, Ruth M. Lijimaer, Allan S. Mohl, Pellman (Pythia) Peay, and Burton N. Seid-
Clio’s Psyche Call for Papers
For Future Issues

Clio’s Psyche welcomes articles on a variety of subjects. Below are some special issues that we would welcome guest editors or guest co-editors for psychological articles for:

- The Psychohistory of comic books, games, movies & TV
- Altruism and generosity in an era of fear
- The impact of celebrity culture on America
- TV and gaming as object relations. Our emotional connection to fantasy
- The images and psychology of enemies and hatred throughout the ages
- The spread of psychological insights and knowledge in society
- The intrapsychic and societal processes of the American acceptance of homosexuality
- The impact of digital devices on children and families
- Environmentalism and anti-environmentalism
- The contemporary American fascination with animals
- The role of women and children in different time periods
- Anti-governmental fantasies and the lessons of civilization
- Domestic and international ambivalence about America as world leader

We seek articles from 1,000-2,500 words, including keywords, a 100-word abstract, a three or four sentence biography of the author ending in an email address. We discourage citations, except for direct quotations, and do not publish bibliographies. Exceptional longer papers of 3,500-4,000 words may be accepted and used as symposia. Our double-blind refereeing system normally involves five referees. It is helpful to examine the last year’s issues on cliospsych.org/archives. Queries and proposals should be sent to cliospsycheditor@gmail.com.
We Wish to Thank
Our Authors,
Diligent,
Hard-working,
and Prompt Editors,
and Anonymous Referees.
Call for Papers on the Psychology of School Shootings

Clio’s Psyche

Due July 1, 2019

For many, school shootings have disrupted the sense of schools as a safe place for education, socialization, athletics, and community. We are looking for short papers on the impact of these horrendous events on those in the schools: children, young adults, teachers, and their families. Our articles are typically from 500-2,000 words, including the title, 100 word abstract, 7-10 key words, and a short biography of the author ending in her/his email address. We would like to hear experiences and responses from those whose lives have been impacted by gun violence.

Some possible thoughts for articles that come to mind:

- What does it feel like to be in a school when these events occur?
- How are students, parents, and teachers coping with this gun violence?
- Are you experiencing or observing PTSD?
- Are there young people and parents developing school phobia?
- What is the impact on teachers?
- What is the impact on education?
- What is the impact of “hardening” schools through greater security?
- What is like for teachers to be encouraged to be armed and trained in armaments?
- Do active shooter drills give the unconscious message to suicidal students of gaining their 15 minutes of fame (infamy) by becoming a school shooter?
- Have some students become suspicious of loners in school?
- Do “active shooter drills” reassure or spread fear
- How effective are student led protests?
- Do students speaking in Congress make a legislative difference?
- Have these horrendous events prompted you to anti-gun action?

An additional possibility is to write by July 1, 2019 a 500-1200-word response to Mary Coleman’s symposium article, “Why Do Children Have to Defend Themselves Against Being Shot at School: Where are The Mothers? You can learn more about our activities and field by going to cliospysche.org. Send responses to Paul H. Elowitz, PhD, at cliospyscheeditor@gmail.com.