Clio's Psyche

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

Special Issue Part II
Autobiographies/Psychobiographies

An Unwavering Optimist

Kendrick Lamar

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Drawing Lots in Auschwitz

Transgenerational Transmission

A Single-Case Historimetrician

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Introduction 1
Paul H. Elovitz & William McKinley "Mac" Runyan

Giving Voice to the Voiceless: Psychobiographical Reflections 4
Jeffrey B. Rubin

Drawing Lots in Auschwitz 10
Ira Brenner

An Autobiography of an Unwavering Optimist 18
Inna Rozentsvit

The Evil That Men Do: Psychoanalytic Meditations on Wickedness . . .31
Jeffrey B. Rubin

Love's Labor Lost and Found: My Relationship w/ Psychobiography . .38
Jefferson A. Singer

Psychobiography in the Shadow of My Absent Grandpa Nissim 48
Daniel S. Benveniste

The Autobiography of a Son Who Chose Not to Be Like His Father . . .57
Richard Wood

Kendrick Lamar Duckworth as Viewed Through His Music and Life . . 64
Brittney S. Sy & Joseph G. Ponterotto

Wings of Resilience: A Family Legacy 74
Inna Rozentsvit

From Berlin, Germany, to Blowing Rock, North Carolina 76
Peter W. Petschauer

Forging His Own Path: A Psychobiographical Portrait of RFK Jr. 85
Inna Rozentsvit

An Abbreviated Autobiography of a Single-Case Historiometrician . . . 94
Dean Keith Simonton
White Supremacy and Childhood Trauma: The Case of David Lane . .102
Jeffrey B. Rubin
On the Road to Find Out: A Career Studying Lives. 106
Susan Bluck

Book Reviews

Reflective Essays on Historical Obsessions and Reenactments 116
Juhani Ihanus
An Ideal Guide for a New Era of Psychobiography 118
Jefferson A. Singer
The Passing Moment of Us All 120
Peter W. Petschauer
The Seasons of a Poetic Wanderer 122
Juhani Ihanus
The Life as an Individual and a Sociocultural Person 124
Claude-Hélène Mayer
Watching Our World End: A Psychoanalyst's Warning. 126
Karyne Messina

Call for Papers 129

Psychobiographies and the Autobiographies of Psychobiographers Special Issue Pt II

Introduction

Paul H. Elovitz—Psychohistory Forum
William McKinley "Mac" Runyan—UC Berkeley

Reading psychobiographies of fascinating actors, artists, entrepreneurs, historians, inventors, musicians, political leaders, and scientists brought me to history, psychobiography, and psychohistory generally. Probing their accomplishments, careers, childhoods, family backgrounds, life crises (including moments when they seem to have lost hope or been stumped in the pursuit of their goals), and personalities led me to solicit and create this tri-part special psychobiographical issue. I've always wanted to know more about these builders of our society and civilization, and psychobiography has provided a greater depth of understanding. The autobiographies of psychobiographers become the icing on the cake.

When first speaking to colleagues about the vision of this project years ago, I (Paul Elovitz) had no idea that we would be able to publish such a rich variety of materials with diverse and interesting approaches. Certainly, Peter Petschauer's courage to probe his father's participation in the SS, in which he served as a diplomat, is exemplary. Peter provides a brief autobiography tracing his own life from his birth in Berlin to his home in North Carolina.

Our authors have delved into not just historical psychobiographies; several have examined contemporary musical sensations such as Kendrick Lamar Duckworth. Brittney S. Sy worked with Joseph Ponterotto, her former mentor at Fordham University, on Kendrick Lamar to view him through his life and music.

There are almost an equal number of psychobiographies and autobiographies in this project. A striking one of the latter is by Inna Rozentsvit, who writes about her life as an unwavering optimist who, while doing so much to further psychohistory, carries with her the impact of her birth and childhood in the Soviet Union, as well as the transgenerational trauma and resilience from her Jew-

ish family. (Dr. Rozentsvit also provides psychobiographical insights on Bobby Kennedy Jr.—which follows up her poem from the previous part—and another relevant poem, "Wings of Resilience: A Family Legacy.") Psychiatrist Ira Brenner's piece, "Drawing Lots in Auschwitz," describes his struggle to get his father to speak about his almost miraculous six-year survival in the Nazi concentration camp system in what is both psychobiography and autobiography. The father's pain from having observed the Auschwitz guards kill his own father before his son's very eyes while his fellow inmates held him back had much to do with his reluctance to share that horrible part of his life with his own son—named for his father.

Transgenerational trauma, which especially runs through the articles written by psychoanalysts, such as Brenner and Rozentsvit, is clearly illustrated by Benveniste's writing about a grandfather who greatly influenced him despite dying before Daniel's birth. The shadow of his grandfather left an indelible mark on this colleague. Richard Wood, an American-born Canadian psychotherapist, writes in "An Autobiography of a Son Who Chose Not to be Like His Father" of his struggle not to emulate his highly narcissistic, controlling father.

My co-author, Mac Runyan, with Jim Anderson, has done a wonderful job of bridging the chasm, which for so long seemed like the Grand Canyon, between those academic psychologists who dared to write about lives and psychoanalytically based psychobiographers. Mac's work as a psychobiographer has inspired some academic psychologists and others to do this important work, which is what makes his story worth repeating.

Starting in 1969, I (Mac Runyan) went to graduate school at Harvard in a Clinical Psychology and Public Practice program. While the psychology department had been taken over by scholars with a "scientific approach" who disdained working on the whole person, retired Professors Henry A. Murray (1893-1988) and Robert White (1904-2001) were willing to take time to talk to me as a graduate student interested in the study of lives. This helped me withstand pressure from professors who disdained what I was doing. I stayed in touch with both of them until the end of their lives.

White was honored with the Henry A. Murray Award at the end of his life. He asked me to go to the American Psychological Association's Convention and receive the award for him. I was

deeply honored to do this. In turn, I was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award in Psychohistory and a festschrift published in *Clio Psyche* (2023), which was organized and carried out most effectively by Jim, whom I had met so many years earlier at Harvard.

In my (Paul Elovitz) opinion, a number of our authors come from the fine academic psychologist tradition of going against the tide of not writing about the whole person as a consequence of the influence of the talented psychobiographers Runyan, Anderson, Murray, and White. Fortunately, psychobiographers are making headway among academic psychologists, including outside of the U.S. Murray Award winner Dean Simonton, in his "An Abbreviated Autobiography of a Single-Case Historiometrician," demonstrates his way around his field's resistance to writing about the entire person rather than particular traits and ethics. Jefferson Singer, a Murray Award winner and a named Distinguished Professor like some of our other authors, started his career with an interest in doing psychobiography but gave it up until more recently, as reflected in his title, "Love's Labor Lost and Found: My Relationship with Psychobiography." Susan Bluck spent her entire career as an academic psychologist who focused on the whole person. However, it is noteworthy that she referenced her study as that of "lives" rather than as psychobiography.

The most prolific author in this series is Jeffrey Rubin, starting with "Giving Voice to the Voiceless: Psychobiographical Reflections of a Psychobiographer." He traces his approach to psychobiography back to reading Atwood and Stolorow's masterful *Faces in a Cloud: Intersubjectivity in Personality Theory* (1979), which made it clear that theories, art, and philosophies grew out of the life experiences of their creators. He spelled out his approach to D. W. Winnicott in Part I. In Part II, he covers not simply his psychobiographical philosophy but also the nature of evil as reflected in the life of David Lane, applying psychobiography to connecting a case of child abuse deepening White supremacy. We hope readers find a most enjoyable intellectual meal among these varied autobiographies and psychobiographies.

Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, is a historian who has taught at Ramapo College as a Founding Faculty Member and previously at Temple, Rutgers, and Fairleigh Dickinson universities. He is also a retired psychoanalytic psychotherapist who was educated at the New Jersey Institute for Training in Psychoanalysis, which in 2019 certified him as a Research Psychoanalyst. Professor Elovitz is the

author of various books, including *The Making of Psychohistory* (2018), and well over 400 publications. He may be contacted at cliospsycheeditor@gmail.com or prof.elovitz@gmail.com. ***William McKinley "Mac" Runyan, PhD,*** successfully overcame the opposition of famous Harvard academic psychologist professors who resisted his earning his doctoral degree with a dissertation on psychobiography. His book *Life Histories and Psychobiography: Exploration in Theory and Method* (1982) has had a major impact, and he edited *Psychology and Historical Interpretation* (1988). Dr. Runyan inspired others in his field to write about the full lives of others during his long career at the University of California in Berkeley. He is a recipient of the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award for Extraordinary Accomplishments in Psychohistory, sponsored by the Psychohistory Forum. He may be contacted at runyan@berkeley.edu. ❑

Giving Voice to the Voiceless: Psychobiographical Reflections of a Psychobiographer

Jeffrey B. Rubin—Psychohistory Forum Research Assoc.

Abstract: This essay explores the roots of my exposure to psychobiography, the kinds of psychobiographies I have written, the theory and method I employ, and how my passions and work are intimately connected to the challenges and hardships I endured.

Keywords: D. W. Winnicott, George Atwood, Heinz Kohut, psychobiography, psychohistory, Robert Stolorow, Sigmund Freud, William Shakespeare

In 1980, I read *Faces in a Cloud: Intersubjectivity in Personality Theory*, Robert Stolorow and George Atwood's (1979) seminal psychoanalytic study of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Otto Rank, and Wilhelm Reich. Their masterful psychobiographies linking the lives and theories of these psychoanalytic pioneers were a revelation, opening up a new intellectual and emotional universe. I saw with unmistakable conviction the way psychological and philosophical theories were not the isolated product of solitary contemplation but emerged directly out of the life experiences of their creators. I never looked at human lives or psychoanalytic theories, works of art, or philosophy the same way again.

In the 1990s, I wrote psychobiographies of Freud, D. W. Winnicott, and Heinz Kohut (Rubin, 1998). The data was drawn from theoretical writings, letters, diaries, interviews, memoirs, reflections on recurrent modes of thought and conduct in their lives, contemporary testimony from colleagues, and attention to the range of thoughts, feelings, and fantasies evoked in me by immersion in their life and thoughts. Five psychoanalytic perspectives deepened my psychobiographical reflections. From classical psychoanalysis, I utilized the developmental perspective, the attention to self-protective processes, and the creative states of mind Freud termed "evenly suspended attention" and "free association." Intersubjectivity theory sensitized me to the irreducibly relational nature of human development and the therapeutic and psychobiographical process. Self psychology and object relations theory refined my understanding of issues related to identity, the other, and the formative role of caregivers in emotional development. My perspective was also enriched by the focus in interpersonal psychoanalysis on the therapeutic value of interpersonal enactments and on one's own subjective reactions as a potentially useful data source.

In recent years, I have become interested in the emotional underpinnings of perplexing contemporary political and cultural topics—from the appeal of authoritarians to the psychology of White supremacists. I was deeply troubled by what felt like a tsunami of wickedness and madness, which I wanted to make sense of. As a psychoanalyst, I believed that politicians, like ordinary citizens, are shaped by the families they grew up in, the history they experienced, and the consequent feelings that arose. Because most people—from pundits to the rest of us—all too often approach politics consciously and cognitively, the hidden emotional forces that shape it are usually minimized and neglected. Politics, like history, also reflects the unconscious motivations and feelings of the people involved—the leaders and the led.

I hoped and believed that psychoanalytic wisdom could be brought to bear on these and related topics. I wrote psychobiographies of Trump, the Koch brothers, and David Lane (Rubin, 2024a; 2024b), a notorious White supremacist. It was emotionally clarifying to attempt to shed light on these disturbing figures. It was also painful to dwell in their universes.

During COVID-19, I returned to a project I had begun years ago, a psychobiographical study of Shakespeare, which I recently completed. Stolorow and Atwood's seminal insight into the con-

nection between one's biography and one's work guided and inspired all of these efforts, which have been both intellectually and emotionally gratifying. I have loved exploring and illuminating the lives, theories, and art of psychoanalysts, political figures, and literary geniuses, respectively.

I didn't think of myself as a psychobiographer—even though I wrote psychobiographies—until I became involved with the International Psychohistorical Association and got to know several psychohistorical colleagues—Paul Elovitz, Inna Rozentsvit, Jim Anderson, and Ken Rasmussen. Before I met them, I thought of myself as a psychoanalyst. As I began to also identify as a psychobiographer, the theory, method, and underlying assumptions of how I think and work—and the possible reasons—came into clearer focus.

Human beings are remarkable symbol-generating creatures who are night-shift artists—fashioning phantasmagorical dreamscapes that rival Dadaist and surrealist artists. This is our first superpower. The chief lesson my patients have taught me in 43 years of practicing psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy is the importance of valuing human experience and the fact that we continuously reveal more than we know about ourselves via our speech and symbolic communications, including our symptoms and actions. Clinical experience has repeatedly taught me that there is always an emotional logic to what people say or do—even apparently bizarre behavior—but that only becomes evident when we understand the underlying history that shaped it. Central to my view of psychobiography is that the psychological theories, political philosophies, or artistic creations of the person being studied by the psychobiographer are often memorials of their unwitnessed pain and an unconscious attempt to communicate, make sense of, and heal underlying psychological disturbances.

Our second superpower is our remarkable capacity to cultivate heightened attentiveness, focus, and clarity and decipher unconscious and symbolic communication. Decades of immersion in psychoanalysis and Eastern meditative and somatic disciplines—e.g., Buddhist meditation, Chinese martial arts and qigong exercises, and Indian yoga—resulted in a marriage of Buddha and Freud: a union of mindfulness and meaning-making that made each wisdom tradition richer than if pursued alone. Integrating Asian contemplative and Western psychoanalytic practices provided an invaluable tool for making sense of human experience.

Paul Elovitz' invitation to contribute an essay on the psychobiography of the psychobiographer resulted in me thinking more self-consciously about the method underlying my psychobiographical approach to psychoanalysts, political figures, and creative artists. "Go where the energy is," my friend, teacher, and mentor Joel Kramer used to say to me. The psychobiographical process begins for me with feeling drawn to a topic out of passion or perplexity—interest or befuddlement. On the one hand, I have loved Shakespeare since I first read him in high school; on the other hand, I was disturbed by and didn't understand what felt like a tidal wave of evil in the world.

Next comes wholehearted immersion in the life-world of the person I am studying combined with self-forgetfulness, by which I mean attempting to bracket what I think or believe, which fosters greater emotional intimacy with who or what I am studying. In other words, I dive into the person's history without any concern for what I think I know. I try to engage the material with Freud's "evenly-hovering attention"—letting it speak to, teach, and guide me—rather than superimposing my prior assumptions or wishes. This opens up a space where the otherness of what I encounter can touch and grace me. Then, I return to myself and attempt to empathize, reflect on, and play with what arose when I initially delved into the material. I am alert to repetitive or irrational themes, tensions, and contradictions (Winnicott says treatment doesn't begin until the True Self is found and that the discovery of the True Self is like a rape); universalizing claims; unexplained strangeness; excessive or deficient emotions; and symptomatic omissions (there is no Mrs. Lear in Shakespeare, and Prospero has no wife).

When I encountered Shakespeare as a middle-aged man, themes that I read past as a college student—mistaken and stolen identities, absent and predatory mothers, familial betrayals, and murdered children—struck me with greater force. A crucial dimension of my process is riffing with the material like a jazz improviser who is grounded in the fundamentals of human development and motivation yet is capable of springing from the conscious and manifest level to the hidden and unsuspected depths as well as thinking about it. I remain alert to what thoughts, feelings, somatic sensations, and images emerge. More specifically, I began to wonder if Shakespeare's plays were a heartbreaking tale of what had happened to him, as well as a remarkable illumination of the human condition.

The roots of my theories and methods lie, of course, in childhood and my own history. I grew up in a middle-class family in the New York metropolitan area. My father was an executive at a clothing company, with a bad temper and a total inability to deal with emotional frustration. My mother was rigid, doctrinaire, and emotionally immature. She was at home when I was young and later became a psychotherapist. The only therapist I ever met who didn't participate in a day of therapy, she had a nasty habit of denying—and redefining— reality.

I was the oldest of two boys. My brother, who was five years younger, loved tennis and had a sweet tooth and a disregard for the law, which he frequently ran afoul of. My parents couldn't manage him. Overwhelmed and lost, they turned to me to solve the growing mess they couldn't handle.

"We don't blame the mother [for her wayward son]," my mother intoned, in a confusing phrase I now realize was probably an unconscious attempt to ward off her own shame for a son who was a monstrous embarrassment to extraordinarily image-conscious parents. In a letter to a judge in one of my brother's numerous encounters with the courts, my mother wrote that my academic, athletic, and social success had damaged my brother and caused his difficulties in living. The fact that two out of three of those descriptions of me were erroneous—I was shy, introverted, and rebellious in school—didn't seem to slow down her headlong quest to exonerate herself and blame me for her youngest son's frequent brushes with the law.

My mother had lost her parents when she was in her 20s. The child of an authoritarian doctor and a quiet and reserved mother (after who I was named) who died before I was born, my mother seemed to identify with her father and follow his ways. My speculation is that she was lost when her parents died. Image—how things looked—guided her through a universe she was not equipped to handle.

I occupied a strange role in my family—savior-scapegoat—who was alternatively called on to save everyone and blamed for my brother's growing difficulties. This left little room for much focus on what was important to me. The role I was invited to fulfill expanded my empathy and fed self-erasure. Looking back now, I think I developed a very self-corrosive habit of taking care of the other and forsaking myself. I felt invisible and voiceless. But what

also unconsciously developed was a fierce wish not to let other people handle agony and madness alone. In being there for other people in the lurch, I could provide what I yearned for, which was/is, for me, a joyful experience.

In my third experience with psychoanalysis—my first two were of negligible value—I found in my therapist, George Atwood, a person who listened with extraordinary attention and heard what I couldn't yet see. Early on in our multi-decade treatment, I said to him that I would pay him a million dollars if he got the boulder off of me. We eventually recognized that the boulder was the massive weight and crushing power of instantaneously caring for the other and forgetting myself. If practicing psychoanalysis unconsciously and inadvertently sometimes reinforced this interpersonal pattern, being in psychoanalysis became a remarkable journey through the vicissitudes of self-annihilation back to a self that had been lost. George's profound empathy and wisdom removed the immense boulder that had been crushing me and was of inestimable value in opening the portal to the not-yet-me and helping me find—and be—myself.

I wonder now if my interest in lives—psychoanalytic, historical, political, and artistic—was related, at least in part, to my own being marginalized and eclipsed. My childhood sensitized me to the secret life of pain that many people experience. From Shakespeare, I learned the importance of seeing it "feelingly," not simply cognitively. In my approach to psychobiography and my interest in the psychology of evil, insanity, imagination, and creativity, I can see the links between my childhood and my own efforts to make sense of and survive a horrifying home. I knew the agony of suffering alone—and the voicelessness of self-extinguishment. My appetite for listening to the hidden stories that shape who people are and the wish to understand and aid souls in distress was, I suspect, an attempt to provide what I yearned for and to give voice to the voiceless.

Jeffrey B. Rubin, PhD, practices psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy and teaches meditation in New York City and North Salem, New York. He is considered one of the leading integrators of the Western psychotherapeutic and eastern meditative traditions. The creator of meditative psychotherapy, Dr. Rubin is the author of critically acclaimed books, including *The Art of Flourishing: A Guide to Mindfulness, Self-Care, and Love in a Chaotic World* (2017) and *The Good Life: Psychoanalytic*

Reflections on Love, Ethics, Creativity, and Spirituality (2004). *The New York Times Magazine* featured his pioneering approach to psychotherapy and Buddhism. For more information, visit www.drjeffreyrubin.com.

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Drawing Lots in Auschwitz

Ira Brenner—Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia

Abstract: This essay highlights some of the lifelong effects of massive psychic trauma on a Holocaust death camp survivor. First seen through his son's young eyes and then his evolving psychoanalytically informed lens, this report focuses on the complex father-son relationship, which is intensified by the intergenerational transmission of trauma and resilience.

Keywords: Auschwitz, black boots, drawing lots, Holocaust, intergenerational transmission, psychic trauma, psychoanalysis, psychobiography, psychohistory, Sachsenhausen, slave labor, survival, unresolved grief

My father, Leo Brenner, spoke very little about his time in the camps. But it was always there, silently lurking in the dark corners of my little fallout shelter of a house. He thought that he could protect his children from knowing about his horrors if he kept quiet about it. It didn't work. In fact, it hugely backfired on him. When I was in medical school and told him that I planned to specialize in psychiatry and formally study the psychological effects of the Holocaust, he was shocked and quite upset. My father thought he failed me because I was so interested in the very subject that he did his best not to think about. He had always wanted me to go into what he thought was an easy and lucrative specialty, dermatology, where I could make a lot of money and stay on the surface, literally and figuratively. However, I felt as though my psychic survival hinged upon understanding as deeply as possible what he had en-

dured, how he had endured it, and how he was able to live a "normal" life afterward. Although it was a mystery to me how it happened, there was no doubt that what he went through had gotten seared into my soul. The memories of his experiences permeated my home like a tasteless, odorless, and invisible gas.

My father had six blue numbers tattooed on his huge forearm that shouldn't have been there. He joked that it was his old girlfriend's phone number, but he was not convincing. As a young boy, something didn't add up. None of my neighbors' fathers had them. My father spoke with a German accent. None of my neighbors' fathers were foreigners. They were all red-blooded Americans, good Protestants and Catholics who worked in the local factories and lived in my hardscrabble blue-collar neighborhood. They were proud veterans of the armed forces, and their sons played army with authentic military helmets, backpacks, and canteens. I could not explain to my peers why I had none of that gear. If I tried, I would get filled up with a toxic mixture of deep sadness, confusion, shame, anxiety, and rage; I had very few words for it all.

The only equipment my father brought over was an ominous pair of black boots that were hidden in a dusty corner of the heater room. He never wore them. I discovered them one day and inexplicably was drawn to them. They seemed out of place in my house and frightened me. I would secretly check on them from time to time, unsure if I was allowed to even know about them. The unspoken rule was that asking questions about anything was forbidden. All I knew was that they came over from Europe with him, but why, of all things, would he bring an old pair of boots that were too small for him?

When I was in high school, my growing strength enabled me to muster up the courage to start asking my father about his life before and during the war. He was evasive, but I discovered a strategy that kept him in one place long enough so he could not completely avoid me. Almost every Saturday I would go to work with him, and while he was driving there and back home, as well as making deliveries to his customers, we would talk. In that familiar unspoken way, we both came to expect another installment of his life in our weekly "sessions."

So, I eventually got to the boots. He hesitated at first, and with a faraway look that I now recognize as highway hypnosis, told me that shortly after the war, after surviving the death march from

Auschwitz to a munitions plant outside of Buchenwald, he and another survivor jumped a German soldier and overpowered him. They took his clothing. Leo's comrade got the coat; he got the boots. After so many years of his helplessness and passive defiance, I felt a strange sense of pride in Leo's powerful actions. Then the dread set in; there was so much more to this story that was never told. First and foremost was whether they killed the Nazi in their attack. This question was part of the fundamental question of what he had to do to survive. Was my father a killer as well as being a survivor? Also, if the boots were small, how old was this soldier? Might he have been a Hitler youth? If indeed my father did kill him, was it a man or a boy? Such questions about a father's capacity for violence can make the Oedipal situation feel very real and dangerous. It was no wonder that by the time I started my analysis, I practically dove onto the couch!

My father's coveted trophy was that pair of jackboots. Though a bit snug, they were far better than the wooden clogs and old rags he wrapped around his feet for the almost six years of his enslavement. Now, they just sat in that dark, forgotten corner of the storeroom, a monument to the brutality of survival that my father tried desperately to relegate to a dark corner of his own mind, which was full of memories.

Leo's scars were observable and psychological. Each jagged line, be it on his throat, chest, fingers, or arms, told a story of unbridled sadism and near-death accidents. After years of starvation rations, slave labor, and the perpetual threat of sudden death at any moment, he was a living skeleton of 90 pounds when liberated by Patton's army. He could never make up for the insatiable hunger that haunted him day and night. My father ravenously ate every morsel of food at every meal that my long-suffering mother cooked for us. He chewed on steak bones until they cracked and then sucked the marrow out of each fragment. Oblivious to his own behavior and projecting his anxiety onto those sitting at the table, he accused us of inhaling our food. He would then think he was reassuring us, saying, "No one is going to take it from you. Slow down. You will always have enough." Long before reading Freud's 1914 paper "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through," I knew about the compulsion to repeat severe trauma—I lived it with my father every day.

I discovered Freud's ideas in my freshman year of college when I glanced at a good friend's psychology textbook and became

fascinated. I read it from cover to cover that night. I intuitively understood all of the unconscious defense mechanisms and was amazed to discover that there was a whole language and field of study of the mind! Only much later was I equally amazed that I had never fully comprehended what the field of psychology was all about until that night. From then on, I knew that I had to learn everything I could about how the mind worked, even though I was not fully aware of why. I directed my courses toward a career in psychiatry or psychology graduate school, not knowing if I would get into medical school and need a backup plan. From there, I was determined to specialize in Freudian psychology and the unconscious mind. It seemed like the only path to follow if I were to have a chance at my own liberation.

It would take more than another decade before I met Judith Kestenberg, the luminary child analyst whose psychoanalytic study group on the effects of the Holocaust on the Second Generation seemed tailor-made for me. By then, I recognized that the intergenerational transmission of my father's massive psychic trauma was the elusive element that had darkened my soul. It had so fully saturated the fabric of my whole being that I feared it was too deep for analysis until I joined her study group. Incidentally, my use of the word fabric is not random.

I should say that after my father came to the U.S. in 1946, he took a variety of low-level jobs and ended up working in a dry cleaning plant. He could tolerate this type of labor and even developed a particular skill as a "spotter." The spotter was the one who pre-treated heavily soiled clothing before loading the items into the huge dry cleaning machines. Those who mastered this art of spotting had a special niche in the dry cleaning world. They were known to be able to salvage very expensive garments, like ornate and delicate silk evening gowns that were stained by wine or greasy food. Without such a talented spotter on hand, this clothing would be totally resistant to standard dry cleaning treatment and essentially ruined. Therefore, a good spotter enabled dry cleaners to offer such specialized services, which enhanced their reputations and increased their profits. Leo became an ace spotter. He learned in Auschwitz how to make himself an indispensable worker.

The spotter's tools were a high-pressure steam gun, an array of brushes, and a combination of toxic solvents that were intuitively applied in various proportions to loosen up the stain from the fabric so it could be fully dissolved in the dry cleaning machines. As a

very sensitive 10-year-old boy finally being allowed into the bowels of the plant where my father toiled for 10 hours a day, I was a bit apprehensive around all of the noisy and dangerous equipment. I stayed close to him, observing him with awe. Surrounded by huge mounds of clothing, he would become enshrouded in a cloud of steam, squirt a variety of poisons onto the diseased material, beat it a few times with his brushes, and then repeat the process until he was satisfied with his progress. Like a magician, he would then emerge triumphantly from the cloud of steam with his conquest, toss it on top of the growing heap, and go back for more. He did this all day long, six days a week. Without realizing it at the time, he demonstrated that with patience, persistence, and experience, it was possible to remove some of the deepest stains from one's fabric. He would have been astounded to learn that he inspired me, providing a concrete model for my own work with refractory patients with deeply stained, traumatized psyches. When I was young, he seemed like a superhero of sorts, a man impervious to all of the elements.

Leo Brenner's life was utterly shattered around the age of 18. His father, uncle, and several boyhood friends were all on the same transport to Sachsenhausen in September 1939, days after the German invasion of Poland. The young, stronger men fared better than the older men, as they were all forced to live like animals and work like slaves in a backbreaking quarry and brick factory. About three interminable years later, they, along with about 450 other men, were sent to Auschwitz to help construct the buildings at the Monowitz Camp, or Auschwitz III. By then, those who were still alive had become veteran laborers whose skills were needed at the massive IG Farben synthetic rubber manufacturing site known as Buna.

As a young boy, "Buna" was a household word but not something I dared ask about. My father would spit that word out every month when he received his *Wiedergutmachung* (reparations from the German government for what the Nazis had done to Jews) check. He desperately needed every penny to keep a roof over his family, but his bitterness was boundless; he took this pittance, knowing it could never make up for his incalculable losses.

His most profound loss was the brutal death of his father, Ignatz, a man who forbade young Leo to emigrate to Palestine with a youth group when it was still possible. My grandfather was a successful businessman with prominent German customers, and he

did not believe that Hitler would succeed in his maniacal plans until it was too late. His business was destroyed during *Kristallnacht* ("Night of Broken Glass") in November 1938, and less than a year after, the Gestapo came for him and my father. My grandmother and the younger children went into hiding immediately afterward.

My grandfather survived until January 1943, several months after their transfer to Auschwitz, when he finally was too weak to report for work. The SS found him in the barracks, dragged him out, and made an example of him in front of the morning assembly by shooting him in the head. My father tried to rush forward to save him but was restrained by his comrades lest he, too, be murdered on the spot. In the Jewish tradition of being named for a deceased relative, I was named for him, but my father could barely talk about him, let alone go into any detail about his fate. I first learned about this story from one of his recorded testimonies late in Leo's life. Despite my father's denial and best intentions, being my grandfather's namesake complicated our relationship in myriad ways.

Somehow, Leo continued to stay alive in captivity for more than two years after his father's public execution. His daily work routine as a welder was fraught with life-threatening dangers on many levels. Then, as the Allies made advances on the battlefield in 1944 and the prisoners heard their bombers in the distance, the Nazi's fear of defeat increased their cruelty. Hope for liberation had to be tempered with even greater caution as conditions became more unpredictable and dangerous. Around this time, one of his boyhood friends from Berlin, Max Drimmer, a member of Leo's work detail, got a secret message to him. Their work frequently took them out of the camp, where they were in contact with local Polish civilian employees. One such man was very sympathetic to the inmates and took such a deep liking to Max that he offered to help two men escape. Through an elaborate scheme with his outside assistance, they devised a plan that would enable the chosen two to escape unnoticed until much later when, under cover of darkness, they donned civilian clothing and exited through a hole in the fence. Another friend from Berlin, Herman Shein, or "Menna," was to join Max in the escape. However, someone within the camp needed to provide some cover for them. Leo was the third man, essential to this plot.

Having heard renditions of this almost impossible but true story from each man who participated, they are consistent, except

for a discrepancy over how Leo got involved in it. My father's version was that the three men drew lots to decide who should stay behind. Here, the selection was made by chance. My father was the odd man out, so he would have to stay behind. It was a fair game, and they all had an equal chance to escape, but Leo lost. He kept his word and risked his life for his boyhood friends, knowing full well any escapee from a work commando unit would result in the immediate execution of its leader. As Leo was in charge, he would have been held responsible. If, however, he was one of the two escapees, then none of the others could be held responsible. But it did not work out that way.

So, the plan needed to include an alibi for Leo. He would claim to be ill and enter the infirmary a day before the planned escape. Max was to become the temporary foreman of the work detail on the designated day, and since he escaped, there was no one to blame. However, everyone knew that merely being in the infirmary was, in and of itself, risking one's life. The SS would make their daily rounds and selections, disposing of anyone deemed unable to recover in short order. Leo certainly knew that too; he was also aware that his own father did not even make it to the infirmary before he was murdered.

A member of the resistance worked in the infirmary and was entrusted with the details of the plot. He was to warn my father just before the guards entered so he would have a minute to hide in the latrine before they started looking for him so they would think he had been discharged. The plan worked; the men escaped, and Leo quietly returned to his work detail. About two very long months later, the camp was suddenly evacuated in advance of the Russians. Leo did not know if his buddies survived until well after the war. They also did not know whether he survived. All of them emigrated to the U.S. after the war and met up again. I also saw them several times during their emotional reunions, hearing more of their stories and staying in touch with them until shortly before their deaths.

Importantly, both Max and Menna's versions are consistent with everything mentioned above, except for the part where they drew lots. They insisted that never happened. According to them, the plan all along was for the two of them to escape. They needed Leo to stay behind to cover their tracks. Evidently, they knew he could be trusted and had enlisted his help, even though it put his utterly bleak life into much more jeopardy. But how could he re-

fuse? He had helplessly witnessed the cold-blooded murder of his father, so if he could help his friends live, even at the cost of his life, perhaps he might feel a sense of redemption. He never spoke that way about such things, so I am left to my own reflection about this facet of the saga.

Max and Menna also had to take a huge chance. They both had half-Jewish girlfriends who were waiting for them and whose families might provide shelter and protection from the massive manhunt that was inevitable. If they were found, however, they would have been interrogated and tortured to death. If that had occurred, they might have revealed Leo's involvement, and he would have met the same fate. So, Leo's participation put him in triple jeopardy. According to records compiled at the Auschwitz memorial, there were less than 200 successful escapes, and these two men were among those few. My father was an unsung hero who never got his due. In fact, he may have downplayed it and tried not to think about it, as it might have been linked to unconscious survivor guilt about not being able to save his father.

Leo was a man of action, not deep reflection. He kept his deepest memories and feelings in that dark corner of his mind where the black boots were hidden. Nevertheless, I would have asked him about this discrepancy had he not died before I learned of it. So, I can only surmise that he revised the story for me, the son named for his father, in order to transform his sacrifice and its deepest meaning into a daring game of chance.

My father mellowed with age, and his ill health slowed him down enough to truly enjoy his bounty in life. In the late 1980s, I took him to Israel for a Holocaust conference where I presented a paper on unconscious fantasies of the selection in children of survivors. We visited an old buddy from the camps, a huge man known back then as little Hans. Little Hans admired Leo's special watch because it had two faces and could keep time in two time zones. Death camp survivors lived in two time zones: Auschwitz time and the present. My father immediately took it off his wrist and gave it to the man, whom he had not seen in 45 years.

Leo and I spent two priceless weeks together and got to know one another on a much deeper level as men. For the next ten years, until his final weeks in the ICU, we spoke just about every day. In the doctors' best efforts to keep him alive, his mind fractured. He developed an ICU psychosis while on a ventilator, and to

prevent him from pulling out his tubes, the staff tied down his arms. That was too much for him. In his delirious state, he was flooded with terrifying memories of torture in Auschwitz. He became convinced that I was his Nazi guard and begged me to open the door to free him. I was devastated and heartbroken; then I understood. He was trying to break free and find his way home to his final resting place.

He was surrounded by family throughout this last ordeal and soon settled down. Incredibly, his condition stabilized, and plans to return home were being made. Knowing he was about to be free, he could then die peacefully. I think about him almost every day, and his essence lives within me.

Months after he died, I found a poem he had written amongst his papers. This form of expression seemed out of character and quite remarkable for him. In it, he enumerated a long list of things that were done to him in stark, unvarnished terms. Each crime was followed by the simple refrain "because I was a Jew."

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An Autobiography of an Unwavering Optimist

Inna Rozentsvit—The Psychohistory Forum

Abstract: This autobiography explores how transgenerational experiences and Soviet upbringing shaped Inna Rozentsvit's character and worldview. Born to Jewish parents with complex histories of survival and resilience, the author traces her development from a curious child to a

multifaceted professional. The narrative weaves themes of intellectual curiosity, resilience, and unwavering optimism against the backdrop of significant historical events. It illustrates how family values, cultural background, and chosen relationships influenced her professional ethos and personal convictions.

Keywords: character development, cultural background, family history, family values, Jewish heritage, individual psychology, intellectual curiosity, psychobiography, psychohistory, resilience, World War II (WWII)

This essay began as a tapestry woven from various sources: my own notes, discoveries from my parents' writings after their passing, postcards and letters exchanged with my children during their summer camp days, correspondence with overseas friends, and heartfelt messages from coworkers, patients, and their families. When the opportunity arose to contribute a psychobiography for an edited book, I enriched this collection with responses to my "calls for prompts" from my family, adult children, and friends—a chosen family.

Although I had never considered myself a psychobiographer, I recognize my innate tendency to seek the "whys" in my research and writing. I employ a bottom-up approach, from roots to branches and fruits, which, in my mind, embodies the essence of psychohistory and psychobiography. My children, born a year apart and now adults, also shared perspectives on aspects they found challenging in their youth but now view differently, including: not taking sides in arguments, equal treatment, looking at everything as a journey and not a destination, and learning to enjoy the journey (this one is a very powerful force in my life related to finding "one thing" that would be a guiding star that shines one's way, no matter how many obstacles he/she needs to overcome). Other important aspects they shared include talking them out of complaining (this is true: diving too much into what's wrong and complaining about it, and the finger-pointing that usually ensues, never resolved any problem), prohibiting name-calling and use of "bad words" like "I hate…," collecting plants and books, and providing full backstories and thorough answers to questions.

One of my heroes, Oliver Sacks, spoke of wanting to be remembered in 100 years for listening carefully to his patients, imagining what it was like for them, and bearing witness. I aspire to be remembered as someone who lived purposefully, showed up for people, cared with joy and passion, loved unconditionally, fought ignorance, dared greatly, and never gave up. Also, since it is not

about me per se but my legacy, I would like to make a difference by promoting benevolent curiosity, open-mindedness, love for learning and personal growth, and love for people, pets, and nature.

My Background Preparing Me for Psychobiography

My love for Russian classical literature, especially poetry, nurtured my ability to write emotionally rich, detailed letters in the "Russian style." This characterized my writing until I was 30, when our family of four embarked on an unexpected journey to unfamiliar places, leaving behind loved ones for an uncertain future. This transition marked a shift in my writing style—it became more pragmatic, need-based, and concise. While I, Inna-the-person, remained unchanged at my core, my environment transformed dramatically. My mental energy was focused on survival: adapting to a new culture, studying medical textbooks in English, learning to navigate multiple-choice tests, working whatever jobs were available, and helping kids to thrive at school.

My journey as a writer began much earlier, though. As a 14-year-old high school student, I discovered my journalistic talent by contributing to our school newsletter. I wrote about "ordinary people"—individuals from my community who had exciting or not-so-exciting jobs but who, at least once, had risen as heroes in their everyday lives. One of these heroes was my uncle, Lev Terk. During World War II, his comrades renamed him Vasiliy Tyorkin to match the character of Alexander Tvardovsky's ballad *Vasiliy Tyorkin: A book about the soldier* (1942 and 1945). The book's character (who was loved by all Soviet people) matched my uncle's character: humorous, never losing high spirit, always finding solutions in difficult situations, and generally not taking war too seriously (at least that is how the character and my uncle appeared to people from outside). Tvardovsky's character symbolizes the resilience and patriotism of the simple Soviet people.

When I started writing the essay about my uncle, I learned I knew little about him. He was in the Soviet army from the time he was 18 years old, from the conflict with Finland, through all of WWII, and during the "Korean War" (when the Soviets occupied North Korea and Americans—South Korea). When I interviewed him, he worked as a metallurgical worker who never involved himself in a "cheap" talk but read more books (at least three a week) than some professors I know. I thought my interview had failed as he answered all my questions with one-liners and even described all his medals without any pride or other emotion. But then, I asked

about the toughest time of his life. He told me about the siege (blockade) of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) from September 1941 to January 1944—a long two-and-a-half years. My uncle's eyes were wet, his voice trembled, and it was so low that I was holding my breath to catch every word he was saying: "Shostakovich … frozen bodies of civilians that the soldiers tried to revive … checking every 'soul' … eating dead animals and rodents … [and again] Shostakovich…" (Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7 was performed in Leningrad during those horrible times, and it became a symbol of resilience and defiance.) My uncle did not mention that the systematic and intentional starvation aimed at the destruction of the Soviet civilian population (as described in Hitler's plan, Barbarossa) was so rampant that there were incidences of eating dead humans; it was probably too much to ask to remember.

I asked about positive memories of the war, and my uncle remembered his favorite songs. One was the wartime song "The Sacred War," with the last words, "Let righteous fury swell like tides that roar, / For now we wage our sacred, solemn war." The other song was a post-war one, lyrical and gentle, "The Dark Night," which made the strongest men cry: "In you, my dear, my faith stands true, / A shield against the darkness grew. / Through the night's embrace … / Whatever fate may have in store, / Your love awaits me evermore."

I recently realized that this essay-interview with the ordinary extraordinary soldier, Lev Terk, aka Vasiliy Tyorkin, which received the Exceptional Junior Journalist award, was my first foray into psychobiography. Though I lacked the proper terminology then, I now understand that psychobiography delves into people's childhoods, family history, family relationships, ideals, and their understanding of right and wrong. It's about listening to what's important to them, without pressure or judgment, and without applying theories and labels—a true "bottom-up" approach. The feeling and the thought process that went into the whole experience of writing this essay will be forever with me.

How My Soviet Childhood Influenced My Life and Things That Matter

I grew up as a happy Soviet child of the 1960s, absorbing the collective sorrow of a nation that had lost 27 million citizens—soldiers and civilians, from infants to elders—in World War II (WWII). My childhood coincided with the era of Yuri Gagarin, the first human to journey into outer space, and Valentina Tereshkova,

the first woman cosmonaut. It was a time of Soviet economic reforms, five-year plans, and Pioneer Houses where children could engage in various activities after school: chess, wood carving, chorus singing, Russian dancing, gymnastics, clay modeling, and homework assistance. I never remember experiencing hate or envy, which I would search my soul for when I started psychoanalytic training, but I never found any traces of my being subjected to them. I remember loving people around me and loving life as-is—the world was my oyster. Later in my training, I decided I got "stuck" in the developmental stage of being in love with the world, which I think is a proper assessment.

For my generation of Soviet people, WWII was in our chronological past, but it lived through our parents, who were born just before or during WWII, and our grandparents. We, the kids, had a very one-sided exposé of the war, which was reflected in the literature, movies, and songs: We, the Soviet people, did it! We persevered and overcame—because we were a great multinational family. Today, the population of many post-Soviet republics-turned-countries does not hold the same spirit of brotherhood. They either want to work in the Russian Federation (RF) as there are more opportunities there or were incentivized to turn hostile to the RF. For me, someone who wholeheartedly believed in the "brotherhood," it was challenging to admit that politics can change people's relationships.

What about my generation's grandparents? They lived through World War I and three (bloody) Russian Revolutions—the First Russian Revolution of 1905, the February (March) 1917 (Bourgeois Democratic) Revolution, and the October 1917 (Bolshevik) Revolution, as well as famines and collectivization. Additionally, my Jewish grandparents and parents experienced traumas and losses due to the rampant overt antisemitism of the Tsarist era, the covert antisemitism of the Stalinist era, and beyond. Interestingly, the Stalinist era's antisemitism was mostly not based on hate toward Jews as an ethnicity but on a dislike of (and possibly hate toward) some Bolshevik Jews believing in the "world revolution" and perceiving Russia to be just the means (fuel for a burning fire) to the end of the world revolution (Slyozkin, 2004). As I wrote earlier this year in *Clio*, during Stalin's purges, Jews were targeted as "rootless cosmopolitans" or as religious Zionists, and these two things were perceived as unpatriotic (Rozentsvit, 2024).

Considering all the above and using an intersectional ap-

proach (see David Schraub's 2019 article "White Jews: An intersectional approach" in *AJS Review: The Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies* for more information), Jews experienced more traumas than any other national ethnicities of the former Soviet Union. So, despite victimhood not being in my DNA, when I hear opinions that some people, groups, or ethnicities are "clinging" to their "chosen traumas," it feels like a sharp instrument is disturbing an old wound. This wound was not even my own; it belonged to at least two generations of my ancestors, some of whom I knew and some of whom I do not even have photographs of. This wound is transgenerational. It is not just Jewishness-based but also based on all Russian and Soviet historical experiences. This wound in my soul is susceptible to any unfairness and injustices related to "my people"—Jews and Russians.

That is why when I learned of the war between two formerly "brotherly" republics, Russia and Ukraine, which was promoted by certain Ukrainian nationalist groups, my transgenerational wound deepened and became more painful. It was even more distressing to learn of atrocities committed against Russian-speaking people, as documented in "Burnt Alive in Odessa" (Bonanza Media, 2021). Reports of military-style camps teaching children to target Russian ethnics (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2015) and attacks on civilian areas in eastern Ukraine, resulting in child casualties (Russia's Western Friends, 2023), further exacerbated this pain.

Why am I writing about this when I am 30-plus years and about 5,000 miles away from these events? Because healing transgenerational wounds is only possible when the truth is spoken about. It's crucial to acknowledge and understand these complex historical and current events, not to assign blame but to recognize the deep-rooted pain and trauma that continue to affect people across generations and borders.

My Roots and Positive Approach to Life

My detailed focus on family background and the chaotic, murderous times for all people in Eastern Europe, especially Jews, is based in part on my having done considerable research on transgenerational trauma and resilience (Rozentsvit, 2022). I was born in Russia, in Astrakhan, a town on the Volga River, near Volgograd, where my Mom was finishing medical school, and my Dad was completing additional courses after architectural school to become a mechanical and agricultural engineer (apparently, where we

were going, they did not need architects). My parents planned to move to Ukraine, where my Mom's parents and her siblings lived—the only family left after the war. Both of my parents have passed away now; first, my Dad, and six years later, my Mom. My Dad was my son's hero. When he died, my son, who had just turned 13, asked me to write something about his Grandpa, saying, "If there's no record of one's deeds and existence, people disappear." I took my son's words to heart and started recording my thoughts and memories. My Dad was my hero, too; he was a very maternal father, super smart, inquisitive, and very handy—he taught me everything that any girl or boy needs to know to survive, be self-sufficient, and project hope and assurance that everything will work out, no matter what. He was very creative and instilled this ability to envision things from inside and outside of the box. Also, he told me many times that I could do anything I wanted to do in this world—and I believed him! This belief or insight (or wisdom?) was a lighthouse shining strong throughout my life.

My Dad was the youngest son of an engineer and a chocolate goods baker who were part of a well-to-do family in Bucharest. They were practicing Jews and lived a "life of *mitzvah*," as my Dad would say to me sometimes. Only as an adult did I understand that *mitzvah* means not just doing good things but also refraining from bad ones and that "one's deed is more important than creed." My Dad lived these words, not just spoke them. Before the war broke out between Hitler's army and the Soviets in 1941, when my Dad was almost 12, Romania was already occupied by Nazis. My Dad's family decided to escape Romania to then Soviet Bessarabia, now Moldova, and from there, used rafts to get to Podolye, Ukraine, which was on the other, Soviet, side of the Dniester River.

Since my Grandfather was an engineer, he built strong rafts that could carry a few people at a time to safety, and there were many people who needed help. Each of my Dad's family members was assigned by my Grandfather to a different raft so the whole family wouldn't be killed if one of the rafts didn't make it. Remembering this, I understood one of my Dad's teachings about the difference between a strategy and tactics and how to take emotions out of the decision-making equation. My Dad would use this every time we analyzed any real or historical situation. He taught me this, as well as the history of countries and people, and I tried to teach my kids the same. As for my Grandpa, he kept going back to help more people, which would cost him his life.

Unfortunately, although my Grandmother survived the river crossing, my Dad and his siblings never saw her again—she was placed on an evacuation transport to Uzbekistan, where she died from malaria and was buried in one of the "brotherly graves." His whole life, or at least as much as I could remember, my Dad was trying to locate his mother's grave. I was given her name.

My Mom's family was from another world, the Tsarist Russian Pale of Settlement, and experienced the chaos in Ukraine until the Soviets gained full control of it. These Jews were extremely poor and unfortunate, as they experienced too many losses during multiple Petlyura pogroms. (Simon Petlyura was a Ukrainian nationalist born in a Cossack family.) My Grandfather was in the Tsarist army, but he did not make it through the 25-year service term as the 1917 October Revolution broke out. He also was injured too with a severely damaged spine and a chemically damaged eye. I remember him being very fair, reasonable, and concerned about people. He prayed every day and mainly spoke Yiddish. He was one of three arbitrators/mediators who resolved family conflicts in the *shtetl* (Jewish settlement). People respected him, but not everyone was happy with his decisions. Still, he stood by his principles. My constant pull to and involvement in mediating conflicts—later realized in a mediator certification—are possibly inspired by my Grandpa, not just my personality!

My maternal Grandma was the youngest child and the only girl in her family. She was the most generous person I ever knew, and she shared everything with our neighbors—a Ukrainian family that had seven children and was poor. Grandma did not talk much and never showed any emotions. I always felt I needed to take care of her and brought her chocolates from kindergarten. I didn't know her story until after my Mom's passing: As a young girl, my Grandma had to watch three of her older brothers being quartered by horses during Petlyura pogroms, one by one. Then, during Stalin's purges, after someone informed authorities that she kept her beloved brother's little journal, my Grandma was sent to Siberian Gulags as a "Zionist sympathizer" because her brother was in the Jewish youth literacy group, which was considered Zionist. She spent long years, from 1940 to 1946, in Siberia. Then, she was declared too sick and unable to work and thrown outside of the barracks. Simple Russian people nursed her for a year and collected pennies for a railroad ticket for my Grandma to go home to Ukraine. I guess she never forgot their wholeheartedness and kindness.

My Mom was an "unwanted" child because the mid-1930s were incredibly difficult to survive in the USSR; another mouth to feed was a huge burden. Yet, she became the most "successful" child (as my Grandma would say), being the first in her family to receive a professional education and become an extraordinary physician. My Mom had a tough childhood—after a period of pre-war food shortages, World War II began. Nazis occupied the little town her family lived in in the first days of the war. The Germans established a Jewish ghetto there and left the antisemitic Ukrainian *politzays* (people's police) in charge. My Grandpa decided not to evacuate (although the Soviets provided horse carriages and then railroad cars for Jews to leave Ukraine) but to live underground, and his strategy worked—they survived! My Mom was six then and looked like a Ukrainian girl, so she became the main supplier of water and whatever food she could find on the surface at night. She always joked about it. The lightness of my Mom's story affected me deeply. It solidified my strong belief that one can overcome fear and be courageous, even when risking your life.

Interestingly, at the very same time my Mom's family was surviving underground, my Dad, who was left without any family, joined the Partisans. They were fighting more with the antisemitic pro-Nazi Ukrainians than with Germans, who moved east very quickly to try to conquer more of the USSR. I can't imagine how frightening it must have been for my Dad to be without family support, which he had enjoyed just weeks before! He never told me the story, and that's how I knew it was frightening. I believe my Mom never wanted me to hear about fear or feel the pain of existential issues in general. She also never took me to cemeteries, nor did I take my kids. As a physician, I think this influenced my never wanting to give up and fighting to preserve the last drop of life of anyone I was/am taking care of.

My Mom was a brilliant neurologist who was always involved in professional development. She learned every possible neurosurgical procedure and alternative medicine approach that a physician could learn or get certified in. Her intellectual curiosity had no bounds. I could say the same about her perseverance. My Mom graduated high school with a gold medal, and she had an easier time being admitted to medical school with only one oral exam, although she had to go far away from Ukraine. Mom never hid her "imperfections" but was determined to overcome them, no matter what. An important example of this is when she created handmade

models of a multitude of cuts and intersections of neurological pathways to envision their anatomy. My ability to be vulnerable, recognize deficiencies, and make a plan to persevere all likely come from my Mom's daily attitudes.

People sometimes asked how I felt as a child in our "super-effective" family led by a woman. I always responded that I felt safe and cherished. We had family dinners every evening, just the three of us, with all the important talks happening then—no TV, music, or radio. Also, everyone had responsibilities around the house, which was my first teamwork experience. This helped me when, after my neurology residency, I entered the neurorehabilitation fellowship program at New York University (NYU), where we had real multi-specialty team experience, learning from each other each and every day. This collaborative transdisciplinary spirit was unusual and memorable. We still connect with each other after so many years have passed since. I think that is why I appreciate dynamic team sports—hockey and soccer (or football, as it is called in Europe).

When I was little, I was an introvert by nature, and my Mom worried that I would stay impressionable and shy. So, she planned out-of-town two- to three-week trips during family vacations so I could be among strangers, see new places, and engage in new activities. My Dad made sure we had everything that we needed and were comfortable. We never needed anything besides what he prepared for these trips. He was able to foresee everything, and I was always amazed. I think that is why I started carrying all possible supplies to school—just in case someone needed anything—not for people's appreciation but for their comfort. Later, this ability to step in another person's shoes and foresee any possible things that could happen helped me to discover my professional talent: foreseeing possible medical complications and preventing them. Also, despite that it was/is making people in personal and professional situations annoyed at times, I value this talent and teach this skill to everyone, including every patient with chronic conditions and their family members, not counting on medical professionals to be there for them every moment. As one of the Soviet expressions goes, "The rescue of a drowning person is his own responsibility."

The ability to take responsibility and find a solution in a difficult situation without finger-pointing was something both of my parents shared. So, it was only natural that I could take on responsibilities without trying to unload its burden on another person first.

I know that my loved ones try to talk me out of it and ask or demand me to say "no" to every new thing, but I thrive on taking responsibility and finding a productive way to solve any problem. I enjoy this journey of doing good and being a part of something that helps humanity, an organization, or at least one person. This ties in with the perseverance that is required to complete the task, but as it is written in *Pirkei Avot*, an ancient Jewish text, "You are not obligated to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it" (Marcus, 2005, Verse 2:21, p. 28). This ability to take responsibility relates to many things that are important in my life, such as being grateful for things and people, being actively empathic (and not only talking about empathy), being fair and accepting people's limitations and our differences, and never comparing people (because this kills one's self-esteem). As the saying goes (attributed to Albert Einstein, but there is no proof of it), "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

My Chosen Family

My family had always been very small, but we always had a full house of people. In the cul-de-sac street we lived in, there were seven boys and one girl (me) of about the same age. I remember playing all-boy games, like Reds-and-Whites or Partisans, and enjoyed woodcarving and building bridges. At school, I was friendly with all the kids, and because I studied for all "5s" (or "As"), I had five or six "tails," kids whom I helped with their homework. Despite my parents being super busy, they always had friends over for holidays or weekends with a full table, talks, and reading books or periodicals—one chapter at a time.

Since that time, I started to think of friends and books (and their authors) as my extended family, my soulmates, people whom I could ask questions and receive reasonable (or not so reasonable) answers (and choose whether or not to accept them)—creating an open and engaging dialogue, without censorship and politicization, even when I'm alone. That's why I appreciate D. W. Winnicott so much—he opened for me a world where any circumstance can be considered "good enough" and where each person has capacities they could develop further (like the capacity for concern, the capacity to be alone, and others). He taught me about the "survival of the object," a concept that helped me withstand fear and persevere, no matter what.

That's how Oliver Sacks became my friend, although I

knew him only from afar when he was still giving lectures at the Albert Einstein residency program (my American alma mater). He taught me a lot about living with a sense of being different and being "blind" to this or just accepting it as a part of life (Rozentsvit, 2023). Erik Kandel became my friend, too. His ideas of new principles merging the mental health field and neuroscience were/are the most fundamental ones since Sigmund Freud, despite all hell breaking loose when he published these ideas at the end of the 1990s—psychiatrists did not want to accept these ideas (I'm sure because of turf wars). His sharing of super-difficult subjects of arts, creativity, visual perception, and conduction of visual information in a popular writing style (Kandel, 2012, 2016) is also very dear to my heart: his popularization of neuroscience, helping people to use the knowledge about their mind-brain dyad (as I call it), is one of my life's agendas.

Returning to friendship—I usually told my children when they complained that they didn't have "many" friends that it's enough to have one friend if it's a real friend. What is a real friend? My perception of friendship came from the Soviet era when we might not have had big families, as many families were decimated during the war, and people didn't have too many children—maybe two, "replacing the population." For us, a friend was a chosen family, a person who never let you down (even if you let yourself down sometimes), would think about your interests first, and could be vulnerable with you, knowing you would accept and understand them. When my friends from medical school finally found me online when I worked at the Brain Injury Center at NYU, we connected as if we had seen each other yesterday—we plugged into each other's lives, asked clarifying questions, remembered people and places, and have never stopped communicating since. One funny thing happened the day we connected on the phone: When they asked me if I had made new friends, I said, "We have friends [in Russia]; they [Americans] have shrinks." I feel blessed to have acquired new American friends, whom I consider my chosen family too—my neighbors, colleagues, and people with whom I share interests, values, and life.

Many more authors, thinkers, and mentors have profoundly influenced my life, and I consider them part of my chosen family. However, I cannot recount them all here due to space constraints. Suffice it to say that these real and literary connections have greatly enriched my intellectual and emotional world, forming a tapestry of

wisdom and inspiration that continues to guide me.

Final Reflections on My Journey

As I reflect on the journey that has brought me to this point, I am struck by the interplay of historical forces, family legacies, and personal choices that have shaped my life and worldview. From my childhood in the Soviet Union, steeped in the collective memory of WWII and the spirit of resilience it engendered, to my experiences as an immigrant and professional in America, each chapter has contributed to my unwavering optimism and commitment to growth. The stories of my parents and grandparents, marked by both tragedy and triumph, have instilled in me a deep appreciation for the power of perseverance and the importance of maintaining one's values in the face of adversity. Their experiences during times of war, persecution, and social upheaval have taught me the preciousness of peace and the responsibility we each have to contribute positively to our communities.

My journey in the medical field, particularly in neurology and psychoanalysis, has reinforced my belief in the incredible capacity of the human mind and spirit. It has also deepened my commitment to fostering an understanding of the intricate workings of the brain and the diverse experiences that shape each individual's perspective. The concept of a chosen family—encompassing friends, colleagues, mentors, and even authors whose works have profoundly influenced me—has been a cornerstone of my personal and professional development. It has taught me the value of open dialogue, intellectual curiosity, and the power of connecting across cultures and disciplines.

Looking to the future, I remain committed to the principles that have guided me thus far: the pursuit of knowledge, the practice of empathy, and the belief in the potential for positive change, no matter what. My experiences have shown me that there is always room for hope and growth, even in the darkest times. I strive to bring this optimism, tempered by a realistic understanding of human nature and history, to my work, relationships, and engagement with the world at large. In sharing this autobiography, my hope is not only to document my own journey but also to inspire others to reflect on the forces that have shaped their lives and to recognize the potential we all have to create meaning and contribute positively to the world around us. In understanding our own stories, we gain insight into the broader human experience and our place within it.

Inna Rozentsvit's bio can be found on page 93.

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The Evil That Men Do: Psychoanalytic Meditations on Wickedness

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Abstract: In our Age of Rage, evil simultaneously commands our attention and resists our comprehension. After exploring a variety of psychological sources of evil, I will take hints from Shakespeare and Melville about ways of responding to the ubiquity of wickedness.

Keywords: David Lane, Donald Trump, evil, Herman Melville, psychobiography, psychohistory, psychology, wickedness, William Shakespeare

"There's so much cruelty in the world," a middle-aged social worker said to me several years ago. "Meanness always existed," she added. "But it has reached unparalleled and intolerable levels. It is sickening and nearly unbearable."

Many of us feel horrified and demoralized by the appalling things people do to each other every day in our Age of Rage—from school shootings and church bombings to concert massacres and killings at protest marches. Neither Donald Trump nor foreign terrorists caused this; a variety of historical, economic, political, and psychological forces have led to the uncivil war in the United States. But Trump has both provoked and capitalized on economic inequality and financial hardship, mistrust and disillusionment, fear and loathing between citizens, political parties, genders, and races, which has only heightened the wickedness and animosity we all have to contend with.

Comprehending Evil

Evil simultaneously commands our attention and resists our comprehension. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the experience of evil is profoundly unsettling. Evil overwhelms us. The evildoer has brought the unthinkable—that which we can't emotionally process—into daily life, and that is part of a contemporary psychoanalytic understanding of trauma. Evil shatters our basic trust in the safety and goodness of the world and leaves us stunned and sometimes speechless. Wickedness upsets our deeply programmed and unconscious Western view that the world, like our family, is safe and good. So, we deny it or push it away, rationalize it or minimize it.

"You have trouble accepting that there is evil in the world," my second therapist said to me many years ago, referring to my tendency to minimize the behavior of a sociopathic relative. I only later realized that he was, unfortunately, correct. But denying the existence of evil not only excuses it but also makes it more difficult to think clearly about its meaning, its source, and how to remedy it.

Philosophers, theologians, dramatists, and political theorists have struggled to elucidate the nature of evil. We don't hesitate to call certain people, acts, and events evil, as the philosopher Richard Bernstein (2002) notes: "genocides, massacres, torture, terrorist attacks, the infliction of gratuitous suffering" (p. ix). But we have

trouble specifying what that means. The nature of evil seems to elude human comprehension and raise more questions than answers. Are wicked people born or made? Do they have evil "seeds," or were they products of disturbed families or deprived socioeconomic life circumstances? Is evil a pre-existing metaphysical entity? Did "the devil make him do it," as some theologians and murderers steadfastly claim? How could a benevolent deity create a world permeated by what Shakespeare (2007) in *Julius Caesar* called "the evil that men do" (3.2.75)? Does understanding the motives of evildoers mean one is condoning their behavior?

Virginia Woolf (1985) aptly noted an "explanation blunts the sledge-hammer force of the blow" (p. 72). In the face of evil, many people tend to rush to pat explanations (and moralistic judgment), such as "he's a born sociopath," and that may provide the illusion of clarity and understanding and perhaps ward off fear and helplessness, confusion and sorrow, even as they demonize and render opaque the people they are pathologizing. Other people shrink in the face of wickedness. Susan Neiman (2015) argues that evil "defies human capacities for understanding" (p. 2). Evil is complex and "resists and defies any final comprehension," Bernstein (2002, p. 7) adds. There is no "complete account of what evil is" because "we are constantly being confronted with unanticipated forms of brutal ethnic cleansing, militant religious fanaticism, terrorist attacks, and murderous varieties of nationalism" (Bernstein, 2002, pp. 225-226). But I wonder if calling evil inexplicable is a mystification—an apparent explanation that hinders efforts to understand what evil is, why people are wicked, and how to respond to it. When we psychologically illuminate the emotional lives of evildoers—which psychoanalysis has the resources to do even though it has tended to neglect the topic—understanding wickedness becomes possible.

"Comprehension [of evil] does not mean denying the outrageous. … It means, rather … neither denying its existence nor submitting meekly to its weight," the philosopher and political theorist Hannah Arendt (1951) argued in *Origins of Totalitarianism* (p. viii). Even though evil is emotionally and intellectually challenging, we can still enrich our understanding, which can help us address it.

There is a "plurality of types of evils," writes Bernstein (2002, p. 226). When we look at how the word evil is used—rather than search for an essential or singular meaning—we can see that it functions in a variety of ways. We call evil that which we can't ac-

cept or find inexplicable and monstrous, such as "the deliberate infliction of unbearable suffering on innocents" (Bernstein, 2002, p. 226): atomic bombs on civilians, putting people in gas chambers, or, more recently, murdering women and children in the war between Israel and Hamas. The word evil is also used "to silence thinking and to demonize what we refuse to understand" (Bernstein, 2002, p. x) as well as to register horror. Fanatical groups, for example, use the word evil to signify what they hate and want to obliterate.

Psychoanalysis has at least a three-fold contribution to make to the psychology of evil. One, psychoanalysis' empathic and contextual mode of listening and investigating can illuminate the intersubjective worlds in which evil grows. Two, psychoanalysis can elucidate the subjectivity of the murderer or persecutor—the links between wickedness and a history of abuse and/or neglect. Lastly, three, psychoanalysis sheds light on some of the salient meanings and motives of evil for the perpetrator.

Evil comes in many forms. Some people who commit diabolical acts fear a threat to their existence—believing that "a person or group is absolutely dedicated to the destruction of what we most deeply love and cherish—ourselves, our children, our faith, our very worlds as ours to inhabit," as psychoanalyst George Atwood (2018) writes in *The Power of Phenomenology* (p. 101). Related to this are people who have been emotionally annihilated as children and harm other people as a way of tangibly leaving a trace of their own unwitnessed agony. Others feel endangered because of prior abuse and hurt other people before they can be retraumatized. Still, other people were humiliated as children or adolescents and feel shame and resentment and attempt to punish others for what they have undergone. In some extreme cases, such people can have an envious hatred of the non-abused, which causes the former to attempt to steal the innocence of the latter the way the evildoer was robbed and betrayed when he or she was young and defenseless.

Discussing David Lane and Donald Trump

Because of time constraints, let's briefly consider two examples: David Lane and Donald Trump. My discussion will be focused and selective.

David Lane, a neo-Nazi and leading architect of the White supremacist movement, illustrates most, if not all, of these motivations. Not because some imagined the Devil made him do it but

because he had been traumatized by a physically abusive and alcoholic father who beat his family with a razor strap, broke David's older brother's eardrum, and abandoned the family when David was four. A year later, David was adopted out of an orphanage by a "doctrinaire, fundamentalist Lutheran minister from the old school" (Lane, n.d.).

Lane underwent something heinous and murderous. When your father physically abuses and abandons you, it is natural to feel decimated and obliterated, worthless and unlovable. To make matters worse, he faced this alone, which only deepened the emotional destruction. In a misguided attempt at self-healing, he blamed the wrong people—Blacks and immigrants, Jews and women—instead of his father and mother, which kept at bay the horrifying realization that his parents had betrayed him.

Some evildoers like Trump are encouraged directly by a parent to do atrocious things. Fred Trump Sr. told his son, Donald: "You are a killer … you are a king … you are a killer … you are a king," as Harry Hurt III notes in *Lost Tycoon*, a biography of Trump.

Trump's parents made him into the kind of person his father wished him to be: someone who thinks he is the center of the universe, lacks a moral compass and empathy for other people, and is arrogant, deceptive, ruthless, manipulative, cruel, and sadistic. His father was myopically self-centered and mendacious, harsh and critical. His mother was cold and emotionally detached. Trump was unloved and not empathized with or understood. Spoiled and emotionally neglected, Trump lacked basic emotional nourishment to thrive, which undermined his view of himself. He learned that the world was a scary and dangerous place and that he needed to demolish anticipated attacks before he was damaged. It is not surprising then that he devotes his life to proving he is not an abject failure (his biggest nightmare is to feel he is a Loser), endlessly violates the rule of law, treats people as means to his self-glorifying ends, and tries to annihilate those who stand in his way.

Evil "seems to belong to another order than that of nature," French philosopher Luc Ferry (2010) writes; "It serves no purpose, and is in most cases counter-productive" (p. 110). Psychoanalysis elucidates and deepens our understanding of some of the emotional functions evil serves and thus sheds light on what Western literature depicted about evil, from the Devil in the New Testament to Dan-

te's *Divine Comedy* to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Richard III* to Goethe's *Faust* to Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and the novels of Dostoevsky and Kafka.

Not all traumatized children become authoritarian leaders, serial killers, terrorists, or sadistic figures, but all that I've studied were traumatized. From a psychoanalytic perspective, there are diverse paths to wickedness but certain common ingredients. Lane and Trump, like Hitler and Ted Bundy, were emotionally tortured, which was denied by people in their world. They were thus gaslighted. There was no home for their feelings, which went underground into their bodies, damaged their sense of self, and sabotaged their relationships. In a misguided quest for relief from agony, they eventually physically reenacted in the world what was emotionally done to them that they couldn't come to terms with or express in the unconscious hope of communicating the nightmare they underwent, experiencing compassion, validation, and self-healing.

When confronted with wickedness, "an experience that some of us have, and of which all of us are capable" (Stolorow & Atwood, 2018, p. 102), we are faced with the question of what to do, as well as why it happened and what it means. I take hints and gain emotional solace from Shakespeare and Melville.

Governing the Shark Within

Shakespeare presented haunting portraits of evil—Richard III and Iago, Lady Macbeth, and Macbeth—and dramatized a view of wickedness that is, to me, more nuanced than the contemporary philosophical or psychological perspectives I have encountered. "In reality, there is no 'eradicating' evil tendencies," as Freud (1957, p. 281) wrote in "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," which was written in 1915, about six months after the outbreak of the First World War. One of the things I most admire about the depiction of evil in *Macbeth* is that Shakespeare does not fall victim to illusory hopes or pessimistic disillusionment about eliminating wickedness. Four of the main lessons for me from *Macbeth* are that: Evil is everywhere; we have to fight it; we won't eradicate it; and we have to contest it anyway.

There's a scene in *Moby Dick* that may depict Melville's (1967) ultimate view of how to respond to wickedness. Bothered by the uproar in the waters below, Stubbs orders Fleece to address the sharks. Fleece's sermon provides an important clue: "Your woraciousness, fellow-critters, I don't blame ye so much for; dat is

nature, and can't be helped; but to gobern dat wicked nature dat is de pint. You is sharks, sartin, but if you gobern de shark in you, why den you be angel; for all angel is not'ing more dan de shark well goberned" (Melville, 1967, p. 251).

The older I get, the more certain I am of this: We are all capable of almost anything, and we can't always eliminate parts of ourselves that we dislike. But that doesn't absolve us of the imperative to try. Even if that is, for most of us, a Sisyphean enterprise.

The job of each of us, Melville tried to teach us in *Moby Dick*, is not to purge greed or wickedness—which is impossible—but to govern the shark within. That is easier said than done because wicked people enjoy inflicting suffering and tend not to feel guilty or troubled about it and thus have little motivation to change.

The roots of evil, in my experience, lie in childhood trauma, especially parental malattunement and the absence of an emotional home for the budding evildoer's challenging feelings. One of my favorite ideas from the wisest psychoanalyst I know—George Atwood—is "the incomparable power of human understanding."

I wonder what would happen if we all walked through the world with a renewed effort to deepen our own human understanding and emotional availability for the people we meet, especially the parents, kids, and adults at risk? Might that create a substitute emotional home for them—and give them a voice? Might that help us make meaningful inroads into the crucial but never completed and urgent task of creating a more humane and less wicked world?

Jeffrey B. Rubin's bio can be found on pages 9-10.

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Love's Labor Lost and Found: My Relationship with Psychobiography

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Abstract: This is the story of the author's relationship with psychobiography, which reflects underlying tensions around shifting loyalties to qualitative and quantitative research that began in his early college years. He explores how these tensions paralleled important relationships with mentors in his life, including, most centrally, his father.

Keywords: autobiography, childhood, clinical psychology, life study, narrative identity, psychobiography, psychohistory, self-defining memory

My tale of a love for psychobiography, lost and regained, starts in my first semester at Amherst College in 1976 with a seminar entitled "Other People's Youth." We read biographies of prominent individuals focusing primarily on their formative early years. Most importantly, we started our course by reading Erik H. Erikson's *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (1958) and finished the semester with his *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (1969). In between, we pored over biographies of Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson, among others.

Having grown up with two psychologist parents (Jerome L. and Dorothy G. Singer), I was fascinated to see how Erikson incorporated psychoanalytic concepts into the familiar literary genre of biography. As an 18-year-old in the throes of my own adolescent psychosocial development, it was mind-boggling for me to contemplate that the forces driving Luther's religious revolution were possibly not only spiritual but deeply rooted in earlier psychological struggles regarding his father. With my father playing a somewhat

larger-than-life role in my life due to his significant accomplishments in psychological research, this formulation definitely caught my attention.

Highly engaged with literature and writing poetry in high school, I continued to explore these interests with an English major at Amherst. At the same time, following my family's path, I also pursued a psychology major. In my psychology coursework, I soon learned about the sanctity of the scientific method, the power of inferential statistics, the rigor of controlled conditions, and the dangers of subjective bias. I received my father's persuasive counsel about the arbitrariness of non-empirical theorists (particularly psychoanalytically oriented psychiatrists) and their speculative pronouncements on all matters of human interaction. Although originally trained in psychoanalysis in the 1950s, he had subsequently embraced laboratory research by the early 1960s. With his colleague, John Antrobus, he had conducted the first experimental studies of daydreaming, which included measurements of eye movements, coding of stimulus-irrelevant thought production, and developing a reliable and valid daydreaming scale. Nevertheless, he had a penchant for literature, especially Henry James. However, this was for the day's end and perhaps an elegant quotation to begin or finish a paper—not the substance of a psychologist's true positivist calling.

Although increasingly aware of this experimental emphasis, I still found opportunities in my psychology coursework to engage with a more holistic approach to individual lives. In my sophomore year, Thomas Cottle was invited to serve as a visiting professor. I signed up for his course, "The Life Study," and another powerful dimension of psychobiographical analysis opened up to me: the study of ordinary life in all its evocative complexity. Cottle originally trained in sociology at the University of Chicago and later developed a career as a clinical psychologist and media expert. However, his early books were powerful first-person portraits of young people from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds. In our small, intimate seminar, he asked each of us to identify a person from the community outside the college and develop "a life study." What exactly this meant to all of us (who were mostly psychology students) wasn't exactly clear. To orient us, he gave us readings, such as Studs Terkel's *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About It* (1974) and Robert Coles's *Children in Crisis, Vol 1: A Study of Courage and Fear* (1967).

Since I was already volunteering at a Veteran Affairs hospital not far from our campus, I chose to ask one of the patients on the psychiatric unit, a young man diagnosed with schizophrenia, to participate in the project with me. I found the assignment to portray his struggles, sense of humor, and consistently kind nature to be one of my college career's most profound learning experiences.

I next learned of a visiting undergraduate student program at Harvard that allowed me to take courses with one of my newly discovered heroes, Robert Coles. I applied and was accepted to spend my junior year at Harvard, where I was able to take a course with Coles. The opportunity to read more of his thoughtful work, listen to him lecture, as well as have more personal conversations with him continued to encourage me to see at both the individual and the societal level the power that the careful presentation of a single life experience can hold.

I also felt the parallel presence of my father's guidance, reminding me that the path to a PhD program in clinical psychology (which by my junior year was becoming my clear professional goal) would require a track record of research activities that were preferably laboratory-based. Luckily, he connected me to John Kihlstrom, a young professor in the Psychology and Social Relations Department at Harvard. Kihlstrom was already an accomplished researcher in the scientific study of consciousness with a particular interest in hypnosis and non-conscious processing.

Kihlstrom helped me to see the importance of my father's work in the field, particularly how he had modeled ways for researchers to examine experimentally meaningful aspects of conscious human thought that had been understudied due to the dominance of psychoanalytic theorizing and clinical extemporizing. Kihlstrom showed me how psychologists, similar to my father, were studying imagery, stream of consciousness, fantasy, dissociation, hypnosis, and autobiographical memory. This, in turn, deepened my conversations with my father and allowed us to share exciting intellectual ground, including pointing me to work by one of his own mentor's, Silvan Tomkins. I began to learn about Tomkins's Affect and Script theory, intriguing alternatives to Classical Psychoanalytic drive theory.

Also, while at Harvard, I connected with Dan McAdams, a doctoral student working with David McClelland on motives and personality. (This link to McAdams took on much greater meaning

later and has lasted throughout all subsequent decades.) I ran a study to support their research activities. Through these connections, I began to learn more about Henry Murray (another connection to Silvan Tomkins) and other illustrious past members of the Harvard department, Gordon Allport and Robert White. For the first time, I became aware of psychology's "personological" strand.

Entering my senior year of college, I faced the inevitable question of how I would make a living. As we had often discussed, my father made it clear that he truly hoped I would pursue a PhD in clinical psychology. If I wanted to continue writing poetry, I could combine this with a clinical practice and some teaching. I wondered if I might emulate Robert Coles's life study writing and pursue this path in my graduate study. My father expressed his great respect for this work as an eloquent voice for societal reform, but he also made it clear to me that this was not where the action was in clinical psychology programs. In fact, he emphasized that if I pursued this line of inquiry, I would be less likely to build the kind of profile that would make me a good fit for a top-notch clinical psychology doctoral program.

This conversation clearly had a profound impact on me, and there is some irony in it too. My father, as I came to learn from my subsequent time in graduate school and then over my career in clinical psychology, was one of the most humanistic and intellectually eclectic academic psychologists I have ever encountered. Yet, as one of the literal founders of doctoral training in clinical psychology after World War II, he had a determination to see clinical psychology continue its development into a rigorous quantitatively based science of human behavior, emotion, and thought. With the best of intentions, this was the direction he urged me to take.

I had managed to build up a strong enough record of research at Amherst, Harvard, and over summers at Yale that I was able to secure admission to a number of clinical PhD programs. I ultimately chose to continue research at Yale on the psychophysiology of emotion, which I had conducted in previous summers, based in Gary Schwartz' laboratory. Yet, even as I began my graduate training, I still felt torn between my literary and more scientific pursuits. I was auditing courses at the Yale Drama School. However, I was simultaneously sitting in on lectures on neuroanatomy at the Medical School. Toward the end of the year, one of my professors took me aside and said that my philosophical queries about the validity of laboratory approaches to understanding human behavior

were all well and good, but that if I did not give myself over to the experimental emphasis of the program, the "train would leave the station, and you won't be on it."

Through my work in Schwartz' lab, I began to notice the unusual power that the recall of powerful memories could have on individuals' emotional states. Building on the work I had done with Kihlstrom on social-cognitive models of personality and then connecting these ideas to the emerging cognitive science models that incorporated Tomkins's script theory, I sought to develop a research program that would examine individuals' most enduring and vivid personal memories. The challenge of explaining why certain memories in an individual's life persisted and became central touchstones in their self-understanding was a rich and not yet deeply explored area of investigation. While I was developing this line of research, Ulrich Neisser, Martin Conway, Marigold Linton, and David Rubin were expanding cognitive psychology to include "everyday" memory and urging cognitive psychologists to break out of list learning paradigms and explore memory in the "real world."

I now felt a burst of intellectual excitement about my work in the "science" of psychology that had previously only occasionally flickered. To me, individuals' significant personal memories were like brief lyric poems filled with imagery that provided an enduring record of our lived experience. Contemplating the opportunity to study these memories and see how they might inform our understanding of personality and psychotherapy seemed a compelling and worthy endeavor. I found my ambivalence about being in the program at Yale dissipating, and my commitment to developing a systematic methodology and quantitative approach to the topic of personal memory in personality and psychotherapy took hold. This work grew into my dissertation and then my development of "self-defining memories": vivid, emotional, well-rehearsed autobiographical memories that reflect enduring themes and/or conflicts central to an individual's sense of identity.

As I was crafting my ideas about self-defining memory, the intellectual influence of Dan McAdams re-entered my orbit and played an increasingly important role in my thinking about personality and memory. His work had shifted from motivational analysis to a larger emphasis on the stories that individuals construct to account for the major themes of their identity. In fact, he began to assert that these stories were the essence of identity for individuals

in contemporary society. He argued that the stories we tell of our lives provide the unity and purpose that contribute to an ongoing and coherent sense of self. I could see that self-defining memories could play a critical role within this framework, akin to key passages that highlight critical themes in the larger life story.

As my research career developed, I also finished my clinical psychology training and continued gaining experience as a psychotherapist. In my postdoctoral year, I was confronted with a significant life decision I had not fully anticipated when I began my doctoral studies at Yale five years before. Should I pursue a career in clinical work, taking a position offered to me in a clinical psychology department at a psychiatric hospital, or make the next level of commitment to academic psychology and accept an offer for a tenure track position in the psychology department of a liberal arts college? I chose the latter for multiple reasons, but relevant to this essay was my continued intellectual excitement about researching autobiographical memory and its role in personality and emotional experience. I felt a position with a primary academic rather than clinical focus would afford me more opportunities and time to continue this intellectual agenda.

I started my career at Connecticut College in the summer of 1988. Once there, I began a series of careful quantitative studies on self-defining memories with graduate and undergraduate students at Connecticut College. My first book, *The Remembered Self: Emotion and Memory in Personality* (1993, co-authored with Peter Salovey), laid out the theory and methodology for studying these memories. The succeeding 30+ years have generated numerous self-defining memory publications from my lab and other labs worldwide (see http://www.self-definingmemories.com). While continuing my clinical work, I was able to write up several case studies for publication, drawing on McAdams's and my own developing ideas about "narrative identity," with a particular emphasis on the role of self-defining memories and Tomkins's script theory. Representative examples of this work can be found in my books *Message in a Bottle* (1997) and *Personality and Psychotherapy: Treating the Whole Person* (2005), as well as a more recent article from 2019, "Repression is the scent of the hunt: A clinician's application of narrative identity to a longitudinal life study."

A pivotal moment in my journey back to psychobiography took place when McAdams invited me in the mid-90s to sit for membership in the Society for Personology, a small invitation-only

group of researchers committed to the tradition of Henry Murray's multi-method and holistic study of individual lives. I began to attend the annual meetings of approximately 15-20 participants, which included a number of researchers central to the field of psychobiography: Jim Anderson, Alan Elms, and Mac Runyan. Other members (e.g., Irving Alexander, Ravenna Helson, Ruthellen Josselson, Paul Wink) emphasized the central significance of studying lives, often longitudinally and with a relational emphasis. The Society was welcoming to qualitative and case study research, while perhaps at times it expressed a bias against nomothetic research that highlighted specific variables rather than whole people. Silvan Tomkins was a founding member, along with Rae Carlson, who had written a classic critique of social psychology and personality psychology entitled, "Where is the Person in Personality Research?" In the decade after I became a member, Todd Schultz joined the Society. Along with the others mentioned above, his participation expanded my exposure to psychobiography and contemporary work in this field.

By 2010, Schultz had signed with Oxford University Press to edit a series of psychobiographical volumes. He encouraged members of the Personology Society to consider submitting proposals. Around this time, I found myself at my in-laws' home for the December holiday without a book to read. Perusing their shelves, I stumbled on a recent well-annotated copy of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (originally published in 1886) by Robert Louis Stevenson. I knew of Stevenson from *Treasure Island* (1882), one of the most beloved stories from my childhood. (I loved the film with Jackie Cooper and Wallace Beery and played out the story endlessly with my puppet theater.) Having never read *Jekyll and Hyde*, I found myself completely entranced by the novella and read it from cover to cover in one sitting. I was stunned by how engaging and fresh it was despite being more than 100 years old. Reading more about Stevenson—his family of lighthouse engineers; his travels through Southern France; his time in upstate New York and Monterey, California; his American wife; and his final years overseeing a large plantation in Samoa—I realized this was a rich psychological study for Schultz' series.

This project, which extended over five years, brought me fully into the world of psychobiographical research. Over the course of my primary research, I was able to visit multiple sites where Stevenson had lived in Scotland, England, and the United

States. I spent hours combing through archives at various libraries and museums with Stevenson holdings. Highlights included having dinner in Stevenson's childhood home with its current owners, hiking in rain and mud on the West Highland trails featured in David Balfour's adventures in *Kidnapped* (1886), and sharing a coffee at Oxford with Stevenson biographer Claire Harman. In the United States, while visiting the Stevenson Museum in St. Helena, California, the curator brought me to a bank vault in town and, with white gloves, I held original pages from the *Jekyll and Hyde* manuscript. Back closer to my own home, I delved into the Stevenson archive at the Yale University Beinecke Library, one of the best collections of his rare papers in the world, and I was able to examine his unpublished typed and handwritten memoirs.

Ultimately, the psychobiographer must narrow their inquiry to a psychological concern or set of concerns that lend themselves to a theoretical application and analysis. Given my interest in narrative identity, my task was to see how Stevenson's most significant memories could elucidate fundamental conflicts and themes in his life that weave through his writing. As my book's title, *The Proper Pirate: Robert Louis Stevenson's Quest for Identity* (2016), implies, my analysis zeroed in on the tension he experienced from early childhood between his constricted Presbyterian upbringing and his delight in transgressive and romantic fantasy and adventure. I traced self-defining memories that reflected this ambivalence and found many connecting threads in his stories, novels, poems, essays, and letters, allowing me ultimately to extract a narrative script that captured key episodes of emotional reaction and meaning-making in his life. Chronically ill all his life, Stevenson died prematurely at age 44 of a stroke. However, I assert that he died with much of this conflict resolved in a manner that brought him a sense of self-understanding and a degree of resolution about his lifelong struggle. As a result, some of the stories he completed toward the end of life reflected a new level of complexity and sophistication, suggesting he still had much fine work still ahead.

This venture into psychobiography had reinvigorated the ardor that I had felt all those years ago in reading Erikson. It was deeply interesting and gratifying to focus on an individual life and view it from all vantage points: historically, socio-culturally, and intra-psychically. I found myself seeking a new subject to continue this work, and this brought me back to a college course I had taken on two prominent religious figures as well: Thomas Merton and

Abraham Joshua Heschel.

As a practicing Jew, I had continued to read and be guided by the spiritual writings of Heschel, a rabbi and philosopher. I had the lovely confluence that my instructor for the Merton-Heschel course, Edward Kaplan, had gone on to write a two-volume biography of Heschel. As I dove into the first volume, I came upon a depiction of a recollected moment during Heschel's period of doctoral study in Berlin that struck me as a quintessential "prototypical scene." Todd Schultz defines the prototypical scene as a galvanizing memory in an individual life that becomes the dominant motif for that person's major conflicts. To identify a memory of this fashion, one must determine how it "interpenetrates" other moments and self-depictions in an individual's life. It should also have an emotional intensity, usually focused on a developmental conflict, and express a degree of crisis or violation of the status quo. As I read through the two volumes and turned to many of Heschel's writings and essays, I identified other memories and critical incidents that reinforced this pattern of tension and awakening, allowing once more for the extraction of a meaningful narrative script (Singer, 2022).

I have continued to employ narrative identity analysis in psychobiography, with a recent article applying this framework to the life and lyrics of the Grammy-winning contemporary singer-songwriter and activist Brandi Carlile (Singer & Lombardo, 2023) in this very journal, as well as to the life of an accomplished African American attorney, Lonnie Braxton (Hamlett & Singer, 2023). Both recent efforts reflect a commitment that the field of psychobiography has made to expand the range of its subjects and to recognize lives that have often been pushed to the margins.

In this spirit, Jonathan Adler and I co-edited a special issue of the *Journal of Personality* (Adler & Singer, 2023) that focused on psychobiographies of social change agents. In our original call for articles, we reached out to organizations that supported researchers of diverse backgrounds both domestically and internationally, especially emphasizing traditionally underrepresented groups in the field of psychobiography. We sought to encourage a younger generation of scholars too and invited some to make a first foray into researching and writing a psychobiographical study.

As documented in our Introduction to the special issue (Adler & Singer, 2023), we built a sense of community among the

co-authors through shared Open Science registration, assigning the various authors to serve as peer reviewers on the manuscripts, and even meeting by video to provide feedback and guidance through the editorial process of manuscript revision. The resulting collection of articles covered a wide and extraordinarily diverse set of subjects ranging from Australia, China, and South Africa to an indigenous community in Montana, inner-city Detroit, and the White House. Not only were the subjects more representative of contemporary life, but so were the theoretical frameworks employed to profile them. For example, various authors drew on critical race theory, narrative identity, relational psychoanalysis, structural analysis, and ecological systems theory, along with other conceptual approaches.

Looking back on what amounts to nearly 50 years of psychological studies, it is gratifying to see that I have been able to return to what I now see as my first love in those initial weeks of college, reading Erikson's captivating evocation of Martin Luther's spiritual awakening. I have returned to fundamental questions of understanding a person—how to make sense of a life in its most complicated and comprehensive fashion with a particular concern for the interior life of memory, dream, fantasy, and psychodynamic conflict. Yet, the years have added an increased appreciation for the historical, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts in which that life is lived. I did indeed follow my father's guidance to build a strong quantitative academic career, but I was also able to make a humanistic turn through psychobiography that has brought a new and vibrant dimension to my scholarship.

Jefferson A. Singer, PhD, is the Faulk Foundation Professor of Psychology at Connecticut College and a Clinical Psychologist. With Jonathan Adler, he was the recent editor of a special issue of the *Journal of Personality* on the psychobiographies of social change agents (Adler & Singer, 2023). He was the past recipient of the Theodore Sarbin Award from APA Division 24 and the Henry Murray Award from APA Division 8 for his work on narrative psychology and the study of lives. His most recent books are *The Proper Pirate: Robert Louis Stevenson's Quest for Identity* (2016) and *In Common Things: A Collection of Poems* (2024). He can be contacted at jasin@conncoll.edu.

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Psychobiography in the Shadow of My Absent Grandpa Nissim

Daniel S. Benveniste—Psychoanalyst

Abstract: This article is a piece of self-analysis that reflects on the autobiographical roots of the author's interest in psychobiography, especially his psychobiographical work on Sigmund Freud's grandson, W. Ernest Freud.

Keywords: autobiography, conflict, mentors, psychobiography, psychohistory, Sigmund Freud, sublimation, transference, trauma

Meaningful activities, in work or play, are the sublimation of early childhood traumas and conflicts, and my involvement in psychobiography has certainly been a meaningful activity for me. In this article, I will introduce a few key experiences in my early life and then describe how they came together in the psychobiography I wrote on the life and work of W. Ernest Freud (1914-2008), Sigmund Freud's oldest grandchild.

I was blessed with wonderful parents. Although I had con-

flicts with my mother and bigger ones with my father, all things considered, I was very lucky to have them as my parents, and their deaths at 88 and 96, respectively, left me with more feelings of gratitude than sorrow.

My father's greatest gift to me was the example he set as a loving husband. However, as an extremely intelligent nuclear physicist, he was self-absorbed and well-known for his arrogance. He didn't listen to his sons but rather lectured them. My father could tell us about everything in the universe or drone on and on about being mistreated by various people he encountered throughout his career who tried to put him down. He took pride in not talking down to his sons; however, this was just a cover story for his denial of generational differences and his competitiveness with us.

My favorite conversations with him (the only ones in which he was not arrogant) were those about his graduate school professor, J. Robert Oppenheimer. In these wonderful reminiscences of his days as a doctoral student in nuclear physics at the University of California, Berkeley, he relaxed and opened up. My father was surrounded back then by some of the brightest luminaries in physics: Oppenheimer, Edward Teller, Ernest O. Lawrence, Luis Alvarez, Wolfgang "Pief" Panofsky, Emilio Segre, and others. Yet when he spoke about Oppenheimer, time stopped, and the room seemed to become almost enchanted. Suddenly, he became very open, emotionally present, loving, passionate, unpretentious, and not the least bit arrogant. Dad was in awe of Oppenheimer, and it was a relationship upon which he established much of his identity.

I am Sephardic, of Spanish-Jewish heritage. All four of my grandparents were from the island of Rhodes, off the coasts of Greece and Turkey. My grandmothers were childhood best friends. They each married and immigrated to the United States after WWI. My father's parents went to Portland, Oregon, and my mother's parents settled in Seattle, Washington. When my mother was born in 1924, my grandparents took a photograph of her in her swaddling cloth, put it together with a box of chocolates, and sent it to my father, who was two and a half years old at the time. My parents first met when they were 15 and 17—they married at 19 and 21. My father was a bright young man headed for a PhD in nuclear physics, and my mother had a high school diploma. An incarnation of love, my mother was sweet, funny, maternal, and loved nature. She was loved by her family, her friends, and, later in life, by people who would care for her in her assisted living program. My

mother also liked going to antique shops and looking for old things. She took me along on these excursions, and I, too, developed a real pleasure in finding old things. They were traces of the past, and I was fascinated by the discoveries we made.

Throughout my psychological training, I was always interested in who my teachers had studied with and enjoyed tracing my lineage. I studied closely with Joseph L. Henderson and John Weir Perry, direct students of Carl Gustav Jung; Rollo May, a student of Alfred Adler; and Nathan Adler, a student of Siegfried Bernfeld, who in turn had been a student of Freud. In this way, I traced the roots of my professional identity back to the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. It is also probably not accidental, though not consciously intended, that all four of my most important mentors were old enough to be my father's mentors.

In graduate school, I met Nathan Adler, and my life pivoted around this new relationship. He was a brilliant professor of clinical psychology and a wonderful supervisor. I was also just as fascinated to hear his stories about his mentor, Bernfeld, as I had been to hear my father's stories about Oppenheimer. Bernfeld entered Freud's orbit in Vienna in 1915, studied at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, and soon became a well-recognized teacher in the psychoanalytic community. Freud described him as "an outstanding expert of psychoanalysis" and "perhaps the strongest head among my students and followers" (Benveniste, 1992, p. 12). Bernfeld immigrated to San Francisco in 1937. Nathan was in supervision and later analysis with him from 1938 to 1953. I found his stories of Bernfeld enchanting, and in the 1990s, I began a research project that focused initially on Bernfeld and then broadened to the early history of psychoanalysis in San Francisco.

Then, one evening, after a psychoanalytic lecture, I met William McKinley "Mac" Runyan, who invited me to join a recently established psychobiography study group. It was fascinating! Everyone was working on a psychobiography except me. I was simply writing short biographical sketches about the pioneers of psychoanalysis in San Francisco. Nonetheless, I found the seminar personally and intellectually engaging. One of my ongoing interests in the group pertained to the transference the author develops toward the subject of the psychobiography being written. What is it in the personality of the subject that engages the psychobiographer to dedicate so much time and effort to telling such a story?

I had thrown myself into this research on the early history of psychoanalysis in San Francisco, and I was collecting documents as well as interviewing subjects regularly. At one point, I had to ask myself: Why am I so passionately interested in all this? The link between Nathan's stories of Bernfeld and my father's stories of Oppenheimer was truly compelling. Then, I learned that Oppenheimer had been in Bernfeld's psychoanalytic study group in the late 1930s, and Bernfeld was born in 1892 and died in 1953. That was really something because my paternal grandfather, Nissim Benveniste, was born in 1891 and also died in 1953. So, this started getting really interesting to me as I was born in 1954, and my grandfather died when my mother was pregnant with me. His early onset amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) began at about age 50, and he died, tragically, at the age of 62. My grandpa, Nissim Benveniste, was deeply loved in the family as well as in the wider Sephardic community, and his early death was so painful that people in the family rarely, if ever, spoke of him. Consequently, I grew up in the shadow of this absent grandfather, which left me always interested in trying to find out what happened long ago.

Another parallel story is that, being a baby boomer and growing up in the 1960s and early 1970s, I had an acute awareness of national events, whether it was the Cold War, the beatniks, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the rocket launches, the civil rights movement, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy, the hippies, the antiwar movement, the drug scene, women's liberation, gay liberation, and so on. As a result, I grew up being very cognizant of how local, national, and world events contextualize the story of any life and decenter the heroic narrative such that the person becomes a function of and player within a social framework.

My father was passionate about his work and an inspiring figure in my early life, but he was never really interested in my development. Because of this, I had a burning interest in finding mentors and collecting amulets of history, whether those were fossils, ancient antiquities, stone tools, Freudiana, old analytic books signed by their authors, memorabilia of space exploration, artifacts from indigenous communities, or other thought-provoking and inspiring items. They were amulets with which I could commune with ancient life, primal man, and inspiring people. I was in desperate need of establishing a social context and making contact. Contact might be in the form of a letter from someone I admire, a

book signed by its author, a handshake with an admired psychologist, or even a real relationship with a distinguished person. I was looking for a mentor.

Around the same time, I had a friend named Linda Goettina. She was a children's librarian who became a psychoanalyst. She knew the storylines of all the children's books as well as the names of their authors and artists. Linda told me that in her work as an analyst, when she had an adult patient, she would always wait for an appropriate moment to ask, "Did you have a favorite book in childhood?" to which most people replied, "Yes." When they named and described the book, Linda could see how the storyline was something of a metaphor for the patient's personality dynamics and object relations. When she told me this, I thought it was very interesting and believable. However, in my case, it didn't seem to fit since my favorite book as a child was Syd Hoff's *Danny and the Dinosaur* (1958), and I remembered that I only liked it because my name was in the title. However, it just so happens I still have the book, and when I reread it, I discovered that it is, in fact, the story of my life.

Danny and the Dinosaur is the tale of a lonely boy named Danny who goes to a museum, sees the dinosaur exhibit, and suddenly, a big dinosaur comes to life. The creature and little Danny play together throughout the town, and at the end of the day, the dinosaur says he has to go back to the museum. Danny wants the animal to come home with him so that they can keep playing, but the dinosaur says he really must return to the museum. Danny goes home disappointed yet satisfied after having spent a full day with the dinosaur.

At this point, I realized that, in a way, I had been "collecting dinosaurs" for years. I had been making a point of meeting old people, mostly psychoanalysts, who could tell me about all the people they knew in the age of the giants. In the course of my research into the early history of psychoanalysis in San Francisco, I interviewed close to 100 octogenarians and nonagenarians (among them Nathan Adler, Joseph L. Henderson, Joan Erikson, John Weir Perry, Nevitt Sanford, Rudi Ekstein, and Rollo May) who told me about the early history of psychoanalysis in San Francisco and Vienna. I enjoyed the contact that these interviews gave me and was surprised when, on occasion, some of the people I interviewed (these "dinosaurs") became my friends. The experience of interviewing these people was often so rich that I would return home

and fall into a deep sleep in the middle of the day. I frequently told my friends that this work made me feel like a professional grandson.

In the mid-1990s, I became interested in Freud's famous child observation of his 18-month-old grandson who played the game of *fort-da*, which was described in his 1920 essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." I then stumbled upon an interview with that little boy, who was 84 years old by then. We began corresponding, and in 1999, my wife and I met Freud's oldest grandson, W. Ernest Freud, in Heidelberg, Germany. He was the only one of Freud's grandchildren to become a psychoanalyst. When we met him at his home, I had hoped to interview him and perhaps publish the interview, but he made it clear from the very beginning that he didn't want anything to do with biographers, historians, or reporters. Ernest didn't trust any of them, saying, "They always get the story wrong!" I accepted this condition right away, but that didn't stop him from continuing to insist that he was not going to be offering an oral history or an interview for an article in some magazine. With no biographical agenda, I simply enjoyed getting to know him during our visit—and we did take to each other rather immediately.

After that first trip, Ernest and I continued to correspond, and two years later, my wife and I stopped by to see him again. We had agreed to visit on a particular day, and when I called to confirm in the morning, he asked me if I had a tape recorder, to which I replied, "Yes, I do." He said, "Good," and nothing more. When we arrived, we greeted each other, chatted a bit, and then he asked if I would like to write his biography! I was astonished but readily agreed. My wife and I changed our travel plans and stayed in Heidelberg for several days while I interviewed Ernest intensively and photocopied documents.

It was amazing to reflect on my motivation to pursue such interviews as related to my lack of knowledge about my own grandfather and then to hear Ernest recalling his grandfather, his *Grosspapa*, Sigmund Freud. After days of interviews, my wife and I returned home to Caracas, Venezuela. I began transcribing the hours of audiotaped interviews, and yet I just kept thinking, "I'm going to get a letter from him any day now reneging on his invitation for me to write his biography." It didn't make sense to me that he had been telling people for decades that he did not want to be interviewed, didn't like reporters, did not want to be around biographers, and if he ever told his story, he'd tell it himself. But here

Ernest was, asking me to write his biography and then cooperating fully. I couldn't help but think, "He is going to withdraw the invitation any day now." I continued to receive letters from him frequently, but instead of reneging, he became increasingly enthusiastic about our project.

I went on transcribing the tapes and then noticed a curious omission. After everything that Ernest had said about his childhood —the death of his mother when he was five and a half; his conflicts with his father; and his relationships with his Aunt Anna, Grandpa Sigmund, and Grandma Martha—Ernest had steered clear of any reminiscences of his younger brother, Heinerle, who died when Ernest was nine. Also, curiously enough, I had apparently avoided the subject as well. So, I wrote to him on September 19, 2001, pointed out my omission, and asked if he would tell me everything he could remember about his brother. Immediately, Ernest responded by saying, "you are absolutely right: the topic of my brother Heinerle is a bit conspicuous by its absence... The situation seems to have been overshadowed by my jealousy which must have been enhanced by the very close relationship I had before his birth with my mother" (Benveniste, 2015, pp. 511-512). He continued his letter the next day, writing, "This morning it 'clicked': the penny dropped (as we say) … my relationship with you is the answer! Quite simply: you represent Heinerle … What is re-enacted between you and me is my relationship with Heinerle,—a momentous discovery" (Benveniste, 2015, pp. 511-512). In other words, after years of refusing interviews, he took to me and asked me to write his biography because I somehow reminded him of his deceased little brother.

My transference to Ernest as a psychobiographical subject was clearly related to my father and grandfather. But it was a great surprise when Ernest developed a transference to me. He did not see me as a transference object derived from his son, who was two years younger than me and had died in 1987, but rather as a transference object onto which he projected his little brother, Heinerle. When I got a chance to talk with Ernest's ex-wife, Irene Freud, she told me that shortly after they started dating, they learned that they had both lost their mothers in early childhood and a younger sibling as well. However, Ernest rarely talked about Heinerle. Irene said: "It was something that had been repressed for so long, you know, it had never come out. He did say, about you, that you reminded him of his little brother," and she went on to share that "I think we were

married for about forty years and he never mentioned his little brother … I talked about my sister who died. But I guess it had been shut off very strongly" (Benveniste, 2015, pp. 516-517).

Yet there was even more to it than all that. When Ernest and Irene's son Colin was born, Ernest completely fell in love with him and took an active role in his care until the young boy was about five, at which point he lost all interest in him. For the rest of Colin's life, the relationship between father and son was characterized by quarreling and bitter fights. It was never analyzed and never understood. Ernest was in analysis on several occasions but apparently never got any insight into this problem. The discovery was something of a traumatic realization during our psychobiographical work together.

As it turns out, Ernest lost his mother when he was five years and ten months old; his brother, Heinerle, died at four and a half; and Ernest lost interest in his son, Colin, at age five. Ernest's sudden loss of interest in his son when he was five years old seems to have been an unconscious reaction to Colin's childhood development and linked to Ernest's losses in his early childhood, as though Colin's normal development triggered Ernest's unresolved traumas of losing his mother and then his little brother. Mixed in with it all were death wishes and survivor's guilt: "How dare you, Colin, survive after age five when Heinerle died at that age?" "How dare you, Colin, survive when my mother, Sophie, died when I was five?" It was these self-reproaches that Ernest lived with all his life and then projected onto his unsuspecting son, Colin. His emotional conclusion might have been, "How dare I survive when my mother died and then my brother died?" Then, through identification with his son and projection onto him, "How dare Colin survive?" It was an example of the phenomenon I call "my child, my childhood." It is the way challenges in one's childhood are reawakened by one's own children as they pass through the developmental stages. So, there you have it: W. Ernest Freud in the shadow of his absent mother and brother grieving for a lifetime, and me in the shadow of my absent grandfather wondering about who he was and all that might have happened long, long ago in the age of the dinosaurs.

You'll recall that when I was in the psychobiography study group in San Francisco, I was interested in the psychobiographer's transference to the subject of inquiry. So, what was the fate of my transference? What is the fate of any psychobiographer's transference? This may sound like a non sequitur, but I would answer by

first quoting Bill Anders, the Apollo 8 astronaut who took the famous photo of the earthrise over the lunar horizon in 1968. He said, "We came all this way to explore the moon, and the most important thing is that we discovered the earth" (Heritage Flight Museum, Burlington, Washington). Isn't that beautiful? That is what many impassioned researchers do: They explore the object of inquiry, learn something about it, and in the process often learn something about themselves. I saw Ernest as a kind of father figure who could tell me about his grandfather, just as I had wanted to learn from my father about my own grandfather. It was a search for personal and professional identity and context.

There certainly were things about myself that I learned in my psychobiographical work. These were aspects of Ernest's personality that, with time, I could begin to recognize in my own personality, and not everything I discovered was flattering. But if I were to describe the benefits of my psychobiographical work with Ernest as if it were my own psychoanalysis, I would say that through my transference and our work together, I ended up feeling seen by this father figure where I had previously felt invisible. This, furthermore, had a positive and lasting effect on my sense of self. In brief, I explored the life of W. Ernest Freud and discovered something about myself.

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The Autobiography of a Son Who Chose Not to Be Like His Father

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Abstract: My autobiographical statement reflects my understanding of the core psychodynamics that formed my relationship with my parents, myself, and the world around me. This is reflected in the work I did in my first book, A Study of Malignant Narcissism: Personal and Professional Insights.

Keywords: autobiography, childhood, fear, Mark Twain, parent-child relationship, psychobiography, psychodynamics, psychohistory, A Study of Malignant Narcissism: Personal and Professional Insights

I'm reminded that Mark Twain concluded that he could probably write a truthful account of himself and the people who played an important part in his life as long as he was reassured that his autobiography would be published a hundred years after his death. On sober reflection, however, he decided telling the truth about oneself was probably a pretty unlikely undertaking. Instead, he would have to settle for the more or less accurate character sketches he thought he could construct of others rather than himself, reminding his readers that he was no better able than they were at being honest in telling his own story. This, of course, is my challenge—the same challenge that anybody who purports to write an autobiographical statement must be willing to acknowledge. In the end, it may fall to interested others to make greater sense of what my experiences have really been like rather than the collection of insights that will shortly follow. I have had the audacity and the hubris to share my understanding of myself because I believe—however inaccurately—that it will help my readers grasp malignant narcissism in a far more intimate way than they otherwise could and, simultaneously, not least because I believe that in elucidating my own pain, others will be in a better position to understand theirs.

I was born in late January 1945 into a peripatetic, very upwardly mobile upper-middle-class family in Germantown, Philadelphia. My father was a high-ranking retail executive. My mother moved back and forth between married homemaker, divorcee, independent real estate professional, and, again, married homemaker/wife through an additional four marriages. One of these marriages was a second marriage to my father that—I would say thankfully—

lasted only a year. My father's career occasioned moves to Minneapolis and Chicago to pursue significant promotions; my mother's proclivities drew her south to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Miami Beach. Both of my parents associated with famous people of one kind or another: my father with well-known corporate leaders and some celebrities, and my mother with prominent mafia figures and a different assortment of celebrities. Superficially, my life looked very colorful, privileged, and enriched by all the opportunities that a place in such vaunted circumstances seemed to promise. Without my fully being aware of it, my growing-up years had assumed a larger-than-life, hyperbolized cast that rendered it surreal and vaguely improbable. However, I would have been hard-pressed at the time to fully appreciate how all these improbabilities had skewed my relationship with myself and my view of the larger world.

Hearing, as a continuous subtext, that I was profoundly lucky to have been born into such circumstances made it much harder for me to recognize, never mind authenticate, what I was truly feeling and what the real landscape I was living in actually looked and felt like. My parents' frighteningly chaotic, ungovernable needs dominated that landscape and the world I began to construct inside. My mother's losing struggle for selfhood and identity felt like it all too closely paralleled my own. At the same time, my father's compulsion to dominate and invade everyone around him with his rage and presence made him feel far too dangerous to build the close relationship with him I needed.

Of my two parents, my father was by far the most frightening. His intermittent, scalding outbursts of rage were fearful. As they piled up in my early experiences with him, I increasingly felt his profound distaste for me. By the time I was six or seven years old, I also became aware that I was an inadvertent competitor, stealing the time and resources that he wanted from my mother despite his ongoing war with her. His rage meant that I was continuously frightened and on guard. Being on guard, in turn, meant that I was perpetually hypervigilant, trying to anticipate when the next attack might occur and what might occasion it. I watched over myself and took great care with what I did and said, trying to ensure that I wouldn't give offense. Hypervigilance entailed endless rehearsal and anticipation of the traps I could find myself in so that I might discover a way to protect myself and possibly shield my mother, who was also frequently subjected to devastating verbal attacks.

Hypervigilance became a habit of being.

Existing on these terms constrained authenticity, relegating me to contriving a self rather than allowing myself to be moved by spontaneity and playfulness. There were moments when I could connect to the people around me through play, but for the most part, orchestration of self dominated my life. There were so many prescriptions accumulating in my life; there was very little room for me to be real with myself or other people. At a certain point, perhaps by middle childhood, I recognized that, other than my fear, which I knew was very real, I had no sense that I possessed any substance—a collage of pretenses sometimes hastily assembled to get through the precariousness that seemed to define my existence in my family. Slowly, I began to feel increasingly dead inside, besides the growing rage that seemed to fill me. Deadness, weakness, vulnerability, and lack of substance all felt like mortal sins, confirmation that I could never be lovable in either my mother's or my father's eyes—all of them profound sources of shame that I somehow had to hide to keep myself safe.

My emaciated interior contrasted my father's grotesque self-inflation, though I would not have used the word grotesque during my childhood. His extraordinary self-ascriptions made him seem mythically large and powerful, a giant who ostensibly commanded the respect and admiration of the people around him, including my parents' friends and his work colleagues who, like him, would have viewed themselves as extremely successful. I heard endless stories about his greatness and toughness, the myriad ways in which he had fought off a hostile, predatory world that assailed him in the executive suite almost daily. I was confronted with a combination of both grievance and braggadocio. How, I wondered, can I ever hope to acquire value in his eyes, given the suffocating fear that infused me so much of the time? How could I ever hope to be a person and, at that, a person of substance? With each passing year, the difference between the realities that seemed to define me and those that my father attributed to himself appeared to grow ever larger. I understood I must never let him see the shame and weakness that characterized me, but this was a secret far too big to keep. Other students in my grades one through three classes, particularly the bullies, could see what an easy target I was. Their assertion utterly disorganized and terrorized me. My father, well aware of what was happening to me, intensified his disgust for me in response. The taste of despair increasingly pervaded my life. How

could I have any hope for my own future? That I could be loved? That I could make my way in the world? These preoccupations extended into the early recesses of my childhood. I could feel that I was different from others and that this difference was not good.

Fortunately, my father's promotion necessitated a move to a new community and immersion in a private day school environment. There, I discovered caring Masters (teachers were called Masters) who demonstrated warmth and compassion (though I don't think they really understood my situation at home) and even sustained mentorship. In that environment, I miraculously transformed, becoming, in short order, class president, president of the Student Council, and captain of all the major sports teams. I was also consistently second in my class academically. Underneath these successes, however, my sense of inauthenticity and shameful lack of substance and contrivance persisted, increasingly reasserting themselves. Apart from the moments of aliveness that my new connections with others afforded me, my desperate efforts to curate a self continued with renewed ferocity. Despite the wonderful affirmation that my new circumstances afforded me, I couldn't feel safe. I was also very cognizant that my "honors" had failed to impress my parents, particularly my father, who continued to regard me with the same distaste and sense of revulsion that he always had. So, I remember thinking, "They understand who I really am, that is, someone who can only pretend to be real and substantial but who actually isn't." I felt terribly inadequate and, to make matters worse, transparently so.

My mother's struggles with herself amplified my panic about feeling inadequate. My father's verbal predation and repeated efforts to humiliate her had finally pushed her out of the family. It intuitively felt like she was fighting for her life. I forgave her for disappearing for months at a time. The eating disorder that she struggled with, which might have arisen as a consequence of a pituitary tumor, provided a disturbing metaphor for what I thought was happening to both of us: starvation of the spirit. I was aware she was frequently suicidal. I was both horrified that she would succumb to his depredations and, at the same time, accepted that she probably could not survive her injuries in the long run. She was both my tormentor and my protector. By 63, she drank herself to death, a withered specter of the extraordinarily beautiful woman she had once been. Watching her disappear over the years was quite chilling. I was sure the same thing was happening to me.

While these issues were playing themselves out, another disturbing psychological struggle was unfolding. I could feel my father's hatred for me because I secretly hated him. I was horrified because I could feel that he wanted me to be like him. If I resisted him, I courted psychological annihilation through the agency of his contempt; if I didn't, it meant I would allow him to replace the fragile remnants of self I had hidden away over the years with an identity that felt alien to me. I would be replacing myself with a stranger. Psychic annihilation was quite a conscious fear for me. I literally felt like I could disappear when I was subjected to his incursions. That also meant feeling much the same kind of fear when I dealt with other personalities who were assertive, emphatic, and insistent.

Compounding my fear was a growing realization that I was turning to acts of cruelty, much like my father did, to make me feel alive. He spent hours waiting for opportunities to hurt animals (squirrels, dogs, chipmunks) that exposed themselves in our yard, celebrating their demise using the crude language of his impoverished childhood. I found myself doing the same thing. It was a way to escape deadness but also horrifying evidence that, despite all the resistance I could mount, I was becoming like him—without the redeeming successes that he kept reminding me to valorize him. I found myself engaging in protracted, intense, detailed fantasies about how I could hurt my parents, inflicting pain on them for the devastation that they were causing me. I had read some things about psychopathy. I felt sure that's where I was heading. My redemption came in an unexpected form. I had stabbed an animal in the backyard around age nine or 10, nearly cutting it in two. The agony in its expression infused me with regret and impressed its suffering with such immediacy that I felt a measure of relief. I could feel and genuinely empathize after all. I didn't have to simulate it to fake decency. Somehow, from that moment on (I'm still not sure why), my capacity for empathy surfaced with ever-increasing vigor. I probably cannot capture the immensity of relief I felt. My guess is that the lovely Masters who had reached out to and mentored me were making a difference, even though I didn't feel deserving of their caring and their obvious affection for me.

One part of my childhood experience is my parents' improbable but rather insistent plea that I should serve as their psychologist from a very young age (probably from grade four on). I was to help them sort through their marital problems and/or person-

al difficulties. I was the "counselor" they turned to when they were anguished, upset, or frightened. It was clear that they were suffering and wanted answers from me. Talking to them in this role was just as scary as any of my other interactions with them. I was very cognizant that if I spoke the truth to either of them, I would be courting personal disaster. Making matters worse, each wanted me to side with them against the other. It was an impossible juggling act. I had to maintain my composure and not show them how disconcerted and frightened I was. These experiences led to more contrivance and hypervigilance, but they also gave me an unexpected gift that took the form of insight. I kept reminding myself that there had to be reasons for my parents' chaos and pain that I probably could not access as a child but that, eventually, I probably could as an adult. That thought—that there was rationality behind all the chaos and suffering—helped me survive over the years.

My father was never able to address or understand the sources of his own pain throughout his lifetime. Like my mother, his life ended in much the same way he had lived it—alone, embattled, and, as I later came to understand, quite frightened. He did provide me with a gift, which he offered me at my request: two lengthy autobiographical statements describing his own early life experiences. Side by side with my persistent attempts to understand my own phenomenology, they allowed me to make sense of the malignant narcissism that defined him. I could better understand his incessant need to adopt a rigid, relentless strongman posture throughout his life that admitted little dependence and weakness. I could also make sense of his need to shatter others' voices and replace them with his own; his recklessness, impulsivity, and grandiosity; his profound fear/envy of love and decency; his need to rob others of their creativity by making them afraid; and his compulsion to engage in sadistic acts to make himself feel alive. I could see how profoundly alone he was, hiding behind walls of contempt and dominance to ensure that no one could ensnare him with bonds of affection, confirming that he could keep a world he experienced as essentially predatory at bay. I could also see how badly, persistently, and ruthlessly he had been exploited by his own parents and by the impoverished circumstances that permeated his life up through his 20s. I eventually came to understand narcissism as a defense against love that, in his childhood world, connoted invasion and exploitation.

When I came to know and appreciate my father's internal

development and family history, which parallel mine, I could understand so much more. Each of us was adultified—he by the need to carry his family financially and I in my role of family psychologist. Each "of us faced formidable threat of depletion and endured starvation, though in different forms. Each of us had been encouraged to develop a sense of grandiosity, me because I acted as my parents' therapist as a child," he by having to carry his family economically (Wood, 2022, p. 133). "Each of us accommodated incestuous attachments to our mothers" and "struggled with a sense of inner deadness and each of us also contrived our lives rather than living them" (Wood, 2022, p. 133). Both of us felt unsafe and hypervigilant for much of our lives. We were "haunted by the monsters we were afraid we carried within us" and "His capacity to love was fundamentally compromised … [while] I worried I could never love" (Wood, 2022, p. 133). We each had so much to hide, so many secrets.

Understanding these things required much of a lifetime, though I was able to outline the major themes I have just described and piece them together effectively in my 40s. Understanding produced relief and made it possible for me to feel a depth of compassion toward both of my parents, for which I am grateful. As my understanding has deepened and refined itself over the years, it has continued to extend the peace it has provided me. However, I know all too well that there are parts of the work that must remain unfinished.

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duction, and it provides a critical appraisal of psychoanalytic conceptions of narcissism. He can be emailed at rwoodn618@rogers.com.

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Kendrick Lamar Duckworth as Viewed Through His Music and Life

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Abstract: Despite Kendrick Lamar Duckworth's worldwide fame and celebrity, he remains a relatively private person. While information can be gleaned from his personal lyrics, this psychobiography on Lamar's Compton origins can shed light on the context that has shaped him as one of his generation's most prolific rappers and social justice advocates. This psychobiography explores the musical and developmental evolution of Kendrick Lamar through W. E. B. Du Bois' double consciousness theory.

Keywords: Black Lives Matter (BLM), double consciousness theory, Kendrick Lamar Duckworth, music analysis, psychobiography, psychohistory, psychosocial stages, W. E. B. Du Bois

Kendrick Lamar Duckworth (known by his stage name "Kendrick Lamar") is hailed as his generation's greatest rapper and lyricist. His 2017 *DAMN* was the first rap album to win a Pulitzer Prize in Music for "capturing the complexity of modern African-American life" (n.a., 2019). He worked alongside former president Barack Obama for the Pay It Forward program to mentor inner-city youth, and he received the Generational Icon Award from the California State Senate for his philanthropic work. Although Lamar writes from an African American perspective, his ingenuity as an artist stems from his ability to lyrically explore themes that transcend geographical and social differences while remaining authentic to his story, artistry, and vision.

As a young 37-year-old artist, Kendrick Lamar's accolades precede his humble, introspective, and soft-spoken demeanor. His lyrics stem from a place of vulnerability and self-awareness that examine the vignettes of life in Compton (in Los Angeles County,

California) and the vices and poverty that entrapped him. On a broader level, Lamar's life and music serve as a lens into the issues plaguing Black communities across America, such as gang violence, police brutality, systemic racism, and substance abuse. His literal and figurative voice acts as a sounding board that amplifies the stories of those living in the epicenter of these issues. Lamar's commercial success has facilitated the widespread reach of the social-political commentary and activism behind his intricate, multilayered lyrics. His activism and immense talent for self-expression have memorialized him as a prolific modern-day social justice figure.

Although Kendrick Lamar's social and political contributions aren't separate from his philanthropic works, this psychobiography will primarily focus on Lamar's formative upbringing in Compton and its impact on his career as an artist. We will examine his transformation into an artist as well as his music's social, political, and cultural impact. We'll attempt to answer: What major life events led to this metamorphosis from a teenager headed toward the path of gang culture to a highly acclaimed rap artist? How have Lamar's life experiences shaped the political and cultural ideology present in his music? Lastly, how has his music consequently shaped the modern-day discourse on institutional racism and oppression?

In essence, W. E. B. Du Bois' theory of double consciousness centers on the juxtaposed and unreconciled African American identity due to the historical oppression and devaluation of African American folx (a marginalized group) in a White supremacist society. In Du Bois' (2008) words: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p. 8). He goes on to explain, "One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois, 2008, p. 8). It can be challenging for African American individuals to merge their identities into a single, unified one; they may view themselves from both their own distinctive perspective and the perspective of the external White America, which can lead to a conflicted sense of self.

Kendrick Lamar's upbringing in Compton, California, formatively shaped his personhood, career, and artistry. His break-

through album, *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City*, is a coming-of-age story about a day in his life as a "good kid in a mad city" (Lamar, 2012). In the 1980s, Compton was a milieu of growing crime, poverty, unemployment, and gang violence; this was punctuated with the introduction of crack cocaine into urban Los Angeles neighborhoods (Cuchna, 2016a, 6:15). The drug had a "degenerating effect" on the poverty-stricken community, as crime rates, gang activity, and incarceration rates continued to climb (Cuchna, 2016a, 6:41). Addiction fomented home robberies and unstable living conditions; conflicts between dealers led to increased homicide rates with a peak of 87 homicides in 1991 (Jennings & Esquivel, 2015). Simultaneously, in the 1980s, the U.S. Government's War on Drugs under the Nixon and Reagan administrations aimed at combatting the crack epidemic led to massive increases in incarceration rates that disproportionally affected African American communities. These events serve as the historical and cultural backdrop into which Lamar was born on June 17, 1987, as the oldest of four children.

Foundation for Initial Trust and Processing the Tumult of Compton

Lamar's parents, Kenneth Duckworth and Paula Oliver, moved from Chicago to Compton to escape Kenneth's involvement in the Southside gang Gangster Disciples in 1984 (Eells, 2015). His parents arrived with only $500 in savings and two trash bags worth of clothes. They lived in government-sponsored housing and relied on welfare and food stamps, while Paula worked as a hairdresser and Kenny worked at KFC. A few of Lamar's uncles were drug dealers and members of the Compton Crips, and two of his other uncles were incarcerated for robbery (Eells, 2015). Despite very challenging financial difficulties and instability, Lamar's parents are presented as loving and nurturing, always giving him a present on Christmas.

In the tumultuous world of Compton, Lamar witnessed his first murder at the age of five when a teenage drug dealer was shot outside of his apartment (Cuchna, 2016a, 8:00). At the age of eight, he witnessed his second murder on the way home from McNair Elementary in front of a drive-thru fast-food restaurant; Lamar stated that by that point, he grew "numb" to it (Eells, 2015). In his adult life, he alludes to processing these experiences through his music as an adolescent.

Despite the instability of his environment, Lamar (2015c) was a bright, straight-A student and a self-described introvert: "I

was a pretty shy and to myself type of person as a kid." Known for his observant, precocious behavior from the corner of the room, his parents nicknamed him "Man-Man" for his maturity (Eells, 2015). He was also a self-labeled "overthinker" (Lamar, 2015c). In 7th grade, his English teacher, Mr. Inge, introduced him to poetry: rhymes, metaphors, and double entendres. Lamar recounts: "You could put all your feelings down on a sheet of paper, and they'd make sense to you. I liked that" (Eells, 2015). He began writing lyrics at home nonstop and aspired to attend college. He learned to express himself in writing, and it appears that writing was an outlet for Lamar to begin processing his early experiences of violence and murder. His stellar grades reflected his success and competency at school, and his goal to attend college suggests a sense of academic self-efficacy.

Forging a Positive Identity through Religion and Music

Lamar was testing his limits and establishing a new identity as a teenager. By the time he reached high school, he had become involved with friends who peer-pressured him into activities such as robberies and home invasions (Eells, 2015). On one occasion, Lamar's mother found a bloody hospital gown from when he accompanied his friend, who had been shot, to the emergency room. Out of tough love, his parents eventually kicked him out of the house for a few days; they feared that he would eventually follow in his father's footsteps of gang activity and crime (Eells, 2015).

Lamar and his friend's encounters with the police were largely negative, fomenting a deep-seated resentment against them (Eells, 2015). On June 13, 2007, one of Lamar's friends was shot and killed by an LAPD police officer. After his death, Lamar became a devout Christian, and he discussed in his music and during live performances how Jesus Christ saved him from a life in the streets. This is a pivotal point in Lamar's life and transformation from a teenager who felt trapped in the cyclical life of murder, death, and gang culture into a man who finds God, breaks free from the cycle, and finds his voice as a rapper and artist. During a skit in Lamar's song "Real," poignant voicemails from Lamar's father and then mother play in reference to his friend's death:

> Just calling, sorry to hear what happened to your homeboy, but don't learn the hard way like I did, homie. Any n*gga can kill a man, that don't make you a real n*gga. Real is responsibility. Real is taking care of your motherf*cking family. Real is God, n*gga…

> If I don't hear from you by tomorrow, I hope you come back and learn from your mistakes. Come back a man, tell your story to these black and brown kids in Compton. Let 'em know you was just like them, but you still rose from that dark place of violence, becoming a positive person. But when you do make it, give back with your words of encouragement, and that's the best way to give back. To your city... (Lamar, 2012, track 11)

Lamar's parents played a significant role in guiding Kendrick away from violence and toward his rap career, responsibility, and God. Their messages of hope, resilience, and faith are themes that their son has interwoven in his musical anthems of optimism against institutional and racial oppression. Lamar emerged from this period with an integrated identity as a burgeoning rapper and artist who was able to shed the role of a teenager pulled by the trappings of Compton street life. His life goal through music gave him a sense of purpose to inspire his city and the next generation of rappers (BigBoyTV, 2017) and to share how God saved him (Breakfast Club Power 105.1 FM, 2017).

Double Consciousness and Kendrick Lamar's Ideology in His Music

Lamar's life in Compton throughout his formative adolescent and emerging adulthood years significantly shaped his approach to life, which he shares through his music with heavy references to Black history (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech), Black literature (e.g., *Roots* [1977], *The Color Purple* [1982]), and Black musical influences (e.g., '60s and '70s jazz funk music). The analysis below will focus on a closer examination of two of his songs from his second studio album, *To Pimp a Butterfly* (*TPAB*). The album was released in 2015 following *Good Kid, M.A.A.D. City* and his rise to stardom. Its references and themes interact to create layers of subtexts and meaning that reveal Lamar's struggles with adjusting to fame and life outside of Compton, his depression and suicidal thoughts, and the temptations of material escapism.

The thematic backbone of the album, however, is the duality of the human condition, which will be examined through the lens and application of Du Bois' theory of double consciousness. Brent Hayes Edwards described double consciousness as "at once a deprivation (an inability to see oneself except 'through the eyes of others') and a gift (an endowment of 'second-sight', that seems to al-

low a deeper or redoubled comprehension of the complexities of 'this American world')" (Du Bois, 2008, p. xiv). Lamar demonstrates and explores both this deprivation and gift throughout *TPAB* lyrically.

The album is a cinematic tale of Lamar as a protagonist who battles "Uncle Sam"—a metaphor for temptations, sin, and capitalism (Cuchna, 2016b, 24:00). The title of the album, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, references Lamar as a metaphorical butterfly who has transformed from a Compton born and raised teenager into a critically acclaimed artist and man; his talent is pimped or exploited for monetary profit by capitalism, White America, and Lamar himself who gives in to the temptations of reckless spending and exuberant monetary success (Cucha, 2016b). While Lamar raps vulnerably on *TPAB*, he simultaneously aligns his own struggles with the plight of Black America (i.e., the collective battle against oppressive, racist institutions). The album created ripple effects and impacted the broader discourse by calling attention to systemic racism, gang violence, and police brutality when it was released (King, 2016).

Track 13: "The Blacker the Berry"

The 13th song on *TPAB* is "The Blacker the Berry." The opening lyrics are: "Everything black, I don't want black (*They want us to bow*) / I want everything black, I ain't need black (*Down to our knees*) / Some white, some black, I ain't mean black (*And pray to the God*) / I want everything black (*We don't believe*)" (Lamar, 2015a, track 13). The lyrics are delivered in a way akin to speaking under one's breath, which implies that these are thoughts Lamar grapples with every day. They succinctly exemplify Du Bois' theory of double consciousness as Lamar wrestles with his conflicting feelings regarding his Black identity in a Eurocentric society. On the one hand, he "wants everything black," meaning he takes pride in being Black and its implications; on the other hand, he "don't want black," meaning that he also rejects his Black identity. This ambivalence illustrates the "warring ideals" common to the Black experience (Du Bois, 2008). Additionally, the phrases "(*They want us to bow*)" and "(*Down to our knees*)" reference how the structural systems of oppression in White America want Black people to conform to their negative perceptions of the Black community.

Lamar wrote the lyrics for "The Blacker the Berry" after he heard about the death of Trayvon Martin in 2012: "These are issues that if you come from that environment, it's inevitable to speak on.

It's already in your blood because I am Trayvon Martin, you know. I'm all of these kids" (Haltiwanger, 2015). Extrapolating from the lyrical excerpt and the overall message of the song, Lamar may be commenting on how the death of Trayvon Martin and other unarmed Black men across the country have led Black individuals to experience further double consciousness and a greater disconnect between both their African and American identities. He and other Black individuals may feel persuaded to believe the implications of these murders (i.e., Black lives do not matter) and America's racist views of Black folx that win over their own positive perceptions of themselves and their Black racial identities. The struggle is not to sacrifice their black identity while living in a larger, White society. The focus on contemporary racism is a sign of the transgenerational transmission of the incredible trauma of African American history.

The title of the song refers to Wallace Thurman's novel, *The Blacker the Berry: A Novel of Negro Life* (1929), and an old folk saying: "the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice" (Cuchna, 2016b). The saying is a positive affirmation of Blackness, which Lamar reverses in the lyric: "The blacker the berry, the bigger I shoot" (Lamar, 2015a, track 13). In other words, the darker the skin tone of Blackness, the more likely a police officer will shoot them (Cuchna, 2016b). Lamar illustrates and comments on the complex, conflicted duality of Blackness by comparing its positive and negative implications. These lines can be interpreted as Lamar's desire to affirm Blackness and take pride in it, but he is unable to because being Black in America increases one's likelihood of racial profiling and being shot by police officers.

With his mindset of double consciousness, Lamar has habitually dissected his life and experiences from both his own and America's perspectives. *TPAB* is partially a critique of institutional racism and systems of oppression against people of color. However, as much as Lamar scrutinizes America as a whole, he also puts a microscope on himself and Compton. The last lines of the song, "So why did I weep when Trayvon Martin was in the street / When gang-banging make me kill a n*gga blacker than me? / Hypocrite!" (Lamar, 2015a, track 13) illustrate this. Lamar calls himself a hypocrite for feeling saddened and enraged at Martin's murder and questions how much he can condemn acts of violence against Black men that he himself has also participated in.

In an MTV (2015) interview, when asked about the controversial line, Lamar stated, "I'm not speaking to the community, I'm

not speaking of the community, I *am* the community." His position offers an insider's perspective on the complexity of hypocrisy and its moral ambiguity in the context of an inner-city culture that perpetuates violence against the Black community. Furthermore, Lamar's experiences in Compton have informed his ideology; in an interview, he stated: "My mom always told me: 'How long you gonna play the victim?' I can say I'm mad and I hate everything, but nothing really changes until I change myself. So no matter how much bullshit we've been through as a community, I'm strong enough to say f*ck that, and acknowledge myself and my own struggles" (cited in Eells, 2015). Lamar deeply critiques the multilayered culture of his upbringing while ultimately recognizing that change starts from within.

Track 7: "Alright"

In the context of the album, Kendrick Lamar's hit single "Alright" follows "u," a song where Lamar details his struggles with depression and suicide. The song was adopted as the unofficial anthem of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest. The opening lines are: "Alls my life, I has to fight, n*gga / Alls my life, I ... / Hard times like, "Yah!" / Bad trips like, "Yah!" / Nazareth / I'm f*cked up, homie, you f*cked up / But if God got us, then we gon' be alright" (Lamar, 2015b, track 7).

The lyrics possess the duality of being both personal and universal as Lamar parallels his struggles with others in the Black community. The first line, "Alls my life, I has to fight, n*gga," references Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Color Purple*, a story about the enduring strength and perseverance of a Black female amidst sexual abuse. Similar to the rest of the album, Lamar draws on the literary and lyrical strengths of a collective of Black artists supplemented with Christian faith to inform his own fortitude. The refrain from the chorus, "We gon' be alright," was chanted at multiple Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2015 (King, 2016). The same year, a video recording circulated of a crowd of BLM protesters at Cleveland State University chanting and clapping to the refrain amidst the police harassing the crowd with pepper spray. In 2015, a high school English class in New Jersey dissected *TPAB* in their race and Black identity discussions. These events demonstrate the social and political impact of the song, the album, and Lamar's rap career. The Black community drew strength and encouragement from the simple refrain, and holistically, "Alright" remains an anthem of unity and solidarity

amidst the tragedy, despair, and hopelessness in the fight for racial equality.

In the context of Du Bois' double consciousness theory, Lamar is faced once again with his warring self; he recognizes the long-standing perseverance of the Black community amidst social injustices, but he is forced to confront how Black people are perceived in America through the murders of young Black men. In some ways, the song serves as a mending of the warring, conflicted self; being both African and American requires an inherent strength amidst decades of systemic oppression, and this strength offers unity and communion between the two sides. Given the widespread cultural impact of the song, it serves as both a reprieve and a reminder of African Americans' grit to overcome and continue to endure systemic injustices.

A Final Word

A psychobiography is a lifespan study that explores unanswered questions. Given the brevity of this psychobiography, exploring the following questions could provide further insight into Lamar's life. He had aspirations to attend college; if given the opportunity now, would he consider attending? Additionally, Lamar labeled the music-making process as therapeutic. In his latest album, *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers* (2022), he discusses having attended therapy. How may therapy have facilitated his healing from trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder and elevated his mental health and artistry? What was it like overcoming the mental health-related stigma of attending therapy as a Black man? These questions are worth investigating to understand further how Lamar conceptualizes and makes sense of his past experiences while navigating his fame, celebrity, and social-political influence.

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Wings of Resilience: A Family Legacy

Inna Rozentsvit—Psychohistory Forum

Backstory: This poem chronicles a Jewish family's legacy (Tsarist pogroms, Stalinist purges, and the Holocaust), from the author's grandparents to her children. It honors ancestors who faced antisemitism, war, and displacement yet preserved their faith, values, and generosity. Shaped by this heritage, the author embodies their perseverance and compassion. She extends this legacy through her work, inspiring others and fostering dialogue while commemorating ancestral sacrifices.

Keywords: antisemitism, family relationships, intergenerational transmission of resilience, intergenerational transmission of trauma, poetry, psychobiography, psychohistory

From roots deep in history's soil, I rise,
As a tree nourished by ancestral ties.
Each branch, a lesson; each leaf, a dream,
In this living tapestry, I am the seam.

Grandmother's heart, a wellspring of giving,
Her generosity was a way of living.
Her open heart and loving deeds,
Planted my giving's precious seeds.

Grandfather, wise and strong,
Carried faith along,
Through pogroms and ghetto's dark,
His prayers lit like a spark.

Antisemitism's cruel, relentless tide
Sought to break them, push them aside.
Yet in their resilience, I found
The courage to stand on solid ground.

Paternal grandparents lost to war's cruel reign,
Their stories echo unspeakable pain.
Victims of fascism's insidious creep,
Their dreams are now silent, forever asleep.

Though their touch I'll never know,
Their struggle and strength still show.
In Dad's kind eyes and his giving heart,
I see the legacy they did impart.

Four souls, four tales of sorrow and might,
Bound by love, by faith, by plight.
Through pogroms, purges, and Hitler's war,
They bore the weight that history wore.

Their Jewish heritage, a double-edged sword,
Both cherished tradition and perilous ward.
Yet from their ashes, their hopes arise,
In me, their dreams touch new skies.

My Mother's resolve, a force of nature,
Her love for healing, a sacred suture.
In her hands, both gentle and strong,
I learned to right the world's wrongs.

Her perseverance, etched in time,
Healing others, her life's design.
She taught me to stand, to fight, to care,
To find hope even in despair.

My Father, a font of kindness and care,
His wisdom and strength were always there.

"Set your mind, and you'll achieve,"
His faith in me helped me believe.

Woven into this familial tapestry,
I've grown wings of boundless empathy.
With each soul I'm graced to meet,
I sow compassion, warm and sweet.

By nurturing others' nascent flight,
I honor those who gave me light.
In every wing that finds the sky,
A piece of my ancestors fly.

My daughter and son, new branches strong,
Carry forward our family's song.
In service and dialogue, they stand tall,
Honoring the legacy of us all.

So, as we give wings to dreams unbound,
Our roots reach deep in hallowed ground.
In this dance of past and future's call,
We stand, both saplings and redwoods tall.

Inna Rozentsvit's biography can be found on page 93. ❑

From Berlin, Germany, to Blowing Rock, North Carolina

Peter W. Petschauer—Psychohistory Forum Res. Assoc.

Abstract: This article is a short version of my physical journey from Berlin through South Tyrol and New York City to the mountains of North Carolina. It also recounts my intellectual journey from my failed attempt to become a priest in three European monasteries to a meaningful professorship in the U.S.

Keywords: abandonment, Afers/Eores, Brixen/Bressanone, children of the war, family dynamics, farm life, immigration, psychoanalytic literature, psychobiography, women's issues, World War II (WWII)

I find writing about oneself is, at minimum, congratulatory and, at maximum, offensive. However, it can serve a purpose if it is useful to others to study the past or better understand certain tendencies and trends in the social sciences and psychology.

Left but Not Abandoned

I left Germany and entered the United States in May 1957 at age 17. It was a positive move in every respect. Having grown up in South Tyrol/Alto Adige, Italy, speaking German with a medieval dialectal intonation, and failing in gymnasium as a prospective priest, I was not employable in Germany in any of the fields to which I aspired. My father Erich, usually known as Dr. Petschauer, suggested I leave for the United States partly for this reason; as he put it, "Nothing will become of you here." But he also had other reasons for sending me away: As a young man, he wanted to emigrate to the U.S. like his sister, Maria (Mitzi) Kresse, my aunt; more importantly, he added, "My new wife and I, and her mother, do not have room for you in our tiny apartment."

I first became aware of (potentially) having been abandoned when *Tante* (Aunt) Mitzi mentioned it in a conversation. She thought my father had abrogated his responsibility toward me twice, first storing me in the mountains in Italy and then sending me to the U.S. My mother told me later that Mitzi had written to her to that effect. The idea fit into my mother's storyline of my father being a terrible husband and dad. After the divorce, which she initiated in 1946 while he was in the American prisoner of war camp in Nuremberg, I frequently became the audience for their perceptions of each other. Divorce can emotionally and financially continue as if it were an accepted practice from one generation to the next. My first wife and I divorced, as did my daughter and two of her husbands.

I did not feel abandoned then or later, mainly because I grew up in a caring farm family that imparted positive values. My father and mother had placed my brother and me with the family for safekeeping in 1943 from war-torn Germany. I have written extensively about the head of the farm, Aloisia Clara, the Egarter Mother who decided to take us in, and her daughters, Olga, Katherina (Kat'l), Agnes (Neas), and Maria (Moitz), who continued in the same vein (Petschauer, 2014, pp. 13-129). In a recent article in *Clio's Psyche*, I described how Aloisia and her future husband Joseph met and fell in love, which was uncommon in farm communities then. They walked home together from elementary school for about 20 minutes—like I did as a boy along the same path decades later—and entered conversations that led to a deeply religious and caring relationship in marriage (Petschauer, 2023). My father had left me with a loving family.

In Lloyd deMause's reinterpretation of the history of childhood, he fit the abandoning mode as the second one in the Middle Ages. He thought he had found it, especially in Europe, when parents abandoned their children to wet nurses, monasteries and nunneries, foster families, etc. (deMause, 1984, p. 61). The concept could obviously be applied to later time periods. I had forgotten or repressed Tante Mitzi's and my mother's comments until I read and later analyzed this phenomenon's existence (Petschauer, 2022, pp. 162-176). There is no question: It exists, and the reason for my concern about it as a scholar partially originated from conversations about my seeming abandonment many years earlier.

This is not the context for a long theoretical discussion, except to say that I realized that abandoning comes in many forms, including enabling children's survival and guaranteeing them a better future. Such was the hope of Austrian-Jewish parents who placed their children on trains to Great Britain during the Holocaust and Central American parents who sent their children to the safer U.S. rather than keeping them in their corrupt country. My parents had the same idea: If we, that is, my parents, don't survive during one of the many Allied bombing raids, the boys will perish with us. My father encouraging me to emigrate to the U.S. fits in the same category.

So, rather than being abandoned, I grew up in a much more positive environment than my parents could have provided at that point. I also developed the more open and optimistic temperament that the younger women in the family modeled, the last of whom died two years ago at 93. Their influence was later reinforced by Micky, my stepmother, the monks in Euskirchen and Exaten, and Joni, my second wife.

My father was captured on May 8, 1945, in Upper Austria, thankfully by American troops, and could not have taken care of me during his three-year imprisonment as an enemy combatant. He had transformed from the rather happy-go-lucky younger man into a serious, often depressed man. My mother, Hildegard (born Dalmer), survived the war in poverty in a miserable two-room apartment in Brixen/Bressanone, regularly received soup for lunch at the Schlüsselwirt, and could not have taken care of me. After my brother died in December 1945, her reversal of fortunes undermined the hope and confidence she had gained during her first years of marriage in Berlin and Brixen (Petschauer, 2014, pp. 133-215). One might argue that she had also abandoned me. However,

when she fiercely protested my leaving Germany, she clarified that placing me in one monastery after another was in the hopes that I would gain a "decent" education. As much as she appreciated the mountain farm's role in my life, she wanted to avoid my becoming a farmer. But, as I will explain below, her efforts hid a troublesome undercurrent.

For a woman of her family's and her own previous social status, my mother chose at least two compromises: She converted from Lutheranism to Catholicism and promised Archbishop Johannes Geissler of Brixen, who had worked with my father on the *Umsiedlung* (resettlement) of German-speaking Italian citizens to Austria and beyond, that I would enter the priesthood. As it turned out, I did not have the calling, but she achieved her goal: I obtained an excellent education. The Franciscans and Capuchins grounded my later educational success in the U.S. As in Afers, I was not treated as if I were less than, or different from, the other children, particularly in the monasteries' gymnasiums in Euskirchen and Exaten; most of us attended these two monasteries because one of the war's many unfortunate outcomes left our families' precarious financial positions. Some of us had also not attended gymnasium for two or three years. During my attendance, the monks moved the gymnasium from Euskirchen to Exaten, a facility west of Roermond in the Limburg province of the Netherlands.

Hardly any place could have excited a 12-year-old more than the central building. Erected by one of Charlemagne's advisers around 800 AD, two of the original four round turrets presented fabulous places for us to hide, just like they had for German and Dutch soldiers during WWII. The mattresses and wine bottles added another dimension. Yet one of the less pleasant sides initially brought stares and catcalls when we dared meander into the nearby village of Exaten. The German occupation, which ended no more than ten years earlier, was still fresh in the villagers' minds, yet after two or three of our "invasions," we became part of the scenery. Important as well, unlike the children of my generation in general, I was not one of the 25% out of 13,000 children "who had no person with whom they could discuss personal problems" (Bode, 2004, p. 62). *Pater* (Father) Dagobert in the monastery saw to that.

When my father decided I needed to leave his immediate surroundings and thus Germany, I was again fortunate to meld into particularly positive situations in the United States. First, I lived with the Gebauers, distant family members in Watchung near Plain-

field, New Jersey, and worked off my boat fare within three months in their knitting mill. The move in late summer to Queens allowed me to gain a further foothold in the U.S. in the home of Tante Mitzi and her daughter, Emily. Emily assisted me in finding my first job as an usher in Radio City Hall. From there, I moved on to Binney and Smith, the famous Crayola Crayon company, and ultimately to an accountant's position in New York University's (NYU's) Medical Center on the East River (today part of the Langone Medical Center). I have described this adjustment in my 2020 book, *An Immigrant in the 1960s: Finding Hope and Success in New York City*.

At age 18, I was on my own. After several ill-advised courses toward a high school diploma, NYU accepted me with open arms. Its history department, with our excellent faculty advisor, Professor Minna Falk, and her colleagues Arthur Z. Arnold, William Blackwell, Leo Gershoy, Frank Manuel, and Ellsworth Raymond, among others, led me to a PhD. Professors Blackwell and Manuel continue to reverberate in me. Blackwell taught Russian economic history, and I became knowledgeable about the subject and aware of his highly sophisticated English in a perfectly organized format. I wanted to be able to speak (and write) English like him. Manuel lectured on intellectual history and usually juxtaposed two prominent thinkers of the past, like Newton and Voltaire or Marx and Freud. What a treat for the 100 or so graduate students in his classes; conversations about his points sometimes lasted for days. The "A" in his advanced class affirmed that I could more than survive in higher education. Although I had already begun to discern some similarities between my middle-high German dialect from the Dolomites and basic English, the linguistic approach these men brought to their lectures catapulted me far beyond the dialect and my rudimentary linguistic skills.

Distant Parents Remaining Close By

Today, knowing about the orphaned and abandoned children after WWII, such as the estimated 20,000 in East Prussia (Winterberg, 2014) and those many thousands caught alone today, I must thank my good fortune. My father came from a middle-middle class teachers' family of German speakers in Slovenia, and my mother from an upper-middle class engineers' family of the Rhineland. Although separated, we never lost contact; even after living in the U.S., we carried on a vigorous correspondence, and I visited often. This needs a short diversion: My father wrote either in longhand or typed, always on the same thin blue airmail paper.

The letters inevitably arrived in airmail envelopes, sometimes including a check. My mother wrote, or rather, scribbled, notes on various pieces of paper that fell into her hands; it could be a postcard, a shred of paper from her desk, or the then-fashionable hotel stationery from one of her favorite spas. All the same, she sent carefully wrapped, thoughtful Christmas packages until she lost part of her past to dementia.

Early in life, I did not know I had been placed in a family for safekeeping; I was oblivious to the situation because I felt at home. In my middle years, I was embraced by family members, professors, staff, and fellow students, and as an office worker in New York City. Even though I had a full-time job and attended university full-time, positive individuals surrounded me. As a full adult, I struggled with and explored coming to positive resolutions regarding the decisions my parents made in their lives, which affected my earlier life. In particular, I began to understand and disagree with my father's turn to National Socialism, joining the SS as a first lieutenant, and my mother's rather aristocratic behavior and seeming distance toward me. Now I understand that she struggled to overcome her family's troubles, the worries about the war, and the divorce from my father.

An important part of a university professor's career is his/her dissertation. I wrote mine about Catherine the Great's childhood in Zerbst (Anhalt-Zerbst). The reason for my interest in her goes back in part to the women on "my" mountain farm: the mother who took me in and the four daughters who carried on her love and attention after her early death in 1945. Sitting in the kitchen with its wood-fired stove, a space forbidden to men, I learned of women's concerns and have written about them extensively; I became a listener, a participant, and an observer. Other reasons for choosing Catherine, unusual in the American setting, was that the future empress grew up in Zerbst, where one branch of my mother's family originated—add to this my knowledge of French and German script and Professor Frank Manuel's encouragement to try a psychological approach.

Through the research about Catherine, I became interested in girls' and women's education in Germany from Martin Luther to the 1980s (see my 1989 book, *The Education of Women in Eighteenth-Century Germany: Bending the Ivy*). Also, through her interest in and extraordinary collecting of art, I explored women's art in the 18th century and began to collect art as well, on a much humbler

scale. The latter interest sustained me, in addition to Joni's and my 42-year marriage.

Because of my dissertation about a Russian Tsarina, Appalachian hired me as a Russian historian, sight unseen, and the unique practices of the time need to be memorialized. My reason for being hired was not a sterling resume from a leading university but rather because, as Graduate Dean Dr. Cratis Williams wrote on the margin of my job application, "he grew up in the mountains of Northern Italy and can tolerate the cold of the Appalachian Mountains." The problem had been that the department lost faculty members because of our mountains' cold winters and relative isolation.

The work on Catherine led in at least two other directions: I became aware of women being poorly treated throughout history, and I started publicly supporting women's studies, introducing a course on women in my history department. The awareness of women's place in societies became the jumping-off point of research on human space(s), which I covered in my 1997 book, *Human Space: Personal Rights in a Threatening World*. Simultaneously, as the head of Watauga College, an experimental unit within the larger university, I became aware of my own rather traditional teaching. In a natural progression, when I left Watauga College in 1980, I accepted the leadership of the Hubbard Center for Faculty and Staff Support, a teaching and learning center that had emerged as one of the best in the country. Sadly, after celebrating the Center near the outset of our last chancellor's administration, she abandoned it. A colleague tasked with faculty development a few years later did not know that the university ever had such a prominent center. Leadership of the Appalachian faculty senate and then the University of North Carolina system followed throughout the 1990s. One of our major efforts, phased retirement for faculty, is still in place; our carefully vetted Post-Tenure Review process died due to persistent faculty opposition.

My disappointment with the traditional approach to understanding and writing history led me, thanks to Dr. David Beisel, Lloyd deMause, Dr. Paul H. Elovitz, and Dr. Howard Stein to psychohistory (see Elovitz, 2015, his lengthy psychobiographical tribute to me). Since my retirement in 2006, it has been my favored approach to investigate aspects of our common past, adding lately poetry to my arsenal of ways of exploring it. It allows me to elucidate complicated topics without much ado. Being active as a psy-

chohistorian led to leadership positions in the International Psychohistorical Association, the Psychohistory Forum, the *Journal of Psychohistory*, and *Clio's Psyche*. In addition, as a so-called retired person, I thrive on continuing to serve on art-related committees at Appalachian State University.

A Long Life's Negative Moments

Lloyd deMause would have said that I am ignoring my childhood traumas, and there were indeed difficult incidences. However, they do not overshadow the positive. One of the stresses very early on was the death of my brother Klaus in late December 1945, the uncomfortable graveyard images it brought about, and my mother's reaction to me afterward; the second was the sexual approach by one of the village men who found me, as the outsider, an exciting object to pursue; a third was my accidental stabbing of one of my playmates with a pitchfork while working on hay distribution in our barn. Thankfully, the fork did not enter his brain, but it damaged his left eye permanently; my guilt eased only after his recent death.

Let me highlight the four most troubling situations in my life. With Klaus' death, my mother lost her favorite son and, in her many efforts to turn me into her image of an upper-middle-class man, she let me know that I was not as good as my brother and, more like my father, the never-do-well. She assessed me as not having the fine hair as he, being too short, and lacking the style of Herr Battré, her companion; before I left for the U.S., she took me to the family's crypt in Hamm and gave me the album of the family photographs with the images of her grandfather, father, and uncles in uniform and the women in excellent dresses. When Joni and I married, my mother implied that I should have married the tall blond who happened to be a family friend. That I earned a PhD meant little in that world. However, thanks to Joni, I was able to pull out the invisible but painful knife that had sat in my stomach for years. The undercurrent of rejection was suddenly gone, and the care I had gained in Afers, monasteries, and with friends and colleagues resurfaced fully.

A somewhat later one was the disappointment over my first love. Gertie (her nickname) was a fellow student. Cupid had reached us with his arrows, and we thrived in each other's presence. One of the few conflicts that emerged in our relationship had to do with her being "Italian American." My family felt that they were "German American" (despite actually being "Austrian American").

Tante Mitzi and her daughter Emily did not embrace this lovely, intelligent woman from a different ethnic background. Ironically, her mother's family hailed from Trieste, not too far from Gottschee (Kocevije), the family's home on my father's side. Still, Gertie's mother and father most likely also had their doubts about an immigrant who had not yet completed his education and contemplated marrying their daughter. These outside pressures comprised my first encounter with ethnic undertones that shape(d) relationships with African Americans and Latin Americans and also fester(ed) within other ethnic groups and between them. In spite of the open and unspoken disapprovals, we carried on for a while longer yet finally decided to become just "friends."

Another difficulty that brought about considerable emotional turmoil in my middle years was the discovery of my father's SS affiliation; it continued to reverberate negatively into my later years. The resolution is fleeting and can be unsettled with an unusual photo or an email, like one I received recently from a European colleague. But most of the time, I hold this past in abeyance through writing and speaking about my struggles with it, particularly through the talks my Jewish colleague Dr. Zohara Boyd and I hold in schools, colleges, and universities. She survived in plain sight as a small child with her family outside the infamous ghetto of war-torn Warsaw.

A final example hangs together with the wonderful relationship that my second wife and I created beginning four decades ago. For reasons not fully apparent but somewhat related to this marriage, my daughter from my first marriage is not speaking to me/us; many different attempts to bridge the gap have failed. Joni and I are hoping and working to maintain supportive relationships with my and our granddaughter.

Conclusion

What is being abandoned? It is a generalization of outside observers and the frequent reality that abandoned children are emotionally and physically starving. I am not this child or adult. I am one of the fortunate human beings who, although sent away by his parents in one case for safekeeping and in another to plant success, found safety and support in the new environment while retaining the support of my parents. My farm family in the Dolomites nourished and cared for me, while my other familial and collegial support during my transition to the U.S. enabled me to catapult from a potential farm boy or factory worker to an academic. One of the

greatest rewards came with Appalachian granting me an honorary doctorate in Humane Letters in May 2015. It honored my teaching, writing, and service to my colleagues and the institution. I have taken up the implied baton in retirement by continuing my scholarship, teaching (although now mostly to colleagues), and my leadership, now in limited forums in the university and psychohistory.

Peter W. Petschauer's bio can be found on pages 121-122.

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Forging His Own Path: A Psychobiographical Portrait of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

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Abstract: This psychobiographical analysis examines Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Jr.'s psychological development and leadership emergence through the lens of family legacy, childhood trauma, and personal resilience. The study explores how early experiences, including his father's assassination and subsequent family dynamics, shaped his environmental advocacy and independent political identity. Analysis of his writings, public statements, and family accounts reveals patterns of challenging institutional frameworks while maintaining deep connections to family values and American ideals.

Keywords: American public life, childhood trauma, environmental advocacy, family legacy, psychobiography, psychohistory, public health, public persona, resilience, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (RFK Jr.)

Born into one of America's most prominent political dynasties, Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Jr.'s life has been shaped by profound personal challenges and tragedies, family legacy and expectations, and an unwavering commitment to his convictions. This psychobiographical analysis explores how these experiences have molded a complex figure in American public life.

Early Years and Family Influence

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s formative years were deeply embedded in the Kennedy family's tradition of public service and political engagement. As McAdams (2011) notes in his work on political figures, early family experiences play a crucial role in shaping future leaders, and RFK Jr.'s childhood was no exception. In his memoir *American Values: Lessons I Learned from My Family*, RFK Jr. (2018) recounts the intellectual rigor that characterized his upbringing: "Our dinner table was a nightly seminar on current events and history. ... My father and uncles challenged us to debate, to question our assumptions, and to connect history and philosophy to current events" (p. 37). These early discussions instilled in him a deep sense of civic duty and a penchant for questioning established narratives and shaping his adult civic engagement and activism.

However, RFK Jr.'s childhood was also marked by profound tragedy. The assassinations of his uncle, President John F. Kennedy, in 1963, and his father, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, in 1968 were pivotal moments in his development. Paul H. Elovitz, in his 2003 *Annual of Psychoanalysis* article, "Psychoanalytic Scholarship on American Presidents," argues that such traumatic events in a leader's early life can profoundly influence their worldview and decision-making processes. RFK Jr. reflected on this impact in an interview: "I was 14 when my father died. It was like a tidal wave washing away all the structures in my life that had given me balance and security" (Winfrey, 2016). This reminds me of Bessel van der Kolk's book, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (2015), on the long-term effects of childhood trauma on adult behavior and decision-making. RFK Jr.'s drug addiction, which will be addressed later in this paper, could be an example.

In the aftermath of his father's death, young Bobby found himself thrust into a leadership role within his own family. He be-

came, as one account describes, "the leader of his tribe of 11 orphaned brothers and sisters" (Samuels, 2023, para 9). This premature responsibility placed an enormous burden on the young Kennedy. He often tried unsuccessfully to fill the void left by his charismatic father and the near-total absence of adult supervision. His mother, Ethel, was pregnant with her 11th child, delivered over an 18-year timespan at the time of her husband's assassination, and was overwhelmed. Bobby referred to her "tough love," saying "her love didn't always feel unconditional" (Kennedy, 2018, p. 329). He became a parentified child, which impacted his adult development.

A unique blend of privilege and chaos characterized the Kennedy household during this period. A family friend from that time likened visits to their Hickory Hill, Virginia, home to "visiting a zoo" (Samuels, 2023, para 9). The property was teeming with animals of all kinds, including untamed creatures and even sea mammals in the swimming pool. Bobby's passion for nature was evident in the hawks nesting in the eaves, while the children's free-spirited behavior was exemplified by their habit of climbing in and out of windows. This early exposure to nature connects to his environmental consciousness.

The challenges of his youth eventually manifested in more serious ways. In 1983, RFK Jr. faced a public struggle with substance abuse, pleading guilty to heroin possession after being found in a compromised state on an airplane. The death of his brother David from a heroin overdose a year later further complicated his journey, making his path to respectability seem increasingly difficult.

From a psychobiographical perspective, these early experiences—the intellectual stimulation, the tragic losses, the premature responsibilities, and the personal struggles—created a complex foundation for RFK Jr.'s adult life. They instilled in him a sense of purpose and civic duty, a capacity for resilience, and a deep-seated drive to make a meaningful impact. Perhaps these early experiences help to explain RFK Jr.'s unconventional leadership style: his tendency to challenge established norms and his passionate pursuit of causes he believes in, traits that would define his later career as an environmental lawyer and activist.

Valuing Family's and Country's History

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s knowledge of and willingness to

talk about his ancestors during his online interviews and even his announcement about his 2024 presidential candidacy show a deep appreciation of his roots without idealizing or criticizing any of them (Kennedy, 2023). During this speech, RFK Jr. shared his family's history with his supporters, providing a framework for understanding his political aspirations. RFK Jr.'s grandparents, the Kennedys and Fitzgeralds, came to America in 1848, fleeing the famine and 800 years of British oppression of Irish Catholics, who were supposed to stay illiterate and never enter any profession. He described his ancestors jumping to politics like hungry men looking for food. His maternal great-grandfather became the first Irish Catholic mayor of Boston. His daughter, RFK Jr.'s grandmother, loved America and instilled this love of freedom and this country in her 29 grandchildren, reciting Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "Paul Revere's Ride," with them. So, when RFK Jr. states that his mission as president would be to end corruption, especially coming from the merger of corporate and state powers, we can believe in his wholeheartedness and understand that this determination comes from his childhood, as we hear the line "A cry of defiance, and not of fear…" from Longfellow's (1860, stanza 14) poem.

RFK Jr.'s lifelong love affair with America continuously comes through in everything he fights for. As an example, RFK Jr. speaks about times when America's waters were not polluted and when the government was not colluding with Big Pharma, stating, "I want to restore in many ways the America of my youth, the America I was brought up in" (Bergengruen & Bucknam, 2023, para 3).

Resilience and Personal Struggles: The Crucible of Addiction

The 1980s marked a turbulent period in RFK Jr.'s life, characterized by a profound struggle with heroin addiction. This personal battle, spanning from his teenage years to his late 20s, offers a critical lens through which to examine his psychological development and later leadership qualities. RFK Jr.'s candid admission of his addiction, from ages 15 to 28, provides insight into the depth of his struggle (GBNews, 2023). He credits 12-step programs with offering a "spiritual awakening" and attributes his recovery to it. This spiritual component of his recovery journey may have significantly influenced his later worldview and approach to advocacy.

Interestingly, RFK Jr. denies any direct relationship between his addiction and his early tragic losses, instead describing

himself as "born an addict" with an "empty spiritual hole" (GBNews, 2023, 0:32). This self-perception aligns with the disease model of addiction. However, from a psychobiographical perspective, it's important to consider how early traumatic experiences might have contributed to this perceived "spiritual hole," even if not consciously recognized by RFK Jr. himself.

RFK Jr. reflects that his addiction experience gave him "insight into human frailty and the power of perseverance" (Stead Sellers, 2016). His addiction struggle appears to have deepened his empathy and influenced his later advocacy work. This transformation can lead to increased emotional intelligence and adaptability. The ability to translate personal struggle into a broader understanding of human vulnerability may have significantly shaped RFK Jr.'s approach to public service and advocacy. Overcoming addiction likely bolstered RFK Jr.'s sense of self-efficacy, potentially contributing to his confidence in tackling other significant challenges in his professional life.

In conclusion, RFK Jr.'s battle with addiction, while deeply personal, had far-reaching implications for his psychological development and subsequent career. It serves as a pivotal chapter in his life story, demonstrating resilience, fostering empathy, and potentially informing his later passionate pursuit of various causes. This period of struggle and recovery provides a crucial context for understanding the complex motivations and perspectives that drive RFK Jr.'s public persona and advocacy efforts.

Environmental Crusader and Anti-Establishment Voice: A Legacy of Passion and Purpose

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s dedication to environmental advocacy represents a confluence of personal experiences, family legacy, and professional pursuits. The seeds of RFK Jr.'s environmental passion were planted early, nurtured by his family's strong tradition of public service and activism. His father, Robert F. Kennedy, and uncle, President John F. Kennedy, were deeply committed to social justice and public welfare, laying the groundwork for RFK Jr.'s future advocacy. This familial influence aligns with McAdams' (2011) observations on the impact of early family experiences in shaping future leaders.

Growing up, RFK Jr. spent significant time in nature, particularly hiking and fishing, which fostered a deep connection to the environment. These experiences laid the foundation for his later

environmental work. During his uncle John F. Kennedy's presidency, young Bobby had a formative encounter with Stewart Udall, the Secretary of the Interior and a noted environmentalist. This meeting left such an impression that Bobby, who recorded the interview, promised to write a book about pollution and the "bad men" responsible for it. This early commitment foreshadowed his future career path and demonstrated how childhood experiences can shape adult motivations.

A pivotal moment in RFK Jr.'s environmental journey occurred during a fishing trip on the Hudson River with his uncle, Ted Kennedy, in the 1980s. Encountering significant pollution, including raw sewage and industrial waste, profoundly impacted RFK Jr., making him acutely aware of the urgent need to address environmental degradation. This was a key event that solidified his life's direction, motivating RFK Jr. to focus on environmental issues. He joined the Riverkeeper organization and later became involved with the Waterkeeper Alliance, working to protect waterways from pollution and to advocate for clean water. As RFK Jr. often cites, this moment was a catalyst for his environmental work, highlighting the tangible consequences of pollution and the need for robust environmental protections.

True to his childhood promise, RFK Jr. chose to become an environmental lawyer. His legal battles against polluters and his work with organizations like the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Waterkeeper Alliance solidified his commitment to environmental protection. This career choice demonstrates the fulfillment of early interests and promises, a key aspect of psychobiographical development.

RFK Jr. (2004) fulfilled his childhood vow by authoring *Crimes Against Nature*, where he articulated his environmental philosophy: "We're not protecting the environment for the sake of the fishes and the birds. We're protecting it because we recognize that nature is the infrastructure of our communities" (p. 15). This statement reflects a mature understanding of environmental issues, linking ecological concerns with community well-being and public health. Kennedy has been outspoken about the potential health impacts of environmental degradation, particularly concerning children's health, driving much of his advocacy. RFK Jr. often frames his environmental work in terms of moral and ethical responsibility, believing in the stewardship of the earth and the obligation to protect natural resources for future generations.

A strong interest in the intersection of science, law, and public policy drives RFK Jr.'s environmental work. He emphasizes the importance of using sound science to inform policy decisions and regulatory actions. He stated: "I do not believe that the function of a citizen in a democracy is to be a cheerleader for people in power. ... We have an obligation as citizens to stand up and tell the truth" (Binelli, 2017).

Controversial Stances and Family Tensions

RFK Jr.'s willingness to challenge prevailing narratives, particularly on vaccines and public health policies, has made him a polarizing figure. In a speech at the California State Capitol, he stated: "I'm not anti-vax. I'm pro-safety and pro-science" (Kennedy, 2019). However, his stance has led to tensions within the Kennedy family. Three of his family members wrote: "We love Bobby. He is one of the great champions of the environment... However, on vaccines he is wrong" (Townsend, Kennedy II, & McKean, 2019, para 4).

This divergence from family norms (of standing with the authorities and the party no matter what) demonstrates RFK Jr.'s determination to define his own path, based on his research and his experience, while creating a complex emotional landscape that likely drives him to pursue his causes with even greater zeal; so, there is a tension between inherited legacy and individual identity. Despite all, RFK Jr.'s love for and loyalty to his family and his mature predisposition to resolve conflicts trump any tensions. He states: "I think the good vastly outweighs the bad, I don't see anything to complain about, honestly … I feel so blessed; I feel a privilege to be a member of this family. … We love each other" (Sky News Australia, 2023, 0:00-0:50).

Personal and Public Life and Continued Challenges

Both joy and tragedy have marked RFK Jr.'s personal life. Of his three marriages, his one to Mary Richardson Kennedy ended in her suicide in 2012, adding another layer of personal struggle to his life story. In his book *American Values*, he reflects on the impact of personal loss: "Tragedy and loss are inevitable in every life. The question is not whether we will suffer, but how we will respond to suffering" (Kennedy, 2018, p. 421).

Furthermore, RFK Jr.'s development of spasmodic dysphonia, a neurological voice disorder, in his 40s presented a unique challenge for a public figure. This condition, characterized by in-

voluntary spasms in the laryngeal muscles, manifests as a strained, often quavering voice quality in Kennedy's speech. Despite the significant challenges posed by this disorder, Kennedy has demonstrated remarkable resilience in continuing his public advocacy and legal work. He has adapted his communication strategies, often relying on prepared speeches and written statements to convey his messages effectively. Kennedy's persistence in public speaking engagements, interviews, and, more recently, political campaigning, illustrates his determination to overcome the limitations imposed by spasmodic dysphonia. His management of the condition, including reportedly using Botox injections as a treatment method, not only showcases his personal tenacity but also offers insight into the complex interplay between health challenges and public life.

Furthermore, Kennedy's openness about his condition and his continued high-profile work have contributed to increased public awareness of spasmodic dysphonia, a relatively rare disorder affecting approximately 50,000 people in North America, potentially inspiring others facing similar challenges. Allegedly, in one of the interviews, RFK Jr. said that although it is frustrating to live with this condition, he focuses on the message, not the delivery.

In Conclusion: A Complex Figure of Conviction and Controversy

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. emerges as a complex figure shaped by family legacy, personal tragedies, and unwavering convictions. His life story is one of resilience—overcoming addiction, adapting to physical challenges, and standing firm in his beliefs despite opposition. It is a redemptive narrative—a journey of overcoming adversity and finding meaning through advocacy and public service. As RFK Jr. (2023) stated in his presidential campaign announcement: "I've spent my life defending our natural resources and the environment ... fighting for justice and standing up to abuses of power. And that's what I intend to do as president."

RFK Jr.'s unconventional political journey in 2023-2024, including his initial Democratic primary challenge and subsequent independent positioning, reflects consistent psychological patterns evident throughout his life. His willingness to forge unexpected alliances and challenge established political frameworks mirrors his earlier environmental advocacy, where he regularly crossed traditional party lines to achieve his objectives. This tendency to prioritize his perceived mission over conventional political alignments is consistent with his long-standing pattern of independent thinking

and resistance to institutional pressures, traits that emerged during his environmental battles and public health advocacy. Throughout his life, his current political positioning appears driven more by his individual convictions than traditional party loyalties or family political traditions. This independence, while sometimes creating tension with traditional Kennedy family Democratic alignment, demonstrates the persistence of his characteristic tendency to chart his own course, even when it means departing from expected paths.

This psychobiographical analysis reveals a man driven by a complex interplay of family expectations, personal experiences, and deeply held beliefs. Whether viewed as a visionary or a controversial figure, RFK Jr.'s journey reflects the complex interplay between personal history, family legacy, and public service. His story serves as a compelling reminder of the power of resilience and the potential for individuals to shape their own destiny, even in the face of profound challenges and expectations. It also offers valuable insights into the development of public figures and the enduring impact of early life experiences on leadership styles and public service motivations.

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An Abbreviated Autobiography of a Single-Case Historiometrician

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Abstract: Historiometry subjects large samples of historical figures to quantitative and nomothetic analyses, yet the researcher may occasionally resort to single-case historiometry. This potential switch becomes apparent in the life and career of the author. The story began in elementary school and continued for seven decades.

Keywords: autobiography, chemistry, childhood, creativity, genius, historiometry, leadership, psychobiography, psychohistory, quantitative research, scholarship

Writing a brief autobiography would seem easy, especially after publishing previously in *Clio's Psyche*. The journal and its readership are already familiar. Yet attempting to write an autobiography for this special issue is surprisingly challenging. One difficulty ensues from the fact that I have already published five autobi-

ographical essays spread over three decades in different publications, with the last one appearing not that long ago. In addition, I have been the subject of two excellent biographies that provide a more objective perspective than I can offer: Ryan Daniel's "Dean Keith Simonton: A truly remarkable contribution to creativity studies that will be one for the ages" in 2021 and Rodica Damian's "Biography of Dean Keith Simonton" in 2020. Likewise, personal interviews have also been published in which someone else sets the biographical agenda, such as Suzanna E. Henshon's "The Creative Path: An Interview with Dean Keith Simonton" in 2011 and Taisir Subhi Yamin's "Dean Keith Simonton" in 2021. Perhaps everything that can be said has already been said, reducing me to compiling and paraphrasing.

Yet none of these essays specifically examine my life and career from the standpoint of psychobiography (the minor exception being Damian's 2014 article, "An Interview with 2014 Murray Award Winner Dean Keith Simonton"). That oversight should not surprise anyone. Most of my research is multiple-case, quantitative, and nomothetic, using multivariate statistics, mathematical models, psychometric assessments, computer simulations, and even laboratory experiments. Thus, I have never explicitly identified as a psychobiographer, and the term "psychobiography" only appears in the title of a single publication (Simonton, 2023). Indeed, I have often tended to prefer the term "single-case historiometry" where the "case" is a historical creator or leader.

The term "historiometry" captures my research's quantitative rather than qualitative nature—for an example, see my article, "Shakespeare's Sonnets: A Case of and for Single–Case Historiometry," from 1989. In truth, I have published only one qualitative single-case study, namely that of Galileo Galilei, in 2012, titled "Foresight, insight, oversight, and hindsight in scientific discovery: How sighted were Galileo's telescopic sightings?" Of course, this count does not include purely biographical publications without any prominent psychological interpretation, like my 2017 encyclopedia entry on Francis Galton. So, let us turn to what I would consider my most important contributions to psychobiography, broadly conceived.

Single-Case Historiometry

Although I have published 13 single-case historiometric studies, these really entailed only seven separate historical cases (three involving target articles with commentaries and replies): Wil-

liam Shakespeare (five studies); King George III of Great Britain (one study, plus reply to commentaries); Napoleon Bonaparte (one study); Ludwig van Beethoven (two studies); Thomas Edison (one study, plus reply to commentaries); Pablo Picasso (two studies, plus one reply to commentaries); and B. F. Skinner (one study with two co-authors). Many of these inquiries covered the luminary's entire lifespan or at least all of their career. However, sometimes the investigation would concentrate on characteristic works, such as Shakespeare's 154 sonnets, Beethoven's nine symphonies, or Picasso's *Minotauromachy* (1935) and *Guernica* (1937). Most were designed to test general psychological hypotheses. For instance, the stress-illness relation was confirmed in the case of King George III, and domain-specific profiles from the Big Five Personality Factor Model were applied in the case of B. F. Skinner.

Nevertheless, the subset was more exploratory. Shakespeare provides a prime example, especially when I ventured into the authorship controversy in my 2004 article, "Thematic content and political context in Shakespeare's dramatic output, with implications for authorship and chronology controversies." Finally, it should be noted that many of these investigations used computer content analysis. Such was applied to Beethoven's symphonies and Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, as in my 1997 article, "Imagery, style, and content in 37 Shakespeare plays." Amazingly, a computer could distinguish between Beethoven's odd- and even-numbered symphonies, thus supporting some recurrent biographical observations dating back to Robert Schumann (Simonton, 2015).

Does my autobiography help explain what I just observed? Does my career make psychobiographical sense? I think so, but the explanation must have started when I entered kindergarten.

Kindergarten through High School

As the first-born son from a working-class family—my father never finished high school—my childhood began in a modest home without books. Fortunately, my kindergarten teacher recommended that my parents purchase a set of encyclopedias designed for K-12 use. I absolutely fell in love with these volumes, first browsing through all the pages packed with photographs and drawings and eventually reading one article after another. I was especially drawn to entries about people who were shown wearing unusual clothes and hairstyles—beards even—that were uncommon in 1950s Los Angeles. Having noticed that nobody I knew claimed an entry, I wondered how these people earned such special attention.

Over time, I gathered that everyone had left a mark on history in some manner, most often as either leaders or creators. This led me to read extensively beyond the encyclopedias, including histories and biographies, even going back to Herodotus and Plutarch. At the same time, I became increasingly fascinated with the sciences, particularly chemistry. In fact, in junior high, I participated in a special LA summer school program for scientific talent. I later graduated from high school with a degree designated "science – college preparatory" and top-in-class awards in science, social studies, and English but not history.

Undergraduate Years

These broad interests did not seem contradictory until I sought admission to college. My first choice was Occidental College, so I applied under its early admissions program. During the interview, the admissions officer naturally asked what my plans were for a major. I impulsively said, "History." She looked puzzled, saying they thought I would pursue a science major. Besides, the college, as a liberal arts institution, already had an abundance of history majors. So, I immediately said, "I mean chemistry." Then, she reassured me with the information that Oxy required all students, no matter what their major, to take a two-year course in the history of civilization. Hence, I would get six trimesters of history anyway, spanning from antiquity to recent times. At Occidental, we read primary sources, too, from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (written c. 2100-1200 BC) to *The Golden Ass* (second half of 2nd century AD) to *The Tale of Genji* (published before 1021) to *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965). Accordingly, I could get my dose of history and biography along with my regular courses in mathematics and chemistry. Yet, the way my mind works, I could not help but make connections between the two, looking at history from a scientific perspective. One of my teachers even warned me that I would never understand history if I looked for regularities, patterns, or even laws. Then, a miracle happened.

As a chemistry major (with added pre-med coursework), I had very few electives. But in my second year of college, I managed to squeeze in an introductory psychology course, which I heard had an outstanding professor. The textbook was the fourth edition of Hilgard and Atkinson's *Introduction to Psychology* (1967). I had no idea that a scientific discipline existed that attempted to address some of the questions I had been dealing with. For example, the text contained an extensive section on genius and

another on creativity. It even included an instructive "Critical Discussion" side box entitled "Life-History Data vs. Laboratory Data; Advantages and Hazards" (Hilgard & Atkinson, 1967, p. 112; yes, the textbook remains in my possession). I was hooked and opted to take another psychology course the next trimester, this time concerning social psychology, where I learned that psychologists had also conducted considerable research on leadership. Because this second course had thrown me off my rigid chemistry sequence, meaning that I could not finish in four years (and thus beyond what my scholarship supported), I changed my major to psychology—joyfully, not reluctantly.

A year later, I decided to apply to the Social Psychology graduate program in the Department of Social Relations at Harvard University. One reason why I applied to this department is because it was still very interdisciplinary at that time, including sociology and cultural anthropology along with corresponding psychological subdisciplines. Although I knew what topics I wanted to study—namely, genius, creativity, and leadership—I was less sure about the optimal methodology. Hence, I wanted exposure to a wide range of options.

Graduate Student Years

Unfortunately, the Department of Social Relations fell apart soon after I arrived. Sociology and cultural anthropology went their separate ways, plus the remaining psychologists rejoined their colleagues in William James Hall to form the Department of Psychology and Social Relations (later changed, after I got my doctorate, by deleting "Social Relations"). Nevertheless, I eventually acquired a new mentor, David A. Kenny, who had just received his PhD under eminent methodologist Donald T. Campbell, who received the American Psychological Association's (APA's) Distinguished Scientific Contributions Award (DSCA) in 1970, the same year I entered Harvard. My mentor was unusually open to various innovative and highly sophisticated methods (later receiving his own APA DSCA in 2019). Moreover, Harvard remained very intellectually stimulating, exposing me to abundant ideas, sometimes through random encounters, such as my meeting William "Mac" Runyan (Simonton, 2023).

But what finally provided the big break was chancing upon a 1971 article by Raoul Naroll, E. C. Benjamin, F. K. Fohl, M. J. Fried, R. E. Hildreth, and J. M. Schaefer, "Creativity: A Cross-Historical Pilot Survey," in which cross-cultural methods used in

anthropology were applied to a trans-historical question. Historical data was subjected to quantitative techniques to answer this important nomothetic issue: What is the sociocultural context of exceptional creativity? After acquiring new expertise in econometric methods, I improved this study by testing additional hypotheses with even greater analytical sophistication. My doctoral dissertation, "The social psychology of creativity: An archival data analysis," emerged less than three years later in 1974. I submitted my thesis shortly before loading up a U-Haul truck to head to my first job as Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Arkansas. I joined the faculty the same year as Hillary Rodham, who entered the law school there. She married Bill Clinton the following year. We never met, though, not even at the reception for the new faculty.

Professional Career

Hillary went from Yale Law to Arkansas because of her fiancé's political ambitions (soon becoming first Attorney General and then Governor). In my case, I went from Harvard to Arkansas because it was my only job offer. Just one out of well more than a dozen ever increasingly desperate job applications! My Harvard professors and fellow students had already warned me that I would face severe difficulties pursuing my research program, which I detailed in my 2002 article, "It's absolutely impossible? A longitudinal study of one psychologist's response to conventional naysayers." Because I could not possibly publish my non-mainstream work in prestigious journals, it would be impossible for me to obtain a tenured position at a top research university. But I persisted. I would rather do the research that most attracted my enthusiasm than conduct inquiries like everybody else was doing. Besides, Arkansas provided an excellent failsafe position that allowed me to explore parts of the United States that were unknown to me.

Happily, the dismal prognoses were plain wrong. I launched an original research program that produced hundreds of publications, dozens published in top-tier journals, plus numerous books—the first one, *Genius, Creativity, and Leadership* (1984), somewhat ironically, published by Harvard University Press. I was sufficiently prolific that within two years I moved to the Department of Psychology at the University of California, Davis. There, I accelerated up the ranks until I was promoted to Distinguished Professor just 30 years after turning in my doctoral dissertation. Better yet, I eventually advanced to an office next to that of Alan C. Elms to more easi-

ly continue our intermittent exchanges regarding psychobiography (Simonton, 2023).

Coda

My research output was high in both quantity and quality. While the former claim is endorsed by mere bean counting, the latter is justified by the many awards I have received for both single publications and lifetime contributions. I won't list them all here, but two stand out in the context of this specialized autobiography.

First comes the 2014 Henry A. Murray Award for "distinguished contributions to the study of individual lives and whole persons," jointly bestowed by the Association for Research in Personality and the Society for Personology. This was the same honor that was given much earlier to Mac Runyan and Alan Elms (in 1986 and 1987, respectively), two highly distinguished psychobiographers (Simonton, 2023). Interestingly, later in 1998, this same recognition was granted to David C. McClelland (also 1987 APA DSCA), who just happened to have served on my doctoral committee, having signed off my thesis back in 1974. Given the interpersonal connections—a fellow graduate student, a faculty colleague, and a former graduate school mentor—this honor seems almost inevitable.

Next comes the 2023 Ernest R. Hilgard Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for General Psychology, Division 1 of the American Psychological Association. Hilgard is the same Stanford psychologist who co-authored the textbook that motivated me to switch from chemistry to a psychology major. Coincidentally, Hilgard's co-author, Richard C. Atkinson, served as President of the University of California for part of my tenure as Full Professor (and he even attended a gala award ceremony on my behalf). But most importantly, their textbook substantially influenced my later research program. Many of the topics I pursued over the years came directly from that text.

To offer but one example, they devoted a few pages to the age at which historic creators make their superior contributions (based largely on Harvey Christian Lehman's book, *Age and Achievement*, from 1953). That was the subject of my very first publication, "Age and literary creativity: A cross-cultural and transhistorical survey," in 1975 (a chapter from my 1974 doctoral dissertation), and I continued to publish on that subject throughout my career, including original empirical studies, literature reviews,

and mathematical models (e.g., "Age and outstanding achievement: What do we know after a century of research?" in 1988, "Creative productivity: A predictive and explanatory model of career trajectories and landmarks" in 1997, and "Creative life cycles in literature: Poets versus novelists or conceptualists versus experimentalists?" in 2007).

Some of my single-case historiometric studies dealt with this same question as well, namely, those involving Shakespeare, Beethoven, and Edison, such as my 2015 article "Thomas Alva Edison's creative career: The multilayered trajectory of trials, errors, failures, and triumphs." Notably, the idiographic results for these three cases align with the nomothetic results from multiple-case historiometric research. Exemplary creative geniuses can sometimes also prove typical for their domain (for an explanation, see Simonton, 1997).

Fittingly, the Hilgard Award was officially bestowed in a ceremony held at the 2024 APA Convention, a few days more than a half-century after I turned in my Harvard doctoral thesis that launched my career (namely, from August 5, 1974, to August 9, 2024). It seems like an opportune occasion to bring this autobiography to a close. As documented in my publications, we understand much better how historic creators and leaders earn entries in encyclopedias—as well as so much more about the psychology of history!

Dean Keith Simonton, PhD, received his Harvard doctorate in Social Psychology and retired as Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of California, Davis. His approximately 600 publications, including 14 books, treat various aspects of genius, creativity, and leadership. In 2023, he served as President of the Society for the History of Psychology, and he won the Ernest R. Hilgard Award for Lifetime Achievement in General Psychology from the American Psychological Association. Simonton may be contacted at dksimonton@ucdavis.edu. His complete publication list is available at https://simonton.faculty.ucdavis.edu/.

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White Supremacy and Childhood Trauma: The Case of David Lane

Jeffrey B. Rubin—Psychohistory Forum Research Assoc.

Abstract: Drawing on a psychoanalytically informed psychobiography of David Lane, one of the ideological architects of the White supremacist movement, the author aims to illuminate the link between David Lane's White supremacist ideology and his emotional experience in childhood with a brutalizing father.

Keywords: autobiography, childhood trauma, David Lane, father-son relationship, neo-Nazi, psychoanalysis, psychobiography, psychohistory, White supremacist

White Supremacy and Childhood Trauma: The Case of David Lane

Drawing on a psychoanalytically informed psychobiography of David Lane, one of the ideological architects of the White supremacist movement, I aim to illuminate the link between his White supremacist ideology and his emotional experience in childhood with a brutalizing father. The most significant threat to America may lie within. When COVID-19 becomes a nightmarish memory of a ghastly cultural plague, I fear the social virus infecting America from White supremacists will continue to haunt, bewilder, and assault us. It is easy to miss the mark when thinking about White supremacists and homegrown extremists. Amid a raging culture war, people tend to be divided between White supremacist sympathizers who condone recent racism and violence and opponents who abhor it. When a significant segment of the population is viewed by some democrats as "deplorable," it is tempting to advocate that we "exterminate the brutes," as Kurtz said in Joseph Conrad's (1950, p. 123) *Heart of Darkness*.

"Nothing is easier than to denounce the evil-doer; nothing more difficult than to understand him," wrote Norman Cousins (1981, p. 39), summarizing Dostoevsky. White supremacy, like madness, has a story to tell. Understanding where people are com-

ing from who identify as White supremacists—which doesn't preclude holding them morally accountable for racism and violence—is more constructive and important than denunciation. We can't address malevolence we don't comprehend, such as White supremacy.

The best theories we have about the causes of White supremacists don't get to the source of the problem. The Chicago Project on Security and Threats (CPOST) has studied the demographics of the "377 Americans, from 250 counties in 44 states, arrested or charged in the Capitol attack" (Pierce, 2021, para 2). Based on two additional independent surveys in February and March, including a National Opinion Research Council survey, CPOST concluded that fear of the "Great Replacement," rather than economic insecurity, was at the root of the rage. The "Great Replacement" theory—the notion that Whites are being displaced and replaced because of mass immigration and low birth rates resulting in rapidly rising non-White populations—certainly sheds light on some elements of fury among White people. Yet, although the "Great Replacement" theory has "achieved iconic status" (Pierce, 2021, para 5), it also hides a deeper source of resentment.

A unifying thread and rallying cry of White supremacists is a belief in the threat of "White genocide." It is hard for those who don't share this belief to understand how neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klanners, militias, and Aryan survivalists came to assume that White people are threatened with extinction by mass immigration, intermarriage, and "forced assimilation." In the case of David Lane, who popularized this belief, fears of extinction seem based on an unconscious fear from the past, instilled by a White father who terrorized and endangered his child.

Lane, a neo-Nazi and convicted felon, was the poster child for 20th century White nationalism. He was best known on the Right for penning "14 Words," arguably the most renowned White supremacist slogan: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children" (Lane, 2015, p. 211). Racial survival was the single greatest issue of our time, according to Lane, and America was the murderer of the White race.

White people living in fear of "extermination" is an old story in American history. In reference to Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World-Supremacy* (1920), F. Scott Fitzgerald's (1925) character Tom Buchanan in *The*

Great Gatsby favorably embraced Stoddard's view: "Well, it's a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be—will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved" (p. 13). It was David Lane who took these views and brought them to a wider audience.

David Lane was born on November 2, 1938, in Woten, Iowa. "My only memory of my mother is as a tall, severe woman who never smiled," he writes in his autobiography (Lane, n.d.). Lane (n.d.) wrote in his autobiography that his father

> seems to have been a drunk, a scoundrel, and a low-life of the worst kind… particularly when drunk, a truly despicable creature. He sold my mother to his buddies and to strangers for booze money. He beat the entire family, often with a razor strap.

Then, he continued with this heartbreaking recollection:

> In 1942, the family was living in a room over a hardware store in Woten, Iowa. With no wood for the stove, which provided the only heat during cold northern Iowa winters, my brother Roger [two years David's senior] started a fire in the stove with available materials, including the razor strap. For this my father beat him so badly that he broke Roger's eardrums and he was deaf for the rest of his life. For this reason, he was never adopted from the orphanage where we all ended up. (Lane, n.d.)

After David's father left his family in 1942, he mistreated another young wife, and "a brother of the new victim smashed his head in with a hammer, and Gerd went to wherever trash goes after death" (Lane, n.d.). In 1943, David was "adopted out of the orphanage" by a "doctrinaire, fundamentalist, Lutheran minister from the old school. He had a personality which practically no one could bear" (Lane, n.d.). His new mother "was an enigma. … To this day I cannot fathom how she could abandon her own talents and ego to traipse about the country with someone I considered an obnoxious buffoon" (Lane, n.d.).

Something murderous and unspeakable was done to David Lane and his family—by his father, not people of color. When your father beats you and abandons you, you feel annihilated and erased, worthless and unlovable. What makes dreadful events traumatic, notes psychoanalyst Robert Stolorow in *Trauma and Human Exist-*

ence (2007), is not the incident alone but the absence of an emotional home for one's feelings. Not only did David Lane go through a devastating experience, but he also had to face it by himself, which intensified the psychological damage.

The nightmare his father put David through gave him a life mission—save White children from being extinguished. But in some ways, the extinction David feared in the future—"The Death of The White Race is neither imaginary nor far off in the distant future"—already happened, but in his past: the emotional "murder" he had undergone at home. The British psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott found that a fear of breakdown—and death (I'd add soul murder)—was a breakdown that happened in the person's past but was not remembered; the unremembered memory was preserved in the fear projected into the future.

"The future for White children" David Lane yearned to "secure"—and that has inspired thousands of White supremacists—was one his father annihilated in him. By blaming Blacks, immigrants, Jews, and women for the "extermination," he didn't realize what he had experienced at the hands of his father. Aligning himself with a community of embittered men who stoked his anger rather than empathized with his pain, David distanced himself from the real source of his agony by scapegoating innocent people, letting his father off the hook. Racializing emotional extinction—attributing fears of obliteration to nameless people of color David Lane never met—warded off the unspeakable and unbearable nightmare that his father had psychologically obliterated him. In doing so, Lane unwittingly ensured that his trauma would never be addressed; instead, he foisted his trauma on the world.

Not everyone who is traumatized becomes an extremist. Some torched souls respond to their agony by becoming psychotherapists or nurses, martial artists or teachers, rather than perpetrators of violence or abuse. It's likely impossible to claim that all White supremacists were once traumatized or that authoritarianism is only learned at home. But I think we can reasonably speculate that some kind of ghastly unconscious trauma may live in some, and possibly many, White supremacists.

Since the topic of authoritarianism and White supremacy is overdetermined, with historical, psychological, and sociological facets, we need to utilize the wisdom of historians and sociologists, mental health professionals and anthropologists, economists and

students of the brain, and novelists and artists in addressing these troubling and ever-escalating cultural cancers. Combating home-grown extremists is a complex problem demanding multi-pronged strategies. It's crucial to understand the emotional sources of White supremacists' fear and alienation, which the example of David Lane suggests is emotional trauma close to home. It's also important to understand their feeling culturally and financially marginalized, supplanted, and losing the world they knew and not being able to mourn it. Getting in touch with the emotional horrors we undergo can be devastating, even shattering. But it also affords a powerful resource for lessening the possibility that such traumas are so frequently revisited on innocent people in the world.

Jeffrey B. Rubin's bio can be found on pages 9-10.

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On the Road to Find Out: A Career Studying Lives

Susan Bluck—University of Florida

Abstract: This article provides my academic life story, charting my course along "the road to find out." The road begins in Vancouver, BC, Canada, and continues on through Southern California, Berlin, Germany, and finally, Micanopy and Gainesville, FL. Embracing humanism, discovering the ecological approach to memory, and early exposure to content-analytic narrative methods are described as shaping my career as a life story researcher. My methods differ from those of a psychobiographer: I am a psychologist who collects the stories people tell of their

lives (i.e., autobiographical memory, the life story) using narrative analysis to reveal important themes and personal interpretations of the life lived.

Keywords: autobiography, cognition research, content analysis, death, ecology, European culture, functional approach, Life Story Lab, memory research, psychobiography, psychohistory, psychology of aging, reminiscence, research process

In the late 1990s, I lived in an Italian opera singer's apartment in Berlin. I'm beginning with that because I mentioned it to a friend years ago, and he said, "If you ever write your autobiographical musings, you'll need to include that bit." My three years in Berlin as a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Max Planck Institute (MPI) for Human Development were incredibly formative in my life of studying lives. After a formal job interview, I landed there, completely ignorant of the stupendous opportunities it would provide. Sitting in my suite in a house in Vancouver on a rainy day, with a cup of tea in hand and a fire on, I wondered what was next for me after graduate school. MPI's job ad sparked my interest. This institute across the sea seemed a place where people "thought like me"—where my focus on lives unfolding over time, a dynamic view of memory and the self, might be appreciated. I hadn't heard of the Max Planck Institute, but I thought I would give it a shot.

Getting an (Academic) Life: My Berlin Days

My position was in the Center for Lifespan Psychology under then-Director Paul Baltes. My thinking was shaped, ideas honed, and analytical abilities tested and tested again through interactions with whom I consider brilliant people. Among others, this included senior scientist Ursula Staudinger, who had consistently innovative approaches to social cognition; psychoanalyst/scholar Tilmann Habermas; and my postdoctoral colleague, Judith Glück. Arriving at Berlin-Tegel, I was picked up by an institute driver, taken to a suite in the leafy, village-like Rüdesheimer Platz, given an office in the innovatively designed, snail-like building that houses the institute (i.e., renowned architects Hermann Fehling and Daniel Gogel), and provided German lessons to learn the language at least *ein bisschen* ("a little bit"). In short, I arrived in a world unlike anything I had ever seen before. I felt welcomed in grand style.

There is much I could say about my time in Berlin. However, a few things are prominent regarding my interest in studying lives. One is my first formal meeting with the scientists of the Cen-

ter. On the spot, in this rarefied environment, Paul Baltes asked me how I had become interested in lifespan development. Looking back later, I realized other people might have talked about their scholarly journey, maybe highlighting accomplishments to create a strong first impression. None of that occurred to me. Instead, to "explain myself," I spontaneously shared two autobiographical memories. As I sat recounting those memories, I realized how they both spurred and represented my fascination with how people carry their past with them in memory.

The first memory I shared was of being ten years old. I was in my family's living room, listening to my Nana as she sat in her dusty green chair. She was saying something about when she was a girl: telling a memory. Sitting cross-legged on the floor, I had a strong reaction: My mind swam as I realized that if she had *that* memory in her head, she also had a million others of all her life right up to this moment when she was in this room, an old lady with beautiful long white hair, my Nana. I was awed at how she could have all that in her head and have it not grow super-large or maybe even come apart somehow.

The second memory was of being at dinner at a university friend's family farmhouse outside Vancouver. Around the table, the room was filled with lively conversation. His mother, though, played a quiet role. She had cooked the food and was placing things out to eat, circling the table while silently delivering the bounty—almost a shadow. I was going to be leaving for California soon and said that. She suddenly came alive and piped up, saying, "I've been to California!" Her adult children's heads swung round, and one actually said, "No, you haven't." She said that it was before any of them were born. Her girlfriend had bought a sports car, and they were itching to drive. They decided spontaneously to drive down the coast to the States just to see how far they could get. I listened, delighted. What I noticed was that she transformed when she told her story. I clearly saw a former self that she carried with her in memory.

Full of such insights as a young woman, I believe I would always have pondered individual lives: notions of self and memory. Fortunately, I found myself developing a career that completely aligned with that. During my Berlin days, my ideas were nourished, particularly by projects with two colleagues. The first became a research program that began over soup in the MPI cantina where scientists and staff ate together. There, I met Judith Glück,

also a postdoctoral researcher. My first awareness of her was someone joking at our table that she and I should collaborate just so that others could, at conferences, smirkingly cite Glück and Bluck. Everyone laughed, including us. Later, though, as she described her work as part of the Berlin Wisdom Project, we began forging an autobiographical perspective on wisdom. Judith is an excellent methodologist and a flexible, creative thinker. Together, we designed (and Paul Baltes graciously funded) a project on what we called *Everyday Wisdom* (2004), collecting open-ended autobiographical stories of individuals remembering a time of thinking, saying, or doing something wise. Our research continued for over a decade, with visits between Austria and the U.S. Resulting publications included the MORE Life Experience Model in 2013, charting how wisdom develops through reflection on one's own life.

The second influential project for my emerging focus on the study of lives was this: Paul Baltes was a strategist extraordinaire. He set my scholarly goal on one of my first days at MPI. Given my background in autobiographical memory, I was to work with Tilmann Habermas to write a major review article on life stories, which was to be published in the *Psychological Bulletin*. Other outlets were not an option. After more than a year working with Tilmann, with much tough grappling with ideas, I had learned more than I could possibly imagine—and enjoyed every moment. In 2000, we published "Getting a Life: The Emergence of the Life Story in Adolescence" … in *Psychological Bulletin*. The article was a jumping-off point for me intellectually. Practically (as Paul said it would), it helped land me a job at a Carnegie-designated Research One (R1) institution. Looking back, it has been rewarding to chart how many other scholars across nations have enjoyed and cited that paper (as documented in *Getting a Life: A Historical Analysis*, Bluck & Koch, in press).

Beginning in Canada: Learning to Love Ideas

Of course, no one's academic life story begins as a postdoctoral researcher. I am Canadian, and my story starts in Canada. I grew up in a loving family with no college degrees and an abundance of ideas and philosophy. There was a dictionary on the shelf by the dinner table where we gathered every night. We all grew up loving nature, singing, and thinking. Later, I had many growth-inducing experiences in Vancouver's Kitsilano neighborhood during my high school days. I was surrounded by a group of wildly wonderful, imaginative friends. Most of my teachers were engag-

ing and encouraging. That said, of the 300 students in my graduating class, only a small handful went to university. I was one of them. It was a boon to have an excellent University of British Columbia (UBC; R1), which hugged the ocean and was surrounded by fir and cedar just up the hill. It was a bike ride away from where I was born and lived with my parents. My studies progressed, particularly through innovative, interactive, and interdisciplinary learning (i.e., UBC Arts One Program) that combined scientific, philosophical, and literary ways of knowing. Though I couldn't have named it then, I was becoming a humanist.

My experience at UBC after graduation (BA, Psychology) as full-time Lab Manager for Dr. Peter Suedfeld's REST Lab shaped my sense of the research endeavor: a chance to romp with others in the playground of ideas. For Peter, the research process was fun, and the results were exciting. I drew on that model of the camaraderie of Peter's lab when I set up my own years later. I also learned that of the many methods in psychology, one was content analysis. Peter was a maverick, asking unconventional questions and using archival and personal narrative text as data (e.g., international newspapers and famous persons' letters). This was in the early 1980s before narrative approaches had gained traction. I was introduced to these marginalized methods very early on, seeing them as completely natural epistemological routes.

I was trained to analyze narratives (e.g., for integrative complexity), the importance of rigorous codebook development, and high standards for inter-rater reliability. This training and my stimulating interactions with then graduate students, now lifelong friends, Drs. Liz Ballard (who I worked with, alongside Suedfeld, on the 1994 article "The Effects of Emotional Involvement and Psychological Distance on Integrative Complexity") and Brian de Vries (who I worked with alongside James E. Birren on the 1993 article "The Understanding of Death and Dying in a Life-Span Perspective") shaped the approach that I have now employed, and taught to others, for decades. Narrative methodology made sense to me because it was firmly grounded in individuals' phenomenological experiences. I felt that my "self as person" and "self as researcher" could happily co-exist by employing this approach.

After nine years of working, I applied to graduate school. My life in Vancouver for those nine years was a golden age. I joke that I enjoyed retirement in my 20s-30s: a bohemian lifestyle with a loving family close by, getaways in the Gulf Islands, travel here

and there, painting and writing poetry, shopping in the markets, and cooking good food for close friends. I was working at UBC with new ideas to engage with every day but none of the pressure of graduate school or a "real career." As I write this, I again realize how every story has many stories in it. Every memory has one that came before and merges into the ones that come next. After nine years, what prompted me to apply to doctoral programs in my early 30s? I can't begin to tell those many stories here, but I only pause to thank my friend and now fictive kin, Alistair Wallbaum. He encouraged me firmly but gently to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) that was required to apply to graduate school. The Vancouver chapter in my life story was about to end.

Across the Border and Down the Road: Graduate School in California

I chose to attend the School of Social Ecology at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) because the school's philosophy fit with how I saw the world. Very much in line with my interest in how individuals navigate their own development over time, the program examined the intersection of psychological, sociological, environmental, and legal aspects of human behavior. I had an apartment on campus but often stayed with friends close by, but a world away, on the flowery, salty Balboa Peninsula. Our beach bungalow was 97 steps from the ocean.

I am thankful to my two mentors at UCI. Dr. Karen Rook was incredibly patient with me as I wanted to develop my own theory paper instead of doing empirical research. I was interested in providing a new analysis of Robert Butler's classic 1963 paper introducing the construct of life review, "The Life Review: An Interpretation of Reminiscence in the Aged." This was an irregular path for a new student, but Karen allowed me the latitude to develop my ideas, constantly reining me in (as that is what I needed). I remember her saying, which I took as both a compliment and a corrective directive, something like: "If you were writing for *The New York Times Book Review*, this would be fine. But you're not. You are writing a thesis, a technical thesis." Her comment really helped me. I realized that I needed to solidly master the structural, logical aspects of academic writing for my voice to be heard.

My own goal, of course, was that, when I had done that, at least to a decent extent, I would reintroduce a bit of informal poetry into my writing. It has always been important to me to write in a way that any interested person might find pleasant and accessible.

When the article from my thesis with Linda J. Levine, "Reminiscence as autobiographical memory: A catalyst for reminiscence theory development," was published in 1998, I sent it to the eminent Dr. Butler himself. As a beginning scholar, I remember being so thrilled when he wrote back with his commendation. Though I had been a co-author on several publications at UBC, this was the first in my own research area. It was clearly focused on how people think about their lives.

Given my increasing interest in memory and the life story, I worked with Dr. Linda Levine for my dissertation. Linda's kindness, a quirkiness akin to my own, wonderful writing skills, and deep knowledge of emotion and memory launched me into the field. She embraced an everyday, ecological approach to cognition and emotion—that is, studying people's memory for experiences in the real world: recalling events of one's own life (i.e., outside traditional cognitive laboratory research). This was new and bold at that time as memory was still largely studied in the lab.

Through Linda, I began to attend meetings of the Society for Applied Research in Memory and Cognition (SARMAC), an intimate, international conference. There, I met the people who had been influencing me as I sat alone reading as a graduate student: David Rubin, Martin Conway, David Pillemer, Dorthe Berntsen, and many others. SARMAC has been a beloved intellectual home throughout my career. Also, on the practical side, I am guessing that colleagues I met there were letter-writers when I went up for promotion. At SARMAC in Victoria, Canada, Martin Conway, with his lovely British accent, approached me jovially, saying something like, "I've been asked to write for you for your promotion, Susan. Of course, I will. I will write a letter that would make your mother weep."

Also, very influential in graduate school, I began reading Dick Neisser, Dan McAdams, and Jefferson Singer. Their carefully crafted views of *why* humans recall the personal past (i.e., the functional approach to autobiographical memory, focused not on the mechanisms of how we recall but why humans remember the events of their lives) and how they carry it with them (i.e., self-defining memories, the life story approach) were delicious discoveries. From completely different orientations, they provided a firm scaffolding for my dissertation. I was also challenged intellectually by a fellow student and now lifelong friend, Mary Moycik, who continues to enrich my life with her alternative perspectives. Amid

these influences and regular trips with friends to the Joshua Tree National Monument to see the cacti and wildflowers bloom, I moved forward. My dissertation, completed in 1997, focused on the qualities of younger and older adults' memories of a real-world event. The first article from the dissertation work was published in 1999, "Autobiographical Remembering and Hypermnesia: A Comparison of Older and Younger Adults," in *Psychology and Aging* with Levine and Tracy M. Laulhere.

Now to Work: Opening the Life Story Lab

I started work at 40. At least, my first "real job." From time to time, I think about normative cultural life scripts and how my life has been shaped by being "off-time" in my career. That said, I didn't particularly subjectively feel one age or another as I began my job at the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville and opened my Life Story Lab. Having lived in cities with over a million people my entire life, I decided to settle in Micanopy, FL, just outside Gainesville. Micanopy has a population of 500, give or take: stories nest within stories as a life unfolds.

For a couple of decades now, I have been studying life stories of people of all ages, largely through content analysis for a variety of constructs (e.g., meaning, purpose, communion, virtue, wisdom, and more) of all sorts of their autobiographical memories. So much has happened that it is hard to describe my continuing journey "on the road to find out." I will mention just a few things: those I have mentored, my connection to the Society for Personology, and how my academic life has come full circle in my current focus on death as part of the life story.

Mentees: My research has been aided by the interest, sometimes passion, of graduate students, an evolving undergraduate team, postdoctoral researchers, and visiting scholars. Their faces kaleidoscope in front of me as I write. Fortunately, I have developed international collaborations and drawn international students and post-docs to my team. For example, previous international doctoral students, such as Hsiao-wen Liao (Taiwan) and Burcu Demiray (Turkey), helped me to see first-hand, not just through the literature, that constructs such as "self" and "memory" do not mean the same thing across the globe. Along with those two, now well-established in their own careers, postdoctoral researchers Majse Lind (Denmark) and Mary Kate Koch (U.S.) have not only enriched my life but left me blissfully confident in the next generation of women in narrative psychology. I thanked each student for

shaping and supporting my lab, celebrating them as they came and went. Still, I say it again to all of them: I am so grateful for our time together.

When I arrived at UF, Nicole Alea was looking to begin her doctoral research. My first day at work started with Nicole at my side. Together, we opened and developed the Life Story Lab as she worked on ideas for her dissertation. Our careers grew in tandem, each helping the other to master what was needed for our different career stages. She has become a dear friend and valued lifelong collaborator. With her, following the early tradition of the ecological cognition movement, I established a program of research embracing the functional approach to autobiographical memory (i.e., the idea that human beings remember so much about their lived experience because memory is foundational to psychosocial adaptation). In our 2002 paper, "Exploring the Functions of Autobiographical Memory: Why Do I Remember the Autumn?" we review how remembering our personal past provides us with self-continuity, allows us to form social bonds, and helps guide our present and future behavior. Nicole and I published the Thinking about Life Experiences Scale in 2011 to easily capture how individuals use memories of their past. Happily, others have picked up and translated this scale into many languages, allowing researchers an instrument that provides a glimpse at individuals' memories of their personal past.

Personology: Another turning point in my career was when Jefferson Singer invited me to become a member of the Society for Personology. This entire group of people and their way of sharing and interacting with ideas positively lifted my academic life. Though I had been studying memories and life stories for some time, joining the society in 2007 provided a regular touchstone with this thoughtful, intimate group all focused on the study of lives. I was also introduced to the world of psychobiography (of which I had been completely ignorant) by Jim Anderson and Mac Runyan. Conversations with Jefferson Singer, Mark Freeman, Monisha Pasupathi, and Ravenna Helson have imprinted on my way of studying lives and my own life likely more than I even know.

Coming Full Circle

In the last ten years or so, my interest in memories and life stories has taken a turn. I began teaching an undergraduate course on Death and Dying and developed a new arm of research on death-related issues in people's lives. I have focused a good deal of my

energy on understanding death as part of the life story, as evidenced in my 2018 article with Emily Mroz titled "The End: Death as Part of the Life Story." This includes how the deaths of others are recalled and integrated into one's life story, as well as how knowing that our stories have an ending affects how we think about our past. Not everyone wants to study death. Fortunately, I admitted doctoral students, Mroz and later Kiana Cogdill-Richardson, who were interested in building careers in this area: their contributions have clearly expanded this work.

This focus on death brings my academic life story full circle. I mentioned that I worked at UBC for many years before going to graduate school. One reason was that I couldn't find a topic that, on close inspection, held my interest. I tried several before chancing on the reminiscence literature, particularly Robert Butler's idea that looking back at life in the face of mortality might aid in preparation for death. This was an area where I felt I could dedicate the time and energy I knew was needed for a dissertation. As I delved deeper, I realized that there was a fundamental question that needed to be answered first: Why would thinking about our past help prepare us for death? In fact, why would remembering and thinking about our past help us in any way at all? Why were humans doing it? Why did my Nana, and now myself, remember so much about what had happened throughout their entire lifetime? Given this conundrum, I set out on my Master's work, my dissertation, and for many years in my Life Story Lab to understand how and why humans remember so much about their lives. With that groundwork laid, I was happy to return to my original pre-graduate school ideas about how death and memory are intertwined.

All stories have an ending, but my academic life story has not yet ended. I now spend my days thinking alone and with others about death as part of the life story. I teach young people not only about life stories and "the good life" but also about what might be a fitting ending to the story: for me, you, and each unique human being. There's so much left to know, and I'm on the road to find out.

Susan Bluck, PhD, is Professor of Psychology, University of Florida (UF) and a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America. In her Life Story Lab (lifestorylab.psych.ufl.edu), she guides a diverse, dynamic team of graduate and undergraduate researchers. Her research focuses on autobiographical memory, reminiscence, and the life story across the lifespan. Susan obtained her PhD from the School of Social Ecology at the University of Cali-

fornia, Irvine. She arrived at UF in 2000 after a postdoctoral position at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin, Germany. Outside of work, she creates stuff, grows stuff, gets out in nature, and is slowly but surely renovating an old family cabin in the Canadian Gulf Islands with her partner. She can be contacted at bluck@ufl.edu. ❑

Book Reviews

Reflective Essays on Historical Obsessions and Reenactments

Juhani Ihanus—University of Helsinki

Review of David Beisel and Irene Javors's Forging New Paths: Reflections on History, Culture and Psyche (Amazon Book Publication, 2024), ISBN 978-1917306805, 123 pages, softbound, $14.99.

Keywords: book review, David Beisel, fear, Forging New Paths: Reflections on History, Culture and Psyche, Irene Javors, parent-child relationships, psychobiography, psychohistory, The Suicidal Embrace: Hitler, the Allies, and the Origins of the Second World War, unconscious fantasy

Looking back on his long academic career as a scholar of modern European and American history, David Beisel has published three essays illuminating his early childhood memories and summarizing his central themes. He remembers his childhood fears during World War II in the Bronx, New York, and tries to explain how they affected him in his much later choice of research topic. His major work, *The Suicidal Embrace: Hitler, the Allies, and the Origins of the Second World War* (2003/2021), is not a study of the battles of war but of the diplomacy that unconsciously resulted in the Second World War.

What Beisel calls his World War II "obsession" is related to his personal history and, more analytically, his research insight into the hidden projections, collusions, and co-dependencies in the addictive systems of the family of nations. The decision-making patterns of leaders and diplomats in the 1930s seemed to Beisel to be carrying out an unconscious fantasy typical of a dysfunctional family. Looking at the historical documents "with a fresh eye and listening with the Third Ear," Beisel witnessed how self-destructive decision-making led first to *folie à deux* and then multiplied into *folie à plusieurs* (p. 12). Nations, groups, and individuals were intertwined and shaped by reenactments reiterating the need to avenge the enemy and sacrifice soldiers for the heroic cause.

Beisel's different way of reading and listening to historical documents has helped change the traditional narratives about the beginning and the course of the Second World War. Those narratives ignore the emotionally charged and neurally imprinted "micro-wounds" that people share during times of war. For example, fear, humiliation, anger, and shame dominate people's individual and cultural experiences during and long after war. Beisel reveals many overlooked connections, thus contributing to psychohistorical research that can make readers more aware of microtraumas and big traumas and their effects. The obligation to repeat self-defeating and self-destructive reenactments may become less demanding with the kind of psychological awareness that Beisel provides.

In his essays, Beisel gives several examples of how plans for the next war are made during peaceful times. Pearl Harbor was anticipated long before it happened. Beisel's "surprise attacks" list ranges from the early 19th century to the 21st century. As a reader, I expected some more analysis and psychological interpretation of these historical events. Beisel's writing style is very clear and readable for a broad audience. However, its laconic outlook may also reflect the author's humble self-positioning in relation to the vast cycles of war, human memory, trauma, and their reliving. Although his efforts have opened important avenues for further research, he does not pretend to fully explain the complex interplay between individual traumatic experiences and their cultural mediation. For psychohistorians, Beisel's contributions clarify how to be on the alert for future disasters and catastrophes through early warning signs.

The other part of the book consists of three essays by Irene Javors. Her first essay approaches modern American history from the perspective of film noir (two adaptations of *Nightmare Alley* [1947/2021], based on the William Lindsay Gresham novel of the same name). The second essay, which was written in 2014, looks at the uncanny and abject zombies as reminders of our infantile past and as metaphors for how we externalize our fear of death and "how we deaden our brains with gadgets, drugs, and the diseases of toxic consumerism and conformity" (p. 103). The American Dream is presented as America's carny show, obsessed with catastrophe. In her cultural critique, Javors debunks the myth of the American "confidence man," limitless opportunity, and freedom (p. 87).

Javors's third and final essay is a personal account of her professional work as a mental health counselor and her various experiences while working on the COVID-19 pandemic. Her previous interest in zombies, which she testifies to in her 2014 essay, was an academic abstraction that abruptly changed during the global pandemic. Her narrative in the third essay is more fragmentary, testifying to the confusion on the COVID-19 frontlines. Javors mentions that during the pandemic, she began to understand those who clung to conspiracy theories and those who felt "conned" by the system. The system's failure is expressed in distrust

in politicians and health authorities. It may be the next level of the nightmare that people are eliminated because they disbelieve in sacred myths. The "tireless algorithms" that Yuval Noah Harari has described in his *Nexus: A Brief History of Information Networks from the Stone Age to AI* (2024) can excite people and push them over the edge. "Informed" people can accept the obligation to kill the aliens.

After reading this work, I wondered how the contributions of these two authors could and should be reconciled. I found at least one similarity. Both writers, in their own way, remind us of regimes of domination and their traumatic effects but simultaneously of the precarious chance to forge resilience and co-creative efforts that counter the destructive delusions now flowing through the global media world. Their short essays led me to ask them for a larger work to address the historical and contemporary issues surrounding the personal and cultural, manifest and latent, expressions and transmissions of trauma. Would there be a way to raise hope for humanity?

Juhani Ihanus, PhD, is Associate Professor of Cultural Psychology at the University of Helsinki and Associate Professor of the History of Science and Ideas at the University of Oulu. He is also an international member of the Psychohistory Forum who has published books and articles on psychohistory, cultural and clinical psychology, psychoanalytic theory, biblio/poetry therapy, and the history of psychology. Dr. Ihanus may be reached at juhani.ihanus@helsinki.fi. ❑

An Ideal Guide for a New Era of Psychobiography

Jefferson A. Singer—Connecticut College

Review of Joseph G. Ponterotto's The Psychobiographer's Handbook: A Practical Guide to Research and Ethics (Washington, DC: APA, 2025), ISBN 978-1433837968, 399 pages, paperback, $69.99.

Keywords: book review, life history, methodology, narrative identity, The Psychobiographer's Handbook: A Practical Guide to Research and Ethics, psychobiography, psychohistory, research ethics, study of lives

Joseph Ponterotto's new book, *The Psychobiographer's Handbook: A Practical Guide to Research and Ethics*, has done a great service not only to the field of psychobiography but also to the larger field of psychology. For decades, there has often accrued (unfairly) a patina of illegitimacy to the psychobiographer's craft. It was easy for those outside the subdiscipline to cast aspersions about "armchair" and "long-distance" psychoanalytic formulations and diagnosis. Ponterotto's comprehensive

and systematic overview of psychobiographical studies from their origin in the first years of the 20th century to the present day makes this "composition fallacy," which has centered misguided speculative efforts, no longer possible. On the contrary: He provides detailed chapters and tables (but always in an accessible manner) that showcase the methodological rigor, theoretical diversity, and ethical sensitivity that define the field's evolving standards. In doing so, he has provided invaluable guidelines for current scholars and future practitioners of psychobiography to follow.

The book is ideally laid out for graduate and/or advanced undergraduate courses in psychobiography theory and practice. It is divided into two sections: "Historical, Methodological, and Ethical Foundations for Psychobiography," which provides historical, methodological, and ethical underpinnings of psychobiography's interdisciplinary blend of psychology, biography, and history, and "Conducting Psychobiography: Nuts and Bolts," which goes step-by-step through the selection of a subject and the accompanying theoretical lens, followed by how to collect, evaluate, and integrate one's data, concluding in the write-up and dissemination of the work. As a bonus, it includes appendices that cover, among other topics, a self-assessment scale for evaluating one's competence to perform a psychobiography, a sample institutional review board psychobiography proposal, and a sample psychobiography course syllabus. It is hard to think of what else the author might have added to this essential text!

One current that runs through the book, which I believe is of increasing significance, is the evolution of psychobiography away from an exclusive focus on famous historical figures. Not surprisingly, given the blinders that psychology and psychiatry have operated with since their origins in the late 19th century, these "important" subjects were almost invariably White, Western, and male. We are now seeing psychobiography begin to widen its gaze substantially, and Ponterotto provides important documentation of more diverse psychobiographies, both internationally and across various racial/ethnic groups in the United States. Just as essential, he illustrates how the range of subjects has expanded to include individuals who are not well-known but whose lives provide unique insights into sociopolitical circumstances that inform our understanding of equity and social justice. We learn about brilliant new psychobiographies of a transwoman advocating for her rights in an Australian correctional facility, an African-American youth leader who started a boxing gym in downtown Detroit, and an anti-apartheid activist in late 20th century South Africa, among many others.

Finally, one of the volume's most encouraging aspects is its inclusion of mini-profiles of current psychobiographers spanning generations and geographical locations. The student or fledgling psychobiographer is sure to identify with at least one of these outstanding scholars and gain

inspiration for their own psychobiographical studies. All in all, this is a stellar must-have book for anyone who desires to learn more about this subfield of psychology that honors individual lives within their historical and sociocultural contexts.

Jefferson A. Singer's bio can be found on page 47. ❑

The Passing Moment of Us All

Peter W. Petschauer—Psychohistory Forum Res. Assoc.

Review of Merle Heidi Molofsky's Sh'ma, I Hear Voices (New York: International Psychoanalytic Books, 2024), ISBN 978-1-9568-6474, 209 pages, paperback, $18.

Keywords: aging, book review, emotional development, Merle Molofsky, poetry, psychohistory, Sh'ma, I Hear Voices, wisdom, women's issues

Merle Heidi Molofsky gave us a powerful book of poems, not text cut to look like poems, as Richard Reichbart assures us in the introduction (p. 1). A meaningful approach to offer a sense of the poems' insight and power is to comment on several that strike me as particularly succinct as a fellow poet. We have all been told many times that poems are usually very personal, but good poetry lifts us beyond this and addresses aspects of the human condition. In its best forms, poetry can be understood across generations. In this review, I take four poems and reach into them to go beyond the personal. Put differently, the poems allow the reader to feel/think of herself or himself as included in its content/message. Molofsky's thoughtful and inspiring *Sh'ma, I Hear Voices* is divided into two parts: part one is entitled "Hearing voices," and part two, "Witchcraft ain't nothing but a good woman feeling bad."

How many times have we stood at the ocean's edge, watched the waves ride in, and wondered where they had been? Maybe they originated somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic, washing over mountains and ridges we cannot see with our naked eye. Now, they are before us, seemingly unspoiled, thanks to Molofsky's words: "The Ocean's Gift / The ocean surged to tell me, / 'I traveled the world, I wanted to find you, to lay before you, at your feet, / my finest filaments of white lace'" (p. 7). She paints an idyllic picture, unspoiled by what they may have encountered. The other reading of this exceptional image is to understand it as the introduction to her book of poems. They emerged from her world, experiences, and thoughts; now, she places them before us in their best form. Best *female* form, I'd like to add—they are, after all, dressed in white lace.

Fortuitously, fate fit my life between major wars. No flights from

bombs, no harassment from autocrats, no nasty attacks on my person; memories of others' troubles fill my mind. I simply turned old, and wrinkles showed up one after the other. The "natural way" of aging, as I identified in these words from Merle: "Lies / The lines of my face tell lies. / I have never suffered. / The rose is red beyond my eyes" (p. 133).

With the following words, Molofsky takes me into my old age: "Now / It took a long time to grow this old, / to tell a story I've never told, / and if the story prove false or true, grass still grows green and the sky's still blue. / I didn't change the world" (p. 7). Yesterday, I was young or middle-aged, but unlike her, I have no intention to tell all the stories of these earlier years. As the priest said at my mother's interment, "Her secrets will fall into the ground with her." Nevertheless, like Merle, I know the world will not have changed because of me. Here is the recognition that our influence, even as the major figures we perceive ourselves to be, will not change the world. Let me add this, though: As a group, unless wisdom strikes us, we will not stop killing our planet and continue to turn the grass brown and the sky dark.

Let's now look at the third stanza of another poem about aging and women's wisdom. "Dreams of a Belly Dancer: ... / … They are simple. / These ones, obsessed with strength, / Timid in the face of something other. / Old, I will frighten them, / Lifting my skirt to betray the stinking / Of my flesh and juices. / But now I dance for the sound / Of the sun, the gold and pearls upon the shape / Of me" (p. 97). The first stanza takes us into the innocence, maybe that of Molofsky, of the young woman, maybe a bride, who is surrounded by "a wolves' chorus: / O the voices of wolves are of blackness" (p. 97). Who are these wolves? Men? As she dances spontaneously, she feels beautiful but realizes she is old and wise to "the ways of men" (p. 97). They are simple, she argues, exuding strength but timid inside. She sees herself as having declined into unsightliness. However, when she dances, she becomes "Of the sun" (p. 97) again, of youth, covered by gold and pearls.

Merle also provides a unique description of a woman who did not just attempt suicide but carried it through: "Suicide Notes, II / Please, she begs of time, I have died / but / do not throw away / all this paper / until someone / has read the words / flames, in THIS instant, / learn to read" (p. 198). What else can one add? How often has a student sat in my office and said she or he wanted to commit suicide?! Thankfully, only one did, yet we'll never know if they will anyway, and we'll not find the note they left behind somewhere to let someone know of their reason for the deed. The book is a stirring poetic introduction for anyone interested in human development.

Peter W. Petschauer, PhD, Drhc, is Professor Emeritus of European History at Appalachian State University. His most recent works include *Seasons of Life and Understanding* (2024) and *What One Learns:*

The Backing of South Tyrol in the Modern World (in German, 2023). The author may be reached at petschauerpw@appstate.edu or peterpetschauer.com. ❑

The Seasons of a Poetic Wanderer

Juhani Ihanus—University of Helsinki

Review of Peter W. Petschauer's Seasons — Of Life and Of Understanding (Perspektiven Presse, 2024), ISBN 979-8326187512, 105 pages, softbound, $16.51.

Keywords: book review, collective history, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Matsuo Bashō, Peter W. Petschauer, poetry, psychobiography, psychohistory, Seasons — Of Life and Of Understanding

In his third book of poetry, Peter Petschauer continues his journey through the landscapes and mindscapes of personal, family, and collective history and the search for meaningful moments. Petschauer's poetic voices resonate autobiographically, but his compassionate and deep listening to "rarely heard voices" includes the care of nature, the empathic embrace of human life in its various stages of development, and a psychohistorical understanding of the tragedies and hopes of humankind.

In the field of poetry, Petschauer cites the Japanese master of haiku and renku (linked poetry that's part of a collaboration between two or more poets) poetry Matsuo Bashō and the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as his models. For Petschauer, poems are comprehensive ways of tentatively knowing and feeling the breathing phenomena of life and their changing relationships. In addition to the poems, his new work includes an introductory essay on Bashō and the writing of poetry. Petschauer admits that some of his own poems belong to the "pure" poetry category (p. 15). Howard Stein has classified this as the complex, self-referential use of language for its own sake without addressing human suffering.

However, most of Petschauer's poems clearly belong to the "applied" or practical poetry that Stein characterizes as engaging the reader's heart, witnessing suffering, offering reflection, and evoking lived and vivid experiences. Petschauer combines narrative or prose poetry with free-flowing poetry that reaches existential-experiential dimensions without following abstract theoretical guidelines. His poetic journey, while fixing "the place, the time, the season, perhaps even the time of day, and of course the object itself" (p. 12), offers an open dialogue for shifting interpretations.

Petschauer's idea of writing poetry is "to express joyful, mean-

ingful and difficult thoughts and encounters with friends, acquaintances and distant men and women who uplift or terrorize our lives" (p. 14). Affectionate dedication to his psychohistorical colleagues and their contributions are part of Petschauer's empathic approach. Such friendly encounters are attached in this work to the sections of poetry that manage to create perspectives on a wide spectrum of passages and transitions in human life and history, not through any dogmatic claims but by accompanying "Tentacles of other times / reaching into the present" (p. 34). There is also a lament for our "crying world" and "uprooted" people and nature. "Waves of discontent" permeate political, social, cultural, and economic issues in this volume.

By writing from the margins, Petschauer succeeds in finding and exploring essential questions, times, and spaces. I associate Petschauer's poems with Paul Celan's (1986) ideas about poetry in his speech "The Meridian" (pp. 49-50). For Celan, poems keep their open and free spaces of conversation, engage the readers, and question in the present moment "where-from and where-to," or move from an "already-no-more" into a "still-here." Like Celan, Petschauer, with his sense of joyful and desperate existence, uses the language of one person seeking the figures of another and is aware of all our dates and seasons: "Tentacles of other times / reaching into the present. / The illusion of remaining young, / except when a mirror tells us otherwise" (p. 34). Poets speak, as Celan (1986) claimed, "from an angle of reflection which is their own existence, their own physical nature" (p. 49).

Even Petschauer's most personal and concise poems contain sensations, sounds, and memories that expand the scene into entanglements with culture, history, politics, and ethics. There is no naïve optimism, but neither is there a cynical attitude. Petschauer does not deny ambiguity and ambivalence, for example, in his connection to his father's traumatic life. Nevertheless, the poems are presented as means of reorientation, as itineraries through which affective, multidirectional memories emerge in the present concerning different individuals, groups, and environments.

Poems are temporally layered. They hide and reveal: "People plagued with memories of another time, / chafe at tendencies of today, / hidden behind barricades of denial, / their past breaks out in arresting torrents" (p. 71). As such, poems function as creations for imagining further—toward possible futures.

The poetic wanderer is a wise observer who marvels at the wonderful moments and embraces the sad memories. While all things must pass, the voices of the past continue to reach out to the future. Hope is not stuck in the abyss; loneliness moves toward surprising encounters: "Except on occasion, / we recognize our common humanity and cross the span" (p. 70). It also accepts the fate of retirement, being alone with one's thoughts and feelings: "The moment we leave our work, / we are

dead in the minds of those who follow. / Long before we close our eyes – / we are buried in theirs" (p. 38). Nevertheless, what has been expressed long ago is still here, questioning, attending, missing, and searching for verve. Besides the poems, the photographs in Petschauer's book of traveling words tell their own fascinating stories, encouraging us to move further toward vistas of creative imagination.

Juhani Ihanus's bio can be found on page 118.

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The Life as an Individual and a Sociocultural Person

Claude-Hélène Mayer—University of Johannesburg

Review of Jack Martin's Studies of Life Positioning: A New Sociocultural Approach to Psychobiography (London: Routledge, 2024), ISBN 978-1-03-260885-3, 176 pages, hardbound, $144, eBook, $43.99.

Keywords: book review, Jack Martin, narrative psychology, psychobiography, psychohistory, sociocultural, Studies of Life Positioning: A New Sociocultural Approach to Psychobiography

In his latest book, *Studies of Life Positioning: A New Sociocultural Approach to Psychobiography*, Professor Jack Martin presents a compelling and innovative approach to the study of individual lives. It integrates psychobiography, sociocultural, and narrative psychology.

The author's central argument is that traditional psychobiographical approaches often fail to adequately consider the sociocultural contexts in which individuals live and develop. He proposes a new approach—which he describes as "life positioning"—that emphasizes how individuals position themselves within their sociocultural worlds and how these positions shape their lives, actions, and experiences.

The book is divided into three main parts. The first part provides an overview of traditional psychobiographical approaches and their limitations. Martin critiques these approaches for their tendency to reduce individuals to psychological traits or mechanisms, often minimizing the broader sociocultural contexts that shape their lives.

In the second part, the author introduces and explains the concept

of life positioning. He argues that individuals actively position themselves in relation to the sociocultural worlds they inhabit, which significantly influences their lives. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the individual as an active agent in their own life story in context rather than a passive recipient of psychological or sociocultural forces.

The third part of Martin`s book applies the life positioning approach to several fascinating case studies. These include psychobiographical studies of figures such as Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Dorothy Burlingham, and Anna Freud. By presenting these case studies, the author demonstrates how the life positioning approach can provide new insights and how their self-positioning in social and cultural contexts may shape an individual's life and work.

I want to highlight two strengths of the book. One is Martin's ability to integrate both psychological and sociocultural perspectives and show how psychological processes are intertwined with sociocultural contexts—both are crucial for developing an in-depth understanding of individual lives from interdisciplinary viewpoints. Another is Professor Martin`s engaging writing style: He presents complex ideas in an accessible and intriguing way and opens up ideas for potential applications of the life positioning approach—even within the life of the readers.

Some readers, however, may find the critique of traditional psychobiographical approaches too harsh. They might argue that the life positioning approach may not apply to all psychobiographical studies. I, however, really enjoyed reading this book because it is an innovative, thought-provoking, and valuable contribution to contemporary psychobiography. It provides a fresh perspective on the study of individual lives. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in new theoretical and methodological approaches to psychobiography and exploring the complex interplay between individuals and their sociocultural worlds on a deeper level.

Claude-Hélène Mayer, PhD, is a Professor in Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Her research areas include transcultural mental health, salutogenesis, transcultural conflict management and mediation, women in leadership, shame and love across cultures, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and psychobiography. She can be contacted at claudehmayer.com or claudemayer@gmx.net. ❑

Watching Our World End: A Psychoanalyst's Warning

Karyne Messina—Private Practice

Review of Jon Mills's End of the World: Civilization and Its Fate (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2024), ISBN 978-1538189009, 258 pages, hardbound, $35.00.

Keywords: book review, End of the World: Civilization and Its Fate, extinction, Georg Hegel, Jon Mills, psychoanalysis, psychohistory, technology

The Prophecy

The final lines of psychoanalyst Jon Mills' book on the future of civilization land with a thunderclap: "If I were a betting man, I would say we are on the brink of extinction" (p. 207). Readers tempted to dismiss this as doom-mongering should pause as Mills isn't just cataloging our existential threats, though they are plentiful. Rather, he plunges into the human psyche to understand our peculiar paralysis in the face of extinction, and his work is very much worth the read to that final salvo.

Other writers pile up the dangers, from climate collapse to pandemic disease and nuclear war, and Mills examines them while turning inward to find the potent poison that seems destined to doom us. Behind the headlines of rising seas and failing states, he finds a species unable to face its own reflection and so incapable of large-scale change. His diagnosis strikes bone: We see the dangers clearly enough, but something in our nature makes us look away.

The Hamartia of Humankind

Building from the sober acknowledgment that we possess the knowledge to prevent our extinction but are psychologically incapable of doing so, Mills argues, while citing Georg Hegel, that our paralysis stems from a primal dynamic to retreat into "thoroughly selfish destructiveness" (p. 152) when faced with existential threats. In other words, humankind would rather indulge in immediate self-gratification, even at the cost of mutual survival. Look no further than at our failed responses to climate collapse, mismanagement of population growth, endless cycles of warfare, and misplaced faith in technological salvation.

Though dealing with matters of the mind, Mills grounds his argument with concrete examples. He points to Delhi and Beijing, where millions struggle to breathe through toxic air while the rest of the world cranks up the AC and sighs. He turns next to humanity's zeal for multiplying the species. "The world population is now eight billion people, which has proliferated by two billion in less than two decades," he writes,

while scientists warn that the Earth cannot sustain these numbers "without grave consequences" (p. xii). This failure of recognition appears most starkly in warfare. "All occupied continents are engaged in military battle, with no foreseeable end in sight" (p. xiii), as he points to conflicts from Ukraine to Gaza. Though peace would serve everyone's interests, we choose war. This isn't politics, Mills insists; it's pathology.

Our faith in technology offers no escape as humans have replaced ageless but imperfect gods with artificial intelligence and autonomous weapons. These new gods are as fallible as the old and equally, if not more, "susceptible to error, miscalculation, malfunctioning, misreading, or inaccurately processing information in the moment" (p. 78). So, we march toward midnight and the end of the world as we know it. Traditionally, "endings precipitate new beginnings," says Mills regarding the traditional myths of civilizations that have come and gone, yet our "technological and planetary devastation" promises "a wasteland of its own desertification" (pp. xix, xx). Where old, passed-down tales and community rituals once offered hope of renewal after destruction, our trajectory is leading us to a deafening and total silence. It is terrifying and bleak.

The Nemesis Within Us

The ancient Greeks understood that to be human is to suffer. Mills goes further: We have elevated the inflicting of suffering on ourselves to an art. Self-sadism by another name, perhaps. While we perform elaborate rituals of salvation—all those summits, treaties, and short-term fixes—they are merely a panacea. With each new warning comes fresh denial, with each threat more sophisticated forms of looking away. Mills asks again and again: Why can't we bear to look?

Critics might accuse Mills of reducing every crisis to psychology, of seeing pathology where there are only politics and economics. He acknowledges the role of systems and structures but insists something deeper is at work: Our well-oiled machinery of denial greases the wheels of all our institutions.

Like a modern-day Cassandra, Mills makes no pretense of offering solutions as he sees our sad fate before us. "It is not incumbent upon a philosopher or psychoanalyst to solve the world's problems," he writes, "yet perhaps it is sufficient to point them out" (p. xviii). His task is to illuminate our ability to see catastrophe because we refuse to face it. Whether we finally open our eyes and act is up to us.

Recognition

Mills refuses to separate material and psychological threats because at the core of our paralysis lies a failure of human recognition. "We all seek recognition; this is a basic human need" (p. 151), he writes. When this need is thwarted, Mills says societies develop "cultural pathos," a collective suffering that makes us less capable of facing each new

crisis. In a statement that should surprise no one, he declares that our failure to value human needs over material comfort "hinges on money" (p. 132).

According to "techno nihilism," a phrase coined by philosopher Nolen Gertz, humankind is now made up of "mindless zombies with no capacity for critical self-reflection, mesmerized by a computer screen" (p. 139). Even our attempts at solutions, from climate summits to artificial intelligence, hasten our decline. It is a new way of thinking about the meaning of blind faith.

Silence

Mills concludes where he began, with humanity's sick talent for self-destruction and inability to recognize itself. The evidence surrounds us while we numb ourselves in our digital hideaways, perfecting ever more sophisticated forms of avoidance.

"The end of civilization is not a preordained fatalism" (p. xx), Mills writes. But he isn't betting on our survival either. He's laying all his chips on the "Don't Pass" line. Humans possess the technical tools to prevent our extinction. Our psychological blindness may ensure we never use them.

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(Papers due 05/15/2025)

Some possible psychoanalytic/psychological topics to write about include:

- *The fantasies and realities of aging: Confronting the prospect of death (choosing to die?).*
- *Age consciousness, quality of life, life extension, and creative aging.*
- *Personality types in coping with the more limited function of aging.*
- *The impact of smaller families and geographic dispersion on aging, death, and dying.*
- *How retirement has enriched, lessened, or changed your life.*
- *The impact of age segregation in retirement communities.*
- *Case studies of famous people confronting aging and the wisdom of centenarians.*
- *Cross-cultural approaches to the psychology of aging.*
- *Reponses to the aging and impending death of a parent, sibling, spouse, or close friend.*
- *Finding purpose through intergenerational connections in the process of aging.*
- *Changing identity, self & body image in the process of aging.*
- *Battling disease, mental and physical decline: the fear and reality of Alzheimer's.*
- *The humor of old age, death, and dying while facing fears, narcissistic blows, and loss.*
- *The negatives of aging (dependency, depression, marginalization) or finding new meaning.*
- *Case studies of hospice workers, therapists, and thanatologists.*
- *Pioneers in the study of aging: the impact of longevity due to medical advances.*
- *Reviews of scholarly books, movies, or television programs on aging, assisted living, health, longevity, and retirement.*

*We seek articles from 1,000-2,500 words—including your title, author name with affiliation, a 50-75-word abstract, 7-10 keywords, and your brief biography (3-4 sentences) ending in your email address. Send documents in Microsoft Word (*docx or doc) format by May 15, 2025, to cliospsycheeditor@gmail.com or our website.*