talk about clinical material. I do **think** that the fundamental analogy that we have to make as psychohistorians is from clinical psychology.

CP: What about personal analysis?

JD: Well, that was certainly an important part of my own life, too. I cannot say that I went into analysis mainly for intellectual reasons — I think I went into it mainly for personal reasons. But I really can't imagine having attempted this sort of work without **having** some personal experience with it. I **think** it's a combination of personal analysis and participation in clinical case conferences that's made me feel confident about working this way.

CP: In ***Entertaining Satan*** *you* describe your multi-dimensional approach — "the four corners of one scholar's compass, four viewpoints" — biography, psychology, sociology, and history. How do you regard your multi-dimensional approach today? Is it the approach of choice for the historian researching and writing over, say, the next decade?

JD: Well, I **think** one could mix and match, work other disciplines into the mix. But, really, the main point that I was trying to make there is that I've always seen psychohistory as not a separate discipline or sub-discipline set apart, but rather as a piece of a much larger package I call "social history." I've always thought that if I had to pin one label to myself I would say "social historian." In my work as a psychohistorian I always saw myself as operating in *a* part of my way of operating as a social historian — but not the only part. I was always distressed with what I saw as a kind of counter-tendency in some other psychohistorians to sort of segregate the effort of psychohistory from other parts of history and to give it a special status. It seems to me it fits in quite well in fact with other parts of our activity as historians. ❑

The Rupture of Innocence: Oklahoma City, April 19, 1995

(Continued from page 1)

sion. I gave our difference of inference no thought, dismissed it, and resumed typing. (Was I "in denial," I later asked myself; that is, was I trying to assimilate the new, the alarming, to something familiar and comforting?) Within only minutes the piercing shriek of sirens filled the air — a sound that soon would rally, characterize, and later **haunt** all of Oklahoma City.

Later that morning I drove to my office at the Family Medicine Center, a building on the Health Sciences Center about $1^{1}/_{2}$ miles northeast of downtown. The traffic was more characteristic of Manhattan, New York City, than any rush hour or traffic jam I had seen in my eighteen years in Oklahoma. As I passed the blood bank there were already hundreds of donors patiently standing in line to give blood. I did not drive in to "do" anything in particular; I was not a certified clinician of any kind. Still, I wanted to be with other faculty, residents and interns. Maybe "being with" them, sitting and listening, was a kind of doing, a bearing witness and emotional catharsis, and a sense-making of it together. We sat in numerous small, dense groups, watched the TV, spoke little. Being there together was itself a kind of assurance and comfort.

For the next several days at least, countless cultural rules that had reigned supreme in ordinary times and dominated clinical conversation were abruptly changed, in fact, dropped. The endless drone of faculty meetings devoted to cost containment, to attracting young and **healthy** patients, to institutional economic survival, and to fierce economic combat between hospitals or alliances of hospitals, for a few weeks gave way to an almost welcome generosity of giving that has long been the signature of Oklahomans in the face of disaster. We spoke for a while as mere, vulnerable people, not as roles and functions. In the cavernous but austere new Family Medicine Center where scotch tape had been strictly forbidden on any walls or doors, and where to hang up anything on a "common" hallway wall required the assent of the CEO, ribbons (yellow, blue, purple) began to appear everywhere. Televisions sprang up everywhere in the Center, broadcasting the events far beyond the office or module of the TV's owner. It was as if everyone knew how and when and where to suspend our conventional cultural values.

At the same time, during the first hours after the disaster, when the explosion was finally traced to a car or truck bomb made of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil (staples of prairie life), certain phrases came to be made recurrently by news reporters and by people downtown: "Terror Hits Home"; "Terror Hits

the Heartland"; Oklahoma's "Loss of Innocence." In the midst of the event itself the effort to make sense of it, and of the violent emotions unleashed by it, already began to take place and shape. Before the explosion had even a chance to cast a shadow in the morning, it already began to slip into the work of myth and legend. Radio and television reporters at the scene often waxed maudlin and voyeuristic. The prospect of finding live or dead children in the building's day care center became the obsession of many who were covering the event. Innocence and its violation, from children to Oklahoma and the prairie, and to the American sanctuary of blessed anachronism, became the central theme as the event began to become history.

Several days later, I drove to a police and National Guard barricade a few blocks north of the bombed-out building and the shattered glass. I stared in dry-mouthed horror of the sight. No television picture (black and white, or color) or photograph of any size could approximate the sight of blackened, hollow sockets where offices and windows and living people had been. The scale was appalling. My own disbelief joined that of my fellow Oklahomans. What I saw was supposed to be confined to the bedtime work of nightmares, of bad, never-remembered dreams, and to foreign countries.

Soon, though, my own thoughts and feelings took a different direction from that of newscasters and most of the people whom they interviewed. I was less interested in focusing on the detective-work aimed at identifying who did the bombing. I wondered instead about how Oklahomans would try to make sense of what happened and what was happening.

Before our very eyes and ears, the event of the explosion was almost immediately swallowed up in legend to make sense of it, and to diminish Oklahomans' anxieties: (1) a focus on potentially dead and endangered children in the Federal Building's day care center, and on the innocence of children; (2) the hope of finding a miraculous pocket, a cavern in the rubble, made by falling debris, and into which many people could find sanctuary; (3) the "violation of innocence," of a building, of a city, a state, a region, a nation; and (4) the search for outsiders who did the unforgivable terrorizing act.

Two group imaginations were and remain constantly entwined: Oklahomans **thinking** about themselves, ourselves, and about America, also ourselves; and Americans outside Oklahoma **thinking** about themselves, ourselves, and about Oklahoma. Clearly, Oklahoma plays a vital, if often unspoken, role in the American imagination. And in every phrase, every metaphor, there is always more than meets the eye. That "more" is often unpleasant, unwelcome cultural truth.

Consider the notion of "innocence" and of innocence violated. One need not be a rocket scientist or a classical Freudian to discern the sexual allusion in innocence lost: an innocence that is vigilantly kept up as the religious, political, familial, and moral facade that masks deed that are forbidden to be put into words. Oklahomans humbly pride themselves as being a kind of buckle in the Bible Belt, yet Oklahoma is also high in teenage pregnancy, wife-beating, child-beating, and family-related child-death, all conducted "behind closed doors" of family inviolability and privacy. There is a disingenuous protest **quality ("'They,'** not `we,' do this heinous kind of thing.") to the outrage against outsiders who would dare harm our children. The terrorism that cannot be publicly discussed, the terrorism that begins at home but cannot be labeled as such, is now safely displaced onto and focused in outside terrorists. If Oklahomans cannot, even dare not, squarely face the disparity between professed family values and actual deeds, Americans everywhere, too, can ill afford to acknowledge let alone rectify these contradictions and ambivalences in Oklahoma or elsewhere. Not far behind innocence's assertion and protest lies a rage that in turn covers shame and guilt, the dread of exposure. Response and responsibility in the shadow of the bombing are no simple or merely local matter.

Whatever else "heartland" connotes and condenses into a single image, it is the heart, the last frontier and remnant of honest sentiment and close, cooperative community, an island of caring and giving in a national sea of callousness and indifference. Oklahoma's reputed "loss of innocence" is equally America's loss of innocence as it (that is, we as a nation) is embodied by and deposited in the idealization of the prairie, the Great Plains, its families, its espoused values, its official wholesomeness, its burden of history.

Consider, as an example of Oklahoma's role in national fantasy, the following letter by Jan Edry in Acton, Massachusetts, published in the May 3 edition of *The Daily Oklahoma,* page 6:

> Dear friends in Oklahoma, You are our hearts before they became hardened by the city and by life. You are our trust before it was violated. You are our smiles before they became a rarity. You are our warmth and **humanity** before we became cold and unmerciful.
>
> To us, you are our bread. You are the drawl that we, with our Boston accents, would love to have. You are cowboy hats and boots, barbecues, square dancing and beautiful open country beneath a vast, starry sky. You are a musical.
>
> You are hay bales and barn raisings. You are our neighbors and friends and represent all that we would like to be if given the chance. We love you.
>
> You are us, OKC. We grieve deeply for your loss. We are there with you and will continue to be until your loss — our loss — is atoned.

A more poignant expression of how cultural geography plays a personified, even bodily, role in local, regional, and national fantasy could hardly be imagined.

"Heartland" and "innocence," too, cannot be understood apart from the intense love-hate attitude toward authority Oklahomans have had since pre-statehood territorial days. Beneath, or alongside, political and religious conservatism, is a proud "rebel" streak, a defiance of authority — even by authorities! A punitive enough conscience is also one eager for a moral holiday — and for a pretext to take it. Several years ago, many Oklahoma county commissioners went to jail for violating the law in behalf of their fierce localism. For many Oklahomans, Oliver North is a culture-hero. Early in the state's history, the Ozark mountains and the western grasslands hid many of the nation's most notorious, and secretly admired, outlaws.

Certainly this anger at authority, especially authority defined as "external" (from bankers to the federal government), did not alone "cause" the April 19 bombing of the Federal Building, but neither is it mere historical background. It is a nutrient, as in a petrie dish, where rage toward "outside government" can grow and thrive in the sacred name of American self-reliance. And it is part of the deeper meaning of "innocence" in the heartland.

The April 19 bombing now joins the Nazi Holocaust, the American atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the mass suicides in Jonestown, Guyana (1978) and Waco, Texas (1993), and the mass casualties of catastrophic fires, floods, tornadoes, political purges, hurricanes, expulsions, earthquakes, and exterminations in their impossible taxing of the imagination to absorb the mere fact of the scale. As a horrific natural experiment, it helps us to comprehend better the nature and experience of personal and collective trauma, to discern what is local and what is universal. It is as if the best we can comprehend is that *numbers* died, not people. Yet "even" nearly 170 is too vast to be grasped as personal. The flight from our own unconscious destructiveness and helplessness **thus** characterizes ***both*** those who do the actual destroying and the rest of us who strain to understand and emotionally hold onto what took place and how many died and were injured. Depersonalization and dehumanization are as much the emotional property of those who survive and mourn as those who bomb, kill, and maim.

The issue of "innocence" takes still another dimension. Media reporters, health care workers, rescue and recovery firefighters, policemen and policewomen, clergy, and the wider public focused throughout the ordeal on injured, dead, or trapped infants and children in the Federal Building's second floor day care center. This almost exclusive focus of attention and horror on the plight of infants and children is a variation on the theme of innocence and violation. It is as if we Oklahomans were identifying mostly, if not exclusively, with (and as) the victimized infants and children. The victimizers became a symbolic conflation of big government, bad government, outsiders, and fanatic military cults: all authority becomes suspect, unable to protect or rescue the abandoned children, those in the building, and the rest of us by virtue of our identifications. Repulsed by the thought of being at the mercy of a hostile, alien, capricious outer world, we Oklahomans, imagining ourselves to be a

community of young siblings in a murderous family, "circle the wagons" and take care of our own in a manner second to none in the nation. But, in the near future, the impaired, symptomatic, injured, and suffering, and those who later will suffer from emotional, psychosomatic, family, work-accident, and other problems traceable to the trauma of the bombing (and its rekindling of earlier, repressed, dissociated, and split-off personal trauma), will be seen and shunned as outsiders. Those who yesterday were "us" will be ritually manufactured into a disowned "them," as part of a paranoid style of mourning this incalculable loss of group boundary and the sense of safety it provided. A vast cultural change of heart is required for the outreach, the support, the listening, and the sheer offering of time to be mustered far down the prairie road.

Psychohistory is, among other things, the study of the interplay between what fateful events do to us; what they unleash in us as memory, as feeling, and as deed; what we do with them once they have occurred; and what we do to give fate its theater. The events on and following April 19, 1995, become even more unbearably tragic as we begin to discern unconscious links between abstract political platforms and incendiary slogans that call for "less government," political doctrines that brand the federal government as especially vile, and public deeds that draw from suggestion and suggestibility to make metaphor concrete, literally to realize the symbolic.

In Sophocles' account, King Oedipus blinded himself once he had seen his deed. It remains to be seen whether we — as Oklahoma Cityans, as Oklahomans, as prairie folk, as Americans — can bear the scope and scale of what doesn't happen here, but did.

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Editor's Note: On April 21 I spoke with Howard and he agreed to write this article for Clio's Psyche. *Subsequently the IPA arranged with Howard for an article in its newsletter which appeared first. Thus, Howard has written two related but different articles on the tragedy in Oklahoma City.* ❑

Free Associations: Violence in Our Midst

Paul H. Elovitz
Ramapo College

The O.J. **Simpson** Trial: As I write these words, I am vacationing at Paradise Lake Estates, a beautiful, perfectly-contained community in Florida. One hundred and sixty-two, separate, air-conditioned homes, with manicured lawns and grapefruit, lemon and lime trees, surrounding a picture-book, man-made lake. The garage floors and most of the driveways are painted pastel colors. I am sitting by the lovely swimming pool looking out at the lake. The palm and flowering trees sway over my head and the birds sing their songs and fly past. When I turn my head I see the security gate.

The guards, smiling to the residents and their guests, are protectors of this tropical Garden of Eden. Security's job is to keep out the annoyances and the evils of the world: to exclude the casual strangers, salespeople, burglars, muggers, rapists, and murderers who might want to enter. The guards are assisted by an eight-foot high, tree-and-shrub-covered wall surrounding this oasis, as well as a moat which doubles as a drainage canal.

Whenever I turn on the television news or the car radio I am reminded that the rest of the world is less idyllic than our friends' home and community in which we are staying for a week. The radio focuses on crime and punishment: Colin Ferguson's sentencing for randomly shooting non-African American commuters on the Long Island Railroad, the trial of the stepmother in an nearby town charged with killing her ten-year-old stepson, but mostly the O.J. Simpson Trial. I have my choice of stations on which I can listen to "THE TRIAL."

The station we listen to claims to provide continuous coverage of the Trial — a radio smorgasbord of gossip and comedy, interspersed with so called "experts" on the law. A female commentator takes the "O.J. must be innocent" position and interprets all evidence in this light, while the male host assures the audience of the famous man's guilt. The callers are asked to "rate the actors" (witnesses) on the basis of their performance and credibility. The