as psychohistorians, need to do to strengthen our work?

AF: Learn how to avoid pitfalls and do better scholarship. Create an international psychohistorical society with much more stringent admission requirements, a PhD in either psychology or history, than the International Psychohistorical Association (IPA), which accepts practically anyone calling himself a psychohistorian. Those who have degrees in both fields would have a special status, such as Fellows of the society.

PHE: Since I periodically meet you at conferences of the International Society for Political Psychology, please tell me about your experiences with this group.

AF: Political psychology has a good international society in the ISPP and a good journal in *Political Psychology*, and seems to be developing steadily, although the psychoanalytic view is not its main stream. What makes the ISPP attractive to me is that it is a group of highly educated people who are open to interdisciplinary scholarship, though psychoanalysis and psychohistory do not have a very big place in it.

PHE: How do you see political psychology and psychohistory developing in the next decade?

AF: Psychohistory is at a crossroads. *The Psychohistory Review* has folded, a very serious blow to our field. A new journal has been launched, *Psychoanalysis and History*, but it deals much more with the history of psychoanalysis than with psychohistory. That leaves only two journals -- the *Journal of Psychohistory* and **Clio's Psyche** -- in the field. Many book publishers believe that their readers no longer want psychobiography. I hope the field grows and prospers, but am concerned.

Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, Editor of this publication, recollects first meeting Avner Falk in person at an ISPP conference in Israel in 1989. ❑

Deconstructing Hillary Clinton's Stab at Psychohistory

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Shortly after the failed attempt to remove her husband from office by impeachment, in her famous *Talk* magazine interview, the First Lady offered an explanation for her husband's sexual behavior. She suggested it grew out of stress generated by his youthful placement in the middle of a sometimes conflicted mother-daughter relationship. I will address the First Lady's amateur psychologizing, but will not join that vast legion of commentators who ignored Hillary Clinton's distinction between "explaining" and "excusing" human conduct.

First of all, the psychological literature is generally to the effect that an only male child placed between a loving mother and a loving grandmother is not per se at risk of developing into a compulsive philanderer. If anything, Clinton is a recognizable version of Freud's archetype, "His majesty the child." Simply put, instead of one doting female figure, he had two doting figures who were competing for his favor!

Secondly, it would be a dull child indeed who did not quickly intuit how to play these two sources of affection off against one another. If blocked from one source of gratification, even the most primal organism will immediately seek another source. Young Billy Blythe was by all accounts quite precocious, so it would be fairly safe to assume that very early on he countered a maternal rejection with turning to his grandmother ("I'll ask Me-Maw,") and vice versa.

With young Billy Blythe, both mother and grandmother had, of course, the same goal, i.e., "raising" the child in the best possible fashion. The two women definitely had some personality differences, but both were passionate, small town women, nurses, and Arkansans. When the child lived with his grandparents it was the grandmother, with his mother away in nurse anesthesiology school and later at work, who disciplined him and the mother who indulged him. Nothing could have been more natural. Later, after the President's mother remarried and young Bill joined the couple in Hot Springs, it was the grandmother who would indulge him on his frequent return visits to Hope. Again, nothing could be more natural. This is quintessentially American and probably universal. There may be a different wrinkle or two, but there is little in rearing processes employed here that could even arguably produce a compulsive philanderer.

In the *Talk* interview, Mrs. Clinton spoke of her husband being torn between these two powerful women. The actual dynamic would seem to be quite the opposite. The mother and the grandmother were united in their esteem for young Bill Blythe. Rather than being required to mediate their

conflict, Master Blythe was the beneficiary of it. He did not need to compete for their affection -- he had it!

An argument could certainly be made that what the President actually learned as a child was to manipulate women to his benefit. However, this hypothesis overlooks the fact that both of these women were perfectly willing to give young Bill whatever they thought he needed. The grandmother had strict standards to be sure -- standards against which Clinton's mother had earlier rebelled -- but this does not affect the basic dynamic here. Both women were clearly committed to the boy and to satisfying his needs. What they may have differed on was what his needs were, but this is a very different question from the First Lady's basic thesis.

Clinton's mother was the sort of person who recognized the validity of the Southern Baptist Church but wanted nothing to do with it. She held the same values (perhaps "more honored in the breach than the obeyance") that her mother did. Simply put, Clinton's mother liked a few "bright lights" and the Baptists frowned on this. A day at the racetrack is for most a harmless diversion. For a "hard-shell Baptist," it is a way station on the road to perdition. (I am advised by people close to Mrs. Clinton that she found her spiritual connection some two decades before her death in one of the 12-step self-help fellowships).

The psychological dynamics of this situation were not as the First Lady suggests, i.e., that of a referee between two strong-willed women, but rather conducive to a child's feeling "all conquering and all beloved." (These words come from Thomas Wolfe, the southern writer whose early family configuration was similar to the President's.)

Based on the biographies, the President's role as referee came later, as his adoptive father's alcoholism progressed into its middle stages. Thus, it would seem that Mrs. Clinton simply conflated the two situations, choosing for whatever reason to attribute the philandering to his first household rather than to his second.

Actually, such youthful trauma as the President suffered may well have been a result of the change from the relative Elysium with his grandparents at Hope to the turmoil and chaos of his second household at Hot Springs. The psychological stress incident to life with an abusive and violent adoptive father, who was in regular and repeated conflict with an adored mother, would have been a far more determinative factor in the development of the President's adult persona than the situation that the First Lady posits.

What is interesting in Mrs. Clinton's analysis is that she reconfigures the situation to cast the other major female figures in the President's life as the villains. This scenario tells us a good deal more about her psychic structure than the President's. In the classic dynamic, the compulsive philanderer is said to be searching for a "mother." Thus, President Clinton would appear to be fortunate in that he seems to have found a "mother figure" almost as permissive and tolerant as his original archetype.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the Clintons' marriage seems to roughly parallel that of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, persons for whom they have on occasion separately expressed their admiration. FDR had a long series of female companions, and Mrs. Roosevelt has been subject to allegations of lesbianism as Mrs. Clinton has been. Despite the slings and arrows, the marriage of both couples not only endured but would appear to have prospered. (No one is talking now about how the First Lady will leave the President in 2001.)

The Roosevelts had some monumental attainments, and I would suggest that the nation is truly fortunate that they lived before the personal became so very political. I would have preferred posthumous revelations to the Starr Report.

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Male Violence towards Women

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Review of Donald G. Dutton, The Abusive Personality: Violence and Control in Intimate Relationships. New York: The Guilford Press, 1998. ISBN 1572303700, viii + 214 pp., $26.95.

Advances in understanding male violence towards women will be welcomed by psychohistorians. Male wishes to control and punish women, for reasons generally unknown to themselves, need elucidating before larger questions about marital and social disorder can be accurately