# Special Issue on Classic Works of Applied Psychoanalysis, Political Psychology, and Psychohistory

Binion Symposium
on Traumatic Reliving
with Freud

**Volume 17 Number 1- 2**
**June and September 2010**

# Clio's Psyche

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

**Volume 17 Number 1- 2 June and September 2010**

## Special Issue on The Classic Works of Psychohistory

Peter Gay's Classic *Freud For Historians*……..…….……1
*Ken Fuchsman*
How Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational* Changed My Life ……6
*Eli Sagan*
L. Pierce Clark: An Early Psychobiographer……...10
*Elizabeth Wirth Marvick and Paul H. Elovitz*
Henry Lawton and J. Lee Shneidman……17
*Paul H. Elovitz*
America's First Psychobiographer: Preserved Smith and Luther...…….22
*Elizabeth Wirth Marvick and Paul H. Elovitz*
Self-Affirmation and Ethics in Erikson's Psychohistory…..…..……..…28
*Joseph Kramp*
The Sons of Liberty: Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body*.……32
*Ken Fuchsman*
Psychohistorians, Nazis, Violence, and Fear..……..……..….37
*Peter Petschauer*
Turning Swords Into Plowshares: Lifton and Volkan……..42
*Benjamin Figueroa*
Bruce Mazlish's Psychohistorical Contributions…….……47
*Juhani Ihanus*
A Critical Review of Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism*.....52
*Tom Ferraro*
Irving Harris' *The Promised Seed*……...58
*Herbert Barry III*
Why I Write Books about Creativity…….……..61
*Andrew Brink*

## A Note From the Editor

**Editorial Board Appointments and the June/September Double Issue**

We would like to welcome Kenneth Fuchsman of the University of Connecticut and Bob Lentz of Calgary to our Board of Editors. Both have served us well in the past, as they will in the future.

Members of the Psychohistory Forum, readers, and others contributed so many articles that were read anonymously and accepted for publication by our referees that we found ourselves with a superabundance of riches. After consultation with members of the Board of Editors we decided that rather than postpone the "Reliving with Freud Symposium" until the fall, we would have a double issue now, so you now hold in your hands the joint June and September issue. We welcome your comments about it, as well as your future submissions.

## Binion Symposium on Traumatic Reliving with Freud


Reliving with Freud……66
*Rudolph Binion*

Responses by……87

*James William Anderson*
*Michael Britton*
*Tom Ferraro*
*James M. Glass*
*Wallace Katz*
*Joel Markowitz*
*Jack Schwartz*
*Norman Simms*
*Robert D. Anderson*
*Paul H. Elovitz*
*Kenneth Fuchsman*
*Judith Harris*
*David Lotto*
*Paul Salstrom*
*Burton Seitler*
*Stanley Teitelbaum*

Binion Responds...……...143

---

Reflections on Presidents Clinton and Obama ……...144
*Daniel Kazmaier*

Book Review: Trauma in the Third Estate, 1789.……...149
*David R. Beisel*

Review Essay: Identity and Other Issues in the Proposed *DSM-V*...…153
*Sarah Kamens*

Letters to the Editor *Ferraro*, *Breiner*, and *Salstrom*...…….…….158

Bulletin Board……163

Call For Papers on the Psychology of Anti- and Philo-Semitism.....….167

# Peter Gay's Classic *Freud For Historians*

**Ken Fuchsman**—University of Connecticut

*Freud For Historians* (1985) is an important work by a distinguished historian with some psychoanalytic training. Gay knows that many historians have little use for psychology within their profession, saying that to certain historians psychohistory is "a disfiguring, perhaps incurable epidemic that has invaded their craft" (Citations are from *Freud For Historians* unless otherwise noted, p. 14). Gay shares some of the criticisms, saying its "defects...compromise much of its work," which include "reductionism" and "its cavalier way with evidence" (p. 17). When asked if he is a psychohistorian, Gay responds, "No, I am a historian....I am a historian who uses psychoanalysis" (Paul Elovitz, Bob Lentz, & David Felix, "The Psychoanalytically-Informed Historian: Peter Gay," Clio's Psyche, 4, 2, September, 1997, p. 63). The rejection of the validity of psychohistory leaves the historical field with a dilemma. Gay says historians "attribute motives," study "passions" and analyze "irrationality." The historian is "an amateur psychologist" (p. 6). Unverified psychological assumptions permeate historical writings. For historians to remain ignorant of psychological research does not make sense, as they are relying on psychological ideas.

In throwing out the psychological baby with the psychohistorical bathwater, the historical profession can be criticized for conceptual insufficiency. According to Gay, historians assume that individuals are motivated by self-interest; a rough psychology adopted from a rough economic theory is imported into history as if it meets empirical standards. Gay shows the empirical and theoretical inadequacy of such purported motivations, even within the economic sphere.

He wants to show his colleagues the Freudian persuasion is not the wild and unverifiable caricature that other historians have created. He writes: "Psychoanalysis...is not a miracle drug or a magic password; it is an informed style of inquiry, supplying answers not one had thought were available" and "suggesting questions no one had thought to ask" (p. 32-33). While psychoanalysis opens up new areas and provides novel solutions, in itself it is a complex specialty, that does not conform to certain conceptions of science. "The Freudian corpus," Gay admits, is not a "comprehensive theory in which general laws can be derived from empirical propositions, and which a crucial experiment might test conclusively." Instead, Freud's work contains "a family of closely related, often mutually supporting claims ranging from empirical statements to limited generalizations to global theories about the mind." It is "like an imposing, sprawling castle" (p. 48).

To Gay, there are two reasons why this spectrum of claims from the factual to the theoretical should not disqualify Freud from historical inclusion. "All the disciplines to which modern historians resort," Gay writes, including "anthropology, sociology, economics...are mired in controversy; they all compel the historian to choose one school in preference to others" (p. 44-5). These social sciences have achieved more recognition in academia than psychoanalysis. Gay also contends that the "empirical and experimental evidence supporting Freudian propositions is impressive" (p. 45). This includes "experimental evidence" that "has buttressed" the theory of infantile sexuality, unconscious defense mechanisms, fantasy, anxiety, and the Oedipus complex (p. 49-50). It is the accumulation of empirical support for Freudian notions that Gay thinks should convince historians to turn to Freudian psychology.

Gay maintains that Freud's theory of human nature is valuable for historians. "Man, for Freud," Gay writes, "is a

creature of contradictions and concealments....psychoanalysis can bring to the assessment of past experience...a set of discoveries and a method" that can "sound the unplumbed depths of human nature" (p. 76-77). In this age of recurring genocide, total war, and the continued brutality of human to human, comprehending the psychological factors contributing to the barbarity within and without should be an important part of the historical profession. If a psychoanalytic theory of human nature can contribute insight into these dark phenomena, historians should seek it out.

Yet as Gay recognizes, historians are uncomfortable with the idea of human nature. To most historians, a conception of a universal human nature violates "man's experience of the past as diversified, unfolding and unfinished" (p. 87-88). Gay reminds historians that "all humans share some inescapable universal preconditions." These include being born "the most unfinished of animals, pathetically in need of nourishment and protection by others...with few instinctual drives and those plastic and...educable for good or ill" (p. 88). Then Gay moves to Freud: "Among those drives, sexuality and aggression....serve as the fuel for human action. They make history" (p. 89).

How do these two primal drives make history? Gay: "The most telling (and most problematic) instance of human nature in action is probably the Oedipus complex." How so? For one, "the Oedipus complex" is "*the* critical developmental experience...that makes man human" (p. 93). In this cornerstone of Freudian thought, as Gay explains it, the boy passionately desires his mother and sees his father as a rival. The youngster imagines retaliation and backs away from his hunger for his mother, "internalizes his father's anger and prohibitions," thus developing a superego and later seeks non-incestuous romantic and sexual objects. The Oedipus complex is a school of love and hate. It both generates "neurosis," and helps the child channel powerful emotions

into socially acceptable channels. But its impact extends beyond childhood by leaving "its traces in ambition and resignation" (p. 93-95). The Oedipus complex, Gay says, "has left its deposits...in politics and religion, education and literature, even in the market place....familial metaphors" are used "to characterize the nature of government authority, the relations of God to man, the responsibility of factory owner for 'their' employees, and a host of other entanglements of power, love, and cruelty." These deposits have not just been left in the modern West. "The Oedipal triangle has made its appearance in all recorded cultures, even the Trobriand Islands." It "appears to be the lot of humans everywhere" (p. 98-99).

In attempting to connect the work of history to a universal human nature, Gay both revived Freudian concerns and preceded recent efforts in both biology and anthropology to revive the study of what is common to the human species. Melvin Konner, a non-Freudian anthropologist and medical doctor, wrote in 2007 that "human nature" is a "term that must be considered again, after decades of disfavor, as having scientific legitimacy" (Melvin Konner, "Evolutionary Foundations of Cultural Psychology," in Shinobu Kitayama & Dov Cohen, eds., *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*, 2007, p. 78). While the disciplines of anthropology and psychology have sub-fields concerned with human nature, in the last century, there is no significant tradition within the American historical profession seeking historical universals. Gay's efforts in *Freud for Historians* is one step in that direction.

What does Gay see as the domain of psychoanalytically informed history? He does not explicitly answer that question. Particularly in his last chapter, he does mention a number of historical works that he finds psychologically significant including the George's *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House,* Erikson's *Young Man Luther,* Edmund Morgan's *The Puritan Family,* Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational,*

John Demos' *Entertaining Satan,* Maynard Solomon's *Beethoven* and Frederick Crews' *The Sins of the Fathers.* Four of these texts are studies of individuals, one is family history, one intellectual history, and Demos' book on Salem and the witch trials is social history. Gay's examples of psychoanalytically influenced history then includes much that is biographical, cultural, and intellectual, and little that is purely political separate from biography.

Gay does not address how Freudian influenced historians adjudicate between psychological/psychoanalytic methods for determining what is factual and historical criteria for verifying information. Much of the suspicion of conventional historians towards psychohistory is their belief that psychological data does not meet historical standards. When two disciplines intermix, there is often tension between the perspectives prominent in each field. Also, Gay has pointed out that social science disciplines are mired in internal controversy. He does not spend much time explicating Freud's theoretical divisions or the controversies between divergent psychoanalytic perspectives. Gay's beautifully written book for historians illuminates many issues and leaves others under-addressed.

***Kenneth Fuchsman, EdD****, is a historian who teaches interdisciplinary studies at the University of Connecticut, where he has served as both faculty and an administrator. Dr. Fuchsman writes on the history of psychoanalysis, the nature of the Oedipus complex, interdisciplinary studies, and a variety of subjects in modern American history. He may be reached at ken.fuchsman@uconn.edu.* ❑

We welcome Work-In-Progress Seminar Paper Submissions

# How Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational* Changed My Life

**Eli Sagan**—Independent Scholar

"The development of the psyche is the paradigm for the development of society and culture." When I wrote that sentence 30 years ago, I held a firm belief that it was true. And I still do. What had been lacking for some time before then, in my mind, was an historical situation of exact duplication between a particular developmental advance in society and an equivalent one in the development of the psyche. Or, at least, a striking correspondence. Certain very general correspondences were worth noting. Society and culture had developed in the direction of Weber's "legal-rational," gradually liberating themselves from paleological and magical ways of thought, because the development of the ego and the cognitive function of the psyche lie precisely in that direction, as Piaget and others had demonstrated at length. As an example, the religious history of Western Europe (Catholicism to Protestantism) demonstrates such a movement towards a more rational, less magical religious view. Protestantism abandoned the notion of purgatory and its corollary belief that, if one said masses for the dead, one would speed the passage of dead souls to heaven. At least ten other examples are available from Reformation history.

What was still lacking for me was a more specific, more exact example of correspondence. In E. R. Dodds' great book, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), and its brilliant theoretical chapter, "From Shame-Culture to Guilt-Culture," he demonstrates that the development in ancient Greek culture from the world of Homer and heroic epic (*Iliad, Odyssey,* etc.) to a world that also includes the tragic view and tragic drama was a movement from a culture almost totally committed to the voice of shame for purposes of

moral judgment to one that also included a large dimension of guilt. This was an historically momentous movement: until that time, no other culture had made that journey. The warrior hero is prodded on incessantly by the voice of shame: "Be a man, don't be a woman, don't back down from a fight, go out and kill someone." The tragic hero, for whatever particular reason, commits an act of moral trespass and brings misery and death to himself and those about him. Shame is about inadequacy and impotence; guilt is about trespass. The tragic view has a much more complex vision of what morality is. It is important to note that in the process of social and psychological development, though one stage replaces a previous one, that doesn't mean that the values of the previous stage disappear. Nothing of importance is ever totally lost or repressed. Shame still lives after the birth of tragedy, but there is no importance of guilt in a shame-culture.

What Eric Robertson Dodds (1893-1979) did not do, but what I could do for myself, was to elaborate on the movement of the individual psyche—and its development—from shame to guilt. From everything we know, the three-year-old child lives not at all in a world touched by feelings of guilt. Shame, and the threat of the denial of love, are the chief modes for morally disciplining such a child. Guilt—and the strong possibility of remorse—arrives only at four to five years old. And, of great significance, as an essential element of the Oedipus complex, which enjoys the exact time-table. Allowing, again, for the persistence of shame throughout life, there is a profound truth in the notion that shame is a pre-Oedipal psychic mechanism, and guilt an Oedipal and post-Oedipal one.

So, does that mean we can say Homeric Greece was a pre-Oedipal, pre-genital society? In the literal, 100% sense, of course not. No society has been such; no society believed you could produce by oral or anal sex. However, in the study of the evolution of religion, for instance, there seems no

question that the religions of primitive society—those preliterate, kinship ones that were the main subject of anthropology—could be described, with knowing reservations, as pre-Oedipal. Especially in contrast to later developments of religion. Certainly, it seems accurate to say that monotheism is an Oedipal religion par excellence, in contrast to a religion of multiple spirits, taboos, complex magical practices, and human sacrifice.

The reason that Dodds' book and, most especially, that chapter was earth-shaking for me was that it opened up a whole world of theoretical understanding of other crucial events in the evolution of society, culture, and, most especially, religion. There is no psychological development from one stage to the next without a new set of contradictions, resistances, anxieties, ambivalences, defenses, and compromise formations. Could it be that when society and culture take the same, analogous developmental advance to a new stage, new equivalent ambivalences, defenses, and compromise formations appear on the level of society? My answer was an unequivocal "Yes!"

The proof was in the analysis of the great historical movement from that stage when society is held together overwhelmingly by kinship forms of social cohesion to a stage of society where non-kinship, political, monarchical forms are the primary ones of social cohesion. All human society began as a kinship society: non-literate with no authoritarian monarch, no politics, no state. The first great developmental advance is the creation of non-kinship forms of social cohesion, most importantly monarchy and state politics. This second stage, in contrast to "primitive society," I designated "complex society."

The new stage demonstrated a whole new set of contradictions and compromise formations. Pervasive human sacrifice, which did not exist in kinship society and ceased to

exist when complex society gave way to the archaic, was one crucial new manifestation of the human religious impulse. How do we understand these new forms of social and cultural existence? By recourse, I decided, to the analogous situation of psychic development. The movement from kinship to state society corresponded very closely to—and was possibly even caused by—the psychic developmental propulsion away from complete dependency on the nurturing of the mother towards separation and individuation: towards autonomy. That movement is fraught with anxiety, ambivalence, and defenses against these same, which are then resolved in satisfactory or unsatisfactory compromise formations. Indeed, all that could readily explain the absolute necessity of an authoritarian monarch—an omnipotent father figure—for the creation of the new stage of complex society. For the psyche, no going beyond maternal symbiosis without the assistance (and the tyranny) of an omnipotent monarchy. Elegant and with a more than vague ring of truth.

Could we, then, begin to understand all developmental movements in society with a similar theoretical approach? For me, the answer was clear and loud. Such was the exciting journey that Dodds and others had given me the courage to undertake.

***Eli Sagan*** *has published several books of psychohistory, including: At the Dawn of Tyranny: The Origins of Individualism (1985); Political Oppression and the State (1985); and Freud, Women and Morality: The Psychology of Good and Evil (1988). As a visiting professor he has taught women's studies, psychoanalysis, and psychohistory at the University of California—Berkeley, New School University, and Brandeis University. He can be contacted at 153 Dwight Place in Englewood, NJ 07631.* ❑

# L. Pierce Clark: An Early Psychobiographer

**Elizabeth Wirth Marvick** (1925-2005)
**Paul H. Elovitz**—Ramapo College

An American neurologist, psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst, Leon Dennis Pierce Clark (June 15, 1870-December 3, 1933) dared to go against established wisdom by insisting that the brain damaged could benefit from classic psychoanalytical principles. He was an early psychobiographer of Alexander the Great, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Napoleon Bonaparte, Abraham Lincoln, Michelangelo Buonarroti, the Pharaoh Akhenaten (also spelled Akhenaton), and others. Dr. Clark's main scholarly psychohistorical foci were on the impact of epilepsy and narcissism on geniuses and great men in history. He received favorable public notice for this work, especially on Abraham Lincoln, with positive comments by Carl Sandburg and other historians. William Allen White, the renowned newspaperman, suggested that similar studies "might be made of all our presidents" (*New York Times*, 1934, pp. 123; see the attached bibliography for full citations).

The psychiatrist applied his knowledge of early childhood development, epilepsy, narcissism (at first spelled as "narcism"), and self-defeatism to the lives of the famous historical individuals about whom he wrote. In "The Narcism of Alexander the Great," the doctor questioned the sanity of the great conqueror, who, after defeating the Persian Empire, went off to further conquests rather than consolidating his empire. He describes the narcissist as so loving the self that he may never develop enough to have attachment to the opposite sex—in exceptional cases leading to homosexuality. In describing the family triangle involving King Philip, his wife Olympias, and their son who is described as a "mother's

boy," Clark suggests that there may have been conjugal love with his mother Olympias who was furious at her husband for planning to take another royal wife, perhaps displacing her son as his heir. (Clark is wrong in referring to Philip's having only two rather than seven wives; Olympias was number four.) The assassination of Philip opened the way for Alexander's military genius. But as an extreme narcissist, he refused to accept any criticism, lived with oriental pomp and circumstance, had himself declared a god, and complained that he had no more worlds to conquer, prior to his death from a fever at age 33.

Clark's psychoanalytic studies of historical figures interested many in the lay public. Best known of these was his work on Abraham Lincoln, published in final form in the year of his death. An obituary headline in the *New York Times* (1933) declared that this book revealed that Lincoln's mother had had a "lifelong influence" on the statesman. In *Napoleon: Self-Destroyed*, the early psychobiographer traces the rise of the Corsican from early childhood to the death of his father when he was 15, emphasizing his genius, grandiosity, maternal identification, narcissism, sensitive nature, theatrical quality, and concluding with the conqueror 's quote, "After all, what a romance my life has been!" (p. 243). The neurologist's enjoyment in writing about Bonaparte is quite evident. His psychobiographical and psychohistorical studies were written for the layperson, in non-technical language. Although he recognized that idealization and the paucity of facts made it difficult to write on historical individuals, he excited his audience with the possibility of attaining a deeper understanding of famous individuals. However, by the standards of the present era there is not a great depth of analysis.

One of Clark's significant achievements was the creation in 1926 and editing of the *Archives of Psychoanalysis*, published by the Psychoanalytic Institute of Stamford Connecticut, with editorial offices in New York at Clark's ad-

dress. August Aichhorn, Felix Deutsch, Sandor Ferenczi, Anna and Sigmund Freud, Georg Groddeck, Otto Rank, Wilhelm Reich, and others were among those writing for this interesting, hardcover-bound journal of over 1,233 pages, including many illustrations. Amidst many other studies Freud published "Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety"; his daughter, "The Technic of Child Analysis"; Groddeck, "The Book of the It"; and Wilhelm Reich, "The Function of the Orgasm." Clark's many contributions included "The Objective and Subjective Development of the Ego," "Studies of Some Aspects of the Art of the Renaissance," "A Psychological Study of Art vs. Science as Illustrated in Leonardo da Vinci," and "A Psychohistorical Study of Akhnaten, First Idealist and Originator of a Monotheistic Religion." After four impressive parts of volume one, in 1927 the editor discontinued the *Archives of Psychoanalysis,* explaining that it took "too much time and effort" from "the staff of collaborators at the Psychoanalytic Institute" and that it would be replaced by monographs "from time to time."

Leon Pierce Clark was born in rural Ingleside, New York State and educated at the Naples (New York) Academy. In 1892 he completed his medical degree at New York University and subsequently served at City Hospital on Blackwell's Island prior to a Manhattan State Hospital internship. Next he became a neuropathologist and Assistant Director at the Connecticut State Hospital in Middletown where he began his work on epilepsy. He became interested in psychological accompaniments of epilepsy, leading to the study of psychoanalysis on which he wrote his first paper in 1908. John Chynoweth Burnham writes of Clark having a type of "conversion experience" taking him in several years from "materialistic neurology clear into the Freudian camp" (*Psychoanalysis and American Medicine, 1894-1918*, 1967, p. 168). Dr. Clark's publications on aspects of epilepsy that he thought were not organic in origin drew on

early psychoanalytic writings on hysteria and seem to have paralleled the development of Freud's ideas on epileptoid symptoms. Late in his life he would visit Freud in Vienna on the way back from a trip to Egypt. (Although Ernest Jones wrote a little for the *Archives of Psychoanalysis*, he denigrated Clark in letters to Freud, as he had Sandor Ferenzci and Joan Reviere.)

Dr. Clark was a lively conversationalist and an active, restless individual who was dauntless in his therapeutic ambitions. He sought to push back the limits on what types of disorders were considered amenable to psychoanalytic treatment, and even as his reputation as a neurologist and authority on epilepsy grew, he published papers on the potential of psychoanalysis for helping those suffering from a wide range of psychoses and neurological impairments—he was a pioneer in the psychoanalytic treatment of those with brain damage resulting in mental retardation (amentia). While others saw the intellectually disabled (mentally handicapped) as too nonverbal—"too stupid"—for talking cures, Clark challenged this approach in his work. "Clarkian" principles have been applied at the Tavistock Clinic and elsewhere. He drew much of his clinical materials from patients at the Psychoanalytic Sanitcrium in Rye, New York, the first facility of its kind in North America. Clark had organized and directed it himself (Anonymous, 1934, p. 121).

As an energetic professional, Clark served as president of various organizations: the New York Neurological Society (1911-12), New York Psychiatric Society (1916), the National Association for the Study of Epilepsy (1919), and the American Psychopathological Association (1923). He served as a trustee of Letchworth Village for Mental Defectives (according to the usage of the time, some of his articles referred to the "feeble minded" and "mental defectives"). In the winter he held informal seminars open to "friends of psychoanalysis"—laymen and physicians. As reflected in his

extensive list of publications, his interests extended from the mentally challenged to suicides.

Epilepsy was the subject this prolific author wrote on quite often, however, as reflected in his extensive list of publications, his interests included dementia, depression, early childhood development, homosexuality, the need for psychological clinics in schools, psychopathetic children, suicide, sycophancy, and much, much more. Regrettably, his work on psychohistory is barely known about by today's psychohistorians.

Leon Clark died suddenly at age 63 from a coronary thrombosis. Not feeling well, he lay down for an afternoon nap from which he never awakened (Anonymous, 1934, p. 121). His body was cremated and the ashes spread at his summer home in New York State on the side of a hill about which he had written the poem, "Happy Hillside" (Anonymous, 1934, pp. 123-24). As with scholars, beyond his family Clark is remembered for his contributions to knowledge.

***Elizabeth Wirth Marvick, PhD*** *(1925-2005), taught political science, political psychology, and psychobiography at CCNY, the University of Bordeaux, the American University in Paris, Cal Tech, the Claremont Graduate School, and UCLA (1960-1990). She was the recipient of American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) grants and a Fulbright Senior Lectureship in France, and served on many professional boards including the editorial boards of* The Psychohistory Review *and* Political Psychology*. Dr. Marvick was the author of the psychobiographies,* The Young Richelieu: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Leadership *(1983) and* Louis XIII: The Making of a King *(1986). Details of her life may be found in a June 2002 interview and a March 2006 memorial in this journal. At the time of her death she was finishing the book,* The Founding Virginians*, on the five men who did*

*so much to shape American history.* ***Paul H. Elovitz, PhD****, editor of this journal, found Professor Marvick shared his longstanding interest in the early works of Pierce Clark and Preserved Smith and started writing articles on them on the basis of unpublished memorial notices of 253 and 360 words that Marvick had sent to him. Professor Elovitz trained in psychoanalysis and has taught history, psychohistory, and interdisciplinary studies at Temple, Rutgers, and Fairleigh Dickinson universities, as well as at Ramapo College where he is a founding faculty member. He may be contacted at pelovitz@aol.com.*

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*[**Editor's Note:** While generally discouraging them,* Clio's Psyche *occasionally publishes bibliographies when it is apparent that the information is not otherwise available to the reader. For this reason in this issue bibliographies are provided for the articles on Clark and Smith. We wish to express our thanks to Brett Kahr of London, Bob Lentz of Calgary, Nellie Thompson of the Brill Library in New York, Ken Fuchsman of the University of Connecticut, and the interlibrary loan staff of Ramapo College for invaluable assistance with this article. ]*

# The Psychohistorical Contributions and Lives of Henry Lawton and J. Lee Shneidman

**Paul H. Elovitz**—Ramapo College

Although their backgrounds and educations are quite different, Henry W. Lawton (1941-) and Jerome Lee Shneidman (1929-2008) share many characteristics and have each made their mark in the application of psychology to history and society. These men are two accomplished and productive scholars who have made significant contributions to the field of psychohistory and scholarship in general.

Both scholars were born as the eldest of two sons into lower-middle-class, economically struggling families. Lee Shneidman was born on June 20, 1929 in New York City to a family of Jewish immigrants from Tsarist Russia, and Henry Lawton arrived on July 1, 1941 in Trenton, New Jersey to a Protestant family whose ancestors were well established in this country. The New Yorker's family remained intact throughout his life, which was plagued by the cancer that struck him as a very young boy and dominated his childhood. In his bed in hospital charity wards, he discovered geogra-

phy, history, and stamp collecting as he escaped from his bodily misery by learning and fantasizing about people in other eras—he remembered at age eight considering Aragonese kings as his friends. His familial and personal commitment to knowledge led him to earn degrees from New York University (BA, 1951, MA, 1952) and the University of Wisconsin—Madison (PhD, 1957), enabling him to have a career as a professor of history.

Henry Lawton identified strongly with his mother in childhood, and would eventually fulfill her dream by becoming a social worker. He was a lonely boy who developed a fascination with history and a enormous capacity for work. Although he came from a family with less emphasis on education than that of the New Yorker, after four years in the U.S. Air Force (1959-63), Lawton nevertheless earned degrees from Trenton State (renamed, The College of New Jersey, BA, 1968), Fairleigh Dickinson (MA, 1971), and Rutgers (MLS, 1977) universities, prior to taking a graduate course on family therapy. He became fascinated by horror films as well as the potential of a horrifying right wing takeover of America led by Richard Nixon—in many ways his bête noire. In the 1970s Henry Lawton found an outlet for his scholarship at the Institute for Psychohistory, International Psychohistorical Association, and through the *Journal of Psychohistory* (*JPH*). Lacking the doctoral degrees of most of his peers was not a barrier for this diligent independent scholar, who always made his living as a social worker, thus fulfilling his mother's frustrated dream.

Both men married, had two children (adopted in the case of the Shneidmans), and maintained a close relationship with their wives. Dr. Connie Shneidman (1930-2006) was a quite successful New York psychologist/psychoanalyst who enjoyed scholarly work with Lee, such as their joint article on the Burr/Hamilton duel. Helen Lawton focused on raising their children prior to working as a librarian. She has re-

cently retired and now spends her time caring for her physically ailing husband and spending more time with her grandchildren.

Interestingly enough, neither man trusted his father. Henry Lawton thinks of his father, who separated from his family when his eldest son was in his early adolescence, as being somewhat unethical, overcharging customers at his sewing machine repair business. As a boy, Shneidman accepted his father's communist ideals for a better society but rejected his father's justification of Stalin's pact with Hitler in 1939 and continued commitment to Soviet communism. Throughout his life he delighted in exposing the foibles and secret deals of societal fathers such as Thomas Jefferson. Lawton holds to the belief, as did Shneidman, that one has to think for oneself rather than trust societal authorities. While Shneidman was active in his synagogue, Lawton's current answer to the question of religious identification is "agnostic."

Both have written extensively on both subject matter and methodology. Henry Lawton wrote the pioneering studies "The Myth of Altruism" (*JPH*, 1982), "The Group Fantasies of Psychohistorians" (*JPH*, 1983), and *The Psychohistorian's Handbook* (1988), and contributed to various methodological discussions appearing mostly in Clio's Psyche and the *JPH*. J. Lee Shneidman, who had the advantage of a university professorship providing far more time for scholarship and publication, wrote articles on methodology and a variety of books, including *The Rise of the Aragonese-Catalan Empire: 1200-1350* (2 volumes, 1970, translated into Catalan); *Spain & Franco: Quest for International Acceptance, 1949-1959* (1973); *John F. Kennedy* (1974, with Peter Schwab); and *Leading from Weakness: Jefferson's Overt and Covert Relations with Spain and the Barbary States: 1801-1807* (an unpublished manuscript).

Although in very different venues, teaching was a significant activity for both. The professor taught historical methodology, Spanish history, and other subjects at Adelphi (for 45 years) and for four years at Fairleigh Dickinson universities, as well as at other institutions of higher education. In 1973 and 1975, he served as a Scholar-Diplomat for the U.S. State Department. In 1965, he established the "Seminar in the History of Legal and Political Thought and Institutions" at Columbia University, serving as chair from 1985 to 2002. Henry Lawton, who would have liked to have made his living as a college professor and research scholar, expressed his passion for sharing his knowledge on a one-on-one basis with his colleagues, especially at the Group for the Psychohistorical Study of Film, the Work-In-Progress Seminars of the Psychohistory Forum, and the International Psychohistorical Association. Students had most favorable comments regarding his teaching when he stepped in to help a colleague by teaching the second half of an undergraduate course on the Holocaust at Ramapo College.

In the early 1980s, Lawton helped to found the Psychohistory Forum as its Co-Director, and then several years later established and directed the valuable film group for close to 20 years. He performs an important service as Book Review Editor of the *JPH*, as well as in his capacity as the tireless and overworked Secretary of the IPA. For many years, he served as the IPA Group Process Analyst and from 2000-04 assumed its presidency without relinquishing his other responsibilities.

Shneidman made important contributions to the IPA, where he served for several years as editor of its *Bulletin* and occasionally presented papers, in contrast to Lawton's consistent presentations and tireless work for the organization from its earliest years. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Lee and his wife Connalee hosted and coordinated the "Communism: The Dream That Failed Research

Group" of the Psychohistory Forum, which eventually morphed into the Psychoanalytic Autobiography Group. Regrettably, this stimulating group did not survive the deaths of the Shneidmans, which came after the loss of several other older participants—namely Chaim Shatan (1924-2001), Ben Brody (1920-2007), and Ralph Colp (1924-2008).

In the course of their decades of work in the field, both scholars demonstrated considerable determination, flexibility, and growth. Lawton started as a dedicated advocate of self-analysis, but eventually came to realize the extent to which the analysand needed the analyst as a transference object, and eventually entered personal analysis. Professor Shneidman, whose belief in developing knowledge through a process of challenging the ideas of others was supported by his contrarian tendencies, showed his willingness to change his beliefs on a number of occasions. An example of this was his insistence that dreams could not be a valuable historical source, a stance later changed in a published *JPH* exchange. To deepen his historical studies, Dr. Shneidman did post-doctoral study as a Research Candidate at the Columbia University's Psychoanalytic Clinic for Training and then at the Rubin Fine Psychoanalytic Institute, where the instructors eventually insisted he see living patients—finally he dropped out because, as he put it, "I only wanted to analyze dead people."

To the very end of his life, J. Lee Shneidman worked on his book on Jefferson's foreign policy amidst his beloved books and manuscripts. The pipe he loved to smoke while working in a constricted space ultimately caused his death by cancer. Despite illness and with his usual determination, Henry Lawton continues his psychohistorical work on film and on a long-term project on Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder of the Church of the Latter-day Saints.

Professor Shneidman's work on early modern Spanish history, Aaron Burr, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, and Thomas Jefferson illustrates the breadth of his erudition while Henry Lawton has demonstrated that independent scholars can make significant contributions to scholarship and scholarly organizations without a university's institutional support. Each man deserves recognition for his significant contributions to both scholarship and psychohistory.

***Paul Elovitz**' biography is on page 15.* ❑

# America's First Psychobiographer: Preserved Smith and His Insights on Luther.

**Elizabeth Wirth Marvick** (1925-2005)
**Paul H. Elovitz**—Ramapo College

America's first psychobiographer was Preserved Smith (1880-1941), carrying on a family tradition of scholarly iconoclasm when he embraced psychoanalysis and applied it to the examination of Martin Luther. This article will examine both this little-known psychobiographer and the pioneering work he did on Martin Luther to bring them to psychohistorians in the 21st century.

Smith was a descendant of 17th-century American settlers and the son of Henry Preserved Smith (1847-1927), a distinguished Old Testament scholar and Presbyterian minister who defended, at the risk of his own career, the teaching of biblical Higher Criticism in American seminaries (H. P. Smith, 1926, see the attached bibliography for full citations). The elder Smith had studied extensively in Germany and the Middle East. The son would say that he owed to his father "much both of the inspiration to follow and of the means to pursue a scholar's career" (Smith, 1920, p. vi).

Preserved Smith brought to his task his reputation as a noted historian of the Reformation (Smith, 1907, 1911, l913), when he published a short but highly significant essay on Martin Luther (*1913), the very first psychoanalytic study of a major historical figure to appear in the United States. He applied a thorough knowledge of Freudian literature to his probably unsurpassed familiarity with the sources of Reformation history as he sought to resolve important problems in Luther's personality: the religious reformer's early "obsession with the devil," and the "part played in his growth by the idea of concupiscence" (Smith, *1913).

This scholar's historical grounding was in sharp contrast to backgrounds of most of the early practitioners of psychoanalysis applied to historical materials. They were clinicians and others, mostly in Freud's circle, with medical and other non-historical training. These self-taught amateurs commonly turned to historical figures to apply their new psychoanalytic knowledge and test various theories. This was sometimes a way of avoiding discussion of their easily identifiable patients in the course of whose treatment they had gained their insights or developed their speculations—theories could more safely be applied to long-dead rather than living individuals. This was a useful technique of non-disclosure in the close-knit, Vienna psychoanalytical community in this post-Victorian era. In contrast, Smith came to his subject not with a theory to justify by finding the corresponding facts, but with an already firm grounding in history.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a wonderful subject for a variety of reasons. First, as the second most written-about historical individual at the time, there was a large potential audience (Smith, 1911, p. viii). (Since the first is not mentioned by name, it is unclear if Smith judged Napoleon or Christ to be the most written about historical personage.) Second, in the founder of Protestantism, Smith had all of the proper ingredients for a path-breaking study, starting with a

massive historical record with which to work comprised of Luther's writings, sermons, correspondence, and recorded conversion. A dozen of Luther's followers recorded the words he spoke at the table while his wife and women of the household served food (Smith, 1907, p. 38). The collected works of Martin Luther include his *Table Talk*.

The advantage of *Table Talk* and Luther's letters for psychoanalytic study is that they do not represent the polished, defensive argumentation typical of modern authors that do not want to reveal their personal motivations and conflicts in the midst of disputation or scholarship. Fortunately, Martin Luther wrote in the pre-Freudian world, where one could innocently speak without the awareness of self-revelation that makes many modern intellectuals highly guarded. Although he was among the best-read men of his age, he used the coarse language of the 16th century—only to be found in the "lowest bar-rooms" of 1911 according to his psychobiographer (Smith, 1911, p. 321). Luther spoke his mind freely in the manner of the ordinary people of his age, and was noted for "a hot temper and almost unbridled violence of language" (Smith, *1913, p. 362). The pattern of his childhood and the drama of his conversion experience were also ready-made for psychological interpretation. In publishing *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther* (1911), Professor Smith sought to reveal "him as a great character rather than as a great theologian," pointing out that his self-revelation goes well beyond that of Cellini, Pepys, or Rousseau—that it is unparalleled. He rightfully saw the body of his writings as "his unconscious autobiography" (Smith, 1911, p. 9).

Although there were indications of his psychological interest in his three earlier studies, these were extended and systematized in his 1913 article, "Luther's Early Development in the Light of Psycho-Analysis," the first significant study of an historical personage by an American. The Reformation historian starts by noting the development of new

psychological knowledge, acknowledging the importance of personality, and assuring the reader that there is no desire to denigrate "the radiant." He goes on to discuss Luther's family background, childhood, unconscious sexual desires, psychoanalytic diagnoses, mood swings, obsession with the devil, conversion experience, relationship with his confessor, and so much more.

Martin Luther had a most unhappy childhood. His reminiscences are of being beaten by his father, sometimes by his mother, and the most troubling of "spiritual terrors" (Smith, *1913, p. 362). Hans Luther was a hard, self-made man who pulled himself out of the peasantry and wanted his eldest and most talented son, Martin, to help him in business by becoming a lawyer. He drank in excess to the point of intoxication, once whipping Martin "so severely that the latter hated him for it and fled from him for a season" (p. 362). Although Martin appears not to have borne any lasting resentment towards his mother, he described her beating him until he was bloody simply for stealing a nut. His resentment for this corporal punishment was focused on his father rather than his mother. Preserved Smith associates Luther with "jealousy and hatred of the father," feelings he sees as getting "transferred to other adult males" (Smith, *1913, pp. 362-363). On the other hand, he argues for Luther being fascinated with issues of mother-son incest. There is an elegance of Smith's depiction of the childhood when he writes "most adults, [are] cut off from their infancy by a curtain of amnesia" (Smith, *1913, p. 362).

A strength of the points made by Smith are that they are footnoted to the original German, which is a reminder that this scholar spent considerable time studying Luther and historical methodology in Europe at a time when history was becoming much more rigorous and "scientific." As someone trained in psychoanalysis who works to avoid using technical terminology, the 2010 writer of these words is less enamored

of Smith's finding Luther to be "a thoroughly typical example of the neurotic, quasi-hysterical sequence of an infantile sex complex," nor does he appear to present adequate evidence for the claim. Smith thought "that Sigismund Freud and his school could hardly have found a better example to illustrate the sounder part of their theory [of the sexual life of the child] than him" (Smith, *1913, p. 362).

Demonology was central to Luther's belief system. He reported his mother struggling with a witch who could cause a child to cry himself to death (Smith, *1913, p. 363), raising questions regarding her ability to separate from her first son, although Smith does not note this. Luther reports disputing with the devil on a nightly basis, stating that the demons gave him night sweats and terrors so "that my hardest battles have been in bed." Smith sees the devil as representing Luther's father (Smith, *1913, p. 365) and at other points quotes him as viewing Christ as the devil (Smith, *1913, p. 373). Luther's obsession with the devil would ultimately result in the writing of the book *The Devil with/in Martin Luther: A Theological Examination* (in German, 1931).

Professor Smith saw Luther as having struggled with masturbation—although in the pre-WWI period he did not directly state this, just as he failed to explicitly state that Luther fought the devil with feces and flatulence. He casts an interesting light on Luther's life-changing decision in a thunderstorm to leave law school and become an Augustinian monk. Also, he argues that the young monk's confessor, John von Staupitz, played a key role in helping him to sublimate some of his conflicts in scholarship and teaching (Smith, *1913, p. 376).

Preserved Smith's pioneer work received mixed reviews. It was condemned in the *Historische Zeitschrift* and in the *Archiv für Reformationsqeschichte* and even attracted,

without being named, the scorn of Lucien Febvre (1928, p. 27), though in certain circles his insights were better appreciated (Smith, 1914). While Smith led the way for our discipline in America by showing the viability of the founder of Protestantism as a source for our field, 45 years later it was *Young Man Luther* (1958) that brought the field of applied psychoanalysis—psychohistory—to public notice. In it, Erik Erikson credited Professor Smith's contribution as "brilliant," but disagreed sharply with many elements of his work and claimed that psychoanalysis was like a "foreign body" in Smith's thinking (Erikson, pp. 28-29).

We view his contributions more positively. Elizabeth Marvick believed that his subsequent magisterial works of historical synthesis, *The Age of the Reformation* (1920) and *A History of Modern Culture* (1930-1934), show that Smith, uniquely among American historians of his time, had integrated psychoanalytic hypotheses into his perspectives. His legacy continued through his family when his daughter, Priscilla Robertson, contributed the chapter, "The Home as Nest: Middle Class Childhood in Nineteenth Century Europe," to the 1974 psychohistorical book, *The History of Childhood*.

***Marvick**'s biography is on page 14 and **Elovitz**' biography is on page 15.*

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# Self-Affirmation and Ethics in Erikson's Psychohistory

**Joseph Kramp**—Drew University

The discipline of psychohistory plays a special role in outlining the ethical concerns that face our contemporary world. My focal point is Erik Erikson, a pioneer in the field, who had a special concern for ethical matters relating to the problems we currently face.

Erikson's psychological work attests to his focus on a person's existential being. Erikson's major psychohistorical works on Gandhi and Luther, more than any part of his oeuvre, clarify the contours of his life cycle theory and the important role that both negative and positive elements play in identity formation. For example, when we look at young Luther, could he have become such a prolific and talented writer and speaker without the forced moratorium and silence he experienced in the monastery, coupled with the guilt and shame of his early childhood? Could he have succeeded in

forging a happy married life without the pains and pleasures of an extensive period of isolation? Erikson plainly answers no to both of these questions; one must experience both the positive and negative identity aspects of the life cycle in order to achieve identity.

Erikson's portrayal of Gandhi's negative identity is even more searching than the portrayal of Luther. While the reader of *Young Man Luther* can almost feel Erikson's idealization of him and, concomitantly, his (omitted) personal investment in the work, Erikson's work on Gandhi bears the marks of a wide array of investments and feelings, most of which Erikson is candid about. It was in this work that his disciplined subjectivity truly shined as an example for the next generation of psychohistorians. Erikson is both highly complementary of Gandhi and highly critical. Nevertheless, he shows deep respect for Gandhi's navigation of the life cycle and tempers his criticism of Gandhi by pointing to the ways in which Gandhi's negative and positive identity elements worked in tandem (and with the particularities of historical context) to bear the fruit of his life. Indeed, we cannot know Gandhi or recognize his achievement without his negative identity aspects—some of which had disastrous developmental consequences for others, his own children among them.

Erikson's approach to negative identity aspects has widespread applications in reforming what we have called "Western ethics." Western ethics rely on a paradigm that shows what one should not do and what one should do without much regard for particularity. For Erikson, this kind of thinking is distracting from the truly important ethical or moral aspects of life, namely those parts of one's being. Self-affirmation or the development of ego strength that we see so clearly, for example, in Erikson's *Young Man Luther*, cannot co-exist with the paradigm offered by Western ethics. This is because Western epistemology denies the exigencies

of particularity through a process in which specific facts (such as the evidence assembled in psychohistorical inquiry) are gathered, categorized, and presented as freed from their particularity. No doubt part of the difficulty psychohistory has had in gaining legitimacy as a field of inquiry has had to do with this very problem of denying particularity in Western epistemology.

In the March issue of Clio's Psyche on heroes and role models, David Lotto ended his article by explaining how learning about the identity failings of his mentors and role models assisted in deepening his sense of intimacy with them. Erikson's focus on the development of ego strength, or self-affirmation, is directly connected to Lotto's example of his deepened identification and concomitant intimacy with his heroes and role models. For Erikson, self and society are transformed not by posting reminders on the wall of what one should or should not do, but rather by uniting the idiosyncratic particulars of one's being that find it difficult to befriend each other.

This process, I believe, is directly connected to the aesthetic sensibilities Erikson developed as a young artist, for the artist (and the psychohistorian) are aware that the most satisfying of portrayals and portraits are the ones that engage the antipodes of existence in dynamic perspective. This process, in which opposing aspects of self and society befriend each other, is often called Erikson's principle of mutuality. In *Gandhi's Truth*, mutuality strikes at the core of his claim that psychoanalysis could greatly assist in the process of seeking world peace since, for Erikson, psychoanalysis assists in the flowering of mutuality. Indeed, perhaps the greatest achievement of *Gandhi's Truth* is the way Erikson described Gandhi's idiosyncratic expression as a style of mutuality, which was occasionally mutual and at other times downright resigned to complete abnegation of the parts of himself he could not make peace with. Erikson was a wizard

at penning the ways in which self-misery and the misery of the world dynamically interrelate.

The ought and ought not approach, or as I like to call it the either/or approach, of Western epistemology and ethics had at its origin a sense of deep self-loathing. (Any strong dose of Descartes, Hobbes, or Hume, and others, when read in light of Erikson makes this abundantly clear.) This self-loathing is infectious and has taken a strong foothold in the academy, government, and houses of worship. It assists in the process of sustaining aspects of our lives that are decidedly un-mutual—dichotomies of race, class, and sex that wear on our individual psyches and collective culture like an ulcer.

The task of the psychohistorian is to counter the individual and collective self-loathing with an ever deeper, more aware, and articulate sense of the human personality and its relation to historical context. In other words, the task of the psychohistorian is to express the particular in all its glory against the tendency to retreat into the unsafe refuge of concepts and categories that deny those particularities of existence that the psychohistorian works so hard to express and elucidate. We, as psychohistorians, feel the pulse of the beating heart in individuals and in society, and our task is to simply listen to it and have the privilege of telling its story.

***Joseph M. Kramp*** *is a PhD candidate in the psychology of religion at Drew University who has been awarded a Young Scholar Psychohistory Forum 2010 Membership. He can be reached at josephkramp@gmail.com.* ❑

We welcome Kenneth Fuchsman of the University of Connecticut to our Board of Editors

# The Sons of Liberty: Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body*

**Ken Fuchsman**—University of Connecticut

Norman O. Brown (1913-2002) and his work fall into many categories. Born in Mexico in 1913 to a British father and a German-Cuban mother, he was educated at Oxford University where his tutor was Isaiah Berlin. Interested in Marx, Brown earned a doctorate in classics at the University of Wisconsin and later became a professor at Wesleyan University. After the defeat of left-leaning Henry Wallace for President in 1948, Brown became disillusioned with politics. He then turned toward Freud to comprehend the failure of political hopes (Norman O. Brown, "Memoirs," in Jerome Neu, ed., *In Memoriam: Norman O. Brown,* 2005). His *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History* (1959) and *Love's Body* (1966, all quotes from this volume unless otherwise specified) brought the Freudian left to unexpected places. In the millennial climate of the late 1960s, his works combining erudition, penetrating insight, and a contradictory liberationist mysticism, became counterculture bibles. In the 1960s Brown was a scholarly, reserved, Freudian Dionysius; a mild mannered Anglo-American Nietzsche.

He is thus an odd candidate for inclusion as a psychohistorian; Brown is neither a psychologist nor a historian. *Life Against Death* is psychoanalytic, but ahistorical. Then there is "Liberty," the first chapter of *Love's Body,* where Brown makes a brilliant Freudian deconstruction of John Locke's liberal republicanism. This essay alone establishes the value of Brown's work for psychohistory. Using psychoanalytic tools, this classics professor explains the emotional dynamics beneath the political rhetoric of equality. He uses Freud's discredited primal horde theory of the male sons' murder of the tyrannical father to illuminate the dynamics of

politics.

"Freud," Brown writes, "seems to project into prehistoric times the constitutional crisis of seventeenth-century England" (p. 3). Locke's philosophy is often cited as justification for political revolt. It is the second of his *Two Treatises of Government* that garners the most attention. The Professor turns to the neglected first treatise, Locke's polemic against Robert Filmer's *Patriarch, or The Natural Power of Kings*. Locke justifies the dismissal of the monarch and the supremacy of Parliament. In Freudian terms, the sons are overthrowing the father. While this may appear to be another variation on Oedipal rebellion, here brothers are not acting individually but collectively against the father. It is liberty against patriarchy. Brown says, "To vindicate liberty is to vindicate...the sons...against paternal despotism…Liberty means sonship" (pp. 4-5). The revolt against paternal rule contains the usual Oedipal rage. The murderous impulses behind this fraternity make them "brothers in crime...equal as sinners" (p. 15). What is billed as a moral enterprise, a republican revolt against unjust authority, also contains criminal intentions. Ethical justifications disguise guilt over forbidden aggression.

These political rebellions are often in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Brown sees an "inner contradiction." While sonship "and brotherhood are espoused against fatherhood," how can there be fraternal unity without a father? "Locke's sons, like Freud's, cannot free themselves from father psychology" (p. 5). The result is that paternal authority sneaks back in, often through the actions of some of the brothers, who frequently take on the father's attributes.

Once the father is gone, fraternal cooperation does not last; the sons may well battle among themselves in a "dispute over the inheritance of the paternal estate" (p. 4). In the rivalries of his offspring, the seemingly deposed symbolic

father-ruler returns with a vengeance. In what is a commentary on his own political radical past, Brown writes: "The history of Marxism shows how hard it is to kill the father; to get rid of the family, private property, and the state" (p. 8).

In electoral systems of government, beneath surface civility and collaboration, competition between political rivals often contains brutal sibling rivalries; variations on Jacob and Esau's struggles to be Isaac's successor. Without a father to oppose, equality does not remain fraternity for very long. "Equals are rivals; and the dear love of comrades is made out of mutual jealousy and hate" (p. 17). Factions arise among the proverbial brothers, and appear as organized political parties. To Brown, such political organizations "are antagonistic fraternities" (p. 29). Vicious impulses and political life are not easily distinguishable. Violent urges arise out of the very foundation of human culture within the family. As well as union within family life, there is also "unconscious hostility," and "taboos which prescribe, sexual separation, mutual avoidance; the castration complex. Without an understanding of the seamy side of sexuality there is no understanding of politics" (p. 11). Brown's Freudian analysis shows how antagonism and transgressions are intrinsic to politics; the chances of democratic consensus, collaboration, and cooperation being sustained are not high.

Locke has different expectations. He sees "freedom from absolute, arbitrary power" as integral to human being. "The natural liberty of man," Locke writes, "is to be free from any superior power on earth," and to be subject to "no other legislative power but that established by consent in the commonwealth" (John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 1947, p. 132).

This cooperative social compact is not consistent, Brown believes, with other human drives. Human "natural inclination, according to Hobbes and Freud, is murder" (p.

16). Sexual desire leads to taboos, to male hostility toward the father; these domestic desires and conflicts are then projected into the political arena, an alliance of sons to topple patriarchal rule periodically ensues, and results in an endlessly repeated cycle of rivalry and hostility. Politics is a theatre on whose stage primal murderous impulses are symbolically and often actually reenacted. Brown transfers the Oedipal family romance to political struggles to understand the complicated fate of liberty.

While Brown's dark explication of Freudian doctrine does not explain the affectionate bonds of family, civic, and political life, it can be used to understand some of the perennial ferocity of our public dramas. Some might say Brown's work is more political psychology than psychohistory. However, I believe that what Brown applies to the political revolt against paternalism of 17th-century England extends to other non-governmental strands of modern life. These are part of what historian Fred Weinstein and sociologist Gerald Platt years ago called the wish to be free (Fred Weinstein and Gerald Platt, *The Wish To Be Free*, 1969).

Where filial piety and reverence for authority were once the order of the day, they are not dominant anymore. Seeking autonomy and escaping from restrictions laid down by those in power occur in a variety of venues. Luther's Protestant Revolution challenged the morality and authority of the Church elders. Medieval guilds restrained trade and aspiring capitalists sought to undo their monopolies. Economic liberty was championed over unjust impositions. The early advocates of modern science campaigned against revelation and rationalism; they called for reliance on verifiable experiments rather than church doctrine. In academic life, we often witness one generation of scholars revising the findings of their forefathers.

In family life, parents once arranged marriages. By

the beginning of the 19th century, sons and daughters in much of the West obtained the right to choose their own spouses and sought other ways of escaping parental control. In American political life from the Sons of Liberty to Barack Obama's hopes that brothers and/or sisters of both political parties could unite against the dominance of special interests, the melodramatic symbolism of good sons and daughters rebelling against bad parental authority has been a recurring motif. Brown's Freudian analysis then can illuminate the animosity and rivalry beneath the calls for democratic unity. The transformational impulse, which is in part a generational revolt against authority, is present in religion, politics, culture, family, economics, science, and academia.

There are lessons for both psychoanalysts and historians in this account of Norman Brown's *Love's Body*. For psychoanalysts, the meaning of the Oedipus complex is not just within the family of origin and later romantic entanglements. Oedipal dynamics are projected onto all sorts of social phenomena. How the Oedipus complex is manifested depends on a wide variety of socio-cultural mores that vary from time to time and place to place. For the historian, there is also much to learn. There are greater connections between the public and private domains than may be evident and the influence comes from both directions. Historians want to attribute changes in domestic life to social causes. They are less likely to look at the interconnection between perennial psychological issues and changing social realities. An understanding of psychology is needed to comprehend certain types of historical phenomenon. History and psychology, like history and other disciplines, are interdependent. Extending the lessons learned from Freud and Brown can be vital to a renewed psychohistory, the insights of past masters can lead to new ways of looking at perennial and contemporary issues.

***Ken Fuchsman's*** *biography is on page 5.* ❑

# Psychohistorians, Nazis, Violence, and Fear

**Peter Petschauer**—Appalachian State University

This essay is about the trail-blazing work of some leading scholars of Germany's children and their pasts, including my own. It is also about how we understand the take-over and control of the National Socialists in Germany beginning in 1933. The well-known names of these scholars include Lloyd de Mause, Alice Miller, Katharina Rutschke, David Beisel, and Aurel Ende.

Reading Tony Judt's "Three Memoirs" elucidates how and why one approaches a topic a particular way (*The New York Review of Books*, February 11, 2010). His experience with basic education at the Emanuel School in Battersea in London, England was quite harsh. By contrast, mine in an elementary school in the mountains of Northern Italy and then in monasteries in Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands was uneventful. The oddity is that Judt's experience took place in England and mine in German-speaking areas. The even greater oddity is that only one of my teachers treated their students in the harsh fashion characteristic of Judt's teachers. (Judt's observations were confirmed by Leena Mehreen Akhtar in "Intangible Casualties: The Evacuation of British Children During World War II," *Journal of Psychohistory*, 37, 3, Winter 2010: 224-54.) Let me add that Professor Judt was born in 1948—11 years after me; I was born before "the war" and he after it. Unfortunately for the profession of history, he is now very seriously ill, paralyzed from the waist down with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease).

I was brought up and educated during the 1940s and early 1950s by my parents, an extended family, and monks from different Catholic religious orders. Even with careful

scrutiny based upon my being a psychohistorian for decades, I find this upbringing no less helpful than that of almost every educated American I have met in the last 50 years. Yes, I was fortunate in most of the persons who surrounded me as a child; for example, the two prefects who led the monasteries during my attendance were intelligent, considerate, and humble. They took seriously one of the main points of Christianity's teaching: treat others as you would like to be treated.

Indeed, differences in locations and experiences produce divergent approaches to childhood and children. In the early 1980s, Lloyd deMause pointed us to an aspect of the past that led most of us, thankfully, to a better understanding of the unspeakable harm inflicted on children over hundreds of generations. With his approach, he worked to legitimize the study of the past of children by scholars, especially in this country. He also pointed to the reality that particularly abusive forms of rearing, say of Greek and Roman children, led to societies that were "inherently" violent and brutal. But even in that torrid past, some parents learned from childhood abuses and thus their children emerged as adults who sometimes were able to lead their societies into more humane directions. The progression of child-rearing modes he shows us is a powerful tool with which to investigate the past, not least because it allows us to see an improvement over time in the way parents and others approach future generations.

DeMause was not alone. About the time he presented his theory, Katharina Rutschke (1/25/1941-1/14/2010), an excellent scholar and profound interpreter of childhood in whose memory I write this essay, brought forth massive accounts of the history of German child rearing. Her first collection was the extensive *German Children Chronicle* (1983); she followed it with *German School Chronicle: Four Centuries of Learning and Educating* (1991). The variety of documents and the depth to which she drilled into every nook

and cranny of the past of German's childrearing is astonishing. She too was not alone. Jürgen Schlumbohm, ed., *Children's Rooms: How Children Became Farmers, Burgers and Aristocrats* (1983); Rudolf Kreis, *The Hidden History of the Child in German Literature: German Language Teaching as Psychohistory* (1980); and Wolfgang Scheibe, *Punishment as a Problem in Education*, 3rd ed., (1977) all came out during this seminal time. Regrettably, hardly any of these have been translated into English.

Because Hitler and the Nazis took over Germany and instituted there one of the harshest regimes ever found on this planet, Lloyd deMause (most recently, "Childhood Origins of World War II and the Holocaust," *JHP*, 36, 1, Summer, 2008; 2-33) and others thought this violence to be connected to the rearing of German children. One of their key assumptions was that Germans acceded to the takeover because they experienced inhumane upbringings.

But there is an underlying problem with this approach, and it is highlighted by my rather "normal" childhood experience. Because of it, I have not only looked for "black pedagogy," but also for light spots in the past. My childhood started during the National Socialist period and continued into the late 1950s. Surely astonishing to some fellow psychohistorians, I was neither beaten nor excessively manipulated by parents, caregivers, or monks. Nor were other students; some of us are still in contact. Except for one person, I had better trained and more humane teachers than had Judt. But better or worse childhood upbringing does not imply more or less intelligence.

One of the major problems with the now "traditional" interpretation of childrearing is that we tend to look for the exception, not the ordinary. Yes, there was abuse in Central Europe, as is in most other parts of the world, and it was recorded. In the study of female education in Germany from

the Reformation to the 18th century (Peter Petschauer, *The Education of Women in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, 1989), I found that the society as a whole was acutely aware of what needed to be undertaken for the benefit of children and passed literally hundreds of school ordinances. They also experimented with educational innovations with almost as much vigor as we do today. All of this had one purpose: to improve the situation of children. Even then the intelligentsia did more, and by the end of the 18th century it refined caring love between marriage partners and between them and their children. Indeed, they invented "real" love, as we understand it today. Given this perspective, the childhood experiences of some Germans of the post-WWI period may point to a different reason for the takeover, and German acceptance, of the Nazis.

Rather than assuming from notable examples that all German children experienced a similarly miserable past, whether fifty or hundreds of years before 1933, it would be more fruitful to stress the childhoods of the National Socialist leaders and those who cooperated with them directly at home and in other European countries. As much as Alice Miller decried the then-current child abuse in *For Your Own Good* (revised ed., 1980), she understood one key issue; even as she concentrated on Hitler, she did not project his experiences onto all German or Austrian children.

My point is simply that we need a more differentiated image for Germany. The counter to the emphasis on negative childhood experiences is to seek an approach that highlights the vicious men (and some women) who as adults abused their fellow citizens. In contrast to the considerable number of Germans who had moved into a more caring approach to their children, this group abused those who had undergone similarly negative experiences and those who had emerged into the more humane mode. But a society filled with families who had been weakened by other stressful cir-

cumstances—defeat in war, economic collapse, and job loss—encouraged the abused to grow into abusers of their society.

There is another component to this argument. The threat of abuse and violence, and its practice, was amazingly effective against the more humane population groups in Germany. Fear, as many autobiographers and other authors have shown, permeated German and Austrian societies. Such persons have had and still have difficulties with bullies because they/we have no meaningful defenses against them.

Yet, in the long run, good parenting, decent education, brilliant art, and exceptional music reemerged in Germany and allowed for those with better childrearing to emerge as leaders after the defeat of the horrible regime.

The lesson seems to be this: those who have had abusive experiences as children are still among us, even if many families and individuals have moved to a more child-centered approach. Given other pressures in a society, they can become a danger again, especially in this very violent country. The less violent population, that is the one with "normal" childhoods, is as easily cowed, or out-manipulated, as it was in Germany in the 1930s and '40s.

If the Nazi takeover in Germany had to do with childhood, and surely it did to a degree, then it was made possible *not* because most Germans were abused as children at this late stage of history, but rather because those who were could all too readily browbeat those who developed no defenses against abuse. Anyone who has read Sebastian Haffner's *Defying Hitler: A Memoir* (2002) understands the vicious brutality with which the abusers proceeded and how quickly the rest of the population was overcome with fear and dejection. It was the fear of all too many of the unfamiliar abusers and their unspeakable abuses that made the take-over possible and maintainable until its defeat in 1945.

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# Turning Swords Into Plowshares: Robert Jay Lifton and Vamik Volkan

**Benjamin Figueroa**—Ramapo College

The biblical prophet Isaiah wrote of a time when "they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (2:4). Unfortunately, this day has not yet presented itself to mankind. In our modern times we still wage wars and suffer the consequences of our actions. Psychiatrists Robert Jay Lifton (1926 -) and Vamik Volkan (1932-) are among those dedicating their lives to alleviate humankind from our destructive tendencies. Both these individuals use their personal and professional skills to further aid our collective understanding of war and the mechanisms which individuals and nations use in justifying, preparing, and engaging in war. They, especially Volkan, have gone beyond understanding conflict to work to lessen enmities leading to warfare.

Their proactive approach relies heavily on psychoanalysis, history, and other disciplines in pursuing the "why" of war with great depth and vigor. Each man has published extensively and built communities of scholars to further the process of peacemaking: Lifton left his Sterling Professor-

ship of Psychiatry at Yale to found and head The Center for the Study of Violence and Human Survival at John Jay College (1985-2003) of CUNY before retiring to a Senior Lectureship at Harvard. At his summer home on Cape Cod he continues the Wellfleet psychohistory meetings started in the 1960s around Erik Erikson and his work. (This by-invitation -only group represents the oldest continuous psychohistory organization.) As a psychiatry professor at the University of Virginia, Volkan created and headed the Center for Mind and Human Interaction (1987-2002) whose publication was *Mind and Human Interaction: Windows Between History, Culture, Politics, and Psychoanalysis* (1987-2003). Each man has written or edited well over 20 books.

**Robert Jay Lifton**

As a United States Air Force military psychiatrist in Japan in 1951 Lifton, enjoying the novelty of being in a foreign land, had his personal and professional interests piqued by the issue of the coping mechanisms of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear survivors, leading to the publication of *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (1967) based on the work he started in 1951-3. Its principal hypothesis is the notion of the "survivor mission." He suggests that if an individual is going to come to terms with the horrors of extreme suffering (as in the Holocaust and at Hiroshima), the individual at some inner level decides to become a "survivor" of that holocaust and take on the "survivor mission" to contribute to something beyond it. Lifton refined his theories concerning the survivor mission with his work on Vietnam, and amidst controversy produced *Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans—Neither Victims nor Executioners* (1973). In it his focus on atrocity producing situations, different forms of guilt, and varying forms of recovery for the "survivor" are perhaps his most important contributions to the field of psychohistory.

His discussion of "atrocity producing situations" is

vividly highlighted by the in-depth interviews and the use of support groups "rap groups" with their emphasis on informal discussions monitored by health professionals, which composed the primary sources for the research conducted in *Home from the War*. In it, Dr. Lifton describes the various preconditions for situations likely to produce atrocities. The essential component is the "dehumanizing the enemy." The U.S. soldiers viewed the Vietnamese enemies as "sub-human" cowards who hid among and behind the local populations and who were unmanly (as when men friends held hands with each other). This dehumanization culminated in American soldiers partaking in horrible acts of violence toward the Vietnamese soldiers and civilians.

The psychohistorian describes the consequences of these actions on the soldiers in Vietnam, the "post-slaughter rationalizing" and varying forms of guilt. He illustrates the use of "static guilt" vs. "animating guilt" and how the latter allows for personal growth while the former suppresses it. He utilizes his concept of the "protean man" to describe returning Vietnam veterans as individuals shifting in attention and identification with causes. He joined with many other health professionals, such as the psychohistorian Chaim Shatan, in helping returning Vietnam veterans with personal struggles centered on denial, guilt, and reentry into civilian life. Lifton identifies situations that can culminate in atrocities and the routes that the participant may use to rationalize his actions. More importantly, he offers a solution or method of dealing with these issues through his theory concerning the varying forms of guilt and how to identify and deal with them in a safe and healthy manner. Beyond theory, at his Center on Violence and Human Survival Robert Jay Lifton fruitfully brought together professionals from many fields including governmental officials and United Nations peacekeepers.

**Vamik Volkan**

The unique experiences of Vamik Volkan's birth and childhood as a Turkish national on the predominantly Greek island of Cyprus left him with vivid memories of the subtleties of group identifications and enmities, as well as a desire to bridge these centuries-old conflicts. Professor Volkan has produced valuable theories concerning the application of individual Freudian psychology to the dynamics of group psychology. Specifically, he has hypothesized that the structures individuals learn as children and adolescents are simply not static, but are quite fluid and the underlying principles of externalization, projection, and displacement all have identifiable applications in the dynamics of group psychology.

Arising from the coping mechanisms mentioned above, Volkan theorized that the group, (e.g., nation, ethnic minority/majority) when presented with external danger such as war, will inevitably be represented by an "object" (i.e., external representations of the self) or conflict in which case the group will pit "good objects" (e.g., national flag, familiar foods, clothing) against "bad objects" (e.g., immigrants, foreign customs). This is done in order to justify war via the protection of the good objects which the individual and group have a vested interest in, while simultaneously ridding the group of the bad objects. According to Volkan, the beginning of the conceptualization of a societal enemy is undertaken when "bad objects" are identified and targeted, which strengthens the group's cohesion while further dehumanizing the enemy.

The targets are also important since they are layered so that the group can attack via non-violent methods or at the extreme end engage in physical confrontations, all pointing to the crucial theory which Volkan highlights as "symbol formulation" (the need to have enemies as external stabilizers and conversely the need to have allies as internal stabilizers). Volkan also addresses the issues concerning neighboring

countries where the external representations of differences are exaggerated and magnified in a process Freud referred to as the "narcissism of minor differences" (e.g., trivial differences in clothing, accents, foods, etc.). This maintains a perceived psychological gap between "us" and "them." Volkan, having had personal experience in working with various nations and their ideological differences (e.g., U.S. and U.S.S.R. during the 1980s), has also identified the risk that national leaders pose to their nations based on their personal attributes. For example, charismatic leaders tend to be dangerous while transactional leaders tend to lead by consensus. Prior to his retirement, for approximately two decades Dr. Volkan traveled to centers of potential conflict, or "hot spots," in Asia and Europe to work to diffuse the hatreds which so often spill over into war. He wrote about these issues in *The Need to Have Enemies & Allies: From Clinical Practice to International Relationships* (1988) and numerous other volumes.

**Conclusion**

Vamik Volkan and Robert Jay Lifton are both vital contributors to the field of psychohistory due to their decades of work, through which they have combined their professional skills as medical doctors and psychoanalysts with a historical approach to the "why" of war. They do not merely identify the roots of the problem, but also provide the reader with comprehensive theories as to the possible approaches in dealing with war and mankind's obsession with it through their various works. Their psychohistorical approach to war is aimed at making our world a less dangerous place, helping the diplomat, the policy maker, and the citizen in further understanding how to bring about the day when our swords will no longer be needed.

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## Bruce Mazlish's Psychohistorical Contributions

**Juhani Ihanus**—University of Helsinki

Bruce Mazlish (b. 1923), Professor Emeritus of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology after a 50-year career at MIT, is a professional historian who has made significant contributions to the fields of intellectual, technological, and global history, as well as psychohistory. He earned his doctoral degree in intellectual history from Columbia University (1955), and taught at the University of Maine (1946–48) and at Columbia (1949–50), as well as directing the American School in Madrid (1953–55), prior to joining MIT for the rest of his career. He was among the post-World War II academic historians to seriously research and publish in the field of psychoanalytic history, including theoretical and methodological issues.

Early on, Mazlish was quite aware of the average historian's rejection and disdain for the application of psychoanalysis to history. In the psychohistorical study of leadership he has discerned two early orientations: an Adlerian/Lasswellian orientation, favored by political scientists, and the Eriksonian orientation, favored by historians. In 1956, inspired by Harold Lasswell and Nathan Leites, the Georges published their psychoanalytic psychobiography *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study*, and two years later Erikson's seminal *Young Man Luther* appeared, without *American Historical Review* even reviewing it.

As a young historian, Mazlish was present on December 29, 1957 in New York, when William L. Langer gave his presidential address to the American Historical Association, calling for the application of psychoanalysis to history. Later, in his *James and John Stuart Mill* (1975/1988), Mazlish says that Langer's address left many eminent scholars muttering, "Old Bill Langer has gone off his rocker" (p. xviii). For Mazlish, Langer's address served as firm ground for further explorations, directed through reading Erikson's Luther work and being invited by Erikson to sit in on his graduate seminar at Harvard. Erikson's sound knowledge on clinical and historical data, and his critical approach to methodological issues, were highly important to Mazlish.

Around 1958, Mazlish went into his own personal analysis, but never entered psychoanalytic training. He concentrated on delving into Freud's philosophy of history and the application of psychoanalytic approaches to historical explanation before he was looking at sociology and sociological history. He edited a landmark work *Psychoanalysis and History* (1963), which included previously published writings, for example, Langer's 1957 address and articles by Philip Rieff, Géza Róheim, and Lucian W. Pye.

However, the work he edited is still more on Freudian psychoanalysis and its possible applications to history than on attempts to delineate an independent discipline of psychohistory. Actually, psychohistory is not even mentioned in that work as a term. In his introduction, Mazlish views psychoanalysis as fundamentally challenging historians to "interpret the documents," to pay critical and analytic attention to the documents and what they really mean (p. 16). Psychoanalysis, for Mazlish, has its roots both in the natural and social sciences. In 1964, Mazlish started a course in "Psychoanalysis and History" at MIT. In *Explorations in Psychohistory* (1974), Robert J. Lifton reminisces about speaking with Erikson about psychology and history in the

mid-1950s, but it was their conversations in late 1964 and early 1965 that began to give shape to the Wellfleet meetings (p. 11). The first Wellfleet meeting, initially called the Group for the Study of Psychohistorical Process, was arranged in August 1966 by Erikson, Lifton, and Kenneth Keniston at Lifton's summer cottage on Cape Cod. During the first four years, Mazlish was an active participant. Lawrence Chisolm and Frank Manuel were the only other historians in the initial group.

The Group for Applied Psychoanalysis (GAP) was another informal association begun in the Boston area in the mid-1960s by literary scholar Norman Holland, psychiatrist Joseph Michaels, and Mazlish. It continued for about 15 years. Lloyd deMause, who took part in the meetings of the GAP in the early 1970s, found them to be "interesting for showing historical emotional trends (though not for child-rearing or [the] causes of these trends)" (E-mail, April 5, 2010). The main focus of the meetings, as recollected by deMause, was not on his preferred subjects of childhood, developmental psychology, and interpersonal psychoanalysis.

Along Erikson's lines, Mazlish published his first theoretical article on psychohistory in September 1968 ("Clio on the Couch," in *Encounter*), presenting some strengths and weaknesses of psychohistory. Mazlish warns psychohistorians against some traps, such as false extrapolations and interpretations of the historical material, psychological reductionism, unverified personality typologies and analyses of past figures, and simplified leaps from the private to the public sphere. At its best, however, psychohistorical inquiry offers tools of analysis of historical motivations and enriches our understanding of historical actors and their contexts.

In the 1970s, Mazlish was intensively engaged in writing psychobiographies, the first on Nixon in 1972. There, Mazlish addresses a "problem history," instead of a

life history, approaching themes or patterns that are discernible throughout Nixon's life. This work was followed by the psychobiography of the Mill father and son (1975), Jimmy Carter (with Edwin Diamond; 1976), and Kissinger (1976). Mazlish also faced heavy criticism, particularly from his former teacher Jacques Barzun and his Wellfleet colleague Robert Coles, whose attack (*NY Review of Books*, February 22, 1973) on Mazlish's Nixon book was vehemently dismissed by Mazlish ("An Exchange on Psychohistory," *NY Review of Books*, May 3, 1973), while he defended his right to use the "problem" approach, and not the life history approach that Coles supported.

Psychohistory was also being attacked by the American Psychiatric Association, which set a special six-psychiatrist task force in 1976. Its report declared that psychohistories of living persons carried grave risks of invasion of privacy. Only psychological profiles compiled by intelligence agencies in the service of the national interest and those approved by the subject were deemed acceptable. Mazlish was a consultant to the task force and generally sympathetic to its aims, but he did not approve of the idea that psychohistory is based on the doctor-patient model. He maintained that psychohistory is first and foremost history and psychobiographies of living political leaders are as much in the national interest as the CIA's psychological profiles, which raised issues of ethics as in the release of Daniel Ellsberg's stolen psychiatric diagnosis for political purposes by the White House plumbers.

Mazlish was among those launching *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* in 1970 and when deMause started, in 1973, *The History of Childhood Quarterly: The Journal of Psychohistory*, Mazlish, John Demos, and Peter Loewenberg appeared in its list of contributing editors. This cooperation lasted for only a few years, until deMausean psychohistory and the history of childhood faced intense resistance from

most academic historians (and many psychological historians) and publishers. For example, Mazlish could never grasp deMause's psychogenic theory of history, and for Lifton, deMausean psychohistory was too "wild." Lloyd deMause mentions that he values Mazlish's work "a lot," since "he was about the only person doing real psychoanalytic psychohistory back then" (E-mail communication, April 5, 2010).

In the early 1990s, Mazlish collected his psychohistorical essays in *The Leader, the Led, and the Psyche* (1990), where he insisted that psychohistory "is not a science; it is still a form of history" (p. 3). He also characterizes his position: "I do not think of myself as primarily a psychohistorian but as a historian who uses psychoanalytic psychology in some of my work" (p. 287). His work has consisted of intellectual history, philosophy of history, history of science and technology, and later New Global History. From the beginning of the 1990s, Mazlish turned away from active psychohistorical studies. However, his experience within psychohistory has made it impossible for him to study intellectual history without the insights of psychohistory, since it "would be like going back to mono after hearing music on stereo" (Mazlish, 1975/1988, p. xix). In his December 1996 interview with Clio's Psyche, Mazlish defined psychohistory as "the application of psychoanalytic concepts and theories to historical data and the re-examination of the psychoanalytic concepts and data in the light of historical methods."

The problems and crises of psychohistory in analyzing groups, parties, collectives, states, institutions and ideologies on the basis of psychoanalytic individual analysis have made Mazlish argue that psychohistory, working in terms of Freudian-style individual psychology, "has little cumulative power and thus a mainly limited future" ("The Past and Future of Psychohistory," *The Annual of Psychoanalysis*, 2003, p. 256). Searching for an alternative, the new "next assignment," Mazlish has proposed the "construction of a theoreti-

cally strong and integrated psychohistorical social psychology and its implementation in detailed, diverse studies" (p. 261). In a conversation ("From Psychohistory to New Global History: A Conversation with Bruce Mazlish," *Historically Speaking: The Bulletin of the Historical Society*, July/August 2004) Mazlish has retrospectively reflected on his career, "One of my prime concerns has been the evolution of the human species. And how we go about looking at this—the question of what lenses we use to look at the past—has run through all my work. One of the lenses is psychological. Historians deal with human motivation. How can you not try to use the most insightful tools of psychology to get at this?"

Mazlish's psychohistorical contributions will motivate new researchers to develop their lenses to look at the past, and to enrich the field with their insights.

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## A Critical Review of Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism*

**Tom Ferraro**—Psychoanalytic Practice

In 1979 Christopher Lasch (1932-1994) published *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. He warned that our culture was de-

grading our psyche and many Americans were becoming narcissistic. Tom Wolfe termed the 1970s "The Me Decade" ("The 'Me' Decade and the Third Great Awakening," *New York Magazine*, Aug. 23, 1976). Lasch felt the country had lost its sense of history, tradition, community, and reciprocity. In this essay I will describe the symptom picture of the narcissist, discuss the cultural causes of narcissism according to Lasch, and look at how post-modern social critics have extended Lasch's views.

**The Narcissistic Personality of Our Time**

The narcissist is essentially lost to him or herself. The primary concern is with self-development and self-glorification, the obsession is with gaining respect, admiration, mirroring, and love. Overcompetitiveness and exhibitionism draw narcissists to occupations where an audience can be found, such as politics, theater and media arts, sports, writing, and teaching. There are fantasies of fame and power, and the goals are beauty and wealth. Narcissists are arrogant, self-assured, and greedy with a need to consume in order to be filled. Their inner self is often described as empty, shamed, aggressive, destructive, alone, and raging.

Heinz Kohut (*The Restoration of Self*, 1977) may be the most influential analyst to work in this area and suggested that narcissism represents a primary defect of the self where the young child was ignored by the mother and felt worthless. The child responds by building a defense around these feelings, which serves to insulate them from their own depression. The defense is a shell fueled by grandiosity and over-competitive urges. Virtually all analytic writers, including D.W. Winnicott, Harold Searles, Margaret Mahler, Alice Miller, and James Masterson, focus upon maternal failures and poor mirroring as the essential cause of primary narcissism.

Lasch, on the other hand, suggested that cultural

changes outside the home, rather than maternal failures, bring so many narcissists to be seen clinically. His basic premise was that the media has destroyed all forms of authority in our culture and consequently we have lost our ego ideals. Without an adequate holding environment (a psychic and physical space in which there is a feeling of being protected, as described for children by psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott) to identify with, this population is forced to revert back to its own harsher pre-Oedipal archaic superego. Irrational elements dominate the personality, causing grandiosity, fear, rage, and marked sadism. Lasch feels that the media's systematic destruction of all authority causes grave consequences. We have seen the dismantling of politicians (Nixon, Clinton, Bush), athletes (Tiger Woods, Michael Phelps), clergy (Pope Benedict), police, teachers, parents, and virtually every authority imaginable. We all have a profound need for heroes, but there are really none left. Lasch felt this produced a massive confusion and regression into the self, which then leads to narcissism.

Additional support for Lasch's thesis that the culture has severely regressed toward pre-Oedipal levels of functioning is found in Edward Shorter's books, for example, *From Paralysis to Fatigue: A History of Psychosomatic Illness in the Modern Era*, 1992. He notes the current epidemic of chronic fatigue, pain, and allergies are due to extensive cultural decay. Fully 90% of adults now experience some somatic problem in any two-week period. It is accepted that factors precipitating psychosomatic problems include chronic rage, anxiety, narcissism, and loss.

**Cultural Causes of Narcissism**

Psychoanalysts pointed to the family's lack of adequate mothering as the reason behind pathological narcissism. Lack of mirroring will produce an empty self, which leads to construction of a hyper-competitive, overactive, defensive armor as compensation. Lasch describes a far more

troubling scenario. He suggests that narcissistic traits have become common due to large-scale social changes outside the family that cause population regression. These influences include: the proliferation of fame and celebrity images that we are constantly bombarded with and seek to emulate; the professionalization and destruction of the family support system because parenting abilities to discipline children have been undermined by therapists and the legal system; the parent's diminished status due to the shift from television programming like *Father Knows Best* to ones like *Married with Children*, which feature foolish, inept parents; the Cult of Consumerism, rampant with industry, credit, and advertising creating hidden needs for goods; and a change in socialization whereby both parents now work and day-care is used. This lack of good-enough parenting produces more empty selves and pre-Oedipal fixations. He goes on to suggest that wide-scale use of the electronic media has a way of undermining social connection and leaves us without a good enough holding environment as adults. Richard Koenigsberg (*Symbiosis and Separation: Towards a Psychology of Culture*, 1989) has written that we have used the media to escape from the social.

**The Passing of the Torch**

Lasch's writing has been both fertile and prophetic. A sign of any theory's power is the lasting interest in it, as is the case with Lasch's book. Here I want to discuss four pieces of writing that have extended Lasch's work.

**President Jimmy Carter's "Malaise Speech," July 15, 1979**

In 1979, Lasch was brought to Camp David to help Carter with his national address concerning the oil shortage. With divorce rates, drug use, and disco on the rise, Carter sensed the nation was in a state of cultural decay. This would be Carter's sixth speech on oil dependence and he had grown tired of using the same metaphors. He reached out to

Lasch and his warning that the country had lost respect for tradition to become greedy and conspicuous consumers. All this was true, but Carter's clear articulation was what helped to oust him from office the following year. In his place, we elected the narcissist's dream president, the handsome actor Ronald Reagan.

**Jean Baudrillard's *The Illusion of the End* (1994)**

Baudrillard is a French sociologist and social critic who does not directly reference Lasch but I see his writing as extending Lasch's concerns. Like Lasch's theorized disconnect from tradition, Baudrillard has claimed that history ended in about 1980. He blames the electronic media and the ensuing information flood. He suggests that the sheer amount, speed, and beauty of information makes it impossible to digest or resist. He also feels that our voracious need to know more is quickly leading to our destruction. We are now under the total sway of our death wish and gleefully sacrificing ourselves to an unknown fate. He has taken Lasch's relatively despairing view and concluded that we are in jeopardy of extinction.

**Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000)**

Putnam details the dramatic collapse of community since around 1970. He suggested that time, pressure, money, mobility, and the electronic media have nearly destroyed our sense of community in direct extension of Lasch's statements.

**Slavoj Zizek's commentary on the film *Children of Men*, 2006**

Zizek is a social critic from Slovenia who also worries about living in a world of images and the resultant lack of historical reference. Remarking on the film *Children of Men,* Zizek says, "This film is the best diagnosis of ideological despair of late capitalism and of a society without a his-

tory. The true infertility is of our lack of meaningful historical experience" (Slavoj Zizek, 2006 DVD Special Features Commentary on *Children of Men*, book by P. D. James, 1992) takes Lasch's initial concern for narcissistic man under the media's sway and finds a conclusion: to live in a world of images and without community is certain death.

**Summary**

We began with Lasch's observed trends toward narcissism, self-involvement, and the end of community. A reason the electronic media has been embraced relates to our desire to reject community. The disappearance of the social and emergence of the false self has been discussed elsewhere. In the end, where are we? Baudrillard and Zizek describe our near future as one of impotence, despair, and self-destruction: an apt description of the narcissist's inner self.

So where is our hope? For one, we see that coupled with this narcissistic epidemic we have also witnessed a sudden emergence of sport participation. Organized activities like running, swimming, weight-lifting, biking, golfing, and walking have grown exponentially over the last 40 years and parallel the information and media age. People are automatically compensating as they experience information overload. Also, many now seek some form of ascetic practice to escape the electronic world's influence. The wild appeal of Elizabeth Gilbert's book *Eat, Pray, and Love* (2006), stemming from her ascetic experiences in Indian ashrams, and the popularity of Bikrim Yoga in the United States also suggest how many seek some ascetic discipline to balance their overstimulating, media-driven life.

There can be no doubt that the "dark side" is here. It is described in films like *The Matrix* where we are all near death in a blissful fantasy, and in Donna Haraway's description of late 20$^{th}$ century America, "We are all theorized as fabricated hybrids of machine and organism. In short we are

Cyborgs. The Cyborg does not dream of community or models of the organic family." She describes our future as thus: cyborgs, independent, fully functioning units, narcissistic, grand, perfect, and cool (Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Nature*, 1991).

In the end, Lasch can be considered a modern-day prophet. He could see that Americans were captured by the entrancing world of media. The media, corporate power, and global capitalism continue to consume all in its wake. No other worldview has been able to keep up or compete. The only human response to this is to slow down and regain connection between body and reality. There is hope only in the body, which will be the antidote to the fantasies, images, status-seeking, celebrities, and narcissism that threaten to swallow us whole. The body will humble you and make you real, and it is the answer to narcissism and to grandiose fantasies as well.

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## Irving Harris' *The Promised Seed*

**Herbert Barry III**—University of Pittsburgh

Irving D. Harris was a psychoanalyst and medical doctor in Chicago when he extensively compared two categories of eminent men: first and later sons. His book, *The Promised Seed: A Comparative Study of Eminent First and*

*Later Sons* (1964), is one of the most important contributions to our understanding of psychological differences between the first or only son and a subsequent son of the mother. He found first or only sons to be more connected to their parents, and thereby more theoretical and heroic, while later sons to be disconnected from the parents, and thereby more practical and realistic. As a first son, I imitate the self-reliant behavior of my father, who was also a first son. I am deficient in the thorough bibliographical research typical of later sons.

The two categories of eminent men were compared in diverse fields. Examples of a typical first son and typical later son are: U.S. presidents Wilson, an idealistic reformer, and clever competitor Kennedy; heroic leader Hitler and militant leader Napoleon; revolutionary theorist Marx and revolutionary leader Lenin; charismatic Mormon founder Joseph Smith and subsequent Mormon leader Brigham Young; theoretical physicist Einstein and meticulous biologist Darwin; Milton's heroic poetry and Wordsworth's descriptive poetry; Mozart's beautifully controlled music and Wagner's passionate operas; the ancient Stoics and Epicureans.

I initially became aware of *The Promised Seed* in 1977. Between 1963 and 1975 I coauthored several articles on birth order of schizophrenic and alcoholic patients. The principal finding was that the incidence of both psychiatric illnesses was higher for the last child in a large family. The "baby of the family" was interpreted as being vulnerable to self-destructive conflict when adult independence was needed.

*The Promised Seed* helped me to read and write about famous men instead of psychiatric patients. My subsequent research on the presidents of the United States, in addition to birth order, has analyzed effects of being given the same first name as the father, or a middle name reproducing the premarital surname of the mother.

In 1993, when I was planning to write about first son and father's namesake President Clinton, Lloyd deMause sent me a copy of the Harris article, "The Psychologies of Presidents" (*Journal of Psychohistory*, 1976, Vol. 3, pp. 337-350), of which I was previously unaware. The principal theme is that major warfare was initiated by seven of the 20 first sons (Madison, Polk, Lincoln, Wilson, F. D. Roosevelt, Truman, L. B. Johnson) but by only one of the 16 later sons (McKinley). Subsequent presidents show a similar difference between first and later sons. Among four first sons, major warfare was initiated by George W. Bush, and perhaps Obama in Afghanistan, but not by Clinton and Carter. Major warfare can be interpreted as avoided by the two later sons because the invasion of Granada by Reagan and the Gulf war by George H. W. Bush (41st president) were brief and against a much weaker enemy.

Birth sequence is an objective measure, usually available in biographies of famous men. Irving D. Harris thereby was able to include this information on many men, including some in ancient civilizations more than two thousand years ago. His 1964 book demonstrated impressively consistent differences between first and later sons. His sample of several hundred eminent men excluded women because very few were equivalently eminent. He excluded sisters from the birth order mainly because the information on them is often unavailable.

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# Why I Write Books about Creativity

**Andrew Brink**—University of Toronto

The Clio's Psyche interview "The Creativity, Introspection and Pacifism of Andrew Brink" (September 1999, p. 75) gives the biographical context for my books to that date while not mentioning an essential reason for their being. Published in 2007, *Desire and Avoidance in Art* prompts further explanation of what I have been attempting. The unmentioned element in my life story is the transforming experience I went through as an artist, or at least as somebody who drew and painted. The subjects in *Desire and Avoidance,* whose talents and achievements far exceed mine, nevertheless grappled with conflicted avoidant attachments I had discovered in myself by painting. Having discovered them by externalizing spontaneous imagery, as did Picasso, Bellmer, Balthus, and Cornell, I wondered whether these celebrated artists had learned from their own experiences anything about their destructive relationships with women. My sense was that although producing visual evidence of anxious punitiveness towards women, they failed to grasp its developmental meaning. They became locked into futile repetitions of anxious maladaptive relationships, usually sacrificing the woman for reasons too obscure for her to understand. While my personal circumstances do not closely match any of theirs in kind or degree, an affinity was felt, the main difference being that, when painting, I was reading psychoanalytic theory and watching what happened as it happened during the production of imagery; I was also recording dreams.

While drawing and painting for several years in the 1960s and 1970s was exciting, the result was upsetting and unexpectedly life-changing, and it put me on a more self-aware course. The person I found in the unconscious was not nearly the one I had believed myself to be, requiring recon-

sideration of the benign, caring pacifist of self-presentation. Instead, repeated imagery showed turbulence, rebellion, and a wish for upheaval before any composure could be reached. The pictures are of a pent-up, enclosed, green world of biomorphic forms, the best of which shaped themselves without much conscious intervention. Tensions and oppositions built up and struggled within the forms. The power of forms seeking to compose and resolve themselves was certainly exciting but also frightening, as invention produced picture after picture. There was compulsiveness about it; the urge to paint seemed never ending, consuming more and more of my time. I had teaching and family obligations to meet, yet this task leapt to the fore. The more readily pathways to the unconscious opened, the more urgently I needed to record the messages from "active imagination." Faint promptings gave way to ready access and, using water colors, I set on paper as much as could be captured. The pictures have never been exhibited, not because they are inept, but because they represent for me far more than just another example of somebody trying to be an artist.

Beginning in the hyper-stimulated 1960s, this compulsion to paint might be explained by the contagious "liberation" of that rebellious era—which was certainly a factor. But for me, drawing and painting revived a technique of self-exploration first met in the pre-adolescent analytic treatments I had when intractable health problems led my parents to send me to a psychoanalyst. She seems to have been a follower of Melanie Klein, using drawing and playing with little toys to access my reactions to the tense family dynamics which she could see accounted for my symptoms—sore joints and enuresis. That encounter with a skilled and kindly analyst was lastingly important, although its true force was "forgotten" until new anxieties in my life revived what I had learned about self-repair.

Through the 1970s, the painting ran its course and

faded from my life. Nobody, except my wife Helen, knew that anything unusual had been going on concurrently with my teaching in a department of English and leading an outwardly ordinary life. But I was changed, broadened, and more alive for what may have seemed an indulgence of the self. Possibly, nobody really noticed the difference, but I certainly did, and continue to benefit, though I do not much like the obsessive and avoidant pathological elements in my makeup that were disclosed. No amount of painting or dream analysis could ever change these, but at least I know about them and, I hope, adapt in a civilized way.

There naturally followed a quest to understand, especially from psychoanalytic theory, the origin and meaning of creativity. I have needed to read and to consider everything I could discover on the subject. Long ago I had come upon P.W. Martin's *Experiment in Depth: A Study of the Work of Jung, Eliot and Toynbee* (London, 1956), along with William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), which introduced the "twice born" personality type. Henri Ellenberger's *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (London, 1970) discussed the productive "creative illnesses" of both Freud and Jung, while a host of British analysts and writers on art in the "object relations" school had a lot to say about creativity following Melanie Klein's delineation of an "inner world" of infancy. Notable are Ronald Fairbairn, Marion Milner, Donald Winnicott, Adrian Stokes, Hanna Segal, and Donald Meltzer. Among their publications are statements of brilliance and lasting worth, such as Winnicott's *Playing and Reality* (1971), the importance of which has yet to be fully grasped. There are also more recent examples of analysts writing on creativity who, like Milner, had productive experiences of communicating with the unconscious by means of drawing and painting. They had the benefit of being able to understand the developmental implications of their own material. Alice Miller's *Pictures of a Childhood: Sixty-six Wa-*

*tercolors and an Essay* (1986) is a very close parallel to my own experiences with the same medium. Of late, I found another parallel in Stephen Newton's *Art and Ritual: A Painter's Journey* (2006), a moving and psychoanalytically informed account of how he discovered authentic subject matter and the means to record it in paint.

Somebody needs to question Melanie Klein's metapsychology as an adequate basis for theories of creativity. Klein's so-called "paranoid-schizoid position," resulting from a rageful death-wish in infant development, is not sustainable in current attachment theory. While there is little or no support in attachment research for Klein's account of infancy, theorizing about creativity goes on as if there were support. The problem today is that attachment research, stemming from John Bowlby, together with advances in biochemical and neurological sciences, has totally reconfigured what used to be called the "inner world of imagination." The language of "objects" no longer serves, as so recently it seemed to serve, explanations of creativity in the arts. When reacting against Klein's affront to the rules of experimental science, Bowlby renounced her language of fantasy in an inner world. To reinstate it is no easy task, and whoever does so will need a range of competence far beyond any of his or her predecessors. There are a few signs of attempts to come to terms with attachment research, for instance by the anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake in *Art and Intimacy: How the Arts Began* (2000). But this is just a start in re-describing the inner world according to an attachment-initiated, neurologically mediated system of full circulation of information back to the conscious self. Evoking this developmental information by art is just one segment in a circle of learning. Perception, pre-verbal seeing and touching, and then responding with internalization of expected reciprocation by mother remain the components of a theory of creativity. But they await a compelling new formulation to account for what

some artists know from experience, yet can't explain in simple words. Although now out of fashion, such explanations are possible and one way or another they will be attempted.

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## The Psychodynamics of Changing Family Relationships

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# Binion Symposium

## Reliving with Freud

**Rudolph Binion**—Brandeis University

Contriving unknowingly to repeat an especially painful experience in disguise, and more than once as circumstances permit, is a pattern of human behavior sufficiently distinct to deserve a technical name: episodic traumatic reliving. Sigmund Freud opened the way to understanding this bizarre phenomenon even though he never dealt with it clinically or even recognized it as an entity unto itself. He did see his early neurotic patients as continually reliving traumatic experiences—sometimes fresh, more often stale—but in a static form: condensed, compounded, and converted into stable symptoms. His early constructions on such symptomatic reliving, though they were in continual flux, are known collectively as his traumatic theory of neurosis, which was the forerunner of psychoanalysis proper.

Psychoanalysis proper is commonly dated from Freud's abandonment, by the end of 1897, of his sudden, ephemeral, ill-conceived notion that all neurosis originates in early sexual abuse by elders and his recognition that such abuse is commonly fantasized by the child. It can be dated more consequently, if still less precisely, from Freud's assumption, developed gradually thereafter in the late 1890s, that every adult neurosis derives from an infantile original whatever later disturbances it may reflect as well. On going psychoanalytical, Freud did not relinquish the idea that neurotics are all reliving distilled traumatic material, far from it, so long as the term *traumatic* is taken to cover upsets, fixations, conflicts, and forbidden impulses indifferently, as in his own loose initial usage; not until well into World War I did he settle on the strict and narrow sense of *trauma* as an

unmanageably shattering experience of a kind with shell shock.

It bears restating and emphasizing for clarity's sake that from first to last the neurotics within Freud's purview were all reliving their traumatic material of the sort chronically, in the form of fixed, steady symptoms (what he called *Dauersymptome*), rather than re-enacting some whole traumatic episode or conjunction of episodes in a full-scale performance itself subject to further replay, as in the historic cases to be discussed below. By the early 1890s he already saw no difference among neuroses of whatever type (mainly hysterical or obsessional) with respect to such fundamentals as that, besides reconfiguring what he styled as traumatic material, they were always intermixed in some measure and were always sexual at bottom. It was to these shared fundamentals that, in the late 1890s, he added an obligatory childhood original, and ultimately an infantile original, for every neurosis. I propose to show that he did so for reasons theoretical rather than empirical and that in so doing he cut himself off from all further insight into traumatic reliving, whether chronic or episodic, in the stricter and narrower sense of *trauma*, just when—paradoxically—he had opened the way to understanding it.

According to the traumatic theory of neurosis that was Freud's run-up to psychoanalysis, the traumatic material that neurotics were reliving was additive. Thus hysteria, as he put it in the context of his traumatic theory, "occurs only where [traumatic] events have piled up" (Sigmund Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess [Letter to Wilhelm Fliess]1887-1904*, ed. by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, 1986, 284 [21 IX 1897]). That is, some peculiarly painful or upsetting occurrence or circumstance, called a "precipitating event" or trigger trauma, would pull together lots of kindred, unassimilated traumatic material going back years or even decades in the depths of the sufferer's mind and would fashion it into

composite, chronic symptoms. While in his practice as he reported on it in letters to his close professional confidant of the time, Wilhelm Fliess, or in the volume of *Studies in Hysteria* that he co-authored with his senior neurological colleague Josef Breuer in 1895, one or another of those accumulated component traumas might well date from childhood or even infancy, this was a far cry from his later psychoanalytical theorem of a blueprint in infancy for every adult neurosis. His (originally Breuer's) so-called "cathartic" therapy of the time consisted in teasing the traumatic material behind the patient's symptoms out of oblivion or repression with the aid of hypnosis or, as a fall-back, suggestion and then inviting the patient to recognize how he or, more usually, she was reliving that pathogenic material through those symptoms. If the neurosis was curable, Freud held, such recognition would or should suffice to cure it.

A few examples from his own accounts of his practice will clarify the concepts and issues involved. The subject of his "first complete analysis of a hysteric" (Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, I, 201), an unwed youngest daughter caring with mounting discouragement for a depressive widowed mother, converted her sense of having come to a painful standstill in life into crippling leg pains. These drew primarily on earlier rheumatic pains, on the memory of having bandaged her late, stricken father's leg morning after morning while resting it on hers, and most recently on a tiring hike with a brother-in-law with whom she was secretly in love. It was after that hike that the dismal feeling of being stuck, of getting nowhere in life, came over her: hardly did she dismiss it from her mind as unworthy when it returned in body language. Concerning this last, quick conversion sequence Freud remarked, stretching the key term beyond recognition: "Just such moments are the ones to be called 'traumatic'" (Freud, *Werke*, I, 235). After a parting flare-up at Freud for having teased her secrets out of her, the patient

wound up cured.

In a comparable case of "traumatic summation," (Freud, *Werke*, I, 242) a student singer choked off a whole middle pitch of her voice after having all too long and too often swallowed her hate for an abusive father; some time later her fingertips started tingling when she angrily brushed away, as she graphically put it, the unbearable latest one of a lifelong series of unjust imputations against her by her elders.

In another young patient, a huge backlog of her father's sexual violence, real or imaginary, against her mother and herself crystallized into an obsessional neurosis after the gory climax of her seeing her mother bleed from the uterus. A young wife in treatment with him suffered from phobias that threw back to her elder sister's scary middle-of-the-night internment during their girlhood and, beyond that, to the guilty secret they shared of having once been sexually used together by their father. Another patient got a head pain at age 15 for fear of her grandmother's piercing gaze: the pain soon went into remission, only to recur as a fixed symptom before Freud's piercing gaze some thirty years later. A spinster in his care suffered from fantasized taunts by neighbors about her having been jilted: the taunts reconfigured a repressed memory of a lodger's having suddenly thrust his penis into her hand without a follow-up. And Freud traced yet another patient's melancholic sense of being worthless to her discovery at age 14 that she had an imperforate hymen.

In only the first of these sample cases, that of the crippling leg pains, did Freud claim a cure. He specified in *Studies in Hysteria* that by his cathartic method he could cure only acquired hysteria, hence by extension only acquired neuroses of whatever kind. In what he called his "model" case of acquired hysteria (Freud, *Werke*, I, 180) the sufferer was a young Scottish governess in Austria whose widowed

employer dashed her fond hopes of marrying him when he dumped on her in a rage for permitting a visitor to kiss his children in her care. Some months later he angrily forbad a cigar-smoking guest in turn to kiss them, whereupon the lass's sense of smell left her, replaced by an imaginary odor of cigar smoke. Her hysteria vanished when Freud brought home to her how in her symptoms her employer's scolding of the cigar-smoker was fronting for his scolding of her, "the really operative trauma" (Freud, *Werke*, I, 179), during which she had smelled precisely nothing for want of anything to smell.

A comparable case, and presumable lightning cure, was that of an 18-year-old innkeeper's daughter he met while resting on a holiday hike. She suffered from gasping anxiety attacks through which, as he ascertained and explained, she was reliving two traumatic memories together: one of having fought her father off in bed at age 14 without realizing at the time what he was up to, the other of having seen and heard him copulate with a cousin of hers a couple of years later.

By contrast, more dedicated hysterics might run him ragged when for every symptom he cured they would produce another, on the order of the choked voice and tingling fingers of the aspirant singer. The first patient he treated by hypnosis would hystericize for any number of traumatic reasons simultaneously, generating stomach aches, leg stiffness, cramps, snorting, fear of strangers, animal phobias, and hallucinations galore along with a consuming hate for her newborn second daughter.

But what he called his "toughest and most instructive case of hysteria" (Freud, *Werke*, I, 245) was the woman who developed a pain in the head from her grandmother's and later Freud's piercing gaze; she also got neck pains from swallowed insults, turned a rebuke that felt "like a slap in the face" into face pain, and massively literalized whatever

pinched her heart or preyed on her mind; stretching it, she even managed to get her right hand to ache from worrying whether she could handle some new acquaintances right (Freud, *Werke*, I, 244-51). Inexhaustibly inventive, she took Freud through several hundred successive cycles of symptoms deciphered and dissolved one by one only to be replaced immediately afterwards (Freud, *Werke*, I, 247] Nor were hysterics unique in this; dyed-in-the-wool compulsives might likewise preserve their compulsiveness intact beneath any number of its malleable showings.

All through the 1890s Freud puzzled over whether a neurotic disposition might be innate or how one was acquired otherwise. On balance he tended to consider that even a one-shot neurosis, such as the Scottish governess's, presupposed a neurotic bent, and for that matter a specific neurotic bent, in her case hysterical (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess,* 24-39 [1892-93 enclosures]; 182-86 [1 III 96]; etc.; Freud, *Werke*, I, 180, 231, 260-64, etc). Until late in the 1890s he toyed with the idea that a neurotic potential was activated by sexual abstinence or aberration. By this latter he meant first and foremost masturbation current or even past (a puzzling insistent idea of his, for if all hysterics, his preferred suspects, were masturbators, then their masturbating was irrelevant to their particular symptoms), but also a use of condoms, withdrawal, and even coital excess. In this vein he handily traced an old prude's fits of anxiety to hints at sex in her sheltered life hard upon remarking that full cures were often possible when current sexual privation simply ceased. But this line of actual sexual causality could not very well be stretched to cover much of his case load, scramble as he might to find sexual "*noxae*" in patients seemingly free of them (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 68 [21 V 1894]).

Some of his sickest neurotics were happily married from way back, and to Breuer he peevishly conceded in 1896 that neurosis is possible "in persons who, to be sure, did not

masturbate" (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 184 [1 III 96]). Besides, a sexual etiology of itself left the choice of neurotic type unexplained.

Meanwhile an alluring alternative to actual sexual frustration or aberration behind neurosis was suggested by indications of possible sexual abuse of his neurotics in their earliest years with the traumatic impact on them delayed until after they reached sexual maturity. If only all neurosis originated in such passive victimization, inborn neurotic proclivities could be scrapped, and the issue of who acquired a neurotic disposition, indeed maybe even for which kind of neurosis, could be resolved. Freud speculated eagerly along these lines in the mid-1890s. "I sense the following strict precondition," he announced to Fliess in October 1895: "a primal (pre-pubertal) sexual experience with revulsion and fright for hysteria, *with pleasure* for obsessional neurosis" (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 146 [8 X 95]). He returned to the charge a week later, specifying that the pre-pubertal sexual traumas took pathogenic effect only after puberty and hence only "as *memories*" (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 147 [15 X 1895]). The very next day he declared himself almost certain of his new schema, with neuroses and even neurotic dispositions both now curable on that basis. He elaborated further on his felicitous construction after four more days, then reaffirmed its "basics" another eleven days later while also raising some doubt about "the pleasure-pain solution" (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 151 -52 [31 X 1895]), presumably because it reopened the old issue of proclivities in the new form of why such experiences gave pain to some children and pleasure to others. Quelling this unwelcome doubt, he ushered in the year 1896 with what, joshing himself, he called "A Christmas Tale": an extravagant comparison of hysteria, obsessional neurosis, and paranoia that led off from the need for a pre-pubertal sexual original of the precipitating cause in each case. A pre-

pubertal trauma was harmful, he now specified, only as a memory reactivated by a similar experience at puberty and reinforced by an inborn disposition (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 169-78 [1 I 1896, enclosure]).

A few months later he even reworked this schema so that the ages for primal sexual traumas matched up with hysteria, obsessional neurosis, and paranoia respectively to make a tight deterministic bundle. "There is more speculation in it than usual," he conceded to Fliess (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 201 [30 V 1896]). On this new theoretical high, Freud was claiming publicly by April 1896 that he had found pre-pubertal sexual abuse, typically at ages three or four, behind twelve female and six male neurotics all of whom he had cured accordingly "wherever circumstances permitted" (Freud, *Werke*, I, 414 [21 April 1896]).

He was to back off from this resounding claim in private some months later, considering above all that there was no telling reality from fantasy in the scenarios of early abuse that he had constructed out of his patients' fragmentary associations to their symptoms, but also that he had been unable to effect even a single "real" cure on that basis (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 283-86 [21 IX 1897]). Not only did this last, private admission contradict his previous triumphant public claim; his previous triumphant public claim did not square with the public or private accounts he had given of his cases before 1896—any more for that matter than did his repeated affirmations in his later, psychoanalytical years that it was his patients who had kept steering him back to their early childhood.

Of his four main and eight secondary cases, all female, discussed by him in sufficient detail in *Studies in Hysteria*, only two involved pubertal and two pre-pubertal material of whatever kind. And of those twelve plus eight other neuroses discussed adequately there and in subsequent letters

to Fliess through 1899, only two drew on sexual experiences going back to puberty, another four to late childhood, and a single one to infancy. Still worse, this last one, which confirmed for Freud "the inherent authenticity of infantile traumas" (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 314-15 [22 XII 1897]) even after his nominal about-face on that very issue, should sooner have strained his credulity even on his theoretical high, what with the patient claiming to remember that at six or seven months of age she had seen her mother nearly bleed to death from a sex wound inflicted by her father, that at two years of age she had been deflowered and infected with gonorrhea by the same penile offender, and that at age three she had witnessed a solo pantomime by her mother of fending off an anal-sexual assault in shrill protest.

With less blatant inconsequence he hailed one of the other cases of pre-pubertal abuse as "a new confirmation of the paternal etiology" (fathers being for him at that point the arch incestuous pedophiles) even though the old paternal abuse, far from festering under repression as required for traumatic effect, was fully conscious with the patient, affect inclusive, and on his own telling did not relate anyhow to her complaint of neurotic anxiety following from her brother's committal for insanity (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 251-52 [28 IV 1897]).

In one of his 13 strictly post-pubertal cases of non-abuse, on the other hand, Freud regretted in so many words that "in all the patient's intimate disclosures to me the sexual element...was completely lacking" (Freud, *Werke*, I, 160). The indications are that the radical turn in his thinking of the late 1890s to childhood sexual trauma as the source of neurosis was not fact but theory-driven, the facts themselves being reshaped by theory even as the theorist slept through many a consultation. To round out the record, the three psychoanalytical case histories that he was to publish in later years (Dora, the Rat Man, and the Wolf Man) famously showed

him steering the patients' thoughts back to sex in childhood whenever they went their own way instead.

Before he began speculating about early sexual abuse behind neurosis, Freud had seen childhood traumas as mere items in an associative series with no causal value even collectively unless and until they were catalyzed by a "precipitating event" later in life and thereby enlisted into symptomatic service, like those cumulative hates that his aspirant singer hurt her voice swallowing. With his child abuse schema, on the contrary, the causal onus shifted to early sexual traumas presaging future neuroses that would, though, remain in abeyance until some critical moment after puberty even while gathering lesser traumatic material into their orbit in the interim. This childhood impetus to a neurosis, albeit an impetus hanging fire, made the remote personal past actual. Previously Freud had considered that unconscious material could sustain a neurosis only if, however old, it had continuing existential relevance. Thus the innkeeper's daughter was anxiously gasping in current fear of her father for having tattled on him to her mother, while conversely a massage and light hypnosis sufficed to cure a former singer whose jaws had been locked nearly shut for years from causes that were by then "evidently long since done and over with" (Freud, *Werke*, I, 237n).

On the child-abuse construction, by contrast, traumatic material no longer obsolesced. At the same time, on that construction as before, a childhood sex trauma could take neurotic effect in later life only as an unconscious memory: no change here. This no-change enabled Freud to put the child-abuse construction to rest all the more easily, memory alone being operant true or false—child abuse or no. By the same token, however, he implicitly and implausibly equated early scary sex phantasms with actual early sex traumas. He did so as well on the connected ground that imaginary child abuse couldn't be told apart from real child abuse

as reconstructed by him (precious few sex traumas or phantasms from later childhood, let alone infancy, were recollected by his patients themselves). The upshot was that to his mind a false memory might pack as much wallop as a true memory however long it had bided its traumatic time in abeyance. On this reckoning a girl would be equally prone to develop a guilt neurosis in later life if she had enjoyed being used by her father sexually or if she had only enjoyed imagining it. At the same time, in imputing to the fantasizing child an active role in acquiring a neurosis, Freud reopened the whole question of neurotic disposition, now recast as the question of which children tended to fantasize to future neurotic effect, and then to neurotic effect of which kind.

If Freud's about-face on sex abuse in childhood as the stock source of neurosis was not as pinpointed in time as is commonly held, neither was it as pivotal in theory. He might still invoke his failed rule of child sex abuse behind every trauma some months after he had professedly scrapped it. Much more importantly, even after he did finally scrap it he still stuck to the childhood source of every neurosis, sex abuse or no. It is this sticking point that was fundamental for his transition to psychoanalysis proper: the childhood origin, next the childhood original, and soon afterwards the infantile original, of all neurosis. At first, in his letter to Fliess nominally writing off sex abuse in childhood as the single source of neurosis, he had reported himself ready to give up on two things along with it: on "the complete cure of a neurosis and the certain knowledge of its etiology in childhood" (Freud, *Werke*, I, 237n, 284 [21 IX 1897]). In the event he gave up on neither, his about-face should logically have put him back where he had been before: with some tenacious neuroses deriving from childhood, even from sex abuse in childhood, but also some neuroses first acquired in adulthood, these being the most amenable to cure, and some inveterate, inborn neurotic dispositions incurable by his methods. However, rather

than back off from the childhood source of neurosis with its irresistible built-in suggestion of deepest roots, he took a gigantic new step forward in that same direction over the following months and years. He part-discerned and part-contrived a normative schema of child development by psychosexual stages, with an inherent risk of a potentially pathogenic emotional fixation at one or another stage in case too little or too much gratification were forthcoming there. In the final reckoning, his infantile stages were to be narcissistic first and then predominantly oral, anal, and phallic by turns, with sex play and sex fantasies at every stage, and with a potential for psychosis, hysteria, and obsession respectively in the event of a hang-up at one of the first three stages.

Traumatic experiences at any point might also carry their own neurotic potential, particularly at the phallic stage culminating in the emotionally charged "Oedipus complex" with its built-in castration fear and its visions of parental intercourse soon mythified as the "primal scene" (Freud, 312 293 [15 X 1897]). This new schema eliminated the need for an inborn neurotic predisposition in case there was no such thing: developmental disturbances could be held accountable for all manner of neurotic afflictions. It also systematized the distinction between an acquired neurotic disposition and an acquired neurosis: the stronger a fixation on an infantile sexual aim, the less of a later reverse or frustration was needed for a neurosis to result. Finally—and this is the crucial point—on these new schematic terms no neurotic potential could be acquired in infancy, whether by trauma or by fixation, without a premonitory neurosis already ensuing in infancy, for any infantile trauma or fixation strong enough to generate an adult neurosis by delayed action was perforce symptomatic from the start. In Freud's own formulation: "When a neurosis breaks out in later life, analysis invariably shows it to be a direct continuation of that infantile neurosis" (Freud, *Werke*, XI, 378). He saw to it that this was so in

the analyses that he himself performed from there on out.

No adult neurosis without its infantile original: this new rule of Freud's had its supportive counterpart in the prodigious theory of dreams that he developed along with his psychoanalytical theory of neurosis. The dream "contains *in nuce* the whole psychology of the neuroses," he told Fliess along the way (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 273 [7 VII 1897]). Just as on his psychoanalytical terms an adult neurosis conjoined an infantile original with a recent "precipitating event," so too in his dream theory did a dream encode both together a disturbing thought pushed out of mind the day before and an infantile wish that it depicted as fulfilled. Despite this two-tier dynamic that he postulated in dreams and in neuroses alike, Freud accentuated the infantile in both cases. As he told Fliess in 1898, "Dream life seems to me to derive *entirely* from the residues of the prehistoric period of life (ages 1-3)—the same period which...alone contains the etiology of all the psychoneuroses....A recent wish leads to a dream only if it can link up with material from this prehistoric period...if [it] is an offspring of a prehistoric wish or can get itself adopted by one" (Freud, *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 329-30 [10 III 1898, stress added]). Likely his rule of infantile origination went from neuroses to dreams even if it is unclear which of the two emergent, mutually reinforcing theories influenced the other more. Whereas his child abuse theorem dates from the spring of 1896, he did not relegate the wish-function of dreams to their infantile component until 1898, when he did so by express analogy with the neuroses. He did so hesitantly in the first instance, moreover, and for many years in the abstract only. "The wish represented in a dream must be an infantile one," he asserted flatly just once in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, completed in 1899, only to add some pages later that, whereas repressed sexual wishes from infancy "furnish the motive force for the formation of all psychoneurotic symptoms," he would "leave it open

whether sexual and infantile factors are required by the theory of dreams as well" (Freud, *Werke*, II-III, 559, 611). Theory notwithstanding, the dreams that he recounted from first to last appear to have originated in every case not in the infantile unconscious, but in the previous day's preoccupations, besides often dragging in associated material from other ages since infancy; or perhaps more properly put, such earlier post-infantile material often linked up with the main dream thought, whether to help disguise it or just to get in on the act. This awkward disconnect between theory and reality may be why he mostly confined his specimen dream analyses in *The Interpretation of Dreams* to their latent contents drawn from the dreamer's previous day's experience. He nonetheless insisted dogmatically until near the end of his days on the infantile source of all dreams, and even in rescinding that infantile edge *in extremis* in his unfinished *Outline of Psychoanalysis* through the even-handed formulation: "dreams from the ego or from the id" (Freud, *Werke*, XVII, 88), he retained the formula that dreams are wish fulfillments, which of itself lent the infantile component a manner of overweight as the source of those wishes that the dream represented as fulfilled.

So comparably as of the late 1890s did he see the infantile source of neuroses as determinative and the "precipitating event" as merely accessory (despite some telltale concessions in particular cases). Aligning neuroses with dreams for a change, he declared hysterical, and probably all neurotic, symptoms to be wish fulfillments, which was easier to see for an innkeeper's daughter gasping over forbidden sex than for an aspirant singer choking on old hates. And in practice he himself mostly supplied the infantile component of dreams as of neuroses with or without the dreamer's or patient's acquiescence. An egregious instance of such imposed interpreting is the prime object lesson on how dreams work that he gave in his closing course of university lectures

of 1915-1917. There the dreamer saw herself with her husband in a half-empty theater after having rushed to buy tickets at what proved to be too high a price. The latent dream thought from the day before, which the dreamer readily conceded, was that she had made a bad bargain by rushing into marriage, symbolized by being in the theater. Years later Freud supplied the infantile wish shown in the dream as gratified: to see what goes on in marriage. But as Stephen Kern put it: "Infants do not wish to see what goes on in marriage. Perhaps children do" (Stephen Kern, private communication). In any case it was no insistence by dreamers, but the architectonics of Freud's dream theory in sync with his theory of neurosis, that mandated an infantile wish fulfilled by every dream.

With his requirement of an infantile original for every neurosis, the theorist Freud painted the therapist into a corner. The hunt for infantile underpinnings of neuroses was perforce futile where the symptoms were fluid, as with his patient who kept literalizing the likes of a piercing gaze, or again with committed neurotics like the Wolf Man, half persuaded by Freud after over four years of analysis that his neurotic trouble came at age one-and-a-half from a traumatic peep at parental intercourse performed *a tergo* three times running: pronounced cured by Freud in 1914, he spent his remaining 65 years generating ever-new symptoms, only to wind up calling psychoanalysis bunk. And with self-made as against born neurotics, what need was there for an *Ur*-neurosis to explain the depressive fit of a 14-year-old on learning that she had an imperforate hymen? The hunt for such an infantile original would only have provided a therapeutic distraction in his practice of the 1890s. As late as his last university lectures he conceded the point implicitly, by a sort of Freudian slip, in regard to a wife's compulsive ritual of summoning her maid on one pretext or another while standing beside a soiled tablecloth: there was no need to re-

cur to childhood in this case, he told his students, since the symptom threw back no farther than to her wedding night, when her husband had stained their bed sheets with red ink lest the maid notice that he had proved impotent. Besides, in none of the cases he reported in the 1890s did the post-infantile traumas he then identified as "operative" fail to explain the symptoms: all were neat fits. And were the cures he then claimed unreal? Of his twelve sufficient case reports in *Studies in Hysteria*, two were stated cures, another four presumable cures, and a further two possible cures. As late as January, 1899, he claimed to Fliess to have cured a hysterical melancholia acquired from a trauma at age 14, and this with no mention of a recourse to earlier childhood. True, in 1914 he pronounced his perennial patient the Wolf Man cured who in fact had a veritable lifetime of neurotic relapse ahead of him. But that false cure, which turned on a suppositional "primal scene" (Freud, *Werke*, I, 226), only highlights by contrast his conclusion to his case history of the patient who had come to him in 1893 with crippling leg pains brought on by her disavowed feeling of being trapped in life: within months he rejoiced to see her dancing away at a house party, then to learn of her love-marriage shortly afterwards.

Conversely, his 1890s concept of summation, whereby it took a "precipitating event" at the end of the line to catalyze a whole run of traumatic precedents and distill symptoms out of them, made no provision for an "operative" infantile trauma even where exceptionally there was one. He might, though, ignore this last-straw concept in practice at the time, as when he nicely derived a woman's compulsive idea that her sewing class mustn't end yet, that she wasn't done yet, from her grandmother's harsh strictures against her leaving the potty before her business there was finished. On Freud's couch in the 1890s, infantile originals were rightly reserved for symptoms acquired in infancy.

In sum, Freud's psychoanalytical rule of a childhood

original for every adult symptom or neurosis brought him only mixed theoretical and therapeutic gain. On the down side in particular—and this is the central point at issue here—it ruled out traumatic reliving, in which an unprecedented, shattering experience is re-experienced close to the bone in all its haunting specificity. That re-experience might be chronic, as with nagging memories or transparent nightmares constituting a so-called traumatic neurosis, nicknamed shell shock in World War I and its aftermath.

In his late, unfinished *Outline of Psychoanalysis* Freud reiterated his standing ground rule of neurotic origination—"in every case the later neurotic illness links up with the prelude in childhood"—only to add this time: "The so-called traumatic neuroses (due to excessive fright or severe somatic shocks...) may be an exception; their connection to determinants in childhood has so far eluded detection" (Freud, *Werke*, XVII, 111). True, he canceled this nominal concession by tacking on the implication that those childhood determinants were no less real for being elusive, but no matter: he was not hot on their trail. A still bigger casualty of his theorem of the infantile neurotic precedent than the traumatic neurosis was episodic traumatic reliving such as makes history. For the trauma that gets relived episodically, as a full-length event, is a trauma properly so-called that in almost every case strikes out of the blue like a sudden blow on the head (as it does literally in Pirandello's paradigmatic *Henry IV*). When it strikes that way, it strikes with no lead time for anxiety, as Freud later stressed, but above all with no precedents to help its victim cope. To be sure, it may link up with earlier upsets as it strains for precedents in the course of the reliving, but that is something else.

In 1914 Freud coined the term "repetition compulsion" (*Wiederholungszwang*) to cover patients in analysis acting out feelings or attitudes from their infancy that were never clearly conscious: such, he astutely observed, was their

way of remembering (Freud, *Werke*, X, 129-130). The term "repetition compulsion" carries a deceptive ring of affinity with episodic traumatic reliving, from which, however, such acting out differs radically in at least three ways: it is elicited by the analysis rather than contrived spontaneously; it reproduces a diffuse cluster of inchoate relations to the surrounding world rather than a single, structured traumatic event; above all, in episodic reliving as a rule not the trauma itself, but only its reliving, is unconscious.

In 1920 Freud re-launched the "repetition compulsion" in the new guise of an instinctive losing effort by the human organism to inure itself to excessive stimuli (Freud, *Werke*, XIII, 17-22). He observed this tendency at work first in his baby grandson repeatedly tossing away and pulling back a toy held by a string, then in the recurrent stark memories that characterize a traumatic neurosis, only to wind up inferring from it a death drive inherent in all life—none of which even began to approach episodic traumatic reliving. By contrast, what more than approached episodic traumatic reliving was when his first hypnotic patient repeated his treatment of her serially with other doctors, symptoms inclusive, beginning a few years after she left his care—or so he learned in 1924, noting: "It was the true 'repetition compulsion'" (Freud, *Werke*, I, 162n), which to my mischievous mind suggests that he saw the "true 'repetition compulsion'" in episodic as against chronic reliving (besides allowing that his failed cure was traumatic) even while now distancing himself from the dubious concept by the use of quotation marks.

Why should the victim of a painful trauma keep remembering it? Freud's best answer was: in order to be thrown by it less. A trauma hits too fast to arouse anxiety, he argued; anxiety tags after a trauma when the trauma hits but then precedes the trauma when it is remembered; thanks to this latter "signal anxiety," its victim braces for it in remem-

brance and thereby dulls its impact (Freud, *Werke*, XIII, 31-32; XIV, 199-200; XV, 100-01; XVII, 130). On this construction, all hurtful traumas would arouse anxiety. In fact, however, some elicit only other affects—shame, disgust, compassion, disaffection, disenchantment, whatever. More to the point, Freud's tacit premise was that traumas hurt even when they are off the mind, or else why remember them in order to dull their impact? Not that they hurt unconsciously; there is no unconscious hurting; *what* hurts is off the mind, not the hurting itself. But Freud stressed the conscious over the unconscious in traumatic shock: the ego, caught off guard by a trauma, seeks to gain control over it. His tacit premise alone holds: traumas do go on hurting even when they are off the mind.

For the rest, if a trauma has aroused anxiety, anxiety will precede it in memory only insofar as the memory is expected to be traumatic, in which case it is the remembered trauma that brings on the anxiety after all. Or more simply put, anxiety doesn't signal a trauma if remembering the trauma is what arouses the anxiety. As for such niceties as whether the pain of remembering a trauma is the old pain resurfacing or a new one, he never addressed them. His best explanation for repeating a trauma, transposed from remembering a trauma, would logically have been likewise: to gain control over it. But a trauma is not itself controlled in being replayed; what is controlled is only the form of the replay. Traumatic reliving was just not Freud's forte after 1900.

By way of explaining the castration complex that he saw as endemic to infantile psychosexuality, Freud postulated an archaic inborn memory trace of a castrating tribal father of yore traumatically gang-murdered by a band of his sons who then relived their grave deed ritually in a totemic ceremony prefiguring all future religious observance. This conception of a collective analogue to an individual obsessional neurosis fed into the historical fantasy of Freud's last

years whereby the Jews of the Exodus murdered Moses in re-enactment of the age-old murder of the fabled tribal father, whereupon a couple of millenniums later the Jews of Judea in turn had Jesus crucified in re-enactment of the murder of Moses. With this grandiose conception of a collective re-enactment of two world-historical mass traumas by turns at countless generations' remove in each case, Freud made ample figurative (not to say fanciful) amends for his exclusion of episodic traumatic reliving from his psychoanalytical framework and, correspondingly, from a theoretical passage on traumatic reliving in that selfsame work on Moses. (Freud, *Werke*, 180-81.)

Now to sum up. In Freud's traumatic theory of the 1890s, neurosis was a chronic reliving of traumas loosely defined. In his later, stricter usage, the chronic reliving of a trauma proper, or lasting massive upset, was a special kind of neurosis: the traumatic neurosis. He pointed the way to understanding episodic as well as chronic reliving when he showed in the 1890s that all neurotic symptoms were relivings. But then he blocked the traumatic neurosis, or chronic reliving of a trauma proper, out of his psychoanalytical system when he adopted the rule of an infantile original behind every neurosis, for the distinctive feature of true-blue traumas is that they have no originals. Episodic reliving for its part had no access to his system by the same token and, further, in that it was not neurotic. Not being neurotic, it never entered his consulting room, so that he never dealt with it clinically. Yet his decipherment of symptomatic behavior as remembrance in action was precisely suited to make sense of episodic traumatic reliving.

As a phrase, the "repetition compulsion" that he postulated in 1914 and redefined in 1920 might have seemed to denote, or at least to cover, episodic traumatic reliving, but as a mechanism it was unrelated and even incompatible. Late in his life, in spite of his psychoanalytic schema inhospitable to

episodic traumatic reliving, Freud fantasized a massive case of it extending from the hypothesized murder of a primeval tribal father (itself relived symptomatically meanwhile as totemic ritual) through the supposed murder of Moses to the real crucifixion of Christ. The psychohistorian's task is to replace such pseudohistory by history with the same Freudian aim of uncovering its inner workings.

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***[Editor's Note****: We wish to thank the Karnac Press in London for permission to use this chapter of Rudolph Binion's Traumatic Reliving in History, Literature, and Film (forthcoming in September 2010) as a basis for this symposium. Two other parts of this book appearing first in* Clio's Psyche *in 2005: "Bismarck's Alliance Nightmare" (XII, 25-26) and the symposium article "De Gaulle as Pétain" (XII, 37, 56-66, followed by historians' comments and Binion's response, 66-100).]*

We welcome Bob Lentz
to our Board of Editors

# Commentaries on Binion's "Reliving with Freud"

## Questions about Freud Prompted by Binion

**James William Anderson**—Northwestern University

Drawing on his extensive knowledge of psychoanalysis and his long-standing interest in trauma, Rudolph Binion provides a trenchant explication of Sigmund Freud's approach to trauma. Binion artfully points out the inconsistencies and shortcomings of Freud's approach, and I have no substantial differences with him.

In looking at the development of Freud's ideas, Binion asks or implies several questions. Why is it that Freud's generalizations at times seem to be not "fact but theory-driven?" In other words, Freud seems to come to conclusions that do not appear to be supported by his observations. What is the meaning of Freud making it a "requirement" that "every neurosis" has "an infantile original?" Why was it that Freud made an "about face on child abuse in childhood?" Freud scrapped his claim that neuroses were the result of childhood sexual abuse and replaced it with what he called his "neurotica," his theory of neurosis that Binion does not describe in this article. In my view, a brief analysis of Freud's theory of neurosis, and of the process by which he developed the theory, suggests answers to these questions.

Freud's theory rests on two concepts, the Oedipus complex and compromise formation. One cannot overstate the importance that he gave to the Oedipus complex. He referred to it as the "nuclear complex," with the meaning that he saw it as being at the heart of all, or virtually all, neuroses. The second concept is that of "compromise formation;" he saw a neurosis as being the result of an unconscious conflict: a wish or desire comes into conflict with an inhibiting factor.

By way of illustration, I turn to Freud's case of a 53-year-old woman whom he saw as "suffering from delusional jealousy." According to Freud's analysis, which I do not necessarily accept but will not dispute here, the woman was tortured by her belief that her husband was cheating on her. The belief was a neurosis because it was not grounded in reality. She was convinced intellectually that her husband was faithful to her, and all the evidence demonstrated that her belief in his cheating was wrong. Her neurosis, the false belief, is a compromise formation. According to Freud's analysis, her unconscious desire is her illicit sexual desire toward her son-in-law. This desire comes up against the inhibiting factor, her view of it as wrong. Such a desire would be "monstrous" to her. Not only would she consider it unacceptable to cheat on her husband with another man, but an affair with this man, her daughter's husband, would be incestuous. Therefore she displaces the desire onto her husband. It was not she but her husband who was guilty of unfaithfulness. "Her illicit desire's 'mirror-reflection,' which brought her such an advantage, now became conscious as an obsession and delusion," Freud notes. She gained relief from her unacceptable wish by way of her delusional jealousy (Freud, 1917, "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis," *Standard Edition*, XVI, 248-253).

While Freud did not explicitly bring up the Oedipus complex in this brief case discussion, its role is obvious. He would have viewed the woman's illicit, and incestuous, desire for her son-in-law as having been grounded in her illicit, and incestuous, desire for her father in childhood. Her wish for her father fueled her wish for her son-in-law. Freud would have considered her neurosis as being grounded in her Oedipus complex.

It is especially fit here in Clio's Psyche, which features psychohistory, to consider the personal side of Freud's development of his theories. As Freud professed that the

Oedipus complex is universal—that everyone is gripped by it—we can be sure he believed that he himself had this complex. When he was just discovering the existence of the complex, he was carrying on a self-analysis. He wrote in a letter to his close friend, Wilhelm Fliess, "I have found, in my own case too, being in love with my mother and jealousy of my father."

Similarly, there was a personal factor in Freud abandoning his view that all neuroses stemmed from sexual abuse. In specifying his reasons for changing his mind, he noted in a letter to Fliess that such a view required "that in all case the *father*, not excluding my own, had to be accused of being perverse." He doubted that his own father could have been a child abuser. Another passage suggests that he may have had his two sisters and his brother in mind, all of whom had neuroses, but he probably also was thinking of himself; he was aware of his own neurotic symptoms, and he was coming to see his Oedipus complex as the childhood forerunner of his symptoms, not an experience of being molested in childhood.

Now it is possible to return to the questions raised by Binion's article. Why is it that Freud's generalizations at times seem to be not "fact but theory-driven?" My answer is that his generalizations, in the final analysis, were based on himself. Because it seemed so true in his own experience that neurotic symptoms were compromise formations and derived from a childhood complex, he became convinced that the same thing was true for everyone with neurotic symptoms, and hence he was quick to see these conclusions as applying to his patients even when he did not have ample evidence.

What is the meaning of Freud making it a "requirement" that "every neurosis" has "an infantile original?" Freud is saying simply that a neurosis is grounded in a

childhood difficulty, almost always the Oedipus complex.

Why was it that Freud made an "about face on child abuse in childhood?" Freud certainly would have accepted that sexual abuse is harmful to children; it's just that, in his view, it did not cause neurosis. Neurosis is something specific; it is characterized by a symptom, such as irrational jealousy or a phobia, which does not seem to make sense because it stems from events that are going on unconsciously. Freud simply did not pay attention to child abuse, because he became focused on neuroses, and he believed that neuroses always fit his formula of the compromise formation. A key part of the compromise formation is the illicit desire, which is grounded in the ur-illicit desire of childhood, desire for the parent of the opposite sex. The pathogenic factor was the child's, and later the adult's, illicit desire. Whether or not sexual abuse occurred—and Freud well knew that it occurred at times—and whatever negative effects it might have, it did not form the precursor of neurosis. Freud was developing something specific, a theory of neurosis, not a comprehensive theory of all forms of psychological disturbance.

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UPCOMING SPECIAL FEATURE:

*Symposium on the Psychology of American Exceptionalism and Politics*

# Psychiatric Experiences on Reliving Trauma: Freud, Binion, and Jos. Smith

**Robert D. Anderson**—Private Practice of Psychiatry

## Applying Freudian Concepts of Traumatic Reliving in Practice

As a clinician and scholar of Joseph Smith, I have significantly gained from Freud's ideas. Yet, I am a healer who questions the dogmas of both the Church of Latter-day Saints and orthodox Freudianism. My interest is in applying Freud's ideas to human understanding, rather than how it fits an exercise of intellectual history.

Working in the psychiatric trenches for 46 years, I can say that I have lived through parts of what Rudolph Binion writes in "Traumatic Reliving with Freud." In the beginning it was reading Freud and his colleagues during psychiatric residency, and later in studies at a psychoanalytic institute. The volume of material was unending and massive, written by intelligent and well-intentioned men (and a few women). A certain validity was supported by the sheer volume of writing, but in practice one looked for the underlying childhood conflicts that created most adult problems. There was a degree of certainty in the theory that made it seem like doctrine, and it was doctrine that I sought to get away from. Through the years, what I learned and experienced contradicted some psychoanalytic theories. I was told that prescribing anti-depressants would interfere with proper treatment, while a senior psychoanalyst described five years of treating a dentist in analysis resulting in "no effect at all." Another psychoanalyst gave ten lectures on treating schizophrenia and a formulation of a patient's illness by Kohut, whose use of Freud's libidinal theory was so convoluted as to be disingenuous.

Despite these concerns, my own prolonged analysis

helped me understand the patterns of my own unconscious impulses: over time I learned to listen carefully to patients. During the time of the growing insurance and pharmacology industries (in the 1980s), I evaluated about 400 Vietnam veterans for post-traumatic stress disorder. Here, the issue was the traumatic experience, and the results of the single adult experience were devastating and sometimes suicidal. Looking for the required childhood precedents had little meaning. But even here, at least sometimes, the veterans' background and earlier experiences seemed to play a part in the severity and persistence of the effect of a trauma. My training in psychoanalysis contributed to thoughts and ideas with patients that I would not have had otherwise.

Today, I spend one day a week in an inner-city mental hygiene clinic, prescribing overrated medications and doing one or two initial assessments. The criticism that Freud somehow diminished childhood sexual trauma by conflating it with fantasy has some validity. In this population, I deal with a majority of women who have experienced some type of sexual abuse, frequently in childhood, and sometimes severe and repetitive. It is the topic they do not wish to discuss (frequently saying they have never discussed it), and when I press for some specifics, they begin to disintegrate.

My work in the clinic is, as is typical for psychiatrists today, limited to evaluating patients and prescribing medication. But even if some aspects of psychoanalytic doctrine were overrated, so is the new "doctrine" of prescribing medicines. It is as if psychiatry has lost its soul through various pressures and gave it to psychologists and social workers. It has taken three generations to unravel the blind path of understanding trauma that Freud put us on and Binion so carefully elucidates.

If I was misguided and needed correction in the area of episodic traumatic reliving, I was also misguided in the

area of pseudo-historical religion, and I needed to replace it with history, using the Freudian aim of uncovering its inner workings. Because of my religious background, I have a special interest in the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith. In this case, understanding the effect of a childhood trauma on a historical figure has been critical.

**Reflections on Joseph Smith's Traumatic Reliving of a Childhood Operation**

In the late 1820s, Joseph Smith, an unlettered 23-year-old farm boy, dictated to scribes the 588-page, 275,000-word *Book of Mormon*, reporting that an angel guided him. He used the improbable means of looking at a magical stone in a hat, with his face buried in the hat to exclude all light while he read off the translation he envisioned. The book he produced was a supernatural Christian history of the Americas before Columbus, mostly covering a thousand-year history from about 600 B.C.E. to 400 C.E. That book led to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, now with 13 million members (about half in the United States), which has more political power than anyone would have anticipated, including presidential aspirant Mitt Romney and converts Harry Reid and Glen Beck. It was a major force in defeating the Equal Rights Amendment (1982) and, recently, Proposition 8 in California. Today, that book continues as canonized scripture to the "LDS," "Latter-day Saints," or "Mormon" Church and is treated as a companion book of scripture to the *Bible*.

Skeptics did not believe he could have written it. For 50 years, the foremost explanation, which still has adherents, was that he had stolen the fantasy writings of a dead Protestant minister. Psychological theories have ascended in the last 60 years, proposing Smith's own imaginative genius as the source. Rather than being a book of love, the *Book of Mormon* reveals a preoccupation with violence in the mind of its author; it is a book of delight in terror, hatred, and de-

struction, filled with unending warfare and the destruction of whole civilizations in hand-to-hand combat. In it even Jesus had a destructive hand, for in the book, he destroyed 17 "great" and ordinary cities at the time of his crucifixion in Palestine, and documented his acts when he, as a resurrected person, visited the Americas for a few days. It is the first story in "the Book" that gives a beginning clue as to what was going on in Smith's mind. Here, a heroic prophet takes a sword off of a dead-drunk, powerful, wealthy, thieving, would-be murderer, and decapitates him with it. He then disguises himself by wearing the clothes of the dead man. The sword, given a name and replicated in the book, becomes central to the first chapters in "the Book" and sword fighting continues throughout, with another detailed decapitation near its ending.

William Morain's *The Sword of Laban: Joseph Smith, Jr., and the Dissociated Mind* (1998) and my own work unite in concurring that the source of this violence was an illness and a childhood surgery Smith experienced when he was between five and seven. His poverty-stricken family was attacked by a typhoid epidemic, and the infection settled in little Joseph's leg bones. He was doomed to die a prolonged and horrible death, perhaps by amputation, but was saved by a heroic surgeon who cut into his leg with his surgeon's knife, bored into the bone, and chipped out segments so the infection could be released. The description of this surgery, given by his mother 35 years later, after his murder at the age of 39, is horrific.

We will never know if Joseph Smith qualified for the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder in childhood, for there was no diagnostic interview. I doubt he qualified for the diagnosis as an adult because he does not seem horrified by his imagery of mayhem but was actively elaborating it for his own developing power as he put on the guise of a prophet. The two parts of the childhood trauma that we can

document into his adulthood were the relentless imagery of surgical horror and the search for power. He would never be helpless again. Where religion is involved, the correction of what Binion calls pseudo-history by real history is a slower process than is psychoanalysis.

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## Freud and the Disappearing of Historical Trauma

**Michael Britton**—Forum Research Associate

Binion focuses on the difference between trauma proper and reliving in the form of "a full-scale performance" out of the blue, versus "a diffuse cluster of inchoate relations to the surrounding world" originating in childhood, endlessly

reproduced in the form of neurotic symptoms. He traces Freud's difficulties in sorting out the two and his imputing of a common origin to both in childhood experience, a decision, Binion argues, based on theory, not data. When trauma strikes in adulthood, this sets clinician and patient on a path to finding a nonexistent past. Interest in adult life in the contemporary world gives way to preoccupation with childhood, interest in the importance of one's actual early life yielding to preoccupation with a theoretical past, patients pressed to redirect their focus from the life they've actually lived to a mental place apart, a move that might be called dissociative. Similarly, positing a killing of Moses as a replay of a primal horde's killing of its leader, with the killing of Jesus a replay of the killing of Moses, involves turning from close observation of contemporary adult historical reality to a theoretically imagined past. Both involve a disappearing of actual life in favor of a world that existed only in Freud's mind.

This contrasts with current research studying trauma proper in adult life and its sequellae, Lenore Terr's systematic, observational studies of real children in the wake of real traumas, work she describes as "the psychology of external reality," and observational studies of the "inchoate relations" of infants/children with their mothers, exploring what in those relations becomes the fabric of a "good" life or the fabric of endlessly repeated distress. Freud attempted the "reconstruction" in these realms of conflicts that existed because theorizing said they must. Without today's research to turn to, he was left with little to do but theorize when observation left blanks he could not fill in.

On the other hand, perhaps Freud's refusal to take behavior and "reality" at face value can be read as an insistence that a self of perception, feeling, and intention lies within our actions if we but do the work of discovering and thereby becoming that self. His theorizing opened the door to today's inquiry into the role of childhood in learning to be

such a self. His practice, however flawed, was a practice that could be seen as transforming selves-locked-in-actions into selves possessing self-reflection, selves knowing the difference between motivation and behavior, selves on a journey to a deeper empathy.

Confronted by World War I, Freud wrestled with the horror of hatreds strong enough to kill 16 million people, while faced in his consulting room by feelings strong enough to sabotage adult lives. His "death instinct" has the hallmark of a theory framed where no research yet existed, but strange as "thanatos" was, it was angled in a right direction. Neurobiological and primate research suggest *death-centered* instincts lurking on each side of the predator-prey encounter: fight, flight, and freezing to avoid death, predatory instincts for hunting seeking to inflict it. Though his work fell short of what we now know, he persisted in asking a question we have yet to answer: how the existence of a self-within-our-actions might shed light on why humanness so often turns destructive.

So why the repetition in both traumatic reliving and in the symptoms of "neurosis?" What is to be made of Freud's pursuit of "development" as somehow implicated in both? Perhaps again he opened a path to thinking about something he himself could not quite identify. How to do humanness well together, rather than poorly, is something we have to discover. When trauma or neurotic symptoms repeat, it suggests some way of doing humanity remains in need of discovering—or needs to be restored after being shattered—two very different situations. An attempt to discover what the better way might be still in the offing must continue until the better way is consciously understood, named, breathed into, and loved enough to be given its rightful place in real life or restored after being shattered.

The most important project driving repetition is to get

a way of being human up and running rightly when we don't know what rightly is, instead knowing "wrongly" as the fabric of being. Or, having found the good and the right established, we repeat because the disaster of having it shattered has not been acknowledged, or an understanding large enough to encompass both the right and its destruction forged, an understanding that rehabilitates the right and the good within recognition that wrong can at times overwhelm the labors of love, reason, and devotion to real life.

Freud's push into the territory of early development can be read as a push into the larger question of what it means to do humanness well, a breaking-down of that large issue into its micro-ingredients as imagined through the vehicle of early developmental stages. But particular good ways of being human emerge at different points in our lives, some in infancy, others in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood. He got the framework wrong but the endeavor right. Still "the need to set the good in motion" glosses over the large differences between that challenge as found in traumatic re-enacting, where what was established was shattered, and fabric-of-life memory, which is what we are when the good was never experienced.

For me, Binion's challenging, illuminating chapter prompted these reflections and an eagerness to see how these themes are played out in his forthcoming book as he takes them into the historical dimension that Freud found so problematic.

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## Freud's Theories Reflected His Needs

**Paul H. Elovitz**—The Psychohistory Forum

As usual, Rudolph Binion's erudition is profoundly impressive. It is a great treat for the readers of Clio's Psyche, myself included, to be able to not only read but also to comment on the thoughts on Freudian theory as dissected by one of our longest serving and most accomplished psychohistorical colleagues. It has set me thinking about how the master psychoanalyst's ideas changed over time.

The concept of traumatic reliving, which Binion has been writing about so masterfully for about a half century, was introduced to me as the "repetition compulsion," a term which Freud did not use a lot. Upon checking the *Concordance of the Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, I was surprised to discover that it totally missed Freud's use of this term and does not list "traumatic reliving." A clear sign of the vitality of psychoanalysis is the extent to which not only Freud, but all of us, keep reworking his ideas to utilize data from the present era. This is just how it should be if psychoanalysis is to continue to be a dynamic paradigm for understanding.

Whenever I hear a new idea or read a book or article for the first time, I ask myself several questions: Does this make sense and shine new light on the subject? To what extent is it a reflection of the author's own conscious and unconscious psychological needs? Does it supplant other explanations? What are the universal implications of the insights presented?

As well as reflecting his enormous erudition, Binion's approach certainly makes sense to me. While dealing with subject matter quite familiar to clinicians, Freudian scholars, historians of ideas, and psychobiographers, it still offers a few new insights. Freud's rejection of the seduction theory

in favor of the theory of childhood fantasies of seduction reflected his own psychological needs, as well as his desire not to totally shock and drive away Victorian contemporaries he wanted to convert to his revolutionary theories. Whereas Binion is focused on the inconsistency in Freud's thinking, my concern is more for the elements of struggle within the originator of psychoanalysis. The essence of Freudianism is the courageous investigation of unconscious desire—a point on which Sigmund Freud never wavered. His system certainly supplanted older systems of explanation, although the struggle against it continues right down to the present day. Freudianism remains a universal system of explanation and the impact of trauma is spreading throughout our society.

To me, the great unanswered question is what in his own psyche and life experience brings my friend Rudy Binion to devote his powerful intellect and enormous erudition to the issue of traumatic reliving in individuals and groups? In the spirit of the Viennese master, it would be good if he tackled this question directly.

***Paul H. Elovitz**' biography is on page 15 .*

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## "Repeating, Remembering, and Working Through"

**Tom Ferraro**—Private Practice of Psychoanalysis

Freud's essay "Repeating, Remembering and Working Through," in my opinion, is the most crucial one he ever wrote. Thus it comes as no surprise to me that Rudolph Binion has chosen to explore this essay in some depth. The concept of repeating versus remembering is the primary thought every analyst carries as we listen to our patients' efforts at self-defeat.

In the broadest sense, repetition compulsions are exceedingly common and very difficult to fix. Long ago, I started out as a young psychologist from SUNY Stony Brook trained in behavior modification. I soon realized that no matter how I endeavored to use these techniques on my patients, their symptoms would persist or change form. This prompted me to enter psychoanalytic training in the hope that I could take the patient further in treatment. I quickly learned that nearly every symptom, misperception, weak or grandiose self-image, and out-of-balance affect seems to repeat continually.

Rudolph Binion approaches this dilemma with a theoretical interest in its genesis. He reviews Freud's ever-changing positions on the matter by talking about neurotic predispositions, early childhood trauma, childhood fantasy, and finally adult trauma, which Binion calls "episodic traumatic reliving." It seems that seeking out the root of repetition compulsions and arguing about whether it stems from infancy or later life largely misses the point.

It is clear to any practicing analyst that we are faced with patients with repetitive hysterical symptoms, repeating conversion symptoms, chronically poor interpersonal choices, and self-destructive behavioral habits. These symptoms are carried by the self. Virtually every level of the patient's self perpetuates these repetition compulsions. Let us say we are treating a patient with narcissism. The perceptual system of the narcissist produces hunger and a feeling of great emptiness, which no doubt stems from early childhood deprivation. They will possess an unconscious self-image filled with shame and anger. Their affective equipment will be an overflowing pool of anger. They will be grandiose and hypercompetitive. All these things will work out of view. These will repeat endlessly, much to the dismay and the exhaustion of patient and doctor. As the psychoanalyst Masud Khan once said, it is an exceedingly "long wait for the cure."

Over the years, we will learn of his psychic structure and then engage in the arduous task of change, which will include changing perceptions, affects, images, and behaviors. There is no easy way around this process. Freud called all neurosis "sticky," and he was quite right. We will find the genesis of this reluctance to change in predispositions to infant and adult trauma.

I commend Rudolph Binion for having the courage to enter the dark world of repetition compulsions, though I can see he prefers the phrase "episodic traumatic reliving." He has attempted to root out the theoretical meaning of this problem. Do patients have neurotic predispositions? Do they have early childhood experiences which form neurosis? Do they make things worse with childhood fantasy? Do they suffer adult trauma? The answer is yes in each case. And then they show up at our door.

The key theoretical position given to us by Freud is that early experience influences later experience. This is really all we need to know. I recall a symposium I attended when in graduate school when researchers were visiting our campus from Stanford. They were comparative psychologists working with animals, particularly an experiment with newborn kittens. For the first two weeks of life the kittens were put in an environment with controlled light. The newborn kittens never saw vertical lines throughout this crucial phase of their development. Then they were let loose into normal environs and proceeded to "compulsively" bump into chair and table legs, and they never gained an ability to see vertical lines. I asked if they thought the kittens would ever learn to see verticality and they said no.

However, psychoanalysts are not as cavalier as these animal researchers, for we treat human beings. Our patients come to us with early childhood deprivations that set up inevitable repetitions. They are as blind as the kittens, but their

blindness relates to things like love, pride, joy, satisfaction, safety, and peace. Our job is to be like a Buddhist priest and practice patience and fortitude. The cure for the repetition compulsion is a long one, but the patient needs and deserves our presence on their long way home.

Like the amazing final scene in the award-winning film *The Hurt Locker*, Dr. Binion brings up the common idea that patients will seek out and reenter traumatic scenes in order to master them. This is a large subject that deserves more space than I have here. It is sufficient to say that the many patients have no other language than that of trauma and must seek it out in order to live. They may not be trying to master anything at all, but merely to live in the only way they know how.

***Tom Ferraro**'s biography is on page 58.*

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## The Internal and External in Freud

**Kenneth Fuchsman**—University of Connecticut

For those of us drawn to Freud, it is often more to certain sides of his work than others. Given Rudolph Binion's focus on episodic traumatic reliving, it is not surprising that he would examine the fluctuations in Freud's theories of trauma. In 1896, the then 40-year-old physician had proclaimed that the aetiology of neurosis, as Binion says, was caused by "early sexual abuse by elders." The very next year, Freud altered his theory of the origin of neurosis by saying it was caused more by the child's fantasies than reality. Binion claims that Freud's partial reversal was made "for reasons theoretical rather than empirical." From then on, Freud was tied to his belief in unconscious fantasy and the infantile sexual origin of neurosis. The results of these psychoanalytic convictions, to Binion, were that Freud's ability to under-

stand traumatic reliving was curtailed. In psychohistory, when the evidence warrants, it is not only ideas that are analyzed, but their relationship to the individual's mental and emotional life. To supplement what Binion asserts, I will show that the ideological reasons for Freud's abandonment of the trauma theory were deeply personal, how they manifested themselves in keeping external causes for neurosis at bay, and that Freud did not quite convince himself of his own ideas.

The place to begin is in an ambiguity in the word "elders," which Binion uses in identifying the agents of abuse. Elders can mean anyone older or it can mean someone significantly senior or higher in rank. In his 1896 articles on hysteria, Freud said that most of the sexual abusing of girls was committed by "a boy a little older (most often her brother)" (*S. E.,* Vol. III, 152). Technically, these young males are elders, but they are not the adults Freud would next accuse. In February 1897, just four months after his father died, in letters but not in publications, Freud identified fathers as those who committed sexual abuse. This included his own father, Jacob, of whom the son wrote, "was one of those perverts and is responsible for the hysteria of my brother...and those of several younger sisters" (*The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904*, 1985, pp. 230-231).

These accusations set off an internal crisis of filial loyalty and rebellion in Freud that contributed to both his abandonment of the trauma theory and the development of more purely psychoanalytic notions. Adding to this mix was Freud's dream of having "over affectionate feelings for" his daughter, "Mathilde" (Freud-Fliess, 249). In a September 1897 letter, when Sigmund announced he no longer believed his seduction theory, he excused fathers, including his own, from being at fault. Freud was caught in a blame and exoneration game, and kept vacillating between who was the

agent and who the victim; he had trouble finding a middle ground. Since, to Freud, widespread perversion by fathers "against children are not very probable," they could not generally be the perpetrators. He then attributed neurosis to "the unconscious...sexual fantasy" of children (Freud-Fliess, 264). In this way, the 41-year-old son and father of three daughters was letting his and other fathers, including himself, off the hook.

Freud did not yet fully believe his own claims. At the time of these renunciations and discoveries, he was in the midst of a self-analysis to uncover the roots of his "little hysteria" (Freud-Fliess, 261). Even though Freud had supposedly jettisoned the seduction theory, he was still searching for someone who abused him. Freud soon found a new "prime originator" of his case, his nanny, who taught him about sex. To him, this proves "that the old man plays no active part in my case" (Freud-Fliess, 268). Less than two weeks later, he formulated the Oedipus complex and now for all of humanity, including him, neurosis originates in the desire for the mother and jealousy of the father (Freud-Fliess, 272). The shift has been made; sexual trauma is not the primary cause of emotional disturbances, but neurosis is generated from the desires and fantasies of the child. Whatever hostile or perverse actions may motivate a parent are not given equal weight with the internal drives of the child. An interactive conception of how psychological problems are generated is not central to his theories.

On one hand, it is easy to see that Freud's personal anxieties helped stimulate the development of some quite innovative ideas. On the other hand, Freud never fully convinced himself that neurosis primarily begins from within. At times, he would seem to leave the door wide open for the importance of what he called accidental experience; at other times, he would close the door, and then he could also develop new theories that expanded his horizons.

Particularly, the universal, positive Oedipus complex involves love for the mother and jealousy of the father. What happens if the home consists exclusively of only one parent and one child, and there are no parental substitutes available? He writes, "*primal phantasies*...are a phylogenetic endowment. In them the individual reaches beyond his own experience into primeval experience" (*S. E.,* Vol. XVI, 371). Freud adds, "Wherever experiences fail to fit in with the hereditary schema, they become remodeled in the imagination" (*S. E.,* Vol. XVII, 119). Therefore, the absence of a father would not inhibit jealous feelings towards an imaginary male rival. Freud knows that science rejects the validity of such phylogenetic ideas. He admits, "I cannot do without this factor in biological evolution" (*S. E.,* Vol. XXIII, 100). As he told Joseph Wortis, "Of course, if one didn't believe in inheritance, there would be a great deal we could not explain" (Joseph Wortis, "Fragments of a Freudian Analysis," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. X, 1940], p. 847). Freud's adherence to phylogeny deflected him from recognizing that family structure might play a part in Oedipal dynamics; it also kept him from having to face that the Oedipus complex may not just be generated from the child, but could be an interactive situation where others may also have sexual desires. Freud could recognize parental desires for the child, but he separated them from having aetiological significance.

Paradoxically, even as he used phylogeny to ward off threats to certain parts of the Oedipal theory, he came up with the negative Oedipus complex where the son, for instance, desired the father and saw the mother as the rival, and the complete Oedipus complex which combined the positive and negative. The complete Oedipus complex focuses on the child's wishes, not the dynamics between parents and the child. Freud's predilection for stressing one side of an interpersonal dynamic limited his ability to understand traumatic

neurosis.

The traumatic neurosis of World War I presents a specific case. Freud initially concluded that this neurosis was triggered by adult experience of combat. He uncomfortably admitted that there is no proof that the war neurosis has any connection to sexual instincts. This does not mean, Freud asserts, that it has been shown that the sexual theory "is *incorrect*" (*S. E.,* Vol. XVII, 208). But later, he inaccurately says, "with the end of the war the war neurotics too, disappeared." This is "impressive proof of the psychical causation of their illnesses." To Freud, this meant that "shell shock" was not a true traumatic neurosis caused by external events, but was often motivated by the desire to be out of harm's way (*S. E.,* Vol. XVII, 215, 212). As such, these disturbances were not adult traumas and therefore no longer a threat to the correctness of the sexual and infantile causation of neurosis. Yet after his defensive posture towards his sexual theories, he soon added aggression to the basic drives. Freud's ways of finding paths around threats to the universality of his cherished ideas and forging new concepts that alters what he was defending testify to his contradictory internal self-dialogue. He would frequently firmly reject certain ideas, then find ways to accept part of what he had just vehemently opposed. His theoretical divisions and restlessness could mean both that he could stop himself from exploring the notion of traumatic reliving and that Binion's development of that concept is derivative from Freud's defensive and creative mind.

There is an odd lesson to be learned from this brief sojourn into aspects of Freud's mental life. The vacillations, gaps, and reversals within his theory as to the role of the event and the role of the individual have relevance for the theory of trauma. We know traumatic events threaten life and limb, but researchers of post-traumatic stress disorder have not been able to adequately explain why some exposed

to the same horrifying events are psychologically scarred and others fail to develop symptoms of disturbance. Any theory of trauma or traumatic reliving needs to examine the personality and the event. Given the mixture of human variability and commonality, any theory, whether it is about traumatic reliving or the sexual-aggressive drives, cannot be separated from how it is processed in the complex personhood of each individual.

***Kenneth Fuchsman**'s biography is on page 5.*

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## Trauma as Horror: Reliving the Unimaginable

**James M. Glass**—University of Maryland

While in the late 1890s Freud gave up his actual trauma theory for the concept of the infantile original behind all neuroses, including trauma, Binion argues he found himself fitting his clinical analysis into his theory. The infantile original is a theory-driven concept—much more so than an empirically-grounded explanation rooted in the patient's symptoms. Further, Freud confirmed this theory-driven notion of the primary sexual etiology of all neuroses through the psychoanalytic assumptions governing his dream theory. Trauma, then, in all its forms becomes a neurotic reliving of either real or imagined sexualized trauma scenes, depending on the specific psychosexual stage at which they occurred. For Freud, what was critical was not so much the facticity of the trauma itself, but the imagining of trauma, its reality as emotional experience, and the power of its repressed affect in the unconscious. Its empirical reality (as a matter of interpreting symptoms) ceased to matter after Freud turned from the trauma-driven theory of hysteria he developed with Breuer. What is critical is how trauma is experienced in

memory, how it appears somatically, and what symptoms reveal about unconscious origins and the specific stage of sexual development at which the "original" event happened, particularly its imaginary happening. Neuroses, no matter how severe, derive from the infantile original, and even precipitating factors embody or represent variations on the archaic original memory.

Theory drives data: Freud the theorist pushes Freud "the therapist into a corner," leading to a frantic "hunt" in all psychoanalytic investigation "for infantile underpinnings of neuroses." Too much, Binion argues, neat fitting of symptoms into theory. This effort at proving theory led to critical problems in psychoanalysis itself: "it ruled out traumatic reliving, in which an unprecedented shattering experience is reexperienced close to the bone in all its haunting specificity," particularly the therapeutic recognition that the reliving experience itself might be chronic. Freud allows that some traumatic neuroses might not have their origin in the infantile "original," and therefore might elude "detection." But Freud, in Binion's view, never pursues this line of inquiry. An even bigger casualty of his neglect of traumatic reliving is figuring out the relation between trauma, identity, and the history of the self. Episodic reliving from a clinical perspective might reveal a great deal about the self's historical development (a history of pain), rather than looking for symptomatic explanations in a range of inferences about an infantile original that may owe more to theory than to the empiric history of the self's own adaptations over time.

Binion suggests even concepts like "repetition compulsion" and the positing of the death drive possess little therapeutic relevance for understanding the unconscious properties of the reliving process itself. Freud's explanation for reliving trauma is that it demonstrates the self's almost heroic effort to gain control over the trauma, but Binion regards this as a mistake. It is not, he suggests, that reliving

creates more "control" over trauma, but almost the opposite: reliving demonstrates the very real power of trauma as an unconscious power that consistently provokes multiple replays. It is not a matter of gaining control over the traumatic memory; rather, in Binion's view, reliving suggests that the self has given up on "control" or any other move to dominate traumatic resonance. The replay, as the psychic "form" of the trauma itself, remains riveted in the self, an essential dimension of identity.

What is at issue here for Binion is "remembrance in action," and in an odd turn of events it is Freud the historian, social theorist, and anthropologist that allows for such remembrance as the endless replay of primal crimes, particularly in matters of authority and the way authority provokes action and violence. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud "fantasized a massive case of [traumatic reliving] extending from the hypothesized murder of a primeval tribal father (itself relived symptomatically meanwhile as totemic ritual) through the supposed murder of Moses to the real crucifixion of Christ."

For Binion this is pseudo-history, but nonetheless a history that—at least theoretically—attempts to uncover the unconscious and hidden workings of real, collective, world-shattering events with special significance regarding limits imposed by law and moral valuation. In Freud's historical narrative, traumatic reliving becomes central to the origins of civilization in murderous rage, but in therapeutic pursuit its etiology consistently reverts to variations on a single theme: the repressed memory of some variation of the infantile prototype. While Binion admires the psychoanalyst Freud, he is highly critical of Freud's fixation on hypothesized, sexual "original" events that might lie behind instances of traumatic reliving.

Binion believes that trauma can indeed be understood

psychoanalytically in terms of deconstructing its symptom formations, but the "reliving" process involves unconscious sources that might be considerably more complex than building on an infantile prototype stored in remembrance as a bundle of pain and anxiety. Take, for example, the death of children. I attend monthly meetings of Compassionate Friends, a local chapter of a national association set up as a safe emotional harbor for parents who have lost children. My son died at home a year and a half ago from a drug overdose. I found him, motionless and not breathing, in bed about eight hours later. At a recent meeting of Compassionate Friends, a woman narrated the death of her daughter. She moved through this story as a monotonic reflection of what she confronted: seeing the accident scene, being at the hospital, standing by her daughter, massaging her shoulders, watching her die, kissing her lips, standing at the edge of the bed while the body bag was wrapped around her, accompanying the gurney to the hospital morgue. She paused for a moment and then continued with the narrative of her daughter's cremation, and how she asked the funeral home if she could be there and witness the burning of the casket, and then if she could operate the controls that regulate how much fire would be turned on.

Her narrative, a reliving, took her back to the accident, the state of her daughter's body, her injuries and disfigurement, her coma, the time spent sitting at her bedside, and the horror of actually watching her child die. In front of a group of complete strangers, this woman vividly brought into her consciousness events of a death that had taken place over ten years earlier. She took us inside her emotional constellation, to the accident site, the hospital, the crematorium, the levers determining the flow of gas, the intensity of the flames.

This was a form of traumatic reliving not only for her, but also for the group. Binion's essay dramatically rep-

resented and made me think about not the narrative line of the story itself—powerful enough—but what lay outside of consciousness, what had no words or gestures: an unconscious story emerging in an empathic setting as an emotionally flat scream, narrative reliving of her daughter's death defined every manifestation of this woman's being, in addition to the being of everyone in that room. Her daughter's death enveloped her "self," at least in that instant. The trauma, as she expressed it, "said" who she "was," just as for everyone in that room who had lost a child, the story unleashed conscious associations and unconscious horror that absorbed identity. Traumatic reliving and self merged; "I am my pain," as one person put it—an unconscious resonance, experienced somatically, shared by persons as diverse as the 22-year-old woman who recently lost her two-year-old child to hospital negligence, the elderly man recalling the anniversary of his son's death 15 years earlier, the father who had lost two of his three children within 18 months, and the mother who had witnessed her daughter's physical disintegration from alcoholism over a two-year period.

It is in this sense that I take Binion's powerful analysis as both a history of Freud's own approach to theory and the empirical reality of symptoms, and a different way of thinking about the history of the self. For whatever infantile prototype remains in these shattered souls who have lost children, it has been totally eclipsed and absorbed by a radically different prototype, as significant an imposition on consciousness as any repressed memory from infancy and childhood—albeit one that will be relived in countless forms in the days to come and that will structure identity for the remainder of their lives. I was particularly attuned to this woman's story, but her utterance of the words—just the very speaking of such words even though spoken in a flat, affectless monotone—vividly recreated my own trauma, and indeed provoked a reliving of trauma for everyone in that

room.

In that Compassionate Friends group, language became numinous, as if by speaking "it," the horror of the event relocates consciousness as a synthesis of what had been and what is now in the present moment. The messiness of what Jean Paul Sartre calls "facticity" drives theory here; and traumatic reliving appears in the tormented words of parents trying to explain, as if through words they could glue together, the fractured pieces of what had been. A 42-year-old woman who sat across from me desperately attempted to describe how she felt, particularly her guilt, after losing her ten-month -old daughter in an accident at home. Words and tears pushed her back into that horrible space; what appeared was a broken-self riveted in memory, who excused herself from the room because she was unable to find her way into the present. She spoke and tried to speak not from the resonance of an infantile prototypical memory, but from the very edge of a madness brought on by the unimaginable.

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## We Are All Reliving with Freud

**Judith Harris**—George Mason University

Professor Binion is convincingly trying to move his paper towards several important conclusions, one being that Freudian terminology tends to mask some overlapping concepts that may offer or infer interpretations that are misleading when one is trying to grasp the development of Freud's traumatic memory theories. If Dr. Binion is correct, Freud

tended to theorize in incremental parts, as if one kind of reliving was distinct from another, or that all trauma dealt with in psychoanalysis had to have an infantile original, and could not be episodic or in flux. No doubt that episodic memory was always staring Freud right in the face—through the early days of conversion theory, when "mnemonic symbols" or physical metaphors for the suppressed trauma, which Freud then concluded was always associated with a sexual experience, through the seduction theory (which Binion calls "ill-conceived"), and his controversial redaction of it into psychoanalysis proper, the Oedipal Complex, drive theory, and beyond, to the topic of Binion's paper, episodic and chronic reliving. He shows how Freud boxes himself in with his own overlabored taxonomy, overlooking the general and the obvious.

Throughout "Reliving with Freud," Rudolph Binion takes a psychohistorian's approach to understanding Freud. He points out how Freud first believed the original trauma occurred in a fugue state, that it could not be "relived" without some precipitating event in the present triggering it, Freud himself admitted in "Aetiology of Hysteria," that "the patients know nothing about these scenes." Their memories of sexual abuse appear to have been responses to Freud's hints, suggestions, and persuasion, and Freud apparently indicated that prior to therapy, the patient's knowledge of trauma is incomplete and expressed in a highly summary form as an incomplete trauma narrative. However, Binion is more interested in the phenomenon of traumatic memory—how it fits together as a puzzle and how it manifests itself through time, or rather how it becomes timeless in quality and not arranged chronologically, so that it seems to belong to the unconscious.

It is in the second half of the paper that Binion suggests that there are two kinds of reliving trauma because episodic reliving strikes out of the blue; it is always "off the

mind" and unassimilated. The only assimilation possible is into the doctor's story, rather than the patient's, as both are "reliving." The Professor suggests that Freud often saw what he wanted to see—although he was frequently faced with empirical evidence that went counter to his claims. By showing us the chinks in Freud's thinking, Binion prepares us to be more skeptical about this late reasoning regarding traumatic experience whether episodic (true blue traumas) or chronic, and the implicit paradox of reliving painful experiences in order to do away with them. Binion does not seem to agree with the idea that repetition compulsion is a way of mastering trauma, or has any link to "reliving." The repetition compulsion engages behavior that mimics an earlier stressor, either deliberately or unconsciously. In the fort/da game, which Freud interpreted, a toddler's mastery over trauma is achieved by a controlled staging that reenacts the original trauma within a ritualized space helping the child to regulate his anxiety about loss and separation from his mother. But as Binion points out, the compulsion to repeat painful experiences does not address episodic reliving, such as the type of shell shock suffered by World War I veterans.

He ends his paper with a discussion of the castration complex, which Freud saw as endemic to infantile sexuality. On the last page, Binion sums up his article by giving us an example of Freud's episodic "reliving" which he viewed as universal and innate to all human development. Thus we are all reliving "with Freud."

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## Binion Revises Freud

**Wallace Katz**—SUNY-Stony Brook

In the late 1960s I was teaching European cultural history at Wesleyan University, where I chaired a committee that chose speakers on politics, history, social thought, and economics. In my graduate school days at Columbia, Binion had been both teacher and friend and, though I had some doubts about the validity of psychohistory, I greatly admired his work. Accordingly, I invited him to lecture. He delivered "Leopold III and Belgian Neutrality," which was the first time I encountered his theory of traumatic reliving.

Though the paper was well received and subsequently published in a Wesleyan journal, *History and Theory* (VIII, 1968, 213-259,)—I remained skeptical. Binion and I had different views of historiography. He applied Occam's razor to history, opting for a historiography that was specifically causal and psychoanalytic, while I argued that the best historical analysis provided rich accounts of the context in which events took place. Historians ask questions and tell broad-based stories in response. Could the accident in which Queen Astrid was killed have determined Leopold's position for neutrality in 1940? This seemed to me a slim thread on which to hang an event with such large consequences.

Yet, this question aside, I thought then—and think now—that Binion has something momentous to say about psychoanalytic theory. First, without discussing specifics, my own adult experience bears out his argument that the theory of infantile origins is not essential to understand symptomatic repetition and, further, focus on infantile origins may in fact preclude cure or, its equivalent, the termination of "interminable" analysis. Second, there is much in the current advance of the science of neurology to make us question the theory of infantile origins. Neurologists now believe that full

development of the brain doesn't happen until the legal age of maturity, at 21. To be sure, Freud's realm is the unconscious and neither memory nor injured emotions are dependent on mature cognitive powers. Yet human decisions and judgments certainly relate to cognition, which would just as easily support the idea that adult experiences, or at least experiences other than those relating to our family in childhood, affect and may even lead to the decisions that shape our lives.

Third, though I was taught to hold Freud in awe—how could I not with Lionel Trilling as teacher and mentor—many aspects of his work bothered me. To start, I never bought into infantile origins, precisely because I'm an historian. Consider this rudimentary question: why did Louis XIV build Versailles? Though I would argue that many factors were involved, if I had to pick a "cause" I'd choose a traumatic event: the two Parisian Frondes in which the young king might have been dethroned or killed if either the princes or the Paris "parlement" had succeeded at revolt. We know little about the connection between this trauma and how the "roi soleil" may have relived it. Was it at the root of his attempt to exert hegemony over Europe? Did he see the English and the Dutch in the light of the two Frondes? Was his reaction to trauma overcompensation, inasmuch as Versailles' splendor and distance from Paris reduced his aristocratic enemies to courtiers and removed the monarchy far away from the Parisian courts and crowds? My point is that Binion's thesis in *Traumatic Reliving* will help historians to see questions in this manner and enable them to discern compulsive repetitive behavior that they may now ignore.

Further, Freud's meta-historical works, *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*, made me question his sanity. These books are simply preposterous. One doesn't have to be an expert on Freud to see easily that he is projecting his infantile origins theory and the Oedipus complex back

into the whole of history and making all of civilized human existence dependent on some brutal aspect of familial relationships, on fathers and sons and their mythical struggles.

Binion probably won't agree with me, but my own suspicion is that Freud's entire infantile-based psychoanalytic theory is an elaborate way, as Carl Schorske has argued (in *Fin-de Siecle Vienna*), of replacing politics with psychology. A Jewish doctor in late 19th-century Vienna would find it easier to outrage the medical community by talking about infantile sexuality than to challenge the state (the government of the Hapsburg Empire) by talking about illegitimate, paternalistic, and racist political authority. If Schorske is right, there is a trauma which, because it had to be buried, gave rise to psychoanalysis as we know it: the trauma of Freud seeing his father abused and humiliated by an Austrian officer who hated Jews.

This is all the more reason to applaud what Binion has done here, and his forthcoming book on traumatic reliving is much more than a simple commentary on Freud. To argue that adult experience rather than infantile experience is essential to understanding the human psyche puts us back on a ground where psychology and history can be of some real use to each other. I might agree or disagree as to whether a specific trauma of adult experience is then repeated so as to shape an entire life or a decisive historical event. But at least we are back here on terrain that speaks directly to what we observe and what accords with our common sense.

Here is a telling, if anecdotal, example. About 15 years ago a mutual friend introduced me to Daniel Ellsberg. I have never met a man so obsessed by one event. Conversation that evening on almost any topic drew us back to his experience during the Nixon administration and his revelations about the Pentagon Papers. One might say that his trauma was self-imposed but it was trauma nonetheless. His neu-

rotic repetition compulsion was to put this one moment in his life at the center of his existence and of all those who came in contact with him. I know, of course, that obsession and compulsive repetition are not the same thing, but clearly adult experiences trump childhood familial struggles when one tries to understand what happened in history.

My only caveat about Binion's book—and it is a caveat rather than a criticism—is that without notes and perhaps further argument, I'm not certain whether his evidence for Freud's reading back infantile origins into many of his cases is indisputably proven. He provides an elegant demonstration of the point, but so that others understand fully the book's significance, one wants no shadow of doubt. I trust that at least part of the remainder of the book will elaborate the theoretical argument. This is necessary so as to provide strong support for the historical essays that apply the theory. Binion has put the cart before the horse, but this is only natural with a historian who needs to examine the facts before proposing the theory.

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UPCOMING SPECIAL ISSUE:

*Psychodynamics of the Self-Exploitation of the Professional Worker*

## Binion's Reliving

**David Lotto**—Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

Dr. Binion's paper "Reliving with Freud" is one chapter of his forthcoming book, *Traumatic Reliving in History, Literature, and Film*, in which he gives us a wonderfully detailed account of the history and development of Freud's thinking on the relationship between trauma and psychological symptoms. The chapter centers on Binion's concept of "episodic traumatic reliving." Two quotes from the paper tell us what he means by this concept. The first is, "Contriving unknowingly to repeat an especially painful experience in disguise, and more than once as circumstances permit, is a pattern of human behavior sufficiently distinct to deserve a technical name: episodic traumatic reliving" (p. 1) and secondly traumatic reliving is, "...an unprecedented shattering experience...re-experienced close to the bone in all its haunting specificity. That re-experience might be chronic, as with nagging memories or transparent nightmares constituting a so-called dramatic neurosis, nicknamed shell shock in World War I and its aftermath" (p.12). In his previous work, particularly his 2005 book, *Past Impersonal: Group Process in Human History*, Binion has used this concept of traumatic reliving to characterize events at the large group level, for example, in exploring the role it played in the activities of the Third Reich. This paper is focused on the individual. His description of traumatic reliving sounds, particularly when he equates it with "shell shock," like he is talking about post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the symptoms of which can include nightmares and flashbacks including literal reappearances of elements of the past traumatic event.

I would suggest that Binion is being too restrictive in his characterization of episodic traumatic reliving in the individual. Although symptoms of PTSD can include flashbacks in which the trauma is "re-experienced close to the bone in

all its haunting specificity," there are many other symptoms which can be appropriately described as reliving or reenactment that don't necessarily involve a literal representation of the traumatic events. For example, consider a soldier who participated in a wartime atrocity. He might well have flashbacks in which he literally relives the traumatic experience but he might also engage in periodic self-destructive behavior, which might stem from his guilt about participating in the atrocity. These self-destructive behaviors are also a form of reliving and reenactment that can be seen as repetitive attempts at mastery just as much as flashbacks and nightmares are.

Binion cogently argues that PTSD flashbacks are not what Freud was talking about in his 1914 paper, *Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through*, where he introduces the term "repetition compulsion." This paper is subtitled *Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, and in it Freud limits his discussion of the repetition compulsion to events that occur in psychoanalytic treatment. However, Freud, in answering the question of what it is that the patient is repeating, says, "...everything that has made its way from the sources of the repressed into his manifest personality—his inhibitions and unserviceable attitudes and his pathological character traits" (*Standard Edition*, Vol. 12, p. 151). In other words, what is repeated is a lot more than replays or memories of previous trauma. It includes repeating the entire range of responses, including the various defenses and compromise formations the person has developed in reaction to traumatic experiences.

Binion correctly states, when he reviews some of Freud's earlier "pre-psychoanalytic" work, that Freud was aware of the existence of PTSD—he saw PTSD-like symptoms in his patients and emphasized the etiological importance of trauma for understanding symptoms. The abandonment of the "seduction theory," starting in 1897, led to a psy-

chology that applied to more than those who had experienced a severe external trauma. The notion of what could be traumatic was broadened to include deprivation as well as impingement. The role of imagination in interpreting, reacting, and even creating a traumatic experience was recognized. For the post-1897 Freud to understand a person's current difficulties, he had to know not only about the trauma, but also about how the person reacted to it.

As Binion points out at the end of his paper, starting in 1920 with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud broadened the concept of the repetition compulsion and saw it as common to all individuals, not just patients in psychoanalytic treatment. Freud also used it to describe large group events such as his speculations concerning the sons' murdering of the father in the primal horde in *Totem and Taboo* and the alleged murders of Moses and Jesus from *Moses and Monotheism.*

Freud and Binion, along with many psychohistorians, are in agreement when it comes to looking at large group behavior. They all fully recognize the power and pervasiveness of the repetition compulsion along with the significance of the return of the repressed, which fuels the reliving and reenacting of earlier trauma experienced by the group.

Although understanding how the repetition compulsion, reliving, and reenacting operate within an individual provides a model and metaphors that are clearly relevant to the psychohistorical understanding of broad historical and cultural events, the study of large group phenomena using psychoanalytic principles is the main subject matter of psychohistory. It has also been the focus of much of Binion's previous psychohistorical work. I think that the existence of episodic traumatic reliving, on the large group level, is indisputable. It is an extremely helpful concept for understanding the motivation behind much of history.

On the individual level I think the concept, as Binion uses it, is far too narrow to be useful as part of a psychohistorical explanation. It applies to those who have experienced a severe trauma and have developed PTSD. Freud's use of the repetition compulsion to apply to a wider range of both "symptomatic" behavior and to a larger group than those who suffer from PTSD, ultimately to all of us, is of greater utility to psychohistorians. It also is in closer agreement to Binion's previous characterization of traumatic reliving when he says, "Whatever we do we tend to act out our past."

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## Freud's Errors Were Part of His Learning Process

**Joel Markowitz**—Private Practice of Psychoanalysis

This erudite article discusses some errors and apparent errors in Freud's thinking. As Professor Binion seeks to do, and because Freud's thinking is so relevant to our self-understanding, we too must try to understand Freud's mistaken speculations. Errors in Freud's thinking also throw some light on the group mindset in which Freud grew up.

We must be grateful, of course, to Freud and others who were brave enough to speculate, to oppose conventional thinking, and to risk being wrong. Edison's 1,033 patents entailed thousands of failed experiments. He, however, was fortunate in ways Freud was not. Collective morality did not attack Edison's experiments, nor were his failed experiments

criticized as so many of Freud's invalid and valid theories have been.

In almost 60 years of psychiatric work, I have found Freud's fundamental thinking to be extremely accurate and incomparably valuable. Although his invalid theories have been emphasized by critics, Freud's many speculations included very few mistakes and those have been of little consequence relative to the vast importance of his valid discoveries.

Freud's repetition-compulsion principle involved the fundamental and powerful tendency to repeat an early experience, particularly a traumatic one. It is best understood, I think, if we use the military metaphor Freud used in his libido theory. Just as a general will pour his troops into a troubled area, so do we pour libido into a traumatic situation in trying to cope with it. Libido makes things important to us; in addition, accumulated libido produces pleasure.

As we know, traumas (particularly violence, sexual abuse, rejection, and abandonment) are often repeated during the formative years and people often repress those repetitions. However, my experience leads me to cautiously agree with Binion that single traumas may cause symptoms.

Freud's ingenious theories on psychohistory—e.g., *Totem and Taboo*, *Moses and Monotheism*—were among the least valid of his efforts (albeit, Moses may well have been an Egyptian aristocrat). Freud also clung to a belief in a death instinct—Shakespeare, Keats, Emily Dickenson, Stevie Smith, and others have written compellingly of the human longing for death. The incidence of suicide despite the major Christian injunction against suicide is among the evidence of the extent to which humans have wanted to die. An instinctive need to die seems to me unlikely because it is too difficult to reconcile with natural selection.

Many therapists still minimize the strength and ingenuity of our ego defenses, and of our need to "work them through" before interpretations can dismantle symptoms, and this tendency was greater in Freud's time. It's understandable, therefore, that therapists often underestimate the collective resistances (especially to Oedipal theory) and the extreme naiveté of Freud's time. There was then a less-critical tendency to "intellectualize." ("Intellectualizations," as you may know, restrict interpretations to being merely "interesting ideas" and prevent them from becoming truly useful.)

At that early stage of psychoanalytic development, it made sense to many analysts that a patient could be cured by intellectually learning how a symptom evolved from an early trauma. More often than today, therapists then conducted "wild analyses": they made interpretations before patients had been prepared to accept and use them. Freud may also have done so, as he did not detail the nature of his work between revealing his patients' symptoms and his interpretations. His therapies also seem too have been too brief to have involved elaborate working through.

On the other hand, we should consider that Freud's interpretations may have had more impact on people of that period than would be the case today. While Freud's contemporaries were far more naïve, repressed, and defensive than we are, the collective mind of Freud's period, paradoxically, hadn't built up the sophisticated resistances that societies later learned to mobilize against Freudian thinking. Freud's patients were in some ways less prepared than many people are today to defend effectively against Freudian constructs. Freud's contemporaries also respected authority more than we do and we can speculate that the impact of Freud's authoritarian manner, powerful personality, confidence, and brilliance must surely have added to the effectiveness of his pronouncements.

In other words, while our sophistication makes us freer with regard to acknowledging and accepting our primitive impulses and fantasies, our defenses have become more sophisticated against awarenesses we want to avoid. Binion quotes from Freud's letter to Fliess in 1898: "Dream life seems to me to derive entirely from the residues of the prehistoric period of life"—ages one to three. What can we do with that thought? I lack the skill to evaluate the validity of that; and I can only assume that his intuitive genius may still be unequalled and that he may have had valid insights that we cannot yet confirm.

We can be grateful that Freud freely abandoned weaker theories for better ones (and that he didn't waste time apologizing for the former). Freud's thinking may have been too restrictive; researchers have since revealed that some major symptoms do seem to derive from traumas during infancy. In my experience, however, much traumatic neurosis seems to originate during pre-pubertal development, and some trauma-inducing neurosis seems to take place during the adolescent period. Also, post-traumatic stress symptoms may be established at any time, and they are evidently different from "formative years" symptoms. Although repressed rage also seems to lead to some symptoms, Freud stresses the importance of sex in symptom formation. His writings have often been ridiculed for emphasizing sexual fantasies and motivations to the extent that they did, but I don't believe that he exaggerated. In retrospect, we may in fact find that he understated the importance of sex to the human condition. I believe that this viewpoint will be reinforced in the near future.

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## Therapeutic Dreams and Reliving

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

"Reliving with Freud" is wonderfully systematic, but I am concerned with only some of the themes in the second half of Professor Binion's paper. The paper is best assessed by practicing psychologists and scholars of Freud—I am neither. As a generalist historian, I do find Binion convincing when he marshals evidence in Freud's own casework to say that Freud should have accorded "trauma" more independent agency than he did. Binion is also convincing when he says a traumatic event can lead to neurotic symptoms regardless of which developmental life stage the trauma victim is at—and regardless of whether the victim carries any predisposition to *be* traumatized by such an event. The First World War's shell-shock cases should have settled this, but apparently by then Freud was locked into his theory that all neurotic symptoms have infantile origins.

On the other hand, I don't share Binion's well-known view that both traumatic reliving and traumatic dreams are devoid of therapeutic benefit—which I'm sure will figure prominently in his forthcoming book that this paper is part of. If we go back and start with Freud's early emphasis on those highly-frequent dreams about the dreamer's previous day's preoccupations—and if we then dismiss Freud's later interpolation that, in addition, every dream also fantasizes the fulfillment of some infantile wish—isn't it possible that our dreams are not (as Freud supposed) *retrieving* the preoccupations of the previous day that we tried to dismiss from our minds but instead are *releasing* from our minds our previous day's preoccupations? Might our dreams, in other words, be partly a way our minds release preoccupations, or even random thoughts, which are useless (if not counter-productive)? If so, that would be therapeutic.

And if so, then we should say goodbye to Freud's theory that dreams enact "wish fulfillment." Granted, children's dreams often enact that, but I doubt that's often true of adults' dreams. I think normal adults' dreams aren't fulfilling wishes but releasing them; freeing our minds of useless preoccupations that perhaps were once useful.

While I'm writing of preoccupations, my mind is racing ahead to a special category of them: expectations. Schopenhauer, who realized that expectations are important in shaping our lives, also identified their origin to be in our past experiences. As Freud said, "What has been, will be." Binion reminds us that Freud's work showed him many people's *disturbing* preoccupations. Another Schopenhauerian theme, which Freud embraced but Binion does not, is relevant here, too: the will. When we dream, we do not will. In dreams we are merely aware; everything happening as though it were inevitable. Admittedly, we often react in our dreams, such as by thinking "oh no…," but even then—and here I am shifting from ordinary dreams to traumatic ones—in dreams which culminate with us knowing exactly what to do but unable to do it, the reason *why* we can't is because we can't will it. As we dream, we may think we are willing it. If we were awake, what needs doing might be doable with a mere fraction of the effort we dream of exerting. Yet, while dreaming, we can't do it because a dream is like the past: it can only be experienced. Its course cannot change. (I'm told that "lucid dreaming" is an exception, but I know nothing of that.) Only when awake can we change anything, and with regard to what's past, we can only accept it.

By precluding our will, dreams achieve our acceptance, but only very temporarily in the case of traumatic (high-consequence) dreams. Dreams by their nature accept not just what arouses anxiety in us but also what arouses the fuller list with which Binion supplements Freud: what arouses our "shame, disgust, compassion, disaffection, disen-

chantment, whatever." Our dreams accept whatever in our past aroused any of those feelings in us. Let me say explicitly that I consider our dreams' acceptance of the past to be a form of guidance, pointing our will toward permanently accepting what is past, and isn't that the definition of therapy?

Traumatic dreams can release our high-consequence preoccupations and expectations only temporarily—only while we're asleep—but our will can later make the release permanent, which is why I disagree with Binion's well-known position that traumatic dreaming is never therapeutic. After we're awake, through our will we are able to accept whatever is causing our traumatic dreams. Thus, regarding the efficacy of our will, I agree with Freud, not Binion.

Binion's other position I contest is that traumatic *reliving* is never therapeutic. Again, it is admittedly not automatically therapeutic, but if a trauma is relived within a wholistic awareness, thereby contextualizing and making relevant the trauma's significance, then traumatic reliving can be therapeutic. This is called "gaining perspective" on a trauma, and thereby coming to accept it. Nothing in us automatically accepts a past trauma, no matter how long ago it happened or how often it reappears in our dreams, waking thoughts, or compulsive behavior; but when our awareness is whole, our will is then able to accept a past trauma and act out that acceptance in a positive, therapeutic way. The sequence can be vice versa: exerting our will to accept a past trauma and acting out our acceptance can somehow give us therapeutic perspective on it, as has often been verified, not by the changed outer behavior but by changed inner experience.

This way of interpreting dreams suggests a counterfactual exercise. We have both benign and threatening dreams. If we think dreams are enacting wish fulfillment, wouldn't it be logical to explain threatening dreams by the

existence of a death wish? But if we think of ordinary dreams as merely releasing what is useless among our low-consequence preoccupations and expectations, and if we think of traumatic dreams as showing us what is useless among our high consequence preoccupations and expectations, then we need no death wish theory to explain threatening dreams. Threatening dreams would merely be doing what benign dreams do: releasing (or at least revealing) our useless preoccupations and expectations.

By the word "useless," am I implying that some preoccupations or expectations are use*ful*? Emphatically yes! Expectations are useful if what they expect is likely to happen. Expectations are inherent in how our inner, subjective life relates to the world's outer, objective life. Realistic expectations have survival value. Also, dreams, I think, help us discard the others.

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## Binion's Probing of Freud's Shifting Theories

**Jack Schwartz**—NJ Inst. for Training in Psychoanalysis

As a practicing psychoanalyst and teacher, I must admit that I have struggled with Freud's theoretical legacy. Alongside my many comrades, we admire and readily use Freud's clinical model such as the use of the couch, free association, dream analysis, interpretation, transference, resistance, unconscious motivation, etc. On the other hand,

Freud's theory of infantile sexuality and origins of psychopathology have been regularly challenged and are still debated. Thus, Dr. Binion's article "Reliving with Freud" inspired me to consider Freud's theoretical legacy and how I interpreted it.

Dr. Binion approaches Freud's early cases, with a keen eye, much like a detective uncovering evidence at a crime scene. Binion suggests Freud's crime, so to speak, had been the abandonment of the clinical actuality of his patient's traumatic recollections and reenactments otherwise known as *reliving*, in favor of reconfiguring the material (from history to *pseudohistory*) to fit his emerging theory of the psychosexual origin of neurosis. As Binion writes, "I propose to show that he did so for reasons theoretical rather than empirical..."

With his proposal Binion identifies the numerous incongruities and inconsistencies in Freud's analyses. For example, Freud's patients showed only partial remission or no cure at all from the talking therapy, and they rarely directly mention infantile sexual material. Binion falls short of Jeffery Masson's highly critical work, *Assault on Truth*, (1985) whereby Masson viewed Freud as purposely covering up the sexual abuse of his patients.

Freud himself was aware of the shifts in his thinking, in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933), in relation to what he describes as "an interesting episode in the history of analytic research." "In the period in which the main interest was directed to discovering infantile sexual traumas, almost all my women patients told me that they had been seduced by their father. I was driven to recognize in the end that these reports were untrue and so came to understand that hysterical symptoms are derived from phantasies and not from "real occurrences."

Binion effectively points out this shift in Freud's theory had significant ramifications by placing on equal ground

fantasized recollections of sexual abuse with actual ones. The key element in Binion's review that Freud remained forever convinced of the early childhood location of the neurosis whether real or imagined. He views Freud as being on the right track pre-1900, "…his decipherment of symptomatic behavior as remembrance in action was precisely suited to make sense of episodic traumatic reliving."

I feel that Binion sometimes doesn't consider the speculative nature of Freud's work at this juncture, that Freud was deeply committed to exploring *psychophysics*, in other words, how the mind energetically operated, how it remembered, constructed ideas, how it perceived reality, dealt with conflicts, and dreamt at night. In other words, Freud was searching for a grand organic scheme, much akin to Darwin's notion of natural selection. As Makari wrote in *Revolution in Mind* (2008), "Sigmund Freud worked feverishly to pull together a grand theory of mental functioning…he sought to integrate physics, biology, neurology and psychology."

It is an interesting element within Binion's article that illustrates Freud's theory of infantile origins of neurosis, which Freud never fully evidenced in his case presentations, actually resulted in creating a schema that fortified the denial of the truth of his patient's traumatic recollections and the understanding of how his patients' symptoms reflected reenactments of the earlier trauma (repetition compulsion) a.k.a. *episodic traumatic reliving*. This was at the centerpiece of a well-regarded series of articles by William Niederland (1951, 1959, 1960) though which he deconstructed Freud's analysis of a patient (actually a memoir analyzed by Freud) called "Dr. Schreiber." Freud ascribed Schreiber's paranoia as a product of unconscious repressed homosexual fantasies, although Niederland effectively demonstrated that Schreiber's early childhood parenting was fraught with systematic paternal abuse which directly corresponded to his symptoms.

At the end of his article Binion reveals his intention, "The psychohistorian's task is to replace such pseudohistory by history with the same Freudian aim of uncovering its inner workings." I don't believe Freud intended to create a "psuedohistory" for his patients. The actual historical record indicates that he was a pioneer, in search of some truth that would unravel the mysteries of the mind. Opposite to what Dr. Binion suggests, Freud's case material reveals *his* truth, his struggle, and observations which led to his conclusions. Right or wrong, that is what happened, thus there is nothing "pseudo" in that. Furthermore there is no mention of Freud's extensive self analysis which also profoundly influenced his theoretical direction as much as his clinical work (Anzieu, 1986).

Despite the inconsistencies and incongruities, and even misinterpretations, and false claims of curing his patients (Wolf Man), Freud's contributions have stood the test of time, even though his writing didn't quite make the case scientifically. As a clinician I feel deeply indebted to Freud. So I am inclined to approach his work empathetically, that is, sensing what it must have been like to be at the precipice of this great knowledge while living in a culture that was as fertile as it was repressive. His comprehensive theory of pathology, treatment, and childhood development remain cornerstones in the understanding of mental processes. He may have downplayed the effects of actual trauma in the service of his theory, as Dr. Binion points out, but when he instructed his patients to "say everything," he opened the door to countless other researchers and clinicians that has led us closer to the grand scheme that Freud was searching for.

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## Intrapsychic or Interpersonal Influences on Trauma

**Burton Seitler**—Supervising Training Psychoanalyst

Trauma studies have made a strong resurgence even though Freud departed from his initial recognition of the extraordinary impact of external intrusions on the psyche instead, refocusing his attention on understanding intrapsychic workings. For this, we owe him a debt of gratitude. However, turning inward instead of outward may have come at the expense of equally appreciating the potency of interpersonal-relational influences on personality development. Some, like Masson, imputed nefarious motives to Freud, raising suspicions that "the professor's" inward turn was the result of "playing politics" with the data (patients' reports of molestation). We now know that some patients provided false memories, supporting Freud's prescient distinction between real and fantasized experiences, so roundly criticized by Masson and others as Freud's falsification of the "facts" that resulted in Masson's (self-) exile to a land "down-under."

In his erudite essay, "Reliving with Freud," Binion revisits the trauma issue in detailed historical perspective. He cites compelling cases showing that traumatized individuals episodically and repeatedly relive their traumatizing experiences, as opposed to "merely" re-enacting episodes or symbolically representing the traumatic experience. For example, amidst a psychoanalytic transference, a traumatized patient may confront an analyst by pointedly asking, "why did you just spit in my face?" Although patient and analyst

both know that the analyst did not literally spit at the patient, the patient has the felt (re-) experience of having been spat on. This is reminiscent of Freud's patient referred to by Binion, who, when feeling rebuked, experienced it as an actual "slap in the face."

While both the literal and figurative exist simultaneously, only the literal is experienced. The actual occurrence (which pre-dated the analytic encounter by a substantial amount of time) never achieved symbolic representation simply because the ego could not wrap itself around certain horrific experience(s) in view of the fact that the emotional impact was just too great and too overwhelming for it. What could overwhelm the ego? For one thing, it may be overwhelmed by the simultaneous bombardment of massive amounts of stimuli that require immediate processing, a requirement which the individual may be hard-pressed or unable to meet. For another, the accumulation of stimuli may add up to an unmanageable totality. One could also argue the reverse, in which a dearth of stimulation (as in sensory deprivation) is traumatic. The latter are readily apparent in a child who has experienced abandonment. This supports Freud's notion of the ascendancy of primacy over recency (i.e., excessive emotionally-laden material occurring too early in child development may be overwhelming for the rudimentary ego, and may represent an important pre-condition for the subsequent emergence of trauma). This is essentially Freud's claim regarding premature "sexual enlightenment" that Binion refers to as Freud's "need for a pre-pubertal sexual original of the precipitating cause in each case."

Binion argues that Freud super-imposed his theory of the sexual origin of neurosis in childhood and subsequent trauma onto the material, often inserting it into and letting it dictate the shape of his treatment procedure. It is here that Binion makes his most strident assertions that Freud created a theory as opposed to his *happening upon* objective infor-

mation based on careful observations of patients; that it was the theory which drove the treatment, instead of the other way around. Whether this is precisely what happened is not clear, although Binion poses a legitimate question and provides an interesting argument on behalf of this contention.

Similarly, the lineage of the multi-versions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM*s) owe their bent for making diagnoses and subsequently promulgating treatments for those diagnoses, in contrast with viewing the diagnostic category as an inherent abstraction not necessarily reflective of a patient's phenomenological reality, or learning who the patient is and finding ways of working with the patient as a unique individual.

Professor Binion contends that Freud's use of the phrase "repetition compulsion" is not equivalent to "episodic traumatic reliving," which Binion describes as "Contriving unknowingly to repeat an especially painful experience in disguise, and more than once as circumstances permit, is a pattern of human behavior sufficiently distinct to deserve a technical name: 'episodic traumatic living.'" His distinction is no minor quibble. Allowing for the conceptual existence of episodic traumatic reliving, space is thus rendered available for an emendation to Freud's trauma theory. Binion suggests that Freud's theory may explain aspects of traumatic neurosis, but not trauma that imposes itself on individuals at *random* ages (i.e., war, assault, starvation, torture, rape, etc.). While Freudian canon may help us understand how a possibly "neutral" stimulus may instigate a traumatic reaction by invoking the "deferred action" rationale, it is hard-pressed to provide a fully adequate explanation of recent traumatic reactions lacking an infantile origin.

Freud, lone pioneer in a vast psychological wilderness, found or blazed trails through emotional jungles, but, even trailblazers occasionally deviate from course. Binion

points to instances of failed treatment outcomes as proof that Freud is incorrect. While there is truth to Binion's observation that Freud made treatment errors, to say that the trail is entirely inaccurate because Freud went off track in his treatment procedures may equally mislead us. I suggest four alternative reasons for this: (1) Freud over-estimated his patients' level of "health," (2) Freud was an average to mediocre therapist, (3) Freud was just learning, and (4) Freud did not always practice what he preached. I for one am just not ready to throw out the baby with the bathwater, nor do I truly believe is Dr. Binion.

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## How I Lived with Freud

**Norman Simms**—Waikato University

In the mid-1950s when I would ride the subway from my home in Boro Park, Brooklyn into "The City" (Manhattan) to go to Stuyvesant High School, I would ostentatiously read books that I presumed interesting and important—as adults told me—and to show off to the other passengers (young females especially, as though they would notice). After reading Freud's short books, *Civilization and its Discontents*, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, and *Jokes and the Unconscious* in this way, I gleaned immature

notions such as that life was a meaningless and essentially bad joke and, never suspecting the contradiction, that everything one did in life had a powerful meaning, usually of a sexual nature. I decided to move up to a fatter volume, *The Analysis of Dreams*.

Not long afterwards, for my graduation present, my uncle, Dr. Joseph Estrin, gave me a boxed collection of the five-volume *The Selected Works*, translated by Ernst Jones. Meanwhile, a family friend became a psychoanalyst to the dismay of his friends; yet his words and enthusiasm were infectious. I am not sure that all this meant anything in a way any follower of Freud could recognize, but to me it was more than exciting: it was overpowering and I tried to recall my own complicated dreams and anxieties (of which there were many) to see if I could analyse them just the way it was done in these books.

As I became more educated, Freud and depth psychology continued to more than fascinate me. The ideas struck me as eminently true because they explained how events in my own experience, including what was in the newspapers, could come about in direct defiance of common sense and logic. But there were also aspects of Freud's theories that disturbed me, that I could not find any confirmation for in my own experience, and that I consequently denied and resisted. Rather than sexual drives and compulsions, when I looked back into my childhood as far as possible, there were other forces and anxieties concerning the absence of my father and other men during World War II, my elderly relatives disappearing and dying all the time, and a general lack of stability in the world as I saw it.

As I grew into my own adulthood and professional training, there was, on the one hand, an important component of analysis—a way of seeing the world and its constituent elements, including historical events, textual artifacts, and

personal feelings about myself—that was always tied to the techniques of psychoanalysis, of not taking appearances for reality, of always trying to look beyond surfaces and back into causations that were rarely if ever manifested. On the other hand, the more I read, thought, and wrote about the swirling confusion of life, the less I could bring myself to understand the Oedipus Complex as a major factor in the course of human development, nor could I really grasp the notions of castration anxiety, penis envy, or a lot of other sexual drives that struck me as, at best, features of Freud's own childhood and family-life in 19th-century Vienna. Instead, while always remaining loyal in my mind to what I still take as Freud's core insights, I began to find more explanatory power in thinkers such as Elias Canetti, Henri Ey, and Lloyd deMause, although with reservations—a grain of skepticism about psychoanalysis, especially as expounded by various professional associations. In addition, through all the subsequent 40 years of my career, I dabbled in a variety of literary theories, from Marxist criticism, systematic folklore, history of mentalities, and, over the last fifteen years, in rabbinical techniques of interpretation of texts and personalities.

Thus, from my immature first forays into the reading of Freud and his associates—e.g., Abrams, Ferenczi, Adler—in the 1950s to my undergraduate and graduate musings and misunderstanding in the 1960s, I considered myself a psychoanalytically-inclined student, but a critical one. It made sense to look at the way people acted in contradiction to their own stated or perceived best interests to search for motivations that were hidden from view, if not their own only, then from those around them. These motivations began their drive to direct behavior and thoughts in earliest childhood, with subsequent rationalizations and appearances built on further experience and education. It made sense that the delusions or hallucinations of neurotic people were written in a code of secrecy by their unconscious; in other words, that

their symptoms were signs of a much more profound and complex illness. I could also begin to see, though it took many long years of my own education and accumulation of experience in life, to discover that groups—families, small communities, whole nations—could be seen in a collective trance or fantasy embodying a more or less temporary mass-being: a crowd or mob.

No doubt in my earliest thoughts and even writings I was still missing the point of what Freud's psychoanalytical methods and theories were all about, as Rudy Binion masterfully shows, and not just because of the resistances mentioned earlier in my essay. However, over the next 50 years I did learn to correct many misconceptions and how to approach the Freudian subject with both more caution and more respect, while at the same time resisting the seductions of Jung (with his racially tinged archetypes), Lacan (with his supersubtle intellectualism), and other pretenders to mystical and politically-correct or post-modernist versions of depth psychology.

***Norman Simms, PhD**, has been teaching literature in New Zealand since 1970, with brief stints in Canada, France, and Israel. He has edited several journals, including Mentalities/Mentalités, and has written scores of scholarly articles and books. Lately he has started to publish short story collections, including, Snapshots from Eternity ( 2009) and Half-Sour Pickles (2010). Dr. Simms may be contacted at NSIMMS@waikato.ac.nz.*

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## Re-examining Freud in an Era of Freud Bashing

**Stanley Teitelbaum**—Psychoanalytic Practice

In this era of Freud-bashing and a climate in which

even new candidates in psychoanalytic institutes are disdainful about readings in Freud, it is refreshing to read Dr. Binion's paper that takes us back to the origins of the field of psychoanalysis. Binion reminds us that in painstakingly building his theory of human behavior and pathology, Freud struggled and re-struggled with many of the component parts of his theory.

Although psychoanalytic practice has shifted radically away from patients who present with debilitating physical symptoms, such as the hysterical paralyses commonly seen at the end of the 19th century, and toward an emphasis on characterological problems, we continue to embrace many of the early central concepts in Freudian theory—transference, resistance, repetition compulsion, working through, etc., to inform our way of working in psychoanalytically oriented treatment. (As a side note, it is ironic to observe how insurance companies currently are pressing for evidence-based results as a condition for therapy reimbursement, which, of course, is much easier to demonstrate via symptomatic improvement than via characterological changes).

While many of the elements and shibboleths of basic Freudian theory have been largely debunked and most of today's practitioners do not think of themselves as Freudian, they stop short of throwing out the foundations of his theory. Instead, they continue to utilize many of the basic concepts in ways that make sense to them. Martin Bergmann, in examining the spectrum of theoretical revisions in psychoanalysis, has classified these approaches into the categories of "modifiers, extenders, and heretics."

Binion's scholarly article prompts us to examine the utility of "episodic traumatic reliving," which Freud originally promoted and later moved away from. He also highlights the significance of the repetition compulsion in work-

ing through traumatic experiences. From a constructive vantage point, these actions can be seen as an attempt to gain mastery over the traumatic circumstances. This sequence is exquisitely exemplified in Alfred Hitchcock's film, "Vertigo," in which the leading character is compelled to repeat the pathway to a traumatic accident in order to master a debilitating state. Other examples of the psychic force of repetition are readily seen in patients who are attracted to new editions of objects who had mistreated them. Adhesive attachments to sadomasochistic interactions may continue to be fueled by the repetition compulsion. Martin Bergman also attained celebrity status for his role in a Woody Allen film, where as a psychoanalyst he pointed out that many people who have been traumatized or in other ways felt mistreated in an early (developmental) relationship are unconsciously driven to seek partners in their adult lives who have similar personality characteristics to the original significant other (the "object" in psychoanalytic terminology), whom they hope they can change and thereby develop a better version of the original depriving or traumatizing object.

Professor Binion is to be applauded for his erudite examination of the evolution and shifting trends in how clinicians apply basic Freudian propositions.

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*[**Editor's Note**: Most regrettably Rudolph Binion suffered chronic kidney failure shortly before these comments reached*

*him. From his surgical ward he sent us the following brief statement. We are pleased to be able to report that Rudy is now at home and doing somewhat better.]*

## Binion Responds

All these thoughtful comments have brought home to me how misleading my "Reliving with Freud" is when read in isolation. The book it serves to introduce explores the mechanism of traumatic reliving in several historic cases, a few literary classics, and movie after movie—not the traumatic stress syndrome, and not deliberate remembrances either, but spontaneous and unsuspecting re-enactments of a traumatic episode.

Freud recognized reliving to be a stunted form of remembering. (So, by the way, did genial Pierre Janet, whom I confined to endnotes, perhaps wrongly.) But on top of this important recognition, Freud then blocked further insight into the mechanism by his rule of an infantile original for all patterned behavior in later life. However he came by this rule, it is wrong.

I was at pains to dissociate traumatic reliving not only from trauma-based chronic symptoms (Freud's "*Dauersymptome*"), but also from posttraumatic stress disorder (to begin with, traumatic reliving involves no defining stress or disorder) as well as from what Freud called a "repetition compulsion" ("*Wiederholungszwang*"). But traumatic reliving itself: its focal concern, got short shrift from my commentators as compared with Freud the researcher, who does not even figure in the rest of my book. This book focuses rather, I repeat, on that fairly ubiquitous pattern of human behavior as well as the ways in which it has been depicted in literature and film without yet having been duly recognized as the distinct phenomenon it is. ❑

# Comparisons of Presidents Clinton and Obama

**Daniel Kazmaier**—Ramapo College

On January 20 of 1993 and 2009, an optimistic, well-educated, young president stepped into the Oval Office. Both William Jefferson Clinton and Barack Hussein Obama entered the White House with great expectations. In 16 months, Clinton went from high expectations to an impending defeat. During Obama's first 16 months in office, he has gone from symbolizing rebirth to steadily growing opposition and public poll numbers falling below 50%. These two Democratic presidents mirror each other in terms of childhood and certain beliefs. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the similarities and dissimilarities of these two talented and challenged young presidents.

Barack Obama had a very similar upbringing to that of President Clinton. Like Clinton, who never knew his biological father who died in a traffic accident (as would Obama's), young Barrack did not remember his biological father because he was less than a year old when his namesake left. At the age of ten he finally met his father, who had come to Hawaii for a month for medical treatment. Because of this paternal absence, each was raised by his mother, and to a lesser degree in the case of Clinton, by his grandparents. The intergenerational conflict in both families was between the mother and a grandparent. Virginia Cassidy Blythe (Blythe was Clinton's birth surname) had a loving relationship with her idealized father and an antagonistic one with her at times psychotic mother—although both adored and competed for the affection of little Billy. In contrast, Stanley Ann Dunham had a strained relationship with her father Stanley and a generally good one with her practical mother. Clinton's ambition and insecurities may be related to his di-

vided parenting (his grandmother regimented him and his mother had a more relaxed style), while Obama's mother and grandparents instilled in him a genuine sense of confidence. Obama has stated in regards to his mother, "I think if you ask a lot of children where do you get your confidence from, it's the love of your mother. She was one of the finest people I've ever known. And a lot of what I do reflects the values instilled in me" (Ken Fuchsman, "Transformations of Barack Obama," Vol. 16, 3, Clio's Psyche, p. 295). His mother's intense love and hopes for his future were also driving forces in the life of the boy from Hope, Arkansas who became our 42nd president.

Obama writes that his confidence may also be related to having to fit into Indonesian culture from ages six through ten. Barack stated, "My upbringing was unconventional. I was tested, I think, in a lot of different environments and over time, I came to be confident about my capacity to connect with other people" (Fuchsman, p. 295). His mother, who mostly raised him, took it upon herself to instill the value of hard work even from an early age. At 4:30 A.M. she would wake Barack up to go over his studies in order to ensure that her son was getting the best education possible. This is but one unique feature of young Barack's childhood that helped him to realize that his mother expected great things of her son while his loving relationship with her encouraged his success.

Both Protestant boys were once sent to Catholic parochial schools because of their high educational standards. At age ten, Barack was sent back to Hawaii after being admitted to the state's most prestigious private school. Obama's mother and grandparents held education in even higher esteem than Clinton's mother did. Barack Obama Sr., who left his American family to earn a master's degree at Harvard, was presented to his son as a model student and leader who was indefatigable and brilliant. Both future presidents were

shaped by the absence of their fathers. Bill Clinton has said on more than one occasion that he had to live with intense ambition for his father, who died at age 28.

These men set goals early in life, attempting to match their imagined fathers. The sons' education and drive would pay off in the long run. Clinton thrived at Georgetown, Oxford, and Yale Law, while Obama has stated, "The only reason Michelle and I are where we are today is because the country we love gave us a chance at an education" (Barack Obama, *The American Promise: Speeches 2007 + 2008,* 2008, p. 505). Obama began his collegiate career at Occidental College in Los Angeles but transferred as a junior to Columbia University, where he went through a period of intense introspection and self-education from which he emerged much more like his mother—dedicated to public service. Eventually he went to Harvard University for a legal degree.

Upon graduation, Clinton returned to his home state to become a law professor, while Obama decided to become a community organizer in Chicago. Obama's ideas about empowering the people and the role of government in assisting the impoverished stem from his work in Chicago, where he subsequently made his home.

Clinton's work as a professor at the University of Arkansas helped prepare him for politics, as Attorney General and then as the youngest governor in the country who was elected five times despite an early defeat that taught him to triangulate, to compromise, and to hold onto power at all costs. While Obama lacked administrative experience, he is not geared to surrendering his ideals for political expediency.

Striking similarities between Clinton and Obama can be seen in their Inaugural Addresses. Clinton outlined his speech as: fixing a weakened economy, providing universal health care, renewing America, investing more in jobs and

the future, ending the benefits of power and privilege for those in the upper tiers of society, and challenging young Americans to become better educated. Obama highlighted his address as: creating new jobs, fixing retirement for the new generation, raising health care's quality, and pulling troops out of Iraq. Both came to the presidency with very similar goals.

It is possible to examine Obama's and Clinton's leadership characteristics and skills in terms of their effectiveness. Obama's leadership is marked by his strong and exuding confidence gained from his mother, grandfather, and the ego ideal his distant father represented. He has strong ideals that he holds onto even in the face of daunting opposition. In order to see this characteristic in action, one must only take a look at the new health care bill which Obama pushed through in the face of intense opposition from the Republican Party; the same party that defeated Clinton's health reform program in 1994.

While Clinton was able to achieve many benefits for America, such as balancing the budget and starting to reduce the national deficit, it became clear early on that Clinton would not sacrifice his seat in the Oval Office to achieve his goals. For reasons of his own personality, Clinton was often drawn to those who opposed him, trying to befriend them and often disappointing his friends in the process. His need to please everyone may stem from his early childhood experiences of the competition for his affection between his mother and his grandmother. He certainly backed down on many issues, such as allowing homosexuals to openly serve in the military, where his "don't ask, don't tell" compromise policy frustrated proponents and opponents of gay rights alike.

The ultimate difference between Obama and Clinton can be seen in health care. President Clinton created the national task force on health care in 1993 with First Lady

Hillary Rodham Clinton as chair. The plan was fought for a year and a half before it died in 1994, while Obama recently achieved health care reform. Clinton's readiness to compromise left many people doubting whether or not he really held most of the values he proclaimed.

Both Clinton and Obama share similar beliefs and backgrounds that shaped their characteristics, their ideals, and eventually their presidencies. While Clinton was working as a professor and lawyer, Obama was working as a community organizer in a run-down, poverty-stricken neighborhood. This sense of the plight of the ordinary and poor might be the real difference that will help Obama succeed where Clinton failed. In achieving nearly universal health care he has already done something that has eluded presidents since FDR.

After probing the lives and early presidencies of Clinton and Obama, it became clear that Obama is the man with stronger values. Right now in America, we need a president with the fortitude and perseverance of Obama to turn things around. Because of the values he possesses, notable self-confidence, skill in getting his congressional allies to fight for his program, and the impressive governing team he has assembled, I predict he will have a more successful first term than his predecessor from Arkansas did.

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UPCOMING SPECIAL ISSUE:

*The Psychology of*
*Love, Fear, and Anthropomorphism*
*of Animals*

# Book Review

## Trauma in the Third Estate, 1789

**David R. Beisel**—SUNY-RCC

*Review of Barry M. Shapiro, Traumatic Politics: The Deputies and the King in the Early French Revolution (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), ISBN 978-0-271-03542-0, Hardcover, $65.*

Barry Shapiro knows his way around the French Revolution. He's also eager to understand it from the inside out. In this book, he makes a solid beginning at uncovering some of the Revolution's more important psychodynamics. It's a pleasure to see a master historian at work.

Shapiro begins at the beginning: the convening of the Estates General in the spring of 1789. Called by Louis XVI as a last-gasp measure in his almost decade-long, failing efforts to reform France's ailing finances, the Estates General soon moved from the king's control to take a direction of its own.

According to France's unwritten constitution, the privileged First and Second Estates (clergy and nobles) paid no taxes and hadn't for centuries. They wanted to keep it that way. In one of the more important and dramatic acts in history, the deputies of the Third Estate took the unprecedented and illegal step in mid-June 1789 of challenging the king and the centuries-old unwritten French constitution by transforming themselves into the National Assembly, claiming they alone represented all of France, not just commoners, and invited delegates in the First and Second estates to join them. Some did.

Louis' response was to decide to crush the Third Es-

tate. He began to call up troops. The deputies of the Third Estate (now National Assembly) began to fear they might be arrested or killed, or possibly both. It was the first time the overwhelming majority of them had undergone anything like it, or acted in any way deemed remotely illegal. The idealized image of the king as a "good father," which they'd carried within themselves from their districts to Versailles, held only until it was finally shattered by each delegate's unexpectedly having to face a sudden, terrifying, and continuing life-and-death situation.

Shapiro's study focuses on the psychological consequences of this June-July 1789 crisis. Using the findings of trauma studies, he argues that at this moment a core trauma was experienced and formed in the Third Estate's delegates, one that proved of considerable importance for the future. The delegates, as he shows, relived the trauma in various ways in the short and long run, including the traumatic reenactments apparent in the political decisions they made in 1790 and 1791.

Because trauma doesn't exist in a vacuum, Shapiro provides rock-solid historical contexts. His scholarship, based on an impressive list of published primary and secondary materials, is impeccable. It includes an especially notable list of archival sources, mainly letters written by the Third Estate's delegates. From these, as well as the delegates' other writings, Shapiro draws a convincing body of evidence showing the emotional roller coaster they were on as events unfolded in June-July 1789. He finds the delegates fluctuating "between idealized and demonized visions of the monarchy," following over the course of time an "oscillating rhythm of psychic avoidance and hypervigilant repetition" (14, 15), each suggestive of a traumatic aftermath.

Woven through Shapiro's narrative are several historiographical references, each orienting the reader to relevant

earlier and current interpretations of specific events, including a few controversies, but placed so judiciously and explained with such brevity they help clarify matters instead of interrupting the narrative flow. Abundant footnotes are conveniently placed at the bottom of the page, where they belong. Some include helpful lengthy explanatory notes that significantly enhance the narrative.

That's on the historical side. On the psychological side, Shapiro's explication of the findings of some pioneering trauma historians—psychiatrist Vamik Volkan and historian Rudolph Binion among them and other pioneering trauma scholars like psychiatrists, Bessel van der Kolk and Judith Herman, adequately explains why he argues as he does, though his study occasionally goes beyond trauma itself to touch on other areas of psychological analysis, including some of the findings and approaches of psychoanalysis.

One of the things "psychoanalytic theory can offer historians," Shapiro reports, is "the ever present reality of emotional ambivalence." This means that in 1789 France and later, "an intensification of affection and tenderness toward the king would be accompanied by a parallel intensification of residual feelings of antagonism and hostility" (34), a finding confirmed by historian Lynn Hunt's earlier *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (1992).

As for trauma, I particularly like the way Shapiro plays with evidence on the theme of the dialectical paradoxes scholars have found embedded in traumatic memories and reenactments. In my own work, I've found it is a crucial but tricky business and conceptually difficult to explain. Here is one example where, I think, Shapiro at least partially successfully communicates the traumatic paradox and its outcome. The "dialectical relationship between denial and repetition [is] important," he writes, since "compulsive efforts to deny or forget…can never…be entirely successful given the

relentless intrusion of traumatic memories into conscious awareness." Indeed, "in the paradoxical spirit of psychoanalytic logic…the harder that one tries to repress such memories, the more insistent and relentless they become."

This played out in the decision of the traumatized deputies of the Third Estate/National Assembly to grant the king a measure of power in the Constitution of 1791 by giving him the right to suspend legislation for one year. The "idealization and denial behind the granting of the suspensive veto "'called forth' its opposite," writes Shapiro, "the hypervigilance behind the exclusion of the deputies from the ministry." This, in turn, ensured that any reconciliation with the king, the cooperation that the delegates consciously hoped would emerge was subverted and "would never be realized" (162). Unless I'm missing something, I have one major question regarding an issue I find absent in Shapiro's splendid study, though it's implicitly hidden in places here and there. Trauma is not the only thing that needs studying in psychological history; I wonder where all the guilt has gone.

It's inconceivable that the Third Estate's delegates, not to mention the millions of city dwellers and peasants primed to explode in their own insurrections in July, 1789, could move through these dramatic, forbidden, and extraordinary changes without feeling some guilt about what they were doing, or merely felt like doing. The paranoia emergent in the Great Fear that lay over the near horizon, or that expressed itself in abundance in the later Jacobin Terror, were doubtless tinged with, if not driven by, projections having something to do with the need to punish their own guilt—a guilt that can, as we know, sometimes be generated by merely *thinking* about rebellion without actually joining one.

Shapiro wonders if his study might have "wider implications" and that "the model of traumatic reaction…might

be useful in helping explain the aftermath of innumerable other political situations in which threat or intimidation played a comparable role" (183). As a historian of historical trauma, I hope so. It may even come to pass that questions of guilt may themselves be better understood through studies of historical trauma such as Shapiro's *Traumatic Politics*.

This relatively short monograph—187 pages of text and footnotes—is a rich interwoven interdisciplinary tapestry that makes an outstanding contribution to both history and psychological history. The Penn State University Press should be commended for publishing it.

***David R. Beisel, PhD,*** *is a European historian who has published on a wide range of topics in American and European history. The second edition of his book, The Suicidal Embrace: Hitler, the Allies, and the Origins of the Second World War, was published by Circumstantial Productions in February. He can be reached at dbeisel@sunyrockland.edu.* ❑

# Identity and Other Issues in the Proposed *DSM-V*

**Sarah Kamens**—Fordham University

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM*), often known as "psychiatry's bible," is currently undergoing revisions for its fifth edition, with a publication date of 2013. The present essay was composed in April, 2010, two months after the posting of the "Draft Options" (tentative revisions to the manual), and approximately three months before the start of field trials for investigating the proposed changes. The revision process for the fifth edition of the DSM has arguably been fraught with more controversy than its immediate predecessors, with interested parties

asking weighty questions about the professional and practical implications of the future manual.

In contemplating what one might write about the relationship between psychiatric diagnosis and identity in today's pre-*DSM-V* world, I found myself repeatedly falling into a certain uncertainty. Though the institution of psychiatric diagnosis can already boast a long history and steady evolution, the present time is one characterized by transition or, as some might have it, upheaval. The *DSM-V* task force has raised questions not only about extant disorder categories, but also about the very nature of mental illness and the border between normal and abnormal. The draft options for the future manual (currently available online at dsm5.org) reify these philosophical questions in bold proposals for new disorder categories, unprecedented expansions of existing disorders, and redefining the notion of "mental disorder" itself. With such questions looming, any suppositions that we might presently have concerning the relationship between psychiatric diagnosis and personal identity may soon become a matter of history.

Within psychology and psychiatry, past discussions of the relationships between diagnosis and identity have come in two primary forms. Most common is discourse concerning the ways in which identity can be disrupted by psychopathology. Such discussions are found within mainstream clinical and empirical literatures concerning disorders such as schizophrenia, dissociative identity disorder, borderline personality disorder, and depersonalization, all of which incorporate some form of identity disturbance into the very definition of the disorder. The second form of discussion concerning identity and diagnosis is less commonplace within clinical-academic circles. Examples of this discourse, which concerns the ways in which psychiatric diagnoses can themselves act as identity-disturbing agents, are labeling theory and the anti-psychiatry movement. Labeling theory

(which originated in sociology) holds that societal beliefs about the mentally ill are internalized through diagnosis, creating negative self-evaluations. The anti-psychiatry movement sees diagnosis as one of many practices that serve to render subjugated those whom, for their unconventional practices or beliefs, find themselves within the psychiatric system. Both labeling theory and the anti-psychiatry movement focus on the ways in which diagnosed individuals find themselves in scripted roles, which do not necessarily reflect the individuals' suffering as much as they do society and its institutions.

The common thread through most discourses about identity and psychiatric diagnosis is that of marginalization. This is, indeed, a quantitative concern. Identity disturbances, such as those found in the psychoses and dissociative disorders, are non-normative, meaning they are found in only small subsections of the population. Likewise, those individuals whose identities have been effected by psychiatric labels or institutions are often those who have in some way been alienated from larger society. In this way, discourse concerning identity and psychiatry to date has largely reflected the ideas of Michel Foucault, who, in his *Madness and Civilization* (1965), outlined the ways in which society came to place madness in its excluded space. For Foucault, exiling and confining madness were acts by which society declared itself to be reasoned and enlightened.

The events leading up to the *DSM-V*, including the current *DSM-V* draft options, suggest that something might be changing in this centralized versus marginalized dialectic that characterizes the relationship between society and the mentally ill. Arguably, this change began in the early 1980s, when research studies revealed high comorbidity between disorders when DSM exclusion criteria were removed, as well as high rates for most mental disorders in general. Further epidemiological studies of the American population

yielded mixed results, and a debate persisted concerning whether the number of people meeting the criteria for a DSM mental disorder was much greater than previously thought. If a large enough proportion of the American population meets criteria for a DSM disorder, it was feared, psychiatrists may be less like border police in society's hinterlands and more akin to security guards in an open prison.

It follows that post-*DSM-V* discussions about diagnosis and identity may be less concerned with diagnosed individuals than with what the practice of diagnosis means for the identity of psychiatry. Indeed, concerns about the future of psychiatry have recently come to the fore in a series of controversial editorials and commentaries published in online journals, such as the *Psychiatric Times* and *Psychiatric News*. In *DSM-V* parlance, the key phrase that signals epistemological uncertainty is "base rates," discussion of which is often undercut with the concern that certain DSM disorder categories may not represent disease entities at all. Due to unknown base rates of newly proposed and revised *DSM-V* disorders, apprehension is increasing over the possible pathologization of everyday behavioral variants. Some examples of phenomena that may qualify for a new DSM diagnosis in the future: behavioral addictions (gambling, sex, the Internet), grief over loss of a loved one (if the bereavement exclusion is removed from major depressive disorder), and gender-nonconformity that causes no distress or impairment.

Particularly notable is the newly proposed psychosis risk syndrome, which (if it makes it in the manual) is intended to diagnose individuals, presumably adolescents, with milder symptoms that signal the risk of converting to full psychosis. Though various estimates have been proposed, the base rates of individuals who present with these milder symptoms in the general population, as well as the percentages of those who will convert to full psychosis, remain unknown. To approach psychosis risk syndrome from the per-

spective of labeling theory would be to state that the diagnosing and medicating of adolescents, during a time of identity formation, is premature and may result in an epidemic of false positives and unnecessary stigmatization. (Allen Frances, chair of the *DSM-IV* task force, has articulated this position in several recent commentaries that are available online.) Yet psychiatrists are presently concerned not only with the future risks to those diagnosed, but also with the threat that unknown base rates and false positives pose to the self-proclaimed scientific enterprise of psychiatry.

Until recently, it was philosophers, anthropologists, and artists who were charged with exploring the relationship between psychiatry and society. The zeitgeist of the upcoming *DSM-V*, however, sees this as a malleable and indeterminate matter that psychiatrists themselves might contemplate and revise. Should epidemiological studies of the new and revised disorder categories reveal large increases in base rates within the general population, it may be necessary to rethink our understanding of mental disorders as phenomena of the margins. And if this is the case, psychiatric diagnoses may, in the future, say more about the institutions that confer them than about the identity politics of those who are diagnosed.

***Sarah R. Kamens, MA,*** *is a doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at Fordham University who holds her masters degree in Media & Communications from the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland. For the past several years, she lived in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel, where she conducted psychosocial research and worked in film. She can be reached at srkamens @gmail.com.* ❑

UPCOMING SPECIAL ISSUE:

*Acceptance of Psychoanalysis as a Type of Conversion Experience*

# Letters to The Editor

## The Lonely World of the Gifted Artist

Dear Editor,

On March 27, 2010 I attended a Psychohistory Forum seminar in New York City conducted by Nellie Thompson on Phyllis Greenacre's essay on the childhood of the artist—a part of the Forum's series on Classic Works in Applied Psychoanalysis. A number of psychoanalysts were there to discuss the nature and development of creative genius. The ensuing three-hour discussion was profound and mesmerizing. Following is what I took from the weekend seminar:

There can be no doubt that there are special genetic endowments in the gifted artist that accounts for some of their success. They have special, superior, God-given abilities to see better, hear clearer, move faster and feel deeper then the masses. For example, Francis Bacon was a descendent of the famous essayist Sir Francis Bacon; Claes Oldenburg was eldest son of a successful Swedish diplomat; Beatrice Potter was daughter to an extremely well-to-do British family.

For me, the key insight of the day was when Thompson mentioned that Greenacre had no use of language until age six. This kind of experience must have led to great loneliness, and it occurred to me that this same childhood loneliness was seen in many well known artists. Jasper Johns, Jackson Pollack, Andy Warhol, Paul Talyor, and others experienced a degree of childhood isolation, deprivation, and loneliness, which may have facilitated the development of a deep fantasy life and an unusual imagination. Paul Taylor was moved from home to home and created imaginary playmates. Beatrice Potter was essentially alone with a nanny for the first six years of her life and eventually wrote a daily diary in an invented language only she could read. Jackson Pollack's family moved about every two years, and as a result he never developed friendships as a child. Jasper Johns' story is the same. This sense of loneliness is common among the creative artists discussed and it forces upon them not only depression, but the development of a vivid imagination that characterizes their adult work.

Often, great artists have a combination of ambitious, supportive mothers and fathers who were absent or failures in some form.

This is part of Goetzels' work.

The use of encoded messages used by so many great artists (for example, Duchamp, Johns, Rauschenberg, and Koons) can be understood as an aspect of privacy, withholding, reminiscence, and defense, which serves to guard them from the public and from their own lost past. The use of encoded messages has not been adequately researched to date. A characteristic of this encoding is that it relates to early childhood experiences. Jeff Koons' famous inflatable rabbits are perfect examples of an early childhood fixation, but this can be seen in Oldenburg, Basquiat, Warhol, Potter, and many others as well.

The unusual confidence of great artists can be understood as an acquisition of an artistic identities to the exclusion of other identity, which allows them to focus and persevere no matter what the rejections. Their confidence need not be seen as pathological narcissism per se, and this may be Greenacre's greatest quality; she rarely pathologized the artist.

I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to Nellie Thompson for preparing such an outstanding and inspiring presentation. I am sure that Phyllis Greenacre would have approved.

Sincerely,

Tom Ferraro

***Tom** Ferraro's biography is on page 58.*

<><><>CP<><><>

## Creativity

Dear Editor,

The word creativity has many descriptions. By and large in the discussion by Dr. Thompson it deals with a special quality that some few people have. It is certainly true that some brilliant people, including some geniuses, have produced some brilliant pieces of scientific and artistic production. Where this creativity originates in those individuals has been a long-standing and interesting question. In looking at the history of individual unique creative expression we find a usual common denominator. This common denominator is the origin of that unique special creativity with their intellectual insight or artistic is demonstrated before adulthood. Detailed studies where available of these individuals' lives indicate that the beginnings were

very early in their lives; but, began to be more apparent to the adult environment in their adolescence.

Another interesting observation is that certain societies and cultures have produced more of this creative output than other societies. It is also interesting that a society that was producing such creative output for an extended period began to rapidly almost completely stop from this wonderful production. In examining those societies we find there was a great deal of stimulation of education, particularly the doubting of previous "established concepts." The societies were much more open than their predecessors. When those societies stopped producing such creativity they also were less open and benign.

What is the beginning of creativity? It usually has the quality of looking at something that is familiar to everyone; but, seeing it somewhat differently. It is as if it is being seen for the first time without any preconceived notions of what it is. Looking at something afresh where they see something that others have not recognized. A common example is Isaac Newton "discovering" gravity. Another example is Darwin having his first concepts of evolution when walking across the hills of his homeland as a young teenager with an open minded professor.

With minor extrapolation and remembering the qualities of early childhood we can begin to see the likely origin of creativity. A small child's exploration with its fingers and hands etc., long before speech, is seeing the world afresh. This becomes more clearly evident when the child begins to talk and asks "why?" The natural attempt to understand the world is a normal exploration of a young mind. It's struggling to understand why; constantly asking "why, what, how?" and more. It is normal for these small children (long before school-age) to repeatedly ask questions of its caretakers (parents, etc.) The freer such questioning and communications the greater opportunity to learn something new. The more open and encouraging the responses the more the mind and brain is encouraged to understand without preconceived notions. The more restrictive and limiting the responses, the more stunted will be this natural creativity. Questioning and doubting by a young mind is the beginning of creativity.

Those societies that are more rigid in their societal and intellectual structure produce the fewer creative products. This is true historically and today. Those societies today that per capita produce the most intellectual and creative products are those that are least doctri-

naire, least rigid, least punitive to the children and their mothers, most democratic, and least religiously rigid and controlling.

The understanding of these factors from a psychohistorical standpoint can be very valuable in understanding such human psychological concepts as creativity.

Sincerely yours,

Sander Breiner

***Sander Breiner, MD**, is a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst in Michigan who may be reached at sjbreiner@comcast.net.*

<><><>CP<><><>

## Reflections of a Conscientious Objector

Dear Editor,

The March 2010 Clio's Psyche is another wonderful array of incisive thought, but when I read my own item in the letters section, I noticed that the words "This disgusted me" at the bottom of page 447 did not reflect my feelings during the incident I was describing. Actually, at the time of that incident, I already knew that U.S. troops had sometimes used torture while interrogating Filipino prisoners during the Philippine War of 1898-1902. So I appreciated the candor of the old gentleman on my draft board when he tacitly acknowledged witnessing or participating in such torture—especially since our exchange was at a formal draft-board hearing.

I guess my viewpoint probably differed from that of most 21 year old conscientious objectors; I didn't think of myself as "in a pickle." Mentally, I was not worried about jeopardizing my future career since I didn't want to have any future career, which I viewed as a life of regimentation. Emotionally, I wasn't insecure about "coming of age" since I'd spent the previous six summers out West on my own. I wasn't worried about what might happen to me in prison since I had just been on a long peace walk with people who'd been in prison and seemed unfazed. Thus, in my own case, the military draft was not an intrusion into some different trajectory that I desired for my life. Instead, it was a challenge to try to help find a nonviolent way to deal with conflicts.

But despite success after success for nonviolent "people power" since the 1960s, mainstream Western political science has

remained indifferent. Indifference is almost equally pervasive in mainstream Western psychology. Erik Erikson did choose Gandhi as the subject of his second psychobiography, prompting considerable anticipation in the peace movement, but what followed was of considerable disappointment—at least about the book's long mid-section "letter" to Gandhi that was prominently pre-published despite the title *Gandhi's Truth,* Erik Erikson didn't seem aware what Gandhi's truth was.

If the editor grants me leave for another page, I'll make my own stab at that. First, from his youth onward, Gandhi suffered a lot for various reasons. Self-chosen suffering became, plausibly, a way he could escape his *non*-chosen suffering. By devising several real-life experiments, he discovered that self-chosen (voluntary) suffering could affect more people than merely the person who was suffering. However, he also encountered a big hitch—that only if voluntary sufferers kept their thoughts on truth (or God) while any attacker beat up or denigrated them did the attacker's attitude seem to change. So he repeatedly urged nonviolent actionists to keep their thoughts on Truth or God if they were attacked.

When we try to find a place for Gandhi's "experiments with truth" in Western political theory, we face an obstacle—namely our culture's separation of "objective" from "subjective." Only what is "objective" is considered trans-personal and thus potentially political, but Gandhi's "experiments with truth" were subjective. He found that subjectively "holding actively to truth" (*satyagraha)* could put other people subjectively under conviction of their conscience and he learned that when people (others as well as himself) acceded to their conscience, they often felt blessed and became very loathe to switch back to their previous attitude.

All this brings to mind a phenomenon well-known in India called *darshan,* the blessing that people share in the presence of a guru. Gandhi insisted he dispersed no *darshan*, but his theory of *satyagraha* implies that anyone anywhere can temporarily fill the role of a guru by keeping their thoughts on Truth or God. What makes someone a guru is being egoless and *anyone* can temporarily be egoless while they're contemplating God, the Absolute, Love, Truth, Beauty, or anything beyond human manipulation.

What most Indians want from a guru is just a blessing. Indians seek out gurus and in effect tell them, "just sit here and do what you do while we sit over there and look at you." They thereby experi-

ence their separation replaced by unity—as though their separate attention has passed right through the guru and returned to the group unified. They experience oneness.

Similarly, anger that attackers direct toward a nonviolent actionist might simply pass right through an actionist who is thinking about Truth or God, and return back to the attacker as a blessing charged by his own energy. As Richard Gregg said in his book *The Power of Nonviolence* (1935), *satyagraha* is like love because they both make use of "the threat of an opposing force or person [by] utilizing its energy in a higher synthesis."

Erik Erikson's *Gandhi's Truth* sometimes portrayed Gandhi as a suitable candidate for psychotherapy. Erikson did not seem to notice that Gandhian *satyagraha* is not just an innovative social psychotherapy but that it obviates, at least temporarily, any need for personal psychotherapy. Indeed, *satyagraha* is a form of personal psychotherapy.

Sincerely yours,

Paul Salstrom

***Paul Salstrom**'s biography is on page 130.* ❑

## BULLETIN BOARD

**CONFERENCES:** Electronic announcements for the fall **Psychohistory Forum Work-In-Progress Saturday Seminars** will be sent in the late summer. Forum members presenting at the 33rd Annual International Psychohistorical Association (**IPA**) meetings at Fordham Law School in Manhattan on June 9-11 include **Herbert Barry III**, **David Beisel** (giving the Keynote Address), **Paul Elovitz**, **Ken Fuchsman**, **Henry Lawton**, **Allan Mohl**, and **Denis O'Keefe**. A number of colleagues are also presenting at the July 7-10 International Society of Political Psychology (**ISPP**) in San Francisco. The Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society (**APCS**) Rutgers conference, "Psychoanalysis and Social Justice," will be on **October 22-23, 2010** with a **July 1** deadline for presentation proposals. The International Forum for Psychoanalytic Education

(**IFPE**) will hold its conference on "Psychoanalysis: Not the Same Old Song and Dance?" on **October 29-31, 2010** in Nashville. The National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis' (**NAAP**) **November 6, 2010** conference, "Do You Know Me? The Value of Conflicting Theories in Psychoanalysis," is at New York City's Downtown Marriott. On May 30 in Florence, Italy at the Society for the Exploration of Psychotherapy **Marvin Leibowitz** will be presenting a paper on the use of projective drawings to determine changes in patients. Paul Elovitz was an invited presenter at Division 39 on Psychoanalysis of the American Psychological Association's meeting in Chicago on April 22. **PUBLICATIONS:** Congratulations to **Nancy Hartwelt Kobrin** for *The Banality of Suicidal Terrorism* (Potomac Books, 2010), **Charles B. Strozier**, et al., eds., for *The Fundamentalist Mindset: Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History* (Oxford, 2010), and **Rudolph Binion** for *Flights of Fantasy* (Aracne Editrice, 2009) which has already printed a second edition. **NEWS ITEMS:** At the ISPP in July **Peter Loewenberg** of the Forum's Board of Editors will be granted the juried 2010 Nevitt Sanford Award for Professional Contributions to Political Psychology. At the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, **Andrew Whitelaw Brink** of Clio's Psyche's Board of Editors, has established the Brink/Whitelaw Archival Collection with about 200 years of family documentation in all lines of his Dutch, English, and Scottish ancestors in Ontario. **Sophia Richman** is writing *Out of Darkness: Transforming Trauma into Creative Expression* under contract with a major publisher. We are saddened by the death on April 14 at age 87 of **Alice Miller**. **HOSTING AND MODERATING:** Our appreciation to **Flora Hogman** for hosting the April 10th meeting and **Eva Fogelman** for facilitating our March 27th meeting at the Training Institute for Mental Health and to **Jacques Szaluta** who moderated both meetings. **ERRATA:** We regret that in Merle Molofsky's March 2010 article, "My

Mother as My Ego Ideal" her affiliation was not identified as NPAP and that there were several other errors caused by a breakdown in our editorial system. **OUR THANKS:** To our members and subscribers for the support that makes Clio's Psyche possible. To Benefactors Herbert Barry, David Beisel, and David Lotto; Patrons Charles Fred Alford and Peter Loewenberg; Sustaining Members Andrew Brink, Ken Fuchsman, Peter Petschauer, and Jacques Szaluta; Supporting Members Robert (Bob) Anderson, Rudolph Binion, Susan Gregory, Eva Fogelman, Bob Lentz, Jacqueline Paulson, Mena and Dominic Potts, Hanna Turken, and Nancy Unger; and Member Irene Javors. Our special thanks for thought-provoking materials to James Anderson, Robert Anderson, Herbert Barry, David Beisel, Rudolph Binion, Sander Breiner, Andrew Brink, Michael Britton, Paul Elovitz, Tom Ferraro, Benjamin Figueroa, Ken Fuchsman, James Glass, Judith Harris, Juhani Ihanus, Wallace Katz, Sarah Kamens, Daniel Kazmaier, Joseph Kramp, David Lotto, Joel Markowitz, Elizabeth Wirth Marwick, Peter Petschauer, Eli Sagan, Paul Salstrom, Jack Schwartz, Burton Seitler, Norman Simms, and Stanley Teitelbaum. To Caitlin Adams for editing, proofing, and Publisher 2003 software application and Brian Todd for editing and proofing. Our special thanks to our editors and to our numerous, overworked referees, who must remain anonymous. ❑

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