

Psychohistory News

Newsletter of the International Psychohistorical Association

Volume 35, Number 3 – Summer 2016

WOUNDED CENTURIES

By Ken Fuchsman

Wounded Centuries is a 2015 anthology of poems edited by David Beisel and published by the Grolier Poetry Press and Circumstantial Productions. This volume first began as panels of poetry presented to the 2013 and 2014 Conventions of the International Psychohistorical Association (IPA).

These panels were the brainchild of Howard Stein, the Renaissance man of the psychohistory community. Dr. Stein has been

writing poems himself since about 1990. He initially discussed the idea of a poetry panel with *Clio's Psyche* editor Paul Elovitz and

IPA President Denis O'Keefe several years before the 2013 meeting, and then recruited work from poets and psychohistorians Peter Petschauer, Irene Javors, Dan Dervin, and Merle Molofsky. Howard also had Molly Castelloe show an early version of her film on Vamik Volkan.

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Pablo Picasso's Guernica

ON RACE IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Keisha V. Thompson

On June 3, I presented at the 2016 Annual Conference of the International Psychohistorical Association. It was my first time attending this meeting, and although I was not entirely familiar with the organization, I felt certain that my work belonged there. I embarked on this work as a

doctoral student trying to make sense of the current models of racial identity and their application to Caribbean individuals of African descent. It was my observation that the multicultural literature oftentimes presented Black or African American

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data in a homogenous perspective. Although individuals may phenotypically present as being Black, they have diverse lived and historical differences within groups which ultimately impact their identities.

The notion of a monolithic Black identity for Caribbean individuals of African descent seemed to be based on the idea that most Caribbean societies are majority African. Therefore, the observation is often made that “race does not matter where we come from.” While this is at times technically true, it is not so in general. To explore this complexity, I conducted some grant-funded research on the Black Power Movement in Trinidad and Tobago. In January of 2016, I traveled to Trinidad and Tobago to conduct interviews and extract information from various archival sources on the 1970 Black Power Revolution.

The work on which I embarked is highly personal. I remember at the beginning of my graduate career attending a conference for Black graduate students in psychology and hearing this quote by Chinua Achebe: “There is that great proverb — that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” The speaker implored us as young researchers to tell our stories. Oftentimes, the stories of people of color are told by individuals from the majority culture. The perspective comes from a lens of white privilege. I took this charge seriously, and believe that as a Trinbagonian of African descent, it is up to me to tell the story of my fellow lions. And so I began by investigating something that was relatively new to my consciousness, and completely absent from other Trinbagonians.

The paper I presented at IPA is a work in progress and is titled “Revolution & Identity: Letters to the Editor, Trinidad, 1970.” The paper is based on letters written to the editors of two major news-papers of the time, the *Trinidad Guardian*, and the *Trinidad Express*. In this paper, I analyzed letters focused on the issue of race. In researching the revolution and the climate of the country, I found that there were many unhappy constituents at the time. People were not only dissatisfied with the issues of race and color, but also issues of trade, labor, an abundance of foreign interests in the country, the overwhelming youth unemployment rate, and the list goes on. The letters varied from unequivocal support for the movement to outrage that “trouble makers” would raise such a nasty issue in the “paradise” that was the country before the revolution.



Makandal Daaga, a leader of Trinidad and Tobago's 1970 Black Power Revolution, died on 8 August 2016

In preparing for my presentation, I was overwhelmed by the rich data which emerged from my analysis. But I felt it most important to educate attendees on the conditions under which the revolution emerged, and ultimately the letters were written. The revolution took place only eight years after independence from Great Britain. As children and all the way into

adulthood, Trinbagonians sing the last line of the national anthem with reverence, and ultimately claim to stand on the foundation that; “Here every creed and race find an equal place and may God bless our nation” (repeat). It then becomes difficult to own that the country was once in an uproar because there was in fact no equality, and people also questioned the very manner in which God and all that is Holy was being presented to them. One of the first sites of civil disobedience was in the Roman Catholic Cathedral

located in the country’s capital of Port-of-Spain. Although the leader of the country was of African descent, many felt as though he was being controlled by the foreign interests of Canada, Great Britain and the United States that seemingly ran the country. People were essentially discriminated against not only because of race, but based on shades of skin color. Some individuals of African descent more easily found employment due to having a lighter hue. And so it is that I embarked on this work and have gathered data to answer several

questions. Most importantly, what happened, why is it not talked about or taught in the history curriculum, and where are we now? Simple questions, with multilayered answers, which I believe will lead me to even more questions for future research.

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The 2013 panel was popular and was repeated in the 2014 IPA Conference, though not in 2015. What led from conference panels to a book was a fortuitous meeting. Dr. Beisel, as Professor of History at SUNY-Rockland, had invited historian Dr. Petschauer to give a women’s history month lecture at David’s school in March, 2015. The two regretted that there would not be an IPA poetry panel at the upcoming conference. As Peter recalls, they were having “a pleasant exchange on a sunny day between two long-standing friends. At some point either he or I thought that it might be a good idea to publish some of the poems that had been presented at recent IPA meetings.” They were both enthused by the idea. David said he would contact his publisher, Richard Connolly of Circumstantial Productions. Connolly, after hearing of the project, said to go ahead.

David says he then solicited poems from the six poets he knows, five of whom had poems presented at the IPA meetings. The sixth, John Allman, is a former colleague of Beisel at SUNY-Rockland. Allman in 1985 had published *Clio’s Children*, poems with historical themes, and had received the Pushcart Prize in Poetry, and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. Each of the poets submitted works for David to review. Over the July 4th weekend, he read the poems to his wife, Sheila. She was highly impressed by the quality of the work. Dr. Beisel then went through the process of selecting the best poems, and says, “I put it together in three weeks, selected the cover, and published it in two weeks.” He also included poems by one of the most prominent psychohistorians, Rudolph Binion, who died in 2011. What makes this poetry volume distinctive, according to Beisel, is that they are all “about history experienced through a psychological lens. They are self-consciously, and systematically, psychological.” He adds that “poetry is a different way of expressing the

psychohistorical insights we have been developing for forty-five years.”

The other poets in this volume also think this form of literature contributes to the psychohistorical enterprise. Howard Stein writes, “Poetry helps make sense of historical experience and ‘objective’ fact. Poetry helps the ‘subjective’” to be included into, and give meaning to the objective....*Imagination* can thus be a key to a closer understanding of cultural and historical *reality*. So, instead of imagination being a *foe* of reality, it can be a *key* to it.”

Dan Dervin, of Mary Washington University, says that unlike “scholarly prose where sources are cited and documented, poetry draws freely on a collective memory of shared phenomena.” In “playing off current events, poems cohere out of their own indigenous traditions by interacting with one’s private imagination.” For instance, when “Yeats

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in ‘The Second Coming’ (1919)...envisions a ‘rough beast...slouching to Bethlehem to be born,’ we may associate to the Bolshevik Revolution or look ahead to the rise of Nazism. But the poet is working out of his peculiar system of 2,000 year historical cycles, punctuated by collapse, upheaval, and new birth presaging the next epoch after ‘twenty centuries of stony sleep.’”

Psychotherapist, poet, professor, and psychohistorian Irene Javors, thinks that “poetry, as well as delving into other creative arts as primary sources, enables the psychohistorian to gain a greater understanding of the interplay of culture and psyche. We all take in our cultures and subcultures, mainstream and alternative, and in so doing, our analysis is effected and affected by such exposure and using counter-transferential techniques on ourselves as psychohistorians of these influences will only enhance our work.”

Merle Molofsky is a psychoanalyst, poet, playwright, novelist, and has been editor of *Other/Wise*, a psychoanalytic and creative arts journal. She writes, “All poetry is both sociocultural and personal, is both revelatory of history and the present, and thus, a harbinger of the future. Poetry engages people in what other people experience and think and feel. And, if we understand that all people are embedded in their world, in their culture, in their era, and thus, in their history, we learn about history by recognizing the

intensity of people living their history.”

Peter Petschauer is the former Chair of the History Department at Appalachian State University. His interest in psychohistory began with the history of childhood, then evolved into family history, and then the complexity of nation states. For him poetry was one of the best ways to explain to himself and others his family history during World War II in Germany. Writing the poems then helped him understand “events that I could not otherwise have approached with such intensity and scrutiny. And this is where poetry and psychohistory overlap for me and become one.”

Peter was born in Germany, and found out as an adult that during World War II his journalist father had served uneasily in the S.S. It was painful to discover that his humane father had been part of such a brutal organization. He wrote about his father’s career and psychological struggles in 1984 in the journal *Biography*.

One of Peter’s poems in *Wounded Centuries* is about a Hungarian Jew with his own family’s last name and who had the same occupation as his father, a journalist. He found out about this man searching on the internet. This Hungarian, Attila Petschauer, who was also a fencer in the 1928 and 1932 Olympics, was “tortured to death by his former comrades in a concentration camp.” For Peter, the only way to deal with his anguish was through poetry:

“Attila, how dare you disturb
My peace with your heritage?
A heritage that questions my own?”

Merle Molofsky’s poems in the book also have a strong personal and historical element. She writes, “I wasn’t thinking about the poems I was writing as about ‘history’, but, rather, as the life I was living — in essence, it was ‘living history.’” Merle says that a number of her poems in the book were “written as history was unfolding, moment by moment. They were written decades ago” in “the era of America’s involvement in the war in Vietnam... Two of those poems, ‘War Stories Three: Sack Full of Screams’, and ‘War Stories Four: Driver’, are part of a sequence of poems, ‘War Stories’ poems. The ‘War Stories’ poems were written as a response to stories that friends of mine, who were recently returned Vietnam veterans, were telling me about their experiences in Vietnam, and about stories they heard about some of the soldiers they had served with, soldiers who were so traumatized that they could not adjust to ‘ordinary life’ back in the States, soldiers who found themselves reliving life or death situations as if they were real, soldiers who deteriorated, who became psychotic, some of whom became violent.”

Dan Dervin discusses how he writes poems. He puts “the focused, analytical mind out to pasture and tunes-in to immediate mental/emotional stimuli as they impact the inner precincts of imagination. Before the personal becomes political (when and if it does), the personal lays claim to its own sphere. Connections arise from one’s internal world, including prior and present experiences and relationships.” As with

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Silent Warrior by Sandra Indig

S. Indig, SILENT WARRIOR (panels one and two), 32" x 82", Acrylic on Canvas

This work is emblematic of wars waged on every front against the attitude, ideology, and goal of those who believe that, "what is mine is mine and what is yours, is also mine." These paintings are the artist, Indig's, way of extending and enlarging the usual definition of "Silent Warrior" from that of one who anonymously serves in battle or in service for his /her country to that of the personal, subjective battle waged in the realm of the individual, personal and subjective. Our psycho history bears witness to the harm done not only immediately but down through the generations by those who wish to destroy, exclude, diminish, etc. Indig's poem, "Unnamed Prayer," speaks to the harm done by: ... *the detritus of thoughts thought, the unkind word, the jealous rage, the insatiable greed of the too judgmental and tenants of a murderous world, ...The question is, "Who tends to the {Good} and warms the bread or gathers the tears to fill the holes of flash floods and screaming sirens?"*



Summer Swing

S. Indig, SUMMER SWING, 17" x 16", Acrylic on Archival Paper

Inspired by the concept of "intention," the graphic image of a swing came into being. From somewhere in my collective unconscious and storehouse of feelings, forms, and muscle memory, the idea of the power of intention common to all our actions, quite spontaneously took this graphic form. Before, after, and during the action of putting the brush to



paper, probably as a by-product of reading and attending conferences on art and science, I thought, "who willfully intends to be destructive and perhaps unknowingly decreases his/

her life force—the force or energy which increases "seeing" in the spiritual sense? It requires consciousness of intention, despite culturally imbedded ideas, to remember that ego includes the spiritual and that freedom of choice is relevant to feelings of self-worth. We, me, I constantly move or swing towards increasing or decreasing our human potential. My painting of the summer of the swing has come to symbolize the personal choice to evolve into an informed, empathic, and flexible person.

Sandra Indig is a psychotherapist, psychoanalyst, and arts therapist in private practice in NYC. She is Committee Chair, Creativity & NeuroPsychoed, New York State Society for Clinical Social Work. Her book, "Image/Word" is in print with MindMend Publishing. For examples of her writing and art work, go to www.sindig.com

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Merle, some of his poems are about traumatic, historically powerful events, and yet in his mind his writing recalls poems with similar themes. He sees how Yeats in his poem, "Easter 1916," combines the personal with the political in response to the execution of four Irish patriots he knew. Dervin writes, "after participating in the 1967 anti-Vietnam War March on the Pentagon and recalling the Kent State killings, I would mull over those events with Yeats' poem in the back of my mind. Those memories were revived by 9/11 when the Pentagon itself came under attack. In the end, I honored the peaceful voices of protest by the writers who put their lives on the line in 1967. I closed by imagining a 'patrician poet, 'Breaking ranks for the barricades/A penman taking on the Pentagon.' "

Howard Stein is a psychoanalytic, applied, medical, and organizational anthropologist, and a published poet. He writes, "Poetry evokes, doesn't merely describe.

Emotion, feelings, are central to the work of writing, listening to, and reading poetry. It conveys feelings *as* facts as much a part of the human experience as any other type of fact. It offers experience, and, if successful, triggers the listener's and reader's own experiences beyond the experience of the poem itself... For example, from reading poetry about the First World War one can imaginatively get inside the experience and reality of the First World War. I believe that my 'organizational' poetry helps the reader to get inside the experience and reality of downsizing, reengineering, restructuring, etc. So: This is what World War I *felt* like; or this is what downsizing *feels* like, etc."

"I didn't consciously start to write poetry that included historical references" Irene Javors writes, "but as I started writing, my unconscious led me to the intersection of my personal history with the historical events of the times wherein I lived. I think that C. Wright Mills had great insight in his work *The Sociological Imagination* wherein he writes that to understand an individual you need to factor in their personal history running parallel to the historical era of their lifespan."

Irene has enjoyed "the poetry panels because we get away from the academic formality and get into more free flowing intuitive creativity. These panels provide a place wherein there is a validation of another pathway to knowledge and wisdom—the pathway of art."

Wounded Centuries can be purchased by contacting the book's editor, David Beisel, at dbeisel@sunyrockland.edu. The price is \$16. At the IPA Conference this year on Friday morning, June 3rd, there was another, well-received poetry panel. We all hope that the new tradition of psychohistorically informed poetry has a long and flourishing existence.

Ken Fuchsman, Ed.D., is President of the International Psychohistorical Association and a professor and administrator at University of Connecticut. He is a widely published psychohistorian and a member of the Editorial Boards of Clio's Psyche and The Journal of Psychohistory. Ken can be reached at kfuchsman@gmail.com

RECONSTRUCTIONS

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ment with the fading dream of manifest destiny for my country and fear with "duck and cover" atomic bomb emergency drills, 1951 – 55; I "did my time" in the military. The sound of a heavy thump, like a dead body hitting the ground: Vietnam.

Our most recent social constructions of reality now seem to me more like flimsy attempts to cobble together something that will get us through from the cradle to the grave with no longer any genuine attempt at sincere connections with other people. This seems true even within social classes; for both rich and poor alike but more so for the rich. Their disappointment is more acute because wealth was "promised" to

bring them satisfaction. Connections with other people and social realities have largely been replaced by virtual realities, war games and celebrities. When a war seems like a good thing, we have Hollywood "beat the war drums" so young men will be indoctrinated with a passion for violence and go off and kill and be killed. It all feels like a social construction of reality somehow

gone horribly awry. And/or, a bunch of insecure old leaders somehow convinced that if they send their young men off to war, there will then be more young women available as consolations for them in a meaningless old age. Or, a la Ernest Becker, if the young are offered in sacrifices to death (a practice in one form or another, as old as civilization itself), death will not take the old men.

So, what's the answer? Adam Phillips has explained the root cause and George E. Vaillant (*The Triumphs of Experience: The Men of the Harvard Grant Study*, 2012) has spelled out that wealth and fame do not bring us satisfaction; it is rather our intimate connections with other people that give us a modicum of satisfaction in life (aka love). All the rest is fluff. The "real" problem is in down-sizing our expectations of life. Can we persuade one another to give up on some kind of magical return to the womb and ownership of the breast? For the first time in the history of our species we have the insight. Do we have the courage?

Ted Lloyd Cox, Ph.D. is a psychoanalyst, sociologist, and author of *The Real Enemy is Reality: a Challenge for Us All* (2014). He can be reached at tedllcox@gmail.com

RESPONSE TO TED COX

by Brian D'Agostino

I want to note two features of humanity's current historical context that I believe shed light on

the restless cultural churning that Ted Cox describes. First, we live in an advanced capitalist civilization in which culture itself is a commodity, and therefore reflects the same "creative-destruction," as Joseph Schumpeter called it, as all capitalist activity. Around the dawn of the 20th century, mass media enterprises emerged as major architects of culture, and from that time into the present, churches, schools, foundations, and other custodians of culture have all been relentlessly transformed by the logic of capital and the marketplace of ideas. On the positive side, this is shaking up old priesthoods and hierarchical norms that have limited the freedom of individuals for centuries, but on the negative side it is systemically undermining community and creating a culture of atomization and possessive individualism, which are persistent themes throughout all the upheavals to which Cox refers.

Second, we live in an emerging planetary civilization in which the Internet and other global channels of communication are bringing about unprecedented interaction among the world's local civilizations and cultures. The acceleration of history that Cox notes is largely due to the accelerating growth of these channels of communication. Futurist Ray Kurzweil estimates that by 2045, the average person will receive over a million emails per day and will have a super-intelligent personal computer to keep up with the pace of communication. While inter-cultural exchanges and cosmopolitanism will no doubt continue to thrive in such an environment, so may fundamen-

talist cults of one kind or another, islands of provincial certainty in the raging sea of ideas and changing norms out of which a planetary identity is being born.

The question I want to pose is this: what institutional reforms can create a future that is humane and egalitarian, rather than violent and polarized by class, ethnicity, and other human differences? While any adequate answer to this question will obviously be complex, worker-owned and controlled enterprises can be a game changer, eliminating what is destructive about capitalism—the exploitation of the many by the few and the destabilization of livelihoods and local communities—while preserving what is positive: the freedom of markets, including the marketplace of ideas. The emergence of such arrangements, which is already occurring on the periphery of the capitalist economy, will also transform cultural institutions. Schools, for example, can become places where un-alienated learning flourishes, rather than places where teachers and students toil to produce ever higher test scores for remote power-holders. My book *The Middle Class Fights Back* discusses these and related ideas.

Brian D'Agostino, Ph.D. is Secretary and Communications Director of the IPA and author of *The Middle Class Fights Back: How Progressive Movements Can Restore Democracy in America*. He can be reached at bdagostino@verizon.net

RECONSTRUCTIONS OF REALITY

By Ted L. Cox

In a recent “sidewalk conversation” with Brian D’Agostino, the title of a very old sociology text popped into my mind: “The Social Construction of Reality” (1966). Brian reminded me the authors were Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. It is a book that became one of the pillars of what C. Wright Mills called my “sociological imagination.” However, now that I’ve survived to age 85, I feel the need to “re-tool” my sociological imagination, to wit, it now feels more like an on-going and simultaneous social destruction and reconstruction of reality that becomes more frenetic over time. It even reminds me of John B. Calhoun’s studies (1958-62) of overcrowding in rats as a model for societal collapse.

What I see now is a constant and world-wide social re-shuffling of norms and values, of power elites and ethnic groups and borders and leadership ---- increasing in frequency over time. This has many causes, attempts at self and social aggrandizement being chief among them. But a major part seems to result from our constant failure to be satisfied with any of our socially constructed “realities.” The initial hope they inspire “peters out over time” but we

are never deterred, we begin again with never a thought to these historical patterns. There are always “unanticipated consequences” to our new realities; they fall short of our expectations and so we tear them down and start over. Violence seems to be a necessary part of this continuing process just as Calhoun’s overcrowded rats demonstrated pathological and

Peter L. Berger

Thomas Luckmann

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

violent behavior. Our disappointment with the realities we construct engenders anger and we desperately need scapegoats to blame for our failures. Our desperation stems from the fear that we, and even our children, can’t have what we desire. Our goals, when we do achieve them, do not bring the anticipated satisfactions. Could

it be that our desires are naïve and they can never be satisfied?

Adam Phillips has proposed an explanation for this dilemma. He concludes that though we live our lives forward we desire backwards. Most human behavior is unconsciously motivated. We attempt to reconstruct and recapture realities which we expect will return us to the imagined bliss of infancy and “owning” mother’s breast. Which, after all, was at one time a contiguous part of us. It is possible that we as a species, cannot give up this naïve and backward approach to our future. We may need the hope of repossessing the past more than we need an accurate appraisal of the future, regardless of the debacles this produces. It may be that we cannot survive without belief in magic of one kind or another. This root cause may be what precipitates the eventual failure of the “human experiment.”

Born in 1930, I grew up on “they got married and lived happily ever after” and “if I were a bell I’d be ringing”; I lived through the flower-children and Woodstock and then came “I can’t get no satisfaction.” I felt disappoint-

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