Are violent perpetrators sociopathic with deficient consciences or do they have a dissociated cache of overly severe guilt? Is it naïve to suggest that hardened criminals can be helped? What degree of agency do serial offenders have in the commission of vicious acts? Are we distinctly different from aggressive felons or are we too similar for comfort? These are only a few of the questions that Abby Stein grapples with in this provocative volume that explores the origins or “prologue” to violence.

Stein convincingly highlights a link between dissociation and crime, and shares impressive research to buttress this connection. She argues against those who eschew guilt as a necessary criterion for the diagnosis of sociopathy or antisocial personality disorder and suggests instead that guilt is pervasive, saturating the perpetrator to the extent that it must be disavowed. Its roots blossom forth from the malicious intent and cruelty of primary caregivers. As Donnel Stern points out in his foreword:

Most often, Stein tells us, violent criminals are not conscienceless; they are not, in other words, what we are used to thinking of as psychopaths or sociopaths. They are not simply evil; or rather, if they are evil, theirs is a complex kind of evil, an evil that seems desperate not to know itself. It is an ashamed and guilty evil, not proud or entitled. Stein suggests not only that we consider the possibility that these people do have consciences, but also that because of insanely brutal disciplinary measures they suffered at the hands of their “caretakers,” their consciences may actually be especially, crazily, severe, so severe that the people who commit these acts may be even less willing than the rest of us to know what they have done (pp. ix–x).
Borrowing from Sullivan’s dissociative processes involving selective inattention and “not-me” experiences, and Bromberg’s noncommunicative self-states, the author portrays a compelling narrative “in which dissociated parts of the self went to sleep at the wheel and left the driving to highly aroused (but unlicensed) agent-provocateurs” (p. 10). Ted Bundy, prolific murderer, is quoted as saying “the man sitting before you never killed anyone” (p. 1).

Stein outlines the paucity of symbolic thinking in trauma victims (who later become perpetrators) and the inability to verbalize experiences that find expression only through dissociated acts. Childhood maltreatment, like a blunt instrument, arrests the developmental capacity to process all but the most concrete acts. Most dysfunctional parents will introduce some basic notion of right or wrong that is “exponentially amplified and twisted” (p. 6). “My mother was a beautiful person, so lovely. If I said no, she beat me from one end of the house to another. I was only beaten if I did something wrong—like not eating” (from a case file, p. 7). Consequently, these self-states need to find realization of this distorted “good” and “bad” by punishing and merging with the criminal’s prey, giving the offender an opportunity to be agent and victim simultaneously. The perpetrator is both identifying with the aggressor and finding an outlet for rage.

Stein’s contention that violent crime is often the result of an exceedingly severe superego introduces a conundrum for both the legal system and forensic clinicians. Is the beaten-child-turned-criminal-adult not fully responsible for violence? And if so, should there be new considerations of extenuating circumstances? The current legal definition of mitigating conditions includes either behavior that is thoroughly unconscious (e.g., sleepwalking, amnesia) or dissociation as severe as Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), where personalities are wholly estranged from each other. The author is working with more contemporary, broader understandings of dissociation that suggest a continuum of self-states from those that are in open and healthy (if sometimes conflicted) communication with one another to extreme nonporous Jekyll and Hyde personalities, where mutual recognition has completely broken down. She is opening the door to consider a middle ground for offenders, where narrative voices are “porous” even when “the subjective perception was one of staunch division” (p. 111). This seems confusing. If narrative voices are indeed “porous,” it would appear that differing self-states are actually in communication. On the other hand, if subjective perceptions are “staunchly divided,” they would seem not to be in dialogue with each other. This “middle ground” suggests provocative and conscience-raising questions in evaluating the agency of perpetrators of aggression. It would have been helpful if the author clarified this ambiguity. Later, in Chapter 5, violent persons are described as being unable to “stand between the spaces” (Bromberg, 1998) of “good” and “bad” selves, these qualities remaining staunchly segregated in self-states free of mutual influence. Dennis Rader, for example, the notorious BTK serial killer (bind, torture, kill), was a council president. Multiple murderers Ted Bundy and John Gacy had alternate lives. Bundy volunteered at a Seattle crisis clinic and Gacy clowned for disadvantaged children. Again, if there are no mutual influences between self-states, then how are they “porous”? Prologue to Violence, however, does present us with the
dilemma of whether brutal behavior as a form of dissociation needs to reach the criteria of DID to be considered a player in mitigating factors. Stein accomplishes this with quite remarkable case files, personal vignettes, and solid research data.

The author asserts that Kleinian paradigms of splitting and projecting are not likely to be defenses in severe pathological types where the object is not securely anchored. When symbolization is “short-circuited,” and objects are not firmly internalized, the difference between the external and internal world is blurred along with the differences between “good” and “bad.” Meanings are then constructed to give some recognizable shape to the murkiness. “In the same way that people reassemble visual-perceptual incongruities to maintain cognitive consonance, traumatized persons attempt to realign new traumatic insignia with preexisting beliefs, wishes, fantasies, and elaborative schemes. In the killer’s narrative, there is no incongruity—the most tolerable image of his own abuser is likely that of a loving brother” (p. 35). Here she is referring to a type of dissociation different from noncommunicative self-states. In this scenario, the abusive other is constructed mentally to fit in with less-toxic schemas in order to maintain safety from anxiety and ties to the not-well-established object. The older brother, for example, is seen as someone who cared, gave attention, while others did not. With this strategy the abused child annihilates himself to preserve a relationship. The adult felon will do to someone else, i.e., annihilate the other, in a repetition of what was not experienced by the self in order to continue to maintain security. This all while disavowing any link between action and intention.

Abby Stein provides several case files to illuminate the dynamic repetition compulsion that sadistic offenders display by oscillating between rage and “victimicy” and how they, therefore, fluctuate between “shame and guilt, injury and attempted reparation” (p. 40). This gets played out in “catch-me-if-you-can” crime scene clues that are calling cards beckoning for recognition, punishment, and reparation. Lawbreakers often seek restraint, punishment, and reproach from external powers to inhibit impulses that felt no longer controllable. Criminals who are attempting reparation and seeking containment are routinely ignored by forensic clinicians who are eager to place a firm boundary between “them” and “us” so they can disavow their own capacities for aggression and retain moral detachment (p. 40). The implications for understanding the countertransference needed to deny Violence “R” Us is noteworthy. We tend to be both fascinated and repulsed by vicious crimes, and people working with this population would gain considerably by keeping in mind the commonality of their aggressive impulses with lawbreakers.

In a section entitled “Clinician Heal Thyself,” countertransference reactions to criminals are further explored. These include the need to evacuate the aggression that is introjected by the therapist, competitive aggression (especially with male therapists), and feigned imperviousness to threat (especially female practitioners). Stein here talks about the limits to treatment. Financial resources are severely restricted, and few practitioners are willing to work with a mandated and violent population. Incarcerated individuals need to rely on primitive defenses to survive and are not liable to lessen their anxieties, through therapy, in an environment that replicates their childhood maltreatment. Nevertheless, Stein is heartened to see that Sullivan’s inpatient milieu
treatment approaches are working in some settings. Prologue to Violence is replete with case files to illustrate Abby Stein’s major thesis, an attempt to relate Sullivanian theories of dissociation to the understanding of violent behavior. Applying a psychoanalytic sensibility to the underlying dynamics in criminal behavior gives a refreshing new context within which to look at a population that is historically devalued and disavowed. Unfortunately, despite many case files depicting evidence of her theoretical disposition, the author does not give in-depth clinical vignettes to show how she utilized this approach in treatment. The reader is left tantalized with the complexity and depth of ideas without the satisfaction of a clinical working-through. What is of special interest about this book is that it raises the bar on dissociation, a psychic process it views not merely as a mental organization and a basis for enactment but also as an important phenomenon in crime and violence.

REFERENCES

A NOTE FROM THE
CREATIVE LITERARY EDITOR

Bonnie Zindel, LCSW

Is it possible to capture a moment—be it spoken, unspoken, or filled with an evocative image—and put it into words? What makes a particular moment meaningful and emotionally powerful? In this issue, the creative literary section is filled with very, very short stories—fiction and nonfiction—about large and small moments, emotional experiences, simple gestures, and snapshots that capture the transience and impermanence of experience. Can we really capture a moment? Once a moment passes, is it gone forever? Can we hold onto it through its transformation into art and words? And is anything too short to be a story? Does a very, very short story need to have a beginning, middle, and end in the Aristotelian manner, or can the storytelling be non-linear? Hemingway once wrote a story in just six words—“For sale: baby shoes never worn”—and he called it his best work.

We received an enormous number of submissions, and I want to thank Amanda Hirsch Geffner and Anja Behm for their careful reading of the creative works. Each of these surprisingly diverse and eclectic selections is less than 700 words. Some are about childhood imagination, nostalgia, unconscious doodling, and existentialism. We see imagistically a chance encounter with mannequins in Barcelona and read about one woman’s fleeting relationship with a bird. But they all transport us in a very short time and capture essences of the human experience.

Submissions of poetry and short stories of up to 10 pages double-spaced can be sent to the Literary Editor, Psychoanalytic Perspectives, 250 West 57th Street, Suite 501, New York, NY 10019.
HOW THE ANALYST DRAWS OUT THE PATIENT

Ronald Ruskin

The analyst holds his notepad. He has been seeing Alba for two years; the sessions move slowly, and Alba is often silent. The analyst leans closer. Alba sighs. The analyst asks what Alba feels, and her shoulders flinch, and she buries her face in the couch. The office is shadowed; the lights dim. They work in a cave, away from the world. Outside the analyst’s window, the sun slips its bonfires behind winter trees.

“What are you feeling?”
Alba says nothing.
“You seem preoccupied.”
Alba says nothing.

“Nothing really,” the analyst says.
“You used your pen.” Alba’s eyes are sharp obsidian. “You weren’t paying attention.”
“You didn’t say anything.”
“That’s beside the point. You were not here.”
“I was here,” the analyst says.
“Don’t try to deceive me,” Alba speaks in her best Gestapo voice.
“But I was here.”
“You were in another universe.”

Suppose, thinks the analyst, I was in another universe? What is so terrible about being a million light-years away? I was only there a few seconds.
“You were far away and you were writing something,” Alba says.
Now the analyst remains silent. He is not sure what to say.
Alba has telepathic powers. The trouble is she can’t read her own mind.
She can’t see how she pushes everyone so far away.

*  
“Were you doodling?”
The analyst is silent.
“Were you doodling? I want to see your pad.”
The analyst shrugs like a truant.
“Show me.”
The analyst hesitates. He lifts his pad.
“Hmm.” Alba inspects the sketch. “That is not me.”

*  
It grows dark. Sometimes, in moments, the analyst sees Alba as the most irresistible woman in the world; at other moments, he despises and hates her and wants her banished—out of sight. The feeling is mutual. Luckily, he is not pregnant with Alba inside him. Or maybe he is. That’s when the problem first began. Mother was busy with two older children and husband far away. Tired was the word they used, they never said depressed. When Alba came home from school, mother was in bed. When she left in the morning, mother was asleep. He knows he has to be there for her, and yet, it is impossible to be there, perfectly, in the way she needs him.

*  
His best doodles occur mid-session, his unconscious hard at work trying to stay awake, yet he feels delinquent. To tell the truth, he can’t be the only one doodling—it’s not something you can feel proud of, like wall graffiti. “That’s not me,” Alba says.
“It’s how I see you.”
“It’s not the way I see myself.”

The analyst draws the force of lines as feelings. It is an imperfect rendering, a 30-second doodle, dissociated, spontaneous, and unformulated. Alba sees her anger in a different light, as if she has circled a painting to find a hidden perspective. The analyst is surprised, too.
“Do I look that distant?”
“It looks that way,” the analyst says.

Alba has never admitted remoteness—it is always in the Other. A space opens between them. A doodle, the analyst thinks, shows more than words.
Now that the session is almost over, Alba talks. She does not want to leave.
FINITUDE

Robert D. Stolorow

If we’re not self-lying,
we’re always already dying.
If we’re not self-deceiving,
we’re always already grieving.
The answer to the existential quiz?
“Good-bye is all there is.”
It was one of those extremely windblown, frigid nights that we get here on Riverside and 73rd. I'm walking into the wind with my two Fairway bags, feeling pretty sure that a few of my fingers are going to be casualties to my love for fingerless gloves.

I get to the door, slither down the steps into the lobby, and Jeff says, “Valerie, is that your bird?” I turn around, and a dove or a gull or something has flown in with me and has landed at the bottom of the stairs.

I get down on the floor with the bird and start telling her she’s a really sweet bird but the stair landing isn’t the best place for her. She looks around, unconvinced, especially given the contrast in weather between West 73rd Street and the lobby.

Then I realize how convenient it is that I got crackers at the store. I break one up and put it far to the side of the lobby. She doesn’t really perk up at my culinary offering, so I slide the cracker toward her. Not interested. Several of my fellow cooperative shareholders enter, glance at me on the floor with the dove, and continue on their way, impassive.

It’s really feeling like time to get upstairs and have my dinner. I scoop up the bird, we go back out into the bitter cold, and I place her on the ground next to me. “I’ll stay here with you to make sure you get off okay,” I say. Well, actually, after about a minute or so, I renege on that and go back inside. Sorry, you’re on your own. But the bird flies in with me, again, and lands on the lobby floor.

Marie then comes in, and I say, I have this problem with this bird who keeps flying in with me and now I’m going to have to bring her upstairs. Would she have a shoe box to help with the transport? Marie goes upstairs and comes down with something like that, so I scoop the bird in and bring her upstairs with me.
So now it’s like 9:15 at night, and I have this wild bird in my apartment, and I haven’t had dinner, and I’m really not so sure what to do. She’s really cute and she’s kind of flapping around, and I name her Gulliver. That’s when you’re really screwed, when you name the animal who found you on the street.

I have this epiphany as Gulliver starts to take wing to my living room walls and I start worrying about bird concussion and prospective human sleeplessness. I can make Marie’s shoe box into something of a lean-to, place it on my terrace, and put a bowl of water and some soaked crackers inside. So then Gulliver can have shelter and snacks, and fly off when she’s ready.

I prepare the bird accommodations and set her inside, and make sure the box is secure and the flap will stay open. Then I get a towel for the bottom so she can be cozy. I retreat to the inside of the windowed terrace door and watch. She nibbles. Fifteen minutes later, she’s still there. And 15 minutes after that. And after that. Then she’s gone. I miss her, white body, orange beak and feet. I kind of would have liked her to stay; maybe we could have worked something out.

Fifteen minutes later, Gulliver’s still gone, and still after that, and so then I can go to sleep. At three o’clock, I get up and turn on the terrace light, and she’s still gone and I’m sad and smitten.

Get up early the next day. Go out to the terrace. Gulliver’s back. She’d come home to die in the early morning.
ARCHITECTURAL IRONY—BARCELONA 2008

Janet Goldmark

While basking in the architectural splendor of Barcelona, home of Gaudí and Miró, I was captured by the irony of this vision.

Janet Goldmark, LCSW, is a graduate of the National Institute for the Psychotherapies. She was cofounder and clinical director of NIP’s Child and Adolescent Training program. Currently she is in private practice, working with adults and children, and is a supervisor in the Adult Training Program. Goldmark is a painter and printmaker and has exhibited in New York City.
In the beginning I thought God lived behind the door at 35 Rashi Street in Tel Aviv, where Savta Bobbe lived.

Savta is *grandmother* in Hebrew, and Bobbe is *grandmother* in Yiddish. Savta Bobbe was my great-grandmother, so my name for her was not altogether inaccurate. For as long as I can remember, I was taller than she was. Her size turned out to be quite convenient, as she shared the tiniest two-room apartment with her daughter, my great-aunt Mera, and Mera’s husband, Binyamin.

The two-hour drive from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv took plenty of preparation and seemed like a great voyage that would last forever. We would make the journey in summer, and when we arrived, exhausted and thirsty, Savta Bobbe would immediately serve us a hot cup of tea, for she firmly believed that this is the only way “to chase away the heat.” In Savta Bobbe’s household nobody cared about table manners. Binyamin used to drink his soup while producing distinguished sound effects, but for some unknown reason he was allowed such imperfection, even by my father.

Binyamin owned a barbershop, and I was thrilled when I could spend the day there, looking at pictures of beautiful hairdos in foreign magazines, eavesdropping on the conversation, smelling all those weird hair lotions, and listening to Binyamin whistle whole concertos. He always wanted to treat me and would get frustrated by my refusal. “How can anyone refuse food?” he would wonder, nodding his head and wrinkling his brow in bewilderment. “And especially sweets...”

On the way home from the shop at the end of the day, Binyamin and I would stop to buy a block of ice. We would carry the dripping block home, losing half of it to the heat, while laughing our hearts out at his concentration camp jokes. Once I asked my mother if she and Dad had ever been to such a camp, and she told me they hadn’t. “How come?” I asked. “Weren’t you good enough to be sent there?”

Savta Bobbe thought that neither my mother nor I could ever do any wrong.

I doubt whether she would have approved of our secular way of life, but she chose not to know what she didn’t want to know. On Saturday evening she would send me to the balcony to look for three stars in the dark sky, the signal that the Shabbat was.

Ofra Bloch is a graduate of the National Institute for the Psychotherapies. She produced and directed the documentary film *Vivienne’s Songbook*. She has a private practice in New York City.
officially over. There was a lot of tension around this issue because my secular parents just wanted me to turn on the lights, an act prohibited until the end of Shabbat. The whole family would wait impatiently in the dark, nagging me to hurry up, till Binyamin would roar in his deep voice, “Oh, say, can you see the comet?” But I took my job seriously and would reply with the self-confidence of a six-year-old, “A comet doesn’t count as a star.”

At night I used to share a bed with Savta Bobbe, and she would lullaby me in Yiddish. She’d sing “Ofen Prepetchik” (“By the Fireplace”), and I would dream about the sounds and smells of a place I’d never been to. Maybe it was her shtetl.

When Savta Bobbe was not plucking chickens for Friday night’s soup, which was her main domestic activity, she busied herself with praying. By the time I was a teenager, she rarely left the house. She would stand in the corner of her room behind the opened door, tiny woman that she was, dressed in her traditional long polka-dot dress, her hair tightly covered, her blue eyes closed, and pray to God. Later on I was told that Savta Bobbe never ceased to pray. She prayed in the midst of the pogrom in her hometown in the Ukraine, she prayed on the boat that carried her and her five newly fatherless daughters to Palestine, she prayed when the Turks who ruled Palestine at the time expelled them to Egypt, she even continued to pray when her eldest daughter died of typhoid, leaving behind her a two-year-old who grew up to be my mother.

I was away from the country when Savta Bobbe passed away. Upon my return, I rushed to her home and peered behind the door. The space was tiny and would have fitted comfortably only her and God. Both were absent.
Their reunion occurred on an unseasonably warm winter’s day under the arch at Grand Army Plaza. They embraced awkwardly, jabbering nervously about the fine weather and impressive architecture, finally settling into an easy stroll and a familiar silence. Released from the shroud of cold, dark days, they let nostalgia lead them on a long walk down Ocean Parkway to the Coney Island Aquarium. There they stood side by side, gaping at the undulations of the jellyfish, its dance across their reflection as light as chiffon.

They had met more than a year before in a greenhouse in the mountains. For days they stooped over hundreds of spinach seeds, their nimble fingers pressing each tiny seed into the enveloping earth. Then they lovingly wrapped a fig tree in layer upon layer of discarded newspaper, branch by crooked branch. They read the headlines aloud to each other as they worked, and laughed that their tree was swaddled in scandal. He loved to watch her laugh, though he glanced at her only when she wasn’t looking, so that she never knew he studied and memorized her face. She reminded him of his wife, whom he hadn’t seen in 35 years, of his daughter, whom he’d seen only once. Life, he’d told her, had knocked him to his knees, and he’d spent the last 20 years closer to the earth than most people get.

She too had tread perilously close to life’s parameters. Her exile had taken her from India, where young goats sacrificed their heads to a bloodthirsty Kali, to Siberia, where the vengeful earth had cut her bare feet as mercilessly as razors. Stumbling haphazardly into his greenhouse, she’d discovered there immeasurable, throbbing relief.

One year later they were walking arm in arm along the boardwalk at Coney Island, mismatched, perhaps, but upright, and grateful. Her thawed feet barely touching the ground, she leaned over and planted a gentle kiss on his weathered and whiskered cheek, sealing it with her palm. In silent, satisfied unison, they turned to watch the waves tirelessly unfurling on the shore.

Jennifer Cantor, PhD, is an advanced candidate at the NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis and is in private practice in New York City.
When I was a little girl, around six or seven, we had a neighbor who was a therapist and saw patients in her home. I was fascinated. I would race home from school, park my stool in front of the kitchen window, and stare at the patients walking in and out of her house. I wanted to know everything about what happened inside. I would observe the patients with wonder. What was wrong? What were they talking about? How did they get to my neighbor’s house? Where did they work? Did they have a little girl? Did they like ice cream? I had a million questions. I would make up stories about the patients, but somehow the stories did not seem to help me figure out what happened inside my neighbor’s home. I was dying to figure this out. So, I decided I would become a therapist, and then I would know what happened.

My room became my office. I set up my desk with my pink plastic phone on top and my bills and notepads inside. I dressed in my mother’s heels. Overalls and heels made for an interesting therapist uniform. I would put my dolls on my bed, and they’d talk about their feelings. They would ask questions, and I would give them answers. I spent hours in my office. One day my father arrived home from work and knocked on my office door. “What’s going on in there?” he wanted to know. “Your mother says you have been up here for hours.” I walked to the door in my heels and overalls and announced, “Dad, I am a therapist. If you want to talk, schedule an appointment.”

My phone began to ring off the hook. My father, my grandfather, my aunt—they all wanted to come in for some shrinking. My father set up an appointment with me and arrived the next day. He came right after work and did not even stop to take off his suit and tie—he was eager to get started. I instructed him to lie on my bed. There he was in his suit and tie lying on my bed with my dolls and blankie. He was my patient on my analytic couch. I was soooo excited. My dad started, “Well, Dr. Levin, I have come to see you because I have this issue that has been on my mind, and I was hoping you could provide me with some answers.”

“Okay,” I replied. He continued: “So I have this issue, Dr. Levin, and I don’t know what to do. I have this little girl who sometimes does not like to clean her room, and I am not sure how to get her to clean it.” “Daaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaad!” I screeched. “You are

Emily Levin, LCSW, is a psychoanalyst and EMDR therapist in private practice in New York City. She is a graduate of the NIP four-year psychoanalytic program and a current candidate in the NIP trauma certificate program.
not supposed to talk about me; I am the therapist.” I guess at the time I did not know how lucky I was that my first analytic patient was willing to talk about the transferential relationship and the real relationship at the same time and in the first session. “Dad, you know I can give you an answer that I really think will work.” “Yes, Dr. Levin,” my father exclaimed with great enthusiasm. “Please tell me!” “Just tell her to clean her room.” “Okay, Dr. Levin. That is brilliant. I am going to try it, and I will get back to you next week.”

I gave my father a bill, and we scheduled another appointment. My father paused at the door for a moment before leaving. I was a little nervous that he was going to ask me to clean my room. “Dr. Levin,” he said. “Yes, Dad?” “You are a very good therapist, and you have a beautiful office.” The door closed, and I sighed with relief. I guess therapists don’t have to clean their rooms, I thought. This job could work for me. I braced myself for dinner that night—I knew my dad would ask me to clean my room. I thought to myself, I hope that we don’t talk about his daughter at his session next week.
PLAYHOUSE UNDER THE PORCH

Annie Lee Jones

When I was little, we lived in a large two-story house on Hale Street in Augusta, Georgia. The house, way back from the road, was surrounded by wrought-iron fences and gates. Its two front porches sat tall and regal, almost majestic for that part of the town. As children, we grew up playing under the house, safe from the burning sun; living by day in an antebellum fantasy world that mimicked the life we imagined existed up on the hill. No matter how fresh the paint, intricate the wrought-ironwork, or white crisp and bright the curtains, we and our house were on the bottom, with the sun always rising up on the hill.

Play under the house was always cool and free, no match for the world outside the gates, but infused with our own take on the pleasures of living amongst the riches at once near and far.

Playing at being others turned out to be the best dress rehearsal for maintaining the double when we were no longer little girls, later, merging our selves into that otherness of a segregated world.

Jones’ gift to the girls of the little brick playhouse under his house protected us, not only from the unbearableness of the oppressive heat of the Southern summer sun but also from despairing moments equally as oppressive. We stayed children longer than most we knew, in a safe space for our imaginations to grow.

Our little playhouse was at once an amazingly versatile rehearsal studio, its stage blazing with any and all props. In our playhouse, racial oppression dressed down; dignity and grace always wore the best gowns.

Our extraordinary world of dreams and fantasy allowed us to bear the oppressive heat of Deep South summers, mostly spent outdoors, properly away from the talk of grown folks’ business.

There were those good times when the early-morning sun heralded our best performances, aided and abetted by our mother’s steady hand. On those mornings, crino-
line slips three, sometimes five layers deep propelled our brightest, whitest starched dresses into the air with every turn, as we waited like little ladies, properly in place. We knew the sound of a car pulling up to the gate, cueing us to run carefully—as not to fall—turning and twirling, tummies pulled in against giggles, and whispered secrets between us all.

On these mornings, some white lady was coming, in her own black car, dropping off her soiled laundry.

Soon to return and get her baskets of freshly hand washed, rice-water-starched, heat-ironed shirts and linens brought back to perfection.

These white women were amazing to us. When they pulled up and got out of their cars, we would run to the gate, opening it wide for them, our eyes bright with curiosity, and maybe some fear.

Most had hair so yellow it was almost white. Eyes usually piercing blue, as they surveyed us up and down, maybe aware that Momma always changed our clothes two and three times a day, as this was laundry pickup day.

For some reason they would tug on our plaits and our cheeks, before daring to call forward the one that they had heard about from our mother, grandmother, or aunt.

“Let me see that child again, who they say can read like a grown-up.” My mother would pick one of us out and push that one forward to be admired. Usually she made her choice quickly, based on whose giggles and twists had settled down.

Always smug in her assurance that the white ladies could never pick a word that we couldn’t spell or a passage from the Bible we didn’t know well enough to pass present company’s scrutiny, no failings allowed.

My mother’s pride, her daughters’ reward, was the glint in her eyes as she waved goodbye to the black car moving away, down the road quickly, white-gloved hand back in its window.

My mother, almost as white as the white ladies she ironed for, seemed to have successfully trained her customers to follow this ritual as part of the bill settlement, only on laundry pickup day.
JELLY JAR

Annie Lee Jones

Jelly jar, jelly jar
I close my eyes and see me running along the river’s edge, spotting the swampy patches in the sweet grass long before I have to broad-jump keeping pace with the slap of the murky water against the river’s edge
Missus’ husband home too early, she managed to rush me off my knees swabbing her kitchen floor clean with rags fresh from the clothesline just like she like,
To my feet,
Pushed through the screen door, almost falling to my knees
Landing in my just-swept dirt,
On your feet, gal, and git!
I knew my two dollars was lost for today’s work,
I knew to run like the wind through the back pea patch,
Over the woodpile,
Down to the river, he could never catch me now,
I know my way over the highway
To the bottom and almost home
Anyway, my jelly jar feels whole as I run my hand across its smooth edges, no cracks at all
Jelly jar safe in my apron pocket
Put away long before missus came back from the porch
No two dollars for a day’s work
Knuckles raw from scrub board work
Working me to the last minute,
Just before Mr. Man’s dust from his truck sends advance signals up the road
No two dollars for a day’s work
Running long and running hard
Jelly jar is still there
home in sight
Soon enough
jars for everyone
Come suppertime tonight.
My father often said that I understood him better than anyone else in his life ever had. Although that was true, I sometimes wished when I was growing up that I knew a lot less about him than I did. Other times I was proud to know him better than anybody.

Dad went by two names, Daddy Boy and Creech, and those names sum up the extremes of his alcohol-ridden, drug-addicted self. When he was Daddy Boy, he was friendly, fun, and undependable. When he was Creech, he was just plain mean. I learned to smell the shift before it started, because he changed faster than Dr. Jekyll could turn into Mr. Hyde. Getting too comfortable with Dr. Jekyll was like sending a signal asking Hyde to appear.

Daddy Boy Creech had a favorite game: “Trust me.” He had favorite sayings: “I can feel for you but I can’t quite reach you” and “Worse than useless.” It took me years to figure out what he meant.

If he was home when I was getting ready to go to sleep, he told me bedtime stories, long stories that were continued over many weeks. They were about him as a hero like Sinbad the Sailor or as a knight with King Arthur’s court. He had good timing and knew how to grab my attention. He had an eye for the killing detail.

Some of those stories were not made up; they were about his job. In real life Daddy Boy Creech was a policeman, and he liked telling me about his work. He described what the torn body of a person looked like when he had been run over by a train or shot. He bragged about beating people up, rolling drunks and dropping them down stairwells.

“That dumb bastard bounced three times! Haw, haw.”

Lynn Somerstein, book review editor for the Psychoanalytic Review, is a licensed psychoanalyst, in private practice in New York City, and a registered yoga teacher. She is on the faculty and board of directors of the Institute for Expressive Analysis. She has written “The Isaac Complex: Paternal Aggression and Filial Self-Sacrifice” and “Original Aloneness, Finding the Deep Self,” a study of the Integral Yoga Hatha One protocol, attachment theory, and object relations theory, among others.
I tried to love and understand him. I tried to remind him that he was a hero. I tried to remind myself too, and I held hard to my fantasy of the benevolent father that I wished I had. Throughout my childhood I yearned for a grandfather, but when I grew up, I realized it had been a father I had really wanted.

Once I decided that my father was like John Wayne.

“John Wayne was tough, but he never killed anybody, Dad,” I said.

“Well, I did,” he said.

Sometimes I wished there was a little more bullshit about Dad.

Dad wanted to teach me that the universe stinks. I knew early on that I didn’t want to live—in fact could not live—in that kind of world, and so I set out to prove him wrong or die trying, because if the world was what my father said, then I just might have to kill myself.

The good thing about Dad, though, was that he had an imagination. He wrote books. He painted. He took me to museums. He reveled in the sensuous rooms of the Frick, and told me how it would feel to live in a beautiful palace with paintings of real girls on swings whose fluffy skirts flew up with the wind. I tried to imagine my mother on a swing, or even outside in a garden, but my mother weighed about 250 pounds and never left the house. There was nothing fluffy about Mom.

Dad and I went all over the city. New York was mine. We took in the sights “on the tin,” for free. We were royalty. Dad showed his police badge, and we never paid for anything.

When I was with my father I got to be his sidekick, an honorary boy. Dad expected me to follow him anywhere and take orders, like the men under his command. I didn’t have to shout out, “Sir, yes, sir!” but I had to say, “Right, Dad!” fast and with real enthusiasm.

During our trips around town, Daddy Boy Creech sometimes took me into the subway tunnels. To get to the tunnel you walked along the platform until the very end, and just where it gets dark, where it looks like the world has disappeared, the tunnel begins. Inside the tunnels there are narrow catwalks, walkways built for maintenance men or the police. Most of these dark paths are bounded by yellow railings that mark the edge and keep people from falling onto the tracks. About every 15 feet a lightbulb blinks from the ceiling. You can see them flash when you’re riding the train.

Once, Daddy Boy Creech left me alone inside a tunnel on the 14th Street station of the Lexington Avenue IRT, while he went inside the station house located within the tunnel to pick up his paycheck and to visit the liquor bottle that he stored in his locker.

“Don’t leave me here.”

“You’ll be okay.”

“I’m scared of the trains.”

“There won’t be any trains.”

“Take me with you!”

“No. This station house is a locker room. Men walk around without their pants.”

“I promise I’ll shut my eyes.”

He left me. The guardrail was built for men, not children. It loomed high over my
head, and I knew I could slip right under it. The fast passing trains punched through
the air, threatening to pull me onto the tracks. I backed up tight against the tunnel wall
and held my ground. I smelled the dank, dirty tracks. I closed my eyes. Then I got
dizzy, so I opened them. I wondered why the sight of naked men was more danger-
ous than speeding trains. I stood directly beneath one of the lightbulbs, hoping the
man driving the train would see me and slow down.

“Trust me,” Dad said. Once when I was about five or six he told me to get on the
bottom seat of a seesaw and play circus acrobat with him. He took a running jump
onto the side that was high in the air. The impact of course sent me flying. I was sup-
posed to land on his shoulders. He was supposed to catch me. But I fell. I landed jaw
first on the pavement. I got hurt. He told me it was my fault. He told me I was clumsy.
He called me a crybaby, asked me if I wanted a crying towel, jeered at what he called
my “crocodile tears.”

That’s when I knew what he meant by “I can feel for you but I can’t quite reach
you,” except he couldn’t feel for me either. My father liked to be a hero; that’s why he
put me in danger, so he could save me if he felt like it and if he was able. I figured that
my life was an experiment: Maybe my father would save me. Maybe he wouldn’t.

When I learned to recognize danger and got brave enough to back away, Daddy
Boy Creech called me a coward. I told myself stories about gypsies who kidnap kids,
and I wondered where those gypsies lived. Did they have a phone? Then my next-
door neighbors threatened to call the Bureau of Child Welfare, but they never did.

I thought things would get better when I got older and bigger, but they only got
worse instead. Dad hated and feared women. He cursed every woman who crossed his
path and didn’t give him the proper respect. Respect for him meant letting him jump
their bones.

“Put a bag over your head, you ugly old bitch!” Dad said whenever he wanted.

For a while I thought I was different, someone pretty, someone good, not an ugly
bitch at all. That changed when I hit puberty. After I developed breasts, he didn’t want
me around anymore. Now I understand that when Dad ditched me he was trying to
keep away from me for my own good. At the time, though, I felt worse than useless.

I remember the last time we went fishing together, me, my father, and my brother
and his friend. We all wore old clothes. We looked like slobs.

“You look like a bum!” my brother’s friend said to me. He meant it in a friendly way.
We were all sweaty. We all stank like fish. I was happy.

My father said, “Get in the house.” To him, if I looked like a bum I must be a whore.
Having breasts was dangerous.

Dad had guns and he taught me how to use them. Once I knew how to clean a pis-
tol, he set up a target in the basement for shooting practice. I knew never to go down-
stairs when he was practicing his marksmanship. He told me he never went in the
basement if he knew that I had his gun. We had to be careful; we knew not to trust
each other.

I grew up and got a job as a caseworker for Children’s Protective Services. Figures,
doesn’t it? I was stuck in a loop, trying to save myself. I saw one child after another
fight to stay with their families, with the parents who had abused them, and I learned
that the only thing worse than bad parents was no parents at all. Meanwhile, my fa-
ther rose through the ranks of the Transit Police and eventually became an assistant
deputy inspector. I was proud of him. We worked the same beat, but he had the guns
and I didn’t. He found that amusing.

“When I go into the neighborhoods, I go with a squad car and backups. You go
alone,” he used to say. He was pleased because I was doing something dangerous. I
could get killed! I started getting drunk and speeding on the West Side Highway. I
dated the kind of guy my father locked up. Bad guys.

Then I married Dale, a man who had been locked up, but he was a good guy, an
artist, a radical, jailed for protesting the war in Vietnam, for civil rights. He and my
father understood each other right away. They hated each other. Dale was not afraid
of my father. I was pleased to finally have someone on my side.

When I was 28, I found out I was pregnant. I was surprised that I could even get
pregnant, as though my female equipment was only for fun and show, not for anything
serious, or real, like a child. My father praised me for having a son, for doing it right,
for not having a girl child, for not being like my mother, for not giving birth to some-
one like me. As if I had a choice. As if that was a compliment.

I was thrilled to become a mother. My breasts were no longer a handicap. Now my
life was important. I knew what my son, David, needed, the kinds of things that I had
mostly only read about or seen on television shows like *Father Knows Best*, and I tried
hard to provide for him. From the time I was little, I promised myself that I would
never repeat my childhood, never, no way, treat my children the way my parents had
treated me.

I was a lot better at being a mother than being a wife. No surprise, my husband and
I could not negotiate family life together. He was damaged by his father and mother,
too. I divorced him and felt like a failure.

I started psychoanalysis because I wanted to learn how I had managed to get myself
into such a bad place and so I could be damned sure that I never went there again. I
needed to find better ways to live. All this time I was supporting myself and my son,
paying for treatment, going to graduate school and then psychoanalytic training. I
felt powerful, like a trapeze artist in the circus who can leap and fly. I was no longer
my father’s circus tooge: Now I was the star.

Years later I got married again, to a certified good guy, a rabbi, a psychotherapist.
He was unable to understand my father at all, which was disappointing, but by now
I was better able to take care of myself, most of the time.

I got pregnant again, with a girl this time. I was surprised. I knew now that I could
get pregnant, but I never guessed that I was female enough to give birth to a girl. I did-
n’t know I had it in me.

My second husband struggles with his own damaging history, which is much worse
than mine, although he does not think so. We are still learning how to meet everyday
reality together, misfortune and good fortune too, with honesty and love. He knows
I will never leave him.

People always tell me I’m brave, reliable, and consistent. I got courage from surviv-
ing my father’s games. I am skeptical. I don’t follow orders easily. I mistrust authority.
Whatever it takes, I have to go my own way. I am determined. Of course, memories of the anger, sadism, and flat-out mind-bending craziness that was part of my early family life will always live inside of me.

I learned to find, create, hold, and share a good father inside me for people who need one.

Ferenczi writes that when the parent acts like a madman, “the child becomes a psychiatrist who treats the madman with understanding and tells him he is right.” (1949, p. 229) We can see where I got my earliest training. As I finish this essay in January 2009, I am waiting for the mail to bring me a copy of my doctoral thesis. It’s called The Isaac Complex: Paternal Aggression and Filial Self-Sacrifice. It’s about fathers and sons. I’m working up to writing about daughters.

My worst fear is to be useless.

REFERENCES

Lynn Somerstein, PhD, RYT
lynn@lynn.com
212-861-6818
The National Institute for the Psychotherapies Training Institute (NIP-TI) is devoted to the study and enhancement of psychological development and to the training of skilled and resourceful mental health professionals. Training at NIP-TI reflects a unique commitment to the evolving theories and practice of psychoanalysis and supports the integration of a wide range of nonanalytic psychotherapies. NIP-TI also serves the needs of the community by providing effective, affordable services in accord with its training objectives in the NIP-TI Treatment Center.

In addition to the journal, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, the Institute offers the following programs and services:

- Four-Year Training Program in Adult Psychoanalysis and Comprehensive Psychotherapy
- Training Program in Child and Adolescent Psychoanalysis and Comprehensive Psychotherapy (Full- and Part-Time Programs)
- Psychodynamic Approaches in Clinical Practice (One-Year Evening Program)
- The National Training Program in Contemporary Psychoanalysis (New York–Based Program for Distance Learners)
- Supervisory Training Program
- Continuing Education Program, including an Annual Scientific Conference (APA and NASW approved for C.E.U. credits)
- Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity
- The Center for Spirituality and Psychotherapy
- The Psychology Training Program (Externship and Internship)
- Social Work Internships
- The Focus Series (sponsored by the NIP Professional Association)
- Advanced Seminars (cosponsored by the NIP Professional Association)
- Community-Oriented Mental Health Activities and Public Education
- Trauma Program

NIP-TI is an affiliate institute of the Association of Autonomous Psychoanalytic Institutes (AAPI).
THE NIP PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

The NIP Professional Association was founded in 1982 to provide candidates with an opportunity to maintain an ongoing relationship with the Institute upon graduation. In the ensuing years, NIP-PA has developed a strong presence in the NIP community, offering a number of academic programs and social events throughout the year to alumni, candidates, faculty, and supervisors. Responding to the Institute's growth, the Professional Association is committed to meeting the interests and needs of those involved in all of the training programs offered at NIP-TI.

The NIP Professional Association, in conjunction with NIP-TI, cosponsors the Holiday Fundraiser and the Annual Conference, in addition to *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*. It publishes a membership directory, which is widely used for making referrals, and runs a listserv and a Web site for members. In addition, it sponsors the Mentor Program, the Fall Colloquium, and the Private Practice Development Workshops, as well as such social activities as dinner-theater event and a Spring Picnic in Central Park.

The Board of NIP-PA welcomes applications from graduates of other psychoanalytic training programs and related mental health disciplines for associate membership.
To best reflect the spirit of openness at the National Institute for the Psychotherapies Training Institute (NIP-TI), *Psychoanalytic Perspectives* is interested in articles that are innovative and creative, address controversial subjects, and compare different theoretical perspectives. We encourage work that reflects an emphasis on integration of clinical and theoretical material, of diverse analytic techniques, of various psychotherapeutic paradigms, and of analytic and nonanalytic techniques.

We also invite submissions of poetry, essays, fiction, and memoirs relating to themes of psychoanalysis, as well as letters to the editors. Please refer to the Creative Literary Arts section of our web site, www.psychperspectives.com, for more information about submitting creative works.

**Manuscript Submissions:** Manuscripts in Microsoft Word format (.doc) may be sent as e-mail attachments to submissions@psychperspectives.com. Only original manuscripts will be considered. Manuscripts are accepted for review with the understanding that they have not been submitted elsewhere. Manuscripts will not be returned. Manuscripts are subject to a blind peer review. There are three parts to manuscript submission, all of which should be submitted electronically to the above e-mail address:

A cover page, including your full name, degrees, credentials (e.g., John Smith, LCSW, BCD), at least one telephone number, a mailing address, and an e-mail address; a short bio of approximately three to five sentences about your professional background; and the title of your manuscript as you wish it to appear in the table of contents.

An abstract of no more than 150 words, including the title and a brief description of your manuscript. The abstract should NOT include your name or any other identifying characteristics.

Your manuscript, created in accordance with the guidelines below, also should NOT include your name or any other identifying information. Any manuscript submitted without all three parts as listed above will be returned to the author.

**Manuscript Preparation:** All components of the manuscript must be double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-pt. font with 1” margins. The title of your manuscript should be in bold type in all caps, and any subheadings should be left-justified, in bold type, with title case capitalization. At the end of the paper on a separate page, under the centered heading “References,” also in bold type, please include a list of references to all works cited in the text (refer to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Ed.*, to see how to prepare your references.)
Style: In the manner of most psychoanalytic journals, text references follow the author-date system, as elaborated in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Ed.* e.g. (Grant, 2001), and are cited within the text, not as footnotes or endnotes. Multiple text references are listed chronologically, not alphabetically. Every text citation must have its corresponding reference listed on the reference page(s), and the reference list should contain publication information only about sources cited in the text. Direct quotations must also include their source page numbers, e.g., (Grant, 2001, p. 120). Manuscripts that do not adhere to APA style will be returned to the author for revision and resubmission.

Permissions: In submitting clinical material for publication, the author affirms that he or she is familiar with the guidelines of his or her discipline(s) pertaining to the confidentiality of such material. The author confirms that publication would not involve any breach of confidentiality or professional ethics. Authors are responsible for all statements made in their work and for obtaining permission from copyright holders to reprint substantial passages from previously published works.

The Editors, The National Institute for the Psychotherapies Training Institute (NIP-TI), and the NIP Professional Association (NIP-PA) assume no responsibility for any statements in the papers printed.

Submissions to Private Lives should describe an emotionally engaging and compelling experience from the author’s personal life, written in narrative form rather than scholarly style, up to 14 pages. Please send to Private Lives Editor Clemens Loew, PhD, via e-mail: CAlOew@aol.com.
If you would like to send a sample issue of *Psychoanalytic Perspective* to your library, institution, or a colleague, please complete the form below.

To: Name __________________________________________ Degree(s) ________________
Address ________________________________________________________________
City ____________________________ State ________ ZIP ____________
Phone ______________ E-mail __________________________________________

Payment Enclosed: North America  Individual $40  Institution $105
Foreign  Individual $89 (US)  Institution $129 (US)
NIP-PA. Members  Individual $35

Charge my:  Visa  MC  AmEx  Card # ____________________________
Signature __________________________________________ Exp. date ____________

Visit our website at: www.psychperspectives.com
Psychoanalytic Perspectives
The National Institute for the Psychotherapies
250 West 57th Street, Suite 501
New York, NY 10019
And it's a good thing Miller doesn't feel the need to compete with her students. According to her cast profile, the infamous instructor estimates that she’s taught somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 students since opening her first dance studio in 1980. A small army of professionally trained dancers? She blamed Dance Moms producers for her weight. Getty Images. The year 2015 saw a seriously slimmed down Abby Lee Miller—an accomplishment that wasn't even on the Dance Moms star's busy agenda. According to Miller, caring for her ailing mother during the last six months of her life took a toll on her health—both physically and emotionally. She detailed to Extra how, towards the end of her mother's life, she couldn't handle even the smell of food without becoming ill. Abby Stein (1 October 1991), is a Jewish American Transgender activist, writer, speaker and educator. She rose to fame through writing her blog "The Second Transition", which resulted in intense media coverage of her gender transition. [Talking about gender transition] I want to say here, in clear and bold words to all humans out there who are going through similar experiences, and especially these of Ultra-Orthodox background: "You can Do It!!! It is not going to be easy, but it is way easier than..." Download Citation on ResearchGate | On Mar 1, 2009, Alan Sirote and others published Too Evil or Too Good? A Review of Abby Stein's. We use cookies to make interactions with our website easy and meaningful, to better understand the use of our services, and to tailor advertising. For further information, including about cookie settings, please read our Cookie Policy. By continuing to use this site, you consent to the use of cookies. Got it.