Kesher

SPECIAL EDITION:
Remembering Ilene Serlin

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ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH PSYCHOLOGISTS
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In Memory of Ilene Serlin z'l

Tree of Life image from D. Sussis

KESHER:
JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH PSYCHOLOGISTS

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second issue of *Kesher: Journal of the Association of Jewish Psychologists*. In this issue, readers will meet our new managing editor, Dan Warner, learn about significant new developments in Italy and South Africa and read psychological reflections on the impact of October 7, 2023 and the persistence of "the Jewish problem". You will read about an Israeli psychologist's experience teaching group psychotherapy skills to Iranian students over Zoom, the role of Jewish women in creating the field of dance therapy, and book reviews by contributors discussing the life and work of Yiddish poet Peretz Miransky and the vexing issues confronting Jews in the diaspora today. But above all, please take time to read the many tributes to one of AJP's founding members, Ilene Serlin z'l, who passed away on November 26, 2024 from cancer.

Ilene's passing late last year came as a shock but not as a surprise, at least not to me. Our last phone conversation (a week previously) had alerted me to the gravity of her situation. No sooner had the sad news arrived than I resolved to commemorate her life and legacy, drawing on the testimony of those who knew her well. But in making that decision, a question emerged: What can *I* say about Leni? After all, her colleagues in APA's Division 32 – Kirk Schneider, Stanley Krippner and Louis Hoffman – knew her for four decades, while I only became aware of Leni's work in existential-humanistic psychology in 1999. Even so, we didn't really start exchanging ideas and information on a regular basis until 2014, when Black Lives Matter's endorsement of the BDS movement catalyzed an alarming shift in tone on several APA listservs. Suddenly, it seemed, even cogent and nuanced defenses of Israel's right to

exist, or of the need for a two-state solution, etc., elicited howls of outrage and indignation, and in some instances, sadly, outright censorship from listserv moderators. Our concern over the resurgence of antisemitism in the mental health professions and society at large drew us even closer in the ensuing years.

Beyond that, I can only imagine that Leni's misgivings about prevailing trends in psychology were also rooted in the training she received in existential-humanistic and Jungian psychotherapy, both of which mitigate strongly against identity politics and critical social justice theory's relentless and exclusive focus on race, "gender" and the oppressor/oppressed binary. After all, existential psychotherapy stresses the importance of addressing the "givens" of human existence, which shape the lived experience of everyone, regardless of their race, class, caste, gender, faith (or lack thereof), including the inevitability of death, the fear of death, the search for meaning, the role of personal choice and human agency in achieving self-actualization, etc. On a different note, Jungian analysis seeks to facilitate the process of personality integration, or individuation, which first requires that the individual *differentiate* themselves from the collective psyche, relinquishing their primary identification with their tribe or culture as a prelude to achieving their fullest human potential. Reducing individuals to avatars of their particular "race" or gender ignores both the universal and the unique dimensions of being human and is therefore incongruent with these therapeutic goals.

In any case, a few weeks after Leni passed, my wife and I drove from Pittsburgh to Niagara-on-the-Lake to celebrate my 70th birthday with a weekend of musical theater. The prospect of organizing a commemorative issue of Kesher in Leni's honor was still very much on my mind, and as a result, the Shaw Festival's production of *A Christmas Carol* struck me in a particularly poignant way. "*A Christmas Carol*?" you ask. "You must be kidding. Ilene was Jewish to the core". Yes, quite so. But as Irvin Yalom observed, *A Christmas Carol* addresses themes that are existential; the fragility of life, the defensive denial of death, the fear of loneliness, the anguish of loss. Only when these built-in features of human existence are acknowledged and addressed honestly can we open ourselves up to experience the joy of human fellowship. These basic truths are all illustrated in the transformation of Ebeneezer Scrooge who, as the story opens, rudely refuses to give tzedakah, to relinquish his miserly ways and embrace humanity, until the Ghost of Christmas Future reveals that unless he changes now, no one will mourn his passing; that those present at his sparsely attended funeral will speak of him derisively, without a trace of fondness, reverence or regret. ("Good riddance, Mr. Scrooge.")

There was nothing miserly about Ilene, of course. On the contrary, she was a generous, loving soul and so – here is the point! – the service that her family convened in her honor on December 1, 2024 showed plainly how deeply she touched the lives of those in attendance. I joined over Zoom and couldn't help noticing that the 150 or so people zooming alongside me came from all corners of the world. There were similar outpourings of grief on the listserv of *Psychologists Against Antisemitism* and condolences from friends and colleagues both in and outside of the *American Psychological Association*. The various reflections and tributes I've gathered in Leni's honor here represent merely a small fraction of her impact on the profession of psychology and its relationship to the arts – dance especially. I hope those who cherish her memory find solace and hope in her continued remembrance. I know I shall. May her memory be a blessing.

MEET *KESHER'S* NEW MANAGING EDITOR: DANIEL NOAM WARNER

I am honored to join Kesher, the journal of the Association of Jewish Psychologists. As a mid-career psychologist and lifelong member of the Jewish community, I bring both professional experience and a deep personal connection to our mission to explore the intersections of Jewish history, culture, religion, and psychology.

Born in the United States to an Israeli mother and a German-Jewish father, I spent my early childhood in Israel before returning to the U.S. One way in which I have cultivated my ties with the Jewish community has been through my profession: psychology. Though rooted in 'Western Science' and built on contributions from people of many different backgrounds, Jews have had a deep and lasting impact on the discipline. Working in psychology one often learns about Jewish people whose insights and efforts shaped the discipline in various ways. While I would stop well short of saying that psychology "needs Judaism," or that psychology is a "Jewish Science," there is certainly something haimish about a field that was co-created by people who belong to our rather small ethnic niche.

However, never have I felt the need to connect with other Jewish psychologists as acutely as I do now. The events of October 7, 2023, and the overwhelming collective trauma it produced underscores the importance of connection. This realization drew me to *Kesher*, as a way to contribute meaningfully to our community through the power of dialogue and scholarship.

The power of humble contributions is illustrated nicely in the Torah portion we read the very week I am writing this: The third week of Tevet in the Hebrew year 5785. (That is the first week of January 2025, in the Julian calendar.) This is the week where we tell the story of 'Vayigash,' one of history's earliest tales of a successful family intervention.

To remind everyone about where we are in the story: the foremost Jewish psychoanalyst of his era, Joseph, has become successful because of his ability to rid Pharoah of his anxiety by interpreting his dreams. Pharaoh's mysterious visions of seven fat cows followed by seven skinny ones was interpreted by Joseph as a sign that Pharaoh should save well during the ensuing seven years of prosperity, because they will be followed by seven years of famine. Pharoah heeded Joseph's counsel and soon was providing stability through rationing for the entire fertile crescent.

While administering Pharaoh's rations, Joseph spies his very own siblings who have emigrated to Egypt seeking aid. This is a very dramatic moment, for Joseph has every reason to be hostile to his (clearly dysfunctional) family who literally scapegoated him and sold him into slavery. At first, in fact, Joseph gives in to his sadistic impulses and tries to manipulate his family against each other, conspiring to make it seem that their youngest sibling, Benjamin, had stolen from him and thus would be imprisoned. However, a moment of family solidarity emerges in their encounter that completely changes his perspective, and in fact helps him bring his guard down and reveal his true identity to his family. What happens is quite simple, the older brother, Judah, "approaches" Joseph and pleads for his younger brother's freedom,

"take me in his place" he begs.

This moment of "approach" on Judah's part has been the subject of Talmudic discourse for millenia. Joseph's anger at his family had pushed him to exacerbate internecine conflicts. He had the power and the ability to hold his grudge and take his vengeance. But Judah diffuses this by showing his dedication to his younger brother, and ultimately their father, Jacob. This reminder of their shared lineage brings about reconciliation and prosperity. For as it is written: Pharaoh sends wagons to bring Jacob and his entire family to Egypt, declaring: "The bounty of the entire land of Egypt is yours."

We inhabit a world as unstable as Egypt was during famine, and our Jewish family is as stressed as ever. Internecine conflicts abound, and their potential to proliferate and intensify should not be underestimated. But I have faith in the approach–the connection–we all can take towards each other. *Kesher* reminds us of our common connection, our common history, and our common destiny. The future is not entirely in our hands, but we can do more and suffer less when we join our hands together.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Conference in Rome: Success!

Dear Daniel,

In my previous letter I expressed deep concern over the boycott of an Italo-Israeli Jungian conference on trauma to be held in Rome on June 9th 2024. The rejection of Israeli and Jewish clinicians by two Italian Jungian associations was a disturbing manifestation of unchecked antisemitism within the field of psychoanalysis. However, significant progress has been made since then, thanks largely to Dr. David Gerbi's tireless efforts. His engagement with the media raised awareness of this troubling incident and garnered support from renowned institutions and public figures. The Einaudi Foundation, a leading international publisher for research in social sciences generously hosted the conference at its venue in Rome. The event also received support from a third Italian Jungian association (LIRPA), headed by Professor Antonio Grassi, along with the New Israeli Jungian Association (NIJA).

Held on October 7th, the conference marked the anniversary of Hamas' indiscriminate attack with speakers from the clinical, political, and media worlds. The symposium was inaugurated by a pre-recorded message from the President of the International Association of Analytical Psychology (IAAP), followed by a ceremony led by Maestro Claudio Di Segni, featuring vocalists from Rome's Symphony Orchestra, setting the tone for a day of intense discussion and reflection. In defiance of widespread boycotts, the conference delved into the psychosocial impact of trauma one year into the conflict, from the treatment of traumatised communities in Israel, to the haunting reality of diaspora Jews facing a potential life in the shadows. Of the 23 contributors, only a handful were practising clinicians. The majority were journalists, and featured three Italian senators, including a member of the Bicameral Commission of Inquiry into Femicide.

Conveying the breadth and emotional intensity of this event in a few lines would be difficult. Here are a few examples.

David Gerbi addressed key issues such as the 'archetypal Jew-hatred' that fuels the ongoing 'media pogrom'. This phenomenon perpetuates historical anti-Jewish tropes and blood libels, casting the Jewish state as a modern-day pariah. Israel, a nation constantly under the microscope, is subjected to a level of scrutiny and condemnation unmatched by any other. While the world turns a blind eye to atrocities such as the genocide in Sudan, the Jewish state is held to an impossible standard. This discriminatory treatment, Gerbi argued, serves as a distinct indication of antisemitism.

Drawing on the Jungian concept of 'rape into consciousness', my autoethnographic exploration delved into the mass rapes of October 7th, where symbolic and actual rape intertwine prompting a profound awakening. This experience reopened transgenerational wounds (my grandfather died in Auschwitz with other members of my family), casting doubt upon the very possibility of Jewish life in the diaspora.

Israeli clinicians offered invaluable and poignant insights into the complexities of working with traumatized communities in a country at war. Iris Elyakim-Meroz, president of NIJA, stressed the unique challenges faced by therapists who are grappling with trauma themselves, and who are forced to 'contain the uncontainable' outside the clinic in settings such as hotels accommodating displaced families, evacuated personnel, and kindergartens. Alongside patients, many therapists also fled to shelters, relying on supervision, peer support, and personal analysis to keep functioning effectively. Collective healing also requires fostering dialogue across ideological, ethnic, and religious divides. Elyakim-Meroz's work in an Israeli Arab village highlighted the importance

of open communication. Despite heightened tensions, projections, and identity confusion, particularly after the October 7th attack, she emphasizes the need to maintain dialogue.

As the daughter of a severely disturbed Holocaust survivor father, Ora Cuperman has firsthand experience of the enduring impact of historical trauma. Cuperman's own struggle with depression has led to the loss of sight in one eye. Her family has additionally been affected by the psychological distress experienced by one of her sons, who is suffering from combat-related trauma. The recent death of a family member, Elton Dror, an anti-terrorist operative killed in the line of duty on October 7th, has exacerbated the situation at home.

In Israel, individuals suffering from combat-related trauma are referred to as 'cut souls', akin to trees severed from their roots. This imagery of a tree disconnected from its roots frequently emerges as a symbol of trauma in her clinical practice. One such case involves a 13-year-old who lost his sister while attempting to escape the violence at the Nova festival.

Cuperman's work underscores the complex challenges of providing therapeutic support to individuals traumatized by mass violence, while simultaneously addressing one's own psychological wounds and the wounds of one's family.

Dr. Yoram Inspektor, a second-generation Holocaust survivor, gave a powerful presentation that wove the theme of King Solomon's dream—in which the King petitioned God for the gift of a 'listening heart'—into his argument that 'we can connect on a heart level'. Inspektor employed the idea of a listening heart to shed light on an event that took place on October 7th. Yael, a twelve-year-old girl, was at home when terrorists entered her house, killing her sister and kidnapping her father. As one of the terrorists was about to kill her mother and her little brother she stood up and looked directly into the eyes of the terrorist, asking in English: 'Why do you want to kill us? What have my mother, and my little brother done to you?'. At which point the terrorist paused, met her gaze, and subsequently departed.

Inspektor linked the terrorist's reaction to 'the face of the Other', a central theme in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. 'We need to keep in touch with our hearts', Inspektor urged in his conclusion, 'we need to look at the face of the other with the hope that one day we will be able to meet and create peace between each other'.

Other valuable interventions included those of Dr Gadi Maoz, psychologist and senior Jungian analyst, Professor Antonio Grassi, psychiatrist and president of LIRPA, and many others. Although I couldn't summarize all the presentations, I trust that your readers will grasp the depth and richness of this encounter, which Inspektor later referred to in a follow-up text as a 'deeply soulful meeting'.

Sincerely,

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Introduction to the South African Association of Jewish Mental Health and Allied Practitioners (SAJMAP)

Dear editor,

Earlier this year, over sixty Jewish mental health professionals raised concerns about the Psychological Society of South Africa's (PsySSA) coverage of events in Israel and Gaza, perceiving PsySSA's social media presence as biased and unprofessional. Despite these concerns, PsySSA continued to share content widely viewed as anti-Israel. Similar reports emerged that some allied professionals and doctors were facing similar issues in their associations. In response, it was decided to establish a new organization, the South African Association of Jewish Mental Health and Allied Practitioners (SAJMAP). SAJMAP seeks to support Jewish mental health and allied professionals and their allies, building a community dedicated to addressing antisemitism and culturally insensitive bias within the mental health field and professions. The association is opposed to the misuse of professional bodies to advance any form of ethnic intolerance, including one-sided anti-Israel rhetoric that is culturally insensitive to many Jews and non-Jews.

Membership in SAJMAP is inclusive, welcoming South Africans and non-South Africans, Jews and non-Jews, professionals and non-professionals who support its vision. While its core membership consists of mental health professionals, the organization actively engages allied health professionals, lawyers, accountants, and others, reflecting its commitment to a broad and collaborative approach. Guided by a strong constitution and a newly elected committee, SAJMAP is in its early stages but has begun addressing issues of cultural insensitivity and professional integrity. For example, I recently commented on objectionable social media content shared by the Dean of a leading medical faculty, highlighting SAJMAP's readiness to uphold its values across professions. (See: SA Jewish Report Article).

SAJMAP's constitution outlines its core purposes and aims, including:

1. Serving as a scientific and professional association for Jewish mental health and allied professionals.

2. Combating antisemitism in mental health and allied professions.

3. Promoting community among Jewish professionals and their supporters.

4. Safeguarding professional standards of integrity, non-racism, and cultural sensitivity.

5. Opposing the misuse of professional associations for ethnic intolerance or misinformation.

6. Advancing the interests and well-being of its members.

Although SAJMAP's primary focus is rooted in South Africa, it has begun forging links with international bodies to extend its impact. While the association is still building its infrastructure, including its website, it is committed to creating a strong, inclusive community dedicated to addressing bias, promoting cultural sensitivity, and defending the professional integrity of its members.

A podcast discussing the founding of SAJMAP (9 December 2024) is available on ChaiFM at https://www.chaifm.com/rabbi-g/.

Please remember that SAJMAP membership is open—free of charge—to anyone who accepts the terms outlined in our constitution. This applies whether you are Jewish or not, South African or not, and whether or not you are a mental health practitioner. The terms are available on our application form here: https://tinyurl.com/n3ah4hbr.

Kind regards
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TEACHING IRANIAN THERAPISTS IN TIMES OF WAR – A BRIEF REPORT

BY HAIM WEINBERG, KAVITA AVULA AND LEO LEIDERMAN



At the beginning of 2023, one of the authors (Haim Weinberg) received a request from Iranian therapeutic organizations to teach group psychotherapy to Iranian therapists. Haim is a licensed psychologist (in California and Israel), group therapist, and group analyst, originally from Israel, who has lived in California, USA, for 18 years. He teaches and supervises group therapists worldwide: In Japan, China, Indonesia, Singapore, Israel, Russia, Europe, and the USA. He developed and directed for 10 years an online doctorate program focused on group therapy, with students from around the globe, and nowadays leads online process-training groups for therapists from all over the world. He wrote and edited books on the social unconscious (Weinberg, 2007; Hopper & Weinberg, 2011, 2015, 2017) and online group therapy (Weinberg et al. 2020, 2023a, 2023b) and is considered one of the experts in these fields.

The Iranian colleagues heard about him and his worldwide teaching experience somehow. Two Iranian organizations (Hamkavan – the Group Analytic Psychotherapy Institute and Ensan – the Psychoanalytic Center) contacted him simultaneously, asking whether he would be able to teach group therapy to Iranian therapists. In the beginning, it was unclear whether they knew about his Israeli origin, although it could easily be found by googling him. Haim met with the organizers online and disclosed this fact. They did not think it would be problematic but suggested not to disclose that on the course's flyer. To receive the Iranian authorities' permission, it was decided to add other non-Israeli origin presenters to the faculty.

THE TEAM

Haim invited two other American colleagues to participate in this project: Kavita Avula, a Seattle-based psychologist of Indian origin, and Leo Leiderman, a trinational (Argentine-American-Israeli) psychologist. Kavita is a licensed clinical psychologist and certified group psychotherapist who runs a consulting firm that facilitates culture change, social justice dialogues, and offers conflict resolution. She is licensed in New York and WA state and also has PSYPACT, an e-passport that allows for tele-mental health practice across state lines for participating states. She is a trauma psychologist and has engaged in international critical incident response and organizational conflict resolution for many years. Leo is a Diplomate in Clinical Psychology and Group Psychology. He is the president-

elect of the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA). He has presented and authored extensively on the topics of group psychotherapy, trauma, dissociation, neurophysiology, and bilingual/bicultural treatment. He established the first bilingual/bicultural mental health treatment program at Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers, NY, where he served as the director for almost 20 years. He is currently co-editing the revised AGPA Trauma book: *Advances in Group Therapy: Trauma Treatment and Recovery* by Leiderman & Buchele.

MOTIVATION FOR THIS PROJECT

Why would an Israeli agree to teach group therapy to Iranian therapists? Iran is considered a fierce enemy of Israel, and its development of nuclear weapons is an existential threat to Israel and the Western world. Iranian leaders declare again and again that they wish to exterminate the State of Israel. Isn't this project like "sleeping with the enemy"? Although the discussion with the Iranian colleagues started before October 7th, and the first course began before Iran targeted Israel with more than 300 ballistic missiles, rockets, and drones, it can be debatable whether under the current conditions such a project would continue.

For Haim, the main reason to open and continue the project was the belief that this was the appropriate response to resolving the conflict in the Middle East. Haim believes that the attitude of "an eye for an eye" leaves the whole world blind. He has always believed that "Blood will have blood" as Shakespeare wrote in Macbeth Act 3, Scene 4. As a group analyst and a relational psychotherapist, he believes in dialogue in times of conflict whether in his therapy groups or as a way to resolve international conflicts (he wrote an article about the tasks of the group therapist in times of conflict: Weinberg, 2015). In addition, many Iranian therapists do not believe in the Iranian Islamic revolution and even oppose the Ayatollah regime. Avoiding teaching them about group therapy, and thus preventing Iranian citizens from good psychological services, is like punishing the Iranian population for the crimes of their dictator rulers. The situation reminded Haim of the academic ban against Israelis (BDS movement), to which he objects since it punishes mainly liberal intellectuals in Israel, who believe in human rights, for the actions of the Israeli government.

Teaching group therapy is teaching democracy, since in a group, each member has equal power and is equally encouraged to express their voice. The group analytic approach, specifically, sees the group analyst (conductor) not as a "leader" but as part of the group, whose interventions succumb to analysis as well. The definition of group analysis by Foulkes, the founder of this approach, is "group analysis is the analysis of the group *by* the group, including the conductor" (1964). Miriam Berger wrote a chapter in Friedman and Doron's book (2017) in which she reflects on the democratic values implicit in group analysis and its clinical praxis. Democracy aims to establish a social reality, where differences are acknowledged without domination, coercion, subjugation, or exclusion. These principles exist in group therapy and especially in group analysis.

Bottom line, for Haim, teaching these courses to Iranian therapists felt beyond a regular job, almost like a mission.

What motivated Kavita and Leo to join this project, being US citizens, in a country that is also in a state of hostility with Iran? Here are their answers:

Kavita considers herself a global citizen and, as such, has worked in many countries from the start of her career. Her work is grounded in social justice, and she has sought to bring her skills to developing countries where they are best put to practice. She has designed trauma healing interventions that involve individual and group support in countries plagued by natural disaster and conflict including Afghanistan, Palestine, Ukraine, Kenya, Mexico, Uganda, and Tanzania.

She was surprised that Iranians were interested and permitted to pursue group psychotherapy training. More than surprised, she felt inspired and was immediately supportive of Haim's endeavor. Kavita's organization, Therapists Beyond Borders, centers on non-violent co-existence so this was an obvious "yes". She believes that we must start

with ourselves when we strive for co-existence and healing. Given that she had spent time in Palestine and witnessed the widespread human rights violations there, she and Haim have opposing views and have been committed to sustaining their friendship in spite of their different belief systems and perspectives.

Having lived on three continents, being trilingual and tricultural, Leo is well versed in world politics. He is aware of the proxy wars between Iran and the US, and Iran and Israel. Likewise he is well aware of Iran's long history of promoting terrorism throughout the world including Iran's two unprovoked terror attacks in Argentina in 1994 against innocent civilians at the Israeli embassy and Jewish Center. He lost a cousin in the second terror attack which occurred on the block where he was born in Buenos Aires.

He has extensive cross-cultural training and experience facilitating and teaching trauma groups for citizens of many ethnic, cultural backgrounds and origins (Leiderman, 2020). He also has apolitical leadership experience being on different governmental, organizational, and mental health boards. He volunteered to be an instructor for this course wanting to promote group therapy training and practice with fellow colleagues in Iran.

STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

The first course started in November 2023. It was based on the Principles Course of the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA) and was composed of 8 weekly meetings, 2 hours each. The principles course is part of the AGPA requirement for becoming a Certified Group Psychotherapist. This course covers the theoretical requirement of the CGP and includes topics such as Yalom's therapeutic factors, change mechanisms in group therapy, neuroscience in groups, developmental models of groups, etc. Each of the three presenters gave two presentations. In addition, we also had one meeting in which Kavita and Haim co-led a demonstration group. In a demonstration group, we invited 8 volunteers from those who attended the course to participate in an unstructured group, where the leaders focus on the here-and-now and the relationships that develop in the group, thus resembling a virtual therapy group. The rest of the attendees observed the demo group and then we opened the group for discussion and learned from the shared experiences. We will report on the specific demo group and its reactions below.

There were about 60 participants in the course, which showed us that therapy in Iran is more developed than we had known and that they are eager to learn about group therapy. The participants' experience level as therapists was mixed: some seemed to be novices, and some were much more experienced in providing therapy and even group therapy. Many of them are aware and acquainted with Western knowledge in psychotherapy, especially with psychoanalytic approaches.

The lectures were given in English through Zoom and were simultaneously translated into Farsi by an Iranian interpreter. We used the business version of Zoom that allows two parallel language channels, one in English and one in Persian. We used PowerPoint presentations which were translated in advance into Farsi, and we left enough time for Q&A.

Before starting the course, one of the participants asked Haim whether he'd be ready to give a short lecture about group therapy to students in the psychology department at Tehran University. Haim agreed to do it pro bono, however, when the date approached, the organizer informed Haim that the authorities canceled the lecture given that he is Israeli. Kavita offered to step in and do the training pro bono and the authorities permitted this. 300 students participated in that short lecture.

This was an act of allyship in that Kavita harnessed her privilege to support Haim, who was being subjected to antisemitism and "cancelled" by the Iranian authorities based on his nationality. This is the essence of equity – using

our platform when we have agency to uplift a marginalized person's work. Haim, graciously, shared his materials and was comfortable with Kavita presenting his work without having his name attached to it for the greater cause of bringing psychotherapy to all corners of the globe.

Iran's economy suffers enormously from the world ban. Inflation is high and salaries are low. None of the participants could pay an amount close to what the presenters usually charge in the US (in fact, not even a tenth of it). All presenters for the course were ready to do it pro bono, but Haim found a generous donor who agreed to donate the money for this project. Ironically, this donor was an Orthodox Jew who made Aliya from the US to Israel and wanted to help other human beings go through the group-transforming experience that he went through being a long-term member of a modern analytic group facilitated by the late Dr. Louis Ormont. Another paradox in the process of providing this course.

After the success of this course (see below the feedback from the participants), the organizers asked Haim to organize another course. This time we decided to focus on Group Analysis, which is the common group therapy modality in the UK and Europe. Haim invited three distinguished group analysts, 2 from the UK (Earl Hopper and Sue Einhorn) and one from Denmark (Anne Lindhardt) to join him for a 9-week course. The course just started with 40 participants. It was launched a few days after the Iranian attack of more than 300 missiles and drones on Israel. It was almost surreal.

OUR IMPRESSIONS FROM DELIVERING THE COURSE

Our impression was that our Iranian colleagues were eager to learn, were very interested in the subject matter, and were very grateful for the course, sometimes because they felt so isolated in the world. Since Iran is stereotyped as a very conservative society, we were surprised by the openness of the participants. The main surprise came out in the demonstration group. A female participant was eager to share her story even before the group started. To our astonishment, she began sharing a story of family sexual abuse that happened to her sister years ago, and that she had never shared before. Although we are used to unexpected openness in a demonstration group, this was beyond any expectation, not only because in a conservative society such as Iran, we did not expect people to talk freely about sex, let alone open up family shameful secrets, but also because a demonstration group is not the appropriate place to deal with such an experience: it is not a therapy group, it is very time limited (one hour), and the boundaries are loose since it is observed by the audience. Like in any trauma case that is opened in the demo group, our difficult task in that case, was to prevent further details while not shaming the woman for sharing the trauma. We praised her for her courage but explained that she might not get what she needs in the limited time that we have. Luckily, she said that all she wanted was to abreact and take it off her chest. Later, when we discussed the demo group, the audience was perplexed as to why we did not encourage further exploration. It gave us the opportunity to explain the role of the group leader, especially in working with trauma. We also used the responses of the group members to the story, to point out society's classical responses to sexual abuse: Denial (one group member was sure that the protagonist was someone we "planted"), disbelief and even attacking the victim (another female group member criticized her for not sharing this event for years).

Half of the videos of the participants were turned off during the meetings. We asked them to open them so we could see their faces and connect better, but in vain. Only in retrospect, we understand that perhaps some of them wanted to disguise their faces to feel safe, in case some "spy" of the regime participated. We were also surprised by the amount of knowledge of Western psychology that the Iranian therapists had. It changed our misperception that psychotherapy is not very popular in Iran. Perhaps we only met that sector that is more privileged and less conservative.

FEEDBACK FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

What was your overall impression of the activity? What went well? What could have been improved?

- This course was very useful and informative for me. I learned new theories and good clinical and practical examples were given. In particular, I found the parts about neurology fascinating. The cost of the course was reasonable compared to similar courses, and the quality was much higher than the previous courses I had taken in the field of group therapy training.
- Very helpful and instructive
- Thank you for your hard effort, I look forward for the upcoming courses
- I generally felt good, especially the Q&A section was helpful.
- I learned the principles of group therapy, but moreover I learned the patience and communication skills from the instructors
- The duration of the course could have been longer to cover more details. The topics and the communication between professors and students were very good. I wish there was a time when they could teach the material through role-playing. One demo session was not enough
- I learned the theoretical foundations of group therapy and got acquainted with its frameworks. I did not receive any information about cultural interventions.
- The course was very good, the way of teaching and the selection of instructors was at a good level, thank you

SUMMARY

This project of teaching group psychotherapy online to Iranian therapists, by three Americans (one of them an Israeli American, two of them Jews) is a model for collaboration between mental health professionals whose countries are considered enemies. This project aims to create a dialogue between colleagues from hostile countries and to bring democratic values to the therapeutic community of a country governed by a totalitarian regime. In addition, this project indirectly suggests an opposite approach from the BDS movement, which does not distinguish between colleagues and academic institutes who promote peace and liberal values and between a government who applies a problematic political agenda.

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TRAUMA AND HEALING, PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE, OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

BY DAVID GERBI

The violent pogrom of October 7 was a new trauma in the history of the Jewish people. Not since 1948, with the birth of the State of Israel, had there been a massacre of Jewish civilians of such magnitude, in terms of both numbers and cruelty. For those who have already forgotten, let me remind you that, in just one day, the terrorist organization Hamas massacred 1,200 innocent, defenseless people— Israelis and foreigners, Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. Entire families were slaughtered, women were repeatedly raped, children were burned, and young people attending a festival celebrating life, peace, and love were mowed down by machine guns. Two hundred forty people were taken hostage, paraded like trophies through the streets of Gaza to the cheers of the crowd. Even lifeless bodies were beaten and desecrated.

The international community's solidarity with Israel was short-lived. The moment Israel acted to neutralize Hamas, which continued to fire missiles and refused to free the hostages, it was condemned. Hamas started the war with the October 7 massacre, fully aware it would provoke an Israeli reaction. In an unacceptable inversion of reality, the world judged Israel as the aggressor and Palestinians as the victims. Fueled by antisemitism propaganda, a media pogrom was unleashed globally, spilling over into streets and universities, leading to boycotts of scientific conferences, art exhibitions, and music and sports events—all aimed at delegitimizing the very existence of the State of Israel. It wasn't difficult to ignite this hate because, for centuries, it has smoldered beneath the surface, always ready to reemerge. We Jews are accepted only in the role of victims, and if we respond to aggression, we are condemned. We are the only people denied the right to defend ourselves because the world hates the Jew who fights; it prefers the Jew who suffers. This is shameful. We no longer accept this role of victims; we must demand recognition of our right to exist and to self-defense. Every Jew must have the right to live in safety, in Israel as well as anywhere else in the world. Today, to those who wish for our death, I respond with the words of Golda Meir: "I prefer your condemnation to your condolences."

I am aware that all that is happening brings mourning and suffering to both the Israeli and Palestinian people. I feel great sorrow for the Palestinians. Ending the war would be simple: free the hostages and stop firing missiles. Hamas' ideology, however, invokes martyrdom and values no life, sowing hatred and considering the sacrifice of Palestinian lives as necessary to achieve its sole objective—the destruction of the State of Israel. Its communication strategy

has proven remarkably effective; they have managed to turn bloodthirsty terrorists into celebrated revolutionaries in the collective imagination, who are emulated as martyrs for freedom, only because their enemy is Israel, the quintessential Jew.

The problem of collective, archetypal anti-Jewish hatred remains unresolved. No other conflict in the world is scrutinized as closely as this one is; the suffering of other peoples is not met with the same empathy shown toward the Palestinian people. Meanwhile, it's conveniently forgotten that Hamas used funds intended for the welfare of the Palestinian people to build a vast network of underground tunnels and to buy missiles and other weapons, using schools and hospitals as arms depots with UNRWA's complicity, using innocent civilians as human shields, and suppressing any dissenting voice under its dictatorial regime with death. Hamas' goal is not to bring happiness and prosperity to the Palestinian people but to destroy Israel. Under better leadership, Gaza would have become another jewel of the Mediterranean; a small but thriving enclave with a promising future. Instead, the sight of Gaza's ruins and the innocent Palestinian dead grieves me. The masses of displaced Israelis and Palestinians who cannot return to their homes and who live with fear and uncertainty about tomorrow disturb and sadden me.

Since October 7, feelings of anger, pain, anguish, shock, and helplessness have been common among Jews everywhere. Each of us experiences these emotions in different ways, depending on our personal history. I am one of the 800,000 Jewish refugees from North Africa and the Middle East: Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Libya. In these Muslim countries, we lived under Sharia law as *dhimmis*, second-class citizens, who were forced to flee to save our lives when Jews dared to defend and to assert themselves on the international stage. No one took to the streets or to universities to defend us. We Jewish refugees received no support or aid from any United Nations organization, unlike the Palestinian refugees, for whom UNRWA was specifically created. We are the forgotten refugees because we did not make enough noise. We did not shout our grievances. We did not become terrorists because it is not in our nature. On the contrary, we invested time and energy in the effort to rebuild our lives honestly, contributing to the development of the few countries that welcomed us.

But now it is time to make our voices heard. Very few know of our history of persecution, flight, and exile, our suffering, our hard uphill struggle to rebuild new lives in new countries. We were stateless, deprived of dignity and our possessions. While the world bemoaned the fate of the Palestinians, no one bothered to tell our stories, or to reflect on the abuses and traumas we endured—buried, suppressed traumas that are easily awakened.

I arrived in Rome in 1967, and am grateful to Italy, which welcomed our community of 5,000 Libyan Jewish refugees. Today I am an Italian citizen; I grew up in an atmosphere of freedom and democracy, worked since the age of twelve, and studied to become a psychoanalyst, finally also able to heal my personal refugee trauma. Yet, in recent months, I have once again witnessed—here in Italy, as in Tripoli in 1967—Arab demonstrators shouting with the same hatred, "Edbah El Jahud"— *Slaughter the Jews!* I am enraged. How can I once again be a witness and victim of Arab hatred in a democratic country like Italy? How is this possible?

My dormant trauma from the anti-Jewish revolt I experienced as a twelve-year-old in Libya suddenly resurfaces. The memory is quite vivid.

It's June 5, 1967; war has broken out between Israel and the Arab countries. I hear the shouts of the enraged crowd passing below our home: "*Edbah El Jahud! Slaughter the Jew! Slaughter the Jew!*" We are hiding, in absolute silence so as not to be discovered. Six children and our parents, alone, shutters closed, suffocating heat, very little food—40 days and 40 nights. I relive the terror of being killed, as sadly happened to many Jews who didn't make it home before the pogrom began. The images of Jewish homes and shops set on fire comes back to me. I remember the smoke that filled the streets. I see the scene of the smoke through the shutters and smell the suffocating odor from the burning building across from our home. I see my parents' faces again—calm toward us children but full of anguish, fear, helplessness, and faith in G-d.

After days of interminable anxiety and uncertainty, we were granted salvation: a quick escape, with one suitcase and 20 pounds per family. We had to leave our homeland, our possessions, our cemeteries, which were later desecrated by the construction of highways; cemeteries where victims of the pogroms of 1945, 1948, 1967 are also buried.

Exactly like October 7: burned homes, men, women, and children massacred, pregnant women disemboweled. One hundred ninety-three dead, including my relatives. The roots of this conflict are all too familiar to me: an ideology that, for generations, has sought to oppress, marginalize, and eliminate the Jewish minority in the Middle East and North Africa. The current violence perpetrated by Hamas is the latest manifestation of this fanatical, extremist, terrorist ideology.

Since October 7, 2023 my life has changed; my sleep is no longer as peaceful as it once was, and my subconscious asserts itself even more through dreams. On February 19, 2024, I had a dream. In the dream, a single phrase appeared in English: "We Hate the Jews. I am Jewish—why do you hate me?" I woke up drenched in sweat, with the question pulsing in my temples: why have Jews been hated, persecuted, expelled, killed, and humiliated in every era? First the Pharaohs, then the Babylonians, then the Romans. Titus's troops looted and destroyed the Second Temple of Jerusalem. You can still see, sculpted on Titus' arch, the sacred menorah carried to Rome on the shoulders of defeated Jews. The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE marked the beginning of the diaspora, the dispersion of a people without a homeland, living at the mercy of rulers' whims, exiles who for two thousand years directed their prayers toward Jerusalem, toward the Temple that was and remains the holiest place for Judaism, despite the fact that only the Western Wall—the Wailing Wall—remains. Two thousand years of expulsions and persecutions, accusations and pogroms, all based on lies about killing Christ and poisoning wells, greedy moneylenders, power-seekers, child killers. Jews have always been demonized, excluded, and persecuted.

We are "the other" par excellence. This centuries' long Jew hatred culminated in the Holocaust, leaving six million dead and entire communities lost forever.

The list of persecutions, expulsions, and exterminations is staggeringly long, although despite everything, the survivors have always managed to be reborn. But such a painful past has left wounds deeply embedded in the Jewish collective unconscious. In response to the tragedy on October 7, I found some solace in the song of the Jewish Passover, which recalls the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt: *Veisheamda* — "In every generation, there are those who rise up against us to destroy us, and G-d saves us from their hands." Thanks to the promise G-d made to Abraham. Unfortunately, victims of wars and persecutions are often paralyzed by trauma, feeling constantly in danger and unable to react, frozen by fear. I have grappled with the legacy of my painful past to find answers... as Jung said, "We only overcome what we face." We can turn our backs on what we have inherited, or confront it, hoping to move forward and prevent that trauma from being passed on to future generations, causing them pain.

I decided to abandon the role of victim. I made this decision after reliving my trauma for the first time. On September 11, 2001, watching the Twin Towers engulfed in smoke, I felt faint: the smoke reminded me of the burning houses in front of mine in 1967. That immense pain drove me to seek a distant place to retreat, to find inspiration and peace. I went on a bit of a fugue stretching from Zurich, to Venezuela, and in multiple places I kept hearing about the Esalen Institute in California. Then, in a stunning dream one night I saw a large bear. I reached out to the institute to learn they were putting on a workshop about Native American "bear medicine." I took this as a sign and went to Esalen where I wrote my story: *Builders of Peace: Story of a Jewish Refugee from Libya.*

The book helped me process much of my past. I imagined that the suffering from persecutions, wars, and fears would no longer touch me. I was wrong. With great bitterness and disorientation, October 7 has resurfaced antisemitism like a returning virus, and it is spreading everywhere—even among my Italian psychoanalyst colleagues.

I responded to the massacre on October 7 by working on a scientific project between Italy and Israel, and was appointed to organize a conference on trauma and healing in Rome, scheduled for June 9, 2024. I shuttled between Israel and Italy, coordinating the efforts of multiple organization such as the New Israel Jungian Association (NIJA), the Italian Association OF Analytical Psychology (IAAP)), and association for Research in Analytical Psychology (ARAP), my Italian colleagues canceled the conference at the last moment due to the uncomfortable and dangerous presence of Jews and Israelis. It was postponed to an unspecified date, without setting either a follow-up meeting with me or a specific date for the conference.

My Israeli colleagues were stunned by this turnaround. This decision was especially disheartening, considering that AIPA's founders, Ernst Bernhard and Gianfranco Tedeschi, were Jewish. Today, AIPA has only one Jewish member, Alessia Anticoli, who was enthusiastic about the initiative but became enraged upon learning why the conference had been canceled. Dr. Anticoli was very helpful in fighting the antisemitism in the Jung Institute and supported me in the creation of the new convention. My colleague Barbara Cerminara, an Italian Jew who lives in the UK and is a descendant of Holocaust victims, was also enraged and has been very helpful in the organization of the new convention (See Cerminara, in Letters, pg 8).

What is the logic at work here? I ask myself, and I ask you: Can antisemitism prevail in a scientific discussion, hidden behind false solidarity that conceals cowardice, at the expense of research and progress? But we Jews are accustomed to moving forward, and this day — at the prestigious headquarters of the Einaudi Foundation, with the institutions that have joined and the speakers who honor us with their presence — is the tangible proof of this. We will continue to consider culture and research as a place for dialogue, debate, and peacemaking.

I am a *Boneh Shalom* — a builder of peace — and I believe it is essential always to keep the door open to dialogue, respect for different ethnicities, religions, and identities, especially for the sake of future generations. To those who wish for peaceful coexistence, I answer as Ben Gurion said: "Those who do not believe in miracles are not realists."

The Abraham Accords of September 15, 2020, signed by Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain (followed by Morocco and Sudan) represent an emerging miracle. Allow me to read the opening statement. It reads: "We, the undersigned, recognize the importance of maintaining and strengthening peace in the Middle East and throughout the world on the basis of mutual understanding and coexistence, as well as respect for human dignity and freedom, including religious freedom..." This declaration fills us with hope, a great step toward the normalization of relations between Israel and Arab countries.

Four years later, the Abraham Accords still provide a beacon of hope for stability in the Middle East. We all hope for an end to hostilities, the end of suffering, and the resumption of diplomatic efforts towards a peaceful and fruitful coexistence between two states, the State of Israel and Palestine. What today seems like a utopia could become reality tomorrow. This is my commitment as a Jew born in an Arab country, tired of wars, vengeance, and recriminations. The dream of a former refugee, who became a fighter for the defense of freedom, democracy, and human rights. I conclude with a saying of our sages from the Torah: "Who is the strongest person? He who turns his enemy into a friend." *Shalom! Salam!*

SYMBOLIC RAPE: THE EXPERIENCE OF A JEWISH WOMAN IN THE DIASPORA IN A TIME OF ANTISEMITIC RESURGENCE

BY BARBARA CERMINARA

I of course belong to a race which in the Middle Ages was held responsible for all epidemics and which today is blamed for the disintegration of the Austrian Empire and the German defeat. Such experiences have a sobering effect and are not conducive to make one believe in illusions.

– Sigmund Freud, 1923[1]

It was my philosophy teacher from the Antilles who reminded me one day: 'When you hear someone insulting the Jews, pay attention; he is talking about you'.[2]

– Frantz Fanon, 1952

1. Introduction

Mine is an attempt to describe October 7th, 2023 (and what followed) in terms of a violent and traumatic awakening of consciousness. Through an auto-ethnographic analysis, I will explore how my personal experience as a Jewish woman living in the diaspora is inextricably intertwined with the broader history of the Jewish collective (Plummer, 2000; Chang, 2016; Ellis & Adams, 2020).

1 *Letters of Sigmund Freud.*
2 *Black Skin, White Masks.*

October 7th amplified the transgenerational trauma that we share as Jews, merging personal and collective narratives (Hopper, 2007; Papadopoulos, 2009), and forcing painful realizations. [3]

In her 'Neurosis and the rape of Demeter/Persephone', Jungian analyst Patricia Berry (2008, 2013) defines this type of awakening in terms of 'rape into consciousness' (2008, p. 28; 2013, p. 204), an expression that I interpret here as *the rape of consciousness* so that it may acquire a new awareness.

What does it mean, then, to be raped into consciousness? Symbolically raped in order to gain a new understanding? And how does this idea of Berry's, which James Hillman (1979) takes up in his *The Dream and the Underworld*, reflect my experience as a Jewish woman who currently lives in the United Kingdom, where incidents of hatred towards Jews have multiplied vertiginously? A country where the very institutions called upon to protect us have shown us indifference, if not open hostility? It is these themes I address below: first by unpacking Berry's idea of *rape into consciousness,* and then by illustrating how this idea can in some way reflect my own experience.

The mass rapes of October 7th forced me to look at the ways in which symbolic and actual rape intertwine, calling into question certainties that I thought were unshakeable. I wonder whether the Jewish Question – that is to say, the debate over the integration of Jews into European societies that began with the emancipation of European Jewry – has ever been resolved (Fine & Spencer, 2017; Seymour, 2024). The diaspora experiment, far from being concluded, seems to be faltering under the weight of centuries of prejudice and persecution. I wonder whether the time has come to radically question the future of the Jewish people in the Western diaspora; whether it is time to turn the page and declare the experiment a failure.

2. Symbolic Rape: Berry

Berry presents an archetypal reading of Persephone's abduction. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter (Persephone's mother) begins with the harrowing abduction of the young Persephone by her uncle Hades. Persephone is forcefully pulled into the depths of the underworld, where the innocent goddess becomes the unwilling bride of the Lord of the Dead.[4]

> Demeter I begin to sing, the fair-tressed awesome goddess,
> herself and her slim-ankled daughter whom Aidoneus [Hades]
> seized; Zeus, heavy-thundering and mighty-voiced, gave her,
> without the consent of Demeter of the bright fruit and golden
> sword. (1-4)
> he [Hades] snatched the unwilling maid into his golden chariot
> and led her off lamenting. (19-20)

The *Hymn* clearly registers the brutality of the attack: the maiden is overpowered by force and suffers violence at the hand of her assailant (Foley, 2013). Her mother laments:

> I heard her voice throbbing through the barren air
> as if she were suffering violence. (67-68)

3 Earl Hopper (2007) explains that in traumatised systems the complexity of individual experiences is often replaced by a more simplified group narrative. Similarly, Renos Papadopoulos (2009) writes that collective trauma can cause the needs of the group to take priority over the needs of individual members, creating a temporary sense of unity by suppressing both intra-group conflicts as well as intrapsychic ones.

4 All my citations from the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* are derived from Foley (2013) and make use the author's translation.

We then witness Demeter's devastating grief and fury at Zeus' treacherous scheme.

Berry interprets the story in terms of the reorientation of an ego which the author considers excessively one-sided: Persephone is too naïve, and Demeter too superficial. In these cases, says Berry, a movement towards introversion, the descent into hell (here represented by the underworld where Hades resides), becomes necessary and it is therefore activated in the unconscious. For its part, the ego perceives this movement as a terrible violation, indeed as a rape.[5]

Berry tells us that when the myth is constellated, rape must be understood as a necessary initiation rite: the passage from a state of excessive naivety and unconsciousness to that of a more mature awareness.

Of course, Berry's interpretation concerns the life of the inner world and the dialectics between ego and unconscious. In my case, however, this brutal intrapsychic movement was activated by external events, and in particular by the orgy of misogynistic violence inflicted on young women on October 7th, 2023. Was there a Demeter-like quality to my consciousness that needed realigning? Perhaps. Regardless, this grotesque re-enactment of the myth's own configuration – rape, abduction, and the underworld in the guise of tunnels – has haunted me like a nightmare, leaving a sickening residue of desecration. I trust the audience is able to appreciate that the theme of rape holds a dual resonance in this context, encompassing both symbolic rape and actual rape.

3. Symbolic Rape: Self, Family, and Collective

Did this violation of the most innocent and vulnerable aspect of me, my inner Persephone, yield any new understanding? Had this descent into the underworld brought forth fresh awareness? To clarify, I must at this point introduce some autobiographical material to illustrate the ways in which the massacres of October 7*th*, and what followed, have a bearing on my story, my family's, and the history of the Jewish collective.

As Jung himself explains in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, there is an impersonal karma that is passed down through the generations, calling us to 'answer questions which fate had posed to [our] forefathers' (Jung, 1963/1989, p. 233). Jung employs the concept of 'karma' to signify the transmission of psychological disturbances between generations. Today we use the term *transgenerational trauma (or intergenerational trauma)* to refer to this same phenomenon.[6]

Here I would like to focus in particular on the concept of *time collapse* introduced by the psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan (1998, 2001, 2006; Volkan et al 2002), an expert in the mediation of international conflicts. The concept of time collapse describes how, under certain circumstances, collective traumatic events from the past can resurface violently in the present. By merging past and present, time collapse creates a psychic space in which individual and collective injuries intersect. Vivid imagery, intrusive thoughts, nightmares, and hallucinations surface -- psychic material that the individual often struggles to contain, as it primarily stems from the collective psyche of the group.

Upon viewing the graphic images streamed online by the attackers on October 7th, I was confronted with a surge of

5 Demeter's neurosis, according to Berry, lies in the goddess' resistance to penetrating the archetype in its depths. The goddess remains on the surface, among humans and everyday things.

6 The exploration of group phenomena through the lens of transgenerational trauma transmission is a topic of interest across multiple disciplines (Lu, 2013). In Jungian psychology, the concept of *cultural complex* provides a framework for understanding how collective trauma can be transmitted across generations, shaping the psychological landscape of families and groups. Developed by Thomas Singer and Samuel Kimbles (2004a, 2004b, 2004c), the theory of cultural complex draws heavily from Jung's complex theory, and especially from his research on family complexes (see in particular Jung, 1909, 1934, 1935; Jacobi, 1959). It also takes inspiration from Volkan's work, particularly his notion of chosen trauma. In fact, the concept of cultural complex shares significant similarities with Volkan's idea of *chosen trauma* (Cerminara, 2020).

emotions. My anguish was not mine alone: it belonged rather to the Jewish collective, to that history that binds us as a people. In these moments, as Volkan suggests, the present time effectively collapsed into the past.

In this state of extreme vulnerability, I was confronted with the troubling question of a Palestinian friend who asked: 'Barbara, do you think Arabs and Jews will ever be able to live together?' The weight of this question was immense, as I grappled with the complex history and ongoing trauma on both sides. The forced displacement of Mizrahi Jews from the Middle East and North Africa, the extinction of ancient Jewish communities that predated the Arab conquest, and the countless atrocities endured by both Palestinians and Israelis created an overwhelming sense of despair.

Media reports further deepened my sense of alienation: many view the penetration into Israel on *Simchat Torah* 2023 as an act of resistance and liberation. But for us, this breach marked the horrific beginning of a systematic violation, with women used as weapons of war.

Mass rape in wartime is a devastating form of violence that extends beyond individual victims. This violence has a dual nature: physical and symbolic (Levenkron, 2010). As a profound invasion of the woman's body, the act of rape mirrors the broader invasion of her homeland. Moreover, the violent appropriation of the female reproductive apparatus constitutes a catastrophic interruption, effectively seizing the woman's reproductive line (Gaca, 2010).

Returning to my personal history, it should be noted that the Racial Laws promulgated in Italy in 1938 irrevocably altered my family's life. My grandfather's world collapsed as he endured mounting persecution. He was a thoroughly assimilated Jew, a quintessential product of Jewish emancipation in Italy. Yet, the illusion of integration was violently shattered with the imposition of the Racial Laws, which stripped him of his rights and exposed the fragility of my family's existence. Ostracised by former friends and colleagues, he lost his livelihood. Forced into hiding with his brother and elderly mother, he was denounced, arrested, and imprisoned. From there, their journey led to the Fossoli transit camp, a prelude to the abyss of Auschwitz (CDEC; Picciotto, 2019, p. 489; Cerminara, 2020).

To put my family's ordeal in historical context, please note that historian Michele Sarfatti (2018) has demonstrated how fascist antisemitism met with much greater popular consensus than most historians recognize (Clifford, 2013). But the post-war myth of Italians' 'brava gente' has proven difficult to dispel. The myth downplays fascist violence and portrays Italians as innocent victims of Fascist and Nazi regimes, projecting Italian shame and guilt onto the German people. This inversion boils down to: 'bad German – good Italian' (Clifford 2013, p. 82; see also Capristo & Lalongo, 2019). Indeed, to date any narrative which considers fascist antisemitism as an autochthonous expression rather than a simple tactical move aimed at pleasing the transalpine allies meets resistance (Clifford, 2013). Despite the infamous Racial Laws which reduced many families to poverty, including mine, and the handing over of the Jews to the Nazi occupiers, most Italians do not consider themselves or their progenitors responsible for the persecution of their fellow citizens: our German counterparts are assigned the task of atoning for Italian crimes as well (Cerminara, 2020; Klein, 2018).

These memories of my family come crashing down on me as I live through the horrors of October 7th and its aftermath. My current experience mirrors this not-so-distant past, especially the lack of support from friends and colleagues. By way of example, on October 10th, three days after the attack, a well-known Jungian analyst explained how our difficulties in understanding the scenes of jubilation in response to the massacres of October 7th reflect a lack of empathy. The scholar invited us to use our imagination in grasping the motivations of those who saw the massacre of Jews as an act of resistance. Just as appallingly, the president of the American Psychological Association Division on Psychoanalysis, within three weeks of the attack broadcast the message that 'We need to reckon with how horrific liberation can be' (Nelson, 2023).

Comments like these provoked a desperation so intense in me that it almost felt out of place. It was here that I understood how, mixed with the present, slivers of the past had re-emerged, passed down from family and acquaintances, but also, and above all, from my mother, who didn't talk much about the war. In these moments, the present time dissolved into the past, as Volkan describes.

4. A Twisted Reality

My life since October 7th has taken on a surreal quality, as if it were a twisted mirror image of my previous existence. In this warped sense of reality, I have questioned my sanity: 'Am I perhaps mentally ill?'. These are not my words, but Jean Améry's. His reply, 'I know that what oppresses me is no neurosis, but rather precisely reflected reality' (1966/1980, p. 96), is of cold comfort, as Améry's sense of alienation echoes through a history that seems destined to repeat itself. The *psychosocial* dimension of my condition, and that of many diaspora Jews, cannot be brushed aside as irrelevant. It would make no sense to 'cure' its effects in the individual. And herein lies the difficulty I am encountering as I attempt to navigate an unreceptive environment. Healing becomes a complex endeavour without a supportive community.

The callousness of many of my colleagues intensifies the profound sense of isolation caused by the sudden surge of anti-Jewish sentiment in Western countries. Berry's concept of symbolic rape acquires a chilling relevance in this context. The recent wave of antisemitism in the West brings to mind horrors of the past. The mass rapes of October 7th demonstrate how the pogroms of Lvov, in which Jewish women were brutally massacred and raped in the streets, are not distant history but a present-day reality.

5. A Traumatic Awakening

This intertwining of symbolic and actual rape has prompted a profound awakening. Former certainties now seem dubious, leaving me to wonder if the Jewish Question has ever been resolved. It was believed that the Holocaust had silenced the age-old problem of the integration of the diaspora Jew. We realize, however, that the Holocaust did not settle this matter. To this day, the question of Jewish existence in the diaspora remains unresolved for many Jews, and in particular those who, while critical of Israeli politics, refuse to cast Israel outside the global community. The Jewish Question therefore persists, as does antisemitism.

The disturbing events unfolding on Western soil, from the obsessive and racist targeting of Jewish and Israeli students on American campuses to the hurtful defacing of my family's *stumbling stones* in Florence,[7] are among the most recent symptom of this endless irrational dysfunction.

Known in German as *Stolpersteine*, the stumbling stones are brass plaques installed at the entrances of buildings where Jews were arrested. These memorials are found throughout Europe. Unfortunately, my family's stumbling stones in Florence were vandalized with acid in March 2024. I was shocked to discover this distressing fact in the Italian regional news. Sadly, I learned that numerous other Jewish families have faced similar acts of defacement, as these stumbling stones have become focal points for unwarranted anti-Jewish hostility in Italy and across Europe.

My inner Persephone has been well and truly violated over the past year. As a diaspora Jew, I'm haunted by questions about our future in the West: can we truly achieve lasting integration in a society that seems to have forgotten the lessons of history? Is our continued presence in the diaspora sustainable, or is it time to admit failure and chart a new

7 https://www.rainews.it/tgr/toscana/articoli/2024/03/-firenze-pietre-d-inciampo-vandalizzate--6884f687-c90d-4391-a715-394c87413c28.html

course?[8]

At a time when diaspora Jews find themselves staring at the possibility of a life in the shadow, just like their predecessors, I hope that bringing this reality to light opens up space for reflection particularly here in Rome, a city that has indeed witnessed racial persecutions, but also some notable acts of courage and solidarity.[9]

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8 In a May 2024 *Fathom* opinion piece, Professor Shalom Lappin echoes this question, concluding with the following statement: 'Jews, particularly young Jews, are unlikely to forget the shocking experiences that they have been subjected to over the past several months. Many may well come to the conclusion that the long-term prospects for a secure, open, self-affirming Jewish life in their home countries are not encouraging [...] The title of this article poses the question "Is it time to leave?" The deepening of the crisis in democracy that we have seen over the past several decades throughout much of the West has been highlighted by the reactions to 7 October and the events that followed it. These reactions suggest that a positive answer to this question has become increasingly plausible' (https://fathomjournal.org/opinion-is-it-time-to-leave-the-resurgence-of-antisemitism-in-the-modern-world/).

9 https://www.liberationroute.com/pois/8/k-syndrome-on-the-tiber-island; https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/5221268

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SOUTH AFRICAN HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS' CRITIQUES OF ISRAEL: DECOLONIAL SOLIDARITY OR ANTISEMITIC BIAS?

BY MARTIN STROUS

Abstract

This paper critically examines the growing trend among some South African healthcare professionals and/or their associated professional organizations of drawing parallels between Israel's policies and South Africa's apartheid legacy. Legitimate criticism of government policies is important; however, the use of terms like "colonial," "apartheid," or "genocide" to describe Israel raise significant questions about historical accuracy, the application of double standards, and antisemitism. The paper explores South Africa's apartheid history, its impact on South African psychologists, and allegations levied by psychological and medical organizations against Israel. The paper advocates for a more ethically grounded discourse that avoids harmful stereotypes and the potential destabilization of professional relationships.

Introduction

South Africa's apartheid regime (1948–1994) institutionalized a deeply racist, segregationist order that systematically oppressed the Black majority and privileged the White minority. This history has profoundly influenced the moral and political consciousness of South African health professionals. Today, many of these professionals draw on the apartheid experience to challenge perceived injustices elsewhere in the world and specifically in Israel.

Over the last decade, and particularly since October 2023, criticism of Israel by South African healthcare organizations has intensified. Public statements, academic articles and social media posts on sites hosted by some South African healthcare organizations echo the language of the anti-apartheid movement, alleging "medical apartheid" and "colonialism" in Israel's treatment of Gazans. While such critiques resonate with local experiences of oppression, questions arise concerning the accuracy and fairness of equating Israel with a colonial or apartheid enterprise—especially given the multi-ethnic reality of Jewish communities and the historical context of Jewish

self-determination. The critiques of Israel go further to claim that it is guilty of "genocide." This paper examines the critiques, assessing whether they genuinely reflect anti-apartheid values of equity and liberation, or whether such critiques risk slipping into harmful double standards and antisemitic tropes.

Apartheid and Its Impact on Mental Health Services

Under apartheid, South Africa enforced strict racial hierarchies, granting political, economic and social power to the White minority while denying Black South Africans basic human rights. These inequalities were acutely reflected in mental healthcare (Strous, 2003).

Public mental health facilities were poorly resourced and largely inaccessible to the Black majority. By contrast, White communities had more ready access to private mental health services that were well funded and culturally attuned to their needs (Strous, 2003). Compounding this inequality was the near exclusion of Black psychologists and African cultural perspectives from mainstream psychology, which remained largely Eurocentric.

These injustices galvanized a movement within the profession. Progressive psychologists and activists challenged the notion of a "value-free" or apolitical psychology, arguing instead that ethical responsibility required confronting systemic oppression. They advocated community-based, socially engaged mental health initiatives.

Decolonization Discourse in South Africa

Despite South Africa's transition to a nonracial constitutional democracy in 1994, racial inequalities and socio-economic disparities continue to prevail (Modiri, 2012). Renewed calls for "decolonization" have gained momentum, aiming to confront the enduring legacies of colonialism and apartheid that remain deeply entrenched within the country's academic, social and cultural frameworks.

In psychology, some scholars emphasize that the field must free itself from Eurocentric models that once underpinned oppressive structures. Decolonial psychologists urge for a reclaiming of African knowledge systems and cultural practices, reshaping academic curricula and cultivating an explicitly socially engaged psychology (Pillay, 2017; Segalo & Cakata, 2017). The goal is not simply to add non-Western perspectives but to unsettle the 'coloniality' of unequal power relations.

The Psychological Society of South Africa's Position on Israel

Within this milieu, the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) has published statements that express solidarity with Palestinians and compared Israeli policies to apartheid (PsySSA, 2020, 2023). PsySSA's Decolonising Psychology Interest Group emphasizes the need to dismantle colonial mindsets in psychology. In Youth Day 2024 commemorations, the society posted material evoking Nelson Mandela's assertion that South Africa's freedom remains incomplete without the freedom of Palestinians (PsySSA, 2024b).

Furthermore, in October 2024, PsySSA honored South Africa's legal team at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) with the 4th Steve Biko/Frantz Fanon Award. PsySSA credited the team for pursuing claims of genocide against Israel (PsySSA, 2024c).

These public endorsements reflect the views of certain segments within the South African government. The African National Congress has aligned with BRICS nations such as Iran and adopted a critical stance toward Israel.

Broader Critiques by South African Healthcare Professionals

Beyond PsySSA, other healthcare leaders and medical organizations have made anti-Israel statements, including, *inter alia*, the following:

1. Shabir Madhi, a prominent vaccinologist and medical faculty Dean, posted inflammatory comments, including likening Israel's prime minister to Hitler and lauding a Hamas leader (South African Jewish Report, 2024).

2. The *South African Journal of Bioethics and Law* published articles denouncing Israel for "medical apartheid," systematic targeting of healthcare infrastructure and genocide (Mahomed, 2023; Soni, 2023; Sathar, 2023). These critiques invoke South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle and at least one paper advocates for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) as an "ethical responsibility" congruent with the anti-apartheid movement (Moolla & Jacub, 2024).

3. In 2024, the South African Muslim Network (SAMNET) and the Islamic Medical Association of South Africa (IMASA) protested the "Future of Health Summit," hosted by a prominent medical insurer. They denounced the insurer for including several expert speakers from Sheba Hospital in Israel (under the Israeli Ministry of Health). This was even though the summit also featured experts on innovative medical technologies from around the world, including several from Arab countries. SAMNET and IMASA claimed that the International Court of Justice had ruled that Israel was guilty of genocide, ethnic cleansing and collective punishment.

SAMNET and IMASA further claimed, without evidence, that the insurer's members opposed engagement with Israeli institutions. This reflects a broader trend of organizations positioning themselves as representatives or voices for others. PsySSA often presents itself as *the* representative body for South African psychology, which it is not. The African National Congress makes claims of genocide against Israel, despite differing opinions within South Africa's Government of National Unity on the matter.

Assessing Coloniality and Genocide Claims

Rejecting the portrayal of Israel as Colonial

Arguments that frame Israel as a colonial state often draw on frameworks popularized by Frantz Fanon (1963), who sought to expose the oppression inherent in colonial racism. However, both Fanon and the decolonization movement have erred by oversimplifying Jewish and Israeli history.

Fanon, a significant source of inspiration for decolonization thinkers, investigated how antisemitism and anti-Black racism frequently overlapped. While he observed that Jews and Black people experienced systemic prejudice, he believed Jews generally had a more accessible path to assimilation in European societies (Frosh, 2020). Despite championing the need for both groups to assert their identities in the face of oppression, Fanon focused predominantly on the suffering of colonized people of color rather than that of predominantly white European Jews. Notably, he referred to the Holocaust as a "little family quarrel"—an offensive remark that trivialized the magnitude of the *Shoah*, a term that describes the calamity of the Holocaust. This may have been to challenge and "decenter" (Cheyette, 2019) Eurocentric perspectives and focus on the experience of the colonized. Fanon, an early activist for decolonization, urged those in previously colonized settings, such as South Africa, not to fashion themselves after Europe (Joosub, 2021). Still, Fanon's depiction of Jews as uniformly "White" and European (Frosh, 2020) failed to account for vast Middle Eastern and North African (Mizrahi) Jewish populations, including Jews of color who fled or were expelled from countries such as Iraq, Yemen, Morocco, and Egypt (Burston, 2023; Goldstein, 2023).

From a critical psychology perspective, "Whiteness" encompasses the systemic and structural dynamics of power and privilege that have historically advantaged predominantly white, European societies while marginalizing others. However, by neglecting the experiences of Mizrahi and other non-white Jews, the decolonial movement—rooted in these critical perspectives—risks perpetuating the very oversight it seeks to address: the erasure of diverse lived experiences.

Israel's establishment in 1948, following a UN resolution passed in 1947, was part of an anti-colonial struggle against the British Mandate. The founding of the State of Israel took place in the aftermath of both the Holocaust and the expulsion of numerous Jews from Arab countries, situating Israel as a refuge for a historically persecuted people rather than a mere colonial outpost (Burston, 2023; Frosh, 2020). Accusations of "colonial oppression" and the implication of an inevitable Jewish "Whiteness" perpetuates antisemitic stereotypes by framing Jews—long subject to persecution—as oppressors.

Jewish identification and solidarity with Israel have largely increased following the October 2023 Hamas attacks, at least in America, the largest Jewish diaspora community outside of Israel. A survey by the American Jewish Committee (2024) reported increased identification with Israel and Jewish heritage. This renewed unity highlights Israel's role as an ancestral Jewish homeland. Portraying Israel as a colonial venture is culturally insensitive, trivializing the deep-rooted Jewish connection to an indigenous homeland.

Claims of Genocide

Some South African healthcare professionals laud their government's accusations of genocide against Israel at the International Court of Justice. Under international law, genocide requires specific intent to eradicate a particular group. However, demographic data show the population allegedly being eradicated is to the contrary increasingly Palestinian (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023), which challenges claims of systematic extermination.

Because of the October 2023 Hamas attacks, Israel's military response is directed against Hamas, a group designated as a terrorist organization in numerous countries, though not in South Africa. Hamas has a history of targeting Israeli civilians, most notably in its brutal attack on 7 October 2023, which heightened Israel's existential concerns. Equating Israel's response to genocide downplays the Holocaust, fosters antisemitism and undermines the country's responsibility to protect its citizens and sovereignty.

South Africa has faced criticism for employing "lawfare," a strategy that utilizes judicial processes to pursue political objectives (Dent, 2021). Its legal actions against Israel, accusing the state of genocide in the International Court of Justice, are widely viewed as part of a broader geopolitical agenda shaped by Iran and Qatar to undermine Israel, under the pretense of upholding international law (Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, 2024). Many Jewish commentators contend that Iran's deep-seated hostility toward Israel has spilled over into civil society, fueling a global surge in antisemitism.

Double Standards and the Question of Antisemitism

Movements such as BDS have been criticized for disproportionately criticizing Israel while overlooking countries with more severe human rights violations (World Jewish Congress, 2022). The enthusiasm with which they criticize Israel usually becomes muted when humanitarian crises involve non-Western or Muslim perpetrators, such as in the Sudan, Syria, China and Iran. This selective scrutiny indicates a double standard, contravening the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which includes the application of unique expectations to Jews or Israel (IHRA, 2021).

Ethical Considerations in Healthcare Discourse

Professional Guidelines

Ethical rules from the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and acknowledged by the Psychological Society of South Africa (2007) stress impartiality, cultural competence and non-maleficence. Yet, the statements of healthcare organizations criticizing Israel have effectively escalated divisive rhetoric, overlooked Jewish suffering or justified terrorism against Israel and its citizenry. Such one-sided condemnations may erode trust in professional bodies, marginalize specific individual professionals within such professions, cause secondary trauma within Jewish communities and subvert the goal of healing.

Advocating for international human rights and exercising freedom of expression are, of course, fundamental rights. However, it is essential to ensure that such expressions do not cross the line into hate speech, thereby inciting violence, intimidation or the marginalization of certain professionals within their professional organizations.

The Role of Reflective Practice

No professional is immune to cultural bias (Strous, 2023). Critical, reflective practice demands an honest examination of one's biases, whether they stem from Eurocentrism or anti-Jewish sentiment. While engaging with decolonial perspectives can be instrumental in challenging oppressive structures, applying these perspectives inconsistently undermines the principle of universal human rights. Overlooking the diverse historical and ethnic realities of Jewish communities risks perpetuating cultural erasure—the very injustice that decolonial theory seeks to confront.

Broader implications for Psychology

Jewish mental health professionals (2024), including the current writer, raised concerns with PsySSA, the Psychological Society of South Africa, regarding its endorsement of selective criticism of Israel. They highlighted this stance as a manifestation of contemporary antisemitism. They further argued that PsySSA's position could undermine the safety and integrity of psychological practices, therapeutic relationships and collaboration among local and international psychological organizations. Furthermore, they cautioned that members of the public who disagree with PsySSA's views might feel discouraged from seeking psychological support, even when needed, due to PsySSA's frequently claimed representation of the broader South African psychology community (which is not factually substantiated). These concerns by South African Jewish professionals echo a growing global trend, where disputes over the Middle East conflict strain collegial relationships and threaten psychoanalytic organizations (The Guardian, 2023).

Conclusion

South African healthcare professionals have rightfully taken on social justice causes. Their critiques of Israel, however, are often framed within an inaccurate and culturally insensitive understanding of history and legal context. Labelling Israel "colonial" or "genocidal" oversimplifies its complex, multi-ethnic reality, and perpetuates antisemitic stereotypes—casting a historically persecuted group as oppressors. Not acknowledging that the founding of the independent State of Israel reflected the realization of an indigenous movement and a response to Jewish refugee crises constitutes a form of ideological denial or 'social amnesia' (Jacoby, 1975).

The principle of "do no harm" extends beyond patient care; it entails a professional's responsible public discourse that avoids demonization or double standards. South African healthcare professionals seeking to fulfill a critical or decolonial mandate need a more balanced approach that acknowledges the complexities of Jewish history and identity. Promoting genuine liberation rather than reinforcing antisemitic narratives requires no less.

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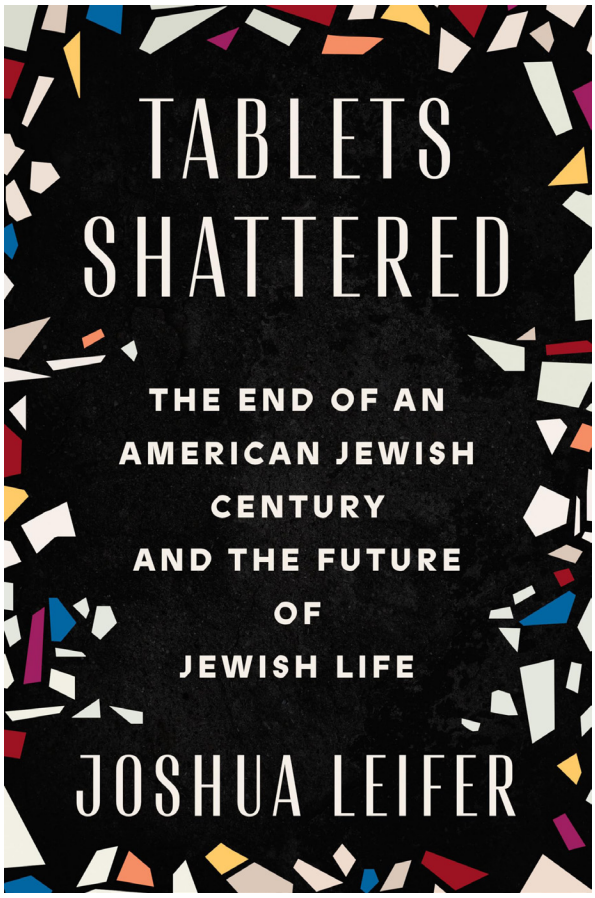
BOOK REVIEWS

A Left-Wing Millenial's View of The Jewish Community Today

Tablets Shattered: The end of an American Jewish century and the future of Jewish life. by Joshua Leifer. Dutton, 2024.

By Daniel Noam Warner Ph.D.



I was recently at a social function with my sweetheart, a Colombian born émigré to the United States, when our Mexican born waiter inquired about my nationality. Before I could say anything, my partner jumped in to explain "Es Israeli."

She winked at me, so I stayed quiet, but later I had to ask, "Why'd you say I'm Israeli? I'm not!" To which she rolled her eyes and said, "You talk about it enough to be! Besides, it makes you sound more exotic ... who wants to be American?!"

I wanted to explain to her that a clerical error has left me as the only member of my family who does not have Israeli citizenship; that some American Jews can find it offensive to be linked to a country that they are not of; that even though I lived there for six years in my childhood I haven't been back since I was 8, and have a very different world view from many Jews who live there now, and am happier to be seen as American (thank you very much!)

This defensive meandering is merely one example of how I personally deal with what Joshua Leifer labels the "Diasporic Double Bind"; the fact that regardless of one's attitude or intentions as a Jew, there is no Jewish identity that is not influenced by the shadow of Israel the nation. And this bind grows only more tightly, as the proportion of Jews living in Israel continues to eclipse the Jewish population living abroad. In short, Diaspora is ending.

Tablets Shattered is Joshua Leifer's *Bildungsroman*, or formation story, of how he has come to where he is as an American Diasporic Jew, and what he thinks the future holds for this once cohesive and proud group. Leifer is a generation younger than me, and thus has insight into world views and positions that are different from mine. Further, he is a good journalist, and brings together many interesting interviews and historical facts to make the work edifying. Last he's a fantastic writer, and I very much appreciate his insightful commentary and wry prose.

Leifer explains that he was born in the mid-90s "in a traditional Jewish community where Israel was the spiritual and geographic center of the universe." This was naturally accepted, he explains, and was part and parcel of the Jewish American zeitgeist in the second half of the 20th Century.

For his grandparents who fled persecution in Eastern Europe, America had fulfilled its promise of equality and economic prosperity. And as world Jewry gathered into Israel over time, many American Jews stayed in the United States, but continued to feel a strong connection to those Jews working to accomplish a Jewish state. For these Jews, commitment to Israel provided a "secular fulfillment" of Jewish identity, without the religious baggage that

modern capitalist culture made to seem archaic, or irrelevant.

Behind the embrace of an American Jewish identity, Leifer states, was an awareness of the horrific decimation of European Jewry stretching from the Pale of Settlement expulsions of the late 1800s, through the Holocaust of WWII. Knowing these stories from the Jewish people's recent past triggered in him and others "an instinctual defense of the victim, the underdog, the marginalized. Having been educated by Holocaust survivors and their children, I saw this as the most natural outgrowth of Jewish experience in history." This dedication to humanistic values is central for Leifer's aspiring Jewish identity. And this is why, as the realities of the Israeli state's history became more apparent to him, and its impact upon the indigenous Palestinian population became more vivid, he became radicalized.

Leifer spent his late teen years and early 20s educating himself on the plight of the Palestinian people. He even went as far as to enter the West Bank to report on protests against Israel, where he found himself "standing on the wrong side of an Israeli soldier's gun," facing tear gas and physical peril. Participation in 2014 protests against the war in Gaza ended him up in a Manhattan jail.

Leifer writes poignantly about how his evolving political position reverberated through his relationships with his family. "I broke with the Zionist dogmatism of my upbringing. I became enraged by my community's open support for the occupation of the West Bank and siege of Gaza and its justifications for the brutality that this entailed. At first I tried to suppress my fury, but eventually, as a volatile adolescent, I ignited. I threatened to run away. I was forcefully asked to leave a Passover seder for calling Israel an apartheid state in a heated argument with close family friends. More than once I announced that I would burn my personal belongings on the front lawn in an act of protest."

Leifer concluded that post-Holocaust Jewish identity has settled into a "survivalist" mentality. The "establishment" organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) or the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) (for example) behave in a way that justifies any action done by Israel, because Jews are persuaded that they are always on the brink of annihilation. Leifer takes issue with this world view, because it defines our identity primarily in the negative, instead of emphasizing what we as a people affirm. Further, he finds it to be intolerant of any dissent, leading to a "moral myopia."

Leifer contends that establishment institutions are now at odds with younger American Jews who "have only known Israel as an authoritarian state and regional military power hurtling down a path of ever more extreme ethnonationalism".

Meanwhile, American Jewish identity is facing a significant challenge from the pressures of modern neo-liberal capitalism. Leifer is not a fan of contemporary American culture, finding it corrosive to individuals and to communities. The American Jewish community has suffered as much as others, he says, having "lost its distinctiveness and its bite, devolved into mere kitsch and cliché: no more Saul Bellow novels, only Seth Rogen movies."

With these tensions in the background, Leifer spends the second section of *Tablets Shattered*, exploring currently emerging alternative Jewish American identity projects. For instance, he unpacks the resurgence of the "*Doykeit*" movement. Leifer explains that *Doykeit* has its origin in 19th Century Eastern European Jewish labor movements, but it is being resurrected by contemporary Jewish leftists who want a progressive political identity separate from Zionism. Just like the "intersectionality" movement in social justice focuses on localized rebellions to injustice instead of, say, spreading human rights to broader and broader fields, *Doykeit* Judaism calls on Jews to do social justice work wherever they are, and is less concerned with the development of a Jewish state.

Leifer also surveys alternative contemporary American Jewish leaders such as Rabbi Amichai Lau-Lavie, the

founder of Lab/Shul, a "syncretic form of Judaism" which synthesizes "liberal politics and Jewish practice." Also he meets with Benay Lappe, a conservative rabbi with ordination through the Jewish Theological Seminary, who formed Svara, an organization which hosts a "Queer Talmud Camp."

Despite his appreciation for left leaning, creative American Jewish movements, Leifer gets the most joy from time spent in America's burgeoning orthodox communities. In a particularly vivid segment about Lakewood New Jersey's orthodox neighborhoods, Leifer finds the cohesion he yearns for. "Orthodoxy will thrive long after the old mainstream institutions fade away. While most branches of American Judaism exhibit the same trend—declining affiliation, diminishing engagement, a growing sense of irrelevance—Haredi [orthodox] Judaism stands apart. In the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Borough Park and Williamsburg, in the New York townships of Monsey and Kiryas Yoel, and in the sprawling New Jersey suburbs like Lakewood, synagogues do not struggle to make a minyan. Instead communities fill sports stadiums like Citi Field and the Wells Fargo Center for massive religious events. The main concern of these communities is not how they will weather decline; it is how they will build new houses and schools fast enough to accommodate the constant growth."

What seems to excite Leifer so much about orthodox is its communitarian world view. These communities support each other, embracing Judaism as an alternative to American culture's "materialism, its sex obsession, its liberalism." For Leifer, this is what Judaism could, and should offer.

Ultimately, Leifer finds the more syncretic and creative Jewish groups he visited, and with which he shares more politics, less sincere in their commitment to Jewish identity. Judaism can't be a matter "merely of personal choice," says Leifer, but should be recognized as "timeless, inescapably inherited, almost ontologically definitional." It can't be something which "could be revised and discarded as one pleased." Today, Leifer reports, he primarily davens in more orthodox environments, where his politics differs from many of those around him, but "I prefer to pray with those I disagree with; I find that I have more to learn from them than I realized."

In fact, Leifer has some very intriguing criticisms of the left-wing movements that he has spent some time with over the last 10 years. He takes issue particularly with left-wing activists who perform their Judaism in rallies, and then actively lobby for dismantling Israel. "Theirs is, perversely," he asserts, "a Jewish politics that revels in its callousness toward the lives of other Jews, whose ancestors happened to flee to the embattled, fledgling Jewish state instead of the United States."

Leifer also explains the kind of antisemitic fantasies Jews working on the left must endure today, as they try to work for social justice with other groups. "Antisemitism on the left takes a different form than on the right, but it is no less real," he explains. "Right-wing antisemitism imagines Jews as a threat to the authentic members of the organic nation; it figures Jews as a foreign, malign influence, usurping and corrupting the Volk. Contemporary left-wing antisemitism, by contrast, envision Jews as the quintessential oppressors—the puppet masters and chief beneficiaries of capitalism, imperialism, and even white supremacy." Both of these fantasies, Leifer points out, "traffic in exaggerated visions of Jewish power".

Leifer closes *Tablets Shattered* with a discussion of various ways forward. The crossroads we are faced with is stark: the American Jewish establishment "carries on as if nothing has changed, ignorant or inured to the suffering in Israel/Palestine, [and] some on the left hope to escape their condition by fantasizing of Israel's destruction." There are four paths he identifies forward, but more importantly I think are some of the deeper philosophical commitments he thinks Jews need to make moving forward in the era of a diminishing Diaspora.

First and foremost for Leifer, Judaism has to be accepted in its full ontological weight, and not seen as volitional, or merely a flavor to add to one's otherwise modern life. In fact, if done right, Judaism should provide sanctuary from the

corrosive effects of capitalism, and provide a community of caring and righteousness.

But with this commitment in mind, we also must accept the many problems and realities that surround the ability of Jews to gather for the first time from Diaspora in some two thousand years. As he says "I do not chant 'not in my name,' but prefer to accept that because Israel is increasingly home to most of the world's Jews, I am, as a Jew, implicated in its crimes."

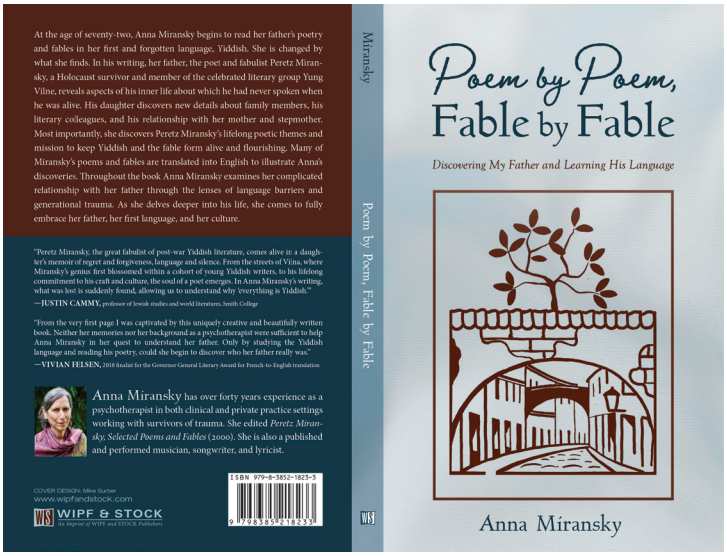
Leifer explains, "My humanism means that I am appalled by Israel's carpet-bombing of the Gaza Strip and mourn the lives of the Palestinians whom Israel has killed, my membership to the Jewish people, the plurality of whom now live in Israel, means that I am aggrieved by what my people have done." With these gestures, Leifer is hoping to overcome the double bind, and become fully Jewish, in all its contradictory, ontological weight.

This certainly has a nice philosophical cohesion to it, and it is not surprising to learn that Leifer is currently finishing his Ph.D. in a Yale program on political philosophy. Leifer is showing himself to be quite precocious, and is hopefully at just the opening moments of an important career as a Jewish thinker, who can help the rest of us navigate the complexity of what it means to be Jewish today, or really at any time.

A Poet and His Daughter's Legacy

***Poem by Poem, Fable by Fable: Discovering My Father and Learning His Language*, by Anna Miransky. Wipf & Stock, 2024.**

Reviewed by Norman Ravvin, Ph.D.



The children of Yiddish writers are a special breed, like the children of other artists, but with extra burdens and baggage. Their parents' world in prewar Europe, destroyed by the Germans, was in certain ways refigured on North American ground, but the underpinnings of that cultural creation slipped away in the postwar decades. Anna Miransky, a Toronto-based therapist, is the child of Polish-born poet Peretz Miransky, who was part of the group of writers who called themselves *Yung-Vilne* in pre-World War Two Vilna. As her father's biographer, translator, and editor, Miransky admits some telling details about his decision to take up these responsibilities. Her childhood home in Toronto was bilingual, though not in a fully idealistic or hopeful way; with her mother she became comfortable in English, while her father's daily and professional life, led almost wholly in Yiddish, made him a diffident parent. Anna's life, lived in English, demanded a late re-immersion in Yiddish language and culture in order to reconsider and maintain her father's oeuvre.

Peretz Miransky's cohort, in Poland and then in Montreal and Toronto, included important and prolific writers. He was published in Poland before the war, in literary journals and in newspapers in Vilna, Bialystok, Grodno, and

elsewhere. Distinctive in his lifelong output was the tendency to include both poetry and fables when his work was gathered in published volumes. Anna Miransky goes to impressive lengths to convey the character of her father's chosen genres, quoting from his work. This brings Peretz Miransky's voice out clearly. At the same time, by offering close readings of her father's work, she highlights his philosophical and personal outlook at different points in his career. Once this foundational portrait is offered, Miransky is able to step back and reconsider her father's writerly goals and how they influenced his private life.

Poem by Poem, Fable by Fable: Discovering My Father and Learning His Language takes shape as a work with multiple goals. It is a poet's biography; it is a reconsideration of the faded status of Yiddish literature and culture; and it is a child's appreciation of and interrogation of the difficulties of inheriting a legacy like her father's.

Miransky portrays her rediscovery, late in life, into her father's language and work as a positive, motivating project. The challenge she set for herself first was to familiarize herself with a poem a day, allowing for a gradual re-entry into Peretz Miransky's work. The outcome of these efforts led to translating a substantial amount of her father's work into English. Miransky is thoughtful about the challenges and decisions required to complete these translations:

> . . . I chose to sacrifice the rhyme to preserve the essence of the poem as best I could; in other words, to preserve the poetry of the poem. What is lost in the English translation are the rhythm and rhyme of the poem as well as the layers of meaning provided by a well-chosen rhyme in Yiddish. In some of these Yiddish poems, those additional meanings are available only to readers of Yiddish who are familiar with Jewish religion and history as well as with Yiddish literature. (51)

Having acknowledged what is lost, Miransky's account of her translation work conveys her own discoveries, with regard to her father's life and outlook and the broader milieux in which he worked. Some of these discoveries present the reader with discordant, even contradictory outcomes. Miransky, his daughter tells us, was a disbeliever throughout his adult life, and this heightened secularity was the context in which he raised his children. Yet there is a kind of open-endedness to this, which she finds in her father's poetry:

> Even though my father did not believe in God as a fundamental and active agent in the world, he talked to God often in his poetry as a way of addressing and protesting the world as it was, in line with the Jewish practice of talking and debating directly with God. "God" was a word he used, although not the only one, for the source of all creation. My father experienced this source as mystical and deeply sustaining. From this perspective, God could appear as the essence of a flower or the deepest truth in a person's heart. (68)

Although Miransky's Canadian years – from his arrival in Montreal in 1949 until his death in Toronto in 1993 – were steadfastly urban, even suburban, he retained a poetic sensitivity to the natural world. Anna Miransky locates its source in the unusual setting of her father's childhood home in Vilna. Peretz Miransky grew up, she tell us,

> in a suburb of Vilna called Shnipeshok. There was a toll gate there, a historic landmark that separated Vilna from the surrounding countryside. His family had an inn that boarded the horses of the local farmers when they came to sell their goods to market. (115)

The more she looks for this sensitivity to the natural world in her father's poems and fables, the more she recognizes the richness of his language for naming and appraising the "power of nature" to lead him to "convey spiritual wisdom and reflect upon life's different stages." (115)

The Holocaust looms over Miransky's life and work. He survived by fleeing east to Samarkand. A wife and child who stayed behind were murdered along with others in his family. And the prewar literary culture of Vilna was itself decimated, with only a few of the major figures from it surviving the war, among them being Avrom Sutzkever, whose death at 96 in 2010 marked the end of a generation of Vilna-born workers in Yiddish.

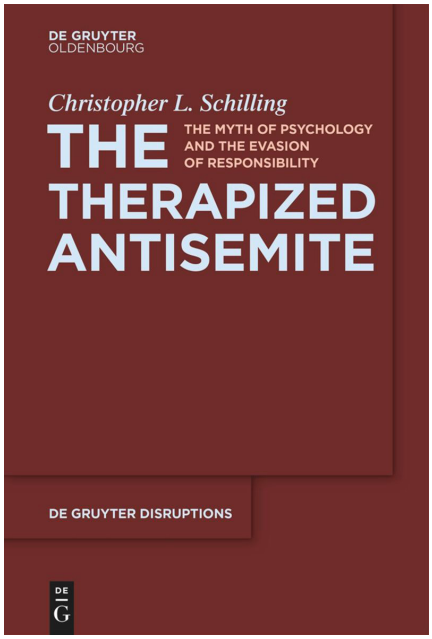
Among the inspiring poems Anna Miransky brings to life through translation and exposition is a portrayal of prewar Vilna called "The Street of Seven Poets" ("*Dos gesl fun zibn poetn*"). In it, Miransky recalls his young compatriots, their formative home lives, and the calamities that befell them by way of German atrocity in wartime. "On a small cultivated street," he wrote of this destroyed world, "our young song sprouted." (110)

Anna Miransky's return to her father's work offers readers an accessible recovery of key aspects of the lively Yiddish world of prewar Poland, as well as a depiction of the creativity of postwar immigrant life in Canada. After settling in Toronto, Peretz Miransky was a traveling subscription manager for Yiddish newspapers, heading out on the road to serve their dwindling client base. Included in the book's appendix are a number of her father's Yiddish poems in their original language, some written in Vilna and others composed in Montreal. There, the intrepid reader can return to the beginnings of Pertez Miransky's efforts to stay at home in language.

Addressing Antisemitism in Mental Health

The Therapized Antisemite: The Myth of Psychology and the Evasion of Responsibility.

By Christopher Schilling. De Gruyter, 2024.



Christopher Schilling is a lawyer and political scientist whose previous publications include *Zen Judaism: The Case Against a Contemporary American Phenomenon* (2021) and *The Japanese Talmud: Antisemitism in East Asia* (2023). I haven't read the earlier book but found the more recent one to be well worth a close reading. Schilling summarizes his argument there in chapter three of this book, as follows. He writes:

> A reason psychology is so successful in the West – in comparison to East Asia – is that it emphasizes the individual over the situation . . . To Westerners it makes sense to see a person as having characteristics that are independent of circumstances, and of moving from setting to setting without changing fundamentally. In the East Asian mind, however, one's being tends to be somewhat fluid and conditional . . . Self-descriptions of Western trained minds are produced very much out of context (the depressed, the psychopath and so on) while Eastern minds tend to think in terms of context: "I'm thoughtful at work" or "I'm funny with my friends". A study found that Japanese, for instance, find it very difficult to describe themselves without pointing out a particular situation: at work, at home, with friends, etc. Westerners, on the other hand, might find it hard to describe themselves in the context of a situation. The Western belief that "I am what I am" becomes "I am Ichiro's friend".

Put differently, East Asians usually conceive of themselves as having more fluid and context-dependent selves or personalities, while Westerners typically think of themselves – or their "selves" – as consisting of a core personality that persists across different social contexts, even if changing environments elicit different aspects of

their (self-same) personality. Schilling then goes on to remark that antisemitism is actually quite prevalent in certain Buddhist sects and the Korean based Unification Church. He therefor cautions researchers not to neglect them in their study of this phenomenon.

These points are well-taken, so I was puzzled and dismayed by several statements Schilling makes in this provocative, well-researched but sometimes confused and confusing book. Let's start with the title. What (or who) is a "therapized antisemite"? Case histories on the treatment of antisemites disclose that they seldom (if ever) seek therapy for their antisemitic attitudes or beliefs, and that those who do want help for other problems. Indeed, Schilling himself concedes as much (p. 33). But no relevant case histories are included or even referenced here. So, to whom does the title refer, exactly? Nothing and nobody in particular, apparently.

Moreover, throughout the book, Schilling uses the term "psychology" indiscriminately to refer to psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis and psychohistory, either ignoring or blurring the boundaries between them. For example, in the book's introduction, he refutes the claim that "psychology" is a "Jewish science", and later scolds Stephen Frosh, a British psychoanalyst, for belaboring these claims. But the phrase "the Jewish science" was invented specifically with reference to psychoanalysis, and many psychoanalysts are not Jewish, or were trained in disciplines like sociology, history, English literature, philosophy or theology in the very first instance.

Besides, were the founders of psychology proper –Wilhelm Wundt, Oswald Kulpe, William James, G. Stanley Hall, James McKeen Cattell, Edward Tichener, etc. - Jewish, or accused of peddling "Jewish" ideas? No. Like Freud, Max Wertheimer, the founder of Gestalt psychology actually was a man of Jewish heritage. But most of his colleagues and students - who were openly, emphatically anti-Nazi and obliged to flee for their lives alongside their Jewish counterparts in the 1930s – were not. Were John Watson or B.F.Skinner, the leading theorists of behaviorism in America, ever accused of dabbling in a "Jewish" science? Were their followers – even those who were Jewish? No and no. Was John Bowlby, the founder of attachment theory, or his followers, similarly charged? No. Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck were both Jewish, but most practitioners who follow in their footsteps, Jewish and gentile, are not. Abraham Maslow, the founder of humanistic psychology, was also of Jewish ancestry. But Carl Rogers, who was equally (if not more) influential, was not, nor are most humanistic psychologists practicing today. But for readers who are new to the field and not versed in the history of the behavioral sciences this complex history is obscured completely by this curious digression on Freud.

That said, Schilling's criticisms merit careful attention, because although he himself is not a mental health professional he cites thoughtful and accomplished critics who speak from *within* their own professions (i.e. psychologists who criticize psychology; psychiatrists who criticize psychiatry, etc.). Besides, when all is said and done, the mental health professions share several models, methodologies and taxonomies of mental disorder that invite or permit generalizations about them all. Finally, some members of these professions – including many who are still venerated as leading authorities and are cited frequently by contemporary researchers - make absurd and unsubstantiated claims about the psychological roots of antisemitism, and sedulously avoid a candid confrontation with the epistemological and methodological problems that bedevil their respective fields.

So, for example Freud – for the record, a neurologist, not a psychologist by training - was alleged by many of his followers to have "discovered" the unconscious. But as Henri Ellenberger demonstrated long ago, this is a myth, like saying that Columbus "discovered" America (Ellenberger, 1970). Freud also claimed that the practice of circumcision elicited castration anxiety among non-Jewish populations, provoking antisemitic sentiments and beliefs; a far-fetched idea for which there is little evidence – although campaigns to ban circumcision in the medical field carry unmistakable antisemitic overtones.

Similarly, Stanley Milgram claimed to discover the psychological processes that rendered the Holocaust possible – a claim that has since been subjected to some withering and well-deserved critiques from psychologists and Holocaust scholars. More recently, Terror Management Theory proposes that antisemitism is a response to an unconscious fear of death. But this "explanation" prompts the inevitable question: why isn't antisemitism *more* prevalent than it is already. After all, who *isn't* afraid of death? (The list goes on and on.)

Based on reflections like these, Schilling concludes that "psychology" has yet to provide a persuasive explanation for any of the many varieties of antisemitism, and that as often as not, the explanations offered are used to diminish or excuse antisemitism by treating it as an "illness" or disease. He also suggests that the "findings" of many researchers are over-generalizations designed to impress, to build or to buttress reputations by substituting the illusion of insight for the real thing, and that their lack of methodological rigor and extreme defensiveness (when called to account) reflects their authors' career ambitions rather than sound, scientific practice.

Some readers will be offended by these criticisms. But to my ears, sadly, they ring true in many instances; far more than many of us may care to admit. Reflecting on the roots of the problem in social psychology, Schilling quotes Israeli social psychologist Daniel Bar-Tal who said that:

> . . . social psychology in general does not fulfill its promise as it was shaped by its founding fathers. They considered the study of macrosocial context as part of the endeavor of social psychology during the 1930s through the early 1950s. But during the 1960s, the mainstream of social psychology, especially the American wing, gravitated toward a psychological-individualistic orientation with major reliance on experimentation. With some shifts this is still the dominant trend . . . Without such focus, social psychology fails, as a study of social behavior, to understand key facets of human behavior (p.22).

Taking a cue from Bar-Tal's reflections, Schilling himself adds:

> Despite any claims within the field of social psychology, there is no single, "straightforward explanation" for antisemitism. At least not yet. Science rarely produces anything straightforward, and we might even need to develop different theories of antisemitism for different cultural and historical settings (p.27)

Agreed. Psychologists have yet to study the different varieties of antisemitism – pagan, Christian, Muslim, Right and Left-wing, racist and anti-racist, East Asian - in their social and historical contexts, and should refrain from making dubious claims about the motives and mechanisms that produce antisemitism unless or until they have enough data to discern underlying patterns and uniformities. Schilling goes on to address the potential drawbacks depicting antisemitism as a kind of virus or infectious disease. He writes:

> Comparing it to a disease at first makes a great deal of sense, as it opens up a discussion about infections, toxicity, mutability and contagion. But it is, nevertheless, too weak a description, even as a metaphor. It does not help to explain the rise of antisemitic political movements and does not fully grasp the difficulty of getting rid of it since "there is no comparable effort at finding a cure", as Ruth Wisse observes. "Those infected with the disease have no strong incentive to seek a cure since they do not suffer the physical consequences; and contrarily, the Jewish victims, who are understandably eager to diagnose the illness and discover a cure, have no access to the carriers and cannot heal those who consider themselves healthy" (p. 46).

On the following page, Schilling writes that the disease metaphor undermines individual responsibility. He quotes the

late Thomas Szasz, "the gadfly of psychiatry", who wrote that:

> We moderns do not believe in punishing disease or patients for having a disease. We do not imprison, much less kill mentally ill persons; we excuse them of their crimes and hospitalize them . . . If antisemitism is a disease then the Nazi leaders were very sick indeed, and the Nuremburg trials were one of the great injustices of the 20th century" (p.47).

Schilling has a point. People who suffer from illnesses – regardless of their severity – deserve our sympathy, support and appropriate treatment, not punishment. Yet I was utterly horrified when five psychiatrists deemed the brutal assassin who murdered Sarah Halimi in her Paris apartment in April 4, 2017 to be not guilty by reason of insanity. And having known two victims of the Tree of Life massacre quite well for two decades, I was immensely relieved to learn that Richard Bowers, who murdered them and nine other worshippers on October 27, 2018, was sentenced for a hate crime, because the jury unanimously rejected the defense's call for leniency on the grounds of "mental illness". Let's face it. We cannot have it both ways – habitually describing antisemitism as an "illness" while condemning and punishing people for it, too. As Schilling contends, evil is real and must be acknowledged as such. So, in times like these, sadly, low intensity antisemitism in the form of antisemitic prejudice must often be endured. Moderate or medium intensity antisemitism in the form of overt discrimination must be fought fiercely by legal-judicial and political means. High intensity antisemitism, in the form of actual violence against Jews must be condemned and punished regardless of the mental health (or lack thereof) of its perpetrators. This is a matter of our collective survival.

But though Schilling's reflections on these points have merit, there are also problems with his critique. For example, in the introduction, he writes:

> I am not denying that mental problems exist or arguing that they are simply a product of society. Mental malfunction obviously exists and matters, but the view that the discipline of scientific (or rather academic) psychology helps to eliminate it, is a misconception, a myth. On the contrary, psychology is a dangerous endeavor because it is an attempt to evade responsibility for antisemitism (p. 5).

I'll grant that psychology has not eliminated antisemitism, even in the ranks of its own practitioners where it has increased alarmingly in the last two decades. But is psychology exclusively (or primarily) designed to provide flimsy pretexts for excusing antisemitism? If so, I confess, that's news to me! And here am I, a Professor Emeritus and former Chair of a Psychology Department. (Will wonders never cease?) Besides, psychologists – as opposed to psychiatrists and psychoanalysts – didn't undertake studies of antisemitic prejudice until 1933, and those that did never treated it as their central research focus. For many it was – and for many, still is – merely one form of racist or ethnocentric prejudice among others. So, while Schilling's complaint may be merely a product of carelessness, rather than a deliberate misrepresentation, one suspects that his words are born of deep disappointment with and/or antagonism toward all the mental health professions, rather than careful and even-handed scholarship.

This is not an isolated case, unfortunately. In the introduction to his book, Schilling declares that:

> . . . for over a hundred years now psychology's vision has remained no more than a myth in Western society. Despite its theories and concepts being widely criticized and often proven wrong, it remains part of our culture, academia and legal systems . . . The idea that thoughts on their own can steer feelings, and that the new science of psychology reveals how to apply this technique . . . was intriguing. (But) . . . it is a myth that nothing is good or bad, but that thoughts make it so, and that psychology can restructure the mind by talking about our feelings. Salvation awaits those who rearrange their thoughts enough to be happy and at peace with all that is wrong in our times. Think yourself well! And if that does not work, drug your mind as well! (p.4)

Really? In my experience, honest clinicians never claim that "nothing is good or bad but thoughts make it so". After all, they aim to reduce unnecessary (and self-induced) suffering to a minimum and, as far as possible, to create the conditions for optimal human development and functioning (i.e. mental health). According to this yardstick, anything that perpetuates unnecessary suffering or obstructs optimal human development is bad, while anything that minimizes unnecessary suffering and urges clients or patients to unfold their (pro-social) human potential is good. And thoughtful clinicians never counsel clients to anesthetize themselves and be "at peace with all that is wrong in our times". Instead, they help clients find the (inner or external) resources to keep hope for a better world alive, and to cope with the understandable distress that the many injustices engendered by human hatred, ignorance and greed create in their wake.

Later, in the chapter on psychotherapy, Schilling cites psychologist William Epstein, a severe critic of his own profession, who compares psychology to a "civil religion", then adds:

> But psychology may be even more attractive than religion, because as many religions claim that if you do this or that, salvation awaits in the afterlife. But psychology says that if you do those things, you can get salvation here on earth, just stripping away all the baggage that the human condition brings with it; you can be completely at peace with yourself and the world outside. What a depiction of heaven on earth! And who wouldn't want that? But in the process, it creates worse human beings. One usually pays for therapy, and the goal is not to be "cured" . . . but to somehow come to peace with oneself. But this is likely to leave one with a sense of moral superiority, given all the hard work done on the self. This is, of course, important as one doesn't want antisemites to become more accepting of themselves as such (pp.30-31).

Let's be honest, shall we? This isn't a fair or realistic appraisal. Do some psychologists promise their clients or patients inner peace and/or enhanced self-esteem? Yes, to be fair, some do, and unfortunately there is a big market for their services in our alienated, consumeristic society. But remember, that the original goal of psychoanalysis was not to produce "happiness" but to *eliminate unnecessary suffering*, which is not at all the same. As Freud remarked to Wilhelm Fliess in 1897, psychoanalysis can only replace neurotic misery with everyday unhappiness. How, precisely? Psychoanalysis sought to give patients greater leverage against their symptoms by bestowing insight into their unconscious fears, wishes and goals, by deepening their capacity for self-knowledge, not by promoting "self-esteem". Moreover, Freud's evolving theory of human development and the structure of the psyche posits the idea that all "civilized" human beings who learn to restrain their baser appetites are destined to experience inner and interpersonal conflict regardless of their race, gender, social class, etc.

Similarly, the goal of existential psychotherapy is not adjustment or happiness per se but authenticity. Existential therapists deem it impossible to "strip away all the baggage that the human condition brings with it", as Schilling puts it. On the contrary, they insist that our efforts to do so result in inauthenticity – a synonym for banality and a pattern of shabby compromises and evasions in our dealings with others. To realize one's potential, to live life to the full, one needs to make candid reckoning with the "givens" of human existence, including the inevitability of death, the fear of loneliness, the search for meaning, the role of agency and choice and need to take responsibility. In other words, psychoanalysis and existential psychotherapy are both rooted in the tragic view of life; a sensibility rooted in European soil, which precedes the advent of post WWII American consumerism by a century (and more). Existential therapists take some measure of inner and interpersonal conflicts throughout the life cycle pretty much taken for granted and seek to strengthen our ability to cope with them authentically, rather than evade or eliminate them.

Another point worth mentioning is that while psychology has yet to produce a single, straightforward explanation for antisemitism – and may not be able to, if we're being honest – it has produced a growing literature on the harmful impact of antisemitism, both for its immediate victims and their lineal descendants. And while there is always room for improvement, no doubt, it is developing a decent track record in efforts to remediate these harms (at the individual level). Schilling's silence on this score is quite notable.

Despite my misgivings and Schilling's missteps, I strongly recommend this short book to readers. The need to address antisemitism in the mental health professions, academia and society at large has never been more acute, and we need to be wary of smug generalizations, defensiveness and complacency in our ranks. Above all, psychologists (and other mental health professionals) need to join hands with practitioners of other disciplines, including (in no particular order) history, sociology, political science, religious studies to make our explanations for the causes of antisemitism useful and credible in the long run.

TRIBUTES TO ILENE SERLIN

From: *The Jewish News of Northern California*,
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by Jeff Sapperstein

ILENE SERIN
1948 - 2024

Ilene Serlin passed peacefully on Nov. 26, 2024, after her brief, recent battle with an extremely aggressive and incurable metastasis of her original thyroid cancer, which was diagnosed three years ago. She led an incredibly rich and full life during those last years. She was an advocate for Israel and organized and planned to lead the first Trauma Mission of North American Psychologists to meet with Israeli Trauma Psychologists. She was also a dedicated member of Congregation Kol Shofar, where the community loved and cherished her. Ilene was an avid Judaism student and loved her immersion in Jewish spirituality and Talmud study. She initiated and led the Rosh Chodesh Women's Chavera and other arts initiatives.

Dr. Ilene Serlin was a Professor of Psychology at Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center. She also was in private practice in San Francisco and Marin County. Ilene was a Council representative and Past President of Division 32 (Humanistic Psychology) of the American Psychological Association. She trained with Laura Perls and was on the New York Gestalt Institute faculty. Ilene was also on the editorial boards of the Journal of Humanistic Psychology and the American Journal of Dance Therapy. She has published numerous articles and chapters in existential-humanistic psychology, particularly in the psychology of women and psychology and the arts.

Dr. Serlin had a long history with humanistic psychology. She was a student of Rollo May. In her career, Ilene built from the founders' work, taking it in new directions. She applied humanistic and existential principles to dance, movement therapy and other forms of art therapy. She provided training in dance and movement therapy around the globe, cultivating a movement in dance and movement therapy in humanistic and existential psychology circles and beyond.

Ilene edited a three-volume set of books on Whole Person Healthcare. She championed holistic approaches to health and mental health. Her work in holistic approaches to health care and dance and movement therapy deepened humanistic psychology's connection with the body. Ilene also was a powerful advocate of feminist perspectives. Throughout her career, she advocated for greater recognition of women's contributions. She illuminated the contributions of women who had been ignored.

In the later years of her career, Ilene increasingly focused on trauma. Her contributions to trauma drew from prior work on holistic healthcare and feminist perspectives. She collaborated with leading feminist psychologists, humanistic psychologists, and trauma psychologists to advance perspectives that deepened the recognition of humanistic contributions to trauma.

While Dr. Serlin's contributions remained underappreciated in many spaces where she contributed, she still received numerous honors for her work. These included the San Francisco Mayor's proclamation of Ilene Serlin Day on Sept. 22, 2018, and the Outstanding Accomplishment Award from the San Francisco Psychological Association. In addition, she was named a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and several of its divisions.

Ilene Serlin, PhD, BC-DMT, was a psychologist and registered dance therapist in San Francisco and Marin County, California. She was past president of the San Francisco Psychological Association and of Division 32 (Humanistic Psychology) of the American Psychological Association (APA). For years she conducted a private practice and facilitated training at the agency she founded called "Union Street Health Associates" in San Francisco. She was awarded the Outstanding Contributions to Practice in Trauma Psychology for 2024 from Division 56 (Trauma) and the Division 32 Rollo May Award for Outstanding and Independent Contributions to Humanistic Psychology, both of the APA. She had many other accomplishments, such as the Distinguished Humanitarian Contribution award from the California Psychological Association for her remarkable work with Syrian refugees and her involvement with mental health organizations, from psychiatric emergency rooms to presentations and collaborations with colleagues at APA, the humanistic, trauma and art psychology communities, and in-person in places like Jordan and China. Dr. Serlin has taught at Lesley College, MA, Saybrook University, the California School of Professional Psychology, CA, the C.G. Jung Institute, Zurich, UCLA, and the New York Gestalt Institute.

She has written more than 100 articles and chapters on body, art, and psychotherapy. Her dance and movement approach to psychotherapy, called "kinesthetic imagining," was featured in the Journal of Humanistic Psychology and applied in her practice and that of many of her students and colleagues. She also made major contributions to existential and humanistic psychology with her chapters in "The Handbook of Humanistic Psychology" (2015) (edited by Kirk Schneider, Fraser Pierson and James Bugental) and "The Psychology of Existence" (1995) (edited by Kirk Schneider and Rollo May), and edited the official "A History of Division 32" (Humanistic Psychology) (2000) (with Chris Aanstoos and Tom Greening), and most recently "Integrated Care for the Traumatized" (2019) (with Stanley Krippner and Kirwan Rockefeller). Dr. Serlin also participated with Kirk Schneider and John Galvin in a landmark interview with pioneering existential psychologist Rollo May titled "Rollo May on Existential Psychotherapy" (available through Psychotherapy.net). Finally, Dr. Serlin has written and presented extensively on women in humanistic psychology, including interviews she conducted with such pioneers as Laura Perls and Eleanor Criswell.

She would be the first to say that her legacy is not in her resume. Rather, it is the authenticity and profound human connections she achieved that we were privileged to witness. Jordanian, Turkish, Indian, Chinese, Israeli and other women everywhere related to Ilene as the sister/mother they never had. The joke in China is the "Ilene Serlin 30-second rule." Women who she trains start crying within 30 seconds as she helps them find and create their voice and identity in a repressed society. Whether at Kol Shofar or in Dali, China, Ilene touched souls. She was a spiritual and academic leader whose legacy of healing will reverberate for generations.

Ilene dedicated herself to family and deep friendships. She was the "human glue" that united family members and created deep connections across a hybrid family network that reflected her soulful, free-spirited nature.

Ilene's other claim to fame was as the beloved baby sister of her triplet sisters, Barbara and Erica. To us, she will always be our "Lench the Mensch" who danced her way through life. Her vibrancy, loving nature, intellect,

generosity, and fierce loyalty will be sorely missed every day, but she will live in our hearts forever.

She is survived by her devoted husband, Jeff Saperstein, sisters Erica (Ken Kushner husband) and Barbara Serlin, nephew Andrew Kushner, cousin Jake Palmer, stepsons David (wife Valerie) and Michael (wife Allie) Saperstein, and her beloved grandchildren, Harry (17), Chloe (14), Ezra (7), Oliver (5), and Shira (3).

Donations can be sent to Congregation Kol Shofar, Rabbi Paul Steinberg's Discretionary Fund in Memory of Ilene Serlin.

Ilene Serlin: A Woman of Valor

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Words were hard to come by as I sat to write something about Ilene Serlin. I struggled to capture and to honor the spirit of a person I had only come to know within the past two years. The Hebrew words "Eshet Chayil", a phrase I heard often as a teen and young adult popped into my mind. I knew that the phrase, which I first heard in Yiddish form, means "A Woman of Valor" and was intrigued that those words returned to me now from so long ago.

I am a secular Jewish woman who is not steeped in the study of my religion, and therefore not qualified to expound on its complex meaning, the history or interpretations of Eshet Chayil, its ancient meanings or contemporary usage. How could I even consider using it to describe Ilene? But as a psychoanalyst I have learned to honor such associations and felt it important to explore its meaning more deeply, to discern why those specific words came to me as I thought of her. On a purely personal level, I remembered that my stepfather spoke this way of my mother, the woman he married in mid-life. (Both were widowed, and each of them brought two children to their union, embarking on developing a blended family). But as I read more about the phrase Eshet Chayil, its ancient roots in the book of Proverbs 31, I felt increasingly that this association was appropriate in many respects.

Many will speak of Ilene's extraordinary commitment to our profession, to her international work as a Trauma therapist, integrating her passion for dance and dance therapy with her training as a psychologist and her humanistic beliefs. Her passionate, vigorous engagement with all projects on which she embarked was something I

experienced first-hand, as we worked together on various committees during the founding of AJP. Ilene was brave, formidable, a champion of social justice (tikkun olam) and a humanist. We were brought together by our mutual desire to fight antisemitism in psychology and the mental health professions. I realized then how apt this association is to describe a woman so deeply committed to the study of Judaism and her desire to educate, share knowledge of the Jewish people, and bring her joyful warmth and knowledge to help those in pain.

I met Ilene for the first time two and half years ago in a brief taxi ride to the airport in Washington DC. I was immediately struck by her warm and optimistic personality and felt a desire to know her more. She exuded love as she described her upcoming trip to Cape Cod, to celebrate a special birthday with her sisters, mentioning casually that she was one of triplets, born in the Bronx. Being a New Yorker through and through, I immediately understood where that sense of familiarity came from. (She had Bronx roots: I was a Brooklynite). Up to that point I had thought of Ilene as a native Californian. Throughout our ride she was busily coordinating with Jeff, her adored husband, and she spoke of her love for family, the family he brought to her in mid-life, and her excitement about the family birthday celebration on the Cape. Her life story, her passionate engagement with her career, her excitement about her deepening knowledge of Judaism, and her love for Jeff's children and the grandchildren she had welcomed with him was something I intuitively grasped. I too had grown up in a "blended family" and had witnessed a woman of valor working to pull it all together.

I felt we grasped each other, both being women of a certain generation who had the good fortune to live in an era when women developed significant careers outside of their homes, yet cherishing the intimacy of family life. We both developed lasting relationships with our "significant others" somewhat later than women of prior generations, and fully understood the challenge and complexity of blended families. We were feisty and feminist, and both dfeeply impacted by the Holocaust and the Civil Rights movement, devoted to learning and to educating others. Yes, the association made perfect sense! I will miss not having had more time with Ilene, who will always embody a Woman of Valor for me.

Tribute to Ilene Serlin

Kirk Schneider
1 December, 2024

Preamble
As the family gathered here is acutely aware: when you lose a person you love you don't just lose a person; you lose a world. This is because everything you've touched together, every person you've gathered with, every place you've visited together, and every meal you've shared is imbued with that person you've lost. In that light, here is a little piece of that world I lost with "Leni" (Ilene) Serlin along with the riches that radiate in its wake.

We met at a party in Boston 38 years ago, when a warm and jovial Rabbi named Levy told me that a congenial young lady named Ilene would be attending this party and that we had a good deal in common. He alluded to our shared background in existential psychology. Well, little did I realize when I met Ilene that our paths would intersect and indeed converge repeatedly for the next four decades.

Leni and I had a vital and longlasting friendship, celebrating the attainment of our Massachusetts psychology licenses in New Hampshire, gathering at the First Soviet-American Humanistic Psychology Conference in Moscow, striding the streets of Beijing together, wending our way through Amman, Jordan or marveling at the wondrous Petra with her sister Ricki; collaborating and participating in dozens of conferences and publishing projects; sharing hundreds of lunches near our Union Street offices over a span of 30 years, celebrating dozens of New Years Eves, Oscar parties, movie nights and lively trips with our spouses to Ashland Oregon to the Shakespeare Theater Festival and to Manhattan to share in our mutual love of urbanity.

And we always seemed to be following each other. Like Tonto and the Lone Ranger (I won't say who was who!) we often wound up at the same place at the same time. This was true of East Coast collaborations like our Center for Existential Therapy in Newton, MA and our subsequent relocations from Boston to the Bay Area, our convergence at Saybrook University and the many teaching gigs we shared or participated in simultaneously, our names following one another on the rosters in alphabetical order.

In many ways, Leni was like a big sister to me, the sister I never had. As I've realized in recent years she was also my hero, modeling courage in the face of the catastrophic cancer that eventually extinguished her life, but also by living to the hilt. I vividly recall the time she jumped on what looked like a 30 foot camel in Jordan, when nobody else (including yours truly) would get near the behemoth! I also admired her ability to hold complex positions around religion and ethnicity. This same person who advocated tirelessly for a safe homeland for Jews in an increasingly antisemitic era travelled numerous times to the Middle East to provide healing connection with Syrian refugees and anguished Palestinians, or to China to bring dance and movement instruction to hungering students and colleagues. In short, dear Leni walked her talk. She was a great friend, confidant, philosophical compadre, and loving challenger of the status quo, both for me personally and among our more staid colleagues, who periodically deserved a kick in the ass

With that let me end this eulogy with a meditation, lightly edited, that I believe captures beautifully the life and spirit that Leni exemplified. It's by Oriah Mountain Dreamer,* who was inspired by Native American folklore:

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets square your moon. I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it or fade it or fix it. I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, or to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after a night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done for the children.

[Finally,] it doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and [affirm the fully lived life]. That's what Jeff and Leni did together in spades, and that's what she, our dear Leni, would cry out to us all.

*From "Mountain Dreamer Speaks."

Tribute to a Dancer

Stanley Krippner

My relationship with Ilene Ava Serlin dates back to 1988, when she joined the Saybrook University faculty. We worked diligently with students, teaching courses and helping them draft their dissertations. Little did we know then that we would both be fired in a desultory manner. But we were resilient and took it in stride, moving on to other activities, such as our overseas trips. In July 1991, Ilene and I arrived in Moscow for a humanistic psychology conference. Following this remarkable event, Ilene and I went to Novosibirsk with the anthropologist Ruth-Inge Heinze to conduct a series of workshops on dance therapy, shamanism, and dream interpretation. A few of our hosts were Jewish and had prepared the appropriate foods for a seder. Ilene suggested that I lead the seder — all this while assuming I was Jewish. I told her that I was probably "Jewish by osmosis" having befriended so many Jewish folks since my childhood and having had Jewish lovers

of both genders, and suggested that we lead the seder together. It was an unforgettable event.

Ilene, Ruth-Inge, and I were housed in private homes, and my host apologized for not having a hot shower. I told her that apologies were not necessary; I simply heated a bucket of water every morning, pouring it into a large basin, like the one I had bathed in at my parents' farm before they had indoor plumbing. At the end of our workshops, we gathered for a party at the home that housed Ruth-Inge, the only one with a hot water shower. After we showered, our host passed out copies of Beatles songs for enthusiastic group singing. Many of the copies were third-or fourth-generation carbon copies so on returning home, I sent a Beatles songbook to Novosibirsk and received a grateful reply. The three of us had sat in on each other's presentations, giving me a chance to see how adroitly Ilene taught the essentials of dance therapy, with a minimum of words that needed translation and a great deal of movement. I understand then how dance, movement, and the expressive arts could be a useful and often essential part of counseling and psychotherapy.

Ilene was active in the American Psychological Association, hosting several panels, some of which I joined as a member. She was also active in the California Psychological Association, which engineered an Ilene Serlin Day in San Francisco. She was a prolific author, and I was pleased to co-edit two books on holistic health care with her. All of Ilene's publications promoted humanistic psychology, existential psychology, and transpersonal psychology.

Ilene was a thoughtful friend, often driving to my home in San Rafael for a visit as well as inviting me to gala parties at the beautiful home in Mill Valley that she shared with her husband Jeff Saperstein. Ilene and I had both spent time in Israel and Jordan; our impressions were similar, and we were original members of Psychologists Against Antisemitism.

Ilene Serlin was a dancer.
Her dance was embodied.
Her dance was creative.
Her dance was connected.
Her dance was meaningful.
Those were her four pillars of dance therapy.
She taught dance therapy in Russia and China
And her students are now teachers.
In the Middle East, she worked with those ravaged by war.
And danced them out of their trauma.
She danced with her triplet siblings.
She danced with Laura Perls, her mentor.
She danced with Jeff Saperstein, the greatest love of her life.

Ilene danced her way right into my heart.
And now I am a dancer too.

Ilene Serlin: A Life of Authentic, Embodied Movement

Louis Hoffman, PhD
Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association

From my earliest memories of Ilene, I remember movement. Even when she was still, Ilene embodied movement. It was not restlessness, but a gentle, calming movement that was the foundation of her presence. Since she died, I have struggled to recall when or how we met twenty years ago. I am sure it was at an existential or humanistic conference, but the specific memory eludes me. What I remember is a dinner in San Francisco where she shared about her family and looking forward to spending time with her sisters the following week. She spoke of her love of dance, her special bond with her sisters, and growing up as triplets. I felt her intense interest in learning about who I was—not as a psychologist or colleague but as a person. Though I had not yet witnessed one of her dance and movement workshops, I could feel the power of movement in her presence that night.

A few years later Mark Yang and I invited Ilene to China to be a keynote speaker at the First International Conference of Existential Psychology. One of the evenings, I finally had a chance to participate in one of her dance and movement workshops. I didn't know what to expect. Growing up in rural Iowa as a football player, the more graceful movements were not natural or comfortable for me. I felt out of place, yet was excited to see what might emerge. It soon became apparent that others shared my apprehensiveness and discomfort. As the workshop began, Ilene quickly disarmed us as the room began to fill with smiles and laughter mixed with brief periods of healing tears and sadness—both were experienced so freely in her presence. While I had developed an appreciation for listening to our bodies previously, I began to recognize that the ways I listened to my body, and encouraged clients to listen to theirs, was more detached, even objectifying. It lacked connection. Ilene deepened my appreciation for the kinesthetic and somatic aspects of therapy and life, and she helped me find ways to embody them in my own way. These now are staples in the way I work with clients.

Through the years of friendship, I learned more of Ilene's struggle, including the challenge of being a woman in humanistic psychology in the early years. Ilene did not follow the typical path, but quickly branched out, such as integrating art, but her contributions were not always recognized and valued. She brought a unique perspective that applied humanistic principles to new domains and, through this, advanced humanistic psychology. She often had to fight for her contributions to be recognized and to have the opportunities that she deserved. It became necessary to become comfortable with discomfort. A story she shared embodied this. Before Laura Perls's death, Ilene had the opportunity to interview her, and Ilene wanted to publish the video of it. She was encouraged to edit out some of the long silences, noting that the amount of silence could make people uncomfortable. She refused to edit this. The discomfort was part of the authenticity; it was part of who Laura Perls was, too. Ilene chose to self-publish the video instead of compromising its authenticity and integrity.

But Ilene's authenticity and willingness to be with discomfort was not always appreciated, nor was her willingness to fight for recognition. For those who knew and could see Ilene, the fight to have her contributions recognized was not selfish or attention seeking. Rather, it was a struggle to assure that women's voices, contributions, and perspectives were recognized. It was a struggle to have ideas and values she was passionate about be recognized. She, in a sense, allowed herself to become a symbol of what she stood for. She endured the frustration of others but kept pointing toward and fighting for the deeper meaning.

While I did not always agree with Ilene on some of the struggles or methods, I appreciated that she trusted me enough to invite me to be an ally and an accomplice. Even when we disagreed, and sometimes strongly disagreed, we maintained a strong friendship and mutual respect.

When Ilene first was diagnosed with cancer, I remember her email sharing that she had lost her voice. While speaking became difficult, her voice remained strong and continued to be heard. She closed her private practice and donated many of her books, furniture, and paintings to the International Archives of Existential and Humansitic Psychology housed by the Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association (RMHCPA), where I serve as Executive Director. Her books now line the walls of the archive, and her furniture and artwork provide a warm presence at RMHCPA's clinic, the Center for Humanistic and Interpersonal Psychotherapy. In November 2023, Ilene visited our building and gave a presentation at our conference. I am thankful that we had this time. As we walked through the clinic, she shared with me the meaning of different pieces of art that she donated, many of which were her own paintings. On the last day of the conference, we had lunch together. I remember fondly walking to the restaurant, picking up food, and bringing it back to eat at my office in what I didn't know would be our last meal together. Much like that first dinner in San Francisco, during this final meal in Colorado Springs Ilene vulnerably and authentically shared intimate details of her life and invited me to do the same. This was Ilene. While there was much work and struggle in between, it was always surrounded by authenticity and friendship. Now that Ilene is gone, I strive to burn these memories deeply into my being to preserve a bit of the presence I valued in Ilene. I know that I am better for her presence in my life, which is something I gladly share with many people from around the globe who she impacted.

Remembering Ilene,

by Lenore Walker

I first met Ilene on the dance floor at a long ago APA Council of Representatives meeting. Tall, lithe, and incredibly agile she floated across the floor inviting everyone to join her dance team. Hampered by my own muscle disorder, I wished I could have joined Ilene and her group who seemed to be having so much fun. Actually, that is the side of Ilene that was so likeable...whether it was dancing with Council members, her Chinese students, Israeli friends, or even on Zoom during our COVID dance parties. She had fun with each person she got up on that dance floor.

Many years later, we met again on Zoom during COVID when Charles Figley was asked by APA Division 56 on trauma to put together an interdisciplinary task force of APA members who wanted to help other psychologists work with the trauma from COVID. Almost 100 of us gathered weekly to try to figure out how to handle the lockdown, change from in person to Zoom psychotherapy sessions, and what impact this forced change had on each of us as well as the world. Quickly it became evident after Charles had us form ten different groups that he wanted to keep records of what was happening. No surprise he chose Ilene and I to be his assistants. My group began weekly zoom meetings and after a few months with using the new technology, Ilene asked if her group could join us. What followed was almost a year's worth of exciting joint programs each week. Ilene brought some of the master practitioners in art, drama, dance, and other creative areas to our weekly meetings. Her work, interspersing the creative arts together with standard verbal trauma psychotherapy techniques, was well represented in our resulting book: Figley, Walker & Serlin (Eds)(2023). *Pandemic Providers* published by Springer.

Ilene did not let her first bout of cancer either define her or

stop her from her work. She finished chemotherapy and went off on an adventure with her husband, Jeff traveling in Israel and Turkey. As my own trip to see our grandson in Israel was during this time, we made plans to meet there. Ilene had already found charming restaurants where we could enjoy our time both together and with other psychologists and family. During this time, she and Jeff spoke so much about their own grandchildren. Luckily some lived here in Florida, so we got to see Ilene and Jeff when they came here. They both also got to meet David and my children at their home in Carmel, California.

When Beth Rom-Rymer and I decided it was time to begin a new organization for Jewish psychologists, it seemed natural that we ask Ilene to join us in its formation. Ilene's passion for Judaism, her love for Israel, and her energy was just what we needed to build AJP. She had already developed a group that met around the antiJewish sentiment in APA Division 39 and the harm being done to students from antisemitism at George Washington University. Ilene's steadfast commitment to making the world a better place for all Jews but especially Jewish students was an important part of the AJP development as an organization. Although she took on the role as board secretary, she never really felt documenting our history was as important as going out and meeting people. When October 7th occurred, Ilene was insistent she needed to go back to Israel and help deal with trauma there. Unfortunately, her reoccurrence with an aggressive cancer kept her from that dream. But, I am sure she is dancing in the rain up in heaven.

Lenore

Remembering Ilene Serlin

By Sarah L. Friedman

I met Ilene Serlin through our work on the Board of Directors of the Association of Jewish Psychologists (AJP). Together, we worked on articulating the mission of the organization and on starting to implement it. I quickly came to admire Ilene's strong Jewish identity and her desire to share what she learned from leaders in her Jewish community and from leaders of the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. This need to share knowledge with colleagues and to educate others was expressed in several of her initiatives. One initiative was that of encouraging others to submit symposia on the topic of antisemitism to the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (APA). Once the symposia submissions were approved by APA, she created a document that provided details of approved symposia, including where and when they were presented. Considering the size of the APA annual convention, this initiative was very helpful for those interested in the topic of antisemitism. She repeated this initiative two years in a row and in the second year she also organized the recording of most of the sessions for the purpose of having a historical record of AJP initiatives.

Ilene knew a lot of movers and shakers within APA which proved useful on many occasions. One such occasion was when she, Lu Steinberg and I collaborated on submitting a research proposal about what APA leadership knew about Jewish identity and antisemitism. The proposal was submitted to the Interdivisional Grant program of APA. Ilene brought on board several APA Divisions that we would not have been able to recruit if it was not for her efforts.

Ilene did not share with me information about her health. Consequently, the information about her passing came as a shock. With hindsight, I believe that the intensity of

her work was motivated, at least to some extent, by her fear that she may not have enough time to accomplish some of her goals. Specifically, I think about her plans for a visit to post October 7th, 2023, Israel, by trauma experts and other psychologists. Some of her AJP colleagues felt that it was better to wait until the sirens calling on people in Israel to seek shelter were no longer activated. But Ilene decided to proceed with the plans for the trip.

I knew very little about aspects of Ilene's life beyond the context of our work on the AJP Board. I was impressed by photos of some of her delicate watercolors that she shared. I learned a lot more during her funeral and was particularly touched by her efforts to create connections among members of her family.

May the life of Ilene and her work on making the world better for others be an inspiration to others in her family, community and profession.

Steven Stein

Ilene Serlin:

I had only known Ilene for several short years, but we had developed a bond over that time. We originally met as part of PAAS [Psychologists Against Anti-Semitism] and then became Board members at the Association of Jewish Psychologists (AJP). We seemed to be on the same wavelength on a number of issues even though our backgrounds and areas of psychology were so different.

While I came from a heavy cognitive behavioral and tests and measurement clinical background she excelled in humanistic psychology and the arts, specifically dance. I know she was very accomplished in these areas and received numerous awards and high praise from her colleagues, but unfortunately, I didn't really get to know that part of her.

We also connected over my daughter, who lives in Israel, and who works at connecting performing arts (improv in her case) and its therapeutic effects. In fact, one of our last interactions was over a podcast my daughter did interviewing the black Jewish dancer Chaya Lev in Jerusalem.

I got to work with Ilene on two projects. She was very selective about the projects she chose (and perhaps was able) to work on. One was the APA convention. She organized a team that included some very competent and dedicated students. She pulled together all the Jewish related presentations and produced a flyer for all the interested attendees.

As well Ilene was organizing a very compact and comprehensive mission to Israel for psychologists focussed on trauma/resilience. I was happy to support her in this endeavor and she produced an incredible and excellent itinerary. Unfortunately, as the conflict heated up

and the number of flights to Israel were reduced, the mission had to be postponed. In my last conversation with Ilene, less than a week before her passing, she insisted that we would be making that trip together in the spring.

Ilene was caring, wise, and leadership oriented. She was focussed and dedicated to the tasks she chose to lead. She took everyone's point of view into consideration and moved forward into action.

Ilene was a very caring, accomplished and driven individual. She will continue to be with us in spirit, helping us carry on with the mission and goals she so ambitiously valued.

Remembering Ilene Serlin

By Esti Cole

How does one write about Dr. Ilene Serlin in the past tense? With reflection, memories, and associations. Ilene and I met at the Association of Jewish Psychologists' Board and had many one-to-one meetings in Zoom Land. We commonly addressed ongoing work, or at times consulted about topics of interest and life's offerings. She epitomized the intensity of being and was involved in numerous undertakings with an urgency of wanting things to be completed. Perhaps Ilene sensed that time was fleeting.

Several times a week I would start my day by reading her e-mails. She had new ideas, learned about upcoming events; was moved by sermons at her synagogue, saw novel art, hiked in nature, and met with interesting professionals she wanted to introduce and collaborate with. Under her e-mail signature, Ilene included a list of her website, her publications and videos, and the list of her many awards. There are no greater awards then those received from one's peers. Ilene received accolades from organizations, including several from APA Divisions.

On her website, Ilene advocated for A Whole Person Health Care, with 4 pillars: meaning and purpose; embodiment; creativity, and connection. Ilene taught that "dance and art continue to keep body and soul together". She walked her talk with these pillars in several countries, leaning about ancient healing traditions; collaborating on resilience publications, mentoring, volunteering, and giving workshops on refugees and trauma with a focus on culturally sensitive trauma informed dance movement therapy. She trained educators and counselors in China, and her popularity with them was evident with the ongoing invitations she received for follow-up events. Ilene sent group pictures, reached out for resources while away, and consulted from afar. Her last 2024 Newsletter is rich with

narratives of her Chinese experiences.

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence modalities come to mind when thinking about Ilene's contributions over time. Whether outdoors in Lisbon, or the Medici Gardens in Florence, her paintings depict the psychologist's keen observation skills, projections, craftsmanship, and her rich imagination. Humanistic psychology, social justice advocacy, and Jewish diversity traditions were both her commitments and pride. On these topics she would spend time in deep discussions with conviction. For a long period, she was planning a group a trauma mission trip to Israel to assist in building bridges post October 7th, 2023. She visited and worked in the country before and felt a special bond with Israel having been born the same year the country was established. Her network there was similarly wide. I recall answering her questions about my Israeli background studies at Haifa U, and my interest in Amos Oz's literature. Sure enough, she sent me group pictures taken at the university where she visited and met the author.

Ilene's memorial service at her synagogue was attended by family and friends, including many who participated virtually. She would have approved of the music chosen, and of the speeches given by her beloved Jeff, and family members. All stressed her central role among them, and having been one of triplets, the special dynamics the 3 sisters had.

I interacted with Ilene only once in person. We spent a few days together at the APA Convention in August 2024. She was full of energy, proud of chairing the AJP program at the Convention for a second year and receiving awards for her impactful professional contributions. On August 16th, she sent me pictures from hiking in Alberta despite the inclement weather. With the included picture here, she wrote:" Incredible blue and green lakes, fed by glacier waters. Shabbat Shalom bathed in beauty". I will remember Ilene the way she wanted to be remembered, with all the rainbow colors.

Esti Cole
AJP Board member.
Chair – Education Committee.

Tribute to Ilene

By Beth Rom-Rymer

My first memories of Ilene were back in the early 2000's when I would see her gracefully and effortlessly dancing at APA gatherings after which she would lead groups of APA members to a DC club for more dancing. I definitely aligned with Ilene's spirit! I, too, loved to dance and strongly believed in the power of movement to heal the stresses and strains brought on by life's many challenges.

Decades later, Ilene, Lenore Walker, and I joined forces to create the Association of Jewish Psychologists. Highly concerned about the dramatic spikes in antisemitism, both nationally and globally, in early 2023, Lenore and I asked Ilene to work with us in creating an organization that would actively stem the tide of antisemitism; work to do research on the causes, sequelae, historical roots of antisemitism; create effective treatment programs for antisemitic-related stress disorders, from a foundation of good, empirical research on traumatic treatment efficacy; promote the tenets of Judaism, that include indefatigable movements for social justice, liberty, equity for all peoples, tikkun olam; and the showcasing of Jewish art, music, dance, literature, and liturgy. Ilene's deep love of our religious traditions and cultural richness deeply connected us three and gave all of us tremendous energy to build a vibrant organization!

Ilene was a devoted sister, wife, aunt, grandmother, friend, mentor: she loved to tell me "*maisehle*", or very sweet stories of her triplet sisters, today, and in their earliest years.

Ilene was committed to bridging the psychological gaps that exist, today, among cultural and ethnic groups, especially between African American psychologists and Jewish psychologists. She tirelessly organized educational panels exploring African American and Jewish relations throughout the history of the United States, engaging so many of us, from both of our cultures, in fascinating, uplifting conversations about race, ethnicity, and the periods in our history in which we fought alongside each other and the periods in our history in which we were pitted against each other.

And, Ilene and I continued to dance together, wherever we could!

Ilene was a woman of great energy, grace, creativity, intellectual depth and curiosity. I will always value the time that we had together: the late night phone calls; the ways in which we sought to support each other; the invigorating ways in which we sought to create new models of community. Ilene left us too soon and I miss her deeply. May her memory be a blessing זיכרונה לברכה

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Member, APA Board of Directors: 2018-2019
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Tree of Life

By Donald Sussis

In thinking about Leni, this painting by my great-uncle Maximum Sussanoff Sussis came immediately to mind. He emigrated to the U S in 1905 to escape Russian Pogroms and being sent into the Russo-Japanese War where Jews were being shot from both the front and back lines by fellow Russian soldiers. Uncle Max was a gifted violinist, actor, director and frequent producer of Yiddish Theatre--and a marvelous painter who showed widely in New York City.

I chose this work because it reminded me of our multi-talented and greatly accomplished friend, Leni. She had wonderful gifts in dance, song, psychology and interpersonal relations. She was a friend to all--regardless of race, belief, education or status. She was warm and welcoming without exception.

The painting is titled "Dancing With Life." It depicts many different people holding hands while circling a mighty tree. This was Leni's gift: bringing people together (often in dance) to enrich and cherish life.

It is sometimes said: "One must wait until the evening to see how splendid the day has been." We miss Leni and her wonderful dance with the Spirit of Life.

Remebering Ilene Serlin

By Alan Entin, PhD

I do not remember when I first met Ilene, but one time that stands out in memory was an APA Council of Representatives meeting when she organized the Council Dance Caucus. Throughout the session, before meetings, at breaks, and after each session Leni directed a group of us in dances to perform at the Presidential Party on a Saturday night; and perform we did, dancing, singing and having a ball at the meeting in DC. We bonded over that wonderful experience, and she and I went on to present programs and collaborate on projects at the intersection of psychology, creativity, art and dance.

Our collaborations took various forms. For example, I will always cherish her erudite review of the book *Different Paths Towards Becoming a Psychoanalyst and Psychotherapist, Personal Passions, Subjective Experiences and Unusual Journeys,* in which I have a chapter. And one of Leni's last publications was "Using Dance and Culture to Work Through Intergenerational Trauma", which appeared as part of an article entitled "Intergenerational Trauma and Life Choices: Becoming Psychologists and Artists" we co-authored for the first issue of *Kesher: Journal of the Association of Jewish Psychologists.*

The knowledge that Ilene was critically ill with cancer did not diminish my heartbreak when I learned of her passing. She wrote earlier, informing me that her cancer had returned and hinted that the outcome could be dire. Leni was a great role model, an engaged teacher and author, whose innovative and creative work is recognized in many divisions of APA. Her work and example will continue to inform and inspire in the fields of trauma psychology, arts and creativity, international psychology, and humanistic psychology. Leni was a dear colleague and a creative force in psychology and the arts, and the Association of Jewish Psychologists. She will be missed. May the enduring memory of her life be a blessing of peace and shalom.

A Tribute to Ilene Serlin

By Irit Felsen

I had the remarkable good fortune to meet Ilene only a few years ago, when Charles Figley convened the APT Interdivision COVID-19 Task Force. Some 70 psychologist of all ages answered the call, and it became immediately clear what a remarkable powerhouse Ilene was. She naturally brought her unbound energy and organizational genius to the group, as well as her warmth, wisdom and generosity of mind. Together with Lenore Walker and Charles Figley, Ilene was able to bring to fruition the book "Pandemic Providers", capturing the experiences of the Task Force in what was appropriately so often referred to as an unprecedented global crisis, which changed so much in our lives. I felt that Ilene and I connected deeply over our love of Israel, and in our private conversations I discovered a vibrant, brilliant, and kind older friend, and an inspiring model to emulate. She will always remain with me.

A Champion for Women in Psychology

By Peggy Kleinplatz

I had known Dr. Serlin for over 30 years through APA's Division 32. She was a champion of women in psychology and especially Humanistic Psychology. When others spoke mainly about Fritz Perls, she re-focused our gaze on Laura Perls.

She was a joy to be around but was steadfast when necessary, especially when it came to her commitment to Judaism. I had a long-running disagreement with a colleague about the value — or lack thereof — of Heidegger's contributions to the field. I was grateful to have Ilene on my side.

She was pure light. I will miss her deeply.

A Tribute to Ilene

By Joanne Broder

I knew Dr. Ilene Serlin through the Society for Media Psychology and Technology, Division 46 of the APA, but really got to know her through the Association for Jewish Psychologists. This year, I had the honor and privilege of nominating and presenting her for the Life Achievement Award in Media Psychology and Technology last summer in Seattle. She was a beautiful person inside and out—a true woman of valor who was so passionate and dedicated to making the world a better place. She will be missed but will live through every single one of us as we honor her legacy. May we all dance with love to remember her.

With love and gratitude,
Joanna Broder

DANCE THERAPY AND JEWISH ROOTS

BY ILENE SERLIN

Common sense and cultural humility recommend that mental health professionals begin with knowing ourselves and how our cultural embeddedness affects the therapeutic process. Mindful of the political polarization taking place in the field, I have been asking myself how my ethnicity has affected my choice of profession. The women who founded the American Dance Therapy Association were my teachers at Hunter College and Bronx State Hospital. I witnessed first-hand the enormous amount of time and care over many years that they put into establishing a professional organization. However, I had never considered deeply my cultural connection to these people, being as so many of them were Jewish. Searching for insight, I was delighted to find the *Oxford Handbook of Jewishness and Dance* (2017). Written by some of the field's luminaries, it helped me better understand dance therapy today, and how we got here.

This book inspired me to hold a panel at the (2023) American Dance Therapy Association Convention. Jewish pioneers of dance movement therapy talked about the influence of their Jewish background and values on their choice of dance movement therapy. The panel was based on the recently released chapter by Dr. Miriam Berger, Dr. Marsha Kalina, Johanna Climenko and Dr. Joanna Harris in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewishness and Dance called* "Jewish Roots and Principles of Dance Therapy." The panel convened in November of 2023 in Montreal and focused on the role of Jewish women in the development of US dance therapy. Its participants included Miriam Berger, Marsha Kalina, Sharon Chaiklin, Susan Kleinman, and Elissa White. This was as panel I very much enjoyed chairing! We explored the themes uncovered in the chapter and considered the role of intergenerational transmission by including younger panelists who are developing new traditions of embodied Judaism.

Historically, Jewish women played a central role in community celebrations through song and dance (Jackson et al., 2022). However, this tradition was discouraged by the Rabbinic patriarchy. As Jewish communities dispersed in the diaspora, they preserved their culture primarily through oral and written traditions, earning the designation as the "People of the Book". This emphasis on speaking, listening, and written expression often came at the expense of non-verbal, embodied practices, leading to the gradual loss of many healing and cultural traditions. Today, Jewish women and feminists are reclaiming these ancient communal practices, and rediscovering the healing power of dance. By fostering dance communities and teaching new generations of Jewish women about its significance, they are reintroducing embodied, feminist, and healing traditions into revitalized Jewish practices.

To explore how Jewish values may have influenced the early practitioners of dance movement therapy, Dr. Marsha Kalina, a clinical psychologist, examined whether these women's Jewish backgrounds shaped their approach to the field. She investigated connections between Jewish values, experiences, and traditions and the development of dance therapy in the United States, asking what insights might emerge from exploring the relationship between Jewish identity and dance therapy. Dr. Kalina interviewed nine Jewish women from the first generation of dance therapists in the United States and one from the second generation. Most of these pioneers studied with Marian Chace and honed their skills on the East Coast in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, later founding the American Dance Therapy Association in 1965 (Berger, 2022). These early dance therapists included Janet Adler, Irma Dosamantes Alperson, Beate Becker, Miriam Roskin Berger, Cynthia Berrol, Ruthanna Boris, Norma Canner, Mara Capy, Sharon Chaiklin, Joan Chodorow, Blanche Evan, Joanna Gewertz Harris, Beth Kalish, Stephanie Katz, Susan Kleinman, Marcia Leventhal, Lee Straus Maslansky, Nitza Broide Miller, Iris Rifkin-Gainer, Elizabeth Rosen, Susan Sandel, Claire Schmais, Roberta Shlasko, Elaine Siegel, Arlene Samuels Stark, Shirley Weiner, and Elissa Queyquep White.

Jewish dance therapists were also strongly represented among the next generation of leaders in the field. This group includes Zoe Avstreih, Joan Berkowitz, Bonnie Bernstein, Bette Blau, Karen Kohn Bradley, Johanna Climenko, Linni Silberman Deihl, Jane Ederer-Schwartz, Tina Erfer, Judith Fischer, Danielle Fraenkel, SuEllen Fried, Barbara Govine, Fran Hamburg, Rachel Harris, Phyllis Jeswald, Marsha Perlmutter Kalina, Susan Kierr, Barbara Kirsch, Virginia Klein, Nana Koch, Ann Krantz, Joan Lavender, Julie Leavitt, Pamela Lerman, Fran Levy, Joan Naess Lewin, Susan Loman, Julie Miller, Donna Newman-Bluestein, Barbara Nordstrom-Loeb, Susan Orkand, Ilene Serlin, Vivian Marcow Speiser, Jody Wager, Anne Wilson Wangh, Nancy Zenoff, and one man, Paul Sevett. Their contributions further enriched the field of dance movement therapy, building on the foundations laid by the pioneering first generation.

The "mothers" of dance movement therapy established practices, organizations, and theoretical frameworks that continue to influence the field today. Their contributions include the development of early dance therapy master's programs at Hunter College (Schmais, 1981, 1985) and New York University, as well as the Dance Therapy and later Creative Arts Therapy Department at Bronx State Hospital (Leventhal, Rifkin-Gainer, & Berger, 1992). They also produced foundational texts, such as Foundations of Dance Therapy, which explored the life and work of Marian Chace (Chace, 1993; Chaiklin & Schmais, 1993).

Some of these pioneers later established additional master's programs, including those at Hahnemann Medical College (Kalish), Lone Mountain College (Harris), and Goucher College (Samuels & Chaiklin). Iris Rifkin-Gainer, a protégé of Blanche Evan—a very early pioneer known for her innovative work with neurotics—helped disseminate Evan's approaches (Rifkin-Gainer, 1992). Ruthanna Boris, a former Balanchine ballerina, brought her ballet expertise to her dance therapy practice. Joan Chodorow and Janet Adler introduced a theoretical perspective rooted in Jungian concepts, such as authentic movement and active imagination (Adler, 1972; Chodorow, 1991). Cynthia Berrol and Stephanie Katz conducted research on the effects of dance therapy on individuals with head injuries (Berrol, 1992), while Adler and Kalish contributed significant work on autism.

Elaine V. Siegel created a psychoanalytic framework for dance therapy (Bernstein, 1972), while Irma Dosamantes Alperson developed a theoretical rationale based on Eugene Gendlin's concept of the "felt experience." Lee Strauss Maslansky, who escaped Nazi Germany as a child, influenced the field both directly and through her family. Her niece, Noa Wertheim, co-created the renowned Israeli dance company Vertigo with Adi Sha'al in 1992. Another first-generation therapist, Elaine V. Siegel, wrote a memoir about her childhood in Nazi Berlin, further adding to the rich tapestry of contributions from these trailblazers.

Social factors played a significant role in shaping many of these women's choice of vocation. Growing up in Jewish communities deeply affected by trauma, many had parents who had escaped poverty and pervasive anti-Semitism

in Europe. These experiences often inspired them to connect dance and the arts with broader political messages of personal liberation and collective social progress. For some, their work was influenced by their environment in New York City, where a strong network of Jewish communal and cultural organizations, such as the 92nd Street Young Men's Hebrew Association and the Henry Street Settlement House, provided care and support for at-risk youth.

Several key themes have emerged in my study of the history of Jewish dance therapists. First, these trailblazing practitioners viewed themselves as innovators, establishing a new discipline and venturing into uncharted territory. Second, they approached dance therapy as both an intellectual and analytical endeavor, as well as a hands-on, practical practice. Third, many described dance as a spiritual or mystical practice and a profound healing art. Finally, their work was often framed through the Jewish concept of tikkun olam, a multifaceted Hebrew term meaning "repairing the world," which encapsulated their dedication to creating meaningful change through their art.

Taken together, these themes present a rich picture of the way dance therapy practice can intersect with Jewish texts and traditions. They offer a glimpse into the ways that Jewish tradition—and the ways in which these women conceive of their Jewish heritage—aligns with, and shapes, the work of these groundbreaking Jewish dance therapists.

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