

Brainwashing's Avatar: The Curious Career of Dr. Ewen Cameron

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At the time of D. Ewen Cameron's death in 1967, at the age of sixty-five while hiking in the mountains, obituaries came filled with the details of a prominent psychiatrist's successful and varied career. The *British Medical Journal's* notice was typical in tone, striking notes of awe at a lifetime's accomplishments with a counterpoint of the fond admiration its subject often occasioned. Such details sounded widely, forming a chorus-like mass encomium that developed along these lines: born in Bridge of Allan, Stirlingshire, Scotland, Cameron rose fast and quickly distinguished himself: medical education at the University of Glasgow; transatlantic migration to Baltimore to work with Adolf Meyer at the Phipps Clinic, Johns Hopkins (1926–1928), and then with Eugen Bleuler at Burghölzi Anstalt, Zurich. Returning to work in the United States, he soon became psychiatrist-in-chief at Albany Hospital, and “at this point he was lost to British Psychiatry.”¹ Cameron remained an American citizen from 1942 to his death, despite founding and then for twenty-one years holding a prominent post at McGill University as the first director and head of the Allan Memorial Institute of Psychiatry in Montreal. Expiring “in full and very active harness,” Cameron at the end was not a defeated man but one with many new projects afoot. He lived with a proper sense of self-sacrifice animating his actions: “He died continuing to help others to a better and fuller life, perhaps at the expense of his own health and life.”² And he excelled at all he did. He left behind 140 published articles and four books, along with his wife, three sons, and a daughter.³

Appreciations culled from a range of other sources evoke a man not only respected but adored. As colleague and collaborator Baruch Silverman wrote, “To anyone who knew Ewen Cameron intimately, it became obvious that here was a man who was vitally concerned with the well-being of men everywhere. He had a genuine disregard for national barriers, racial variations and religious differences. He had a world perspective on social, economic and political problems.”⁴ In the *American Journal*

of Psychotherapy, psychiatrist Frank Braceland paid tribute to Cameron's more muted qualities,

His world-wide success in his profession was, of course, due principally to his great knowledge and brilliance. But surely a great factor also was the softness—one is tempted to say loveliness—of his personality. Those who were privileged to know him, even briefly, will not soon forget the warmth and the kindness of this understanding man.⁵

His patients, especially female ones, tended to fall in love with him. When some of these same patients years later came to sue him, their former unwillingness to protest the brutalities of his method was couched in terms of their inordinate affection for him, and their about-face statements thus had a dizzying feel.⁶ Much of the praise for Cameron's personal touch imputed a sense of the noblesse oblige a powerful and well-connected physician-administrator displayed in forbearing to put himself on a pedestal when he easily might have:

He always insisted on treating a number of his patients himself personally, rather than sitting too much in his professorial chair, which also carried so many administrative and teaching responsibilities. By this means he always remained aware of the individual patient's problems, and was able to discuss treatment matters from personal experience.⁷

None of these accounts even glancingly mentions the systematic torture-in-the-name-of-science that a man who would in thirty years be known as "maniacal," "notorious[ly] . . . cold," and "that monster, Dr. Ewen Cameron" enacted on his unwitting experimental subjects.⁸ Not a single obituary touches on Cameron's deplorable research, and none so much as hazards the phrase "brainwashing expert," the near-standard epithet for Cameron today.

To make the fond memorial portrait of any controversial figure jibe with the one that dominates the public sphere post-infamy is always difficult. How can one reconcile, on the one hand, the picture of a man who, after years of honors in a many-splendored career, stopped in 1966 to receive "a special Mental Health Award for the outstanding contribution which he had made to the mental health of the Canadian people" with, on the other hand, descriptions of the same man destroying the lives of a hundred or more Canadians. One way to reconcile the two pictures is to present Cameron's story as a fall from grace. In this staging, Cameron was "the Scot whose gilded career as the world's leading psychiatrist was mysteriously, and

ignominiously, cut short,” as a 2006 retrospective by the *Scotsman* newspaper puts it.⁹ In this view, the cutting short followed from the discovery of the true nature of his research activities. On conspiracy theory websites, for example the *Illuminati News*, Cameron figures as the beneficiary of a fringe-science “secret laboratory” outfitted through the munificence of Allen Dulles’s Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).¹⁰ Elsewhere his doings contribute to one of “101 Strange Tales from Science’s Outer Edge” in the volume *Far Out*.¹¹ The easy answer is that Cameron must have had a dark secret of which those who praised him were unaware. The quick response, in turn, is that for Cameron himself there were no secrets. This makes the case and the career worth reexamining. In fact, the case seems all the stranger the more its curious openness is scrutinized.¹²

This essay reexamines the medical, scientific, and technological questions about brainwashing that Cameron’s career—as Cold War brainwashing’s real-life mad scientist—insistently raises, even if these are often sidestepped. For the sidestepping is of interest; it is a systematic, even structural forgetting that is difficult to pinpoint. Brainwashing is a rich arena in which to observe it. To begin: why did brainwashing take hold in American life in the years after World War II? Instead of flashing and then fading in the pan or turning into a one-sided bromide, brainwashing became a nation’s shared concern, a creeping worry all could viscerally understand, so that the power of the idea extended well beyond the contexts in which it was originally envisioned to operate. “Crucially,” as Timothy Melley points out, “the theory of brainwashing studiously avoids structuralism; it preserves the intentionality at the heart of individualism by understanding social control as the work of an exceptionally powerful, willful, rational, and malevolent human agent—the brainwasher.”¹³ The particular ur-qualities of the brainwasher are those that the late picture of Cameron combines: mastermind, manipulator of all he touched, secret tormenter, and scientific evil-genius (or perhaps bumbler) warped by ambition. “If God Himself was sitting in that chair, we would make him say what we wanted him to say,” a Communist interrogator reportedly boasted in Budapest in 1951.¹⁴ Cameron, too, could almost literally put words in his patients’ heads. Yet by an odd paradox, the once god-like Cameron came to be the avatar of brainwashing by a like process: he is made to say, puppet-like, whatever his puppet masters want him to say.



Cameron's work, with perhaps one exception, was never hidden, and took place in plain sight. A passage from a review of a 1998 Canadian BBC documentary highlights this difficulty:

The Sleep Room, directed by Anne Wheeler, recalls a series of barbaric experiments conducted on mental patients over a nine-year period beginning in 1955. Although these began as a well-meaning if desperate attempt to cure schizophrenia, the "psychic driving" technique invented by psychiatrist Ewen Cameron took on a science-fiction quality when it was revealed in 1977 that the Central Intelligence Agency had helped finance the work. The CIA thought it had potential as a brainwashing technique to be used on "enemies" of the United States during the Cold War.¹⁵

Although the passage is an example of infelicitous phrasing, in its awkwardness it captures the contradictions of the case. According to this capsule summary, Cameron's work started out well intentioned and its "science-fiction quality" emerged only "when it was revealed in 1977 that the Central Intelligence Agency had helped finance the work." Somehow the experiments did not become barbaric until the CIA connection emerged during U.S. Senate hearings under the persistent questioning of Edward Kennedy, among others.¹⁶ More than one hundred ex-patients (including one in the womb, whose mother was a Cameron patient treated up to the ninth month of her pregnancy) suffered for more than a decade from being depatterned; psychically "driven"; dosed with LSD-25, barbiturates, PCP, and sodium Amytal; forcibly kept in a "sleep room"; sensorially deprived; rendered incontinent; stripped of some or all of their memories; and left, in many cases, unable to live outside an institution. But none of this would have been remarked on as other than intractable patients exposed to an unsuccessful method had the funding conduit not come to light—as if the simple mark of "CIA," once revealed, transformed the very medical, social, and personal reality of events. What was merely unfortunate became, overnight, horrific abuse. Here the "dark secret" story emerges in its starkest and simplest form.

Two alternatives present themselves. Either Cameron was an ambitious doctor who had good intentions but suffered from being a product of his times and training (as the obituary writers would have it), or he was a bad doctor who practiced travesty and torture in the name of medicine (as the conspiracy-minded might put it). The only way to make sense of the conflicting evidence is to add a glomming-on of chronology and thus to offer a story about change: Cameron *started out* one way,

a good man, and *ended up* another, a monster, not really a man at all. In Naomi Klein's recent best seller *The Shock Doctrine*, Cameron features prominently as the first "Dr. Shock," his human guinea pig experiments the key to unlocking how what Klein calls "disaster capitalism" works to exploit vulnerability and suffering to bring about political-social and economic change. Cameron's is the template allowing readers to "crack open the secret history of our era."¹⁷ (The second Dr. Shock is Milton Friedman.) This suggestive use of Cameron's work as a springboard to grand narrative and bold connections has much that is of value. However, what is even more interesting is to try to understand how a contradictory portrait made of two irreconcilable images can often collapse into a cartoon of one or the other. This process itself is understood as the work of a cultivated blindness that was both an artifact of the Cold War and also, in a peculiar doubling typical of certain Cold War sciences, itself a research topic (just as it figures as my research topic here).¹⁸

A Brief History of Brainwashing and the CIA's Behavior-Modification Program

The word *brainwashing* entered the English language with some force in 1950, and has since had a checkered fate. In September of that year, in a *Miami News* article titled "'Brain-Washing' Tactics Force Chinese into Ranks of Communist Party," a journalist named Edward Hunter announced a powerful technique Chinese Communists had pioneered with help from their Soviet apparatchik peers. Hunter claimed the term was derived from the word *hsi-nao*, to wash the brain, and was a new weapon that combined modern laboratory techniques with insidious—read: ancient Chinese—coercion methods. In October, Hunter wrote a follow-up article in the *New Leader* announcing, "'Brain-reform' is the objective, popularly referred to as 'brain-washing.'" He was already claiming widespread popular usage for a term that, at least according to some researchers, he himself, or his colleagues, had invented. Actually, the term *brainwashing* had circulated for some months in CIA internal memoranda dated well before the *Miami News* story, and journalist Hunter, who was also a psychological warfare specialist for the U.S. Office of Strategic Services and later the CIA, was merely midwifing the concept into public view.¹⁹ Still, by 1952 the word had gained a firm foothold in the English language.

Hunter was a propagandist as well as a journalist, but his view of the imminent dangers of brainwashing came across as realistic, at least to many among the general public. His views triggered a chain reaction. Even today the word tends to appear (psychologically if not always literally) in big capitals, as in a recent *New Yorker* headline: "BRAINWASHED."²⁰ By definition the term evokes puppet masters,

evil manipulators, true believers, “the calculated destruction of men’s minds,” and people behind curtains pulling strings. When it first emerged in the early 1950s, brainwashing as a concept gathered up unspoken fears and gave them a name, a subject, and an object. A “devilish new process” was afoot in the world, according to Rear Admiral D.V. Gallery in the *Saturday Evening Post*: “This inhuman method for tampering with men’s minds and souls defies all laws of God or man.” American GIs were in danger of being rendered “laboratory rats in a diabolical scientific experiment,” with the emphasis on *diabolical* rather than *scientific*.²¹ Brainwashing neatly expressed the feeling that someone “out there” was trying to control you in mysterious and unfathomable ways.

The term is now an antique (although perhaps undergoing a *Mad Men* retro-style comeback), but the concerns it originally addressed persist in contemporary form. Whether speaking of John Walker Lindh or Cardinal József Mindszenty, mass hysteria or mass polling, Stockholm syndrome or Stepford wives, how young kids in one part of the world are converted to intifadas and in another to lollapaloozas, a common thread is the changing of people’s minds by design and from the outside. In the most extreme cases, according to this perennially popular analysis, the transformation may start with chains or coercive force, but eventually such accoutrements are not necessary. The process of changing people’s minds starts from the outside but seems to move inside so successfully that the person affected will proceed to act out a role—of suicide bomber, silent chattel, abductee, refugee, strutting revolutionary, newscaster, or newsmaker—as if the script had not only been memorized but consumed, internalized, and fully incorporated into the deepest weave of the psyche. Just as Maxwell Smart in *Get Smart* ate his operating instructions so as to absorb them and save himself from being found out, so the brainwashed person changes herself to save herself, and what first occurred “under the gun” no longer needs a gun to be enforced. Acting in a new way, according to new patterns, becomes natural.

In the mid-1970s, U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents captured and booked Patty Hearst in a Mission District “safe house” where the remnants of the underground Symbionese Revolutionary Army were hiding out. Nineteen months earlier, the group’s revolutionaries had kidnapped her from the apartment she shared in Berkeley with her then fiancé, the wonderfully named graduate student (and moderate pothead) Stephen Weed. On arrest, when asked her occupation on the intake form, she wrote, “urban guerrilla” and gave the black power salute. Months passed before she was able to regain a nonrevolutionary point of view. In the early

2000s, Mormon teenager Elizabeth Smart was recovered by the police after nine months on the lam with an unsavory set of kidnappers who abducted her from her Salt Lake City bedroom. Her first question was about the well-being of her abductors: Would they be alright? A few years later, Jose Padilla, a thirty-one-year-old Chicagoan accused of terrorist plotting, underwent solitary confinement for two-and-a-half years on a naval brig in Charleston, South Carolina, and emerged so attached to his captors and FBI agents that he was unable to communicate even with his lawyers. “Like a piece of furniture,” is how his legal team characterized him.²² (The case of Padilla raises an important related issue: the ties between brainwashing discourse, behavioral-science research, and the roots of “coercive interrogation,” a set of techniques revived, in modified form, during recent U.S. military engagements in the global war on terror.) The apparently brainwashed subject coming into public view has never disappeared.

Even as filmmakers, novelists, conspiracy theorists, and their audiences used brainwashing as a spur to self-examination and self-doubt during the Cold War, other North Americans—biologists, social scientists, toxicologists, and spies—worked behind the scenes to bring this unsettling mix of fears and promises into the realm of lab-based reality. When such experts entered the brainwashing field, they depoliticized it, as Catherine Lutz points out: professionals, especially psychologists, “turn[ed] the question over from political debate between social segments to seemingly technical debate among experts.”²³ Military-funded researchers converged on seemingly brainwashed returning Korean War prisoners of war (POWs), who presented a firsthand opportunity to find out what brainwashing was and was not. The consensus was that brainwashing was neither hocus-pocus nor exactly new but was the result of combining well-worn and new-fangled behavioral conditioning techniques within a highly controlled environment. Whether U.S. scientists could develop a homegrown version of these techniques that would yield equally spectacular results remained to be seen.

MK-ULTRA was the CIA’s umbrella program to do just this. The program funneled research into “behavioral modification” in the service of American geopolitical and ideological interests. More to the point, it was a secret program designed, in the words of its decade-and-a-half-long head Sidney Gottlieb, “to investigate whether and how it was possible to modify an individual’s behavior by covert means”—or, in the still more direct language of an internal CIA memorandum, to pursue the goal of “controlling an individual to the point where he will do our bidding against his will and even against such fundamental laws of nature as

self-preservation.”²⁴ A string of experiments began in the late 1940s as the Cold War set in, reached their peak in the early to mid-1950s when key social-science initiatives and certain arms of the CIA consolidated and when a significant charter to extend the research into real-world situations went forward, and ended effectively though not entirely in the mid-1960s. The program constituted “a veritable Manhattan Project of the mind,” in historian Alfred McCoy’s phrase, with costs for psychological research and operations reaching a billion dollars a year.²⁵

This Los Alamos of brainwashing employed contract workers to carry out 149 external subprojects. Much of this research was in the category of “human ecology,” a mix of sociology, anthropology, medicine, psychology, and cybernetics. Until around 1955, when an organizational shake-up occurred, the Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology was a direct cover, a false front, for CIA projects. After 1955, MK-ULTRA incorporated the society as a more legitimate enterprise, the Human Ecology Fund, working as a conduit or “cut out” to support many scholars in many places as a way of keeping abreast of and supporting research of interest to the CIA. Through the Human Ecology society and fund dozens in the academic circles of the social and human sciences helped with “skull sessions,” knowing or not knowing they were dealing with the CIA. One ex-CIA man described an urgent need to “keep on top of the burgeoning behavioral sciences.”²⁶ Conferences such as the Macy Foundation’s “Problems of Consciousness” took place once a year at the Princeton Inn during the 1950s, bringing together leading contractors from the CIA’s Technical Services Section and the military with a group of roughly twenty-five academics who shared the distinct multidisciplinary inclinations the CIA favored. Luminaries such as Margaret Mead and Jean Piaget attended. The Human Ecology Fund became a channel offering access to stars in the sociological and behavioral fields—including Erving Goffman and B.F. Skinner, each of whom received small grants to finish books. This method, the CIA believed, was the best way to encourage in such stars an openness to having their brains picked. To keep abreast of developments in the behavioral sciences, Human Ecology agents regularly visited grant recipients. Most simply indulged in professional gossip; some acted as spies. An agent could use a prominent name to work his way into someone else’s office, an agency operative recalled. “You could walk into someone’s office and say you were just talking to Skinner. We didn’t hesitate to do this. It was a way to name-drop.”²⁷ Even a self-described “quasi-Marxist” such as sociologist Jay Shulman could be used by the CIA, which funded his research—in secret, via their cut-out—to gain access to leftist Hungarians. “My view is that social scientists have a deep personal

responsibility for questioning the sources of funding; and the fact that I didn't do it at the time was simply, in my judgment, an indication of my own naiveté and political innocence, in spite of my [leftist] ideological bent," Shulman later said.²⁸ Unorthodox projects had a special appeal.

The cross-disciplinary approach signified by the word *ecology* drew some of the more creative social scientists of the day and also attracted high-up CIA officials, who were radicals in their own way. The Human Ecology society flourished. Allen Dulles engaged intensively in the project and attended its board meetings. The CIA's interest in the "inner workings" of the mind (rendered as surface phenomena that could be measured and changed) dovetailed with the so-called cognitive revolution and helped to unlock the hold of strict (Skinner-style) behaviorism on the field, giving impetus via its Human Ecology society to renegades such as Carl Rogers, Charles Osgood, and Martin Orne. For example, Rogers received \$30,000 from the society and, after some years, was prevailed upon to join its board. While his funders' mandates did not affect his work on non-directive therapy, the CIA for its part hoped to glean from Rogers's reports new mechanisms for influencing people's behavior (Rogers was unaware of the agency's memoranda that circulated on this score). Once seated on the board, he learned that the money supply "was coming from intelligence funds as a cover for secret work that was going on"—and that part of his job was to maintain this cover—but he emphasized, in a retrospective interview, that the fear of Russian chicanery was so great in this period that his efforts seemed no more than patriotic duty.²⁹ Orne of the University of Pennsylvania received support for research on hypnosis. Osgood pioneered the study of self-conversion, later labeled "cognitive dissonance," in which a subject, in order to avoid the discomfort of incongruities or ambiguities, embraces a more extreme opinion about an object than he or she initially held: self-brainwashing, in effect. In a final twist, some of the men funded by the CIA in these years (including Orne and West) would become the greatest "brainwashing" experts of the next decades, and be sought out to testify in the 1976 Patty Hearst trial on her behalf.

The aim in all the MK-ULTRA experiments was to achieve a controlled state over another human being, and agents stood as the ultimate test case and perhaps metaphor for perfect control. A CIA document dated November 26, 1951, states, "We're now convinced that we can maintain a subject in a controlled state for a much longer period of time than we heretofore had believed possible."³⁰ By playing on weakness or vulnerability, people could be turned into "controlled sources"; that is, agents willing to do a superior's bidding. Agency rhetoric was often couched in

terms of “owning” another person. As Richard Helms, successor to Allen Dulles as head of the CIA, later testified to the Senate, “the clandestine operator . . . is trained to believe you can’t count on the honesty of your agent to do exactly what you want or to report accurately unless you own him body and soul.”³¹ This tendency to seek perfect control reached its most absurd expression in a project to build remote-controlled animals to be deployed as bombs or listening devices. Subprojects 142 and 94 funded, in the scientists’ own wording, “very practical experiments” on the “conditioning and control of animals”—dogs, cats, and monkeys. The experiments involved the installation of remote-sensing devices so the animals could be used as guided microphones and bombs.³² In the late 1960s, dolphins underwent conditioning to become underwater assassins off the coast of Vietnam, trained to hold sharp needles in their snouts. When they poked divers with the needles, a burst of compressed air would be injected, killing the diver while floating him to the surface. (The dolphins in the program often attempted to escape their controllers, unheard-of behavior in dolphins.)

CIA money began funneling to Cameron in 1957. The funding went via the Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology, and whether Cameron was “witting” or “unwitting” in serving the CIA’s interests—did he know the ultimate source of his U.S. funding?—is still unclear. Some sources allege a close relationship with Allen Dulles, indicating high-level involvement in interrogation-research plans. Others, for example Cameron’s children, some colleagues, and some scholars, insist he did not know. (For some, this debate is itself beside the point: as Edward Shorter put it, “The CIA angle is irrelevant, in that Cameron would have done exactly the same experiments without CIA money.”³³) In an August 1, 1977, *New York Times* interview, Cameron’s former lab assistant, Leonard Rubenstein, explained that the work Cameron did with CIA funds “was directly related to brain-washing.” As Rubenstein explained, “They had investigated brainwashing among soldiers who had been in Korea. We in Montreal started to use some of these techniques, brainwashing patients instead of using drugs.”³⁴ Rubenstein also insisted Cameron and his colleagues were unaware of the CIA provenance of their money. Brainwashing was for them an intellectual-operational challenge. That Cameron’s lab would have gone ahead with the experiments with or without the CIA funding—whether wittingly received or not—is perhaps the salient point.³⁵

What is clear is that, to some, Cameron’s work represented an outer limit, a chance for scientists to pursue the “impossible experiment,” in Jill Morawski’s term. These were experiments at the tacitly agreed-upon edge of what can be done in accord

with the norms of a particular society at a particular time, experiments not publicly sanctioned by the “overarching customs and constraints” that guide laboratory research. Such experiments were often imagined as a kind of Arcadia, a free realm of manipulation and observation detached from social facts or niceties where, as Morawski says, “social experiments involving total control of the environment” could proceed unhindered. Cameron, in his sleep room, day ward, and isolation chambers, enacted one of the closest real-life versions of this impossible experiment.³⁶ Cameron’s program involved the stripping away of the patterns and habits that make up the self—and the subsequent building of new patterns on that evacuated ground.

Cameron and the World of the Postwar Behavioral Sciences

For Cameron, the onward-advancing trajectory of the putative unified social sciences overran the minutia of daily evidence. In the name of empirical science, the day-to-day evidence of Cameron’s research and therapeutic activities was neglected and, after a time, not even seen.

Strong currents already at work in the Anglo-American social sciences of the postwar period contributed to Cameron’s work in at least three important ways. First, although Cameron arrived after the first wave of behaviorism, he was on time for the emergence of the postwar behavioral sciences and learning theory.³⁷ When “brainwashing” became a cause célèbre during these years, it renovated debate about the effects of conditioning. The spate of brainwashing research that followed the 1949 Mindszenty affair and the 1951 Korean POW emergency found U.S. experts reaching a near-unanimous conclusion: the spectacle of brainwashing was nothing new or magical but resulted from the combined effects of intensive behavioral conditioning and environmental engineering—“milieu control,” as Robert J. Lifton puts it, the first on his list of eight necessary conditions for thought reform to take place. As psychologist Edgar Schein concludes in *Coercive Persuasion*, “brainwashing” is less accurate than “coercive persuasion” as a name for the phenomenon at hand “because basically what happened to the prisoners was that they were subjected to unusually intense and prolonged persuasion in a situation from which they could not escape; that is, they were coerced into allowing themselves to be persuaded.” Assorted psychological, physiological, psychiatric, and sociological theories could contribute to building a generalizable theoretical model for this process—and this model would apply not only to prison camps north of the 42nd Parallel but in all kinds of “social influence situations,” some in American society itself.³⁸ This

“ecological” approach to the molding of human beings was beginning to be familiar. Schein, in the preface to his *Coercive Persuasion*, even acknowledged the Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology for its “consistent support.”³⁹

To read Cameron’s experimental protocols is to see a head-on program in behavioral modification and “milieu control,” taken to extremes. For Cameron, the psyche was not an entity to be deeply psychoanalyzed. His method of psychic driving explicitly forbade any but the most superficial analysis. For Cameron, the psyche was not an entity at all. Rather, it was a series of complexly interacting patterned mechanisms and feedback functions that a skilled researcher could disassemble. An even more skilled researcher could later reassemble these mechanisms and functions according to design specs. (That Cameron, quite successful in the former, did not always succeed in the Humpty-Dumpty task of putting patients back together speaks to the gap between ambition and reality.) In this, Cameron was helping psychiatry to catch up to the behaviorist viewpoint of other fields that had surged ahead, as he suggested in 1948:

In our field there was a long delay in recognizing that behavior could be conceptualized as an interaction between the total individual and his total environment. . . . Now we are approaching a period when the whole concept of the cause may be abandoned in favor of a hypothesis of chains of event sequences continually interacting with, and modifying, each other. Causes, then, are seen to be no more than our recognition of places in these sequences at which we can most successfully interfere, either now or when we have gained more skill.⁴⁰

Skill sets might lag behind plans to “interfere.” The important thing was this: Once such sequences of behavioral interactions became the “stuff” psychiatrists themselves worked with, intervention would become a simpler matter. The “cause” of a problem was no more than the particular node where it might be successfully rebooted. This late-date behaviorism suffused Cameron’s work via the bruited search for an objective psychiatry gained through experiment (the subject of Cameron’s first book) and, more pertinent, in his postwar hopes for psychiatry to become an engineering-type science, one that could succeed in bringing about behavioral change. As Cameron claimed of his psychic-driving “dynamic implant,” which he installed via feedback-looped tapes fed into the subject’s waking and sleeping life, “We have shown that it is possible to activate the learning process and thereby produce new behavioral patterns.”⁴¹

In joining behaviorism’s latest theoretical iterations, Cameron also entered the

ambit of the behavioral sciences. In the postwar period, the two—behaviorism and the behavioral sciences—were not the same, and, though they often went hand in hand, behavioral scientists disliked being taken for mere behaviorists. What were the postwar behavioral sciences, then? How did they overlap with such entities as the social sciences and the human sciences in the United States? The behavioral sciences were a new rubric that emerged around 1946 and attempted to reach across disciplines to pull out the most useful techniques and tools so that a coalition might devise a full-on grand theory of human relations and human action in the world. “Social relations,” the “structure of social action,” and “human relations in a changing world” were catchphrases typical of the behavioral sciences movement as well as names of new institutions or groundbreaking publications.⁴² The result was a shared search to found a common social-scientific language. Its boosters felt it was fair to speak of an entity such as basic social science and to describe the aim of the behavioral sciences as the attempt to systematize such a basic science with a general theory of its own.⁴³ To adopt the behavioral sciences was a choice and, often, a life-long commitment. Unlike behaviorism during this period, which often bore a taint of the prewar old-fashioned, the behavioral sciences were a strong postwar institutional entity: the Ford Foundation Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences was one bellwether, the RAND Corporation another. A late-in-life Q&A with David McClelland, a central figure who promoted the behavioral sciences in their postwar American form, gives a sense of some of their *esprit*:

Q: Do you have a definition of behavioral science?

A: Oh, we did in the Ford Foundation, believe me, we did. It's sociology, social anthropology, personality, clinical [psychology] and social economics, where they're really interested in the psychological aspects of economics, maybe even history and so on. But it was definite that it had to be, you know, within the scientific modality in the sense that it wasn't a humanistic approach to history, it involved numbers and quantitative evaluation of things and so on. We knew very clearly what it was. . . .

[I]t's the study of human behavior in the scientific modality.⁴⁴

Cameron shared this impetus. A self-styled young-Turk revolutionary well into middle age, Cameron saw psychiatry keeping stride with the newly influential behavioral sciences and even sharing the same path.⁴⁵ A common element was the emphasis on what one scholar calls the “cult of experiment”: taking the arena of psychological and social life as one best addressed through rigorous experiment.⁴⁶

Cameron's 1935 *Objective and Experimental Psychology* placed the future of the field in the domain of experiment and explicitly removed it from the wishy-washy terrain of sentimentalist do-gooding and ideas unattached to experimental proof.⁴⁷ Some years later, he evoked the asylum's horror-ridden past in order to invoke a streamlined future for psychiatry in which it would properly base itself in nothing-but-experiment: the old psychiatric hospital was a place for

the ingeniously depraving restraints, the slow destruction of personality through years of institutionalization, the hopelessness, the night and fog of misery which enveloped patients and staff alike, the long lines of men and women passing three times a day, seven days a weeks, month after month, down to their meals in the dining room and back up to the wards again.⁴⁸

Cameron would reform the space as a day hospital where no patient would be held against her will and where state-of-the-art research would lead to the best, most up-to-date methods. In 1946, Cameron's first act as head of the new Allan Memorial Institute, which was to be based in a Victorian mansion donated for the purpose but in need of renovation, was to set up laboratories in the mansion's former stables (later these would be converted into sensory deprivation chambers). His second act was to declare the hospital an "open" facility, one where no patient would ever feel constrained or held down. The pages of *Modern Hospital* and like publications hailed Cameron as a humane innovator, his facility leading the way for the world as a whole.⁴⁹

A second strand of Cameron's Cold War human science orientation was his technophilia. Like a number of other behaviorists, Cameron was a tinkerer, a lover of the neat gadget, a rigger of devices. For example, he tried to build an automatic baby feeder, reminiscent of Skinner's baby-tending box, for his own infants.⁵⁰ Although he typically dressed in tweedy suits, Cameron always drove a late-model American car. The attraction to high-tech aids shaped his experiments in the name of therapeutics as well. The new generation of U.S. mind-control researchers tended to share this love of technology. Many have remarked that the Americans, unlike the British or the Soviets, were "very gimmick-prone" in their search under MK-ULTRA and related U.S. military projects for a fail-safe, fail-proof method to control the thoughts and behavior of a target person or nation of persons.⁵¹ They tended to look to technology for shortcuts to the slow, patient, plodding spy game. Americans were wont to place technological innovation at the core of the Cold War ideological struggle, an index of their "technophilic hubris," according to historian of espionage

Kristie Macrakis.⁵² Among the devices the MK-ULTRA men brought to the director's office for approval were a hunting knife that had a powerful radio transmitter in its handle, a golf-ball bomb, and a tube of toothpaste that could cause the user's gums to rot.⁵³

Cameron combined an array of technology-based methods as a way of "thrusting forceful change" into older therapeutic practices such as the slow and humanistic pursuit of psychological healing via psychotherapy.⁵⁴ In the era of the automat, the EZ-wash, the drive-through, Cameron sought nothing less than the "automation of psychotherapy." The aim of his signature "psychic driving" technique was to automate and streamline the process of repatterning the deviant individual into a healthy one. He even saw the possibility of achieving assembly line-like efficiency once the techniques—triggers, cues, dosages—of the driving method were standardized. In the mid-1950s, with an air of understated but confident discovery, he touted his new technique in the major, peer-reviewed journal of his field as a "gateway through which we might pass to a new field of psychotherapeutic methods."⁵⁵

What was psychic driving, aside from Cameron's bid to win a Nobel Prize by curing schizophrenia? The technique entailed playing for the patient over and over a "loop" of one of her own statements from therapy—a key, five-to-seven-second-long statement on a major topic with the tape running at a standard rate of seven-and-a-half inches per second, as Cameron specified with the exactitude of one for whom the magnetic tape recorder was a great boon. Inspired by a 1948 advertisement he had seen, for a commercial product called the Cerebrophone—"a revolutionary way to learn . . . while you sleep"—Cameron devised a cassette tape player that would deliver messages to patients either from under their pillows (while they were in forced sleep) or from inside a wired football helmet. After thirty minutes of playing the tape or "driving," a marked "penetration" generally occurred, making hitherto inaccessible psychological material accessible to the therapist. That is, the "driven" patient experienced an escalating state of distress that often caused her to reveal past experiences or long-buried, disturbing events. Because patients frequently were disinclined to listen to the "driving" material, Cameron took deliberate steps to thwart this avoidance. Besides the "use of pillow and ceiling microphones," he recorded different voices to deliver the message (perhaps the mother, perhaps a peer); he administered drugs such as sodium Amytal, Desoxyn, and LSD-25 (the latter recommended for its ability to "disorganize" thought patterns); and he imposed prolonged sleep. Driving itself could also be prolonged, and in some cases Cameron kept the messages playing while a patient slept for twenty to thirty days.

Another variation was the isolation of the patient in a sensory deprivation chamber: kept in a dark room, eyes covered with goggles, auditory intake reduced, and “prevent[ed] . . . from touching his body—thus interfering with his self image,” the patient found himself in circumstances where, finally and most alarmingly, “attempts were made to cut down on his expressive output.” That is, by means of exertions that can only be imagined, the patient was not even allowed to scream. All these factors could be varied or combined with extended periods of driving—up to twenty hours per day for ten or fifteen days at a stretch. Shock treatment (electroconvulsive therapy) from a Page Russell machine allowed the delivery of greater doses of electricity at more frequent intervals.

Cameron reported that once the patient’s resistance had been conquered, the result was therapeutic. Depatterning then proceeded to a final level of “disorganization” in which the patient experienced utter “loss of orientation as to space and time,” near-total amnesia for his or her identity, often double incontinence, and (relatedly) childlike dependency on care staff.⁵⁶ The goal now was to rebuild, to retrain the patient to pursue healthy behaviors and leave behind the unhealthy behavior patterns that had previously vexed him or her. Despite the labor-intensive tasks it generated for nursing staff, the method at its core served to put the whole process at a distance by automating it: “this method of activating psychotherapeutic mechanisms not only created a great deal of time saving for the therapist but also appears to operate much more rapidly than ordinary psychotherapeutic procedures and hence constitutes a time-saving for the patient,” Cameron and his assistant asserted.⁵⁷ Cameron’s method was at heart an efficient device.

A love of gadgets animated the American social sciences more broadly, where it took the form of the cherishing of methodology, the fervor to innovate with new techniques and psychotechnologies, and the eager adoption of these new tools as the central platform of scientific research that often appeared as crusading “movements.” Altogether, this research tendency might be called methodologico-centrism.⁵⁸ This is the third arena where Cameron’s orientation overlapped with a shared social scientific impetus of the postwar years. Methodologico-centrism is an odd allegation to make of a man judged to have been wildly wrong and criminally unskilled in the methodology he adopted by, in essence, slapping together every purportedly therapeutic innovation developed for treating schizophrenics in the previous two decades and giving it a new name. Yet methodological fixation allowed him to ignore the lack of significant results accruing in the clinic and to continue unabated in his quest to solder together a grand, all-purpose cure for

mental disease. In this, too, Cameron was part of something bigger. The methodologists of the postwar American social sciences were innovating not so much single, specific methodologies—the golden age of methodology in the U.S. social sciences was probably the 1920s and 1930s (think of Chicago School-style ethnography or Boasian cultural anthropology)—but meta-methodology, the use of methodology as language, a way to speak across disciplines, to borrow the best parts of each approach, and to merge in a common enterprise. Groups of people with specific social scientific training were coming together, “deeply interested in learning wherever possible from the other social sciences,” as one political scientist understatedly put it in 1961.⁵⁹ Many shared a revolutionary fervor, well captured in Cameron’s 1948 cast-off-the-shackles remarks in the journal *Science*:

[E]xtremely interesting and provocative things . . . are happening to our conception of science. It is the inmost germinal place of our future. I reiterate my belief that psychiatrists, with their unique position between the medical and social sciences, have a special responsibility to act as leaders and guides in entering and opening up this new territory.⁶⁰

The old world of scientific practice was dying, must indeed be hastened to its grave, and, as Cameron saw it, forward thinkers would dominate a futuristic world of treatment via bold methods.⁶¹ Captivated by the future, inclined to mechanical-toy tinkering, and styling himself a modern man of science, Cameron read science fiction each night before going to bed. According to his son, he spoke of these books as his “blood.”⁶²

IIII

Cameron has not often been the subject of academic writing. Some medical reassessments and many popular-audience journalistic accounts of his work have been published, but little in the way of “serious” scholarly attention. This is no doubt an artifact of the splitting of Cameron into the mild-mannered if somewhat authoritarian man who sometimes stumbled but was “well within the standards of his time” and the dark figure of ultimate manipulation.⁶³ His work may pose a mystery, but it is not a mystery that has been of interest in academic circles. Cameron’s research spurs discussions of true-or-false brutal realities rather than of subtle shadings and the constructedness of science. The histrionic mitigates against the historical. Simply to narrate events as they took place “in the sleep room” is to find oneself in

overwhelming terrain that neither lends itself to fine-grained treatment nor seems to benefit from hermeneutics. When in 2005 I published a book that included a chapter dealing, in part, with Cameron, I received several communications, including a sad letter from a French-Canadian woman whose grandmother had been a patient of Cameron's and an official-looking communiqué from one of Cameron's sons, Duncan Cameron. A lawyer with Cameron and Hornbostel LLP, a Washington, DC, law firm, he took issue with my portrayal of his father. In addition to disputing several factual matters in my account, he also sent along carefully gleaned news clippings and magazine features that painted a more positive portrait of his father, both at the time of his death and earlier in his career, and urged me to reconsider his father's work in a more positive light. I undertook to read more deeply into Cameron's own writings, the press coverage sent by his son, and other accounts I could find. What I discovered surprised me: Cameron was both a more complex, modulated character than the one I had painted and also, perhaps for that reason, at the center of events that became more horrifying and more strange. The necessary portrait became one not simply of a man-acting-in-a-vacuum but a social nexus in which the scientific search for truth played out amid many forces and interests. The "factory of facts" was Cameron's own, but it was one that *connected* him with others—actors, patients, onlookers—rather than isolating him as a solitary mad doctor or CIA cipher. He did not, in short, act alone. His empyrean isolation was itself a social phenomenon: *There but for the grace of God goes God*, was reportedly the hallway chatter of nurses, junior colleagues, and assistant underlings who observed Cameron making his rounds of "depatterned" patients.

Most striking in the research I consulted was a document written by Robert Cleghorn, a former colleague of Cameron who succeeded him as chair of the department of psychiatry at McGill University, home of the Allan Memorial Institute. Cleghorn had been at work for some time on a memoir of his own working life; a small portion of the memoir, published in 1990, was an account of his relationship with Cameron. An editor's introduction to Cleghorn's essay mentions that Cameron's work had throughout the 1980s been debated so thoroughly that "Cameron's controversial practices, [are] now thoroughly discredited."⁶⁴ Still, reading the manuscript, I was struck by how little this discrediting had affected Cleghorn in what must have been a long-term habit of looking up to the figure of Cameron. One gets a sense of the powerful aura of the man who, even after death, after professional upending, and after occasioning court-ordered payments to his patients greater than any the CIA had made before, can still elicit the following sketch:

Then their choice of a director fell fortunately on D. Ewen Cameron, who proved to be creative, resourceful, enterprising, and blessed with administrative skill. His background and training fitted him eminently for this venture. A son of the manse, he was born near Stirling Castle, Scotland. A good athlete and scholar at Glasgow University his well proportioned frame still moved with athletic grace in later life.⁶⁵

Like others, Cleghorn makes much of Cameron's warmth. Yet Cleghorn hesitates, too, as if not sure that this warmth was not actually cold: "What about his warmth, mentioned earlier? It was there, but never allowed to appear as intimacy." Later Cleghorn admits that Cameron never socialized with his professional acquaintances and that his genial personality was a thin overlay. He could be intemperate and abusive. He had a blind eye for psychopathic personalities, at least two of whom he hired as laboratory assistants, much to Cleghorn's eventual chagrin, because after Cameron left the Allan abruptly in 1964 his untoward lab associates remained and continued depatterning patients well into 1965 despite orders to cease and desist. Zigging and zagging in his views of Cameron, his memorialist at last makes his way to a summary judgment, offering, "I cannot but feel kindly for the Chief who was a phenomenon" and yet admitting "he did not become a model for many. He inspired awe and admiration but no affection or identification in his students." Cleghorn's struggle to admire a chief he is unwilling not to call "chief" while weighing the depredations and abuses he saw the man carrying out and the ex post facto evidence of Cameron's plunging reputation and public discrediting is painful to read. After all this, Cleghorn judges Cameron "one of the most impressive men I have ever met."⁶⁶ Cameron not only depatterned (putative) schizophrenics into a "confusional state"; he seems to have induced such a state in those who knew him professionally.

Eerily, this confusion comes to a head in a passage in which Cleghorn describes how, for a short time in 1962, he took over Cameron's rounds, monitoring his sleep-room patients:

My first intimate contact with the treatment came when I was left in charge of the ward where all this was carried out, while the chief went on a tour to Japan. I was early struck by the zombie-like, repetitious, brief greeting given me daily by a girl known to me as a former classmate of my elder daughter. I can't say I was emotionally distraught nor did I develop a fanatical opposition to the goings-on I had inherited on a short-term basis. My background in wartime, which concerned both civilian as well as military casualties, the

former starved to the point of death, doubtless left me armored against an immediate affective reaction. The ultimate result of the impact of the difficulties with these cases was my abolishing the procedures three years later when I arrived at a position to change policies.⁶⁷

However shocked he was to see his daughter's school friend "brainwashed" in a hospital ward, able to eke out only a bare mechanical greeting each day, Cleghorn did not or could not recognize this horror as such. Retrospectively, Cleghorn was at pains to explain why: the cause was surely the recent war and its effects on his ability to feel his own emotions. Having seen people starved almost to death, what was it to him to see a girl his daughter's age, indeed her friend, rendered a zombie in his own hospital ward? In the memoir, Cleghorn does not dwell further on this encounter; he was "armored against an immediate affective reaction." In a seeming coda of remorse, he attributes his subsequent abolishing of psychic driving (in 1965) to the sight of this girl. By then Cameron had left the hospital in mild disgrace, or at least to the accompaniment of pointed institutional silence—he received no formal good-byes, not even a ceremonial gift, at the close of a storied, twenty-plus-year stint as head of the Allan. Besides, Cameron himself had given up on the technique by 1964, when he "fled Montreal for a post at the Albany Medical school," so it would be hard to attribute Cleghorn's subsequent policy enforcement to the encounter three years earlier with the young girl on the wards—Cleghorn merely formalized an abnegation his chief had already made.⁶⁸ The event, more so than almost any other anecdote attached to Cameron's history, evokes the structured forgetting within which his research went forward. His colleagues, associates, underlings, and funders could and did see without seeing, watch without knowing, and remember while forgetting. Events could go on and not really be happening.

Cameron provides, then, a reflected portrait of the future as groups of forward-looking men and women in the behavioral sciences' postwar world imagined it. Cameron's own work and words, scarcely legible sometimes for the bombast they occasion, are useful in helping to catch a glimpse of the disappearing visions of erstwhile visionaries—

The future is . . . an uprising suppressed so quickly that no pictures were taken . . . a colony of idealists who turned to the manufacture of kitchen appliances, a design for rational living that forgot to account for toilets, an archive of unpublished masterpieces curated by the secret police, a café whose once-famous corner table was removed and replaced with a video poker machine,

a few years' worth of entries in the early journals of someone who died broke, died insane, died a highly respected figure in the carpet trade.⁶⁹

—and, finally, of a man such as Cameron. His good friend and colleague Silverman hailed him with words from the Canadian poet R.F. Scott: “The Future of Man is My Heaven.”⁷⁰ Perhaps, after all, the obituaries were correct.

How can one rethink the figure of Ewen Cameron? What were the embedded institutional, personal, and political structures that allowed the peculiar operation of his experiments to go forward as if nothing were amiss? My aim has been not just to contextualize Cameron in order to show nuance, complexity, and historical shadings—the default method of the history of science in the early twenty-first century.⁷¹ My aim was also to situate him in an environment that is productive. Cameron embodied his own insights about the shaping effects of environments. In addition, the “Cameron avatar,” reexamined, curiously mimics tendencies in academia and left-leaning politics to create an interpretive doubling, the dynamics of which yield a secret that, when revealed and pulled out into the surface world of confusing complexity, will clarify and illuminate the whole. Academic critique, conspiracy theory, and brainwashing fantasies (which are particularly pertinent examples of conspiracy theories) share this dual-strata logic. Cameron is its product, catalyst, and symbol.

Notes

1. William Sargant, "Ewen Cameron, M.D., F.R.C.P.(C.), D.P.M." *British Medical Journal* 3, no. 5568 (1967): 803–804.

2. Sargant, 803.

3. Other commonly detailed career mileposts include the first presidency of the World Psychiatric Association and past presidencies of the Society of Biological Psychiatry, the American Geriatrics Society, the American Psychopathological Association, and the American, Canadian, and Quebec Psychiatric Associations. His work was recognized by the Adolf Meyer Memorial Award, the Samuel Rubin Award, the Montreal Mental Hygiene Institute Award given periodically for outstanding contributions to the mental health of the Canadian people and by various honorary fellowships and memberships. He was also honored by being asked to give the Maudsley Lecture in London in 1962. See Robert Cleghorn and Baruch Silverman, "D. Ewen Cameron, M.D., F.R.C.P.(C.)," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 97 (14 October 1967): 984–985.

4. Baruch Silverman, "Dr. D. Ewen Cameron: An Appreciation," *Canadian Medical Journal* 97 (1967): 985–986.

5. Francis J. Braceland, "In Memoriam: D. Ewen Cameron," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 124 (1967): 860–861.

6. Former Cameron patient Gail Kastner, interviewed recently in a Montreal old-age home, described suffering "my electric dreams" in which she sees "him," Cameron, or, as she also calls him, the "Eminent Monster." See Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Penguin, 2007), 26. One of Cameron's most famous patients, Velma (Val) Orlikow, who along with her husband David, a Canadian parliamentarian, successfully sued the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Canadian government, describes her treatment as fueled by the fact that she would do anything to be near Cameron, the doctor she adored. His threats of withdrawal from contact with her caused her to submit to LSD trials and additional horrific experimental treatments. "My mother thought Cameron was God, he could do no wrong. Then the researchers turned up that Cameron had been paid by the CIA for the mind-control stuff, at which point my mother just freaked out and was demoralised for a long time," her daughter Leslie Orlikow recalls. Craig Howie, "Stunning Tale of Brainwashing, the CIA, and an Unsuspecting Scots Researcher," *The Scotsman*, 6 January 2006.

7. Sargant, 803.

8. Klein, "The Torture Lab: Ewen Cameron, the CIA and the Maniacal Quest to Erase and Remake the Human Mind," in *Shock Doctrine*, 25. For her, Cameron played a "central role in developing contemporary U.S. torture techniques" (29). Max Pilkington describes Cameron as "notorious for his cold and often unethical approach" in Pilkington, "Night School," *Guardian* (Manchester, UK), 5 March 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2005/mar/03/research.highereducation1>. The reference to Cameron as "that monster" is from Alexander Cockburn, "On Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*," *Counterpunch*, 22 September 2007. Decades after Cameron's death, he is still commonly portrayed as a "memory thief," a violator of the Hippocratic oath, a sociopath who trafficked in psychopathic lab assistants, and an architect of crimes against humanity. (*The Memory Thief: The Story of Dr. Ewen Cameron* is the title of a 2004 Frontline Scotland documentary which "hears for the first time the horrific personal stories of patients who suffered at his hands." In a review of recent work created by Canadian artist Sarah Anne Johnson, the granddaughter of one of Cameron's patients, a critic characterizes the

psychic driving experiments as “one of the most bizarre, and disturbing, crimes ever committed by the U.S. government.” Robert Schuster, “Sarah Anne Johnson Conjures a Mind-Control Center,” *Village Voice*, 8 September 2009.)

9. Howie, “Stunning Tale of Brainwashing.”

10. Agent Orange and Mr. X, “Who Is Illuminati Licio Gelli?” *Illuminati News*, 15 December 2006, <http://www.illuminati-news.com/2006/1217d.htm>.

11. Mark Pilkington, *Far Out: 101 Strange Tales from Science's Outer Edge* (New York: Disinformation Co., 2007).

12. As Cameron’s longtime lab assistant Leonard Rubenstein insisted, “I really honestly can’t tell you where the information filtered [secretly]—I’m sure it was all published.” Nicholas Horrock, “Private Institutions Used in C.I.A. Effort to Control Behavior; 25-Year, \$25 Million Program,” *New York Times*, 1 August 1977, 1, 16.

13. Timothy Melley, “Brainwashed! Conspiracy Theory and Ideology in the Postwar United States,” *New German Critique* 108 (2008): 149.

14. The interrogator, who was questioning Robert Voegler, an American businessman who was soon to “confess,” was quoted in the *New York Herald Tribune*, 1 May 1951, and in turn reported on in Edward Hunter, *Brain-Washing in Red China: The Calculated Destruction of Men’s Minds* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1951), 3.

15. Ray Conlogue, “The Sleep Room’s Missing Memories,” *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 10 January 1998, C2.

16. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and Senate Subcommittee on Health and Scientific Research of the Committee on Human Resources, *Project MKULTRA, the CIA’s Program of Research in Behavioral Modification*, 95th Cong., 1st sess., 3 August 1977 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977).

17. Klein, esp. ch. 1.

18. On the topic of the cultivation of forgetting and selective blindness typical of Cold War thinking, see Paul Erikson, Lorrain Daston, Rebecca Lemov, Michael Gordin, and Judy Klein, “The Strange Career of Cold War Rationality” (forthcoming). The mechanics of rationalization—under the rubric of cognitive dissonance research—became a fruitful topic of experiment during the same years, when hundreds of experiments in and out of the laboratory were performed. See, for example, Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957); and Leon Festinger, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group That Predicted the Destruction of the World* (New York: Harper-Torchbook, 1956). Even more broadly, social psychology as a burgeoning field demonstrated how absurd situations arose from subjects simply following purportedly rational social norms. The Milgram experiments (esp. 1962–1964) are particularly cogent examples of such displays, which often take a theatrical form.

19. See Timothy Melley in this issue of *Grey Room*. See also the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition for *brainwashing*, where the first use cited is Hunter’s *New Leader* article of 7 October 1950. By 26 May 1952, a *Time* magazine article had attributed the term to general Chinese usage: “Ai Tze-chi was Red China’s chief indoctrinator or, as he was generally called, Brainwasher No. 1.” “China: Brainwasher at Work,” *Time*, 26 May 1952, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,859632,00.html>. On Hunter’s background, see John Marks, *The Search for the “Manchurian Candidate”: The CIA and*

Mind Control: The Secret History of the Behavioral Sciences (New York: Norton, 1991), ch. 8.

20. Louis Menand, "BRAINWASHED: Where Did the Manchurian Candidate Come From?" *New Yorker*, 15 September 2003, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/09/15/030915crat_atlarge.

21. Rear Admiral D.V. Gallery, "We Can Baffle the Brainwashers!" *Saturday Evening Post*, 22 January 1955, 20, 91–98.

22. Nina Totenberg, "U.S. Faces Major Hurdles in Prosecuting Padilla," *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, 3 January 2007, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6682846>. Elizabeth Smart's father characterized his daughter as "undoubtedly brainwashed." Timothy Egan, "End of an Abduction Ordeal in Plain Sight," *New York Times*, 14 March 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/14/us/end-of-an-abduction-ordeal-in-plain-sight-a-kidnapped-girl-behind-a-veil.html>. Elizabeth Smart spoke with Patty Hearst to seek guidance some days after her return. Nick Madigan, "Abducted Girl's Relatives Say Her Captors Brainwashed Her," *New York Times*, 17 March 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/17/us/abducted-girl-s-relatives-say-her-captor-brainwashed-her.html>.

23. Each service hired its own experts: Julius Segal worked for the Army's HUMMRO (previously the Air Force's Human Relations Research Laboratory); Edgar H. Schein worked for Walter Reed Army Institute and then moved to MIT; Albert Biderman worked for Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base; Harry Harlow (with I.E. Farber and Louis Jolyon West) worked for the Air Force; and Raymond Bauer worked at Harvard and MIT, including the latter's CIA-connected Center for International Studies. See Catherine Lutz, "Epistemology of the Bunker: The Brainwashed and Other New Subjects of Permanent War," in *Inventing the Psychological: Toward a Cultural History of Emotional Life in America*, ed. Joel Pfister and Nancy Schnog (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 245–270. An earlier version of "Epistemology of the Bunker" was published as "The Psychological Ethic and the Spirit of Containment," *Public Culture* 9, no. 2 (1997): 135–159.

24. Marks, 25, 62.

25. Alfred McCoy, "Science in Dachau's Shadow: Hebb, Beecher, and the Development of CIA Psychological Torture and Modern Medical Ethics," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 43 (2007): 401. See, also, Christopher Simpson, *Science of Coercion: Communication Research and Psychological Warfare 1945–1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8. The definitive source on MK-ULTRA remains Marks, who was an actor in the subsequent drama of the project's unveiling. Via a Freedom of Information Act request, Marks brought MK-ULTRA financial documents to light in the wake of the destruction of the operational files.

26. Marks, 69.

27. Marks, 171.

28. Marks, 164.

29. Rogers interview quoted in Patricia Greenfield, "The CIA's Behavior Caper," *APA Monitor* 8 (December 1977): 10.

30. Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shlain, *Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD: The CIA, the Sixties and Beyond* (New York: Grove, 1985), 8.

31. Marks, 47–48.

32. "'Guided Animal' Studies," memorandum for the deputy director, April 1961, quoted in John Ranelagh, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 207–208.

On dolphins, see Marks, 153.

33. Edward Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1997), 383 n. 62.

34. Horrock, "Private Institutions."

35. This argument is made in Edward Shorter and David Healy, *A History of Electroconvulsive Shock Therapy in Mental Illness* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 133.

36. Jill G. Morawski, "Impossible Experiments and Practical Constructions: The Social Bases of Psychologists' Work," in *The Rise of Experimentation in American Psychology*, ed. Jill Morawski (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 73, 80. Three areas of research are subject to unspoken "social rules" and taboos, according to Morawski: hallucinatory drugs, psychosurgery, and prolonged sensory deprivation. All three were prominent among those areas taken up by CIA social scientists and researchers.

37. Cameron's medical training worked against a strict behaviorist orientation, although many of the tenets of the behaviorist approach suffused his thinking and research beginning in the late 1930s.

38. Edgar Schein, *Coercive Persuasion: A Socio-psychological Analysis of the 'Brainwashing' of American Civilian Prisoners by the Chinese Communists* (New York: Norton, 1961), 18–21. On the "behavioral explanation" versus the brainwashing explanation, see Ron Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military-Intellectual Complex* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 171ff. Robert J. Lifton discusses the eight principles of thought reform in Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of Brainwashing in China* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

39. Schein, 14.

40. D. Ewen Cameron, "The Current Transition in the Conception of Science," *Science* 107 (1948): 556.

41. D. Ewen Cameron et al., "Automation of Psychotherapy," *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 5, no. 1 (1964): 2.

42. The Department and Laboratory of Social Relations at Harvard in 1946 merged four fields into one experimental department with an accompanying Laboratory of Social Relations. See Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (New York: Free Press, 1967); and Alexander Leighton, *Human Relations in a Changing World* (New York: Dutton, 1949). The latter is a formative text that, among other things, inaugurated the study of cross-cultural psychiatry, one of Cameron's passions and continuing legacies.

43. See James G. Miller, "Toward a General Theory of the Behavioral Sciences," *The American Psychologist* 10 (1955): 513–531. Miller recalls that he and colleagues at the University of Chicago (and later Michigan) began to be explicit about such a unified basic science in 1949: "We aimed toward the ultimate goal of a theory embracing all aspects of behavior, but short of that we hoped to structure our research strategy to make possible a salvage of confirmable microtheories about specific areas of behavior" (513).

44. "The Reminiscences of David C. McClelland" (interview, Spencer Foundation Oral History Project, Columbia University, 1983), HUGFP 145, Box 25, David C. McClelland Papers, Harvard University Library.

45. "Revolutionary" and "young Turk" were common adjectival identities adopted among forward-looking, self-consciously modern psychological experimental researchers starting in the mid- to late 1930s and extending to the postwar period. From 1936 to 1941, a private club for young experimentalists

(membership was to be revoked upon reaching the age of forty) was founded by radical behaviorists. Called the Psychological Round Table, it came complete with mysterious talismans (Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company tokens marked "PRT") that were always to be carried on one's person and included bonding rituals involving long cocktail hours, the giving of fiercely behaviorist papers, and raucous send-ups of senior, fuddy-duddy psychologists. See Ludy T. Benjamin Jr., "The Psychological Round Table: Revolution of 1936," in *American Psychologist* 32 (1977): 542–549. A capsule summary of Cameron's attitude to the development of his field captures this self-consciously innovative quality: "Pragmatic, progressive, modern: Cameron was all of these things . . . [a] young Turk." Anne Collins, *In the Sleep Room: The Story of the CIA Brainwashing Experiments in Canada* (Toronto: Lester, Orpen, and Dennys, 1988), 97. Lazarsfeld and Rosenberg's 1955 "bible" for social research is dedicated to the "Young Turks at Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research." Paul Lazarsfeld and Morris Rosenberg, *The Language of Social Research* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1955).

46. Gary Hardcastle, "The Cult of Experiment in Psychology: The Psychological Round Table, 1936–1941," *History of Psychology* 3 (2000): 344–370.

47. D. Ewen Cameron, *Objective and Experimental Psychology* (New York: MacMillan, 1935).

48. Cameron as quoted in Collins, 69.

49. Cameron debuted the Allan Memorial Institute as the first day hospital in the world, preceding by two years the first such hospital in Britain, by Joshua Bierer. D. Ewen Cameron, "The Day Hospital: An Experimental Form of Hospitalization for Psychiatric Patients," *Modern Hospital* 69 (1947): 60–63; and D. Ewen Cameron, "The Day Hospital," in *The Practice of Psychiatry in General Hospitals*, ed. A.E. Bennett et al. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956), 134–150. See, also, A.E. Moll, "Psychiatric Service in a General Hospital with Special Reference to a Day Treatment Unit," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 109 (1953): 774–76. A historical perspective is found in D.L. Goldman, "Two Pioneers of the Today's Partial Hospital and Their Ideas," *International Journal of the Partial Hospital* 6 (1990): 181–188.

50. Collins, 252. See, also, B.F. Skinner, "Baby in a Box," *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1945, 30–31, 135–136, 138.

51. Marks, 52.

52. "By the time of the Cold War, technology had become a cure-all, a 'fix' for numerous problems. Therefore, it should be no surprise that technological solutions were also applied to the intelligence problem of a closed society." Kristie Macrakis, "Technophilic Hubris and Espionage Styles during the Cold War," *Isis* 101 (2010): 380.

53. Gordon Thomas, *Journey into Madness: Medical Torture and the Mind Controllers* (London: Corgi, 1989), 282.

54. Cameron et al., "Automation of Psychotherapy," 1.

55. D. Ewen Cameron, "Psychic Driving," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 112 (1956): 503.

56. A wide range of responses could be observed, Cameron asserted. In point of fact, even judging from the material Cameron himself provided, the range of responses was not so much "wide" as deep and narrow, involving many ways of expressing hostility to the therapist. Patients apparently resented even the earliest forms of mild driving (when they were subjected in Cameron's office to tapes of their own voice or another voice played over and over on an endless loop). Patients ran away in horror, tried to attack Cameron, and yelled invective. Sometimes people inverted the theme; for example, told by

the taped voice not to drink alcohol, they heard encouragement to continue drinking. Not infrequently, psychic driving inspired patients to fall in love with Cameron, for despite the fact that his voice was not on the tape, patients saw him as its ultimate source. After forty days of psychic driving, a seventeen-year-old alcoholic girl stated, "Doctor, I wanted to tell you this morning but you left before I could. You know I love you just and even more than I love my father. I wish I could have been your daughter." Cameron et al., "Automation of Psychotherapy," 9. On the range of patients' responses to psychic driving, see Cameron, "Psychic Driving," 703–708.

57. Cameron et al., "Automation of Psychotherapy," 13.

58. On methodologico-centrism and the fervor to innovate within social science methodology, see Rebecca Lemov, "'Hypothetical Machines': The Science-Fiction Dreams of Cold War Social Science," *Isis* 110 (2010): 401–411.

59. Robert A. Dahl, "The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest," *American Political Science Review* 55 (1961): 766.

60. D. Ewen Cameron, "The Current Transition in the Conception in Science," *Science* 107 (1948): 558.

61. Cameron spoke of the "future of social sciences in the coming world order" in a radio talk around this time. Social and behavioral scientists, Cameron concluded, must take responsibility not only for the health of individuals but for that of societies. Human relations—merging sociology's, psychiatry's, and psychology's insights—must become a science. Social engineering by means of the social sciences was not just a possibility; it was a necessity. See Harvey Weinstein, *A Father, a Son, and the CIA* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1988), 91.

62. Collins, 22.

63. Howie, "Stunning Tale of Brainwashing."

64. Charles Roland, editor's note to Robert A. Cleghorn, "The McGill Experience of Dr. Robert A. Cleghorn, MD: Reminiscences of Ewen D. Cameron," *Canadian Bulletin of Mental Health* 7 (1990): 53.

65. Cleghorn, "The McGill Experience of Robert A. Cleghorn, MD," 54.

66. Cleghorn, 56, 67, 74.

67. Cleghorn, 67.

68. Shorter, *History of Psychiatry*, 208. By the time of his death, Cameron was "essentially in disgrace" (208). A *New York Times* obituary headlined him not for psychic driving but for "Research in Geriatrics at Hospital in Albany." Obituary for Cameron, *New York Times*, 9 September 1967, 31.

69. Luc Sante, *The Factory of Facts* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 293.

70. Silverman, 986.

71. To situate a scientist or set of scientific practices is to analyze science as an authentically historical phenomenon. As historian of science Steven Shapin characterizes the large turn in the field from narrative great feats of science to situating it in the world, the change was one of approach: "Past science had its historical integrity, and the task of the historian was not to celebrate its contribution to the future but to describe and interpret its historical situatedness." Steven Shapin, *Never Pure: Historical Studies of Science as if It Was Produced by People with Bodies, Situated in Time, Space, Culture, and Society, and Struggling for Credibility and Authority* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 6.