against psychoanalysis -- that it is untestable, speculative, unscientific -- is the best argument I know for it.

But all is not well in academic psychoanalysis either. Aspects of academic psychoanalysis -- and I am thinking particularly of the Lacanians, but surely there are others -- seem intentionally obscure, purposefully hermetic. A sympathetic reading would be that this is a defense against a world, including an academic world that wants to put everything to good instrumental use, to find the measure for everything. But one suspects there is more going on in it.

Above all, we live in a world in which the subjective and the inner are under attack. This includes the realm of feelings. Or at least the realm of subtle feelings, for it seems to be the goal of the entertainment industry to stimulate a very limited range of feelings as intensely as possible.

What concerns me most is not that the Lacanians, or others, are obscure and hermetic. That has its purpose and its charms. What concerns me is that academic psychoanalysis would become less like poetry, less about the cultivation and investigation of imagination and feeling. What concerns me is that the psychoanalytic study of texts is no longer about feeling, but about the suffering of the letter. But letters don't suffer. Only people do. In a world in which no one seems to have time for suffering, in which the cultivation of an inner world in which suffering is essential seems pointless, academic psychoanalysis should be exploring just how complex human suffering can be, and the strange and destructive permutations it can take.

In the end, this is the standard by which I would judge academic psychoanalysis: not whether it is obscure or recondite, but whether it is an attempt to cultivate inwardness. At least some academic psychoanalysis -- and this applies to every school -- seems to use the jargon of psychoanalysis to escape from inwardness by talking about it in ways that denude it of a meaningful connection to suffering and joy.

Paul H. Elovitz: When I was introduced to psychoanalysis by a colleague at Temple University in the 1960s, I thought of it as having the power of poetry and music in getting to the subjective heart of the human condition. Thanks for reminding us of psychoanalysis' subjective essence in this age of science and verbose intellectualizations cut off from emotion.

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Paul H. Elovitz is Editor of this publication. See full author credit on page 123. ❑

An Australian Psychohistory Group

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Early last year in Melbourne, Australia, nine people met formally for the first time to create a psychohistory discussion group. I will explain how this came about and report on our experiences.

Several years ago I approached a senior lecturer at La Trobe University, where I was and remain a student, to supervise a "free-reading" course so I could probe deeply the works of Freud and other eminent psychoanalysts. The lecturer, Richard Trahair, is himself a recruit to psychohistory and a presenter at International Psychohistorical Association conferences. He subsequently introduced me to some of Lloyd deMause's theories.

In the ensuing years I have tutored and lectured in Dr. Trahair's Psychoanalytic Studies course. Together with him, I have attempted to introduce some of the more enthusiastic and sophisticated students to the work of deMause. Interestingly, these students have without exception been "mature" both in age and experience. As a mature age student myself I could identify with the frustration many of them experienced in trying to find like-minded individuals with whom to explore these ideas openly and frankly. Having come to know most of them quite well, I approached them about starting a small discussion group to meet once a month, have dinner, and talk about psychohistory. We now meet on the first Wednesday evening of each month for about four hours.

Our early decisions included setting a limit to the size of the group of no more than 10 people,

focusing on a chapter of deMause's *The Foundations of Psychohistory* (1982) each month, and having one member of the group provide current materials, such as media reports of child abuse and cartoons demonstrating unconscious collective feelings toward political leaders, that support or refute the claims made by deMause.

This arrangement worked, but not without some uneasy moments. Most of us had long since read *The Foundations of Psychohistory* and a degree of tentativeness about the case studies did not always produce vigorous discussion. About the fourth month came the usual process of sorting out personalities: We stopped being on our best behavior, figured out who knew what about psychohistory, struggled to maintain our focus on the subject, and worked on some issues of leadership and group consensus.

After several anxious weeks, I discovered the unconscious desire of the group to have and sustain a "leader," something I had been strongly resisting. My original intention in starting the group was to act as a facilitator for only a few months, providing suggestions for discussion papers and encouraging people to introduce their own research interests so that it would evolve into a more consensual group. I remain optimistic that this will happen as the group develops further. However, in response to the uncertainty and insecurity in the group that surfaced in the fourth month, I now select an article for discussion each month from the *Journal of Psychohistory* and write a short monthly newsletter. In the newsletter I remind everyone of the date of the next meeting, chat about what is happening on the Psychohistory List on the Internet, and pass on any information about new books and articles. The newsletter is posted to the members prior to the meeting.

To date we have discussed several important issues including Repressed Memory and the McMartin Tunnels; Eli Sagan's analysis of the Paranoid Position; and Adowa Cycles. The McMartin Tunnels case in the U.S. is one in which children's accounts of abuse at a preschool and the physical evidence that supported their claims were met with massive denial by those in authority. The vilification of therapists and the "scapegoating" of one concerned and vocal mother elicited much discussion. In Eli Sagan's analysis of the Paranoid Position he posits that the extent to which individuals overcome the feeling of infantile paranoia greatly affects their capacity to manage non-rational impulses and moral anxiety as adults. Emerging from the paranoid position of infancy is dependent upon the ability to develop trust, both in the self and others. Sagan's analysis proved illuminating for our understanding of the Heaven's Gate suicides. Adowa Cycles are fifteen year cycles in which current socio-political phenomena, psychohistorically perceived as re-birth imagery, are seen to have their genesis in a traumatic event or events approximately 15 years previously.

In our discussion of recent Australian films, we concluded that a vast majority of them dealt with the theme of national identity -- *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* is the best example. We found the events that occurred in America just prior to the 1980s to be closely connected to an emerging "group fantasy" in Australia: the uncertainty of who we are and where we belong in the world; for example, the shadow of disgrace over Nixon's resignation [1974] and the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics. This was compounded by a severe recession here in Australia. However, our winning the 1983 America's Cup in yachting had a profound effect on national pride: "little" Australia could upstage the mighty United States! While severe bush fires added to economic concern they also witnessed a resurgence of community support. It seems as if we were starting to feel capable of standing alone. At the same time, a new and charismatic prime minister was elected. Robert (Bob) Hawke exemplified the archetypal Australian, a bit of a larrikan [a rowdy], but a man with the intelligence and strength to "get the job done." As Australia attempts to deal with severing the umbilical cord with mother England (we are in the difficult process of becoming a Republic) and to prove that it is able to stand alone without the constant approval of a paternal United States, we can be seen to be in an oedipal struggle to define our identity.

The monthly discussion is very lively. The members of the group are increasingly trusting of one another and, consequently, very relaxed. Six women and three men from various backgrounds, including academia, teaching, welfare, and psychology, make up our group. We have had one person leave due to work commitments and another person join two months ago. There have been two other expressions of interest in joining, but our group is reluctant to expand further. My personal preference is to provide a format in which guests may participate occasionally with a view to establishing other, similar groups themselves. To

help new groups, as well as for our own historical record, I have maintained a file of our newsletters, discussion papers, and the reference materials that we have found profitable. There are open invitations to present to us extended to Norman Simms in New Zealand and Philip Dwyer, an Australian historian working to apply psychohistory to Napoleon and the French Revolution. Recently, Paul Elovitz and Henry Lawton in America have provided support which includes important resource materials. We have taken out a group subscription to *Mentalities*, and articles from that journal along with articles from **Clio's Psyche** will be amongst our forthcoming discussion subjects.

We will soon hold a weekend mini-conference at which each member of the group will give a paper that applies psychohistorical theory to their research interests. Besides providing valuable intellectual experience, this time together will also strengthen our ties as developing psychohistorians and bring our work to a wider audience.

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A Psychohistorian in New Zealand

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So far as I know, no one has taught any university courses in psychohistory in New Zealand. Nor has any colleague ever voluntarily expressed an interest in psychohistory. Yet, paradoxically, I became a psychohistorian precisely because of my coming to this country in 1970.

When I came from Canada 28 years ago, I had never heard of the field -- it would have seemed bizarre. Nevertheless, there is evidence of a nascent psychohistory in my thesis and first attempts at publishing. I wrote about a 14th-century Middle English romance called *William of Palerne*, and there are two aspects to the study which tell me now why I would eventually be interested in psychohistory, sparked into an explicit enthusiasm because of my move to New Zealand.

The first is the subject matter of the poem: it is about lovers who are forced to escape from Rome to Sicily. Their flight is guided by a werewolf, a prince transformed by his step-mother to get him out of the Spanish court, and this creature, always called the "witty werewolf," raises problems of the relationship between human and animal, reason and instinct, language and communication. I had to deal with childhood in the Middle Ages, definitions of humanity and bestiality, and the problematics of language and reason. Though I did not know it then, I was already dealing in psychohistory.

Rather than a straightforward literary translation from a French original, the poem seemed to be a transformation from a literate to an oral mentality, with the text recast into formulaic phrases and into new categories of thought, perception, and feeling. I am surprised at how radical my thesis was because in the mid-1960s the field of "oral dynamics" had just opened up, and virtually none of the major literary studies were published. Today, of course, many scholars are writing about the way in which oral literatures differ from written texts, going way beyond McLuhan's notion that the medium is the message. Now it is evident that the way memory works; the reception mechanisms of traditional audiences; and the dynamic relationship between visual, tactile, and auditory perceptions largely determine what can and cannot be known, felt, and thought about. These are not absolute but significant minor distinctions, and therefore my early work on *William of Palerne* as a "translation" from a written French version strikes me as still on the cutting edge, and certainly open to further psychohistorical investigations. If I have moved on, it is less in terms of theory and methodology -- which have increasingly turned to psychohistory for insights -- than of specific content.

However, the only indication that what I had been working on was "abnormal" to "serious" scholarship came in the form of silence, the lack of response to my thesis: it was not referred to by anyone writing about *William of Palerne*, not even to dismiss it as ridiculous. The silence continued when I started to give papers in conferences or deliver guest lectures around New Zealand; and more so the silence existed among friends to whom I tried to speak of my interests. At that time I would not have used the words *denial*, *repression*,