

Psychohistory News

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50 Years Later

Restoring the Mind of Black America

Reviewed by Gilda Graff

While this book is about the psychological effects on Black Americans of the Civil Rights Movement and its disintegration, it also gives historical background showing the alternating hope and despair experienced by the Black community.

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Book Review- *Restoring the Mind of Black America*, Eddie Taylor. Chicago. African American Images, 2011. 139 pages \$15.95 (paperback)



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the 1963 March on Washington



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2013 IPA Convention Report

by Brian D’Agostino

The International Psychohistorical Association’s 36th Annual Convention in June featured dozens of interdisciplinary offerings in panels on policy analysis, psychobiography, violence, empathy, the political process, poetry, trauma, the media, and more. Paul Elovitz, Founding Director of Psychohistory Forum and Editor of *Clio’s Psyche*,

gave the keynote address on the history and prospects for the field of psychohistory. His survey threw into relief the rich diversity of scholarly traditions that go under the name “psychohistory.” Given the time constraints, he focused on three of the major figures—Robert Jay Lifton, Lloyd deMause, and Vamik Volkan.

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The IPA board of directors invites you to contact us with feedback or ideas about this publication, our organization, or the field of psychohistory.

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CONVENTION REPORT

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An independent psychoanalyst in the tradition of his friend and mentor Erik Erickson, Robert Jay Lifton found the psychoanalytic establishment dogmatic and, unlike deMause, did not view psychohistory as a separate discipline. He interviewed survivors of large-scale trauma such as victims of the Hiroshima bombing and American soldiers returning from Vietnam, as well as agents of genocidal projects, especially Nazi doctors. Lloyd deMause, founding editor of the *Journal of Psychohistory* and a founder of the International Psychohistorical Association, studied the history of childhood and the impact of changes in child-rearing on large-scale historical developments as well as their expression in “group fantasies.” Vamik Volkan, a founder and early president of the International Society of Political Psychology, studied the role of historical traumas in the identity of ethnic groups and applied political psychology to international conflict resolution through the International Negotiation Network and other organizations. Dr. Elovitz concluded his talk with some reflections on the future of the field, such as new opportunities provided by the Internet to bypass obstacles to psychohistory posed by the balkanization of academic disciplines.

Following the keynote, Hans Baker of the University of Guelph, author of *Towards a Just Civilization: The Gandhian Perspective on Human Rights and Development*, presented a fascinating psychobiographical sketch of Max Weber. Son of a pious Lutheran mother and a liberal Prussian patriarch, Weber throughout his life tried to reconcile religion and liberalism. While producing his famous sociological work on modern bureaucratic rationality, he personally experienced his own administrative responsibilities in academia as a “steel cage,” and suffered an apparent breakdown in 1904-1906 from which he recovered in a sabbatical in



David Beisel, Paul and Geri Elovitz at the 2013 IPA Convention

Italy. Looking at this episode through a psychoanalytic lens, Dr. Baker notes that Weber used the opportunity to write and suggests that he was really giving free rein to his healthy self under the socially acceptable cover of recovering from an illness.

NYU Professor of Social Work and Psychiatry Jerome Wakefield brought startling new insight into the exhaustively studied case of Little Hans, which Freud took as confirmation of his Oedipal Theory. Using Foucauldian analysis of power, Wakefield discussed how the Oedipal Theory, which instilled suspicion of mother-child intimacy, meshed with the agenda of men to be alone with their wives and contributed to the distancing of children from parents characteristic of the modern bourgeois family. He examined the power dynamics operating in Freud’s relationships with the Max and Olga Graf, Little Hans’ parents, and how they distorted Freud’s analysis of the boy’s horse phobia.

David Beisel’s presentation was entitled, “Finding Feelings/Enduring Trauma: Unearthing Hidden Riches in Historical Documents. Author of *The Suicidal Embrace: Hitler, the Allies and the Origins of the Second World War*, Prof. Beisel explored the role of emotion in historical inquiry. While emotion is omnipresent in historical sources, historians have traditionally tried to

relate to it from a position of academic detachment. Instead, Beisel encouraged historians to “find the feelings,” both in the material and in themselves, and by enduring the traumatic feelings evoked by the material to discover the traumas that have endured in it, with the powerful messages from the past that they convey. He illustrated this way of working with sources using several war poems.

Jerry S. Piven, author of *Death and Delusion: A Freudian Analysis of Moral Terror*, placed the Aum Shinrikyo cult into the context of the “normal madness” that is part of modern Japanese civilization. Building on the work of Robert Jay Lifton and others, Piven explored the intergenerational impact of large-scale historical traumas from Western domination in the 19th century, to the defeat of Imperial Japan and the atomic bombings, to the collectivized capitalism of post-war Japan. Piven explored the psychic underworld of Japan’s “industrious civility” as expressed, for example, in the sado-

masochistic fantasies evident in manga comics. He examined the rage, shame, and humiliation that originate in childrearing and are expressed in adult gender psychology and social behavior. These explorations provided a rich psychohistorical context for Aum Shinrikyo’s violence and bizarre apocalypticism.

These brief sketches provide a glimpse of what makes the IPA’s annual conferences so exciting. A lively exchange of ideas among all in attendance continued in two more days of high quality panels. Don’t miss our 2014 conference at NYU on June 4-6; a call for papers appears on page four.

Brian D’Agostino is the Editor of *Psychohistory News* and the IPA’s Communications Director. He is the author of *The Middle Class Fights Back: How Progressive Movements Can Restore Democracy in America* (Praeger 2012).

LETTER FROM THE IPA PRESIDENT

Dear IPA member,

I hope this message finds you well as this Fall issue of our newsletter goes to press. Please note the following items of business.

IPA 2014 Convention. Our planning is well underway. Space has been secured at the New York University Kimmel Center for University Life at the Washington Square campus for June 4, 5 and 6. A call for papers can be found on page four. We look forward to reading your proposal and please pass the call on to colleagues who may be interested in participating. Our attendance has been on an upswing the last couple of years and the quality of presentations has been outstanding. Feedback from attendees was excellent and we look forward to an even better IPA 2014 convention. We ask those who are teaching psychohistorically related content to college level students to actively encourage and support them to participate in the student panel.

IPA Officer Elections. The positions of President, Vice-President, International Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer will be filled by a vote of all IPA members present at our 2014 convention. Please think about running for one of these positions or nominating other IPA members; the current Board is committed to opening our organization’s leadership to new people. Per our Articles of Association, elections for officer positions occur at the annual IPA convention on even

number years. All positions are a two year appointment. In the event that no nominations have been received for a given officer position, current officers will maintain their position on the Board for the subsequent election cycle.

For more information about our election process or for a copy of our Articles of Association, don’t hesitate to contact me. Send nominations by email to djo212@nyu.edu or by mail to Denis J. O’Keefe, IPA President, 142A Main St, Highland Falls, NY 10928.

IPA Outreach. Our last item focuses on involving new people in the life of our organization with a view to increasing our membership. The IPA consists of individuals dedicated to the promotion of the academic field of psychohistory through education, training, and scientific research. Membership is open to anyone wishing to render support, guidance and encouragement to those participating in psychohistorical endeavors. Please reach out to colleagues who may find our work as exciting and important as we do. One way of doing this is to circulate back issues of our Newsletter, our Statement on Violence, or other IPA materials accessible on our website at <http://psychohistory.us/>. Another way is to invite people to our summer conference. Thanks for your support for the IPA and don’t hesitate to contact me with any questions or ideas you may have.

Collegially yours,

Denis J. O’Keefe, IPA President
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CALL FOR PAPERS

37th Annual IPA Convention, New York City, June 4-6, 2014

The International Psychohistorical Association is currently accepting papers for its 2014 annual conference to be held June 4-6 in New York City at New York University. For 37 years the IPA has brought together scholars from diverse backgrounds for three days of stimulating psychohistorical discourse. Year after year the cross fertilization of so many fields has provided for incredible insights into the history of childhood, causes and effects of psychological traumas, historical motivations, and related topics.

Interested scholars are invited to submit your presentation proposal for possible inclusion in our 2014 program. Papers are expected to be psychohistorical in focus and utilizing primarily, but not exclusively psychological/psychoanalytic principles. Typical presentations are 40 minutes in length which includes 10 minutes for discussion. Please include your name, affiliation, email address, phone number, proposed title, and brief abstract. Email this information to Denis O'Keefe at djo212@nyu.edu or mail it to The Family Resource Center, 215 Main Street, Highland Falls, NY 10928.

Restoring the Mind of Black America

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The pain within the community “can be traced back to slavery” (p. v). When the Civil War ended slavery, the government tried to assimilate the freed slaves during Reconstruction, which was a time of “unparalleled hope” (p. v). By the early 1870’s, Blacks had won hundreds of political offices as United States senators and representatives, state legislators, superintendents of education, state treasurers, and lieutenant governors. When Federal troops stationed in the South to enforce Reconstruction were abruptly removed in 1877, Reconstruction ended, and the Jim Crow era began. The goal of the Jim Crow laws was to halt Black progress. These laws succeeded in creating a renewed sense of inferiority and degradation within the Black community. Taylor stresses that Jim Crow was not just about segregation or about laws; it was about “asserting and reiterating Black inferiority with every law, word, and gesture in every aspect of both public and private life” (p. vi). The laws existed “to remind Black people that no matter how educated, wealthy, or respectable they might be, they would never be entitled to equal treatment with the poorest and most degraded Whites” (p. vi). Although African Americans have always struggled for their rights, it was not until the years following World War II that these efforts coalesced into the Civil Rights Movement (p.41).

The psychological trauma of slavery and its aftereffects on future generations has been explored elsewhere in recent years, but in this important book for historians and psychotherapists, Eddie Taylor, an African American who grew up in the inner city, sets out to document and understand the decline of the African American

community since the end of the Civil Rights Movement. He was inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, but later became “perplexed to witness [the] violence, hatred, and crime” (P. v) that followed and wondered how such a “powerful movement could disintegrate into “such terrible social decline in virtually every area of African American life” (p. v).

In describing the events of the Civil Rights Movement and its subsequent disintegration, the author often uses the language of psychoanalyst Melanie Klein and of object relations theory. Object relations refers to an individual’s interactions with external and internal others, both real and imagined, and the relationships between their real and imagined worlds. After stating that historians consider the Civil Rights Movement to have begun in 1954, Taylor describes its beginning metaphorically:

Long after the Civil War, the African American community tossed and turned in the belly of America until a movement was born and a new people emerged. The Civil Rights Movement gave birth to the Black community... The African American community was born on December 5, 1955 at a rally in Montgomery, Alabama (p. 45).

Taylor goes on to say that the rally protesting the mistreatment of Black people on Montgomery buses was led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who stated:

When the history books are written in the future, somebody will have to say, ‘There lived a race of people, of Black people who had the moral courage to stand up for their rights. And thereby they injected a new meaning into the veins of history and civilization (p. 45).

Dr. King imparted his philosophy at twice weekly mass meetings which cut across class lines, and he eventually became the “leader, parent, and loved object” (p. 47) of the African American community nationwide. Taylor further states “The internalization of King as a loved object transformed the terrorized community into a hopeful one. Even in the midst of danger, the community felt that they had all the hope and security they needed to face the world” (p. 48).

Taylor also sees Malcolm X and the Black Panthers as leaders and parental objects for the African American community. He points out that African Americans may not all accept the loved object status of Malcolm X or the Black Panthers, just as there is a “constant great divide” (p. 50) between the NAACP vs. the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), founded by Marcus Garvey, and W.E.B. DuBois vs. Booker T. Washington among the Black community.

However, the author believes that Malcolm X, who “brought consciousness” (p. 49) to African Americans in the North, is a significant figure in the internal world of the Black community and that he developed the community’s self-esteem and identity. He “focused on the deplorable conditions of inner city blacks” and “was concerned about their cares and fears, just like a parent would be” (p 49-50). Taylor cites William W. Sales Jr.’s belief that while both Malcolm X and Dr. King are within the internal worlds of African American youth today, “the image of Malcolm X rivals and perhaps outshines that of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a Black icon and in his commitment to black people” (p. 50).

The Black Panther Party, founded in October 1966 by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton, “gave the African American community practical, day-to-day guidance on how to deal with police harassment, poverty, racism, discrimination, and injustice” (p. 53). Eldridge Cleaver became a leader of the Party because he believed that it was carrying out Malcolm X’s program. The Panthers developed a Ten Point Platform and Program, the purpose of which was “to give the community a powerful vision of justice and equality. This manifesto appealed to African Americans because it addressed urgent issues such as poverty, housing, education, police brutality, and more” (p. 54). Since the organization demonstrated its concern for the community, it too became an internalized love object for many. Taylor points out that Huey P. Newton, one of the founders of the Panthers, educated African Americans about their constitutional rights and especially wanted to end police brutality. The author quotes David Hilliard regarding Newton as follows:

Whenever he came across a policeman harassing a Black citizen, he would stand off to the side and recite relevant passages and penal codes within earshot of the cops. Members of the Black community were shocked. Never had black men, much less armed Black men, stood up to the police for the people (p. 58).

Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. were assassinated in 1965 and 1968 respectively, but it was the United States Government, including the FBI and COINTELPRO, according to Taylor, that dismantled the Black Panther Party. COINTELPRO is an acronym for Counter Intelligence Program, a series of covert, and at times illegal projects conducted by the FBI from 1956 to 1971 to survey, infiltrate, discredit, and disrupt domestic political organizations and individuals, such as those associated with the Civil Rights Movement, including Martin Luther King Jr. Taylor states that the Panthers were consistently targeted for annihilation and cites Hilliard’s statement that by 2/2/71 the FBI “believed its four-year-long war against Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party was nearing victory” (p. 58).

Taylor uses Kleinian theory to discuss the tremendous impact the loss of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and the Black Panther Party had upon African Americans. Their loss created a great void and an urgency to lessen the pain instead of processing it. In Kleinian terms, African Americans have been making “manic reparations” as opposed to “psychological reparation.” Manic reparations encourage compulsive achieving, ‘moving on’ and ‘getting over it’ rather than reflecting on the loss and embracing the pain,” and also manifests itself in gang violence, substance abuse, and diminished self-esteem (p. 61). Taylor contends that psychological reparation “might have done its work had it not been undermined by the disruptive forces of the government” (p. 61).

It seems to me that the response of the FBI to the Civil Rights Movement was also a manic one. Taylor does not make that point, but he does quote Neil Altman’s statement in a 2005 Psychoanalytic Dialogues article that the U.S. government’s attempt at reparation following the attacks of 9/11, which was to create the War on Terror, was a classic example of manic reparation. The FBI’s earlier manic response to the Civil Rights Movement led to Nixon’s “law and order” campaign, which eventually brought the War on Drugs. As I explained at the 2013 Psychohistory Conference, the War on Drugs led to the mass incarceration of Blacks.

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Taylor ends this valuable book by stating:

Although the Black community as a whole appears reluctant to get psychotherapy, the community can benefit and become whole, through the therapeutic process. Without going into the recesses of the mind to unveil the trauma of slavery, the brutality of Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement, and the tragedies we experience today, the community cannot experience true reparation. Psychological reparation seeks to care for the soul. As prisons fill to capacity and new laws with even stricter penalties are being designed, we must urgently address the suffering that is hiding behind the violence, drug addiction, and rebellion. The psychotherapist's office is a safe space. We must take that first step – for the sake of our mental health, for the sake of the Black community, for the sake of America, for the sake of the world (p.128).

Clearly, it is not only the Black community that could benefit from being “put on the couch” since our whole society is manic as Neil Altman explains. He indicates that the manic defense can operate as a defense against guilt and that:

many of the most shameful moments in American history can be understood in terms of guilt avoidance. In the American South, for example, the violent resistance to the civil rights movement can be understood in terms of the overwhelming sense of guilt about the human damage done by slavery and its aftermath that would be unleashed if it were admitted that African Americans are human beings with the same human rights as Europeans. The ever increasing marginalization of the poor in our society can be understood in terms of an effort, on the part of many middle-class Americans, to remove their suffering from our sight in order to avoid guilt, as well as to reinforce the sense of the poor as different, to avoid a guilt-inducing sense of identification (Altman, p.338).

Since we cannot put all Americans on the couch, perhaps the speech given by President Obama several days after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the killing of Trayvon Martin will help us to have a much needed dialogue about race in America. The President movingly stated:

You know when Trayvon Martin was first shot I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago. And when you think about why, in the African American community at least, there's a lot of pain around what happened here, I think it's important to recognize that the African American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and a history that doesn't go away.

There are very few African American men in this country who haven't had the experience of being followed when they were in a department store. That includes me. There are very few African American men who haven't had the experience of walking across the street and hearing the locks click on the doors of cars. That happens to me – at least before I was a senator. There are very few African Americans who haven't had the experience of getting on an elevator and a woman clutching her purse nervously and holding her breath until she had a chance to get off. That happens often (Obama, B, 2013).

Several hours after his speech, demonstrations in dozens of cities commemorated Trayvon Martin. In an interview just before his appearance in Atlanta, Martin Luther King III said that he believed the verdict had led to an unusually introspective and widespread national conversation about race and the criminal justice system (Joseph C., & Somaiya R., 2013).

This wonderful book has helped me to understand, not only the effect on the Black community of both the Civil Rights Movement and its disintegration, but also the manic society all Americans live in. The author's citation of articles by Neil Altman and Hester M. Solomon has inspired my reading of both. I recommend this book to those who want to better understand and be a part of the national conversation about race.

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Gilda Graff is a supervisor at Washington Square Institute. Her scholarly articles include, Everything Has Changed, But Nothing Has Changed: Shame, Racism, and a Dream Deferred; The Name of the Game is Shame: Slavery and Its Aftereffects; The Intergenerational Trauma of Slavery and Its Aftermath; and Redesigning Racial Caste in America via Mass Incarceration.

Florian Galler on Violence *continued from page eight*

traumatization—such as militias and gun enthusiasts—defend abusive structures against reasonable change. An example is the National Rifle Association (NRA), which not only serves as a lobbyist for the gun industry but also acts as an agent of the alter egos of the population. This became apparent in the NRA's February 2013 offensive against President Obama's proposal to ban high-capacity ammunition magazines. The organization ran an ad pointing out that **“secret service and law enforcement officers would not be barred from using high-capacity magazines**, while criminals would still be able to purchase them on the black market” (Yahoo! News /The Ticket – Feb 15, 2013: NRA goes on offensive over high-capacity magazine ban). This is a demonization of the reasonable state. The state is perceived as Babylon and is treated like a criminal against whom people have to defend themselves. I conclude from this that the NRA plays the part of a true agency for the apocalyptic wishes of our alter egos. I regard it as a confirmation that the presumed perpetrators from the NRA and the gun companies finally act as agents of our alter egos.

As for state violence, the IPA Statement views war as “fundamentally an instrument for the accumulation of wealth and power by self-interested elites whose perceptions of self-interest are distorted by psychopathology.” In my opinion this approach contains a **pervasive illusion** that the self-interested abusive elites who abuse their power are the true monsters and the only responsible ones for bad developments in societies. **We should be aware that there will always be people who take advantage of a situation which enables them to abuse their power. Therefore it's the dissociated personality parts of people who again and again give electoral support for policies designed to support abusive behavior by self-interested abusive elites who are the monsters!**

I do not think however that people are more evil than the perpetrators. The opposite is true. But people are the decisive factor in enabling and unconsciously supporting abuse and exploitation, and are more important in this respect. Therefore I think it's the people, it's us or our alter egos who are the monsters. The IPA Statement concludes with an appeal to reasonable politicians in Washington and outlines a policy agenda to reduce and eventually end violence in all its forms. I think in addition reasonable citizens should be aware that they are objects of unconscious mass psychological influences and that the resulting certainties frequently are due to existing needs for psychic defense against traumatic feelings. Group fantasy analysis is therefore an important instrument to understand what is really relevant in a public discourse.

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Florian Galler is the Representative for Switzerland of The Institute for Psychohistory and Editor of the free Psychonomic Newsletter (www.psychohistory.ch) This text is based on material from his presentation at the 2013 International Psychohistorical Association Convention in New York, as abridged and edited by Brian D'Agostino and Florian.

We Are The Monsters!

Critical Review of the IPA Statement on Violence

by Florian Galler

After the December 14, 2012 mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, the International Psychohistorical Association (IPA) published an official statement entitled “How to End Violence in America,” which appeared in the previous issue of this newsletter and is posted on the IPA homepage (<http://psychohistory.us>). As a deMausian author, I was astonished by this statement because it has more in common with conventional thinking than with psychohistorical group fantasy analysis (DeMause 1982, 2002, 2011). It asserts, for example, that war “is fundamentally an instrument for the accumulation of wealth and power by self-interested elites whose perceptions of self-interest are distorted by psychopathology.”

I begin my critique of the Statement by outlining some basic principles of group fantasy analysis as I understand them. What Lloyd deMause calls “group fantasies”—for example, the notion that more guns can make America safer—result from defenses against traumas that people experienced during their pre- and postnatal lives. Fetal trauma is regarded as the primal, deepest, and most unconscious one; a second level of trauma stems from early childhood. Every society is comprised of subgroups, which deMause calls “psychoclasses,” that are defined by the child-rearing practices that shaped their development.

Perinatal and childhood traumas give rise to dissociation and other psychological defenses, which express themselves in group processes. I call the dissociated part of the personality the alter ego, which stands in contrast to the ego, or the reasonable part of the personality. The latter corresponds to our commonly accepted explicit value system, embracing democracy, human rights, and social welfare, for example. The alter ego, by contrast, acts out feelings of self-hatred and feels best when society is headed for wars, economic crises, or other catastrophes.

The self-hatred of our alter egos is mainly expressed in large groups such as nations, because acting out feelings of murderous rage on an individual level would be highly disruptive to the reasonable part of the personality for most people. In order to avoid getting in touch with traumatic feelings of rage, anxiety, guilt and shame, people behave according to the psychic defense mechanism of the unconscious identification with the aggressor. Therefore they identify with powerful group members who abuse their power. Agents of the alter ego in politics such as Tea

Party politicians then endeavor to ensure a favorable environment for the preservation or the expansion of abusive behavior in the society and fight against the removal of exploitative and unjust mechanisms as currently is the case in the fight of the Tea Party against Obamacare.

The IPA Statement distinguishes between individual violence—such as the Newtown shooting—and state violence. But a shooting rampage per se comprises a social element. In a media report on a mass shooting, the mental experience of people was described as “chaos and disbelief” (ABC News, Dec 11 2012: “Gunman kills 2, then self at Oregon mall”). Whatever the individual starting situation of someone who runs amok may be, it will end in his compulsive need to act out feelings of self-hatred within “public, highly symbolically charged institutions” and produce an apocalyptic situation of “chaos and disbelief” among the population. Therefore his individual (unconscious) motivations largely correspond with the pervasive apocalyptic wishes of the dissociated personality parts among the population or at least among large parts of it. The shooter unconsciously attributes his unbearable pain to the reasonable state, which he perceives as doomed like Babylon. In solidarity with the militia or survivalist scene, he gives support to our alter egos and frightens our reasonable personalities by demonstrating the existence of murderous wishes of self-hatred.

Within the mass psychology of nations, some members of psychoclasses with a particularly severe history of
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Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde