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“Tender Murderer”: A Psychoanalytic Reading of Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer in Thom Gunn’s *Boss Cupid*

“Nazik Katil”: Thom Gunn’ın “Boss Cupid” Eserinde Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer’in Psikanalitik Okuması

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ÖZ

Bu makale, Thom Gunn’ın seri katil Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer’den dinlediğimiz “Hitch-hiker”, “Iron Man”, “The Visible Man”, “A Borrowed Man” ve “Final Song” adlı beş şarkıyı içeren son kitabı Boss Cupid’de (2000) yer alan “Troubadour” şiir koleksiyonunu incelemektedir. Gunn’ın şefkat duygusu içeren çalışmaları, Dahmer’in yoğun duygularını ve sapkın eylemlerini romantik bir tarzda kendi sesinden bize aktarırken, “ozan” rolünü oynayan bir katili ortaya çıkarıyor. Bu kendi adına konuşma eylemi, güçlü bir öz-farkındalık duygusunu öne çıkarır ve bir katilin, içinde bulunduğu sefil durumun farkında olmasını sağlar. Bu nedenle şairin katili ele alış tarzı, onun korkunç cinayet yöntemlerini romantikleştirme eylemi yoluyla böylesi her şeyi tüketen cinsel tutkuya karşı belli bir empati gösterdiğini ortaya çıkarır. Şairin herhangi bir eğilime karşı önyargısız olmasından, döneminin şiir üslubundaki geleneklere karşı çıkmasından yola çıkan bu çalışma, Gunn’ın Dahmer’i, ruh sağlığı bozuk olduğundan, partnerinin onu terk etmesini engellemenin tek yolu olan öldürmekten cinsel haz alan ve umutsuzca ilişki arayışında olan ‘nazik bir katil’ olarak tasvirini araştırıyor. Makale, bu şarkılarda Dahmer’in cinayet eylemlerinin şefkatli duygular üzerine kurulu aşamalarını ele alırken, Jacques Lacan’ın insan aklının üç tanınal teorisi, Nevroz, Psikoz ve Sapkınlık, üzerinden yapıyor. Bu temel teşhis kategorilerinin ikisi, nazik katilin cinayetlerinin arkasında yatan amacı/amaçları okumaya yardımcı olan belirli semptomları tanımlamak için kullanılacaktır.

ABSTRACT

This article examines Thom Gunn’s poem “Troubadour,” in his final collection Boss Cupid (2000), containing five songs “Hitch-hiker,” “Iron Man,” “The Visible Man,” “A Borrowed Man,” and “Final Song”, all of which are sung by the infamous serial killer, Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer. Gunn’s study of Dahmer, evoking compassion, furnishes a murderer who performs his own role of “troubadour” while singing his intense feelings and aberrant actions from his own voice in a romantic mode. This act of speaking for himself highlights a strong sense of self-awareness and renders a murderer who is cognizant of his miserable situation. Thus, the poet’s treatment is with a particular empathy for such all-consuming sexual passion through an act of romanticizing the killer’s horrendous ways of murdering. Based on the poet’s lack of prejudice towards any propensities and his courage of going against the poetic conventionalities in his time, this study explores Gunn’s portrayal of Dahmer as a ‘tender murderer’, a desperate intimacy seeker victimized by his damaged psyche, thereby having sexual gratification in killing, the only way to stop his partner from leaving him. While the article engages with the phases of Dahmer’s homicidal acts operating on tender feelings in these songs, it does so through Jacques Lacan’s theories of the psyche with its three diagnostic structures: Neurosis, Psychosis, and Perversion. Two of these fundamental categories of diagnosis will be utilized to define particular symptoms, which cater to reading the tender murderer’s motive(s).

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Introduction

Thom Gunn, who grew up in England during the heat of the 30s and 40s sweeping the nation, is still celebrated with justifiable fame for his brilliant and multi-layered poems in a wide range of poetic forms and his poetic collections of homosexual male passion, love, grief, and urban life. His move to the United States in the 1950s indicates that his collections present a mixture of English tradition and American experience, a combination of formal structure and meter, and turbulent subject matters highly influenced by American poets. His final collection *Boss Cupid* (2000), read as a sequel to *The Man With Night Sweats* (1992), juxtaposes the brashness of youth with the melancholy and scholarliness of age, both lamenting for his friends who died of AIDS and hinting at a self-portrait of the poet who wears the traces of all the ages he has gone through. His poetic portrait presents a remarkable interest in the exploration and formation of identity, disguised as an existential hero in his collections, as in Donald Hall's elucidation in the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*:

... he may not be labeled by nationality or anything else. His identity is his resistance to the limitations of identity. He belongs to uncertainty, exploration, movement, and ongoingness... Here is the man without conventional supports who refuses title and easy chair, political party, and national identity (Poetry Foundation).

In forming Gunn's thoughts concerning existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre played a massive role through his philosophical treatise *Being and Nothingness* (1956), which proposes that humanity is to reach its meaning in a doomed form of freedom presented in a senseless universe. However, John Keats's poetic theory, known as Negative Capability, offered more than existentialism as it enables the artist to "access to truth without the pressure and framework of logic or science" and navigates "the [poet's] power to bury self-consciousness [and] dwell in a state of openness to all experience", hence, he activates all his energies, present between wakefulness and sleep, for poetic creation (West, 2020, Negative Capability, para. 1). His influences go farther backward than Sartre's and Keats's. Shakespeare and Metaphysical poets, particularly John Donne provided literary forebears in the use of techniques, devices, and styles in his early poems (Fan, 2007, pp. 15-16) as he said "I was trying to be the twentieth-century John Donne" (Gunn, 1981, p. 36), yet, these influences became less frequent in his later poetry, which supposedly goes parallel with the differences between the British and American culture and law towards the issue of homosexuality. In one of his interviews, he stated:

When I first started to write, I was aware of being queer, but I didn't write about it because queer poems would probably not have been accepted by the editors I sent them to, and I probably would never have gotten to the United States to join my lover (Hennessy, 2005, p. 10).

Based on the above quotation, it is appropriate to suggest that Gunn may have referred to these canonical figures to seek a way to conceal his homosexuality and beautify the coded sexual references (or code the beautiful sexual references). The poems emerged from the famous sign of Cupid "devious master of our bodies" (Gunn, 2001, p. 101). Knowing the fact that Cupid was initially employed by Ovid as "Sir Cupid"¹ and Spenser as "Dan Cupid"², Gunn

¹ "Oh Venus and thy tender sonne, Sir Cupid, what delyght, / How present feeling of your sport hath touched mee this nyght. / How lay I as it were resolv'd both marea, flesh, and bone." Arthur Golding, 2006, trans. *Metamorphoses*, IX, 573-5. London: Penguin Classics.

² "And after all came Life, and lastly Death; / Death with most grim and griesly visage seene, / Yet is he nought but parting of the breath; / Ne ought to see, but like a shade to weene, / Unbodied, unsourd, unheard, unseene. / But Life was like a faire young lusty boy, / Such as they faigne Dan Cupid to have beene, / Full of delightfull health and lively joy, / Deckt all with flowers, and wings of gold fit to employ." Spenser, *The Faerie Queen*, Mutabilitie Cantos, VII, vii, 46.

talks about his lyrical connection to his “Boss Cupid” through its poignantly meditative lyrics, shedding light on the fact that desire and love serve as the dominant themes in this chronicle. The poems in this collection are centred upon on social deviants, and Dahmer’s songs are given in the third section under the title “Troubadour”, resonating with the conventions of “the courtly code of love” (Michelucci, 2009, p. 147). This part includes five songs - “Hitch-hiker,” “Iron Man,” “The Visible Man,” “A Borrowed Man,” and “Final Song” - which present the serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer’s deviant desire for affection and practice of love. The poet’s lyrical wit and deft personas create a potent reminder that every existence is deeply imbricated with conflicts and differences. At first glance, the image on the cover of the book evokes such a muscular power, but the first meeting with the poems nullifies this and signifies, instead, a sense of tenderness and sympathy instilled in the lines. The sense of tenderness functions as a departure point and constitutes the essence of this study.

Born in May 1960 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer was a cannibal, necrophiliac, and gay serial killer. Serial killing, despite its varied definitions according to a cursory reading of the literature, shares one commonality that many experts agree: “The offender must have killed at least two victims in temporally unrelated incidents” (Knoll, 2006, p. 64) to qualify as a serial killer, and must also use the same method of execution. The method of operation is what enables the criminal to be recognized as the same person who has committed multiple crimes. Therefore, there must be a pattern in the crime-commission process for someone to be classified as a serial killer; simply committing multiple murders does not qualify someone as a serial killer. Adding to that, according to Ressler and Burgess, the FBI divided the serial murders and murderers into two distinct categories: organized and disorganized:

Table 1: Profile Characteristics of Organized and Disorganized Murder

Organized	Disorganized
Average to above-average intelligence	Below-average intelligence
Socially competent	Socially inadequate
Skilled work preferred	Unskilled work
Sexually competent	Sexually incompetent
High birth order status	Low birth order status
Father's work stable	Father's work unstable
Inconsistent childhood discipline	Harsh discipline as child
Controlled mood during crime	Anxious mood during crime
Use of alcohol with crime	Minimal use of alcohol
Precipitating situational stress	Minimal Situational stress
Living with partner	Living alone
Mobility with car in good condition	Lives/works near crime scene
Follows crime in news media	Minimal interest in news media
May change jobs or leave town	Significant behaviour change (drug/alcohol abuse, religiosity, etc.)

Table 2: Crime Scene Differences Between Organized and Disorganized Murderers

Organized	Disorganized
Planned offense	Spontaneous offense
Victim a targeted stranger	Victim/location known
Personalizes victim	Depersonalizes victim
Controlled conversation	Minimal conversation
Crime scene reflects overall control	Crime scene random and sloppy
Demands submissive victim	Sudden violence to victim
Restraints used	Minimal use of restraints
Aggressive acts prior to death	Sexual acts after death
Body hidden	Body left in view

Weapon/evidence absent Transports victim or body	Evidence/weapon often present Body left at death scene (1985, p. 19).
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According to Jentzen's study, Dahmer was an organized serial killer (apparently in the initial phases of his murders), displaying all of the phases of the crime in a planned and coordinated manner. He chose his victims by prowling local bars in the area, and then took pictures of his victims (all of them male), both alive and dead. He kept these pictures and some mementos from his victims, including their body parts. However, later on, Dahmer was growing psychologically disorganized in his killing and disposal techniques, as evidenced by the increased frequency of the killings, the piling of bodies, and the requirement for additional containers (2017, p. 450). Thus, his name surfaces as a troubling paradox, an unmoulded serial killer rendering a confession including every detail and wishing to know what is wrong with him.

When caught, serial killers' sanity is questioned, necessitating a psychiatric examination. The results of the investigation classify the serial killer as either organized or disorganized based on a psychoanalytical approach to criminology. While psychoanalysis is concerned with investigating the human psyche, the psychoanalytical view of criminology deals with examining what factors may lead someone to break the law, making crime, insanity, criminal responsibility, psychosis, and perversion the domains of interest. It helps people understand no matter what crime is committed, there is always something hidden lurking behind it, prompting them to reveal their motivations and eschew any generalization of behaviours. In Dahmer's case, undoubtedly, the desire to cannibalize the lover suggests a psychoanalytic interpretation. In Jacques Lacan's *A Theoretical Introduction to the Functions of Psychoanalysis in Criminology* (1950), his insights "Psychoanalysis simultaneously resolves a dilemma in criminological theory: in unrealizing crime, it does not dehumanize the criminal" (p. 135), propose not to consider the offender as a monstrous being, but to investigate deeper what is going on in his/her psyche.

Lacan's structures of the psyche provide a way to categorize subjects and their motivations. Systematizing Freud's work on diagnostics groupings, he introduced a trio model concerning the functioning of the human mind and identified three diagnostic structures of the human mind: Neurosis, Psychosis, and Perversion, each of which defines particular symptoms. All three function differently in approaching and solving the problems of alienation and being restricted by the law regarding his/her *jouissance*. *Jouissance* is a French word whose equivalence in English is 'enjoyment' but has a deadly reference, an excessive kind of pleasure linked to pain. A little more elucidation is requisite here to comprehend the link between psychoanalysis and serial killing. According to Lacan, the subject discovers his individuality in the mirror stage – the central stage in one's development (6-18 months of age)³ -- by realizing that he is not one with his mother. Moncayo and Romanowicz's construal of Lacan presents that since we all go through the mirror stage, there is no such thing as a "normal" person for Lacan. This division places us all in the Neurotic structure, where we undergo Privation, Frustration, and Castration at the same time that we realize we are separate from our mother, and from then on, the father's authority, identified with the law, takes hold (Moncayo & Romanowicz, 2018, p. 1).

The discovery of the child's individuality in the mirror stage causes the subject to become split, and from that point forward, s/he will constantly be seeking her/his

³ It corresponds to the imaginary order in which the child moves from the stage of primary need to demands.

‘completeness’ which is possessed in the Real stage, but for this search to be accomplished, the child must express her/his needs verbally. This need brings about the use of language, which places the child in the Symbolic Order (18 months to 4 years of age), and now the child is an empty signifier (I) in the sphere of the Other. This symbolic order is what establishes the internalization of the law in the child. Associated with all the power, this law is determined by those having come before the child, in Lacan’s terminology, “symbolic father” and the “Name-of-the-Father” (1958), namely social structures such as law, religion, education, etc.

As is argued in Lacan’s *Écrits* (originally published between 1936 and 1966), the human subject exists within one of these diagnostic structures rather than being in a normal state. The most typical state that a subject shows is likely to be described as neurosis, whose primary definition is the question of existence itself (1998, p. 174). What determines the neurotic is the “existential values” (Ibid., p.190) of birth and death. As Fink observes:

The neurotic [in contrast to the psychotic] is unsure, maybe the person was there, maybe not; maybe the voices are coming from some outside source, maybe they are not; maybe what they say has some meaning, maybe not. The neurotic wants to know: 'Am I crazy to be seeing (hearing) such things? Is it normal? How should I be viewing such experiences?' (1997, p. 84-85).

Hysteria and obsessional are two major forms of neurosis. Lacan maintains that the subject’s hysteria remains localized in the signifier’s enigmatic reflection, particularly on these existential values, as well as displaying symptoms that arise from being associated with something structured, like a language (1993, p. 190). This diagnostic structure is normal since it functions as the structural and constituent of the human psyche. He views the signifier to indicate nothing in the sense that what it symbolizes cannot be discovered in nature; thus, the superego is developed to make sense of such an absence. The superego’s job, then, is to be “indispensable to the functioning of a human organism that has to come to terms not only with a natural environment but with a signifying universe” (Ibid.). Fink argues that a characteristic of neurosis is repression, which is activated by a child’s longing to be one with his mother. This repression works by suppressing emotions that cause one to feel ashamed, embarrassed, or out of line with one’s ideals. Notwithstanding, anything that is suppressed in a subject will eventually surface as a symptom. This symptom may manifest physically or psychologically, but it is always a message conveyed to the Other (1997, p. 114).

If we elaborate further on obsessional neurosis and hysteria, Lacan states that obsessional neurosis bears on the interrogation of the subject’s existence, while hysteria is more concerned with the question of the subject’s sexual orientation such as “Am I a man or a woman?” or, “What is a woman?” (1993, pp. 170–175). In Fink’s elucidation in *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (1997), that the obsessive fantasy has to do with the relationship with an object, even though he will always deny that this object is linked with the Other, more explicitly, the obsessive will always deny the loss of the object α . Lacan distinguishes both obsession and hysteria in the aspect of their fantasy. In her/his fantasy, the separation will be resolved because “the subject constitutes himself in relation to the breast, which serves as the source of his desire; unity or wholeness is restored to the subject by addition of the object” (p. 119). In the meantime, the hysteric’s isolation from the object α is removed since s/he considers himself to be the missing piece that the Other needs; in other words, s/he becomes the essential object that the Other desire and “s/he constitutes herself on the subject side of the ‘equation’ as object α ” (Ibid., p. 120).

The other structure is perversion, which is one of the most common structures in a criminal. Perversion, according to Lacan, is defined as “not simply an aberration concerning social criteria,” but instead, the rejection of castration. To further elaborate, the subject recognizes the constitutive lack, which acts on desire and, as it suggests, it “constitutes the motivation of filling in this lack with desire objects” (Yazıcı, 2007, p. 63), yet s/he holds that it

is full of meaning and substance. This differs from neurosis in that the pervert lacks the “question”; “as neurosis is characterised by a question, perversion is characterised by the lack of a question” (Evans, 1996, p. 142). The pervert behaves purposefully to create the illusion that their *jouissance* is the Other’s *jouissance*.

The symbolic is generally unimpaired in both of these spheres. While the neurotic just denies castration but continues to try to fill the lack, the pervert is persuaded that his/her desire for the Other is fully intact. For the pervert, the Mother is always there, whereas for the neurotic, such presence is questioned. The constant presence of the Mother can be linked to Bond’s observation that “in perversion infantile fantasy still dominates; this may be characterized by and recognized in an apparent splitting or oscillation between an image of an *idealized mother* and another that represents a *repulsive mother*,” and he adds that perversion is an ongoing struggle against restrictions imposed, “locating the perverse subject in a socially coded context of subversion and sabotage” (2009, p. 34).

The third modality is psychosis. Lacan distinguishes the psychotic (or psychosis) from these two former diagnostic entities in two forms of negation. The first one is foreclosure, the equivalence of the Freudian term of *Verwerfung* that Lacan identifies as the process of psychosis, in which an element is denied beyond the scope of the symbolic order as though it had never existed (Evans, 1996, p. 65). The object of the foreclosure is the Name-of-the-Father (known as a fundamental signifier); thus, the application of meaning faces difficulty (Ibid.). Foreclosure defines psychosis. To Lacan, this enlightens why the psychotic either invents words to correspond to phenomena or frequently encounters meaning slippage. The symbolic totality is beyond resolution. For Lacan, this should be distinguished from neurosis. Repression only casts an aspect of signification to the unconscious, whereas foreclosure completely rejects it from the symbolic, with no possibility of recovery. Hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia are observed to be symptoms of the psychotic condition. The psychotic, in particular, makes meaning of the symbolic in the long run by redefining signifiers beneath the signified to match a delusional model.

Already believing they are whole in a way, psychotics perceive everyone else as an object; they are free to act any way they like. If they were criminals, they could kill without feeling guilty. This is what distinguishes a psychotic criminal, who will assert that they were only carrying out the order whispered by the voice because they were not established in the symbolic order. As they were not established in the Symbolic order, everything that was rejected in this phase may reappear as a hallucination. However, Dahmer “did not claim to hear voices or have hallucinations ... because he seemed perfectly ordinary, it was assumed that he seemed perfectly sane also” (Masters, 1985, p. 20). His normalcy in the manner and lack of characteristics attributed to a “mad” man evinced that cracking open his personality was difficult (Ibid.).

As Fink explains, at the heart of Lacan’s work lies his proposal pointing that these structures (Neurosis, Psychosis, and Perversion) are developed from the Freudian Oedipus complex:

The boy’s blithely polymorphous sexuality becomes organized, owing to the father’s function in bringing about repression of the boy’s Oedipal attachment to his mother. The father-who in Freud’s work is par excellence the symbolic father, the demanding, prohibiting father-brings about a socialization of the boy’s sexuality: he requires the boy to subordinate his sexuality to culturally accepted (that is to say, symbolic) norms.

This occurs, Freud tells us, even in the case of perverts: their polymorphous sexuality gives way to a hierarchization of the drives, but under the dominance of a zone other than the genital zone—oral, anal, scopic, and so on. Similarly, in accordance with Lacanian criteria, the pervert’s imaginary has undergone

symbolic rewriting of some kind-not the same rewriting as in neurosis, but a rewriting nevertheless, evinced by the ordering or structuring of the imaginary.

In psychosis this rewriting does not occur. We can, at the theoretical level, say that this is due to the unsuccessful establishment of the ego-ideal, the nonfunctioning of the paternal metaphor, the non-initiation of the castration complex, and a variety of other things. The point here is that the imaginary continues to predominate in psychosis, and that the symbolic to the extent to which it is assimilated, is "imagarized": it is assimilated not as a radically different order that restructures the first, but simply by imitation of other people (1997, p. 89).

To elaborate briefly, the symbolic father's role in organizing a child's sexuality is contrasted with the absence of symbolic rewriting in psychosis, where the imaginary continues to predominate without assimilating the symbolic as a distinct order.

Lacan proposes that these three structures are distinct and separate from each other; in other words, if a subject is diagnosed as neurotic, s/he cannot suddenly alter the category and become perverse since all these are mutually distinct spheres (Bond, 2009, p. 31). Three of the structures are different. However, I want to question the distinctiveness surrounding these three structures drawing from Kaltenbeck's proposal (2017, p. 101) based on his conclusions based upon Lacan's notes on "Kant with Sade" (1969). Can we not claim that perversion sets the stage for psychosis? Are both structures possible to be affected by each other, furnishing a nexus for the hypothesis of examining Jeffrey Dahmer through both perversion and psychosis? Therefore, the study explores whether Lacan's claim that any instance of how a human being functions must be representative of at least one of the three modalities can be challenged.

When revisiting *Theoretical Introduction* (1950), one finds Lacan's contemplating whether "the search for truth that constitutes the object of criminology in the order of judicial things, and also what unifies its two faces: the truth of crime on its police face, the truth of the criminal on its anthropological face" (p. 9). He essentially interrogates whether unearthing truth is the ultimate goal that links the various inquiries with analyses within the framework of criminology. Hence, there are crimes that can only be understood, according to Lacan, "within a closed structure of subjectivity" (p. 10), suggesting that certain elements such as traumas, fears, and unconscious impulses influence a criminal's subjective experience. In the examinations, psychoanalytic theory provides ways to explore indications or symptoms seemingly in normal-looking subjects, like Dahmer.

The poet Tom Gunn illustrates an approach to this subjective experience and avoids portraying his respective protagonist as an evil figure by focusing on the killer's story rather than the victims'. Drawing on this standpoint, Dahmer's impenetrable case depicted in Gunn's poems can be better decoded with Lacan's influential theories by drawing attention to seemingly unfathomable details.

Tom Gunn's "Tender Murderer": Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer

For Dahmer, the idea of love and death fused. A serial killer puts his victims to sleep so that they do not suffer before killing them; at the same time, he has a genteel heart and thinks that he eats his partners he killed to keep them alive by filling the feeling of void inside him as he shared in one of the interviews that it is a way of "making me feel they were a part of me" (Bertram, 2021, n.p.).

With this, he could exhibit such a vivid picture of a romantic character, which made it hard to fathom that he murdered these people out of pure evil. As Fan points out, "Framing Dahmer's gay, murderous, cannibalistic and necrophiliac fantasies within the elaborate convention of courtly love, Gunn imagines him as an extreme version of a modern troubadour, composing and singing his own songs about his actions, self imprisoned in his own 'rapture'" (2007, p. 221). Following Lacan's thesis in *Theoretical Introduction* (1950), "Psychoanalysis

... does not dehumanize the criminal” (p. 135), Gunn humanizes serial killer Dahmer by portraying him as a wretched affection seeker, suggesting a tender murderer. The opening stanza, which is the first song, “Hitch-Hiker” in the section titled “Troubadour”⁴, written in “elegant Elizabethan” (Wilmer, 2009, p. 2) style, is voiced by the romantic outsider character:

Oh do not leave me now.
All that I ever wanted is compressed
In your sole body. As you turn to go
I know that I must keep you, and know how,
For I must hold the ribbed arch of your chest
And taste your boyish glow. (Gunn, 2000, p. 85)

Unlike a cold and calculating murderer, the speaker evokes sympathy in the reader through his sense of loneliness and desperate seek of intimacy and love as encapsulated in “Oh do not leave me now/ All I wanted is compressed in your sole body” (lines 1-3), painting a picture of a lover who only wants to cuddle up and to be loved, and cared, simply to feel ‘worthy.’ This raises the idea that Dahmer had never been valued in his whole life, even more awful or pitiful in the case of his parents. This negligence appeared first when his mother Joyce rejected breast-feeding and distanced herself from her son; thus, “do the rejection and distance become incorporated, absorbed, into their view of their own place in the world, and gradually presumed natural and deserved, or just ‘right’” as penned by Brian (1993, pp. 27-28). When Dahmer’s mother’s desire moved towards her demanding schedule rather than being with her son, his killing, which is supposedly a form of satisfaction, may have been the manifestation of his stolen pleasure with the mother. In light of the paternal function, there are two phases; the first one defines the moment when an authority, specifically the father, prohibits the child from the *jouissance* that s/he attains from the mother, marking a semi-detachment. When the father announces this separation, “the child is constituted as the object by which the mOther as Other obtains satisfaction. Alienation, this first movement of the paternal function, does not occur completely for the psychotic but is firmly instated for both the pervert and the neurotic” (Swales, 2012, p. xiv). In this phase, the split of conscious and unconscious occurs, the effects are alienation and repression. Could Dahmer’s plea of “Oh do not leave me now” (line 1) hint at the primal repression? I think it is possible to propose this.

The second phase is separation, which appears when the mother’s desire is inclined to other objects or other pleasures, in particular, responsibilities outside the home. Then, the child enters a symbolic space where s/he obtains her/his subject position relying on her/his own desires. For the pervert, there is no separation; s/he is “stuck identifying with being the actual object of the Other’s *jouissance*. Most perverts are male, and so they identify with the penis as the actual object of the mOther’s desire (Swales, 2012, p. xiv). In the context of these insights, Dahmer’s mother’s desire was captured by her schedule and then her other baby urged him to move into his own subject position, but he may not have achieved it. The consequence of his denial of the castration is perversion.

Therefore, these phases of parental function culminated in his impairment – which he is aware of - and dysfunction: “he has said that he is not good at coping with disappointment” (Brian, 1993, pp. 28). At this point, drawing on psychoanalytic perusal of him and simultaneously his motives for killing, the tender wish shifts into an *unwanted* compulsion forcing him to stop his partner from leaving him for now, but to him for good: “As you turn to go/ I know that I must keep you” (lines 3-4). The expression of *unwanted* highlights that what

⁴ Troubadour is defined as a French medieval lyric poet who composed and sang in Provençal in the 11th to 13th centuries, especially on the theme of courtly love (Oxford Dictionary).

he does is not consciously intended by a healthy mind but rather out of his pervert or psychotic psyche. The only way he knows to make his partner stay is to “hold the ribbed arch” (line 5) of his chest and taste his “boyish glow” (line 6). His reference to “the ribbed arch” manifests his desire to possess the heart of his partner, implicating again the desperate desire to attain attention and affection. In addition, Gunn stages Dahmer’s plan of constructing a skeletal altar out of his victims’ ribcages. The expression of “ribbed arch” (line 5) insinuates his fetish for the male chest, whereas his tasting the partner’s “boyish glow” (line 6) finds parallel expression in Dahmer’s dismembering all of his partners and eating them, which signifies his uncontrollable lust for people who partner him. A nineteenth-century German psychiatrist and author, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, first utilized the term fetishism for sexual behaviour. He defined fetishism “as a sexual perversion in which sexual excitement is absolutely dependent on the presence of a specific object (the fetish)” (Evans, 1996, p. 64). If, as Lacan states, “perversion is a sort of accident in the development of the drives” (2020, p. 105), then fetishism is possible to arise out of any impairment in Dahmer’s drives. To Lacan, a fetish is a substitute for the phallus serving as a protection against ... castration anxiety (2020, p. 15), suggesting a strive for access to this lack of object symbolising phallus. Thus, that someone is defined as fetish is both related to the perception of the absence of a phallic organ in the female subject, and also to the negation of this absence (Ibid., p. 16). The serial killer Dahmer’s fetish desire for a male chest is then examined as his protection against castration anxiety and the negation of the absence of the phallus.

The criminals act in the Real order in a symbolic fashion (Costello, 2002, p. 91). To him, crime is committed when family and society do not function properly; and it is associated with the interruption of the paternity function and the deterioration of the father’s involvement as a third to the duality between mother and child, that is, with the dysfunction of the symbolic order. He maintains that:

.... we “normal neurotic” subjects act in the Symbolic order in a real way whereas the criminal acts in the Real order in a symbolic way. We take the Symbolic as Symbolic; the criminal mistakes the Symbolic for the Real. He takes the structures of the Symbolic for something they are not (Ibid., p. 117).

Lacan defines the stage of the Real as a time of completeness that is irrevocably lost through the entrance into language, which brings about a search for satisfaction. Nevertheless, the Real continues to impact us as adults because it is the foundation that all of our fantasies and linguistic structures inevitably break. Every time we are forced to realize the materiality of our existence, for instance, the real continues to erupt. This realization is typically traumatic since it puts our entire “reality” in jeopardy, but it also fuels Lacan’s *jouissance*. Based on this account, a criminal’s confusion between the Symbolic and the Real, as mentioned by Costello, can be accounted as a downward journey from the Real into the Symbolic, leaving irremediable wounds; however, above all, this search for satisfaction unavoidably turns out something different or more precisely aberrant unlike that of a “normal neurotic” subject. Lacan’s account of such a scene suggests that Gunn delineated Dahmer as the hero/protagonist who was swept away by both a dark undertow in his psyche and by social and familial malfunctioning, rendering him to crave satisfaction, possession, and affection, previously denied. He was disabled by all these and unable to function in normal ways. The fact that he was abandoned by his mother for good and that he could not stop her may have been projected on his victims. Thus, he figured he could only stop them if he simply killed them.

Apart from its association with language, the Symbolic is also “the realm of radical alterity”, which Lacan alludes to as the Other” and it contains the unconscious, the discourse of this Other, and “the realm of the Law” which controls desire in the Oedipus complex (Evans, 1996, pp. 203-204). Through the lens of his clinical structures, “the perverse - his *Verleugnung* - is one that is characterized as an intrinsically male response to Oedipus” (Bond, 2009, p.37),

thereby identifying Dahmer as a lust killer or more pertinently a perverse killer due to his sexual propensity towards the “boyish glow” (line 5) and “ribbed arch” (line 6). Dahmer lacked any principles which controlled his pleasures and desires.

Considering the fact that Dahmer’s first victim was a hitch-hiker named Stephen Hicks murdered in 1978, the first song is a tribute to Hicks. The typical lover characterization in “Of my desire to own the elusive one / I have not even possessed” (lines 8-9) eerily evolves into the speaker’s success in stopping his partner: “I thought you were gone / But you are here and will remain with me /Your long hair floods the pillow that we share” (lines 13-15). But how? How did he convince his partner to stay? The clue surfaces in the following line with the word “mute” (line 16); it is not like a tacit acceptance to stay, but forced, so the result is the perpetual muteness of the partner. This presents full possession and control to the tender murderer as insinuated in “in which I’m free” (line 17), leading to stripping his “body bare” (line 17) and rendering the dead a sort of doll to sexually toy with till he consumes him to his last piece as a trophy and till a new one is wished. In Lacan’s “Kant with Sade” (1963), one may find a form of exploration of satisfaction bereft of any kind of restrictions or limitations evinced through a sort of Sadean maxim of desire: “*I have the right of enjoyment over your body, anyone can say to me*” (Gault, 2003-2004, p. 7). This is interpreted as a declaration of right; however, the first part of the sentence sounds like it is said to the person by someone else, and s/he reports it to the person s/he speaks to. Thus, the “I” reports what is said to him/her, and “I” does not refer to the addresser but to the Other, testifying to the possibility of hearing this declaration from anyone, so it points to the existence of the Other. Lacan’s elucidations on Freud’s view of the Other as “supreme Other in “Evil,” namely superego, indicate that superego does not seem like the Other that chooses the good side, but the Other that is after evil (Ibid., pp. 7-8). It appears that Dahmer’s Other seems evil through the macabre dimensions of the Other’s imperatives. The lonely lover’s declaration of right over, namely erotic desire, his partner is the possession of him to the point of killing, rather aberrant, which simply alludes to why and how he finds peace and full assurance in the dead’s silence. His murderous reality is obscenely masqueraded as a mutilated body in ‘mute consent’. This is very much related to his wish for the partner to be completely submissiveness to him and to exercise full control over him. His declaration of right over the victim’s body is confirmed with “in which I’m free” (line 17).

In the castration complex, it is observed that the child discovers that the Other- the first one is the mother- is missing after separation which leads to a lack in the Other. To Lacan, if the child cannot separate her/himself from the imaginary relation with the mother to embark on the real world, s/he may encounter several peculiarities, one of which is perversion. Thus, in the light of these accounts, it is probable to conclude that Dahmer is a victim of his self-absorbed mother who denied her baby at an early stage and super busy father; “always saw him as a man working rather than loving or being with him” (Brian, 199 p. 100), also “autocratic to the point of bossy” (Ibid., p. 105), possibly leading to chain of negative consequences in the formation of psyche and psychosexual development. When there was no relationship with the mother, could have been there separation from the mother? My argument reaches the answer ‘no’. With this personal information, it is safe to link it with Lacan’s Seminar II, in which he asserted that perversion and psychosis, also phobia, culminate from when “something is essentially incomplete in the Oedipus complex” (1998, p. 201). He added that there is a vital blockage even prior to the first time of the Oedipus complex in psychosis, whereas in perversion, the complex is performed the third time, but instead of identifying with the father, the subject identifies with the mother and/or the imaginary phallus, thereby recollecting the imaginary preoedipal triangle; the mother, child, and phallus (Ibid.), in which fetishism is also rooted. In this context, we can propose that Dahmer could not identify with his father as a result of not being able to detach

himself from the imaginary relation with the mother due to impairments, so to say, he identifies with his mother, meaning, he is stuck in the imaginary triangle of mother, child, and phallus.

Portrayed as a lonely man hungry for physical intimacy urged by Boss Cupid's commands, Dahmer wished for absolute submissiveness from his partner, and when denied, this placed him in a vicious circle which is presaged in the first poem: My song in each reprise / Will follow the first order, strain by strain" (lines 19-20). This taps into Dahmer's self-awareness about the feeling of loss similar to his ephemeral thought of "full possession" (line 23). Why did he want "full possession"?

Gunn portrayed the serial killer's excessive desire by bringing us closer to him through a picture of a lonely, depressed, and confused young man who finds happiness in his way when abandoned by his divorced parents. We hear him in the second song "Iron Man" versing: "sullen moody summer" (line 1) when he "sat in the kennel of inaction" (line 2) while his parents "were away / Getting divorced" (lines 3-4), suggesting his dangerous and erotic solitary experience awash with his unquenchable toying with his own body and fantasizing with a muscled iron Man: "all of the day I masturbated" (line 6), "I played with myself, played with myself, absorbed in the study" (line 10). His asking "what could I do with such a body" (line 12) does not require an answer as it lacks a question mark in the end since he knows well what to do by beginning to design the next step in his fantasies which is supported by "And good enough to eat" (line 13). The word "taste" in the first song reappears as "eat," which presents the idea that the recurring theme is consumption. This can be interpreted as his false desire to become one with his partner highlighting the presence of the first Other – his mother – in his life, already impaired. This is the darkest shadow of that separation. What lies at the heart of his act of consuming is to keep them alive inside.

A breakthrough classic in psychiatric studies of serial murder, Lunde's *Murder and Madness* (1975) concludes that:

Most murderers can be characterized as one of two distinctly different types: they are usually either paranoid schizophrenics or sexual sadists. Paranoid schizophrenia is a psychosis characterized by hallucinations ("hearing voices" in most cases), delusions of grandiosity or persecution, bizarre religious ideas (often highly personalized), and a suspicious, hostile, aggressive manner. Sexual sadism in its extreme form is a deviation characterized by torture and/or killing and mutilation of other persons in order to achieve sexual gratification (p. 48).

Dahmer was compelled to commit all the crimes due to his sexual drive and desire to achieve sexual gratification in killing and decomposing the body. A psychoanalytic, in Dean's words, "is the one who approaches sexuality diagnostically, classifying it as normal or pathological; the unconscious casts doubt on the very notion of the normal" (2014, p. 155). From Lunde's and Dean's standpoints, it would be appropriate to suggest that Dahmer's pathological sexuality is intricately linked to his sexual drives and unconscious. Dahmer's lurid desires manifest as the results of an unhealthy subtraction, a phenomenon of cracked splitting. This nurtured, in my view, his violent motives in his unconscious. While Freud defined the term unconscious through neurosis, Lacan's first handling of it by way of psychosis. When referring to Lacan's unconscious, we reach a point of convergence for Dahmer's case: Lacan uses the phrases "impediment," "failure," and "splitting" to describe the unconscious (Miller, 1995: 9). This void or break in the symbolic chain is what is known as the unconscious. Your unconscious produces emotions and mental images that are predicated upon the other's language, and hence, he asserts that "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other" (Ibid., p. 150). To focus on desire, Lacan argues that it swims against the notion of identity and "Desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the phenomenon of their splitting" (1977, p. 287). To further elaborate on psychosis, in his seminar *The Psychoses*, he argues that the core idea of psychosis, defined

by the activity of foreclosure, is madness (1993, p. 4). In this activity, a hole is transpired in the symbolic order because the Name-of-the-Father foreclosed and not absorbed into the psychotic's symbolic order; if the Name-of-the-Father is foreclosed, being the essential signifier, there is no normal proceeding in the subject, in other words, no paternal signification. Mentioning a gap in the symbolic order does not point that the psychotic lacks an unconscious mind; rather, psychosis is characterized by "a present unconscious mind that is not functioning" (cited in Evans, 1996, p. 157). This causes the psychotic structure due to this malfunctioning of the Oedipus complex; in other words, a lack in the paternal function. In other words, the paternal function, in psychosis, is decreased to "the image of the father (the symbolic is reduced to the imaginary)" (Ibid.).

Based on these elucidations, Dahmer's malfunctioning unconscious, foreclosure (whose object is the name-of-the-father) that regulates the pleasure principle, takes him to *jouissance*, which Lacan used to refer to the pleasure of masturbation, as orgasm. The pleasure principle, controlling the limit to enjoyment, is damaged, thus, he transgresses the restrictions, and the result is pain. Dahmer's mentioning of "all of the day I masturbated" (line 6), "I played with myself, played with myself, absorbed in the study" (line 10) testifies his "*jouissance* is suffering" (Lacan, 1986, p. 185). The contradictory gratification that the subject gets from his symptom—or, in other words, the pain that he gets from his own satisfaction—is so aptly expressed by the term *jouissance*. The killer transgresses twice by transforming his orgasm through masturbation into orgasm by killing his partners and consuming them, as in "what could I do with such a body" (line 12) followed by "And good enough to eat" (line 13). The pleasure principle, in Dahmer, was not transgressed but was literally annihilated. Certain excess *jouissance* is also referred to in the following song with further explanation.

In the next song, "The Visible Man", we read about Dahmer's advancement into the next phase showing how he now easily makes his partner(s) stay in his way. I say 'easily' to mark his transformation into an accomplished partner who can rely on his convincing skills finding an expression in "Now I can count on you" (line 1). His grown-up version, which is his metamorphosis into a serial killer, is translated into an address to his lover, but actually, he is talking to himself: "But you no longer have a young man's heart" (line 3), connoting his wisdom in when and how to murder his lover and sealing the union with the "We do not need to part" (line 6). The line "Yet nothing lasts, you know" (line 7) implicates his (un)witting acceptance of the short-term union as the partner will die and his corpse will decay soon. Dahmer's stay with his grandmother provides him with an opportunity to invite potential victims to his new altar, where he ritually sacrificed his offerings not to gods or ancestors but to himself. Jamie Daxtator and Richard Guerrero are two of them whose "... blood was easily hosed down the drains" (Masters, 1985, p. 120) and the head is kept for collection as a new relic for his shrine. His altar is represented in "crawl-space" (line 10), "hidden at the center" (line 9) which is specified with a division between the house, symbolizing his pretended normalcy, and the real self, manifested in his shrine. Dahmer, as he shared in his confessions, wanted full possession and control of the men that he developed some sort of fancy; and he took it a step further with his horrendous experimentation "with the removal of certain parts of the brain, in which he poured chemical mixtures in an attempt ... to give life to automatons that would be responsive to his will and obedient to his sexual desires" (Michelucci, 2009, p. 147). When he murders them, he gets what he wants: all his own. His full possessiveness, on the one hand, gives him the authority to allow the already-dead lover to experience his uncanny way of loving, all he knows, coded as a romantic coupling by him; on the other hand, it controls his object of love to have sex with him by penetrating, implicated with "Here, I will let you enter" (line 12). This last line suggests a normal sexual passion but, with Dahmer's extreme fantasy, it turned into a transgression of regulation of pleasure; the result is *jouissance* which is "always of the order of

tension, of forcing, of expenditure, even of exploit. *Jouissance* is undoubtedly there at the point where pain begins to appear” (1967, p. 46). Lacan, in his seminar focusing on fantasy, situates the perverse “as a no-holds-barred, *jouissance*-seeking activity, its less apparent aim is to bring the law into being: to make the Other as law exist” (Fink, 1997, p. 180), whereas the neurotic act functions to maintain the effect of desire. (2011, p. 163). A subject positions himself as object α and complements the Other with *jouissance*, thereby dividing her/his partner between surrendering to the commanding voice and rebelling against the abuse perpetrated. The pervert is unaffected by whether her/his partner gives consent to the submission, what matters for her/his is to be the subject of the lack. As Lacan maintains:

If there is one thing that we know today about the perverse, it is that what appears externally as an unbridled satisfaction is a defense, as well as the exercise of law, insofar as it restrains, suspends, detains the subject in the path of *jouissance*. The will to *jouissance* in the perverse, as in any other, is a will that fails, that faces its limit, its brake, in the very exercise of desire (as cited in Mendonça & Peixoto, p. 4).

The perverse subject’s unrestrained satisfaction is actually her/his defense mechanism. For the pervert, desire occurs when a law is subverted and supported. Dahmer’s endless pleasure was subverting a law to an extreme point.

His dissatisfaction with the victim’s cold body triggers his hunger to want what his “skin hides” (line 11), and then he indulges in dismemberment. Once another forbidden passion is transgressed, it also becomes insatiable; he, thus, repeats it over and over to attain self-gratification, but fails. Then he adds another dimension to his fantasy, this time collecting trophies from each victim to keep them alive in his solitary world. Gunn’s next song “A Borrowed Man” reads as a transition from collection to reflection on his trophies, suggesting Dahmer’s sort of inventory analysis:

From one a scalp, with hair’s regalia,
From one large hands and lazy grin,
From someone reddened genitalia,
And last, the image of the chest
From my original conquest,
The cage once tented in its skin,
Now great free-standing ribs that I’m
Leaving as bare bone rather than
Refleshing, best part of the best,
Only Love, Iron Man. (Gunn, 2000, p. 12-21)

What clearly emerges from this review of trophies is his unconscious striving to fill the hole of the Symbolic order which was deepened by his history of abandonment. Since he fears any type of loss, he fantasizes that he still has them - not him, all of them, adumbrating the profundity of the void and hunger for love. He deconstructs his unrestrained hunger for love and reconstructs it in the form of satisfying his understanding of tasting it in its denotative meaning. He literally tastes their flesh by heading “Off to the kitchen, where instead” (23) he will “find more tangible effects”, “Than what the memory collects.” (lines 24-25). The sense of Dahmer’s fetish is upgraded when he fries and eats his victim’s flesh “on the metal shelf” (line 29), which compensates for all his “orgasms past” (line 37). His cannibalism leads to orgasmic pleasure that is captured in the final lines “They mount, and break, and in recapture / Flood me with rightness of my rapture” (lines 41-42). Dahmer’s insatiable desire is encapsulated in Lacan’s object α which functions as an impediment in obtaining desire as Žižek phrases:

... the *objet a* prevents the circle of pleasure from closing, it introduces an irreducible displeasure, but the psychic apparatus finds a sort of perverse pleasure *in this displeasure itself* in the never-ending, repeated circulation around the unattainable, always missed object. The Lacanian name for this “pleasure in pain” is of course enjoyment (*jouissance*), and the circular movement which finds satisfaction in failing again

and again to attain the object, the movement whose true aim coincides therefore with its very path toward the goal, is the Freudian *drive* (1992, p. 92).

In other words, the presence of the object of desire itself is responsible for Dahmer's inability to satiate his desire, suggesting the ultimate exclusion of the possibility of satisfaction. Apart from his unquenchable desire illuminating his inventory, there are other key elements to be considered this time through the lens of Lacan's psychosis. As Lacan notes, "the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father in the place of the Other and the failure of the paternal metaphor [that] I designate as the defect that gives psychosis, its essential condition" (1958, p. 479), thus there is a malfunction path here. Bond's *Lacan at the Scene* (2009) offers two critical aspects for interpreting the crimes of psychotic subjects: "visual evidence of fragmentation and chaos may be interpreted as a consequence of foreclosure. And secondly that visual evidence of a bizarre or incomprehensible organizing logic may imply the presence of a-protective-delusional metaphor" (p. 34). This serves as a mirror illuminating Dahmer's "incomprehensible organizing logic" seen in his collection of trophies. "Incomprehensible organizing logic" is manifested as a disorganized murder and murderer since minimum level situational stress, living alone, living near or in crime scene, sexual acts after death, and, more relevant one is, leaving evidence in the crime scene are distinguishing features that are possible to attest to Dahmer according to FBI's distinct categories. He has nothing to hide, as observed by Fink: "[in psychosis] nothing is repressed, and thus there are no secrets to keep from oneself" (1997, p. 98). It appears that he thought there was no need to control the flow of perverse fantasy as "surprising objects in unexpected contexts" (Bond, 2009, p. 101), supported by Brian's accounts:

On the kitchen floor were four boxes of muriatic acid. The refrigerator contained, in addition to the man's head already noted, some blood drippings on the bottom, and, in the freezer compartment, three plastic bags. Two of them each contained a heart, and the third some portion of muscle... In the hallway stood a closet in which were found, together with bedding, some chemicals (formaldehyde, ether, chloroform), and two bleached skulls on the shelf (1993, p. 6).

These are scenes from the décor of Jeffrey Dahmer's flat testifying to his oblique confession of "I fell into myself / nothing could raise me now" (lines 1–2). This highlights the killer's self-prison of his overwhelming loneliness, implicating a dramatic scene of downfall. Perhaps a confrontation with his deviant crimes, which unavoidably erupted in his sunk into his cocoon, a backward journey. This "Final Song" begins with Dahmer's acceptance of defeat generated by a Sisyphean struggle of having, or making, an ideal partner who never leaves him, as he sings in his first song, "Hitch-Hiker." Meditating on the lifeless limbs, Dahmer is sarcastically reflecting upon his futile collection: "a head stood on the shelf / beside lard in a cup" (lines 3-4). The more limbs there are, the more normal they look; the more normal they look, the emptier Dahmer feels, which finds a parallel expression in Bond: "If the fundamental relational grid of signification has been so disrupted - or is nonexistent- it may be said that objects (and ideas) are not actually out of place at all, but exist "as is": they are experienced at face value" (2009, p. 101). Therefore, each item displayed- a head on the shelf- or casketed safely- other organs in the freezer- seems actually not out of place. These items also help the psychotic to remember his victim as Lacan describes their signification in the symbolic order that "every element has value through being opposed to another" (1993, p. 9). The tone of emptiness is imbibed in the words, evoking a sort of delirium hinted at by the unpunctuated lines. The line "only myself remained" (line 16) perhaps resonates with the first moment of Dahmer's self-doubt and being cognizant of the horror of his actions or unavailing attempt. He may be cognizant of the perverse actions, but oblivious to the vacuum in his psyche: "I wanna know why I am what I am" (Kennedy & Berlinger, 2022, 9:19) said he after his capture. The head "locked in its own surmise" (line 6) is representative of Dahmer himself, who is stuck in his own distorted perceptions. The psychotic, to Lacan, completely rejects castration, and this denial of the symbolic castration brings castration back to the Real. Lacan's configuration of

the notion of the “Borromean Knot” including the three orders (the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary), suggests that they get jumbled. The general symptoms can be delusions and hallucinations – which may not be developed in or experienced by all psychotic, disorganized thinking. Which one(s) led Dahmer to take the most extreme path of all is indefinite; however, it seems more certain that he was detached from reality because of disorganized thinking. Based on Lacan’s expounds on the hole in the symbolic order transpired by foreclosure and indispensable imprisonment of the subject in the Imaginary ultimately results in a psychotic disorder (1993, p. 144).

The absolute solitude caters to a realisation of total disorientation caused by sexual perversion; he is the victim of his *murderous* sexuality as lamented in “burdened by my erection” (line 21). His realm occupied by limbs of the dead suggests his long being in another dimension, away from the precepts of the real world. As noted by Highsmith, Dahmer’s deprivation of “normal personality structure ... to build friendship or a relationship of any kind” (1993, p. 6) rests at the focus captivating his sexual unfulfillment within his enormous suffering from desperate loneliness.

Conclusion

Thom Gunn humanizes the serial killer Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer by rendering him as a modern troubadour who retells his story, but his version of it, through the convention of courtly love. By drawing us closer to Dahmer with his songs and portraying him as a solitary and confused young man who seeks happiness in his own way when his divorced parents desert him, Gunn depathologizes the perpetrator’s insatiable desire and whispers us to witness the tenderness in his murderer. This testifies to the fact that the poet follows Lacan’s thesis proposing the fact that psychoanalysis sheds light on the motives behind criminals’ homicidal acts, rather than dehumanizing them. Gunn’s humanizing Dahmer comes into focus with Lacan’s two of clinical structures of the psyche, namely perversion and psychosis, presenting a way to understand the killer’s motivations. Lacan identified three diagnostic structures of the human mind: Neurosis, Psychosis, and Perversion, each defines particular symptoms and functions differently in their approach to the criminal psyche within in the context of criminology. He is adamant about the exclusiveness of these structures, further indicating that any symptoms observed in human functioning must be handled as an example of merely one of these clinical modalities. However, this study has investigated whether Lacan’s argument that any instance of human functioning must represent at least one of the three modes can be contested. The conclusions drawn from the detailed analyses splitting Dahmer’s psyche to reach illuminating evidence show that the notorious serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer could be both pervert and psychotic. The impaired relationship with the separation from the fictitious relation with his mother, arising in the form of denial of this castration, may have been perversion. The imaginary relationship with the mother was also problematic in Dahmer’s case as his mother refused breast-feeding, which may have apparently caused more serious impairments. His mother’s refusal seems one of the recorded information but there may be unrecorded ones, too. This provides fruitful context to link it with his fetishism- a sexual perversion- which may have been caused by a sort of accident in his sexual drives, thus, he took the most extreme path of satisfaction in murdering and eating them. The foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father and failure of the paternal function, here the father, results in psychosis. The Name-of-the-Father regulates the pleasure principle after the castration, but Dahmer transgressed the limits of the pleasure principle and killed his partners. *Jouissance* is the suffering/pain that the subject derives from her/his own satisfaction that is named as a path to death; however, it was not Dahmer suffering or seeking death out of suffering in his *jouissance*, but his partners suffered from his own satisfaction, since he was, based on the theory, created the illusion that his *jouissance* is the Other’s *jouissance*. When the Name-of-the-Father is foreclosed, it leaves a

perpetual hole in the Symbolic order that Dahmer could never fill, and projected on his entrapment in a morbid loop, highlighting his unquenchable sexual thirst.

For Lacan, the criminal acts in the Real but in a symbolic fashion, suggesting the dysfunction of the Symbolic Order. Thus, a criminal's confusion between the Symbolic and the Real which can be explained as a descent from the Real into the Symbolic, leaving permanent wounds, illuminates our understanding concerning Dahmer's motive to fulfil his sexual gratification. Above all, though, this quest for fulfilment inevitably results in something different, or more accurately, aberrant. Drawing on Lacan's description of this sequence, it is suggested that Gunn portrayed Dahmer as the protagonist/hero who was carried away by a negative psychological current as well as by dysfunctional societal and familial structures, which abnormalized his want of love, belonging, and fulfilment that he had previously been deprived of. All of them caused his inability to be 'normal' and, more precisely, hindered him from growing a healthy psyche. It is possible that he projected onto his victims the painful emotional and psychological damage due to the absence of paternal function. Thus, this absence is reasoned that the only way he could stop partners was to murder them. In his songs, "Hitchhiker," "Iron Man," "The Visible Man," "A Borrowed Man," and "Final Song," Dahmer sings about the journey from his extreme form of desire, which connotes his desperate need for coupling, full of intimacy, furnishing all forms of satisfaction to his inescapable loneliness, rendering him a tender murderer. Nothing justifies or excuses what Dahmer did but these poems in light of Lacan's theories provide us with greater insights into understanding his motives.

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