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Luciano Cabral da Silva

Multiple killers as monsters in American true crime narratives of the second half of the 20th century

Rio de Janeiro

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Tese apresentada, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Doutor, ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras, da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de concentração: Estudos de Literatura.

Orientadora: Profª. Dra. Leila Assumpção Harris

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Assinatura Data

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DEDICATÓRIA

To the ones who have supported me all along.

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My journey through PhD education has been, just like many other journeys, full of ups and downs, backlashes and upsides, doubts and certainties. I have frequently heard that the more you learn, the less you know, and I would say that this statement is right, but not totally right. Learning is a hard process, involving several skills, such as linguistic, bodily, and logical, all of which equally important. But there is one skill that I want to highlight here and now: interpersonal. It has to do, basically, with social interactions. Interpersonal skills stand for understanding people (putting yourself in somebody's shoes) in order to manage relationships the best way possible. As a PhD candidate, I have learned many skills. But I cannot state that I know less than before because what I have surely learned better came from examples very close to me throughout this journey.

I would like, first of all, to thank my advisor, professor Leila Harris. She has her own way to successfully reach her students whenever we need.

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RESUMO

SILVA, Luciano Cabral da. *Multiple killers as monsters in American true crime narratives of the second half of the 2th century*. 2021. 187 f. Tese (Doutorado em Letras) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2021.

Esta tese de doutorado põe em foco quatro narrativas de *true crime* estadunidenses da segunda metade do século 20 sobre assassinos múltiplos: (1) *Deviant: the shocking true story of Ed Gein, the original psycho*, de Harold Schechter (1989); (2) *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story: an American nightmare*, de Don Davis (1991); (3) *The Stranger Beside Me: the shocking inside story of serial killer Ted Bundy*, de Ann Rule (1980); e (4) *In Cold Blood: a true account of a multiple murder and its consequences*, de Truman Capote (1965). Desenvolvo meu argumento através da discussão desses criminosos enquanto figuras monstruosas que suscitam o efeito de medo nos leitores. Minha análise aproxima indispensavelmente três elementos: assassinos múltiplos, monstros e a retórica da monstruosidade. Um assassino múltiplo [*multiple killer*] é uma pessoa que comete mais de um homicídio, um fenômeno que se divide em: (i) *mass killers*; (ii) *spree killers*; e (iii) *serial killers*. Nas ficções de horror, monstros são seres que a ciência contemporânea não consegue explicar, compostos de três aspectos: (a) anormalidade; (b) letalidade; e (c) impureza. Por fim, a retórica da monstruosidade envolve as estratégias narrativas que escritores de *true crime* sobre assassinos múltiplos utilizam para trazer à tona a monstruosidade desses criminosos – consequentemente, provocando o medo. Neste trabalho, quatro estratégias são identificadas: (1) *locus horribilis*; (ii) qualidades góticas [*gothic qualities*]; (iii) descrições detalhadas [*graphic descriptions*]; e (iv) reações [*people's reactions*]. Noël Carroll (1990, p. 16) define os monstros ficcionais de horror como criaturas extraordinárias em um mundo ordinário, capaz de afetar os personagens humanos física (pois são uma ameaça à vida) e cognitivamente (pois são formados por categorias conflitantes: animal/humano; morto/vivo; animado/inanimado, etc.). A hipótese apresentada é a de que, embora careçam dos atributos inexplicáveis que caracterizam o monstro de horror, assassinos múltiplos (por existirem no nosso mundo real) são também monstruosos; não por seus traços físicos anormais, mas por suas ações anormais. No entanto, esses criminosos não se apresentam como indivíduos naturalmente horríveis. Pelo contrário, eles são tão comuns quanto qualquer outra pessoa. Assim, para que se ofereça um relato que entretenha seus leitores, os escritores de *true crime* lançam mão das estratégias narrativas da retórica da monstruosidade, a fim de transformarem um assassino comum em um figura extraordinária, tão horrível quanto um monstro ficcional de horror.

Palavras-chave: Literatura Estadunidense. Narrativas de *True-Crime* do século 20. Assassinos múltiplos. Monstros. Estratégias narrativas.

ABSTRACT

SILVA, Luciano Cabral da. *Multiple killers as monsters in American true crime narratives of the second half of the 2th century*. 2021. 187 f. Tese (Doutorado em Letras) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2021.

This PhD dissertation focuses on four American true crime narratives of the second half of the 20th century about multiple killers: (1) Harold Schechter's *Deviant: the shocking true story of Ed Gein, the original psycho* (1989); (2) Don Davis's *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story: an American nightmare* (1991); (3) Ann Rule's *The Stranger Beside Me: the shocking inside story of serial killer Ted Bundy* (1980); and (4) Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood: a true account of a multiple murder and its consequences* (1965). I develop my argument through a discussion of these offenders as they are transformed into monstrous figures to excite the affect of fear in readers. This analysis necessarily brings three elements together: multiple killers, monsters, and the rhetoric of monstrosity. A multiple killer is a person who commits more than one murder, a phenomenon divided into (i) mass killers; (ii) spree killers; and (iii) serial killers. In horror fiction, monsters are scientifically non-explainable beings compounded by three ingredients: (a) abnormality; (b) lethality; (c) impurity. Finally, the rhetoric of monstrosity relies on the narrative strategies true crime authors of multiple killer accounts use to foreground monstrosity, and consequently arouse fear. So far, four strategies have been identified: (1) *locus horribilis*; (2) gothic qualities; (3) graphic descriptions; and (4) people's reactions. Noël Carroll (2009, p. 16) defines fictional horror monsters as extraordinary creatures in our ordinary world, powerful enough to affect human characters physically (for being a threat to life) and cognitively (for being made of opposed categories: animal/human, dead/alive, animate/inanimate, etc.). The hypothesis made is that, although not marked by those inexplicable features which shape horror monsters, multiple killers (for they exist in our very real world) are equally monstrous; not for their abnormal bodies, but for their abnormal actions. However, these offenders do not present themselves as naturally horrible; on the contrary, they are as ordinary as any other human being. Thus, to offer readers an entertaining account, true crime authors make use of narrative strategies of the rhetoric of monstrosity, in order to shape an ordinary murderer into an extraordinary figure, as frightening as a fictional horror monster.

Keywords: American Literature. 20th-Century True Crime Narratives. Multiple Killers. Monsters. Narrative Strategies.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

On January 17th 1945, the newspaper *The Argus*[1], from Melbourne, Australia, reported that the trial of a "US soldier and young dancer" had opened the day before in the Central Criminal Court at Old Bailey, London, England. In the courtroom, it is said on page sixteen, there were American as well as British lawyers, high officers of the US Army, and a high number of members of the press. The news clarified that the special interest in the trial was due to its singularity, for an American soldier had never before been "handed over to British justice for trial on capital charge". Hundreds of people had unsuccessfully applied for tickets to get into the court. Some even lined up outside the building, hopeful to become part of the audience; they were, however, moved away by the police. Also, dancing girls from West End shows tried to come in.

The US soldier and the young dancer were Karl Gustave Hulten and Elizabeth Marina Jones. Despite being born in Sweden in 1922, Hulten was raised in Massachusetts, United States. After the Pearl Harbour strike, he joined the US parachute troopers. He moved to England in 1944 to be part of the D-Day invasion force. Nevertheless, he soon went absent without leaving, deserting his troop, and then stealing a uniform, a gun, and an army truck in the process. Driving to Hammersmith, West London, where he based himself, he slept in the truck and managed to get money from stealing.

Elizabeth Jones was a Welsh girl, born in Glamorgan in 1926. She was said to be closely attached to her father, so much so that, when he was called up to the armed forces, she tried to hitchhike to his base in order to meet him. As Jones was apparently beyond parental control, her mother took her to court to be subsequently sent to a reform school. By the age of sixteen, she left the institution, soon after marrying soldier Stanley Jones, considerably older than she was. Elizabeth ran away from her husband a short time later, as she claimed that he had been violent since the wedding day. She therefore decided to head for London and, once there, she started to work as a dancer in a club, under the name of Georgina Grayson.

Jones and Hulten met accidentally at a small café on October 3rd, 1944. They were introduced by a friend, and quickly engaged in conversation. Hulten told Jones that his name was Ricky Allen, and that he was a second lieutenant of the US Army; Jones, on her part, told

[1] The news article "Murder of Taxi Driver near London: US Soldier and Young Dancer on Trial: from our own correspondent in London" is in: *The Argus* (Melbourne, vic.: 1848-1957), January 17th, 1945, page 16. Link to the online archive: https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/1106404. Last accessed on January 12th, 2021.

him she was a topflight stripper. They got along well, so they arranged to meet again on that same day. Karl Hulten still rode his stolen truck when he picked up Jones at the Broadway cinema late in the evening. As they drove around West London, he would constantly brag about the fact that, apart from being a lieutenant, he was also a Chicago gangster doing some business in the city. Jones would then let Hulten know that her secret dream was to be a gun moll so that she could live her life reckless of danger.

For six nights, the gangster-stripper couple was truly reckless. Their first victim was a girl riding a bike on the dark streets of Reading. Hulten forced her off the bike by veering the truck towards her. The girl managed to escape the attack and ran away, though she left her bike and purse behind. The next night, as they were looking for another victim, they spotted a cab and followed it. When they drove past the vehicle, Hulten stopped the truck in the middle of the road, blocking the path. He immediately pointed his gun at the driver, but there was a passenger inside. Probably unsettled by this setback, the couple drove off without harming anyone.

Their second victim was a young girl carrying a suitcase who hitchhiked to Paddington. Jones and Hulten offered to drive her to her destination. At some point of the trip, the couple stopped the truck, faking there was a flat tire. Hulten managed to get an iron bar while Jones was diverting the girl's attention. Not only did he hit the victim, but also half-strangled her. They rifled through her pockets – to find five shillings – before they dumped her by a river bank. This victim is known to have fortunately survived the near-murder assault.

Their recklessness reached its peak when they once again tried to rob a cab driver. This time, nonetheless, they gave up the army truck, so they could pass themselves off as ordinary passengers. They hailed a grey Ford V8 on the road, driven by George Heath, who stopped and agreed to take the couple. Hulten was sitting next to the driver; Jones sat in the back. The moment Heath "leant over from his seat to open the rear door for the girl" [2], Hulten produced his gun and shot him in the back. Jones searched through Heath's pockets, eager to find much money, but obtained from the murder nothing more than a watch, a fountain pen, a self-propelling pencil, and "£ 4 in notes and about £ 1 in silver and copper"[3].

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[2] "Cleft Chin Murder: A 'Cold-Blooded Act': Soldier & Girl in Court. In: *The Nottingham Evening Post*, Monday, November 27, 1944. Link to the online archive: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000321/19441127/020/0004. Last accessed on January 13th, 2021.

[3] Idem.

George Heath was found in a ditch at Knowle Green, near Staines. The police had not been able to identify the corpse immediately, which made the press refer to the case as 'the Cleft Chin Murder' – a cleft chin was Heath's prominent feature. Karl Hulten and Elizabeth Jones were soon arrested because they foolishly continued using Heath's cab. Hulten was sentenced to death by hanging, but Jones stood away from the gallows pole nonetheless. She served nine years in prison, being freed on parole in 1954.

At that time, the war between the Axis powers and the Allies had been tearing London down with German doodlebugs, and the wrecks could be seen almost everywhere. Newspapers would fill in their pages with reports on troops, casualties, and the ongoing battles. In spite of the wartime, however, the Hulten-Jones case was so widely spread that, just few months after the sentences had been proffered, a book about the trial was published[4].

I have introduced this chapter with the Cleft Chin Murder because it may encapsulate something of a change in the way violent crime had so far been seen by the public, and tackled by literature. Hulten and Jones carried through a crime spree which seems to foreshadow a new path in murder. George Orwell discussed this change in an essay of 1946, pointing out that "our great period in murder" (ORWELL, 1968, p. 98) had come to an end. In "Decline of the English Murder", the novelist lists nine homicide cases which had been, until then, worth remembering. Because they were memorable somehow, he claimed that most of those cases were made into criminological treatises, studies for lawyers and police officers, or novels – the most successful example is probably *A Pin to See the Peepshow* (1934), by F. Tennyson Jesse, a literary fiction based on the "Ilford Murder" perpetrated by Edith Thompson and Frederick Bywaters, in 1922.

In his essay, Orwell is surely concerned about those circumstances in which facts may serve aesthetic purposes. In other words, his interest lies in those real-world events which, as they bring along certain elements, can be turned into a work of fiction. He argues that his list of 'memorable murders' is composed of respectable middle-class people eager to keep their position or climb up the social ladder. He also adds that sex is an ever-present component somewhat. Furthermore, the victims of such murders are mostly husbands or wives and the milieu is predominantly domestic. In some cases, the motivation for the homicide is the smokescreen of a scandal (be it a divorce or adultery); in others, the victim's money (coming from an insurance policy or a legacy) precipitates the crime. Finally, Orwell emphasizes that

[4] *The Cleft Chin Murder*, by R. Alwyn Raymond (1945).

all the nine murders mentioned are disclosed after either closer investigation or peculiar occurrence – or even, as he puts it, "some dramatic coincidence" (ORWELL, 1968, p. 99).

Keeping those elements in mind, Orwell prescribes what he calls the "perfect murder" (p. 100). Under his standpoint, a homicide reaches aesthetic perfection by including the following ingredients: (i) it should be committed by a married middle-class man/woman who apparently lives his/her life successfully and above suspicion; (ii) the murder should be sexually motivated – a love affair between the murderer and his secretary or his professional competitor's wife, for instance; (iii) the murderer should live in the suburbs, preferably in a semi-detached house so that neighbors can overhear telltale sounds through the walls; (iv) the murderer should bear a guilty conscience – killing must be seen as the last resort to keep him/her from being caught in adultery; (v) the murder should be carefully planned and done, but some tiny and incriminating detail must later come up; and (vi) the means for the homicide should be poison. Orwell asseverates that a murder which holds that background is memorable for two reasons. First, it contains tragic and dramatic qualities. Second, it is capable of stimulating empathy not only for the victim, but also for the murderer.

It is noticeable that the Cleft Chin case does not fit Orwell's prescription. Hulten and Jones lacked most of the elements outlined above. To begin with, they were not middle-class people living in the suburbs. Even though their crimes could be taken as a product of a love affair, they had nothing to do with the domestic milieu. They did not have any previous relationships with their victims (the girls and the taxi driver had been chosen randomly or circumstantially), and no assault seemed to have been carefully planned. Their arrest, far from being the consequence of closer investigation, resulted from Hulten's foolishness. Lastly, the weapons were a gun and an iron bar, not poison.

In essence, the Cleft Chin Murder was the case of an army deserter claiming to be a gangster who happened to meet a stripper dreaming of being a moll. The callousness of both Hulten and Jones prevented them from exciting the audience's empathy. For Orwell, such a murder would never be perfect because it neglects the tragedy and drama needed to make it memorable. This "whole meaningless story" (ORWELL, 1968, p. 101), he concludes, could only attract a great deal of public attention thanks possibly to a wartime, for it provided entertainment for a society torn apart.

To counterargue Orwell, it can be said that the Cleft Chin Murder was remembered even after the end of the war, in three occasions at least. In 1947, the novel *Night Darkens the Street*, by Arthur La Bern, is published. It is loosely based on the case, focusing on Gwen

Rawlings, a character whose life has conspicuous resemblances to Elizabeth Jones's. A year later, Rawlings's story is made into a movie under the title *Good Time Girl*. Finally, in 1990, *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl* is released. The movie retells the Hulten-Jones events, being heavily based on the accounts of their six-night crime spree.

If there is any mistake in Orwell's formulation, it is perhaps his longing for a type of murder whose days had already gone by the middle of the century. Still, his nostalgic attitude has the merit of recognizing a change. From that moment on, a new type of vicious, shocking and apparently meaningless crime was to rise. The recurrence of such attacks would cause a stir in investigative methods, draw the press and public attention alike, and trigger off works of fiction and non-fiction. The number of victims, paraphilia, lack of motive, callousness and mainly brutality were to make these criminals famous. By the 1960s and 1970s, multiple killers would boom, and despite the fact that it is well-known that every country has its share of such slayers, the United States will be the place for the most memorable ones.

Murders have always been part of our everyday lives, from those unknown cases statistically documented, those well-known cases in headlines, to the ones unfortunately related to us somehow. But, out of the myriad of murder cases we can think of, there is a kind which is rare and yet bloodcurdling: multiple murders, that is, several homicides perpetrated by one or by few individuals. Those who kill many (for lust, for thrill, for profit, etc.) seem to have raised much attention throughout history. There are multiple killers which some of us may still recollect, even faintly, if we hear their names: Gilles de Rais (sentenced to death by hanging in 1440 for killing hundreds of children), John Williams (hung himself in prison for murdering seven people in 1811), Jack the Ripper (an unidentified killer who mutilated female prostitutes in Whitechapel, London, in 1888), and recent ones, such as the Park Maniac, Killer Petey, Richard Hickock and Perry Smith, Ed Gein, Ted Bundy, and Jeffrey Dahmer, to name but a few. This PhD dissertation ultimately examines true crime accounts about these recent multiple killers.

When I started off my PhD journey, my proposal was fairly different from the one I offer here. Initially, I planned at scrutinizing fictional multiple murderers as narrators, as tellers of their own story; to put it another way, my goal was to examine the poetics of autodiegetic multiple killers as they go about narrating the homicides they have committed. That plan had been motivated by studies during my master's thesis, *The fourfold serial killer in Bret Easton Ellis's American Psycho* (2015), in which the results had shown that there was a shallow, monotonous, emotionless, uncommitted and non-ornamented narration being used

by Patrick Bateman, the first-person protagonist of Ellis's novel. Such a narration seemed to echo the way real multiple killers typically recount their vicious events, a peculiar rhetoric which has been noticed by true crime writers[5], journalists[6] and documentary filmmakers[7]. I hypothesized then that this type of rhetoric, when used in multiple killer fiction, could be ineffective to generate the affect of fear in readers, and I affirmed so based on Hanna Arendt's remarks over former Nazi mass murderer Adolf Eichmann.

In her report on the banality of evil, Arendt tells us that Eichmann – tried, found guilty for killing millions of Jews, and sentenced to death in 1962 – is thin, bald, medium-height, middle-aged, crooked-teethed, and nearsighted (ARENDT, 1999, p. 5). She observes that, had this trial been somewhere other than Jerusalem, the Nazi officer could have been acquitted for "lack of *mens rea*" (p. 17); to wit, for absence of a guilty mind, because psychologically, this mass murderer did not have any bad conscience, and did not feel remorseful for perpetrating, systematically, the extermination of so many people. Psychiatrists who had assessed Eichmann considered his whole attitude towards his family "not only normal, but most desirable" (p. 26). A minister, who had regularly visited him in prison declared he was "a man with very positive ideas" (p. 26). On a psychological level, the case had nothing to do with legal or moral insanity; not even could hatred of Jews be taken into consideration, for Eichmann "never had anything whatever against Jews; on the contrary, he had plenty of 'private reasons' for not being a Jew hater" (p. 26, quotes in original). Arendt concludes that the Nazi murderer was not exceptional; he was actually an ordinary individual. Prosecutors insistently tried to make the jury take Eichmann as a monster; they failed though.

From that point, I made a hypothesis that this failure may have been explained by the fact that Eichmann's testimony was nothing but "empty talk" (p. 49). The adjective 'empty' referred to the "self-invented clichés" (p. 49) as well as to the flat, emotionless, and repetitive way upon which this mass murderer had built his statements throughout the trial: "Whether writing his memoirs in Argentina or in Jerusalem, whether speaking to the police examiner or

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[5] Ann Rule in *The Stranger Beside Me* (1980) observes that serial killer Ted Bundy "so often spoke in clichés" (p. 545).

[6] Janet Malcolm in *The Journalist and the Murderer* (1990) remarks, after interviewing mass murderer Jeffrey MacDonald, that "a murderer shouldn't sound like an accountant" (p. 70).

[7] The 1993 news article "From Dahmer himself, grisly details of death calmly, without remorse, the killer talks of slayings", about correspondent Nancy Glass's interview with Jeffrey Dahmer for the *Inside Edition*, describes the serial killer's speech as "spoke evenly and unemotionally about his deadly compulsion". Link to the article: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1993-02-08-1993039178-story.html . Link to the documentary *Inside the Mind of Jeffrey Dahmer: serial killer's chilling jailhouse interview*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWjYsxaBjBI . Both links last accessed on January 14th, 2021.

to the court, what he said was always the same, expressed in the same words" (p. 49). He himself apologized for his rhetoric, saying that "officialese [*Amtssprache*] is my only language" (p. 48).

Eichmann's trial and Arendt's remarks helped me notice how inextricably intertwined some components of the narrative are. In other words, her report called my attention to the close relationship between the teller and the story being told. In order to reach an effective narrative outcome, this relationship was to set up rules: that (i) a dreadful action should be performed by an equally dreadful character; and that (ii) a dreadful event should be followed by an equally dreadful narration. It is advisable to have actions matching those who act somehow; otherwise, for lack of coherence, the narrative may mismatch, and hence lose its effectiveness. My preliminary research had pointed out that Patrick Bateman was not the only fictional character making use of this, say, shallow rhetoric[8]. Dennis of Dennis Cooper's *Frisk* (1991), Quentin P. of Joyce Carol Oates's *Zombie* (1995) and Andrew Compton of Poppy Z. Brite's *Exquisite Corpse* (1996) also employed this kind of autodiegetic narration.

But if I said a few lines earlier that what this PhD dissertation offers now is fairly different from what I had previously planned on doing, it means that part of my former proposal still remains. I was first interested in fictional multiple killers and their murders as a poetics of autodiegesis. This work still revolves around these criminals as a poetics. However, from now on, this word must denote artfulness in the sense of technique, meaning, more specifically, the making of a monster in narratives about, not fictional, but real multiple killers. Late 20th-century true crime books constitute the focus of my scrutiny.

In sum, this dissertation sifts through true crime narratives about multiple killers in order to spot the strategies used by true crime writers to excite the affect of fear in readers. This fear, however, is not kindled by itself. Rather, it is an emotion incarnated by multiple killers narratively transformed into monsters. These criminals do not present themselves visually abnormal, such as ghosts, vampires, werewolves or other gothic creatures of fiction. In reality, they are, strangely or not, as ordinary as any other human being. Some of these murderers may be mentally insane (Herbert Mullin, for example, claimed he had murdered thirteen people so that he would prevent an earthquake from hitting California), but even these ones do not possess a conspicuous abnormality which tags them monstrous. My present analysis thus is similar to my previous proposal, for it still focuses on a mismatch; and yet, it differs from the original because it directs full attention to the discrepancy between ordinary

[8] Based on both James Annesley's *Blank Fictions* (1998) and Elizabeth Young & Graham Caveney's essays on fictions of blank generation in the US (1993), the term formerly used was 'blank narrative'.

figures and fearful accomplishments. To recollect what I have argued before, my analysis contemplates the putative rule that a horrible action should be done by an equally horrible killer.

From the start, I would like to make two points clear. Firstly, part of my scrutiny of multiple killers has surprisingly counted on studies about serial killers. However, this surprise vanishes once we note that, what scholars call 'serial', it means, in reality, 'multiple'. The term multiple killer is the superordinate of three subsets: mass killer, spree killer, and serial killer. The adoption of the term 'serial killer' as a superordinate by some scholars may be explicated by their intention to work with a more popular word, perhaps easier to grasp. My adoption of the term 'multiple killer' designates my inclination towards accuracy, though I am aware the term is not so popular.

Secondly, most of my examples of criminals, as well as the true crime books I have perused for this academic work, come from The United States of the late 20th century. This is so due firstly to my field of study, namely, US Literature and secondly to the prominent American entertainment culture surrounding multiple killers, able to join together, as professor David Schmid (2005) has pointed out, stardom and violence (p. 105). Forensic psychologist Katherine Ramsland (2005), albeit unsystematically, calls our attention to two historical aspects of the multicide phenomenon which, from the 1960s on, seemingly influenced the rise of these criminals in the US media and its boom in the next decades: (i) the imbrication of cases of multiple murders; and (ii) the new criminological terms (p. 162-9).

In the 1960s, multiple killer cases began to overlap significantly, which contributed to the rise of the media image of these criminals and its boom in the next decades. From 1962 to 1964 – few years after the discovery of Ed Gein's "trail of blood"[9] – serial killer Albert DeSalvo bounded, raped and strangled women, both old and young, gaining the monicker 'The Boston Strangler'. Larry Lee Ranes, also in 1964, confessed to have killed five men at the age of nineteen. In July 1966, Richard Speck broke into a town house in Chicago to murder massively eight nursing students at once. A month later, sniper Charles Whitman, after killing his mother and wife, climbed up the clocktower of a university in Austin, Texas, to shoot to death fourteen pedestrians. In November, eighteen-year-old Robert Benjamin

[9] This phrase comes from the news article "Farmer Hints He Killed Woman, Police Find 10 Skulls", published in 1957, fairly summarizes Gein's story, a crime largely covered by media at that time. Link to the article https://www.upi.com/Archives/1957/11/18/Farmer-hints-he-killed-woman-police-find-10-skulls/9561510801683/ . Last accessed on January 17th, 2021.

Smith[10] entered a college of beauty in Arizona to kill five people with his gun. In 1969, a serial killer who called himself Zodiac, in a letter to editors of three San Francisco papers, claimed to have killed two couples in California and, that same year, the followers of cult leader Charles Manson committed a series of nine murders in four different locations.

That decade also brought out a new set of crime lexicon into play, with words which would later become widespread and popularly known. Although the term 'serial killer' was to be coined only later, the vocabulary used to classify multiple murders increased in the 1960s with terms, until then, hardly ever known to justice agents: 'series killer', 'chain killer', 'pattern killer', 'antisocial personality disorder', etc. This new lexicon also attested to the beginning of a closer interaction between law enforcement and psychopathology, as a clear attempt to bring these murderers to justice as much as an effort to build up a typology of their criminal minds. The next decades were to pin their hopes on the crime profiling techniques, an approach replete with terms such as 'organized' and 'disorganized', 'modus operandi', 'psychopath', sociopath' and many others. This crime lexicon has overstepped the bounds of forensics and can nowadays be seen in many true crime accounts about multiple killers[11].

These two historical aspects may have contributed to the rise of the multiple killer in American culture because, from that moment on, US media had (i) a new entertaining subject to report, a subject capable of arousing sensations for their spectacular violence (thus engaging the public through these sensations); and (ii) the lexical tools to rationalize them, borrowed from the new approaches of forensics science. It is in this context that modern American true crime stands out. Like media, true crime narratives about multiple killers apparently entails this same twofold characteristic, that is, to entertain and to inform, even though some true crime writers insist on the fact that what they provide is more information and less entertainment. Jack Miles (1991), while reviewing some criminal works, avows that "most true crime authors do not identify themselves as entertainers but as unofficial intelligence agents. Ours is a nasty job, they imply, but someone has to do it" (p. 59). But the critic affirms that, as a rule of thumb, editors market the cases which have been proven commercially appealing, those stories "around which huge and essentially in-the-know audiences have already gathered" (p. 59).

[10] The 2016 article "The Story of the First Copycat Mass Shooter: Robert Benjamin Smith inaugurated murder for the media age", by Meagan Day, albeit centering on Smith, also mentions the crimes of Speck and Whitman. Link to the article: https://timeline.com/first-copycat-mass-shooter-8c0f08080307 . Last accessed on January 16th, 2021.

[11] This lexicon can be found even in non-American books, such as in the Brazilian *Serial Killers Made in Brazil* (2014), by Ilana Casoy. See Chapter 1 for further information.

While debating the longevity of true crime narratives, David Schmid brings back to memory a 1993 informal survey undertaken by book market news magazine *Publisher's Weekly* in which booksellers answered which true crime titles were always in demand. The survey uncloses that the true crime coping with serial killers sell the most, achieving substantial rate those gruesome and grotesque accounts. According to one of the editors, Paul Dinas: "Crime committed for money or revenge without sex is much less commercial, so I look for the sex angle, for murder, adjudicated killers, and increasingly for multiple bodies. The manner of death has to be very violent, very visceral" (SCHMID, 2005, p. 176). Schmid observes that Dinas additionally doubts if he nowadays would publish, for instance, Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1965) – a book considered to have shaped the modern true crime genre. For the editor, the non-fiction novel lacks the viscerality true crime entertainment requires: "it's not intense enough, bloody enough, or lurid enough to meet the public's demand" (p. 176).

It is striking to notice that, ultimately, this editor's comment may have indicated that true crime narratives about multiple killers differ in degree. To rephrase it, he seems to admit that there are true crime authors which overtly target emotions to entertain their readers. On the other hand, other authors may curb the intensity of their narrative, resulting in a rather restrained impact on the reader's emotions. That being said, in this PhD dissertation, I hypothesize that authors of true crime stories utilize, either to a small or great extent, narrative strategies to transform multiple murderers into monsters in order to arouse the affect of fear in readers.

Structurally, this dissertation is divided into three chapters: (a) Chapter 1: Multiple Killers: definition; (b) Chapter 2: Multiple Killers: Monsters; and (c) Multiple Killers: True Crime. These parts twine together by three elements: multiple killer, monsters and true crime. The first element envelopes the subcategories of mass killer, spree killer, and serial killer. The second element designates a real criminal whose monstrosity emerges by virtue of narrative strategies. Finally, the third element marks true accounts exclusively about real-life multiple murderers.

In Chapter 1, I seek to define the phenomenon of multiple killers – or multicidals – and its subsets. Some authors compare these murders to a natural disaster: they are relatively rare in the scheme of physical incidents, but they demand our attention when they take place (CLEAR, 2010, p. xv). So, the word 'phenomenon' here means an unusual but significant occurrence. The subsets of multicidals include (i) mass killers, (ii) spree killers, and (iii) serial

killers, in which differences are based on three components, viz. body count, location, and timing. Despite controversies over some particulars, the usual definition encompasses: (i) mass killers as criminals who commit four or more homicides at once at one location only; (ii) spree killers as criminals who randomly murder three or more at more than one location, with no cooling-off period between homicides; and (iii) serial killers as criminals who commit at least two homicides at more than one location, with a cooling-off period between homicides. This period, perhaps the most debatable feature in forensics of multicidals, denotes a certain dormant season, varying from weeks to years, in which the serial killer returns to his or her routinely social life.

The anecdotal style of this chapter, due to the case studies throughout the text, is explained by some needs. The anecdotes clarify definitions by offering examples; they also help in the debate, in the following chapter, over the abnormalities of these multicidals. In addition, they introduce considerations over the change of ordinary multiple killers into extraordinary gothic figures. All in all, these anecdotes function as an effort to make my readers more familiar with the phenomenon of multicide, but the use of particular instances is, by and large, an attempt to decodify the issues of the phenomenon more easily.

In Chapter 2, I discuss multiple killers as moral monsters whose alterity comes to the fore by their brutal actions rather than by their physical abnormalities. Essentially, monsters are entities who deviate from the norm, reinforced the term teratology, the biological study of monstrous facts. The horror monsters of fiction, as art philosopher Noel Carroll puts it, are evil creatures who disrupt the natural order of things. In gothic stories, human characters run away from monsters on the grounds that these creatures are taken as a physical and cognitive menace. At bottom, they are extraordinary entities in our ordinary world (CARROLL, 1990, p. 16) which our contemporary science fails to explain. What is more, they are repulsive insofar as their bodies display the interstitial signs of abnormal fusions: alive/dead, human/animal, animate/inanimate, etc. Their very presence is enough to frighten human characters because their unnatural biology is nothing but a threat to life. For these reasons, threatening, repulsive and lethal are core qualities for these horror creatures, mainly supernatural ones.

In spite of Carroll's definition of horror monsters, all restrictive for sheltering only unnatural biologies and supernaturalities, multiple killers have been commonly and constantly called monsters by lay people, media, literature and scholars. Following philosopher Berys Gaut, who disagrees that the horror genre can only be populated by impossible monsters, I

contend that multicidals are not monstrous for their biological or supernatural traits, but indeed for their moral deviation: they are so more for what they do (and thus, event-based) and less for what they are (and thus, entity-based). Moral monsters have no evident bodily abnormality; therefore, their alterity cannot be identified immediately. Those who interact with these monstrous figures cannot perceive the danger which human characters, in the presence of Carroll's horror creatures, can. If a biological/supernatural monster is said to be identifiable, a moral monster is unpredictable. Among other critics, the seven theses on the monster by cultural scholar Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in tandem with Alexa Wright's chronological approach on the visual representation of monsters assist me in my debate that (a) we may be living in a cultural moment in which human unpredictability is a powerful source of fear; and (b) contemporary monsters tend to be ordinary rather than extraordinary.

In Chapter 3, I examine four true crime books in order to unveil the narrative strategies of the rhetoric of monstrosity[12] utilized by writers to create entertaining accounts of multiple murders. As stated by Nicola Nixon, the supernatural creatures which captured the 1970s cinema and literature gave room later to serial killers, potentially threatening and frightening for being a real danger. Nonetheless, narratively, the ordinariness of these murderers prevented them from exciting the affect of fear on their own. Therefore, they had to be transformed into monsters, that is, there was an aesthetic demand to make such an ordinary individual an extraordinary criminal, resembling those supernatural creatures of the 1970s.

Put together from the four narrative devices of modern nonfiction by Tom Wolfe, one of the leaders of the New Journalism, I have shortlisted four narrative strategies of the rhetoric of monstrosity: (1) *locus horribilis*: any space, be it a farmstead, an apartment, or a dormitory, where brutal violence springs, or any spatial description which prioritizes negative depictions of nature, premises and/or indoors; (2) gothic qualities: attributes (grammatical components, such as adjectives) which help mark the multicidal (or the multicide) as violent, brutal, animal-like or abnormal somewhat; (3) graphic descriptions: explicit descriptions of murders and/or detailing of violent acts, such as torture and rape; and (4) people's reactions: any response to the incident of multicide by townspeople, acquaintances, law enforcement agents, or the narrator, and/or their impressions about the multiple killer.

The four true crime books chosen to be scrutinized are: (a) Harold Schechter's *Deviant: the shocking true story of Ed Gein, the original psycho* (1989); (b) Don Davis's *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story: an American nightmare* (1991); (c) Ann Rule's *The Stranger Beside*

[12] This term has been freely borrowed (and translated) from a study in progress conducted by Brazilian scholars Julio França and Pedro Sasse.

Me: the shocking inside story of serial killer Ted Bundy (1980); and (d) Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood: a true account of a multiple murder and its consequences* (1965). These nonfictions have been selected for different reasons, all of which, though, of paramount importance for this work.

Deviant is written by Harold Schechter[13], a prolific author of true crime and university professor, and deals with Edward Gein (1906-1984), a criminal who possibly inaugurates the culture of multiple killers in the United States. Davis's *An American Nightmare* recounts the life and crimes of Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer (1960-1994), whose homosexuality and paraphilia have received several specialized and non-specialized investigations, being often cited in academic articles, newspapers, websites and documentaries. *The Stranger Beside Me* is Rule's debut nonfiction and a best-selling book, famous for imbricating the author's fledging career as a writer with the serial killer Ted Bundy's crime biography. Last in order, many regard *In Cold Blood* as the epitome of the modern true crime narrative (SCHMID, 2005, p. 175; CLARKE, 2005, p. 357, HICKMAN, 2009, p. 132) for its capacity to mix journalism up with literary fiction. Capote himself, a renowned novelist in the 1960s, claims to have invented a new genre, the nonfiction novel. This true crime account brings back to life mass murderers Richard Hickock and Perry Smith, disclosing their poor background in contrast with the wealthy Clutter family. All of these five multicidals, some for their own brutality, others for their stories told, certainly have been myths of the American culture.

Finally, yet importantly, it is worth saying that this academic work does not rely on historical moves. Many scholars have already studied and delivered the history of the phenomenon of multicide (for my part, I myself have benefited from these studies). My purpose is to pull multiple killers, monsters and the rhetoric of monstrosity together to show how these elements may be key factors to true crime authors who aim at entertaining readers through the narrative construction of monstrous figures. In the best-case scenario, by the end of this PhD dissertation, I hope the reader will have learned more about an all-rare but appalling type of violent offense on which the modern true crime genre has been writing for decades. And although the reading interest of audiences may at times escalate and at others recede, it seems that this type of nonfiction will continue on and on.

[13] Further information about this author is available at https://haroldschechter.com/ . Last accessed on January 18th, 2021.

1 MULTIPLE KILLERS: DEFINITIONS

1.1 Multicide: Mass, Spree, and Serial Killers

For the sake of starting off, I want to briefly refer back to the Introduction of this dissertation, more specifically to George Orwell's essay "Decline of the English Murder" (1946). While discussing the difference between the perfect murder and the Cleft Chin case, the English novelist observed that the fact that killers Karl Gustave Hulten and Elizabeth Marina Jones had killed only one victim was "good luck" (ORWELL, 1968, p. 100). He believed that, had the couple not been arrested as soon as they were, they would have committed many other murders. Back in the 1940s, Orwell could not possibly have known it, but his observation alluded to a prototype of the multiple killer, a kind of criminal (one or few individuals) who kills many, simultaneously or sequentially. But, even though the word 'multiple' may lead us to think of a great number of deaths, crime scholars still struggle for clear definitions.

We may come across the phrases 'mass murderer', 'mass killer', 'spree murderer', 'spree killer', 'rampage killer', 'cluster killer', 'serial murderer' and 'serial killer' on newspapers, documentaries, television shows, movies, and literary works, but we hardly ever think over those terms attentively. Scholars have been debating for years over what should be taken into consideration to define such assailants. Psychopathology, number of victims, modus operandi, motivations, and even gender are common elements brought up into discussion, though experts have not yet reached a consensus on the particulars. For instance, based on other scholars, Julie B. Wiest (2011) defines mass murder as "the killing of at least several people in one place at the same time" (p. 30-1). In the context of massive attack, we may conclude that number matters. What is, nevertheless, the minimum number of fatal victims to determine 'several'? Besides, even though psychosis and lust have been factors traditionally associated to serial killers' reasons to kill, other scholars have expanded their conceptual standpoint to encompass motives other than mental disorder and sexual desire. Mass, spree and serial killers are murderers who compose a rare and peculiar category of violent crime, the one regarding multiple homicide. For this reason, they must be better understood as branches of what is called multicide.

There are three categories of violent offenders belonging to multicide: mass, spree and serial killers. These categories cope with those cases in which criminals, roughly speaking, slay their victims (1) at once, (2) over a rather short period of time, or (3) over a long period of time, respectively. In such cases, not only does body count matter, but also differences in timing. In *Crime Classification Manual* (2006), Ann Burgess differs multicide based primarily on three elements: body count, location, and timing. According to Burgess, violent criminals are termed mass murderers when they kill four or more people at one location only; spree murderers randomly kill three or more victims at more than one location; and serial killers murder two or more victims at more than one location.

I should underline that the difference between spree and serial murderers does not rely solely on the amount of bodies (at least three homicides for the first criminal and at least two for the second one). Burgess distinguishes these offenders more precisely by the so-called 'cooling-off period', a kind of dormant season which may range from weeks to years; or as Burgess herself clarifies, "the state of returning to the murderer's usual way of life between killings" (BURGESS, 2006, p. 437). Spree killers would thus kill their victims in a string of events, without resuming their routine duties. Conversely, serial killers would assume their typical activities again between one murder and the next: "Serial killers tend to go about their lives and murdering on the side, while spree killers act in passion and without the emotional cooling-off period" (DOUGLAS et al, 2013, p. 481).

When it comes to multiple murderers, the steps they take to perform their assaults are of paramount importance. These steps determine what is known as modus operandi (M.O.), that is, the expedients operated by offenders to attain their end: "It encompasses all behaviors initiated by the offender to procure a victim and complete the criminal acts without being identified or apprehended" (KEPPEL & BIRNES, 2009, p. 4). Modus operandi may be constituted by the weapons and tools these killers select previously (bombs, guns, ropes, duct tape, etc.) or the objects they may find by chance in the crime scene (a knife, a hammer, stones, pieces of wood, etc.). The way offenders particularly handle such things (type of rope knots, kind of injury, etc.) may also characterize their M.O. Furthermore, modus operandi may be constituted by victimology (characteristics of victims), the disposal of bodies, and/or by the existence of additional felonies.

To exemplify modus operandi, Keppel et al. (2009) brings up the nineteenth-century infamous case of Jack the Ripper, who may have killed up to ten female victims in the

Whitechapel area of London between 1888 and 1891. The so-called Jack, whose real identity is unknown[14], has never been caught:

> In the six linked cases, the killer's M.O. included attacks on white, female prostitutes, typically between 24 and 45 years old. He preyed on women who were poor. The evidence shows that when the women hiked their skirts in preparation for sex, the killer grabbed their throats and strangled them. The victims were then lowered to the ground with their heads typically pointing to the killer's left. This is supported by the lack of bruising on their heads as noted in the coroners' reports. […] The weapon used in the murders was a sharpened long knife. The victims were already dead or unconscious from manual strangulation before their throats were cut. The women's throats were cut from the left side while they were on the ground rather than while standing. This is evidenced by the lack of blood on their clothing and is supported by the coroner's reports. (p. 56)

The modus operandi can evolve as it is reshaped (due to a wish for lowering risks or mastering the control of a victim) to meet the demands of the crime (DOUGLAS & MUNN, 1992, p. 2). American serial killer Son of Sam (the moniker for David Berkowitz), for example, stabbed his victim in his first attempt at murder. He soon concluded that a knife would not be effective: not as lethal as a weapon and produced too much blood. Thus, he bought a .44 pistol, a weapon which could be more suitable for his goals: "His MO was to look for women alone in cars, or necking with men in parked cars. Then he'd walk up and shoot the women and sometimes the men with them. […] He was out looking every night but would strike only when he felt the circumstances were ideal" (RESSLER & SHACHTMAN, 1992, p. 77-8).

The fact that Berkowitz changed his weapon, targeted the same kind of victims and chose to attack only at ideal circumstances reveal his amount of reasoning. For his modus operandi, Berkowitz belongs to the group of organized killers, that is to say, those offenders who "learn as they go from crime to crime; they get better at what they do, as this shows in their degree of organization" (RESSLER & SHACHTMAN, 1992, p. 132). Organized multicidals exhibit a high level of forethought. They plan their crimes in advance, so they bring along with them all tools required to succeed in their enterprise, from powerful guns for massacres to handcuffs or ropes for rapes. In order to avoid being connected to the homicides, organized killers take the weapons away from the crime scene. Fingerprints, blood smears and anything else which can possibly spot these offenders are wiped off. Accordingly, victims are sometimes beheaded to prevent them from identification. For this type of killers, corpses must be disposed or hidden somewhere far from the place the kills were perpetrated.

[14] In 2002, novelist Patricia Cornwell published *The Portrait of a Serial Killer: Jack the Ripper: closed case*. Her research meant to be the last word on Jack the Ripper's identity. However, other researchers have, throughout the years, contended her conclusion.

Psychologically, organized multicidals tend to be intelligent, to have good verbal skills, and may have the presence of mind to keep calm and stable in critical situations.

Modus operandi reveals yet disorganized killers. Those who belong to this group do not preplan their assaults. They frequently act at the spur of the moment. The lack of planning also leads to chance weapons. Disorganized multicidals do not select previously the tools to commit a crime. Rather, they look for objects available at the site, to be used as makeshift weapons. As for their low level of reasoning, their victims are chosen more randomly than logically. They are not chosen for their vulnerability or for some features which may possibly meet the killer's expectations. Besides, they are more generally murdered quickly, without being tortured. Nonetheless, victims of this type of perpetrators are oftentimes mutilated:

> A disorganized crime scene displays the confusion of the killer's mind, and has spontaneous and symbolic qualities that are commensurate with his delusions. If the victim is found, as is often the case, he or she will likely have horrendous wounds. Sometimes the depersonalization of the victim by the attacker manifests itself in an attempt to obliterate the victim's face, or in mutilation after death (RESSLER & SHACHTMAN, 1992, p. 135).

These offenders have no interest in the personality of the victims. They seldom talk to them or try to persuade them to go somewhere else. Not as intelligent as organized ones, disorganized killers lack the verbal skills required to lure their victims. For their paranoid and/or schizophrenic tendencies, after murdering, they do not try to conceal or even move the corpses away from the crime scene.

I should make it clear that, depending on the factors at stake (killing tools, victim's vulnerability, offender's state of mind, motivations, and so on), the categories of multicide discussed so far may overlap. That is, a serial killer, for instance, may adopt, after some murders, the modus operandi of a spree killer by choosing victims at random and killing them within a short timeframe range. Likewise, a spree killer may change their modus operandi by embracing a plan to assault some of their targets[15]. These categories have been brought up to ultimately help us didactically. They are surely applied to make us grasp more accurately the violent crimes being dealt with here, not meaning at all that they must be held inflexibly.

[15] According to American criminologist Eric W. Hickey, overlaps between mass murderers and serial killers have been statistically unlikely: "We rarely, if ever, hear of a mass murderer who has the opportunity to enact a second mass murder or to become a serial killer. Similarly, we rarely, if ever, hear of a serial killer who also enacts a mass murder". (HICKEY, 2010, p. 20).

1.1.1. Mass Killers

In spite of the disputable numerical precision, the act of killing at least four victims in a single event at one crime scene seems to be the most acceptable and widespread description of a mass killer (FOX & LEVIN, 1998, p. 408; DOUGLAS et al, 2013, p. 471). Even inspiring poems, such as John Berryman's "Dream Song #135", engendering documentaries, such as Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), and playing the lead in novels, such as Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2003), mass killings have not received as much attention – be it from scholars, the press, or art makers – as serial killers have. Fox and Levin present four circumstances which may contribute to this unbalanced interest (FOX & LEVIN, 1998, p. 430-1).

The first circumstance relies on the fact that, unlike serial killers, mass murderers seldom entail a challenging investigation by law enforcement agents. The arrest of a serial killer is frequently preceded by laborious profiling, several interrogations, and subsequent identification. Mass killers, in turn, are generally found at the crime scene: they either commit suicide, are killed by the police, or are ready to surrender. They are almost always pleased to be arrested or shot, "having achieved his mission through murder" (FOX & LEVIN, 1998, p. 430). Narratively, such characters might not be as interesting as spree or serial killers, for their incapacity to kindle expectation and uncertainty which are typically built upon a sequence of crimes, a detective figure and investigative moves.

Also, when compared to the other two multiple murders, massacres are less powerful to generate fear and anxiety. The American serial killer Dennis Rader, alias BTK Strangler (an acronym for Bind, Torture, Kill and whose span of killings ranged from 1974 to 1991), was only arrested in 2005, after almost three decades of investigations. Rader used to send graphically detailed letters of his murders to the police and local news companies, frightening the Sedgwick County, Kansas, for years. Mass murders, contrariwise, albeit tragic, are single events, that is to say, "[b]y the time the public is informed, the episode is over. There may be widespread horror, but little anxiety" (FOX & LEVIN, 1998, p. 430).

The third circumstance contributing to the impaired attention to these massacres is the unsatisfactory information on mass murderers' state of mind. Many of them do not survive their crimes, and even if they leave notes or diaries behind (evidence to help scholars comprehend their motivations), these sources are not enough to clear their psychological

features. In true crime accounts, interviews with mass murderers, for instance, are scarce (as said, these multicidals are generally shot or shoot themselves to death), leading authors to rely on statements of psychologists, eyewitnesses, law enforcement agents or the like to tell crime biographies more trustworthily[16]. Finally, data based on interviews with serial killers are more plentiful than those on mass murderers.

As a last circumstance, Fox and Levin believe that mass murders are not able to emulate the sensationalism of serial killings, more specifically those related to lust. They argue that the press, the public, and even researchers tend to draw their attention to the paraphilia and sadism of perpetrators, such as serial killers Ted Bundy or Jeffrey Dahmer, whose accounts of necrophilia and cannibalism have been terrorizing and fascinating people. To prove them right, they point out that serial murders lacking sexual abnormalities (poisonings, slayings in hospitals or killings for profit) have been constantly ignored by some researchers. Likewise, in fictions, the multicidal character is frequently depicted as a serial killer who slays for thrill or control, with sadistic tendencies and sexual drives. Those fictional multicidal murderers, stripped of sexual impulses – similar to teenager Kevin Khatchadourian, from *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, or deputy sheriff Lou Ford, from Jim Thompson's *The Killer Inside Me* (1952) – are not as easily found in literary works as lust-driven multiple killers are.

In crime profiling, mass murderers are likely to be those supporting fanatic ideas (race supremacy or religious extremists, for instance), those who have gone through a deeply traumatic condition (such as unemployment), or those who have been struggling a chronically depressive state (due to parental issues, bullying, social marginalization, etc.). This criminal, therefore, may be a Vietnam veteran, a neo-Nazi militant, a manic-depressive, a jobless man or woman, "who one day, perhaps after losing his girlfriend or being fired from his job, switches onto *over*-overload, picks up his Uzi or AK-47, walks into a post office or a McDonald's and spray the crowd, before putting his own brains to the walls" (CONRATH, 1994, p. 144). This violence, though premeditated, is spontaneous and non-repeatable.

Unlike what we customarily take for granted, mass killers' victims are not mostly strangers. They are, all in all, family members or acquaintances who are slain by a disgruntled father or a resentful employee (FOX & LEVIN, 1998, p. 434-5). A notorious example is

[16] Take American journalist Jamie Thompson's true crime book *Standoff: race, policing, and a deadly assault that gripped a nation*, published in 2020. Based on interviews, audio and video recordings, her account recreates the deadly 2016-attack on five police officers by mass murderer Micah Xavier Johnson, who was killed at the crime scene.

Jeffrey Robert MacDonald, a US Army surgeon captain convicted of murdering his pregnant wife and his two daughters in 1970. Nevertheless, the allegedly newsworthy cases are those in which the perpetrators appear to become out of control by choosing to kill those they have never seen before. The generic examples provided by Fox and Levin (p. 444) suggest five motivations for mass killing: 1) power: pseudo-commando killers who, dressed in battle fatigues, kill in public at daytime, have powerful weapons but no escape plan, and welcome their fatal outcome; 2) loyalty: a father who kills his whole family because he can no longer provide for them; 3) revenge: a newly-fired employee who breaks into the workplace and shoots bosses and colleagues; 4) terror: a group of political extremists which bomb a plane to gain prominence and visibility; and 5) profit: thieves who murder all the witnesses of a robbery.

Out of the several examples of quasi-worldwide reported cases of mass murders which have occurred, at least, from the late twentieth century on, especially in the US – from San Ysidro McDonald's (1984) or Columbine High School (1999) to Aurora Movie Theater (2012) to the latest Stoneman Douglas High School (2018) – there is one which appropriately illustrates a mass killer: 'The Clutter Family Murder', a farmhouse slaying which took place in Holcomb, Kansas, in 1959. The case is a common example of those mass murders committed for profit, to be specific, murders carried out by "armed robbers who slaughter a roomful of witnesses to their crime" (FOX & LEVIN, 1998, p. 430). This multicide is furthermore distinctive for its adaptation into the best-selling true crime book *In Cold Blood*[17], by Truman Capote.

On November 18th, 1959, nearly one thousand people gathered near the Garden City Methodist Church to offer their condolences to fifteen-year-old Kenyon Neal, sixteen-year-old Nancy Mae, Bonnie Mae and Herbert William, all shot in the head three days earlier. Herbert William Clutter was a wealthy, self-made man who owned a ranch. He was also the chairman of the Kansas Conference of Farm Organizations, and had been a member of the Federal Farm Credit Board under Dwight Eisenhower's mandate, being appointed by the president himself. In Capote's *In Cold Blood*, he is described as "the community's most widely known citizen […] and his name was everywhere respectfully recognized among Midwestern agriculturists […]" (CAPOTE, 1993, p. 6).

Father, mother and their two youngest children were murdered by Richard Eugene Hickock and Perry Edward Smith. Hickock and Smith planned to head for Holcomb after

[17] Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1966) will be discussed in Chapter 3, as one of the examples of the rhetoric of monstrosity.

Hickock had heard of the Clutter family from a cellmate. Floyd Wells told him he had been Herbert's former farmhand, and was sure that there was a safe in the house with ten thousand dollars. Wells said it was no secret that the money was near at hand because Mr. Clutter eventually needed to pay his expenses and his farm workers (KEGLOVITS, 2004, p. 40). The two murderers broke into the farm in the middle of the night just to learn that there was no safe. In the end, as they ransacked the entire house, the only valuables they could obtain from their mass killing were roughly fifty dollars, a pair of binoculars, and a transistor radio.

Richard Hickock is said to be into sports when he was a teenager: basketball, baseball, and football. A student on the first team at school, he was also an A-grade young boy. His parents could see the potential of him, but they could not afford to pay for his college. Thus, after high school, Hickock had a job offer to work for the Santa Fe Railways, in Kansas City. He got married when he was only nineteen and had three children. By that time, a serious car crash disfigured him: his face was moderately lopsided which made his eyes get uneven. He drifted through other jobs as well: an ambulance driver, a mechanic, and a painter. However, his expenses were too high for his income, so Hickock decided to write around bounced checks. He went, as a result, to prison for the first time. In 1958, he was imprisoned again for almost two years for invading a house to take a rifle (KEGLOVITS, 2004, p. 39). While incarcerated, his second wife divorced him. According to Hickock's father, that moment "[…] he was a plain stranger to me. You couldn't talk to him. The whole world was against Dick Hickock – that's how he figured" (CAPOTE, 1993, p. 167).

Perry Smith, in turn, is said not to have had any formal learning. John and Florence, his parents, were rodeo performers, known as Tex & Flo, but the family had been living for years in a truck, driving around the United States in search for work. Smith's mother, escaping his father's violence, divorced him and took the children to San Francisco. Smith was first arrested when he was eight years old and Capote writes that his sister, Barbara Johnson, reminds that Perry, at that time, had turned into a troublemaker: "He wasn't her baby any more but a wild thing, a thief, a robber" (CAPOTE, 1993, p. 184). His mother became later a drunkard, passing away when Smith was thirteen. In 1948, he joined the US Merchant Marine, consequently serving the Korean War. Discharged with honors four years later, he had a motorcycle accident which had him hospitalized for six months. Because of the crash, a rather near-death experience, his legs were disabled – the constant pain made him addicted to aspirin. Smith had been charged for reckless driving, arrest resistance, burglary, vagrancy, and was ultimately sentenced five to ten years for escaping prison (KEGLOVITS, 2004, p. 40).

Hickock and Smith had been incarcerated in the State Penitentiary at Lansing. They were both out on parole by the middle of 1959. Hickock, afterwards, managed to reach Smith, and, three months later, they were breaking into the Clutter's house, taking advantage of an unlocked door. They first came into Mr. Clutter's office. As they noticed there was no safe, they moved upstairs to question the family about the money. Herbert Clutter and his son Kenyon were taken to the basement, Bonnie Clutter and her daughter were left in their bedrooms. Their hands and feet were hogtied and their mouths taped shut. Perry Smith slit Mr. Clutter's throat, and then shot him and the rest of the family in the head.

The Clutters murder case, for its motivation on burglary, fits that type of mass killing perpetrated for profit. Not only were Hickock and Smith dragged to felony by the likelihood of stealing ten thousand dollars from a safe, but were also determined to commit the perfect crime by eliminating all witnesses:

> But Dick had made up his mind: stockings of any shade were unnecessary, an encumbrance, a useless expense ("I've already invested enough money in this operation"), and, after all, anyone they encountered would not live to bear witness. "No witnesses," he reminded Perry, for what seemed to Perry the millionth time. (CAPOTE, 1993, p. 37)

I should remark that Dick Hickock and Perry Smith, albeit common examples of mass murderers, acted particularly different from what the statistics reveal of this sort of multicidals. The most broadcasted cases show that, after making their "'final statement' in or about life through the medium of abrupt and final violence" (HICKEY, 2010, p. 20, quotation marks in original), the mass murderers' typical outcome is to turn themselves in deliberately, to be killed by the police, or to commit suicide. Those two offenders, nonetheless, in wanting to succeed in their robbery, killed the entire family but escaped from the crime scene. Far from being motivated by power, revenge, loyalty or terror, Hickock and Smith's actions (undoubtedly callous and brutal) were sparked by the possibility of material gain. This motivation resulted, not in arrest or suicide, but in an intention to keep freedom.

1.1.2. Spree Killers

In *Vulgar Favors* (1999), Maureen Orth writes that, after the news on the murder of cemetery caretaker William Reese, the township of Pennsville, a rural area in New Jersey,

were overrun by panic: "Police heard a rumor that a woman was so scared when she heard a noise in her bedroom that she dove through the screen on her bedroom window and ran up the street in her nightgown and slippers. A cop reportedly smashed up his car chasing the wrong red pickup" (p. 141). Reese had been the fourth victim of Andrew Cunanan, a spree killer who became notorious for also killing Italian fashion designer Gianni Versace. Cunanan, trying to lead the police astray, shot Reese in the head in order to steal his pickup truck. Before committing suicide with a gunshot through the mouth, inside a houseboat in Miami Beach, Cunanan had murdered five people in four months.

A killing spree (also known as rampage killing or cluster killing) is characterized by homicides, no less than three, committed at different locations with a short time break and no cooling-off period between assaults. These criminals act in an impulsive and spontaneous fashion, and as a consequence their victims are often chosen randomly[18]. In addition, spree murders usually take place in consonance with other felonies, like rape, kidnapping, armed robbery or auto theft (Cunanan, for instance, stole a car). The seeming randomness, spontaneity and impulsiveness of these crimes have made the populace assimilate killing sprees as unpredictable, resulting in a rampant feeling of panic.

For resembling the modus operandi of both mass murders and serial killings, spree murders are sometimes taken as hybrid homicides (DeLISI et al., 2008, p. 39; FOX & LEVIN, 1998, p. 408), being positioned halfway between massacre and seriality. There are, in turn, some scholars contending that these crimes should be lowered to a subcategory of either mass murders or serial killings (DOUGLAS et al, 2013, p. 477; BUSCH & CAVANAUGH, 1986, p. 6). There are, as well, other experts who would argue that, given the difficulty of defining 'cooling off' as properly as it must be, there has been a tendency of eliminating this type of multicidal altogether, with such homicides being sorted out as serial murders (HICKEY, 2010, p. 22). Though still debatable, the term 'spree murder' (and variations) has been largely mentioned and used. Those in favor of maintaining the category assert that it holds significant difference: on the one hand, the lack of a cooling off time lag keeps killing sprees from being a subset of serial murders; on the other, the sequence of homicides at various locations avoids their categorization as mass murders (GRESSWELL & HOLLIN, 1994, p. 3).

[18] A rather recent case of spree murder took place in Cambridgeshire, England, in 2013. Within about ten days, Joanne Dennehy killed three men and stabbed at random two other men on the streets. The story, known as the Peterborough Ditch Murders, can be read at http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-25669206. Last accessed on May, 1st, 2018.

Similar to what has been underscored about mass murders, when confronted to serial killings, spree murders have not been drawing much attention either. This setback, at least partially, may be explained by the frustration of coping with an unpredictable criminal, whose random behavior makes it hard to grasp. What can be said so far is that murders committed by these multicidals are quick, disorganized and rather arbitrary. Their assaults are unplanned and the time span between one crime and another is significantly short. Some scholars have even stood for the randomness and short timing, rather than body count, as core elements to make spree killers more distinguishable (DeLISI et al., 2008, p. 40).

An iconic case of spree killing was perpetrated in 1958 by Charles Starkweather (also known as Little Red), a nineteen-year-old garbage collector who, accompanied by his girlfriend Caril Ann Fugate, murdered eleven people in less than two months. Starkweather was sentenced to death and executed by electric chair in 1959, at the Nebraska State Penitentiary. Fugate, who was fourteen years old at that time, pleaded not guilty, stating she had been kidnapped and forced by Starkweather. The jury, however, sentenced her to life imprisonment, but she was eventually paroled eighteen years later. This case is recollected, from time to time, by local newspapers[19]. The police chase for the teen couple broke out a pandemonium of citizens locking their doors and getting their guns ready. Nebraskans, both old and young, still remember those terrifying crimes.

The Starkweather-Fugate murderous spree has rendered several true crime books[20], including Ninette Beaver's *Caril* and Linda Battisti and John Stevens Berry's *The Twelfth Victim: the innocence of Caril Fugate in the Starkweather murder rampage*, two accounts which side overtly with Caril Ann Fugate. Fictionally, the case has sparked a significant

[19] In 2008, an article, in the *Star Herald*, was written for the fiftieth anniversary of this murder spree. It can be read at http://www.starherald.com/archives/th-anniversary-of-starkweather-s-murder-spree-stirs-up-memories/article_51ba4949-6de2-5fb8-9587-72f4e57c9d66.html . The next year, another article, *in the Lincoln Journal Star*, delivered interviews with Charles Starkweather's niece, Rhoades Starkweather, and Caril Ann's friend, Linda Battisti. The article can be read at http://journalstar.com/special-section/starkweather/starkweather-s-family-still-lives-with-legacy/article_df1bdfe6-4f57-59ed-a889-6d185f4d43cf.html . Both links last accessed on May 20th, 2018.

[20] *The Murderous Trail of Charles Starkweather* (1960), by James M. Reinhardt; *Caril* (1974), by Ninette Beaver; *Starkweather: the story of a mass murderer* (1976), by William Allen; *Starkweather: a story of mass murder on the Great Plains* (1993), by Jeff O'Donnell; *Headline: Starkweather: from behind the news desk* (1993), by Earl Dyer; *Born Bad: Charles Starkweather – Natural Born Killers* (1996), by Jack Sargeant; *Waste Land: the savage odyssey of Charles Starkweather and Caril Ann Fugate* (1998), by Michael Newton; *Starkweather: inside the mind of a teenage killer (2004),* a reprint of the 1976 volume by William Allen*; Pro Bono: the 18 year defense of Caril Ann Fugate* (2012), by Jeff McArthur; and *The Twelfth Victim: the innocence of Caril Fugate in the Starkweather murder rampage* (2014), by Linda Battisti and John Stevens Berry.

number of movies[21], the first one being released only four years after Starkweather's execution. But the well-known moving picture based on the case is probably Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*, whose graphic violence in tandem with sarcasm made it a controversial piece. Starkweather's bloodshed has also inspired novels, such as *Not Coming Home to You* (1974), by Lawrence Block, and *Outside Valentine* (2014), by Liza Ward[22]; the latter having Caril Ann as one of the first-person narrators.

Described as handsome, stocky and as tall as only 1.65, Charles Starkweather wore rimless glasses, black-and-white cowboy boots and was a big fan of James Dean, having a hairstyle which would resemble the movie actor's. He had been initially taken as a nice, polite and funny young man by friends, but, according to criminologist James M. Reinhardt, Starkweather would be concealing a profound hatred of people. In an interview, Charles depicted his first days at school as hurtful and traumatic: he used to be incessantly bullied for having a speech impediment and bowlegs. His classmates called him names by chanting 'bowlegged', 'red-headed woodpecker' and making fun of his speech. The young Starkweather grew a low self-esteem, but he had not been left alone. Reinhardt argues that teachers tried to help him. They assigned special tasks and stimulated his artistic skills. Yet, Starkweather could only see the teachers' kindness skeptically. In the long run, hate distressed him to the point of considering everyone's behavior to be a deliberate act against him:

> Reinhardt concluded that Charlie was miserable, and, like most miserable people, he did not know the source of his hatred, so he exaggerated the event in order to justify his hatred against the world. He gave himself the right to hate by exaggerating what he considered the cruelty of others. (BATTISTI & BERRY, 2014, p. 18)

The teenage Starkweather gained later a reputation of being a callous and cold bully, feeling no remorse when fighting fellow students. A teacher recalled one of the fights by telling that Starkweather had forced the student 's face into a bed of ground rock. The boy was bleeding and crying. Charles, however, looked remorseless and insensitive to what he had just done. Bob von Busch, a closest friend, once stated that Starkweather had two sides: he could be extremely kind at some times and also unreasonably mean at others.

At the age of sixteen, Starkweather quit school and got a job at a recycling company. He used to complain about the college employees who, trained by him, were praised and

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[21] *The Sadist* (1963); *Badlands* (1973); *Kalifornia* (1993); *Murder in the Heartland* (1993); *Natural Born Killers* (1994) and *Starkweather* (2004).

[22] The author Liza Ward is Chester Lauer and Clara Ward's granddaughter. Husband and wife, they were both murdered by Charles Starkweather.

raised. Never getting any compliment, Starkweather would conclude that such a neglect was due to his poor condition: "I used to wonder why 'no goods' like some I knowed was get'n praised for doin' what they done. Guess it's cause they talked better'n I did and 'cause they had better places to sleep in at night" (BATTISTI & BERRY, 2014, p. 21, quotes in original). Although hating the world he lived in, there were two passions Starkweather would ever pursue: hot rods and guns. The former, it is said, offered him a chance to be closer to disaster, a way of drawing death as near as he could. The latter provided him with a sense of supernatural strength. This feeling seemed to be so strong in his mind that he believed even the devil could be defeated with a shot:

> […] but between the firearms, and the automobiles, I'd rather hear the crack of a firearm than have or drive the finest car in the whole wide world. I love the smell of guns. I love to take a gun apart and put it together again. A gun gave me a feeling of power that nothing else could match… I remember once thinking that if the devil comed at me I would shoot him with a gun. (BATTISTI & BERRY, 2014, p. 23)

When Bob von Busch introduced Caril Ann Fugate to Charles Starkweather, the couple got along well immediately. Caril Ann and Charles fell for one another and started to date even under protests, especially from Marion Bartlett, Caril's stepfather. Mr. Bartlett thought that Caril Ann was too young to have a boyfriend. Starkweather taught his girlfriend how to drive and used to take her hunting on a farm outside their community. The farm belonged to August Meyer, a friend of Starkweather's. Mr. Meyer had allowed him to hunt in his land whenever he felt like. Caril Ann and Charles used to spend their whole time together, but soon enough he became obsessively jealous, repeatedly inquiring his girlfriend about the schoolboys to whom she had talked and insisting that they should move away.

In Caril Ann Fugate's version of the account, Charles Starkweather constantly asked her to quit her job as a babysitter, so they could have more spare time for themselves. He had fabricated a story about moving back to Texas to reassume his position as a sheriff. At that time, Starkweather worked as a garbage collector, and, as far as Fugate could know, he had never been to that city. But that make-believe seemed to be all real in Charles's mind, taken by him as though it was an actual story:

> When she was alone with Charlie, he would tell her that he was going to quit his job as a garbage man and move back to Texas where he could resume his duties as a sheriff and catch Indians. He was going to make a lot of money and take her away where they could be alone together, just the two of them in their own little world where nobody else would bother them. Caril wondered whether Charlie was actually starting to believe his own crazy stories. (BATTISTI & BERRY, 2014, p. 39)

On December 2nd 1957, the headline of a local newspaper exposed a picture of a smiling young man named Robert George Colvert[23], found dead on a road in the city of Lincoln, Nebraska, with a gunshot to the back of his head. Colvert worked as an attendant at a nearby gas station. The county sheriff shortlisted the motivation for the murder to robbery, as 160 dollars had been taken from the cash register and about 60 dollars from the victim. No one could possibly have traced the crime back to Starkweather at that point. Nonetheless, the murder of Robert Colvert would be later known as the first out of eleven slayings committed by Little Red.

On January 21st 1958, Charles knocked on Caril Ann's door, carrying his hunting rifle. She was away to school at that time of the day, so the door was answered by Velda Bartlett, her mother. Like Caril Ann's stepfather, Mrs. Bartlett did not happily agree on her daughter's date, though she had turned a blind eye to it. Starkweather seemed dissatisfied with such disapproval and quarreled with the Bartletts about it. Shortly, the quarrel mushroomed into a vicious frenzy of rage: Starkweather shot both Velda and Marion dead; the two-year-old Betty Jean, Caril Ann's sister, was choked to death with the rifle barrel. The corpses were hidden in an outbuilding behind the house. When asked later, under interrogation, to explain the reason why he had also killed the baby, Starkweather answered that she was crying too much.

Most versions of those three homicides blame Caril Ann Fugate for making no objection to her family's murder. Some authors claim that Fugate was present while her little sister was being killed (NASH, 2004, p. 1110-1). Others, on the other hand, contend that Betty Jean and her parents had already been murdered when Fugate came home from school. Allegedly, Starkweather made up a whole story about the kidnap of the Bartletts by his gang. He therefore had been keeping Fugate psychologically captive by threatening her that he would only spare her family as long as she cooperated (BATTISTI & BERRY, 2014, p. 52). The young couple would stay in the Bartlett's house for the next six days. In order to keep visitors away, a warning note was posted on the door: "Stay away. Everybody is sick with the flu. Miss Bartlett" (p. 61).

After the Bartlett family's murder, Charles and Caril Ann drove to August Meyer's farm. They were warmly welcomed and Meyer offered them horses to pull their car which had become bogged down in the mud. On their way to the stables, nonetheless, Starkweather suddenly produced his gun and killed the seventy-year-old man. The savagery of that behavior, according to Fugate, made her sure that, from that moment on, there was nothing

[23] The front page of the newspaper *The Lincoln Star* can be found at https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/66723057/ . Last accessed on December 30th, 2019.

she could do but obey. Police was told that the killer's car was parked on Meyer's farm. Officers were sent to surround the property, but the criminals had driven off. The body of August Meyer was found with a shot to the head.

On that same evening, with their car stuck in the mud, Starkweather and Fugate had to walk along the road. They were hoping for a ride, so they flagged down a car. In the vehicle, there was the teenage couple Robert Jensen and Carol King, heading for Bennet, Nebraska. Starkweather explained he was supposed to make a phone call, then Jensen allowed them to climb in. The rifles that Starkweather and Fugate carried did not concern Jensen – guns were common in those rural areas as many people hunted. In Bennet, Starkweather pressed his rifle to Jensen's head and forced him to drive to an old schoolhouse. The couple was taken to a cellar nearby and shot to death. When the bodies were later found, it was noted that Carol King had been raped before she was killed.

The bodies of August Meyer, Robert Jensen and Carol King were quickly found. The report of deaths piling up, headlined by the newspaper *Lincoln Star* '3 More Bodies Found: Bennet victims bring toll to 6', changed the behavior of the town. The brutality of the crimes – parents with headshots, a baby with a skull fracture, a young woman raped and mutilated – panicked people to the point of mass hysteria. It was the first time that a spree killer on the loose had been reported:

> The three slayings stunned the town of Bennet so much that during the night men armed with shotguns and rifles drove up and down the streets in search for the killers. Houses were lit up, and a knock on any door was answered by a person with a shotgun in hand. With a killer on the loose, a person might very well shoot first and ask questions later. (BATTISTI & BERRY, 2014, p. 86)

The day after those murders, Starkweather and Fugate drove to the Country Club section of Lincoln, an uptown area for affluent residents. Even though the murders had been random so far (for they had no evidence of previous thinking or victim's linkage), Starkweather could have been planning to take his anger out on some rich people. This might explain the reason why the house of the businessman Chester Lauer Ward and his wife Clara Ward was broken into by Charles and Caril Ann. Mrs. Ward and her maid, Lillian Fenci, were taken to a bedroom, gagged and tied up. They were both stabbed and mutilated. Mr. Ward, who had been away, was shot in the head as soon as he came back home. Chester Lauer's car was stolen and, after the killing, the couple drove off westward.

According to Caril Ann Fugate, Starkweather wanted to go to Washington – his brother Leonard lived there. So, on January 29th, they had already driven all night long. Charles might have thought that the best way to lead police astray was to keep changing cars.

Thus, somewhere near Douglas, a city in Converse County, Wyoming, he killed another man, after noticing him rest in a car, parked along the road. He crammed the body of shoe salesman Merle Collison on the backseat and started the vehicle. But it could not move because the emergency break was stuck. Unable to release the break, Starkweather flagged down a passing car. As soon as Joseph Sprinkle stopped, Charles produced his gun and ordered Sprinkle to help him fix the emergency break. The hostage man, right after seeing the corpse on the backseat, took his chance by trying to grab Starkweather's gun. They were fighting for the weapon when Caril Ann Fugate, who had just seen a police car coming near, rushed towards it. Later, deputy sheriff William Romer would say to the press that Fugate was shouting: "He's going to kill me. He's crazy. He's just killed a man" (BATTISTI & BERRY, 2014, p. 94).

At that time, Sprinkle had already successfully taken the gun from Starkweather. Nevertheless, the spree murderer was able to let go of him and step inside the car. Amazingly, Starkweather released the emergency break, started the car quickly and escaped from the scene. The sheriff chased him promptly. As Starkweather drove into downtown Douglas, other officers engaged in the pursuit. They shot Starkweather's car many times and shattered the window glass. The high-speed chase ended up after Charles had been cut in the neck by some glass. Ironically, he thought he had been shot.

A core feature of spree killers, as previously underscored, is their randomness. Because of their lack of criteria while choosing victims, their targets range from children to elderly to basically just anyone. Charles Starkweather killed eleven people: a young man, a child, middle-aged men and women, a seventy-year old friend, and a teenage couple. Due to his blind rage, panic overran Nebraska. Another feature of these murderers is disorganization. None of Starkweather's victims were hidden after death. The bodies were mostly left where they had been slayed. Starkweather mismanaged all of his murders, never concerned about wiping off any evidence of his mayhem.

Spree murderers, furthermore, never preplan their assaults. They tend to act in the heat of the moment. For this reason, there is an absence of a cooling-off period. In the havoc wreaked by Starkweather, there was a short time lag between one murder and the other – the longest was no more than a month. After he had started his killing rounds, he never resumed his routine duties. The fact that he murdered seven people in three days corroborates the quickness which characterizes a killing spree.

From a psychological standpoint, it is argued that Starkweather was too angry to think carefully or devise an escape plan. His hatred of people, for (as he believed) never offering him any help, had blinded him, so he aimed victims arbitrarily and indiscriminately. His level of rage seemed to have been kept steadily high even moments before his execution. When asked to donate his eyes after death, Starkweather angrily replied: “Hell, no! No one ever did anything for me! Why the hell should I do anything for anyone else?” (NASH, 2004, p. 1113)

1.1.3. Serial Killers

Unlike the two other multiple killers discussed before, serial killers are deeply studied, debated and reviewed. They have drawn attention from scholars, the media, and art workers alike. For their eye-catching potential, journalists, documentarists and true crime writers customarily choose those extraordinary and appalling cases to publicize, especially the ones in which brutality, mental derangement and sexual deviance are prominent. By the same token, film makers and novelists mold their stories preferably out of the so-called ‘true’ serial killers: criminals who kill repeatedly due to psychosis and sexual drive.

A significant number of researchers has also claimed that brutal, disturbed and paraphilic urges are key factors in understanding and defining the phenomenon of serial murder (LIEBERT, 1985, p. 188-9; RESSLER & SHACHTMAN, 1992, p. 33; DOUGLAS et al., 2013, p. 481). It is argued that these elements are to be taken as the only features to spot a serial killer. Yet, there have been other scholars, such as Holmes & DeBurger (1985), who asseverate that, given the various motivations for committing a sequence of homicides, a typology of serial murders should be devised (p. 31). Another group of contemporary researchers, moreover, contend that brutality, mental illness and paraphilia, though playing a meaningful role in the serial killer studies, are to be seen as some among other important features to describe and categorize this violent phenomenon (FOX & LEVIN, 1998, p. 407-8; HINCH, 1998, p. 12-3; RAMSLAND, 2005, p. x).

So far, definitions of serial killer have varied substantially. The disagreement on a single definition by researchers, for the most part, rests upon the quantity of victims and motivations (WIEST, 2011, p. 29). Criminologist Steven Egger (1998), for example, states that a minimum of two victims is enough to define a seriality (p. 5-6). Wade C. Myers et al.

(1999) justifies a minimum of three victims by emphasizing that this amount demonstrates a serial pattern more convincingly (p. 154). As the number echoes the definitions offered by other experts, Christopher J. Ferguson et al. (2003) similarly advocates for three victims (p. 290). Finally, Fox & Levin (1998) stand for at least four victims to qualify a killer as a serialist, pointing out that such number "helps to distinguish multiple killing from homicide generally" (p. 408).

I would like to remark briefly that, albeit frustrating, it is understandable that these scholars suggest three different body counts – even though they are all supported by the same justification. As far as a sequence of homicides is concerned, the modus operandi plays an important part and has an effect on the definition of serial killer. Investigators look for patterns in the offender's behavior in order to connect him/her to the homicides. But they cannot find such connections unless they examine a reasonable number of victims. This very point appears to be the core of the problem. If the minimum number is low, it might be too early and burdensome to identify a seriality. Comparatively, a high number of victims may be as problematic, for being too late – and for costing too many lives – to take any action for determining a connection between murderer and the murders. Apparently, one of the factors used to define seriality has ended in a deadlock which may only be broken arbitrarily[24].

Regarding motivations, the disagreement seems to be whether these murderers are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. On the one hand, it is maintained that personal-satisfaction seekers, such as lust-driven multicidals, must be the ones to be taken as serial killers. As Ronald Hinch (2005) underlines, the assumption revolves around the idea that 'true' serialists are intrinsically motivated (p. 4). We find such proposition built upon the claim that serial murderers are fundamentally determined by a desire to kill:

> […] the most robust definition of serial murder is one that includes a delimitation of the phenomenon in terms of intrinsic motivation of the killer. A murderer may kill in order to profit financially – in which case the murder is a vehicle for another goal. It is not an end in itself. This is in contrast with the murderer whose primary motivation is to kill, but who also takes advantage of opportunities the dead victim provides by way of, for example, financial gain or sexual gratification. To this end, it is proposed that the hallmark of the serial killer as most people conceive him is, first and foremost, his motivation to kill, repeatedly, for personal gratification – regardless of the context in which killings are committed". (SKRAPEC, 2001, p. 22)

[24] The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S.) has broken the deadlock. The definition of serial murder on its website establishes the number two as the pragmatic minimum number of victims: "Serial Murder: The unlawful killing of two or more victims by the same offender(s), in separate events". Link to the definition: https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/serial-murder#two . Last accessed on January, 15th, 2021.

In this sense, black widows (wives who murder a series of husbands) and hitmen (professional killers), for instance, ought to be left out altogether, for their main motivation is extrinsic – they kill for profit, not for pleasure. On the other hand, it is contended that the phenomenon of seriality must go beyond intrinsic impulses, be it pleasure, sex or the like. Serial murders are performed by human beings; hence the motivations must be as broad as human behaviors are (HICKEY, 2010, p. 26-7). For the sake of unveiling the difficulty of consensus on this matter, I will discuss, rather closely, some recurrent definitions on both sides.

1.1.3.1 Intrinsically Motivated

In a book on the phenomenon, FBI agent Robert K. Ressler (who claims to have coined the term 'serial killer') offers several accounts and anecdotes on investigations, profiles, arrests and interviews with serial killers. Virtually all the cases he talks over – Richard Trenton Chase, Edmund Kemper, John Wayne Gacy, Gerard John Schaefer, John Joseph Joubert, Montie Ralph Rissel, Angelo Buono/Kenneth Bianchi, Jerome Brudos, David Berkowitz, Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer – are of males driven by lust. His description of a serial murderer, as someone who compulsively fantasizes, narrows the motivation down to sexual impulses:

> Most people conceive of the murderer as being a kind of Jekyll and Hyde: One day he's normal and on the next a physiological drive is taking hold – his hair is growing, his fangs are lengthening – so that when the moon is full, he'll have to seize another victim. Serial killers are not like that. They are obsessed with a fantasy, and they have what we must call nonfullfilled experiences that become part of the fantasy and push them on toward the next killing. That's the real meaning behind the term *serial killer*. (p. 33, italics in the original)

Ressler admittedly says that, while an FBI profiler, he was concerned first and foremost with those criminals motivated by urges other than profit. Thus, he lists murderers, rapists and child molesters as his prime interest: "in a perverse though sometimes understandable way they are seeking emotional satisfaction. That makes them different, and, to me, that makes them interesting" (p. 32). When he discusses his interview with David Berkowitz (who never had any sexual intercourse with his victims), Ressler says that the serial killer confessed he had shot women "out of resentment toward his own mother, and

because of his inability to establish good relationships with women" (p. 77). Some lines later, nonetheless, he reveals that Berkowitz, like other offenders he had met, was impelled by sexual drives just the same: "He told me that in the process of stalking and shooting women, he would become sexually excited, and that after the shootings, he would masturbate" (p. 77). It is worth highlighting that, even when multicidals are unable to meet the sexual stereotype (like Berkowitz is), Ressler keeps rationalizing them by stating they would fantasize and feel sexually aroused afterwards (FERGUSON et al., 2003, p. 288). For focusing on fantasy as a main element, dismissing profit as a motivation, and mentioning sex killers essentially, the FBI agent inevitably associates seriality with lust.

While reviewing the psychiatric literature on serial killers, Keeney & Heide (1995) stress that experts (notably in texts published in the 1990s and earlier) postulate that (a) serial murderers are male and also that (b) serial murder "is a type of 'lust murder', perpetrated by a 'sexual sadist'" (p. 300, quotation marks in the original). American psychiatrist John A. Liebert (1985), for instance, declares that it is hard to define random homicides as serial certainly because it is a phenomenon intrinsically motivated: "The difficulty of defining a set of circumstances as serial murder, both spatially and temporally, indicates that organized murder of cultism and terrorism are apparently not operating. […] Serial murder is a product of primitive emotions" (p. 188). According to the psychiatrist, random serial murders perpetrated by cultists or terrorists are unlikely to happen for two reasons: (a) for their distinct patterns, ritualized cultist murders would be more easily noticeable by investigators; (b) as they aim to draw attention to themselves, politically motivated acts, like terrorism, would hardly murder randomly. For Liebert, serial murders are irrational and motivated by sexual urges: "Apparently, motiveless serial killings of young males and females where intimate physical contact obviously preceded death, demands the investigation of Lust Murder" (p. 189). Ultimately, extrinsic motivations of homicides, such as religion or politics, are not to be dealt with by psychiatrists.

The last definition of serial killer as intrinsically motivated I will debate is possibly the longest and oft-quoted one. Provided by Steven A. Egger (1998), it intends to cover all factors related to the categorization of this multicidal:

> A serial murder occurs when (1) one or more individuals (in many cases, males) commit(s) a second murder and/or subsequent murder; (2) there is generally no prior relationship between victim and attacker (if there is a relationship, such a relationship will place the victim in a subjugated role to the killer); (3) subsequent murders are at different times and have no apparent connection to the initial murder; and (4) are usually committed in a different geographical location. Further, (5) the

> motive is not for material gain and is for the murderer's desire to have power or dominance over his victims. (6) Victims may have symbolic value for the murderer and/or are perceived to be prestigeless and in most instances are unable to defend themselves or alert others to their plight, or are perceived as powerless given their situation in time, place, or status within their immediate surroundings, examples being (7) vagrants, the homeless, prostitutes, migrant workers, homosexuals, missing children, single women (out by themselves), elderly women, college students, and hospital patients. (p. 5-6)

Two points in Egger's definition follow along with those characteristics already taken for granted by scholars: serial murders are committed at different times and in different locations. Additionally, his definition acknowledges that a serial killer is typically a man who may either act by himself or may, in some cases, be helped by another or other killers[25]. It also establishes a minimum of two victims as well as asserts that murderer and murdered, as a rule, are relationless. The fact that victims are vulnerable (depending on when, where and/or who they are) is equally relevant here: they are occasionally powerless, weak and defenseless – especially those groups regarded as socially marginalized; and finally the examples of prestigeless social strata he gives makes his categorization painstakingly careful.

According to scholars, notwithstanding his effort to present many variables (gender, body counts, victimology, psychopathology), Egger still overlooks faults (FERGUSON et al., 2003, p. 288; HINCH, 2005, p. 2; HICKEY, 2010, p. 26; WIEST, 2011, p. 33). One of these faults has to do with his restrictive view on motivations, owing to his premise of a desire for power/dominance and rejection of material gain to explain why serialists kill:

> According to Egger, serial murderers spend a great deal of time fantasizing and preparing for their eventual crime. The act of serial murder then fulfills some intrinsic internal need and is not primarily for financial gain or other pragmatic ends. Although the fantasy element to Egger's definition does not explicitly demand that the fantasies be of a sexual nature, this appears to be the implicit understanding. (FERGUSON et al., 2003, p. 288)

It is possible to argue, just like Christopher J. Ferguson et al. does, that the act of fantasizing does not necessarily imply sexual issues. The Zodiac Killer, for instance, a serialist who operated in the 1960s and has never been caught, was not believed to be driven by lust. Like Berkowitz did, his victims were either shot or stabbed, with no evidence of sexual manifestation.

Egger's considerations regarding fantasy interestingly resemble those offered by Ressler. Similar to what the FBI agent does, Egger also links fantasy to sexual impulses. In

[25] Some examples of partner killers are Angelo Buono and Kenneth Bianchi (the Hillside Strangers); Leonard Lake and Charles Ng; lovers Ian Brady and Myra Hindley (the Moors Murders); lovers Henry Lee Lucas and Ottis Toole; and husband-wife killers Fred West and Rose West.

fact, the description of a serial killer provided by Ressler, Liebert and Egger still has an impact on recent works. By reading, for instance, *Serial Killers: Made in Brazil* (2014), by Ilana Casoy, we see the same restrictive connection (that is to say, serial murder-sexual drives) being applied. In her book, Casoy explores seven offenders, whose killings range from the 1920s to the 2000s: José Augusto do Amaral, Febrônio Índio do Brasil, Benedito Moreira de Carvalho, Francisco Costa Rocha, José Paz Bezerra, Marcelo Costa de Andrade e Pedro Rodrigues Filho. The body counts vary from two murders (committed by Francisco Costa Rocha) to seventy murders (committed by Pedro Rodrigues Filho), and, except for one, all of the deaths are sexually motivated.

Casoy defines serial killers as criminals who commit several homicides with a certain interval between murders. She avoids, it is noticeable, the hardship of setting a minimum number of victims[26]. In addition, Casoy asserts that serial murders are linked by three elements – modus operandi, ritual and signature[27] – and their behavior split them into two categories: organized and disorganized. She adds up that serial killer's victims share similar traits, are physically vulnerable, and at the same age range. Also, victims are selected randomly and apparently killed for no reason. Finally, Casoy mentions the cooling-off period between one murder and another, the manifestation of a psychosexual reason to kill (emerging out of fantasies and leading to paraphilia), and a need for dominance and control (CASOY, 2014, p. 23-4).

Among the cases chosen by Casoy, two of them are worth reviewing: Francisco Costa Rocha (alias Chico Picadinho) and Pedro Rodrigues Filho (internationally known as Killer Petey). Their names are often seen in lists of Brazilian serial killers[28], though their number of victims and motivations differ dramatically. Rocha has murdered two women after having sex with them in a time span of ten years between murders. Filho, who has his own father as one of his victims, has murdered seventy, most of them while he was imprisoned. Unlike Rocha,

[26] During an interview to a Brazilian talk show, she has said she would consider two homicides as a minimum number. Link to the interview on August 22nd, 2017: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-aW23CiyhE . Last accessed on January 15th, 2021.

[27] Casoy's usage of terminology seems to be quite particular (and probably inaccurate). She explains that 'ritual' is the behavior which exceeds what is required to commit a crime (p. 27). For their part, while discussing 'signature', Douglas & Munn (1992) state that "This criminal conduct is a unique and integral part of the offender's behavior and goes beyond the action needed to commit the crime" (p. 3) – she names 'ritual' what the criminologists name 'signature'. Moreover, the example she provides to define 'signature' – types of knots – holds elements of modus operandi.

[28] One of these lists can be found at https://noticias.r7.com/cidades/fotos/relembre-os-principais-assassinos-em-serie-que-ja-assustaram-o-brasil-16102014#!/foto/1 . Last accessed on January 15th, 2021.

Filho's series of killings have nothing to do with sexual impulses. His victims (all of them male) were murdered chiefly for revenge or for a code of conduct he himself set.

Francisco Costa Rocha was born in 1942, after her mother had gone through two abortions. His father – a stern, violent and extremely jealous man – had another family. Francisco's mother was his lover from outside marriage. His father, Casoy says, did not use to visit him frequently, so Francisco grew a deep bitter-sweet feeling of both love and hate for this paternal figure. When he was four years old, her mother started suffering from a lung condition. Unable to be raised by her, Francisco thus moved into his father's farm, but he lived, in fact, with a couple who worked there. He would spend his time in the woods, walking aimlessly. A restless boy, he used to kill cats for the sake of making sure of their seven lives, hanging them from tree branches or drowning them in the toilet. He was recurrently punished for his behavior.

Two years after having been living with the farm couple, his mother took him back. Casoy reveals that that moment was awkward: Francisco could barely remember his mother's face. They moved to Vitória anyway to live a harsh life. His mother made a living by working as a hairdresser and needlewoman. She had a tendency to fall in love with married men, and this fact troubled Francisco. At school, he was aggressive, hostile, absent-minded, reckless, and uncontrolled. The shortest teen of his gang, he was constantly forced into homosexual caress. Together with some friends, he would later form a group of troublemakers who crashed parties and high-society weddings. They got drunk, broke into cars, drove them around, and then parked the cars back again.

At the age of sixteen, Francisco moved to Rio de Janeiro along with his mother and stepfather. He had had some jobs, such as air force recruiter, aircraft mechanic, and salesman. But still his absent-mindedness, recklessness and lack of self-control always took over. For this reason, he got dismissed from all the jobs he ever had. About four years later, he became a realtor in São Paulo. Getting a reasonable income and working under flexible hours, Francisco rented a flat with a friend downtown, so he could enjoy the nightlife. At that time, he would spend his days reading German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky, trying drugs and engaging in orgies. Casoy underlines that violent sex began arousing him more and more.

One of those nights, he met an Austrian woman named Margareth Suida. She was a divorced ballet dancer who worked as a masseuse. Francisco chatted with Margareth for long before she was invited to come over to his flat. From this moment on, Casoy cautions readers

that the interview started to fail because what happened after the couple stepped into the flat would come to Chico's mind in a series of nonsequential and disorderly flashbacks. To sort out the statements and make the case more comprehensible, she lets us know that she has reached her conclusions based on Chico's answers for the interview in tandem with a forensic examiner's report of 1966.

Margareth's clothes on the floor by the bed and her undergarments over the couch would possibly mean that she got naked voluntarily. Likewise, the number of cigarette butts in the ashtray indicated that they engaged in a long conversation. Therefore, Margareth was not murdered right after they had entered the flat. Their sexual intercourse must have taken place the way Francisco would described as usual – bite-mark evidence could be found on Margareth's breasts and neck, and she also had a bruise on her nose.

Making use of Chico's flashbacks, Casoy tells that he could recollect having attacked Margareth by grabbing her neck, in an attempt to strangle her. After she lost consciousness, Francisco went over her and suffocated her with a belt. The buckle, full of hair, was found on the bedroom floor, and Margareth's earrings, under the bed. The next flashback recalled the moment he dragged her to the bathroom. The smear of blood on the floor and the bloodstained scissors on the dressing table suggested that Francisco started mutilating Margareth over the bedroom carpet. In the bathroom, he placed her in the tub for the purpose of tearing her corpse apart. With a razor blade in his hand, Francisco cut off her nipples and stripped off some of her skin. Besides the breasts, he also mutilated her vagina and buttocks. Casoy highlights that this need of divesting women from their female characteristics is called "defeminization" (CASOY, 2014, p. 94).

The forensic report of 1966 also mentions, according to Casoy, several bloodstained footsteps on the bathroom floor. Those treads, far from evidencing a regular walking, implies that Francisco walked in and out of the bathroom many times, possibly mentally deranged. The moment he came around, he felt disgusted with what he had just done. Thus, he cleaned himself up, got dressed and left the place. Francisco confessed his brutal crime to his flatmate and decided to hire a lawyer before turning himself in. However, his flatmate went to the police station and pressed charges. Soon after, Chico was arrested.

In his interrogation report, Francisco claimed that he murdered Margareth Suida to give vent to his anger. Margareth reminded him of his mother, whom he had grown to hate for having been abandoned by his father and for having forced him to live together with a stranger. Furthermore, he asserted that his virility had been seriously impaired, and

consequently a morbid need for violence took control. Francisco Costa Rocha alleged that he had lost his mind on Margareth because she ridiculed him while he attempted to sodomize her.

Chico was ultimately sentenced to fourteen years in prison. Once incarcerated, he graduated from high school, used to read many books, and then started working in the jail superintendent's office. Eight years after his first murder, Francisco was put on parole for demonstrating exemplary behavior. It was mandatory, nevertheless, to come to court every three months.

Francisco got married and worked for a publishing house. But as time went by, his recklessness and lack of self-control would rise again. Getting home frequently drunk late at night, he made his pregnant wife divorce him. He ended up living in cheap motels or rented apartments, used drugs and moved from job to job. In 1976, after having sexual intercourse, he was accused of physical injury. He had tried to strangle a woman (she was few months pregnant) and had bitten her several times. Casoy writes that, according to the police report, the woman fainted in the process. After she had recovered her consciousness, she noticed some blood licking from between her legs. In the hospital, she was told that she had been assaulted with an edged weapon and lost her baby as a consequence.

In his interview, Francisco Costa Rocha pointed out that he was aware of his rising sadism. Some women underwent his sexual violence and half-strangulation, but, as they were familiar with paraphilic intercourse, they did not complain about it. One of these paraphilias was erotic asphyxiation, consisting of a sexual behavior where a person deliberately obstructs airflow in the partner's trachea to reach a heightened arousal. It is a potentially life threatening as the supply of oxygen to the brain is reduced. If the choke takes long enough, it causes death.

Only one month after he was sued for physical injury, Francisco met Angela de Souza da Silva, a prostitute quite well-known in the neighborhood. She would be strangled and cut into pieces like Margareth Suida had been. He took Angela to his flat and choked her to death while they were having sex. When he realized he had murdered her, he knew that he had to hide his crime. Once again, he dragged the corpse to the bathroom, cut off her breasts, disemboweling and throwing the viscera down the toilet. Concluding he would never get rid of the corpse this way, Francisco decided to chop Angela's body with a saw. Eyes were taken out, mouth sliced off, and head and limbs split. The body parts, Casoy underscores, were packed in a suitcase and in a bag, and left on the balcony. Unable to carry the containers along

by himself, Francisco decided to escape to Rio de Janeiro. Once again, he is turned in by a friend and arrested on the same month.

For many times, the newspaper *Notícias Populares*[29] reported the two murders, calling Francisco a "monster" and a "maniac" in the headlines. In the trial, however, his attorneys maintained that he was mentally ill, so his crimes did not derive from a deliberate attack, but from his derangements. They also alleged that, when Francisco dismembered the body, he did not intend to hide his crime – the dismemberment was caused by his mental disorder. The prosecutors, on the other hand, tried to convey that Francisco was nothing but a sadist, a vicious and brutal killer. He was convicted of Angela's in 1976[30].

Francisco Costa Rocha targeted females. The modus operandi for both his homicides were quite alike: meeting the women, inviting them to his flat, having sexual intercourse, beating and strangling the victims, mutilating and butchering their bodies. Despite the small number of victims, he fits satisfactorily the stereotype of serial murderer (HICKEY, 2010, p. 189): he is male, white, lust-driven, vicious, acts alone and had a troubled childhood. Additionally, he overkills the two women and, given his chaotic flashbacks, he seems to be mentally unstable. If we can join all of these oft-repeated features together in one multicidal, we can safely understand the reason why Rocha has become a mythic Brazilian serial killer. Like other sexual serialists (John Wayne Gacy, Ted Bundy and Jeffrey Dahmer, for example), he is the quintessentially horrendous deviant. This will likely explain the reason why Ilana Casoy does not put into question the presence of Francisco Costa Rocha in her list of killers: Rocha's murders are intrinsically motivated. On the other hand, she reluctantly includes Pedro Rodrigues Filho, because, as it will be elucidated in the next section, he is extrinsically motivated.

[29] The headlines and pictures related to Francisco Costa Rocha's murders may be seen here: http://fotografia.folha.uol.com.br/galerias/28466-chico-picadinho-no-np#foto-433754 . Last accessed on January 15th, 2021.

[30] Francisco Costa Rocha had been imprisoned for forty-six years (our Brazilian crime law does not allow imprisonment for more than thirty years). In 2017, he was reported to be released from Taubaté Correctional Institution: https://veja.abril.com.br/brasil/esquartejador-de-2-mulheres-chico-picadinho-deve-deixar-a-prisao/ . [news article in Portuguese]. Last accessed on January 15th, 2021.

1.1.3.2 Extrinsically Motivated

For the myriad of websites and newspapers where his name and background can be found, Killer Petey is possibly the most prominent Brazilian serial killer to date. His criminal life was singular, and his personal code of conduct has led commentators to label him the 'Brazilian Dexter'[31]. Pedro Rodrigues Filho murdered predominantly those who have been taken as unworthy living in society: rapists, kidnappers, child molesters, etc. For not being sexually motivated, Casoy suggests that Filho may be better categorized as a different type of serialist (CASOY, 2014, p. 311). Although she still refers to his killings as serial murders, she hesitates in adding him to the category of motiveless homicidal. Filho committed his first murders early in life, at the age of fourteen. These crimes were not lust-driven, nevertheless. They were motivated by a sense of retribution.

To better grasp Filho's rise from Pedro Rodrigues to Killer Petey, Casoy divides his lifetime of crime into four stages: (i) from birthday to his first murder; (ii) as a drug dealer, leading criminal gangs; (iii) early prison life, but not yet marked with the stigma of killer; (iv) well-established as a killer (CASOY, 2014, p. 303). At each stage, Casoy emphasizes how proud of being a criminal Filho is.

In the interviews, Filho recollects his parents' everlasting fights – his father was extremely jealous. Together with his eight siblings, he was consistently exposed to domestic violence and abuse. One of his first reminiscences of childhood is set even before his birthday. While his parents were quarreling, his father kicked his mother's belly. She was pregnant with Filho, and he claims that the blow caused him a skull fracture. Not raised by his parents only, but by his grandparents as well, his grandfather trained him how to shoot guns; as for his grandmother, she taught him how to drink animal blood, for she believed it was healthy.

When Filho was fourteen, his father, who worked as a security guard for a school, was accused of stealing food from the kitchen. For this reason, he was fired from the job. This event threw his family into a period of shame and starvation. Casoy tells that Filho, at that time, decided to stay away in the woods for about thirty days, hunting and selling monkeys to help provide for his households. Thus, after spending his time quite isolated, he made up his

[31] We can find this label at https://www.unilad.co.uk/crime/real-life-dexter-has-killed-71-people-but-still-walks-free-today/ and also at http://vt.co/news/weird/meet-real-life-dexter-killed-criminals/ . Last accessed on January 15th, 2021.

mind to retribute what had been done to his father: the vice-mayor of the town and the security guard who worked together with his father were the ones to blame. He therefore stole his grandfather's boots, handgun, rifle and cartridge. The vice-mayor was shot dead for dismissing his father. Filho, afterwards, headed to the school to meet the security guard, who was killed because Filho believed he was the actual food thief.

The second stage of Filho's lifetime of crime started after he had run away from his hometown. To escape being arrested, he moved to Minas Gerais, so that he would live together with his godmother. Once in the community, he got involved with the local drug dealers, being immediately enticed by Maria Aparecida Rolim with money and power. Rolim had been married to the head of the community drug traffic. After his death, Rolim took control of his business. She is said to be an attractive woman, consequently seducing Filho into sex and drugs. For becoming intimately close to Rolim, he quickly climbed up the ladder to be a gang leader. Nonetheless, his fast ascension also boosted jealousy among the other dealers. He was told to be wanted dead and then killed four traffickers who planned on ambushing him. Some time later, Rolim was killed by the police, forcing Filho to run away once again. He would eventually gather other criminals to start his own gang.

Filho's first moments in prison, seen by Casoy as his third stage, are described as a hellish season. For having been exposed to all kinds of brutality, gone through near-death experiences and murdered, as he asserts, more than thirty people, Filho recalls his incarceration as hideous days: the walls of the correctional facility smeared with blood, weapons all over the place, and inmates fighting capoeira, smoking and drinking. The fifth floor, probably the place over where prison staff barely watched, was even worse. Filho says that those who got sick on that floor were not looked after; the sense of death could be felt everywhere. To keep himself alive, he would permanently bring a knife along, wherever he was.

After a period of time in the solitary confinement, the officers put Filho in another cell, together with an inmate who used to sexually abuse young newcomers. This criminal was said to be intimidating and fearsome, hated for taking advantage of others. On the very first night in the cell, Filho smashed the criminal's head, while he was asleep, with a rock found in the bathroom. Filho told an officer what he had just done, adding up that he would kill whoever messed with him. This murder actually got him the respect of many cellmates. Shortly after, the media would come up with the moniker Killer Petey.

The last stage brings out a well-established Pedro Rodrigues Filho, famous and infamous for being one of the most dangerous killers of São Paulo prison system. Proud of his wrongdoings, Petey himself alleges he has murdered more than one hundred people, including those casualties which, due to riots, are officially reported as done by unknown perpetrators. Casoy asserts that he has developed several modus operandi to kill: using a knife, a pen, hot oil, arsenic, strangulation, and so on. He has also been called on to appease insurgencies, as no one is willing to battle him. In the end, Killer Petey admits he had felt hopeless for years, killing inmates thoughtless and pointlessly.

According to Casoy, Filho seems to have a particular set of principles, a code of conduct. He argues that most of his assassinations have been meaningful, rather than meaningless, motivated by revenge and a sense of righteous behavior. Filho boasts, for instance, about never taking drugs or stolen goods into his mother's house. At a certain moment of the interview, Filho is asked if his murders may have motivations other than revenge. He answers subsequently:

> P. R. F.: Well… it's like, we just, it just don't matter in the end. You're stoned so bad. I lost my sister. You don't care about leaving no more… I looked at the guy, the guy is a loser! You wanna kill, it's that hunger for killing! You wanna get out of prison, wanna go somewhere else, you know? […] no big deal, I killed him just because he did something to someone else.
> Interviewer: It's like a mission then, you picked the ones who didn't deserve to be alive?
> P. R. F: In our business, it's not allowed, you know? I just knocked them off [rapists, child killers][32] (CASOY, 2014, p. 306-7, my translation).

By the end of her account on Pedro Rodrigues Filho, Casoy discusses the nature of his murders, especially for a tattoo he has on his right arm which says: 'I kill for pleasure'. For serialists like Filho, is the act of killing pleasurable or a means to achieve other goals? In other words, Casoy is willing to know whether his murders are motiveless or motive-based. The reluctance in adding Killer Petey to her list of serial killers might be explained by the fact that Casoy finds more sociological than psychological grounds to justify his motivations:

> Killer Petey epitomizes those who has always been socially marginalized. When he was a child, for being poor, he did not go to school and he did not know what a

[32] Originally: "P. R. F.: Aí… Por exemplo, por exemplo… A gente já tá, tanto ir, tanto faz. Tá craqueado até o pescoço. Perdi irmã. Não tem interesse em ir embora mais... Eu via o cara, aquele cara não tá com nada! Cê tá louco pra matar, aquela sede de matar! Quer sair da cadeia, quer ir pra outro lugar, entendeu? [...] não é nada, só porque ele fez alguma coisa pra outra pessoa eu já ia lá e matava.
Entrevistador: É como uma missão, você escolhe aquele que não prestava para estar aqui?
P. R. F.: No nosso meio do crime não é permitido, né? Eu ia lá e eliminava [estupradores, matadores de crianças]".

> doctor was. The welfare state had never reached him whatsoever. He learned among his peers the moral and ethical codes under which his life would be ruled. Virtually all his family members had already killed or had almost done so. Physical violence had been part of his life on a regular basis. Anger has always been an omnipresent emotion[33]. (p. 310, my translation)

Depending on what it is intended, experts will be focusing on different elements to better cope with serial killers. Based on method of killing, investigators have devised dichotomies to better classify the phenomenon: organized/disorganized[34], geographically stable/geographically transient, single killers/team killers, etc. Based on motivation, criminologists (helped by social and behavior scientists) have formulated typologies (some of greater scope than others) to categorize serialists. Holmes & DeBurger (1985), for instance, offer four broad types of serial killers: (1) hedonistic, (2) power/control, (3) visionary, and (4) mission-oriented. The criminologists say they have focused on behavioral models, and that each type (and subtype) is supported by the personal justification or gratification given by serialists for their reason to murder (p. 31). If taken as extrinsically motivated, Pedro Rodrigues Filho will possibly fall under the mission-oriented type.

1.1.3.3 Types of Serial Killers

(1) The **hedonistic serial killer** pursues satisfaction, being totally devoted to it. Their hedonism is subcategorized in three behaviors: (a) lust killers, those who obtain satisfaction having sex with corpses, mutilating them, drinking their blood and cannibalizing them – for their sensational power, this type of murderer is perhaps the most publicized by media and most fictionalized by filmmakers and novelists; (b) thrill killers, those who seek pleasure through the process of slaying victims, that is to say, killing is an end in itself; (c) comfort killers, those who kill in order to satisfy some financial gain – they profit by means of murdering. For the lust and comfort killers, murder is seen as a consequence, a method to reach other targets. By contrast, for thrill killers, murder is the target.

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[33] Originally: "Pedrinho Matador é o exemplo de pessoa que sempre viveu em sociedade paralela à formal. Na infância, por consequência da pobreza, não frequentou escola, não sabia o que era um médico, não teve absolutamente nenhum contato com o Estado. Aprendeu ali, entre os seus, os códigos de moral e ética que regeram sua vida. Todos em sua família mataram ou quase o fizeram. A violência física era vivida ou assistida todos os dias. A revolta sempre foi presente em suas emoções."

[34] Eric Hickey (2010) highlights that such a dichotomous model lacks "reliability and validity testing" (p. 370).

(1.a) Out of a plethora of hedonistic lust killers (from Brazil, the US or elsewhere), there is one who is particularly compelling, as he has been immortalized by two famous novels, and, later, movies: *Psycho* (1959) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988). Edward Theodore Gein, or Ed Gein, a seemingly harmless farmer from rural Plainfield, Wisconsin, officially murdered two women: fifty-one-year-old Mary Hogan and fifty-eight-year-old Bernice Worden. Gein would technically be kept out of some definitions of serial killer which claim a minimum amount of three victims. He is believed, nonetheless, to have committed many other local homicides. His motivation was his need to collect human bodies, especially for their skins, to allegedly turn them into lampshades, bedposts, chair coverlets, wall hangings, bowls, household decorations and a bodysuit he used to wear around the house.

Ed Gein was a loner at the age of forty-one. His father George Gein had died in 1940, his brother Henry died in 1944, battling with a raging wildfire, and his mother Augusta had a fatal stroke the following year. After Mrs. Gein's death, he nailed her bedroom door and window shut to apparently seal off any memories of his dead mother: "By shutting himself off from the two rooms most often occupied by his mother, Gein sought to obscure if not eliminate any haunting visions of her stern image" (NASH, 2004, p. 307). Mrs. Gein, it is said, was a dictatorial matriarch, constantly warning her sons against the schemes of women. She used to make use of vivid descriptions of venereal diseases and talk over how sex could bring excruciating pain and sudden death.

Gein was known in the community of Plainfield as a slightly odd and lonely man. His checkered flannel ear-flapped hat and his shirt all buttoned to the top might have made Gein look like a guiltless figure. But, at that time, he had already been snatching freshly female corpses from burial sites. He would also regularly visit the local library to borrow books and periodicals about human anatomy. These activities had been passing unnoticed for years. So, when he killed Mary Hogan and dragged her on a sled to his house in 1954, no one could possibly suspect him.

Mrs. Hogan ran a tavern in Pine Grove. According to Gein's statements, he waited until all customers left the remote place before attacking the victim. He produced his pistol from the pocket, placed it at close range and shot Mrs. Hogan fatally in the head. Then he put her body on his sled which was outdoors and took it to his farm. It is speculated that Gein must have spent several hours to go back home after this murder. There was a blinding snowstorm that made it harder for him to walk (NASH, 2004, p. 308).

Three years after he had murdered Mary Hogan, Ed Gein stroke again. Bernice Worden owned a hardware store in Plainfield. By the end of that November 16th, Mrs. Worden was about to close the establishment when Gein came in. He approached a gun rack and took a rifle from the wall, putting a bullet into the chamber. Just like Mrs. Hogan, Bernice Worden was shot in the head, dying immediately. This time, Gein dumped the corpse into his car and drove away. Mrs. Worden's son was a deputy sheriff. After being reported of his mother's disappearance, he learned that Ed Gein had been the last customer in the store. The police headed to Gein's farm to inquire him. But they found a shocking environment:

> They found a human heart in a pan on the stove; human entrails in the refrigerator; a shoebox with nine vulvas in it; another box containing four noses; a pair of stockings made from human skin; a soup bowl fashioned out of a human skull; a vest made from a female torso; skulls mounted on Ed Gein's bedposts; nine masks made out of the flesh of female faces, some hanging on the walls as decoration; a human scalp in a cereal box; a drum fashioned out of human skin; four chairs whose upholstery was made of human skin caked in dripping fat; various pieces of jewelry fashioned out of body parts; and ten female heads. Many of the artifacts had been rubbed down with oil to keep their luster; the human masks were made up with lipstick; a red ribbon was tied through one of the vulvas. In Ed Gein's summer kitchen, they found the headless and quartered corpse of Bernice Worden hanging from the rafters like a freshly killed deer. (VRONSKY, 2004, p. 186)

Ed Gein's homicides were not a result of thrill to kill, but another goal: corpses. During the hard winter seasons, when he no longer could unbury corpses from graves, he murdered in order to keep his supply. Some commentators add that his two known victims somehow resembled his mother (NASH, 2004, p. 308), and that could have also been a motivation – Mary Hogan and Bernice Worden were as old as Mrs. Gein. Anyway, Ed Gein has been fictionally portrayed as both a body-obsessed and mother-obsessed killer, two types personified by the characters Buffalo Bill and Norman Bates respectively.

(1.b) Murders resulted from a pleasure to kill classify the offenders as hedonistic thrill killers. Their sadistic pleasure derives from the process of killing: bondage, gag, choke, rape, torture, etc. Once the victim is dead, their interest is lost. Postmortem activities are seldom reported in these types of offense. These serial murderers are highly organized and careful in their attacks. Vulnerable groups are their target victims. For this subcategory, team killers and cousins Kenneth Bianchi and Angelo Buono are the perfect example.

From October 1977 to February 1978, Los Angeles residents panicked because of the series of rapes and murders perpetrated by what was later known as The Hillside Stranglers. Yolanda Washington, Judy Miller, Lisa Teresa Kastin, Jill Barcomb, Kathleen Robertson, Kristina Weckler, Sonja Johnson, Dollie Cepeda, and many others were found dumped dead

in the Hollywood Boulevard area. The young female victims were prostitutes, runaways, college students and workers who had been captured, raped, sodomized, tortured and strangled to death. The killers cleaned the corpses so as to wash off any evidence that could be traced back to them.

Bianchi worked as a security guard and Buono managed an upholstery business. Buono lived alone, but Bianchi had a wife and son. They, thus, took several of their victims to Buono's garage where they could exert their sadistic impulses secret and freely. In January 1978, Bianchi made up a story of an alarm system in a house his company had been protecting. He told Karen Mandic, with whom he worked, that he needed somebody for a job consisting of house-sitting for two hours while the alarm was turned off to be repaired. Mandic concluded that it was a good opportunity to make some money. She later asked if she could take her roommate, Diane Wilder, with her and Bianchi answered she could. After the girls were found raped and strangled in the trunk of their own car, witnesses reported that Kenneth Bianchi had been the last to have been with them. Police searched the car and the house and gathered physical evidence which finally connected the murder to the murderers.

To avoid the death penalty, Bianchi pled guilty and testified against his cousin. Buono tried to keep his innocence and denied having killed the victims. However, evidence linked him to the murders, especially traces of semen. Kenneth Bianchi was a hardworking, handsome, and charismatic man. As for these qualities, his friends found hard to admit he could be a sadistically thrill killer:

> Yet nobody could quite believe it: Kelli Boyd maintained that Bianchi was a gentle lover and caring father to their son; the security company, run by a former police officer, reported that Bianchi was one of their best employees, a popular guard who was often requested by clients; and friends came forward maintaining that Bianchi was too gentle to have committed such brutal crimes. ((VRONSKY, 2004, p. 189)

(1.c) To exemplify a hedonistic comfort killer, we can recall the case of Dorothea Montalvo Puente from Sacramento, California – dubbed 'Death House Landlady' by newspaper. Puente, a 53-year-old woman, managed a boarding house, and, from 1982 to 1988, she poisoned seven of her elderly tenants. She had preplanned the murders, chosen her victims according to their vulnerability, killed them within a long span of time, hidden the bodies, and profited from the murders. The reason for her homicides was surely financial – her tenants had been killed for their social security checks.

Originally named Dorothea Helen Gray, Puente was born in 1929. In her early childhood, she was placed at an orphanage after the death of both her parents. At the age of sixteen, Dorothea got married for the first time. The couple had two daughters, but it is

reported that, for unknown reasons, Dorothea and husband gave them up: one girl was sent away to Sacramento to live with relatives, and the other was offered for adoption. After being married for only three years, the couple divorced.

Long before her murders at the boarding house, Puente was imprisoned for forging checks. At the age of twenty-three, she wed a man called Axel Johanson, with whom she had a troubled relationship for fourteen years. Eight years later, she was once again arrested and put into prison for three months for running a brothel. Then, Dorothea started working as a nurse in private homes. Shortly after, she began to manage boarding houses for elderly and disabled people. She divorced Axel Johanson in the meantime, and married Roberto Puente, whose surname she took. As quickly as her first marriage, Dorothea Puente divorced, moved to Sacramento and took over a three-story Victorian-style care home.

She was well-liked by local social workers for accepting hard-case tenants, such as mentally-ill, drug addicts and recovering alcoholics. Most of her inmates were elderly people, so Puente would constantly cash their social security checks for them. The victims she targeted were the so-called 'shadow people', those homeless who had no one to care for them, those who would not be noticed if they had eventually gone missing.

In 1988, after a social worker reported the disappearance of Alberto Montoya, a disabled and schizophrenic man, police officers inquired Puente about the missing tenant. She answered that Montoya was in a trip. Nevertheless, the soil on the boarding house yard was disturbed, arising suspicion. The officers, as they received permission to dig, unearthed the body of seventy-eight-year-old Leona Carpenter, a former tenant. Meanwhile, Puente, not yet a suspect, escaped immediately, flying to Los Angeles. She was arrested at that city five days later, after being recognized.

Six more bodies were uncovered out of Puente's yard, all of them tenants who had lived in the boarding house. Puente was believed to have profited five thousand dollars a month from the murders. Her modus operandi was to take in elderly and disabled people, drug them on tranquilizers and then kill them. In the end, she was convicted of three murders, and received a life sentence without parole. Dorothea Puente died from natural causes in prison in 2011.

(2) The **power/control serial killer** fundamentally seeks satisfactions by controlling victims. These murderers want to be seen as all-powerful, godlike creatures. According to Peter Vronsky (2004), this type may be "the most common of all serial killers" (p. 148). They enjoy the control they exert over victims, and, in doing so, they find sexual compensation.

They frighten, torture, and then finally kill as an expression of having power over life and death.

These murderers are generally likeable individuals: intelligent, articulate, elegant, charismatic. Their satisfaction starts early and unnoticed: "The actual pleasure of controlling the victim may begin before the victim even realizes it as the serial killer manipulates and seduces the victim" (VRONSKY, 2004, p. 196). Characteristically, the power and control these serialists exert when the victim is alive go on into death. Therefore, evidence of postmortem activities is found, that is, they keep the corpses at home or some other safe place, so they can come back regularly to relate to their dead victims. The relationship is commonly sexual and violent, with the employment of mutilation and necrophilia.

A literal semblance for Joyce Carol Oates's *Zombie* (1995) and subject of many true crime books, including Don Davis's *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story: an American Nightmare* (1995)[35], homosexual serialist Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer symbolizes the killer eager for power and control. Haunted by a feeling of abandonment, Dahmer craved for a lover who would never leave him, so he drilled the skull of some of his victims to lobotomize them: "Death was an intended by-product of his efforts to create a zombie..." (ULLMAN, 1992, *apud* TITHECOTT, 1997, p. 164)[36]. Lobotomy was a neurosurgical procedure quite frequently used to treat some mental illnesses by the mid-twentieth century. It consisted of severing the nerve pathways in the lobes of the brain in an attempt to reduce or heal the symptoms of schizophrenia, manic depression, bipolar disorders and other similar diseases. The procedure had been controversial since its beginning in the 1930s. The serious effects on lobotomized patients ranged from inhibition to stupor to lack of responsiveness that would make them look like real-life zombies. To exert power and control in full, it was this procedure that Jeffrey Dahmer inflicted on victims.

Jeffrey Dahmer was born in 1960. In his grade school years, the young Dahmer developed a morbid behavior which would later be linked to his obsessive dismembering of victims: he killed small animals, dissected them, and then kept some of their body parts in glass jars. The birth of his brother had a great impact on him. It caused Dahmer such a distress that increasingly isolated him from his family and the rest of the world (KURTZ & HUNTER, 2004, p. 72). From that moment on, he felt he would be the least favorite child, neglected and

[35] Please, check chapter 3.

[36] The full-length article "I carried too far, that's for sure" (May 1st, 1992), by Joan Ullman, can be read online at https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/articles/199205/i-carried-it-too-far-thats-sure . Last accessed on January 16th, 2021. The line I have quoted, however, was taken from Richard Tithecott's book.

abandoned by his parents in favor of his brother. So, killing and dismembering road animals became, ultimately, an outlet for his isolation. When questioned by his father about the dissections, Dahmer used to hide away his hatred by saying that it was only a curiosity and an enthusiasm for science: "Dahmer claimed that he only dismembered the corpses of the animals because he wanted to see the way that things worked inside" (p. 73).

After his parents' divorce, while he attended high school, Jeffrey Dahmer's deep feeling of abandonment in tandem with a chronic alcoholism contributed to turn him into a potential killing machine. Despite his troubled condition, he was the class clown, faking epileptic seizures in public places as well as playing other tricks to make classmates laugh. But such a funny personality may have been concealing a mental pain: "Dahmer constantly acted the goat so that he would be the centre of attention. This need for attention emerged out of a nagging desire to compensate for the feelings of neglect he experienced every waking minute of his life" (p. 74). In his mind, the only way to soften his abandonment was to secure a permanent companionship.

At the age of eighteen, Dahmer murdered his first victim. Steven Hicks was hitchhiking for a concert when Dahmer drove past him on the road. Hicks was young and good-looking, so Jeffrey gave him a ride and quickly invited him over for a drink. At home, Hicks was killed with a bash in the head by a dumb-bell. His body was butchered and his bones smashed with a sledgehammer. Dahmer's hatred of abandonment did not allow Steven Hicks to leave him:

> Hicks was not homosexual, and probably rejected Dahmer's sexual advances. This rejection was a monumental blow to Dahmer's already fragile self-esteem and he was even more repulsed by his own homosexuality, which he had grown previously to embrace. It drove Steven Hicks away from him, which was the last thing in the world that Dahmer wanted to do. […] Since Dahmer had already developed an interconnection in his mind between sex and violence, it is likely that he became sexually aroused during the murder and more sexually attracted to the dead Steven Hicks. (p. 78)

Some months later, after failing his university career due to alcoholism, Jeffrey Dahmer enlisted in the US Army. It is mentioned that he was trained as a medical specialist and became an excellent medic and estimable leader, but he was discharged for ostensively racist opinions and drunkenness three years later. Dahmer then worked for a blood bank, lived off his grandmother, had a job at a chocolate factory, was arrested for disorderly conduct and for masturbating in public.

The second known murder committed by Jeffrey Dahmer took place almost ten years after he had murdered Steven Hicks. In 1987, Dahmer took Stephen Tomi to a hotel and killed him. Using a suitcase, he transported Tomi's corpse to his grandmother's house, dismembered him, smashed the bones, ground up the flesh, and disposed everything in the trash. One year later, he slightly changed his modus operandi. To convince victims, he would tell he was a photographer interested in taking pictures of them. He would offer money and take them home. From this point on, the homicides would follow Dahmer's usual steps: drugging and strangling victims, butchering their bodies and grinding their bones to dissolve them in acid and then dispose them down the drain. James Doxtator and Richard Guerrero were both killed under this very operation. In 1988, things changed to worse because Dahmer could afford to rent his own apartment. The place would be later known as a hellish site, as dreadful as the Ed Gein's farm, a safe and secret place where Dahmer could put forth his experiments of lobotomy in order to create his zombie.

Dahmer was arrested and convicted to serve sixteen life terms for sixteen counts of murder in 1992. In his interrogation, he openly confessed the homicides, even returning to Bath Township to direct police officers to the remains of Steven Hicks, buried in his backyard years ago. Besides, his apartment on 25th street furnished plenty of evidence to plead him guilty, with photographs, body organs and members all over the rooms:

> Inside the apartment, police discovered a mess in the kitchen, power tools in the living room, and bloodstains on the bed. Dozens of Polaroid photographs were strewn about the apartment. The pictures were of bloodied corpses in various stages of dissection. There were also photos of severed human remains, which Dahmer kept as souvenirs. One particular photograph depicted a severed head which had been painted gold and placed on top of a pair of severed hands. In the refrigerator, police located the skull of one of Dahmer's victims in a box on the shelf. In the freezer there was a human head, and in a separate freezer which sat on the floor there were three additional human heads. The bedroom contained a box full of pictures and two additional skulls. Three more skulls, along with several human bones, were found inside a filing cabinet. Inside the closet, there were two skulls in a kettle, and in a second pot were found assorted male genitalia and several severed hands. Police also located the 57-gallon drum Dahmer kept in the bedroom, which was filled with acid and three headless torsos. (p. 94-5)

The power/control serial killer who wanted to create a zombie-like lover was sent to the Columbia Correctional Institution to serve his sentence. In prison, Dahmer adopted christianity and was baptized. He was eventually beaten to death by another inmate in 1994, while cleaning up a men's room. With a 20-inch metal bar, the black prisoner Christopher Scarver allegedly claimed revenge for the mostly black victims Dahmer had murdered.

(3) The **visionary serial killer** suffers from some sort of hallucination, psychotic disorder or other mental illness, truly believing that committing murders is a command of visions or voices. This type of serialist is completely out of touch with reality, for they say they have obeyed supernatural forces. Some visions and voices are god-mandated whereas others are devil-mandated (HOLMES & DEBURGER, 1985, p. 31-2). It is not usual for visionary serialists to target specific social groups, albeit it may happen. Investigators, thus, have to deal with a series of puzzling murders and chaotic crime scenes due to the visionaries' high degree of disorganization – a result of their psychotic condition.

It is said that one of the usual characteristics of visionary serial killers is being socially nonfunctional (VRONSKY, 2004, p. 148). Consequently, they are loners, living by themselves without having contact with other people. Some visions and voices are not permanent, but episodic. So, those who live with these serialists may take them as harmless, though eccentric. Because of their disorganized mind, visionaries leave behind no clear modus operandi or motivations for their series of homicides. Yet, it is known that, once their sick state of mind prevents them from trying further locations, these serial killers hardly ever commit their crimes far from home.

When Ressler & Shachtman bring up the case of Herbert William Mullin in *Whoever Fights Monsters*, they do so to illustrate the disorganized killer. The extent of Mullin's disorganization might be debatable (VRONSKY, 2004, p. 154), but he is undoubtedly an epitome of the visionary serial killer. Under the command of his father's voice telling him that deaths would prevent an earthquake in California in the early 1970s, Mullin killed thirteen people of all sorts: women, men, teenagers, children and elderly. He suffered from schizophrenia, but, at the time of his trial, he was considered to be legally sane, and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Herbert Mullin was born in 1949. It is said that he went through an ordinary childhood and high school years as a middle-class boy: he was on the varsity football team, popular with both boys and girls, polite and "most likely to succeed" (RESSLER & SHACHTMAN, 1992, p. 144). By the age of sixteen, nonetheless, one of his school friends died in a road accident. In the bedroom, Mullin decided to set up a shrine to devote to his dead friend and got obsessed with the possibility of being homosexual. According to Vronsky (2004), it was the first manifestation of "some kind of instability in Mullin […]" (p. 149).

In the late 1960s, Mullin's appearance and behavior became oddly volatile. He had long hair and wore beads, but he gave it all up when he did not have the sexual experiences he

was looking for in return. Then, he had his long hair cut and dressed up like a business man. Soon after, he studied to become a priest, but dropped out later. Once, he stood up in a Catholic mass and yelled aloud that the ritual had nothing to do with Christianity. He walked into gymnasium to train boxing. He fought so relentlessly that his handlers said he could be a lightweight professional fighter. Suddenly, he gave up being a boxer as well. He used to propose marriage to strange women on the streets, being obviously rejected. Thus, he realized that the rejections meant he was a homosexual, and then he would travel to gay districts of San Francisco to ask men on the streets whether they would marry him, being equally turned down. Mullin also joined the US army and went through their basic training. However, his mental instability gave him away, so he was cashiered out. He adopted Eastern religions and traveled to Hawaii to pursue his mysticism. His mind had become more and more deranged, so that, while there, he was hospitalized in a mental institution. He could not hold a job for long, often requiring the support of his parents.

In 1972, according to witnesses, Mullin spent the entire September contemplating the bible. By that time, he was also told about a possible earthquake that could hit California, and thus he started to hear voices demanding him to prevent it:

> He came to believe that California had been kept from having a calamitous earthquake in the previous half-dozen years because the war in Vietnam had produced a sufficient number of American casualties; that is, nature demanded blood sacrifices in order to keep from destroying the natural world. In October of 1972, however, the Vietnam War was rapidly winding down, insofar as American involvement was concerned, and Mullin's mind discerned a potential catastrophe looming. California would suffer a cataclysmic earthquake that would stop it into the ocean, he concluded, unless the amount of human sacrifices to nature was raised. It was for this reason, Mullin later said, that his father began to order him, by telepathy, to take some lives. (RESSLER & SHACHTMAN, 1992, p. 146)

Mullin's first murder took place the following month. While driving on a highway, he saw a fifty-year-old vagrant, named Lawrence White, walking along the shoulder of the road. He then stopped his car and pretended to be looking under the hood. White approached him and offered some help in return for a ride. Mullin accepted the offer and then asked White to take a look at the engine. In the meanwhile, Mulling went back in the car for a baseball bat. He smashed in the old man's head, dragged his body to the woods nearby, and left him behind.

Two weeks later, his father's voice demanded him a new sacrifice. This time, the order seemed to be more specific as Mullin was told to test whether the environment had been polluted. If so, the earthquake was about to hit. Thus, Mullin picked up a college student,

Mary Guilfoyle, who was hitchhiking. Guilfoyle was stabbed in the chest as soon as she climbed into the car. Mullin dragged her body to the woods, undressed her, spread-eagled her legs, cut open her abdomen, and started to investigate her entrails in order to spot traces of pollution. He hung her inner organs over tree branches close at hand to examine them more carefully. Mary Guilfoyle's remaining skeleton was found only several months later.

Roughly speaking, schizophrenia is a severe mental disorder characterized by alterations of thinking, feeling, and relation to the external world: "It is a splitting or dissociation of psychic functions" (NOLL, 2007, p. 339). In other words, schizophrenics lose their capacity to tell reality from imagination. It is not a splitting personality (such as serial murderer Ed Gein or his fictional counterpart Norman Bates), but a splitting reality, a tendency to take hallucinations as actual occurrences. This hallucinatory state of mind in Herbert Mullin can be perceived in a conversation frequently quoted by writers. For appearing to be doubtful about his father's commands, Mullin had decided to confess his murders to Henri Tomie, a Catholic priest. In the confessional booth, Mullin revealed the murderous enterprise his father had ordered him to carry out and hallucinated that the priest had given himself voluntarily to sacrifice:

> "Herbert, do you read the Bible?
> "Yes."
> "The commandments, where it says to honor thy father and mother?"
> "Yes," Mullin responded.
> "Then you know how important it is to do as your father says."
> "Yes".
> "I think it's so important," the priest said (in Mullin's recollection of the encounter), "that I want to volunteer to be your next sacrifice." (RESSLER & SHACHTMAN, 1992, p. 146)

Soon after Henri Tomie's offer, Mullin hit, kicked and stabbed him about six times in the chest and back. He ran away while the priest was left bleeding to death. Herbert Mullin would yet kill ten more people: Kathy Francis and her two children, James Gianera (a former teammate) and his wife, four teenage boys who camped in a tent in Conwell State Park, and seventy-three-year-old Fred Perez. Mullin was arrested in January 1973 because a neighbor had taken notes of the license plate number of his station wagon. After shooting Perez, Mullin calmly drove away from the crime scene.

(4) The **mission-oriented serial killer**, unlike the visionary type, normally targets specific groups of people: women, elderly, black people, homosexuals, prostitutes, etc. There is a mission to accomplish which is not commanded by visions or voices – it is consciously chosen. The murders perpetrated by these killers reflect their own ambition to eradicate those

they consider to be "undesirable or unworthy to live with other human beings" (HOLMES & DEBURGER, 1985, p. 32). Oftentimes, mission-oriented serial killers display a sense of pride for the series of murders. Attached to a certain set of values, they believe to be offering the community an essential service.

The choice of victims has normally to do with the missionary's background or beliefs (religiously supported or not) that the world could be a better place to live in without a particular group or individuals. Different from visionaries, mission-oriented serial killers are organized, methodical and quick-slayers. This means that their homicides rarely involve sexual urges (exceptionally, it may occur when the target group is prostitutes). Torture, mutilation or corpse violation are also infrequent in such cases. Missionaries are driven to eliminate the undesirable, so much so that postmortem activities are exceptional – their mission is done once the victim is killed. The body of the victim is found many times in the crime scene because missionaries avoid any interaction with the object of their hate.

Pedro Rodrigues Filho, sometimes seen as a "nicer"[37] serialist for killing mainly criminals, embodies the mission-oriented type. Like the antihero Dexter Morgan, Filho channeled his anger into other offenders for their breaking of certain codes of conduct. In his interview, he proudly confesses the murders of more than one hundred unworthy inmates, and even promised to slay the Park Maniac (a moniker for Francisco de Assis Pereira), another Brazilian serial killer who raped and killed women, arrested in 1998. According to Ilana Casoy, Filho's favorite saying is "I dare whoever blames me for my wrongdoings to first be attentive to their own mistakes"[38] (CASOY, 2014, p. 309, my translation). Possibly, he believes to be offering a sort of valuable service for which he should not be entirely condemned.

[37] The adjective has been used in an article by Kara Goldfarb: "Meet Pedro Rodrigues Filho, the real-life 'Dexter' – serial killer of other criminals" (2018). The text can be found at http://allthatsinteresting.com/pedro-rodrigues-filho . Last accessed on January, 16th, 2021.

[38] Originally: "Desafio qualquer ser humano da face da terra que queira apontar os meus defeitos, sem ter que dar margem para apontar os seus erros".

MULTICIDE: body count, location, timing, motivation		
Mass Murderers	Spree Murderers	Serial Killers
1. Slay their victims at once 2. At least 4 victims 3. No cooling-off period 4. Victims chosen judiciously or logically 5. Modus operandi: organized (i) Preplanned crimes (ii) Set of proper tools (iii) Unconcerned of proper disposal of bodies (iv) Evidence left behind 6. Presence of reasoning 7. Victims' vulnerability taken into account 8. No other felonies 9. Victims killed quickly 10. Non-repeatable act 11. Motivation: attention, mission, revenge, profit 12. No escape plan	1. Slay their victims over a rather short period of time 2. At least 3 victims 3. No cooling-off period 4. Victims chosen randomly 5. Modus Operandi: disorganized (i) Unplanned crimes (ii) Chance Weapons: tools taken from the crime scene (iii) Unconcerned of proper disposal of bodies (iv) Evidence left behind 6. Lack of reasoning 7. Victims' vulnerability not taken into account 8. Presence of other felonies 9. Victims usually mutilated 10. Repeatable act 11. Motivation: revenge, mission, attention, profit 12. No escape plan	1. Slay their victims over a long period of time 2. At least 2 victims 3. Presence of a cooling-off period 4. Victims chosen judiciously or logically 5. Modus Operandi: organized (i) Preplanned crimes (ii) Set of proper tools (iii) Concern with disposal of bodies (iv) Evidence wiped off 6. Presence of reasoning 7. Victims chosen for their high level of vulnerability 8. Lack of other felonies 9. Victims oftentimes mutilated and/or tortured 10. Repeatable act 11. Motivation: paraphilia, revenge, profit, mission, attention 12. Escape plan

2 MULTIPLE KILLERS: MONSTERS

2.1 Real-Life Jekyll-and-Hydes

Robert Louis Stevenson's novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) offers us a tale of a key relationship between two conflictive selves. On the one hand, Henry Jekyll is a wealthy and esteemed Londoner doctor, the one who defines himself as a natural-born industrious man with a bright future, admired by his fellows and friends. On the other, Edward Hyde is disrespectful, wicked-looking, and made of "pure evil" (STEVENSON, 1999, p. 45). This tale is traditionally examined in light of the Victorian period, in which the value system of that time sermonized a clear line of demarcation between safe pleasures and dangerous self-indulgences. Knowing how thin this line is and how hard it is to keep from crossing it, the protagonist, a renowned man of science, produces an elixir which splits his personality into good and evil.

Edward Hyde is first mentioned in the story by Mr. Richard Enfield to Mr. Gabriel Utterson. Mr. Enfield is walking on an empty street at three a.m., heading home, then he sees a 'little man' on the corner accidentally bump into an eight- or ten-year old girl who was coming from the apothecary. Mr. Enfield expects the man to be an all-British gentleman, that is, to be polite and thoughtful enough to help the young girl. But the little man – "it wasn't like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut" (p. 4-5) – tramples over her and callously leaves her screaming and crying on the ground. To make up for the misdeed, the girl's family demands money, so Edward Hyde, the callous little man, signs a check for them. This signature becomes the first evidence of the close relationship between the doctor and the monster.

Edward Hyde's assault toward the young girl makes his bad reputation stand out. But what makes him evil is the motiveless murder of Sir Danvers Carew. We learn of the Carew case through a maid-servant who happened to have witnessed the crime. At about eleven p.m., the maid is going to her bed upstairs when she sees through the window a white-haired old man meet another. At first, the former is described as kind and innocent-looking whereas the latter is merely a 'very small gentleman'. The maid soon realizes that the small man is Edward Hyde – "who had once visited her master, and for whom she had conceived a dislike" (p. 16) – and that he seems impatient and angry, swinging his cane around like a

'madman'. All of a sudden, Mr. Hyde, in an outburst of rage, strikes the old man with his cane, and then (just like he did to the young girl) tramples on him, this time so repeatedly and violently to the point of killing:

> The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds, and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was tramping his victim under foot, and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds the maid fainted. (p. 16)

Notwithstanding the persona-split elixir, Jekyll and Hyde become more and more as one. In the long run, the good and the evil selves mingle into something symbiotic, as the relationship between (i) a father and a son – "Jekyll had more than a father's interest; Hyde had more than a son's indifference" (p. 48) – (ii) a mother and a son – Hyde is said to be a thing 'caged' in Jekyll's flesh, "where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born" (p. 53) – and finally (iii) a husband and a wife – "that insurgent horror was knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye" (p. 53). Dr. Jekyll, aware of his splitting-mingling conflict, makes a striking comment on the doppelganger phenomenon, or in his words, the "polar twins" (p. 43) whose personalities have been intimately bound: "[…] man is not truly one, but truly two. […] I hazard a guess that man will ultimately be known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens" (p. 42).

Stevenson's classic story introduces a peculiar type of monster into our very world. The Jekyll-Hyde doppelganger epitomizes the hypocrisy of the Victorian ethical principles to which everyone was supposed to attach but few could put into practice. In his written statement by the end of the tale, Dr. Jekyll admits to be struggling with a 'double existence', a 'primitive duality', 'a double-dealer', and a 'profound duality of life'. In order to give full vent to his vices while unremorsefully keeping his veneer of virtue before the public, the doctor comes up with a dose of medicine (or a 'draught', as he puts it) to dissociate his two selves. As long as he had two separate identities, Jekyll would still "carry my head high" (p. 42) even though Hyde was "drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone" (p. 46). Something goes unexpectedly wrong as Hyde's sense of survival grows stronger and stronger: his Jekyll-self, originally good and esteemed, is being gradually overtaken by his Hyde-self, all vicious and repulsive. The doctor posits, in his last lines, that Hyde has become so dangerous that committing suicide is the only way out:

> Will Hyde die upon the scaffold? or will he find the courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows; I am careless; this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself. Here, then, as I lay down the pen, and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end (p. 54).

I have called this tale back to mind because many multiple killers (and more particularly, serial killers) have been stereotypically defined as possessing a Jekyll-and-Hyde personality. These news items, biographies and true crime books reporting that multicidals can play the virtue figure by day and let loose of their vice by night refer, one way or another, to Stevenson's monster. The more we read about these criminals, the more are the chances to come across this comparison. For instance, in 1993, journalist Skip Hollandsworth publishes his interview with serial killer Charles Fredrick Albright in West Texas prison[39]. Albright, nicknamed the Eyeball Killer, was controversially convicted of the murder of at least four female prostitutes in the early 1990s. He is said to have been a perfect lover, showering women with flowers, candies, and music boxes. He would even go as far as playing Chopin on the piano and reciting a poem by John Keats from memory to one of his girlfriends. Hollandsworth's article is expanded with pictures of the killer's childhood, family and friends, as to corroborate his ordinariness. After exploring Albright's personal life, Hollandsworth asks: "Was there, on the other side of his gentlemanly Jekyll-like personality, a kind of sexually perverted Hyde?". The journalist does not seem frightened by the presence of a serial killer. But he is apparently surprised at finding a potential fictional character in real life.

Forensic psychologist Katherine Ramsland also associates multicidals with Jekyll and Hyde. She asseverates that Stevenson's novella proved to be the fictional tool to which future criminologists would refer in search of an explanation for such an overwhelming circumstance, namely, "the uncontrollable urge within a person who appears normal" (RAMSLAND, 2005, p. 79). In yet another study debating the reasons why serial killers kill, Ramsland briefly compares Dennis Rader, the BTK Strangler, to a Jekyll-and-Hyde behavior. For being both an 'organized predator' and an average family man, Ramsland points out that BTK could manage to get away with murder as an incognito for three decades. Rader was finally arrested in 2005, but not so as a result of any forensic leads put cleverly together, as we may expect. In fact, he was imprisoned for his apparent dumbness.

[39] The article "See No Evil", published in May 1993, can be read at: https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/see-no-evil-3/ . Last accessed on January 18th, 2021.

Rader used to send handwritten letters, with graphic details of his homicides, to the police. As personal computers had become more popular in the 2000s, Rader believed communication would be more effective if he used one. Then, he mailed a letter to investigators asking if he could communicate with them by a computer disk, provided that the police promised not to trace him. After getting the green light, Rader incredibly sent to investigators a floppy disk full of information data which could be tracked down. The police made the promise, but they obviously did not keep it.

Rader's arrest shows that, for playing a nothing-special husband, worker, churchgoer and neighbor, he could only be captured due to his foolishness. It must be highlighted that some criminologists argue that BTK was not dumb. The floppy disk was nothing but an excuse to get himself caught. For his heavy egocentricity, Rader wanted to be arrested in order to be as notorious as other serial killers (DOUGLAS, 2007, p. 290). In any case, the fact that BTK was able to masterfully split his good from his evil persona had given him the chance to keep killing and killing without ever being part of the pool of suspects: "Serial killers like him are truly Jekyll and Hyde, and their 'potion' of transformation is psychological" (RAMSLAND, 2006, p. 177, quotes in original).

When we read Dennis Rader's crime biography is not any wonder one recalls Jekyll and Hyde. The oldest of four sons, Rader is reported to have had a normal childhood, though he disguised a sinister practice: he used to hang (like Jeffrey Dahmer did) stray animals. In his twenties, he quit college to join the US Air Force, and in 1971, he got married. He is said to have been a devoted husband and a family figure who, within his span of killing, had two children. He was also a member of the Christ Lutheran Church in Wichita, and later became the president of the church council. Allegedly, Rader started going to church at about the same time he committed his first multicide.

Rader's Hyde-persona first comes up in January 1974, when BTK killed four people of the Otero family: wife, husband, a nine-year-old son and an eleven-year-old daughter. At that time, he was working for ADT Security Services, a company which provides electronic security, including alarm monitoring supplies. BTK learned how to disable the alarm system so that he could break into houses more easily. He had been watching over the Otero family, taking notes of the number of members and their schedules as well as planning which tools he would need to bind, torture and kill them. Before going inside the Otero's house, BTK cut the phone wire and switched off the alarm monitor. In there, he subjugated the husband in the kitchen, the wife in her bed and the son in his bedroom. He bound them with rope, cord and tape, and then strangled them to death. BTK was particularly sadistic to the daughter as he

took her to the basement to fulfill his sexual urges: "The partially nude body of Josephine, eleven, was discovered hanging from a water pipe in the basement. A large amount of semen was found on her leg" (DOUGLAS, 2007, p. 17). If one compares the murder of the Otero daughter and the trample of the young girl in Stevenson's tale, the former is certainly worse – Josephine was hanged to death and her body was sexually violated. Nevertheless, it is not unexpected if one ever underlines how coincidental it is that both the real Jekyll-and-Hyde and the fictional Jekyll-and-Hyde have assaulted a female child.

As claimed, the fictional Jekyll-and-Hyde functions as a tool to explain the real-life Jekyll-and-Hydes. Charles Albright and Dennis Rader have been compared to that double-persona protagonist for their ability to keep one personality on the outside and another on the inside. Publicly, they would play the man next-door whereas, before their victims, they would unleash their monstrousness. This double-persona is found, for example, in one of BTK's letters to the police. In his own words, BTK puts the blame on a monster who takes over his thoughts and impels him to kill:

> I'm sorry this happen to society. They are the ones who suffer the most. It hard to control myself. You probably call me "psychotic with sexual perversion hang-up". When this monster enter my brain I will never know. But, it here to stay. How does one cure himself? […] I can't stop it so the monster goes on, and hurt me as well as society. Society can be thankful that there are ways for people like me to relieve myself at time by day dreams of some victims being torture and being mine. It a big compicated game my friend of the monster play putting victims number down, follow them, checking up on them, waiting in the dark, waiting, waiting . . . the pressure is great and sometimes some times he run the game to his liking. Maybe you can stop him. I can't. He has aready chosen his next victim or victims. I don't who they are yet. The next day after I read the paper, I will know, but it to late. Good luck hunting. (p. 56-7, grammatical mistakes in original)

Like Henry Jekyll in his letter, Dennis Rader rhetorically dissociates his original self from the monster who, says he, is inside his brain. He refers to the monster using a third-person pronoun as if to make the reader believe that, though there is one body, there are however two distinct individuals in it. Rader has not been the only killer to label himself a monster; other multicidals have claimed the same label[40], especially to plead the insanity defense in trials. But even if they refuse the monster tag, comparing these killers to Jekyll and Hyde inevitably leads us to see them as monstrous creatures.

Stevenson's novella may also serve as a gateway to discuss what exactly means to call multiple killers monsters. The visual representations of Mr. Hyde (in book covers, billboards, art prints, and so on) are usually of an ugly and deformed being, sometimes having sharp

[40] Please, check David Berkowitz's statement in Chapter 3.

teeth; other times having a greenish skin color. Also, he may have an ape-like body or a conspicuous wrinkled face. In sum, Mr. Hyde seems frequently to possess a physical abnormality of sorts, something that visually gives his vicious features away.

But it is also possible to read Edward Hyde as another type of monster, equally vicious and murderous, and yet not presenting physical abnormalities which might reveal his monstrosity. In other words, Mr. Hyde may be the character who falls at once under the category of both (i) a biological and/or supernatural monster, the one visually abnormal, and (ii) a moral monster, the one whose actions, rather than the body, are abnormal. In this chapter, these two types of monster will be examined, from those creatures whose alterity marks the body to those whose alterity is found in their brutal actions. The multiple killer, it seems, is to be less monstrous for what they are and more monstrous for what they do. In a few words, multicide is shocking but multicidals tend to be ordinary.

2.1.1 Two Types of Hyde

In his confessional statement, Dr. Jekyll notes one morning that he was supposed, as usual, to wake up in his original body. However, he continues in the body of the monster:

> Now, the hand of Henry Jekyll […] was professional in shape and size; it was large, firm, white and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough in the yellow light of a mid-London morning, lying half shut on the bed-clothes, was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor, and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair. It was the hand of Edward Hyde. (STEVENSON, 1999, p. 47)

In this scene, Dr. Jekyll finds something abnormal in his hands right after his sleep. Those hairy, thin and bony hands show that that body does not originally belong to him. There is indeed a physical difference indicating that something wrong and terrible has happened: "[…] I rushed to the mirror. […] Yes, I had gone to bed Henry Jekyll, I had awakened Edward Hyde. How was this to be explained? I asked myself; and then, with another bound of terror – how was it to be remedied?" (p. 47). Jekyll's abnormal physicality evidences that it is Mr. Hyde who is taking control of his body that moment, the monster's presence is thus plainly visible. This is a scene which allows us to take Edward Hyde as a biological monster.

Besides, Dr. Jekyll emphasizes that there is a direct proportion between his evil character and his monstrous body. After drinking the elixir for the first time, the doctor lets us

know that his transformation into Edward Hyde is accompanied by excruciating pains: grinding of bones, feelings of nausea, and horror of the spirit. Once the transformation is completed, he realizes he has 'lost in stature'; yet he feels "younger, lighter, happier in body" (p. 44). The potion freed him from all of the ethical principles which had constrained his self-indulgences. The consequent short height, the doctor explains, has to do with the fact that, almost all his life, his vices have been held back in favor of his virtues. If we rest upon this explanation strictly, we may say that the more crimes Mr. Hyde commits, the taller he will grow:

> The evil side of my nature […] was less robust and less developed than the good which I had just deposed. Again, in the course of my life, which had been, after all, nine-tenths a life of effort, virtue and control, it had been much less exercised and much less exhausted. And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter, and younger than Henry Jekyll. (p. 44)

Although the doctor knows of his abnormality, he also declares it is part and parcel of his human nature. He admits that, after the transformation, he feels 'tenfold more wicked', and consequently he becomes ugly and deformed. But he seems to acknowledge that this change has made him feel whole as well: "Evil besides […] had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay. And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human" (p. 44). What is worth arguing is that Jekyll's acknowledgement, that is, his abnormality being regarded as intimate, apparently effaces Mr. Hyde's physical misshape in the eyes of other characters. Mr. Enfield, for example, calls him 'damnable', 'ugly' and 'really like Satan', yet he fails in pinpointing his exact defacements when asked:

> 'Hm,' said Mr Utterson. 'What sort of a man is he to see?
> 'He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an extraordinary-looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can't describe him. And it's not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment'. (STEVENSON, 1999, p. 7)

Identified as the prime suspect in the murder of Danvers Carew, Edward Hyde becomes a wanted man. Mr. Utterson and an inspector perform a search in Hyde's house to seize the butt end of a checkbook and the half of a cane, all evidence linking the monster to the homicide. The inspector therefore decides to publish handbills to make known Mr. Hyde is a murderer, but he realizes he has no background information about him:

> […] for Mr Hyde had numbered few familiars […] his family could nowhere be traced; he had never been photographed; and the few who could describe him differed widely, as common observers will. Only on one point were they agreed; and that was the haunting sense of unexpressed deformity with which the fugitive impressed his beholders (p. 18)

Once again, it is mentioned that Mr. Hyde's physical abnormality cannot be explained. The phrase 'unexpressed deformity' sounds like a summary of Mr. Enfield's hesitant portrait of the monster. In truth, the short stature seems to be the only physical quality on which characters fully agree. Mr. Hyde's evil, at least for those who look at him, comes out more metaphorical than concrete, as though the onlooker could sense something wrong but could not spot it physically. Or rather, it is as if the monster could turn into something monstrous only after acting viciously. These descriptions, found throughout the tale, allow us to take Edward Hyde as a moral monster.

2.1.2 The Doctor and the Killer

If Charles Albright and Dennis Rader ever represent the Jekyll-and-Hyde behavior, there is a multicidal who may have enveloped the virtues of the doctor and the vices of the monster like no one else. Theodore Robert Bundy, a multicidal classified as a lust killer in chapter 1, has been recalled as the true amalgamation of good and evil, and his biographers dwell on it. Ted Bundy synthetizes the all-American wishful thinking: male, white, handsome, charming, well-educated, and well-spoken. In a 1978's article for *The New York Times*, journalist Jon Nordheimer, the moment he describes Bundy's looks, goes as far as referring to this killer as "Here was a young man who represented the best in America, not the worst"[41]. Bundy looked nothing but a promising young man. He had a girlfriend, studied Psychology and Law, worked as a political campaigner, and as a counselor for the Seattle's Crisis Clinic. His sex appeal was such that, even in prison, as a convicted serial killer, he would receive several letters from girls who wrote to be in love with him. In the course of his trials, Bundy got married and his daughter was born. In crime biographies, he is infamous for

[41] The article "All-American Boy on Trial", published on December 10th, 1978, can be read at https://www.nytimes.com/1978/12/10/archives/allamerican-boy-on-trial-ted-bundy.html . Last accessed on January 19th, 2021.

having bludgeoning, raping and killing possibly as many as thirty women as much as he is famous for having being his own attorney and taking over his own defense in court.

Like what is usually done to other multiple killers, the media had nicknamed Bundy: he was 'The Mysterious Stranger'[42]. But once arrested (and his image broadcasted), this moniker, as expected, unglued off his identity. Interestingly, to date, no other nickname has been suggested – Ted Bundy is the only name news outlets use to refer to him. Probably, his visual attribute and cleverness are too positive to be handled as a run-of-the-mill case of multicide. Despite English writer Collin Wilson has called Bundy "another textbook case of the high-IQ killer" (WILSON, 2007, p. 135), this multicidal is far from being a typical case. Bundy's intelligence and performance in the courtroom have been constantly highlighted by true crime writers. His self-confidence and articulate rhetoric were never unnoticed, so much so that Judge Edward Cowart, who read Bundy's verdict, felt sorry for sentencing him to death in 1979. Cowart's final statement is frequently quoted to show how powerful Bundy could be in arousing empathy:

> "I say that to you sincerely; take care of yourself. It's a tragedy for this court to see such a total waste of humanity that I've experienced in this courtroom. You're a bright young man. You'd have made a good lawyer, and I'd have loved to have you practice in front of me – but you went another way, partner. Take care of yourself. I don't have any animosity to you. I want you to know that" (RULE, 2009, p. 477)

Ted Bundy's first fatal victim goes back to January 1974 when a twenty-one-year-old college student was reported missing in Seattle. Lynda Ann Healey lived in a frame house together with four other undergraduate students, near the University of Washington, and worked part-time at a ski reports radio station. She is described as beautiful, tall, slender, blue-eyed, with chestnut brown hair (p. 58) parted in the middle. Victimology indicates that most of the women Bundy attacked and killed presented the features this first victim retained. As Lynda Healy had not arrived at work, his employer telephoned inquiring why she did not show up. On that same evening, she had also invited her parents over for dinner. So, by the time they arrived for supper to learn Lynda had not been seen all day, her roommates, frightened, called the Seattle Police.

Detectives were escorted to Lynda Healey's room in the basement. In there, they pulled the spread off the bed and saw that the pillow had vividly red stains of dried blood on it. A huge blotch had soaked through the sheets into the mattress, evidencing a severe injury, but there was not enough blood to indicate she had bled to death: "A reasonable supposition

[42] The article "The Case of the Mysterious Stranger", published on September 8th, 1974, page 23, can be seen at https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/491815876/ . Last accessed on April 4th, 2020.

was that someone had entered Lynda's room as she lay sleeping, beaten her into unconsciousness before she could cry out, and carried her away" (p. 62). Behind the closet, Lynda's nightgown was found smeared with blood. Some of her clothes were also missing which meant that Bundy had probably spent some time to dress her up before he took her away. He would take yet many more girls – in Seattle, Oregon and Salt Lake City – that same year.

Bundy was known to be a peeping Tom. For this reason, his victims had been, in the beginning, assaulted in their dorms, after being watched over. However, his M. O. soon started to branch out, and then Bundy was able to play diametrically different roles as a means to draw girls to his Volkswagen Bug: he could be both the helpless next-door guy and the bossy police officer. As a helpless next-door guy, he would approach his victims with a briefcase and arm in a sling; other times, on crutches and a full cast on his leg. In *The Stranger Beside Me*, Ann Rule reproduces the statement of a sorority girl accosted by Bundy:

> "He was carrying a briefcase with a handle, and he kept dropping it. I offered to help him, but I told him I had to go into one of the houses for a few minutes, and, if he didn't mind waiting, I'd come out and help him get his stuff home."
> "And did you?"
> "No. I was inside longer than I thought, and he was gone when I came out." (2009, p. 84).

At Lake Sammamish, a popular picnic spot, he successfully abducted two girls in broad daylight. Some of the witnesses remembered eavesdropping a good-looking man with a slightly English accent named 'Ted' ask Janice Ott and, later, Denise Naslund for help to place his boat on the rooftop of his car: "Yes, he'd spoken of playing racquetball while he chatted with Janice Ott. His smile, his smile was something special. He spoke with excellent grammar; he'd sounded well-educated. Good. What else? Tan, he was tan. Good. What else?" (p. 109). On that day, both girls vanished, and two months later parts of their skeletons would be found on a hillside east of Seattle.

Disguised as a bossy police officer, it is reported that Ted Bundy once abducted (this time unsuccessfully) a woman at a shopping mall. A non-uniformed 'Officer Roseland' approached Carol DaRonch and informed her her car had been broken into: "He was well-dressed in a sports jacket, green slacks, and cordovan-colored patent leather shoes. He had wavy brown hair and mustache" (p. 137). The fake officer persuaded DaRonch to accompany him to her car to check if anything had been stolen. As she glanced around inside the vehicle and concluded nothing was missing, Bundy insisted that they should go to the headquarters to sign a complaint anyway. In the car, the girl realized 'Officer Roseland' was driving in the

opposite direction of the police department, so she tried to jump out of the car. Bundy pulled over, produced a gun and threatened to kill her, but she kicked at his genitals and managed to flee.

About one year after this attack, Ted Bundy was arrested. Substantial evidence pointed to him as the perpetrator of terrifying serial killings. Not only had his ex-girlfriend turned him in, but Carol DaRonch had also identified him in a police line-up. What is more, bloodstains on DaRonch's clothes matched Bundy's blood type, credit card receipts proved he had been near the same places the young women had disappeared, and finally telling tools (handcuffs, rope, a crowbar, an ice pick, and a pantyhose mask) had been found in his VW Bug. Collin Wilson reminds us that, despite the evidence, the hardest part was to make people (and particularly the jury during the trials) believe that the all-American Bundy, the visual appeal of virtue, was in reality an all-vicious kidnapper, rapist and killer, who committed his murders for his own hideous sake: "The central objection to it became apparent as soon as Bundy walked into court. He looked so obviously decent and clean-cut that most people felt that there must be a mistake". (WILSON, 2007, p. 137-8).

While discussing Ted Bundy's psychological issues, Collin Wilson mentions what is possibly one of the cleverest ruses ever done against a multiple killer. In 1979, Bundy, then an inmate in Florida State Prison, wrote to journalists Stephen G. Michaud and Hugh Aynesworth, telling them he was willing to be interviewed. Bundy hoped to turn his words into a book so that he could prove he was innocent. Nonetheless, far from wanting to tell what truly happened, Bundy lied, sidestepped, hedged, got vague and equivocal in the interview sessions. Based on the journalists' standpoint, Wilson compares Bundy's behavior to a little boy who, in the face of plentiful evidence to the contrary, still refuses to accept any blame[43]. To circumvent this childish behavior and get a confession, Michaud suggests that Bundy speculated on the nature of the criminal who would have done what he had been convicted of:

> SM: You've told us some of what you know. What you could tell us, though, is what sort of person you think might have committed the crimes. Assuming it was a single person, he must have a personality and motives that you could infer from the evidence – and from your own background in psychology (Ted had an undergraduate degree in psychology from the University of Washington) (MICHAUD & AYNESWORTH, 2019, p. 54)

[43] This comparison is corroborated by Stephen Michaud's interview to Noel Ransome "Meet the Journalist Who Interviewed Ted Bundy for Months", published on February 6th, 2019. The interview can be read at https://www.vice.com/en_asia/article/59x3d3/ted-bundy-stephen-michaud-interviews . Last accessed on January 19th, 2021.

This third-person approach is proudly embraced by the killer. The next days he talks extensively and minutely into the tape recorder about this 'person'. To date, this interview has been a robust testament of Bundy's life as a multiple killer. The upshot of his psychological issues is that Bundy emerges as disclosing a Jekyll-and-Hyde personality; the third-person approach served as the elixir to split him in half: "Soon Michaud became aware that there were, in effect, two 'Teds' – the analytical human being, and an entity inside him that Michaud came to call the 'hunchback', the Mr Hyde alter ego" (WILSON, 2007, 142). In Bundy, there were the virtues of a doctor Jekyll and the vices of a killer Hyde coexisting side by side.

2.1.3 I Am Not a Monster

For those familiar with the particulars about Ted Bundy's biography, it is known that he fought for his life until the last minute. He pleaded not guilty, escaped cleverly from prison twice, and filed appeals for almost a decade to avoid the death penalty. In the end, he directly confessed having murdered more than thirty women. But, in his last interview the day before his execution in 1989, Bundy placed the blame for his atrocities on an addiction to violent pornography:

> Ha … (laugh) There is … absolutely … no way … to describe… First … the brutal … urge to do that kind of thing … and then … what happens is once it is more or less satisfied, and, receded you might say, or spent, like that sense, that kind of energy … at a level receded… and basically I became myself again. And I want people to understand this too … I'm not saying this [inaudible], it is important that people understand this: that basically, I was a normal person. Uh … I wasn't some guy hanging out in bars, or a bum. I wasn't a pervert in the sense that, you know, people look at somebody and say, "I know there's something wrong with him" and just tell! … I was essentially a normal person. I had good friends, I … led a normal life, except for this … one … small, but very potent and very destructive segment of it that I kept very secret and very close to myself, and didn't let anybody know about it. And part of the shocking horror for my dear friends and family when, years ago when I was first arrested was … there was no clue! They looked at me, and they looked at the, you know, the average American boy, and I … I mean, I wasn't perfect … I was okay, okay? I was… the basic humanity and basic spirit that God gave me was intact and … unfortunately became overwhelmed at times … and people need to recognize … that it's not some kind of … Those of us who are … who have been … so … much influenced by … violence … in the media, in particular, pornographic violence, are not some kinds of inherent monsters. We are your sons and we are your husbands and … we grew up in regular families, and pornography can reach in and snatch a kid out of any house today… it snatched me out of my … it snatched me out of my home twenty-thirty years ago. And as diligent as my parents were … and they were diligent in protecting their children …

> and as good a Christian home as we had, and we had a wonderful Christian home … There's no protection against the kinds of influences that there are loose in the society that tolerates … [44].

This interview was carried out by Reverend James Dobson, an influential conservative psychologist then engaged in a public anti-porn crusade. Dobson was soon accused by criminologists of being too biased, and the public of being too naïve for swallowing a serial killer's lines[45] on his 'deathbed'. All in all, what is worth emphasizing about this last interview is that blaming pornography had ultimately given Bundy the chance to remove the Hyde-persona out of his self and move it into somewhere else. Bundy was still trying to hold onto life, so he needed to convince (whoever inclined to empathetically buy his rationalization) he was only the means to violence, not its cause.

It is equally worth emphasizing that Bundy's maneuver to remove Mr. Hyde seems to be his last-ditch attempt to cut off any association with a monster. He openly claimed he was not a monster because he probably knew that, when it comes to multiple killers, this word (as much as its derivations, such as 'monstrous' and 'monstrosity') is commonly used to qualify, and to excoriate openly, criminals like him. There are numerous examples of this association, be it titles of newspaper articles[46], killers' nicknames (such as 'The Monster of Florence' or 'The Monster of the Andes'), killers nicknaming themselves (such as serial killer David Berkowitz signing his letter as 'Mr. Monster'), or books about the matter, such as former FBI agent Robert Ressler's *Whoever Fights Monsters* (1993) and *I Have Lived in the Monster* (1997) – not to mention Peter Vronsky's *Serial Killers: the method and madness of monsters* (2004), the movie *Monster* (2003), based on female serial killer Aileen Wuornos, and novels, such as Dan Wells's *Mr. Monster* (2010).

Likewise, fictional characters also utilize this word to describe this kind of killers. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Jack Crawford instructs Clarice Starling to avoid giving Hannibal Lecter any personal information. Crawford reminds her that Lecter gutted another agent to near-death with a linoleum knife, and succinctly qualifies the psychiatrist killer: "I know he's

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[44] This putative official transcript can be found at https://serialkillersinfo.com/documents/ted-bundy-final-interview-transcript/ . There is also a Youtube video of his interview, under the title "Ted Bundy full final interview from 23rd January 1989 + Interview with Dr. James Dobson" at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08dpnn0cd10 . Last accessed on January 19th, 2021.

[45] Dr. William Wilbanks's article "Expert Warns: Don't Swallow Bundy's Lines" can be read here: https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1989-02-05-8901070504-story.html . Last accessed on January 19th, 2021.

[46] For instance, an article from *The Washington Post* presents this title: 'Green Sleeper' serial killer sentenced to death for 'monstrous crimes'. Link to the news: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/08/10/grim-sleeper-serial-killer-sentenced-to-death-for-monstrous-crimes/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.61f41b5cca72. Last accessed on January 19th, 2021.

a monster. Beyond that, nobody can say for sure" (HARRIS, 1991, p. 6). In *American Psycho*, Patrick Bateman, the yuppie serial murderer, labels himself as the "monster of reality" (ELLIS, 2006, p. 304) while torturing the escort girls Torri and Tiffany. Although Lecter and Bateman are qualified as monsters, these entities have been traditionally linked to extraordinary, supernatural beings. Mass killers, spree killers, and serial killers contrariwise are real threats of our real world. So, what do journalists, criminologists, moviemakers, and writers mean when they call a multiple killer a monster?

2.2 **The Essence of Monsters**

In the novel *Exquisite Corpse*, serial killer protagonist Andrew Compton complains about being called a monster:

> Some may think killing is easy for men like me, that it is a thing we murderers do as casually and callously as brushing our teeth. Hedonists see us as grotesque cult heroes performing mutilations for kicks. Moralists will not even grant us a position in the human race, can only rationalize our existence by calling us monsters. But monster is a medical term, describing a freak too grossly deformed to belong anywhere but the grave. Murderers, skilled at belonging everywhere, seed the world. (BRITE, 1997, p. 70)

Not only does Compton's remark substantiate the common qualification of multiple killers as monsters, but it also calls to mind that the word has been linked to abnormality. In the excerpt above, the protagonist highlights that 'monster' is a medical term which defines a deformed freak. In fact, the medical term is teratology, the study of anomalous formations of the body and deviations from a normal type of organism, as the Greek *teras* stands for 'abnormal' or 'different from standard'. In sum, the essence of monsters is abnormality.

Any light we shed on the nature of monsters[47] should also concern alterity, a word defined as "the state of being other or different; diversity, otherness" (ASHCROFT et al., 1998, p. 11). This definition calls our attention to the fact that our identity is shaped comparatively, based on deictic grounds: "The existence of others is crucial in defining what is 'normal' and in locating one's own place in the world" (p. 169). There is only an 'I' in comparison to a 'you'; and there is only a 'we' in comparison to a 'they'. Alterity comes into play to help us recognize how the difference is closely and inevitably related to monsters, and

[47] Part of this approach to monsters comes from my article "Medo e Monstruosidades". In: *Poéticas do Mal: a literatura do medo no Brasil (1840-1920).* Julio França (editor), 1st edition, July 2017, pp. 201-24.

why abnormality essentially defines them. For deviating from the norm, monsters incorporate differences, deformities, and aberrations. For the same reason, we believe that monstrosity is in the other, never in us:

> "The monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us. In its function as dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond – of all the loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct but originate Within" (COHEN, 1996, p. 7).

We can trace the connection between monsters and abnormality as far as to ancient Greece. In Aristotle's *De Generatione Animalium* (possibly the oldest scientific treatise about monsters) abnormal features play a key role. In this study on living beings, Aristotle examines differences and similarities between parents and offspring. At a certain point of his treatise, he wonders why some newly-born children look more like animals than like humans, condition known as monstrosity, according to the philosopher. I want to say that the conclusions reached by Aristotle on that particular issue is irrelevant for my purposes. What matters is the fact that this ancient study tells us what monsters are all about: both a deformity and a blend of the categories of humans and animals (ARISTOTLE, 1984, 769b11-769b21).

This Aristotelian treatise, whose goal was nothing but providing a description of the fauna as he knew it, is important because it unveils that, in the Classical period, abnormality was already the essence of monstrosity. Any offspring possessing characteristics other than those carried by their parents would be taken as different, anomalous and unnatural. According to Aristotle, monstrosity manifests itself through the violation of the natural codes in typical operations (770a30-770b27). Living beings transgressing such typicalities, be it humans, animals or plants, should be labeled monsters. On the other hand, the violation could be taken as normal as long as it occurred again and again.

Similarly to Aristotle's treatise, the collections of Roman natural philosopher Caius Plinius Secundus, or Pliny the Elder, also speculates over monsters in the old times. Written in 77 CE, *Naturalis Historia*, a grandiose encyclopedia of the natural world, catalogs fields of study as broadly as astronomy, meteorology, geography, mineralogy, botany, and zoology. When confronted with Aristotle, Pliny the Elder presents less science and more enthusiasm to select samples of "the wonderful forms of nations" (Book VII, p. 175). As a consequence, he mingles true and false events together. It is his enthusiastic behavior, however, that gives a clue to the depiction of monsters by the classical thinkers.

The reports Pliny gathers describe the diversity of human beings "both prodigious and incredible" (p. 175). By commenting on language, for example, he notes that "the speech of

so many nations; so many tongues; so much variety of utterance, that a foreigner seems to be something different from a man" (p. 176). Furthermore, by describing these various peoples, Pliny asserts that (i) the Scythians (nomads originally of Iranian stock) feed on human flesh; (ii) there are cyclopes and man-eating giants in Sicily and Italy; that the Arimaspi (a people located near Scythian lands) have one eye in the middle of their forehead; (iii) the Abarimons (inhabitants of the Himalayan valleys), though they can run swiftly, have their feet facing backwards; and also (iv) some Albanians grow greyish hair since childhood and have blueish-grey eyes which are more effective at nighttime than daytime. This long list (which could be even longer) of "nations of such monsters" (p. 177) corroborates the essence of the monstrous instance. It indicates that abnormality was the feature which stood out whenever classical philosophers came to grasp the core of the monster.

Another important ancient text coping with monster is Saint Augustine's *The City of God*. It is Augustine's effort to answer critical questions of Christian theology, such as the original sin, the suffering of the righteous and the existence of evil. At a certain point, Augustine posits that monstrosity is a natural occurrence, for it is in accordance with God's will. Addressing his reply to pagans who stated that the human body was unable to endure the hellfire eternally, Augustine answers that the human body was immortal before the original sin. This argument leads the theologian to claim that, if the body substance has been modified before, it is reasonable to believe that it can be modified once again. At God's will, the body would gain its immortality back, so it can bear endless punishments in Hell:

> So then, God can create what He will, so can He change the nature of what He has created at His good pleasure. And hence is the multitude of monsters, visions, portents, and prodigies, for the particular relation whereof here is no place. They are called monsters, from *monstro*, 'to shew', because they betoken somewhat: and portents and prodigies from *portend* and *porrò dico*, to presage and foretell somewhat to ensue. […] But we ought to gather this from all those monsters and prodigies that happen or are said to happen against nature. […], that they all do tell us this, that God will do with the bodies of the dead, according to His promise, no difficulty, no law of nature can or shall prohibit Him. (AUGUSTINE, 1909, p. 303, italics in original)

Augustine's claim is certainly grounded on the book of Psalms. The creation of a variety of living beings, including monsters, can be found there. The biblical creature Leviathan (illustrated by William Blake as a giant sea serpent), for instance, is told to be God's creation:

> O LORD, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the Earth is full of Thy riches.

> [So is] this great and wide the sea, wherein [are] things creeping
> Innumerable, both small and great beasts.
> There go the ships: [there is] that Leviathan, [whom] Thou
> hast made to play therein. (PSALMS 104:24-26)

In the words of king David, Leviathan is nothing but a playful living thing. Nonetheless, in the previous book, God offers Job a different kind of monster. In order to make sure of his omnipotence, God praises his creation by describing it as a horrifying beast:

> Who can open the doors of his face? His teeth [are] terrible round about. {His] scale [are his] pride, shut up together [as with] a close seal. […] Out of his mouth go burning lamps, [and] sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as [out] of a seething pot or cauldron […]". (JOB 41:14-20)

God goes on describing Leviathan: it is fearless, has a heart as hard as a stone, sneezes shining lights, breathes kindled coals, and throws flames out of its mouth. Although this description is intimidating, the creature is still celestial. However, the Holy Bible is not straightforward when it comes to monsters: sometimes they are god-made, other times they are devilish beasts of Satan. This Bible's controversy is evidenced when the two testaments are confronted. In the Old Testament, Leviathan is a heavenly creation. But, in the apocalyptic Book of Revelation, this monster is detached away from God altogether, becoming a threat to all things as we know them:

> And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon [Leviathan[48]], having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
> And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.
> […]
> And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
> And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.
> And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (BOOK OF REVELATION 12:3-9)

There is no other place in the Bible where monsters are so pervasive. The prophecies are full of monstrous beings: lion-headed horses, human-faced grasshoppers, beasts having numerous heads and horns, and so on. Monsters here are not only abnormal, but also evil. In this apocalyptic scenario, monsters curse, blaspheme, destroy, and shed blood. Their actions are always vicious, resulting in horror and death upon the world. For this reason, the red

[48] For translating the koine Greek *drakon*, the words 'Leviathan' and 'dragon' (and also 'sea monster') are taken as synonyms (see BEAL, 2002, p. 79-80).

dragon/Leviathan could only be a creature belonging to Satan, the quintessential personification of evil. Leviathan, as a consequence, has its association to a god-made creature broken. As the apotheosis of unconditional good, God could never allow such beast to come along by his side. Saint Augustine's claim in favor of monsters (supported by a playful Leviathan in Psalms) turned to be inadequate after those dreadful revelations about the end times, the end times precipitated undoubtedly by evil monsters.

In all likelihood, The Book of Revelations put into question Augustine's effort to prove that every monster should be presumed a godly creature. It confirms that at least part of the biblical teratology, the apocalyptic branch, is imbued with ungodly attributions. It must be stressed that, circa fourteenth century, "abnormal or prodigious animals were regarded as signs or omens of impending evil[49]". Some monsters, stripped of their celestial feature, dichotomically acquired a whole new essence, viz., a devilish and an evil one. Abnormality, the violation of natural codes, started to correspond also to communing with Satan, so the equation: abnormality + evil = monster.

2.2.1 Horror Monsters

It seems that the biblical revelations to John made an important contribution to turn monsters into evil abnormalities. No wonder fiction has been creating countless of these creatures – vampires, werewolves, witches, ghosts, to name but a few, are the materialization of that equation. This type of monsters will mean horror and, for being a threat to life, will then arouse a corresponding affect. One of the important scholars who amalgamate abnormality and evil is art philosopher Noel Carroll. In *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of Heart* (1990), he strives to define the horror genre, and in so doing he also explains what a monster, or to put it more specifically, what a horror monster is.

[49] The second half of the entry on the online etymological dictionary is: "Abnormal or prodigious animals were regarded as signs or omens of impending evil. Extended by late 14c. to fabulous animals composed of parts of creatures (centaur, griffin, etc.). Meaning 'animal of vast size' is from 1520s; sense of 'person of inhuman cruelty or wickedness, person regarded with horror because of moral deformity' is from 1550s. As an adjective, 'of extraordinary size', from 1837. In Old English, the monster Grendel was an *aglæca*, a word related to *aglæc* 'calamity, terror, distress, oppression'. ***Monster movie*** **'**movie featuring a monster as a leading element', is by 1958 (*monster film* is from 1941). Link to the entry: https://www.etymonline.com/word/monster . Last accessed on January 19th, 2021.

Noel Carroll follows in other theoreticians' footsteps by claiming that the horror is a modern genre whose earliest meaningful source was Horace Walpole's gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1765). Based on Montague Summers's fourfold scheme, Carroll brings out the gradients of gothic: historical, equivocal, natural/explained, and supernatural. Then, he makes clear that the supernatural gothic is "of great importance for the evolution of the horror genre proper […] in which the existence and cruel operation of unnatural forces are asserted graphically" (p. 4). It is for this reason that he contends that Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1797) foreshadows what the horror genre was about to become later. For Carroll, more than an enormous helmet crushing a prince to death, it was the existence of a demon, and the cruel operation of an impalement of a priest, which drew the outlines of the genre.

Be it in painting, sculpture, drama, moving pictures, or literature, the horror genre is defined primarily by the emotional effects it aims at arousing in audiences. Not surprisingly, Carroll lets us know that he follows Aristotle's lead, though he does not expect to be as authoritative as the ancient philosopher is in his *Poetics*. If Aristotle could offer the grounds for tragedy in relation to the catharsis of pity and fear, Carroll believes he can similarly offer a significant account of the horror genre concerning an emotional effect he labels 'art-horror'. This effect has to do with a particular emotion artistically excited, an emotion caused by art forms, all of which presenting some sort of supernatural manifestation or non-explainable scientific incident. In order to help us grasp what he means by art-horror, Carroll provides a list of examples ranging from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Stephen King's *Pet Sematary* to Andrew Lloyd Weber's *Phantom of the Opera*, George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, to H. R. Giger's paintings. He emphasizes that this emotional effect is awaken when the audience is in touch with this type of works of art.

For my purposes, the importance of such a poetics lies in its definition of the monster. As Carroll himself puts it, art-horror is an emotional effect 'entity-based': "my definition of horror involves essential reference to an entity, a monster, which then serves as the particular object of the emotion of art-horror" (p. 41). In other words, the horror genre is an artistic category grounded in the effect of horror aroused by the presence of a monster. Therefore, in the examples given above, Frankenstein, Mr. Hyde, the resurrected family, the Opera Ghost, the zombies, and Giger's aliens are the objects of the emotion of art-horror. At bottom, the horror monster is the driving force of the genre, and it is so because, for Carroll, a horror monster must be composed of three ingredients: abnormality, lethality, and impurity.

Carroll goes as far as to explain that the word 'monster' stands for "any being not believed to exist now according to contemporary science" (p. 27). In this sense, he says that dinosaurs (because they no longer exist) and nonhuman visitors from outer space (because they might exist) are to be regarded as monsters for they violate the metaphysical norms as we know them. In Carroll's perspective, however, this sense is too broad to be applied to what he contends the horror monster is. That is why he confronts fairy tales with horror tales. In fairy tales, monsters are not abnormal. In fact, they are creatures regarded by other characters as belonging naturally to that fantastic storyworld. In horror tales, on the other hand, the monster is taken as abnormal by characters who interact with it, not at all belonging to the reality-based storyworld. In the universe of fairytales, these monsters are normalized by the cosmogenesis which accommodates them. More importantly, their very presence is not taken as a violation of any physical norm. Monsters of the horror genre, contrariwise, violate the fictional universe in which they appear. They are intruders, rule-breakers of the cosmology of the story, being understood as exceptional forces, or in Carroll's own words, as extraordinary characters:

> The monsters of horror, however, breach the norms of ontological propriety presumed by the positive human characters in the story. That is, in examples of horror, it would appear that the monster is an extraordinary character in an ordinary world, whereas in fairy tales and the like the monster is an ordinary creature in an extraordinary world. And the extraordinariness of that world – its distance from our own – is often signaled by formulas such as 'once upon a time' (p. 16).

In fairytales, the monster is part of the fantastic setting. Consequently, its existence is not regarded as a transgression of any given norm. Fairytale monsters may be dangerous, threatening, and frightening, but they do not disturb the universe they occupy. The horror genre, in turn, makes use of monsters which have the capacity to throw the cosmological norms into disarray, and the human character's reaction to the presence of the monster is what attests to this capacity:

> What appears to demarcate the horror story from mere stories with monsters, such as myths, is the attitude of characters in the story to the monsters they encounter. In works of horror, the humans regard the monsters they meet as abnormal, as disturbances of the natural order (p. 16).

But concerning the emotion of art-horror, it is not enough to define monsters as non-explainable creatures. Even though they are abnormal, some monster may be threatening without being horrifying whereas others may be neither threatening nor horrifying. To fall under the category of horror, a monster must be portrayed as a physical (perhaps moral and

social as well, Carroll adds) threat to life. Then, horror monsters are threatening because, according to Carroll, the human characters in the story evaluate them as such. Because those monsters are abnormal entities, the characters assume they are lethal.

Like the apocalyptic creatures of the Book of Revelation, monsters of the horror genre embody evil. But their threat stems from yet another element Carroll adds to their conceptual design: impurity. Taking from the Mary Douglas's anthropological study on pollution[50] (and more specifically on her interpretation of the abominations of Leviticus), Carroll concludes that "[…] monsters are not only physically threatening; they are cognitively threatening. They are threats to common knowledge" (p. 34). His conclusion is based on the fact that interstitial beings, such as ghosts, werewolves, cyborgs and haunted houses, are impure because they violate culturally established parameters as they join together mutually opposed categories: ghosts are, at once, dead and alive; werewolves are, at once, human and animal; cyborgs are, at once, human and machine; and haunted houses are, at once, inanimate and animate. If taken as a biological monster, Mr. Hyde, for example, is impure for fusing a man and an ape-like creature into one. When monsters are described in a horror story, we many times come across terms such as "filth, decay, deterioration, slime and so on" (p. 22) uttered by the narrator and/or the human characters. These terms ratify the monster's contradictory nature, a nature able to be made of categories that should have remained apart from one another. In the presence of the horror monster, therefore, disgust and repulse come along with the feeling of horror, forcing the victims to avoid touching or being touched by the creature. As a response, the human characters often try to protect themselves from the monster's touch: they tremble, crouch down, flinch back, and run away. The physical contact with the monster seems to imply a hazardous outcome, something that ultimately would cause the victim's death:

> Just before the monster is visualized to the audience, we often see the characters shudder in disbelief, responding to this or that violation of nature. Their faces contort; often their noses wrinkle and their upper lip curls as if confronted by something noxious. They freeze in a moment of recoil, transfixed, sometimes paralyzed. They start backwards in a reflex of avoidance. Their hands may be drawn toward their bodies in an act of protection but also of revulsion and disgust. Along with fear of severe physical harm, there is an evident aversion to making physical contact with the monster. Both fear and disgust are etched on the characters' features. (p. 22-3)

[50] DOUGLAS, Mary. *Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2001 (originally published in 1966).

The presence of the horror monster causes certain emotional responses in the human character: shudder, scream, paralysis, revulsion or the like. Carroll then says that the audience's response is supposed to ideally mirror those of the characters. As he expects to join together the philosophy of art and the philosophy of mind, Carroll claims that the monster triggers a horrified reaction in the audience, and then adds that both emotions – the characters' and the audience's – should be running along. In the philosopher's standpoint, his so-called mirroring-effect is crucial for two reasons: (i) only few genres can be characterized by a close relationship between the emotional state of characters and the audience's response; and (ii) it gives us the chance to define art-horror objectively (instead of doing so based on our subjective responses), by grounding our assumptions upon the way human characters react to the presence of monsters in horror narratives.

Such an entity-based theory has the added advantage of moving away from idiosyncratic receptions of a genre, especially the one marked by emotional effects. And yet, it has been objected strenuously from the start for having too restricted boundaries. A theory of horror whose monster is defined as non-explainable leaves out virtually all the psycho stories. These narratives present characters popularly regarded as monstrous as the supernatural or otherworldly beings. Concerning psychos, Carroll admits that Norman Bates is a monster (or at least, Bates is on the verge of being one), but he does so because he sees this killer as impure. Bates is Nor-man, that is, neither man nor woman, or rather the merger of these two genders: "He is son and mother. He is of the living and the dead. He is both victim and victimizer. He is two persons in one. He is abnormal, that is, because he is interstitial" (p. 39). Though Bates is free from any biological and/or supernatural trait, Carroll still spots impurity in his psychological derangement. Surely threatening for being a serial killer, Bates becomes a monster for carrying opposed categories within.

2.2.1.1 An Objection to Horror Monsters

Once we encompass Carroll's definition as it is, no other multiple killer but Norman Bates can fall under the category of horror monster. Carroll says that he roots his notion in the ordinary language (p. 13), in an idea of horror which has been thought of and used with a great deal of consensus. As shown before, monster and multiple killers have been frequently interwoven in the media, books and everyday speech. In ordinary language, multicide also is

linked to the monstrous phenomenon. However, Carroll does not qualify, for instance, Hannibal Lecter as a monster.

A philosopher who objects to this restriction is Berys Gaut, who insists that psycho stories are examples of horror. Gaut maintains that the horror genre is not necessarily populated with impossible monsters all the time. To this, Carroll replies that psycho stories are understood as horror because they are science fictions of the mind, not of the body (CARROLL, 1995, p. 68). Bates, Lecter and the like are ultimately horrifying for being portrayed as fanciful or mythological beings: they are not the types of psychos we usually find in real life. These murderers, Carroll puts it, are extrapolations of actual multiple killers, so they become as impossible as supernatural or otherworldly monsters. Gaut responds in turn that a portrayal of fictional killers as an extrapolation of real ones is not a guarantor of their impossibility:

> "But saying that psychotics in films are fictional extrapolations of real psychotics doesn't show them to be impossible beings, any more than saying that some of D. H. Lawrence's characters are fictional extrapolations of his acquaintances shows them to be impossible; and I can remark of a real person that he has a Mephistopheles-like character without rendering him thereby into a literal monster" (GAUT, 1995, p. 284).

If we ever compare, say, Jeffrey Dahmer to, say, Norman Bates, it is not surprising to take the former as more horrific for his cannibalistic rampage than the latter for his psychotic behavior (even if we recollect the opening dialogue, in Robert Bloch's novel, between Bates and his dead mother). Also, the criminal biography of Ed Gein, who inspired Bloch to create his killer villain, is more horrific than his fictional counterpart. As already said in chapter 1, Gein was a body snatcher who furnished his house with human heads, covered his furniture with human skin, and sewed clothes with human flesh. What Gaut fundamentally means is that extrapolated psycho characters may be depicting real multiple killers very closely. Some beings, actual or fictional, can affect us without being fanciful or mythological – in sum, without being impossible. So, in order to include multiple killers under the category of monsters, a definition of horror monsters based on entities should concede to be also based on events.

Restricted all along to an extraordinary background, the nature of horror monsters as Carroll puts it seems too narrow to embrace the changes of teratology. Not only Berys Gaut, but also Fred Botting and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argue, overtly or covertly, that a solely entity-based concept of horror monsters (bound by biological and/or supernatural principles) disregards the myriad of sources of fear with which we struggle in the world. Just as the

gothic setting has evolved from haunted castles and secret chambers to the maze of city streets and violence at homely premises, the monster has also evolved from a supernatural to a natural being, in narratives of murders, psychopaths and multicides. I want to bring alterity to the fore once again to make it clear that the monster phenomenon is far reaching. If we ever take the other into deep consideration, moving closer and closer to moral deviations to debate the essence of monsters, a broader perspective come into play, a perspective with, among other fields, historical, cultural, psychological, and sociological significance.

2.2.1.2 Beyond Horror Monsters

In his effort to make a stand for an ampler view on Gothic, Fred Botting relies on the idea of excess to point out that such a genre retains less synchronic and more diachronic features. In other words, the gothic narrative, as it devotes full attention to negative elements, is to find these elements developed and evolved through time and space – for Botting, Gothic is a transhistorical and transcultural genre. He defines gothic excess as the act of being fascinated with transgression and anxiety to the point of crossing strict and long-established boundaries. Thus, the gothic narrative tends to be obsessed with themes, practices, situations and objects which are built upon what is negative, irrational, fantastic, immoral, threatening and violent.

Its capacity to develop and evolve through time and space has made Gothic powerful enough to replace *loci* and forms of threat. In the eighteenth century, the supreme *locus horribilis* was the castle: gloomy, bleak, labyrinthine, and full of hidden passageways. The castle of Otranto, the prime site of earliest gothic fictions, is archetypally portrayed as having secret chambers, cellars and hallways: “As these thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, she recollected a subterraneous passage which led from the vaults of the castle to the church of St. Nicholas” (WALPOLE, 2007, p. 31). Furthermore, the castle symbolized a character’s neglected condition after having lived plentifully and prosperously. In the nineteenth century, the castle (albeit not completely) gave way to the old house, as gloomy and bleak as the castle had been. This house, usually run-down and located at secluded sites, held in its premises hidden rooms, devilish possessions, frightening children, family vendettas, and a multitude of unresolved past issues which would return to the present. The house of Usher, where a mysterious brother-sister relationship takes place, illustrates quintessentially this *locus*:

> I looked upon the scene before me – upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain – upon the bleak walls – upon the vacant eye-like windows – upon a few rank sedges – and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees – with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium – the bitter lapse into everyday life – the hideous dropping off of the veil. (POE, 2003, p. 90)

To date, the old house continues to live through. But unlike the castle, its diachronic feature has allowed it to slip through the centuries, so being the *locus horribilis* of several works. Nonetheless, the later gothic narrative has been adding up other sites to its stories. The labyrinthine streets of a modern city, the dark alleys of a metropolis, and the small town with its mysterious townspeople are some of the horrible places we can find in gothic narratives nowadays:

> "Gothic landscapes are desolate, alienating and full of menace. In the eighteenth century they were wild and mountainous locations. Later the modern city combined the natural and architectural components of Gothic grandeur and wildness, its dark, labyrinthine streets suggesting the violence and menace of Gothic castle and forest" (BOTTING, 1996, p. 2).

Notwithstanding the replacements of the *locus horribilis* (namely, the gloomy castles of the early days of Gothic being transmogrified into the dreary city paths and residences of its current days), there are some characteristics which have survived throughout; all of them, nonetheless, coming down to negative traits. While comparing European (mainly British) to American landscapes, Fred Botting asserts that the European Gothic tradition (its roguish aristocrats and fake chivalric codes as well as its ruined castles and decayed abbeys) would serve the United States awfully as tools to give rise to the affect of fear, for being too far removed from their history and geography. In order to keep this effect, American gothic was to be coping with familiar issues and sites, that is to say, to deal less with supernatural occurrences and more with realistic (though equally strange) incidents:

> Significant differences appear in the use of Gothic images in writing that was predominantly realist. Hackneyed Gothic machinery was abandoned, but contrasts of light and dark, good and evil, were inflected in texts in which the mysteries of the mind or of family pasts were the central interest: the human and social world completely replaced the grand Gothic terrors of a supernatural kind. In the American context a different geography and history were available to writers: romantic adventures could take place in the wilds of an uncharted continent or horrors could be found in the Puritan witch trials of Salem in the seventeenth century. (p. 114)

The changes of forms of threat have been similarly made evident historically and culturally, especially by the various characters employed by gothic narratives. The

replacements of menace and violence manifested by the *locus horribilis* can also be found in protagonists and antagonists of the gothic. In this sense, it is unsurprising that the sources of fear thematized in American texts differ from the ones in British texts. As discussed by Polish literary critic Agnieszka Monnet (2016), by the 1790s, the United States, especially due to its religious, political and geographical landscape, was breaking ground on new horror themes that would later be the country's literary hallmarks: "These included the frontier and its native inhabitants, Puritanism and its tendency towards religious excess and the individual in relation to the larger body politic" (p. 53). Based on American cultural historian Karen Halttunen, Monnet writes that the birth of the American horror takes place by the time religion could no longer explain crime, and above all, murder. Religious narratives considered evil an inevitable fact of the human nature, a behavior related to a fallen existence on Earth. Similarly, the secular perspective of the Enlightenment and the newly-established Romanticism were ineffective, for they could not see violent crimes as far as mysterious aberrations. The lack of a proper explanation, Monnet asserts, resulted in a fascination with many sorts of violent literature, from biographies of killers to graphic bodily mutilations.

To give but one example of this fascination with horror, we can take the captivity narratives. These narratives are first-hand accounts of New England settlers who had been held captive by Native Americans. Captivity narratives bring alterity to the fore by clashing 'us', the English settlers, with 'them', the natives. The latter is here described as savage, inhuman and inherently cruel, being the one who scalps, mutilates and kills just for the sake of it. In many of these narratives, the subtitles on the cover are used as a summary of the horror the pages inside uncover. For instance, *French and Indian Cruelty: Exemplified in the Life of and Various Vicissitudes of Fortune, of Peter Williamson, a Disbanded Soldier*, published in 1758, promises to detail the manner, customs and dresses "of the savages" as well as "of their scalping, burning, and other barbarities". Moreover, *A Plain Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Remarkable Deliverance of Thomas Brown of Charlestown, in New England*, published in 1760, lets us know, in its subtitle, that not only was Thomas Brown captured and taken in custody for three years by Native Americans, but also that he personally saw, like Peter Williamson, many atrocities put in practice by his captors. In these narratives, the horror emerges not only from the depiction of the natives, but also from the description of the killings:

> How he was taken Captive by the Indians and carried to Canada, and from thence to the Mississippi; where he lived about a Year, and was again sent to Canada, During all which Time he was not only in Constant Peril of his own Life; but had the

> Mortification of being an Eye-Witness of divers Tortures and Shocking Cruelties, that were practised by the Indians on several English Prisoners; one of whom he saw burnt to Death, another tied to a Tree and his Entrails drawn out, &c &c.

Probably the most famous captivity account (often cited in essays and newspaper items[51]) is *A Narrative of Captivity, Sufferings and Removes of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, published in 1682 and written by Mary Rowlandson herself. After her village is attacked by the Narragansetts, she is abducted and taken along with them to be later traded for money. In the long run, Rowlandson comes to realize that there is some kindness in some of the natives' acts: "Sometimes I met with favors, and sometimes with nothing but frowns" (ROWLANDSON, 2004, p. 37). Nevertheless, she turns her captors into horror monsters by describing them all along with gothic qualities: 'bloody heathen', 'murderous wretches', 'ravenous beasts', 'barbarous creatures', and 'inhumane creatures'. Besides, she sees the Narragansetts as pejoratively black, as in 'as black as the devil', 'black faces', and 'black creatures in the night'. In the first pages of her account, the attack on the village is portrayed as deeply shocking, certainly the gruesomest scenes of the narrative. The graphic descriptions of houses and barns on fire, villagers being shot down and knocked to death, children and mother crying, people soaked in blood, and "Indians gaping before us with their guns, spears, and hatchets to devour us" (p. 3) makes her captivity story the original illustration of the real fears of settlers in the fledgling US:

> There were five persons taken in one house; the father, and the mother and a sucking child, they knocked on the head; the other two they took and carried away alive. There were two others, who being out of their garrison upon some occasion were set upon; one was knocked on the head, the other escaped; another there was who running along was shot and wounded, and fell down; he begged of them his life, promising them money (as they told me) but they would not hearken to him but knocked him in head, and stripped him naked, and split open his bowels. (p. 2)

For the seventeenth-century settlers of the early US, horror meant being kidnapped, and possibly murdered, by Native Americans. Their source of fear was the monstrous other, the one who was neither white nor of British descent, the one who was close to the settlers geographically, and yet far removed from them culturally. For Mary Rowlandson, Native Americans were a real horror because they had set her village on fire, held her captive, killed her child, starved her to near-death, and threatened her life. What is more, Rowlandson's captivity narrative corroborates another perspective upon monster, namely, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's cultural standpoint in "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" (1996). In his essay, Cohen

[51] See, for instance, Elaine Showalter's "Dark Places" (2013), published in *The New York Times*. Link to the text: https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/09/books/review/tradition-of-captivity-narratives.html . Last accessed on January 19th, 2021.

proposes an interpretation of monsters which reaches biology and supernaturality as much as it goes beyond those elements. In reality, he grounds his theses on what he calls a new *modus legendi*: a method of reading cultures from the monsters they engender" (p. 3).

2.2.2 Cultural Monsters

According to Cohen, a monster culture involves an enterprise other than a theory of teratology. The seven postulates (as he names them) of his method are intended to be tools for examining the monsters a given society metaphorically spawns at a certain cultural moment. Apparently, these cultural moments have to do with a *zeitgeist*, in which the eruption of a monster is inextricably related to the fears, desires and anxieties of a time, a feeling and a place. To rephrase it, for Cohen, the many sources of fear have been producing as many monsters. That is why Cohen states in his first thesis that the monster's body is cultural: by the time the monster is read through culture, we realize it embodies the various concerns of a society.

In addition, Jeffrey Cohen claims that, by the time the monster is killed, it comes back (as the same creature in slightly different clothing) again and again until those current concerns give way to new ones. In his second thesis, Cohen makes use of the vampire to prove that the monster can assume new interpretations as long as it is "examined within the intricate matrix of relations (social, cultural, and literary-historical) that generates them" (p. 5). That being said, once we flesh out the monster's bones with the particular concerns of a group (in a broadest sense, Cohen might say), we may be able to learn better about a society. Vampires for instance symbolize different concerns to different cultures: (i) Sheridan Le Fanu's Carmilla (or Millarca, or Mircalla) explores the moral transgression of homosexual eroticism; (ii) Bram Stoker's Dracula personifies the menace of a foreigner who comes from afar; (iii) Nosferatu materializes the German anti-Semitic frenzy by having rats coming along with the monster to swarm over a town and spread diseases; and (iv) Anne Rice's Lestat brings back homosexual eroticism, this time, however, to be scrutinized against a postmodern scenario. Carmilla, for instance, is burned to ashes after having a stake driven fiercely to her heart. She is reduced to nothing in the end, as it is desired for a monstrous creature to end up. But the monster, argues Cohen, always escapes, moving from one story to another, dressing in different clothing, and so making new readings possible.

Like Noel Carroll, Cohen also reads monsters through the blend of categories. He does not go as far as labeling monsters impure, but, in his third thesis, he argues that the monster has the capacity to escape because it does not fall easily under any categories. That is, the monstrous body announces a calamity as it refuses to be caged within our contemporary classifications. Be it an impure creature or the harbinger of crisis (in Cohen's words), the monster is the one who tends to liminality, and consequently it challenges our reasoning:

> This refusal to participate in the classificatory "order of things" is true of monsters generally: they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions. (p. 6, quotes in original)

A definition of monster held under the banner of difference is perhaps the most suitable approach of a cultural standpoint. It is meaningful thus that the title of Cohen's fourth thesis metaphorically asserts that 'the monster dwells at the gates of difference'. I have averred, if we recall some arguments put forward paragraphs before, that an essential trait of the monster is its power to regulate our deictic normality: 'I' compares to 'you', 'we' compares to 'they', and so on. The more 'you' and 'they' deviate from the norms, the more abnormal – and thus monstrous – 'you' and 'they' will be. In this fourth thesis, it is emphasized that the representation of anterior cultures as monstrous legitimizes their extermination. As an example, Cohen mentions the US settlements: "In the United States, Native Americans were presented as unredeemable savages so that the powerful political machine of Manifest Destiny could push westward with disregard" (p. 8). The frontiersmen who fought the monstrous natives were taken as a heroic group – they became the true inhabitants of New England. J. Hector St. John de Crèvecouer's "What is an American" (1782), by explaining what Americans are, keep African slaves and indigenous people out of his diagnosis. For Crèvecouer, an American is a mix of races, more readily, European races; naturally, black people and Natives must be excluded. To take a literary example, in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), the Hurons, singled out mostly in the villain character Magua, are constantly portrayed as malignant and treacherous. Like Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative, the white characters in the novel rhetorically depict natives as monsters:

> 'Monster! Well dost thou deserve thy treacherous name', cried Cora, in an ungovernable burst of filial indignation. 'None but a fiend could meditate such a vengeance. But thou overratest thy power! You shall find it is, in truth, the heart of

> Munro you hold, and that it will defy your utmost malice!' (COOPER, 2005, p. 125-6)

Reading the monster upon cultural grounds opens up the debate to both its essence and its function. In light of culture, the monster is essentially made of fears of societies. What is more, it takes on new meanings, refuses systematic categorization, and embodies abnormality. But culture also shows the function of the monster. In his fifth thesis, Cohen points out that the monster draws the line at normality. In other words, monsters mark the boundaries of what is ordinary, possible or acceptable to a given society, so much so that anyone who ever tries to violate these limits chances to become a monstrous being. In the end, the monster warns of the need to conform to some normal behavior, to avoid transgression and respect the lines:

> Every monster is in this way a double narrative, two living stories: one that describes how the monster came to be and another, its testimony, detailing what cultural use the monster serves. The monster of prohibition exists to demarcate the bonds that hold together that system of relations we call culture, to call horrid attention to the borders that cannot – must not – be crossed (COHEN, 1996, p. 13)

As the token of transgression, the monster is repulsive. But for the same reason it becomes all the more attractive. A monstrous being is horrifying for violating the parameters of ordinariness; and yet, for being a violator, it allures those who desire (consciously or unconsciously) to transgress. In Cohen's sixth thesis, the monster is said to be a 'kind of desire' because it "can evoke potent escapist fantasies" (p. 17). This ability to provide a deviation from the norm sparks fascination as the monstrous being gives the chance to escape reality in order to step into forbidden sites. The location of these sites (or habitations of the monsters, according to Cohen) must be far enough to be exotic, to be comparatively unknown to those who happen to stroll in such lands. In fact, monsters generally come from distant territories, such as Transylvania, the woods, the deep sea, or the depths of the mind: "Their monsters serve as secondary bodies through which the possibilities of other genders, other sexual practices, and other social customs can be explored" (p. 18).

Indeed, all of those theses come down to an understanding of monsters as the product of human fears, with regard to a particular time, place, and group. If Botting takes the monster mostly diachronically, Cohen interprets it mostly synchronically. In his last thesis, Cohen maintains his *modus legend* by finally saying that the monster brings about human knowledge – its very birth, presence, bodily traits and function reveal how a society sees the world. Once we adopt such standpoint, we agree that the monster must be read beyond an

entity-based approach. I believe that, only by doing so, we are able to answer why journalists, criminologists, moviemakers and writers call multiple killers monsters. It seems to be less what these killers are and more what these killers do that causes us to qualify them as monstrous.

Entity-based monsters bear in their body the impurity which makes them horrifying whereas event-based ones may not present any telltale feature other than gruesome murders. In the presence of a multiple killer, we hardly ever realize the danger, unless this killer does (or tries to do) any harm. Mass murderers, for example, "cannot be predicted in advance and prevented, because too many young men fit the profile of the typical mass shooter, however statistically rare such incidents may be". (GOODE, 2016, p. 147) In other words, multiple killers cannot be spotted as easily as Carroll's horror monsters can. Such a difficulty, turn these murderers into unpredictable beings. Cohen's *modus legend* is useful here because, perhaps, we have been presently living at a cultural moment in which human unpredictability has become a powerful source of fear. The numerous homicides and ever-present overkill of MacDonald, Berkowitz, Gein, Dahmer, BTK, Smith and Hickock, Cunanan, Killer Petey, Mullin, Mrs. Puente, Bundy, and others aforementioned, are extremely shocking. But their crimes may be all the more shocking for our incapacity to see them coming. It is for being unpredictably gruesome that we may say multiple killers are monsters.

2.2.2.1 Multiple Killers as Moral Monsters

So far, I have counted on Fred Botting and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen to back me up on the historical and cultural levels, respectively. However, I want to briefly introduce this section with Sigmund Freud's psychological view on unpredictability in order to analyze multiple killers as human monsters. In the second part of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud initially debates the relationship between people and (or rather, human behavior towards) religion, that is, "what the common man understands by his religion" (FREUD, 1962, p. 21). His definition of religion stands for a system of doctrine which promises to explain to us, once and for all, the enigmas of the world as well as guarantees that there is a watchfully transcendental being to compensate us afterlife for our sufferings in this life.

For Freud, religion is nothing more than an infantile attitude, a posture foreign to reality. His initial mentioning to it nevertheless leads him to discuss the reason why so many

never leave this doctrine behind. He argues that life is a hard experience, composed of pains, frustrations, disappointments, and impossibilities. To make it bearable, we must impose palliative measures without which we cannot live. Religion is, he says, one of those measures. It arouses happiness and it is apt to provide strong feelings of pleasure. But Freud asseverates that happiness is an intrinsically episodic phenomenon because prolonged pleasures can only generate mild contentments (p. 23).

Differently, unhappiness has no episodic condition, according to Freud. We suffer more often than we feel pleased, and the sufferings we experience in lifetime stem from three sources: (i) our own body: fragile and mortal, subject to decay and death, giving us warning signs through anxiety and pain; (ii) nature itself: untameably powerful and mercilessly destructive, causing disasters from time to time; and (iii) our relationship with other people: especially due to their unpredictability. Freud makes clear that this third element may be the most painful source of suffering because "We tend to regard it as a kind of gratuitous addition, although it cannot be any less fatefully inevitable than the suffering which comes from elsewhere" (p. 24). To avoid such unhappiness, Freud mentions that some have tried to keep themselves isolated, emotionally uninvolved with other people.

The evolution of medical science has improved the quality of the human body. We know we may eventually be ill, but we also know that, under proper treatment, we can be healed. The impact of time over the body has equally been placated, though we are aware we will certainly get old and die someday. Nowadays, cutting edge machines can anticipate (and eliminate in some cases) wildfires, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and thunderstorms, even though we know nature cannot be completely tamed. Technology has indeed overcome several sources of fear, but death and natural disasters are still seen as a matter of chance, as fatality.

Despite Freud's mentioning of our relation with other people be as inevitably painful as any other source of fear, it is hard for us to take human attitudes as chance. We may try to keep aloof from others as a method to avoid unhappiness. Yet the social life upon which we depend is a maze of interactions too intricate to be removed altogether. Moreover, social interactions lead to undecipherable relationships, to the point of turning unknown those we thought were well-known. It is no wonder we many times understand human unpredictability, not as inevitable or part of human nature, but as the outcome of some impaired behavior.

Our relationship with other people is also what French historian Jean Delumeau (2007) indicates as a contemporary source of fear. In "Past and Present Fears"[52], Delumeau observes (like Jeffrey J. Cohen does) that fears are metamorphic and come to prominence in virtue of a given time and space. On a historical level, the most frightening source of fear, according to Delumeau, had for centuries derived from nature: plagues, poor harvest (as it caused starvation), wildfires sparked by lightning, earthquakes, seaquakes, volcanic eruptions, and so on. These fears progressively gave way to wars and revolutions as though these occurrences could explain all the sufferings on Earth. Modern wars have improved genocide, especially the weapons of mass destruction (such as radiological, biological, chemical and nuclear weapons). In preceding wars, shootings and blows would victimize only those actively involved in them (namely, the soldiers) whilst today's bomb drops victimize civilians as well. More recently, terrorist attacks show us that the battlefield has become larger, so a bomb may be exploding anytime anywhere. The fear of wars, Delumeau remarks, is still out there, as latent as an impending doom. It has however been little by little replaced by the randomness and unpredictability of human attitudes. The worst-case scenario narrows down to the conclusion that there is no safe place.

Wars, once gradual, endemic and irregular, have apparently become unforeseen, pervasive and virtually endless (the end of a violent affair marks the beginning of another). In present days, those involved in battles are soldiers as well as commoners – ordinary people replete with their needs and aspirations. Those old battles have been currently overtaken by individual violence, including the one having no assigned cause. A fight which had once been institutionalized and collective has been made into many individualized fights nowadays – a one-man battle against another one-man battle. We have been experiencing, it seems, the age of *homo homini lupus*.

On a sociological level, Zigmunt Bauman points out (in an assertion similar to Freud's) that, in our contemporary world, the other makes us suffer the moment we take their actions as deliberate, as intentional, not as a chance. Much of the fear we currently experience, says Bauman, comes from our coexistence with the other. We become suspicious, and we refuse to trust in the other's tendency to sympathy and solidarity (BAUMAN, 2009, p. 16). For this reason, we keep trying to predict, as a self-defense, other people's intentions, and find ourselves overwhelmed by the time we realize we do not expect these intentions to be other than violent. What we ultimately seek is safety, so the comparison as a tool to

[52] This title has been roughly translated as the essay, originally written in French, does not have an English version.

evaluate the other: when they are like us, that is, when the other fits our standard reference of normality (in any sense we find it appropriate), we feel safe. Conversely, when they are not like us, we feel frightened. The other who does not behave as we do is the one to be rejected, punished, imprisoned, and finally executed. This deviant individual cannot be on the loose in society at all. For violating both religious commandment and legal norms, killers are abnormal. For violating those very rules repeatedly, multicidals are monstrous. Alterity is, I insist, a central element to access the monster.

It is for their deviant actions, and not for any biological-supernatural impurity, that multiple killers are called monsters. When debating serial killers, David Punter and Glennis Byron claim they are "the monster that dominates the last part of the twentieth century" (PUNTER & BYRON, 2004, p. 265). Their series of murders, paraphilic urges, and motiveless (or scarcely motivated) brutality have turn them into the contemporary American fear, the reason for their painful source of suffering. The multicidal is Mr. Hyde taken as a moral monster, that is, all of those ordinary individuals who manage to go about their unsuspected lives while committing one hideous murder after another. Or as Philip Simpson (2000) notes, in another literary analogy:

> The elegant, aristocratic vampire as a product of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, for example, transmogrifies quite easily into the contemporary serial killer beloved of journalistic tabloids, hit movies, and best-selling novels. He is the neo-Gothic villain and demon lover. (p. 14-5)

Doppelgängers or vampires, or even a bomb track about to explode (in the case of mass murderers), the monstrosity of multiple killers has been, at least in the United States, discussed more frequently and excitingly than any other modern (and/or postmodern) horror creature.

In a study that traces the human monster in light of a visual approach, Alexa Wright claims to be "particularly interested in the literal way in which these strange creatures embody difference, or 'otherness'" (WRIGHT, 2013, p. 1, quotes in original). If taken chronologically, her study shows that the so-called monster has become less and less physically abnormal. That is, the bodily extraordinariness that characterized the original monstrous creature in Aristotle and Pliny (Wright's starting point is the image 'The Monstrous Races of the World') has been supplanted by individuals as ordinary as 'normal' members of society. Wright grounds her "historical transition from morphological to behavioural monstrosity" (p. 3) in a series of Michel Foucault's lectures collected in *Abnormal* (1974-5) and "The Dangerous Individual" (1978). Though she agrees on that

transition, Wright calls back the etymological meaning of the words 'monster', 'monstrousness' and 'monstrosity' (from Latin *monstrare*, that is, to show, to warn or to advise) in order to emphasize that the visual attribute of the phenomenon, one way or another, still remains.

Although frequently used interchangeably, Wright distinguishes 'monster', 'monstrousness', and 'monstrosity', for she contends that such a distinction separates the social and cultural effects of the phenomenon from its manifestation: (a) 'monster' is the entity, an individual object or subject. The monster personifies all the qualities that characterize the phenomenon, for bringing the monstrousness and the monstrosity together; (b) 'monstrousness' is the manifestation of the phenomenon. It is the epitome of what must be rejected, namely, the impossible, dreadful, inhuman, unspeakable and the unthinkable features that "lie at the periphery of human identity" (p. 3); finally (c) 'monstrosity' is the abnormality that functions as a sign of monstrousness. In this sense, it is both a cause and an effect. Covertly following Cohen's lead and others', Wright states that monstrosity "is a narrative imposed on certain appearances or behaviours at particular times in specific social contexts" (p. 3).

As an American phenomenon, multicide emerged to notoriety at the particular time of the 1970s. In that decade, according to Philip Jenkins (2006), the specific social context was the increase in the violent crime rate and its side effect of crime punishment boom (p. 135). In a 1977 issue of *Time*[53], Ed Warner brings out this matter as he recalls some newly-committed crimes by young Americans: (i) sixteen-year-old Johnny shot a driver to death; (ii) seventeen-year-old Steven was arrested for raping and murdering a nurse; (iii) nineteen-year-old Touché was charged with arson, burglary and attempted murder; (iv) sixteen-year-old Eric pleaded guilty to knocking down an eighty-six-year-old lady; and (v) fifteen-year-old Lawrence confessed to having murdered two brothers in his neighborhood in a brutal fashion (he had tied up, castrated, stabbed and beheaded the boys). Early in his article, Warner observes that "A new, remorseless, mutant juvenile seems to have been born, and there is no more terrifying figure in America today".

Warner's article usefully sets the scene of violent crime in the 1970s. But his observation might have been too passionate and hyperbolic. In American society, other figures can be equally terrifying. Phillip Jenkins, for instance, reminds us that there were

[53] Ed Warner's 'Youth Crime Plague", first published in *Time* Magazine, on July 11th, 1977. The full version of the text can be read at *https://edwarner.org/collected-works/time-magazine/time-magazine-1977-1980/the-youth-crime-plague/.* Last accessed on January 20th, 2021.

other sources of fear of great concern in the 1970s: the Soviet Union, foreign and domestic terrorists, drug dealers and drug kingpins, child molesters, pornographers, and serial killers (JENKINS, 2002, p. 5) – or, I must amend, multiple killers. Some of the most popular multicidals to date committed their gruesome crimes by the 1970s: the unidentified Zodiac Killer in 1968-74; Charles Manson's family in 1969; Jeffrey MacDonald in 1970; Edmund Kemper in 1964-73; Herbert William Mullin in 1972-3; John Wayne Gacy in 1972-8; David Berkowitz in 1976-7; and Ted Bundy in 1974-8. The young criminals Ed Warner lists were terrifying but, compared to these who kill many, their monstrousness is of another kind.

Multiple killers are monsters for performing peculiar outsiders, located preferably apart from the ordinary members of society. Desirably, their stories must not match our reference of normality. In the conventions of modern profiling, these homicidals are stereotypically those who have had some unfit background (poor, low education level, raised by a dysfunctional family, sexually and/or physically abused, drug-addicted, alcohol-addicted, etc.) or those mentally impaired (revengeful, schizophrenic, psychotic, etc.). Even after committing suicide, being shot to death, or being otherwise arrested, found guilty and locked in prison for life (or facing capital punishment), a multiple killer's personality is scrutinized minutely, so to find a particular cause which can turn this criminal into abnormal. Richard Tithecott explains that:

> It is not conviction which brings the illusion of closure, only that which we really seek: origins of the story of *his* violence, origins which we figure as belonging solely to the individual, to *a* life. Our discourse of detection continues by reconstructing the history of the individual serial killer as a case, as something to be solved, as something whose center begins (and usually ends) in the unspeakable. (TITHECOTT, 1997, p. 34, italics in original)

All those anecdotes in chapter 1, from Jack the Ripper to Killer Petey, may be regarded as attempts to dig abnormalities out of those multicidals: Herbert William Mullin was schizophrenic; Dorothea Montalvo Puente was coldly greedy; Perry Smith and Richard Hickock were poor and badly-educated; Chico Picadinho was raised by an unfit mother; Ed Gein by a domineering mother, and so on. Crime profiling must, ultimately, dig out monstrosity of some sort. More clearly, crime profiling means less a forensic technique to gather evidence against the multiple killer and more an investigation to unearth the killer's otherness. With this said, this investigation relies on the assumption that multiple killers must invariably end up in possession of a disease: "[...] the premise of the validity and reliability of a profile is that the person who commits these crimes has a personality that reflects pathology (HOLMES & HOLMES quoted in WRIGHT, 2013, p. 126).

One of these pathologies is, for instance, sexual abnormality. The serial killer, the most celebrated type of multicidal, has been often associated with sexual drives. In chapter 1, while examining intrinsic motivations, I highlighted that FBI agent Robert Ressler conceives of serial killers as murderers oriented by some sort of paraphilia. Ressler's association of seriality with sex is iconic as he informs that the combination of these elements is what makes serial crimes different – or I should say, monstrous.

Perhaps all the more monstrous is homosexuality. Richard Tithecott reminds us that, for some experts, Jeffrey Dahmer's ego, addiction to alcohol, personality disorder, necrophilia, and above all sexual orientation are his signs of abnormality. The American professor recalls an episode of American TV program *Sonya Live* (aired from 1987 to 1994), in which the host Dr. Sonya Friedman avers that serial killers Ted Bundy and Arthur John Shawcross[54] were sexual sadists when it comes to females whereas John Wayne Gacy[55] and Jeffrey Dahmer were sexual sadists when it comes to males (TITHECOTT, 1997, p. 71). In search of some deeper moral deviation, the show host asks forensic psychiatrist guest Richard Klaus this question: "Was that just spurious, something that just happened, or is there something in the background that leads one in one direction or the other?" (p. 71). As a reply to it, Klaus answers that Shawcross was willing to prove he was potent in a heterosexual world, and that the gayness of Gacy and Dahmer unveils a lot of sexual orientation disturbance.

Based on that show, Tithecott calls our attention to the dichotomy gay killers versus straight killers. For Richard Klaus, Shawcross's sexual orientation could not be an issue, for our contemporary social parameters regard heterosexuality as normal. On the other hand, Gacy's and Dahmer's homosexuality does not conform to those parameters, so it is a disturbance: "Gacy's and Dahmer's homosexuality is framed as unnatural, the result of something gone awry, whereas Shawcross's 'problem' is not his sexual orientation but his sexual impotency" (p. 72, quotes in original). This dichotomy may explain in some degree why John Wayne Gacy and Jeffrey Dahmer have stood out of that mass of human monsters as one of the most infamous American serial killers, inspiring numerous documentaries, true

[54] Known as 'The Genesee River Killer', Shawcross was sentenced to serve 250 years in prison for murdering 11 women in 1988 and 1989.

[55] Serial murderer nicknamed 'Killer Clown', convicted of killing twelve teenage boys between 1972 and 1978.

crime books, novels, and fictional characters[56]. In a heteronormative society, 'normal' members expect gay killers to move about wildly first and foremost for their sexual orientation: "For a heterosexual culture, the Dahmer case represents an opportunity to explain acts of savagery by referring to his putative homosexuality, to confuse homicidal with homosexual tendencies, confuse 'sexual homicide' with homo sex" (p. 73, quotes in original).

Crime profiling brings monstrosity out of multiple killers. The multicidals' otherness (at least most of them) I have mentioned so far have been classified as abnormal on grounds of characteristics unlike those of 'normal' citizens. Otherness has been thus a tool to reduce the unpredictability of multicide attacks, despite criminologists have been reminding us that, especially in the case of mass killers, such unpredictability is possibly what essentializes their nature. It is harder to single out human monsters than biological-supernatural monsters. For the latter, the body makes the horror condition conspicuous (it is lethal because it is impure). For the former, the body may be unblemished. Strikingly, our approach on human monsters has been, to a great extent, similar to our approach on biological-supernatural monsters. That is, we are still willing to find external monstrosities which can push these beings away from our ordinariness. Once we spot these monstrosities (be it homosexuality, paraphilia, psychosis, poverty, family wrongness, or the like), we feel safe due to their difference separating them from us. In just few words, we endorse Jeffrey Cohen's fourth thesis that a monster means deviation from our norm, that it "dwells at the gate of difference" (1996, p. 7). However, there are killers who, though lethal and gruesome, have no external monstrosity, no unfit background of any sort. These are the monsters who fit our standard reference of normality, the ones who, when comparison tools are applied, frighteningly meet our expectations.

2.2.2.2 Ordinary Monsters

I have said before that multiple killer Ted Bundy struggled to dissociate his self from monstrosity. Blaming pornography had been his desperate attempt to pull the monster both out of and away from himself. Not surprisingly, in his interview, he reiterates he is 'a normal

[56] John Wayne Gacy has inspired the character Twisty, a psycho clown in the television series *American Horror Story: Freak Show*, released in 2014; Jeffrey Dahmer is the background for multicidal protagonist Quentin P., in Joyce Carol Oates's novel *Zombie*, first published in 1995.

person'. It seems that, from his answers, Bundy is aware that his background fits standard references of normality for he maintains he is not 'a pervert in the sense that people look at somebody and say, 'I know there's something wrong with him''.

On the day he was electrocuted, the newspaper *The New York Times*[57] published an article which focused on the public reaction to his execution. Bundy is said to have 'boy-next-door good looks and intelligence' as well as 'good looks and soft-spoken charm'. Elsewhere in the article, Bundy is said to be a 'central mystery' because nobody could possibly answer how a 'handsome, articulate, urbane young man' turned into 'one of the most savage and unpredictable killers in the nation's history'. Finally, Jerry Blair, one of the prosecutors of the Bundy case, has his comment on Bundy's intelligence quoted: 'He probably could have done anything in life he set his mind to do, but something happened to him and we still don't know what it was'. All of the assertions about Ted Bundy revolve around a standard reference of normality. Bundy's description is all positive: white, heterosexual, intelligent, handsome, and articulate. On the other hand, he was put to death for the murder of more than thirty women, killed over a span of about five years. Bundy becomes a mystery because such a moral deviance is not expected from someone who displays so many 'bright' qualities.

In her analysis on Ted Bundy, Alexa Wright raises an interesting question: "But what happens when the monstrousness behind the modern monstrosity […] resists representation of any kind?" (WRIGHT, 2013, p. 145). Asked another way, how can we surely spot a monster when it carries no alterity? The monster which resists falling under the dichotomy I/you or we/they may prove to be the most mysterious. Wright brings up Foucault's lecture "The Dangerous Individual" once again to point out that, in the nineteenth century, legal and scientific attention switched from the crime to the criminal; speaking otherwise, "from the criminal act to the character of the individual" (p. 146).

The early history of true crime narratives in the US seems to strengthen Foucault's point. In colonial New England, true crime narratives known as execution sermons focused on the spiritual condition of the convicted murderer rather than on the details about the murders (HALTUNNEN, 1998, p. 2). Colonial capital criminals were the epitome of original sinners, put to death outdoors in the marketplace to repent as well as to discipline the community. From the late eighteenth century on, however, these narratives had become more

[57] Jon Nordheimer's article, "Bundy is Put to Death in Florida After Admitting Trail of Killings", January 25th, 1989, can be read here: https://www.nytimes.com/1989/01/25/us/bundy-is-put-to-death-in-florida-after-admitting-trail-of-killings.html. Last accessed on January 20th, 2021.

secular as they kept their eyes on the crime itself: nature of the violence, time and location of the crime, arrest of the criminal, criminal's motives and sentence given (p. 2). One of the oldest true accounts about murder in the United States, the compilation *Pillars of Salt* (1699), by New England historian Cotton Mather, lacks pieces of information about criminals and refuses to offer a minute inspection of crimes. For the most part, these accounts do not go any further than treating those capital criminals as exemplary sinners, as those who chose to keep away from God's will, and thus must be punished to sever as a "warning", as Mather puts it in the title. In the eighteenth century, nonetheless, true crime narratives, such as Barnett Davenport's putative confession, would spend most of its pages letting readers know of his crime. Davenport, the first-known American mass killer[58], had his brief account published in 1780. This crime confession offers Davenport's biography, and tells in details about his murders.

In "The Dangerous Individual", Foucault tells a short story of a rapist who, during a trial in 1975, in Paris, seldom speaks. At a certain moment, the judge asks him a question about the nature of his crime: "Why, at twenty-two years of age, do such violent urges overtake you?" (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 1). The rapist does not answer anything and remains silent to all of the judge's interpellations. Then a juror impatiently interrupts and requires the accused to "For heaven's sake, defend yourself" (p. 1). Foucault posits that the reason why the criminal (charged with five rapes and six attempted rapes) remains silent is not for the facts or the circumstances of his crime; he does silence because of his inability to answer any question about his self. According to Foucault, the very question the rapist evades answering is 'Who you are?'.

The shift of attention from the crime to the criminal in the nineteenth century provides a new possibility. Under a knowledge system interested in the core of the individual, the criminality, dangerousness and threat of the criminal could be scrutinized for the sake of being explained rationally, and for disseminating the results afterwards. That knowledge system included the fields of criminology, psychology, criminal anthropology and the particularly important field of psychiatry: "All these areas of expertise were used to account for the behaviour of a particular individual by attempting to explain the causes of his or her monstrously incomprehensible actions within a psychological and social context" (WRIGHT, 2013, p. 146). By virtue of this shift of attention, criminal justice has still been taking criminals as relevant as their crimes, or rather, in Foucault's words:

[58] For a more detailed analysis of execution sermons and Davenport's multicide, please, see chapter 3.

> Legal justice today has at least much to do with criminals as with crimes. Or more precisely, while, for a long time, the criminal had been no more than the person to whom a crime could be attributed and who could therefore be punished, today, the crime tends to be no more than the event which signals the existence of a dangerous element – that is, more or less dangerous – in the social body" (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 2).

Foucault emphasizes that there was a double concern to validate the criminal over and above the crime (p. 3). On the one hand, rationality could be added to the legal practices, in an attempt to reduce subjectively biased sentences, and on the other, general law and its codes could be conformed to social reality, especially in the dialectic matter between the rich and the poor. Consequently, the traditional question "what must be punished and how?" (p. 3), which had guided judges and jurors so far, changed into "whom you think you are punishing?" (p. 3). But, due to the introduction of this new question, the criminal-over-crime legal punishment was faced with a crisis. Some nineteenth-century criminal psychiatrists[59] would frequently refer to a handful of murder cases of the same pattern: (i) in Paris, Henriette Cornier kills her neighbor's daughter and throws her head out the window; (ii) in Vienna, Catherine Ziegler murders her child, but is acquitted on grounds on insanity. She pleads to be kept in prison because, once released, she knows she will murder again. Months later, she gives birth to a child whom she immediately kills; (iii) in New Hampshire, Abraham Prescott strikes his foster parents with an ax and pleads not guilty, for he alleges he did so in a fit of sleepwalking. Months later, Prescott strikes his foster mother to death with a wooden stake; (iv) and in Cramond, John Howison breaks into a house and murders an old woman with a garden spade.

These cases were compelling not only for their gruesomeness, but primarily for revealing killers who resisted falling under the insanity prescription – or any other plausible motivation to kill. In that period, insanity had still been fundamentally connected to mental disturbances such as dementia, hallucination, imbecility or furor. Nevertheless, the murders mentioned above (and other similar cases which could also be cited) did not result from mental derangement or passion. The victims were either unknown (or hardly known) or intimately known. In both scenarios, our reasoning finds no motivation for the crimes. Besides, no material profit is reported to have motivated such cruel assaults:

> Finally, all of these crimes were committed without reason, I mean without profit, without passion, without motive, even based on disordered illusions. In all the cases

[59] Foucault cites the psychiatrists Metziger, Hoffbauer, Esquirol and Georget, and finally William Ellis and Andrew Combe.

> which I have mentioned, the psychiatrists do justify their intervention by insisting that there existed between the two actors in the drama no relationship which could help to make the crime intelligible. (p. 5)

The dangerous individual with which psychiatrists needed to cope rationally and judges needed to punish fairly were far removed from those traditional criminals whose abnormality was to be identified through their alterity. In *An Account of the Behaviour, Confession and Execution of John Howison*[60], we learn that Howison was in fact a serial killer. The last paragraph of his account reports he had murdered seven people: a Jew, four boys, one girl, and the old woman aforementioned. What is equally telling is that it is said that people were permitted to visit Howison in prison to come to terms with a murderer who would carry no trace of insanity, being as ordinary as any other citizen in town: "The most prevailing opinion, however, by all those who had the best opportunities of forming any, correctly, was, that the more was seen of him, the more he seemed to be perfectly sane [...]". This observation matches the conclusions reached by Foucault in his lecture. The dangerous individual is what he calls 'the great monster':

> The individual in whom insanity and criminality met in such a way as to cause specialists to raise the question of their relationship, was not the man of the little everyday disorder, the pale silhouette moving about on the edges of law and normality, but rather the great monster. (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 5)

I will assent with Alexa Wright on the choice of Ted Bundy as the quintessence of the contemporary great monster. The figure of Bundy confuses the question 'whom you think you are punishing?' and resists representation because he cannot fit those previous backgrounds antecipated for other multiple killers, such as Mullin or Dahmer. Perhaps, Ted Bundy is the instance of the event-based monster in the extreme, for having offered no way to unveil his monstrosity other than the brutal homicides of which we knew only after his arrest. Similar to John Howison, Bundy seems perfectly sane. His skin color and handsomeness furnished him with the normality to run his murderous errands above suspicion as much as his self-defense during his trials attested to his intelligence and high verbal skills. It is not thus any wonder that friends and workmates would react incredulously to Bundy's arrest in 1975.

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[60] The brief report on Howison's case, *An Account of the Behaviour, Confession and Execution of John . Howison, who was executed at Edinburgh, this morning, Saturday, the 21st January, 1832, for the Inhuman Murder of an old Woman, in her own house, at Cramond*, can be found at https://digital.nls.uk/broadsides/view/?id=14578 . Last accessed on January 20th, 2021.

In *The Only Living Witness* (1999), Stephen Michaud and Hugh Aynesworth quote the voices of some friends and workmates who knew Ted Bundy in order to prove how perfectly Bundy, in other people's eyes, would fit the 'normal' parameters. Warren Dodge said to unbelieve Ted could have been charged with kidnap and attempted rape: "He was too quiet, too intelligent, too much a nice guy, too much a gentleman to have possibly done anything like that" (p. 162). The former aide to Governor Evans, Ralph Munro, said to be shocked and incredulous. Larry Diamond, with whom Ted Bundy worked at the Department of Emergence Services, learned about the arrest from inquiring reporters: "My impression was […] 'No, it couldn't be'. It could be like one of us" (p. 162). Finally, two of Bundy's friends, Gwen Grim and Susan Reade, from the 1972 election campaign, had talked about the news until late at night: "It just freaked us out […] We thought, Well, how well did we really know him?" (p. 161). The image of a clean-cut handsome young man was totally at odds with so monstrous attitude as Bundy's visual appeal and social behavior met the expectations of the 'normal' members of society. In the end, what makes Ted horrifying is the fact that it is hard to make him a monster as we know it.

The traditional tools to recognize a human monster as the alien other, bodily blemished by monstrosities of any sorts (be it poverty, family dysfunction, homosexuality, paraphilia, insanity, etc.) seem to be ineffective when we are threatened by a multiple killer such as Ted Bundy. Back to Jeffrey Cohen, the ordinary-looking but vicious killer may be the monster that the cultural moment of the US has engendered. Thus, the American contemporary fear possibly emerges in the face of ordinary monsters who refuse being easily recognizable. Maybe, in order to grasp which monstrous creatures American fears have been producing, we must pay close attention to Cohen's fifth thesis. The existence of Ted Bundy may have taught US society that it must conform, follow the rules, and avoid crossing boundaries. But on top of that, Bundy may be forcing them to reassess their long-established sense of normality. With no such reassessment, an ordinary all-American well-spoken John Doe may become the next in line in wanting to kill as many as thirty women while playing the guy next-door – and Americans may never know it.

3 MULTIPLE KILLERS: TRUE CRIME

3.1 Larger-Than-Life Subjects

While giving some examples of mass killers in chapter 1, I have briefly mentioned Jeffrey Robert MacDonald and his family triple murder case. Known as the Green Beret Killer, captain doctor MacDonald was found guilty and sentenced to three consecutive life imprisonments in 1979. In court, he asserted his innocence by insistently harping on a home break-In: intruders had forced into the house and killed his pregnant wife and two daughters. When the military police came in, Colette was found covered in blood in the master bedroom, on her back, with her legs apart. She had been clubbed to death in the head and face. Kimberly, who was five years old, was dead in her bedroom, lying in bed. The pillow and mattress were soaked with blood, and gaping wounds could be seen in her cheek and neck. She had been stabbed so savagely that bones bulged outward. The two-year-old Kristen, like her sister, was also found in bed in her own bedroom. The little girl had been repeatedly stabbed in the back and chest. There was a baby bottle near her mouth, almost empty. Also, a stuffed dog was lying in bed with her. She had bled profusely, so there was a large pool of blood on the floor.

MacDonald was found next to his wife, his face down on her chest and his arms around her neck. He had been stabbed in the lung, but his wounds were far from being as severe as the other victims'. He breathed hard, but still could speak that, during the assault in which he was knocked down, a woman sat next to him and kept chanting: 'Acid is groovy… kill the pigs'. On the headboard of the bed where Colette lay dead, the word 'pig' had been written with her blood. Later, he would report that there were four intruders: "Two white men, one black, and a woman with long blond hair who had been wearing a floppy hat and high boots and who had been holding a candle" (McGINNISS, 2002, p. 20). Still trying hard to breathe, MacDonald fainted, but soon regained conscience after a mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. He immediately struggled to break free from the police soldier because he wanted to check his daughters: "Fuck me! I gotta see my kids! Take care of my kids! Leave me alone!" (p. 19). MacDonald stood up to a sitting position while the soldier was trying to calm him down. The soldier did not need much, though: MacDonald stopped fighting and cried after he looked down at his dead wife.

The murders of the Green Beret Killer, albeit committed nearly fifty years ago, still appeal to audiences. In 2017, "Final Vision"[61], a television movie about the case, was released (it has been the latest production on Jeffrey MacDonald to date). Nonetheless, the movie is not only a story of a killer and his victims. It concentrates most of its energy on the four-year relationship between MacDonald and the nonfiction writer and journalist Joe McGinniss, who first came into the limelight a decade earlier, with a book about the marketing of presidential candidate Richard Nixon. At first, their relationship appeared to be the perfect match: MacDonald was craving to be written about, and McGinniss was looking for a larger-than-life subject to write about. The literary output of this relationship was *Fatal Vision*, a more-than-600-page[62] true crime book published in 1983. It tells MacDonald's story substantially, from his junior high school days as a nine-grader (when he first met Colette) until his long-term trial and conviction as a mass murderer.

After the book release, however, that perfect match went extremely sour. MacDonald was expecting his story to be of a dear father and loving husband, who had been attacked by a group of drug-addicted hippies (after the fashion of the Mason family against Sharon Tate). McGinniss, on the other hand, painted a bad picture of the captain doctor. In *Fatal Vision*, MacDonald is described as a latent homosexual and a potential psychopath. By the end of the book, the journalist debates the multicide in light of Hervey Cleckley's *The Mask of Sanity* and Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism*, and thus the portrayal of MacDonald ends up being of a pathological narcissist:

> The report also said, "He is subject to being amnesic concerning what he would wish to blot out from his consciousness and very conscience. His credibility leaves much to be desired. In testing, he proved himself to be considerably pathological and impulsive, with feministic characteristics and concealed anger. He has a disdain for others with whom he differs and he is subject to respond with anger when his person is questioned, on whatever basis".
> "He handles his conflicts by denying that they even exist. He is not in touch with his feelings and essentially is not comfortable with himself. He has only an authoritarian image of himself as the machismo type of male".
> "In terms of mental health and personality functioning, he is either an overt or a repressed sexual invert characterized by expansive egotism and delusions of persecution. He is preoccupied with the irrelevant and is unable to face reality. To suit his whims, he has the faculty to manufacture and convolute circumstances. He seeks attention and approval and is given to denial of truth." (p. 836)

[61] A short review of the movie and the case can be found at: https://people.com/crime/scott-foley-as-jeffrey-macdonald-fatal-vision-movie-preview/ . Last accessed on January 20th, 2021.

[62] My pocket edition has nearly one thousand pages.

The same year *Fatal Vision* had been published, the former captain sued the writer[63]. In short, McGinniss had apparently betrayed an implied agreement: the book was supposed to portray MacDonald as an innocent man, not as a murderer. Three years later, a settlement was negotiated, putting an end to the trial after the parties agreed on a sum of money to be paid. There is a careful afterthought over this trial written by another journalist, Janet Malcolm. She started writing about the controversy McGinniss-MacDonald after she receiving a letter from MacDonald's lawyer. He summoned her (and other journalists) to stand up against what the outcome of the trial might set: censorship of writers' freedom of speech. In *The Journalist and the Murderer* (1990), Malcolm goes down into this controversy, but she does not side with the journalist (as we might suppose by the title she has chosen). In fact, she accuses Joe McGinniss of choosing "not to see what was staring him in the face" (p. 72). In other words, by painting a bad picture of MacDonald, the journalist not only kept his personal verdict of guilty under the hat, but also failed in seeing that the murderer was not the larger-than-life subject he was looking for.

Malcolm writes that she first met Jeffrey MacDonald at Terminal Island Prison, in California. She describes him as a tall and well-built man, and shares her first impressions of him, especially the moment his handcuffs are removed:

> Meeting a visitor at these circumstances would not seem to offer much scope for a soigné entrance, but MacDonald somehow managed to get through the humiliating ritual as if he were an actor swiftly shedding his costume before getting friends in the green room, rather than a prisoner coming out of solitary confinement for a few hours. (p. 65-6)

Even though all of Malcolm's remarks are to question the ethical relationship between journalists and their subjects, her observations on MacDonald's ordinariness serve me well. By the middle of her book, Malcolm spends some pages examining MacDonald's rhetoric. The murderer, craving to be heard, is said to have a rapid and relentless speech, "like an executive or a politician with a prepared line of patter always at the ready" (p. 66). There is one word in this quote which requires some attention: patter. One of its meanings[64] is 'the jargon of a particular group', especially the one followed by a fast and mechanical speech, as of sellers, auctioneers and entertainers. Malcolm observes that MacDonald's verbal skills go hand in hand with the talks of politicians and executives. It is quite clear that these two

[63] A fair summary of the case can be read here: https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-11-24-mn-24281-story.html . Last accessed on January 5th, 2021.

[64] We can find this meaning here: https://www.thefreedictionary.com/patter, and also here: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/patter. Last accessed on January 7th, 2021.

occupations are alluded to in her comparison for their rhetorical strategies: the former uses them to persuade voters; the latter to persuade shareholders. When Malcolm first interviews MacDonald at Terminal Island, she points out that the ex-captain sounds like an executive or a politician because his answers are glib, as though he had already a preplanned line for each question asked. What Malcolm means by associating those kinds of rhetoric with a convicted murderer is that she could not keep from noticing a 'discrepancy' between the language and the person:

> Both in the prepared story and in his unpremeditated responses MacDonald used language that was at curious odds with his person: he himself bristled with tense aliveness, but his language was dead, flat, soft, clichéd, unnuanced. The discrepancy became even more marked when, back in my hotel room, I listened to the tape recordings I had made in the prison. Isolated and stripped of the man's strong gestural presence, the plain words had an awful puerility. (p. 67)

Malcolm writes that Michael Malley, one of MacDonald's defense attorneys, also complains about the same issue. He speculates over the reasons why they have lost the criminal trial, and one of his conclusions blames MacDonald's speech: "And the other reason was Jeff. He didn't have the ability to make the jury believe him. This is an idea that Jeff doesn't like. He thinks he tells his story well" (p. 67). This is the very moment Malcolm realizes she had committed the same mistake as Joe McGinniss. She was hoping for a murderer who could be powerful enough to be a larger-than-life subject on his own, but what she met was an ordinary man speaking an ordinary language. It was incredibly frustrating that a man who could kill his whole family in cold blood would tell his story like a politician or an executive, full of tedious rhetorical strategies:

> I had made the same error that Stone made in marvelling at MacDonald's incapacity for rendering Tolstoyan portraits of himself and his family. MacDonald's bland dullness on tape seemed unusual to me and to Stone (and also to McGinniss, who had told me how he groaned whenever a new tape arrived from the prison) because of its contrast to the excitingly dire character of the crime for which he stood convicted: a murderer shouldn't sound like an accountant". (p. 70)

The fact that the Green Beret Killer was nothing special, that he was a man who did not have any heroic or epic story other than his brutal murders, had been staring McGinniss in the face all along. This is what Malcolm contends McGinniss chose not to see. For Malcolm, the McGinniss-MacDonald case may be summarized as follows: a journalist who thought he had a larger-than-life subject on which to work, but found out too late that his subject was "not a member of the wonderful race of auto-fictionalizers" (p. 71). She reminds us that criminal trials are not supposed to convince that one is the kind of person who could

have committed a crime. Rather, they must only prove that one has in fact committed it. In the same manner, Joe McGinniss, as a journalist, should have reported what had been presented to him, not invented out of it. But, as a true crime writer, what should Joe McGinniss have done to turn an ordinary subject into a larger-than-life one?

I do not plan on discussing the ethical implications of the case, not even do I intend to support either Malcolm's accusations or McGinniss's defenses. In this chapter, I aim at scrutinizing some true crime stories to reveal some of the diegetic elements employed by writers to make a multiple murder account entertaining to the reader. More specifically, my scrutiny examines the rhetoric of monstrosity, that is to say, the narrative tools and strategies used to transform a multicidal into a monster. At bottom, the word 'rhetoric' stands for a language applied to bring about an effect whereas 'monstrosity' denotes, as discussed in chapter 2, a narrative imposition towards certain appearances and behaviors socially and historically contextualized. Though this chapter relies on a descriptive (and not at all on a prescriptive) standpoint, I am interested in the methods writers have adopted to deliver extraordinary stories out of rather ordinary biographies. There are multiple murderers (Ed Gein may be one of them) who seem to be ready-made, auto-fictionalizing horror figures. Contrariwise, there are others (Ted Bundy may be an instance) who are too positive to live up to our expectations towards monstrosity, so these killers need to go through literary changes to be captivating, or rather to be monstrous, somehow. I must clarify that, despite my eventual comparison between sources and the output, I want to propose the examination of the narrative elements used to transform biographies into literary entertainment.

3.1.1 Ordinary into Extraordinary

When Janet Malcolm brings to the fore the fact that Joe McGinniss chose to paint an ordinary MacDonald as a narcissistic murderer, she ignites a critical thought over the true crime genre which would be worked on, almost a decade later, by Canadian literary critic Nicola Nixon. In "Making Monsters, Serializing Killers" (1998), Nixon does not dissect *The Journalist and the Murderer*, but she discusses the same point Malcolm does: how ordinary killers are literarily remodeled into extraordinary figures. For Nixon, the demonic entities which had populated horror stories in the 1970s and early 1980s (*The Exorcist, The Amityville Horror* and *Poltergeist*, to name but a few) gave way, progressively, to an entity

much more concrete, a menace entirely stripped of supernatural features: the serial killer. It should be kept in mind once again that those decades gave birth to the most popular and sensational American murderers we know of: Charles Manson, Jeffrey MacDonald, David Berkowitz, Jeffrey Dahmer, Ed Kemper, Ted Bundy, Dennis Rader, John Wayne Gacy, James Oliver Huberty, Aileen Wuornos, and more. Nonetheless, these real menaces were hardly able to be appealing on their own. It was necessary to build them upon a literary ground, as fictional as any other former gothic character.

Nixon avows that the rise of the serial killer – and I would include, in a bigger picture, the mass and spree killer – brought about the permanent severance of monstrous creatures: on one side, we would find those belonging to the fictional world (demons, ghosts, vampires, werewolves, zombies, etc.); on the other, those belonging to the real world (notably, the multiple killers). It can thus be said that the fictional monsters suffered two blows. Because of that division, fiction gave room to reality, and additionally lost its original position as the only catalyst to engender fear. To illustrate this severance, the Canadian critic brings back David Berkowitz's deceitful insanity pleas, a serial killer whose chief modus operandi, as explained in chapter 1, was to shoot women with a .44 pistol.

At his trial in 1978, Son of Sam stated that he was not at all in control of his gun, but rather the *Duke of Death*, the *Wicked King Wicker*, and the *22 Disciples of Hell* – these had been the demons which took him over. Strikingly, not only did Berkowitz claimed he had been controlled by demons, but he also tried to personify something demonic: the letters he wrote to the New York Police Department, telling the officers he would be killing more and more, were signed *Mr. Monster*. To prove himself insane, he said he constantly heard demonic inner choirs and hellish noises under the floorboards at home. To enhance the pleas, his defense attorney produced pictures of doodles and scribbles from his walls which read: "I am possessed" and "Demons tormented me" (NIXON, 1998, p. 219). Even a board of psychiatrists had been hired to evaluate him, and the conclusions declared him insane and delusional. After all the efforts and evidence to make sure of his insanity, Berkowitz was reevaluated, considered fit to stand trial, and then found guilty to serve six life sentences.

The next year, Son of Sam unexpectedly took back all of the insanity pleas for demonic possessions he had entered. In a press conference, he confessed that demons had never tormented him. The truth was that those creatures were total fabrications. The devilish figures, the noises, choirs and doodles were a complete pack of lies he had made up to be an excuse for his murders. By striking the demons out of his homicides, Berkowitz's confessions drew full attention to the multiple killers. Thus, nicknames as nasty as The Green Beret

Killer, The Killer Clown, Son of Sam, The Milwaukee Cannibal, The Coed Killer, Damsel of Death, and BTK Strangler started to prove increasingly popular and effectively sensational. As a consequence, the creatures which had so well instilled fear for their extraordinary horror faded in the presence of a monster who demanded no supernatural trait.

The stories about real crimes, that is, the true crime narratives, on the increase in the 1980s corroborate Nicola Nixon's argument about severance between fictional and real monsters. A great number of books of this genre were published at that time (McGinniss's *Fatal Vision*, to give but one example, was first published in 1983). What is more, there was a growing and enthusiastic American audience (a demand which has even transcended that decade) for accounts on brutal criminals, such as *The Stranger Beside Me* (1980), *Son of Sam* (1981), *Killer Clown: The John Wayne Gacy Murders* (1983), *The Only Living Witness* (1983), *Deviant: the shocking true story of Ed Gein* (1989), *Ted Bundy: Conversations with a Killer* (1989), *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story: an American nightmare* (1991), *The Crime of the Century* (1993), *The Night Stalker: the life and crime of Richard Ramirez* (1993), *Die for Me* (2000), and so on. These books not only turned Ted Bundy, David Berkowitz, John Wayne Gacy, Jeffrey Dahmer, Ed Gein, and many others into celebrities, but equally seem to mark the watershed for multiple killers as gothic characters. From that moment on, these criminals and their crimes established themselves as sources of fear in the American folklore.

Nixon affirms nevertheless that this severance brings its own problems. Despite the fact that this kind of criminals is more menacing and frightening for the real fear they can engender (as multiple killers exist out there in the real world), Berkowitz's confession could not effectively eliminate the fictional instance of true crime narratives. Many of the books aforementioned have hyperbolic sentences on their covers which claim "to shock with truth" (NIXON, 1998, p. 221). Ann Rule's *The Stranger Beside Me*, one of the most famous true crime books to date, promises to tell "*The shocking inside story of serial killer Ted Bundy*". But Nixon contends that these 'shocking truths', those stories which make up the core of true crime narratives are a little more than:

> catalogs of the killers' effects on their victims, whose corpses testify silently to pre- or post-mortem torture, mutilation, dismemberment, sexual assault, cannibalism, necrophilia, exposure, paraphilia. Typically such catalogs are lightly larded with thumbnail sketches of the young, innocent victims' lives and last-known movements, embellished slightly with speculation about the killers' modus operandi, and explicit about the totemic body parts or pieces of clothing and jewelry that the killer removed from the victim. And, as if to offer some vague sociological or psychological justification for the killers' actions, true-crime writers hark back to cryptic biographical facts about the killers' childhoods and early, premurderous, years. (p. 221)

Ann Rule had been Ted Bundy's friend once. Rule was studying police science and Bundy was a psychology student at the University of Washington. In 1971, their mutual interest in the law had pushed them both to the crisis lines at Seattle's Crisis Clinic where they worked together. By writing in the preface of her book that telling a story of an anonymous murder suspect is quite another thing as telling a story of a murderer "you have known and cared for for ten years", Rule aspires to make Ted Bundy singular and extraordinary – in one word, larger-than-life. It goes without saying that, as a multiple killer, Bundy is expected to be violent and vicious (and he was indeed a rapist and necrophiliac). But, as discussed in chapter 2, he was equally the boy next-door, going about an unexceptional daily life, as ordinary as Jeffrey MacDonald or many other multiple killers. Even Rule, in the opening lines of *The Stranger Beside Me*, acknowledges such ordinariness:

> NO ONE GLANCED at the young man who walked out of the Trailways Bus Station in Tallahassee, Florida, at dawn on Sunday, January 8, 1978. He looked like a college student – perhaps a bit older – and he blended in smoothly with the 30,000 students who had arrived in Florida's capital city that week. He had planned it that way. He felt at ease in a campus atmosphere, at home. […]
> In Washington State, or Utah, or Colorado, he would have been recognized instantly by even the most desultory of media watchers and readers. But here in Tallahassee, Florida, he was anonymous, only another handsome young man with a ready smile. (RULE, 1980, p. 1, capitals in original)

In search of a shocking truth, Rule falls back on those catalogs cited by professor Nixon – those facts which resemble forensic reports (NIXON, 1998, p. 221). Rule describes Bundy's victims (he would rather choose young ladies with long hair parted down the middle), brings out the moment and location the victims were last seen, mentions the decays of the dead bodies, describes the modus operandi, uncovers the steps of the investigation process, and explains psychological behaviors. In addition, *The Stranger Beside Me* provides sixteen pages of pictures of Bundy, the writer at the Crisis Clinic, and the four fatal victims, as well as photographs of the trial, of one of the crime scenes, and a mugshot of a seventeen-year-old Bundy from the high school yearbook. But, given that the forensic reports are nothing more than mere descriptions of a killer's profile and a listing of murders, those catalogs of facts fall short of narrative potential. So, in an attempt to keep from writing a plotless book, Rule joins together report and narrative, filling up pages with photographs and investigation accounts in tandem with an inside story of someone who befriended a multiple killer.

Ann Rule's inside story serves as a good illustration of professor Nixon's assertion that "the 'factual' material cannot itself sustain the burden of narrative" (p. 222, quotes in original), Many of us may possibly say that *The Silence of the Lamb*'s Hannibal Lecter is the quintessence of a fictional serial killer: intelligent, highly-educated, charming, articulate. On the other hand, few of us may take real serial killers the same way. The real ones are habitually dull, prosaic, and ordinary. Their utterance is built upon clichés and their reason to overkill goes no further than a small set of features victims may eventually have. That is why real-life Ted Bundy differs from *The Stranger Beside Me*'s Ted Bundy. To escape the electric chair, the former had to keep stating, just as demonstrated in chapter 2, he was not a monster: "If anyone considers me a monster, that's just something they'll have to confront in themselves. It has nothing to do with me because they don't know me. If they really knew me, they would discover I am not a monster" (RULE, 2009, p. 544). To escape failing narratively, *The Stranger Beside Me*'s Bundy had to be so, just like *Fatal Vision*'s Jeffrey MacDonald did. The amalgamation of report and narrative pulls to the fore a writer in wanting to transform an ordinary murderer into an extraordinary creature. If the real instance cannot be powerful enough to convince, the fictional instance, the Ted Bundy created through Rule's inside story, becomes a monster, by incorporating the characteristics of a gothic figure.

3.2 **The Monster Discourse**

Janet Malcolm's viewpoint towards the McGinniss-MacDonald case (and, to a great extent, towards journalistic business as a whole) leads us to think through the subgenre under which *Fatal Vision* falls: true crime. I say subgenre because modern true crime stories branch from a broader category which has been carrying quite a number of labels: narrative journalism, literary journalism, intimate journalism, creative nonfiction, feature writing, documentary narrative, new journalism, and nonfiction novel. This category essentially joins together the factual and the fictional – or more accurately, the factual content of journalism and the narrative devices of fiction. The true crime narrative makes use of the same couple of elements, adding to this recipe the accounts of crime.

Legally, crime is an act resulting in violation of the law in which the consequence of conviction, after trial by court, is fine or imprisonment as possible penalties. Put differently, a

crime means any serious offense against an individual or institution that is punishable. In this regard, the contents of true crime books tend to come about as inclusive as the term 'crime' can possibly be. In *Encyclopedia of True Crime* (2008), to give but one instance, author Charlotte Greig makes her criminal list out of swindlers, thieves, drug dealers, spies, white-collar culprits, and multiple killers. She even goes as far as discussing prison cultures in some countries, including the Brazilian prison gang First Capital Command, PCC (in Portuguese initials). But for my purposes, I do not intend to offer an extensive embrace. Rather, the books on which I rely here necessarily contain multicides and multicidals in their lines: (a) Harold Schechter's *Deviant: the shocking true story of Ed Gein, the original psycho* (1989); (b) Don Davis's *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story: an American nightmare*[65] (1991); (c) Ann Rule's *The Stranger Beside Me: the shocking inside story of serial killer Ted Bundy* (1980); and (d) Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood: a true account of a multiple murder and its consequences* (1965). These four books chronicle the life and death of five infamous multiple killers, and they will be understood as part of a modern literary genre which boomed by the second half of the twentieth-century US: the New Journalism or the nonfiction novel.

3.2.1 Tracing Monstrosity

True crime accounts of murder have been part of the American everyday life ever since Puritans from Britain settled down in colonial grounds in the first decades of the seventeenth century. But the rhetorical transformation of murderers into monsters would wait for more than a century to take place. It is possible to track the dissemination of news about murders in the United States back to the execution sermons. Briefly alluded to in the previous chapter, execution sermons were public religious narratives of the colonial US which aimed attention at the spiritual circumstance of the criminal sentenced to capital punishment. Historically speaking, the British kingdom of the 1660s had passed a series of acts to conform liturgy to strict episcopal patterns which, as a result, forced English Puritans to commune less and less with one another.

But on the other side of the Atlantic, geographically away from those British domestic politics, colonial Puritans saw themselves free to put their religious enterprise into practice.

[65] This book had been previously published under the title The Milwaukee Murders.

As American historian Daniel J. Boorstin (1958) asserts, "The history of the New England pulpit is thus an unbroken chronicle of the attempt of leaders in the New World to bring their community steadily closer to the Christian model" (p. 12). In this context, sermons, as the exhortation of Puritans ideals, became both a gospel piece and "the only regular means of public communication in New England" (HALTTUNEN, 1998, p. 12). These public narratives would join, much more often than not, two elements: preaching and practical issues. This is the reason why a Puritan sermon touched on the particulars of the community's life – an earthquake, a plague of grasshoppers, the arrival of a ship, the election of a magistrate, the gathering of militia, or the execution of a criminal – as much as on the biblical references.

The narrative analysis of the Puritan sermon frequently marks its plain style. On the political level, English Puritans refused to comply with the clerical instructions of the Anglican church because they believed these instructions allowed too-ornated services. Puritans wished to simplify rituals and get rid of the British metaphysical preacher's ornamentations in favor of a more ascetic lifestyle, and in wishing so, those who sailed to New England did not adopt such an overembellished form of worship – it was a simpler and more straightforward oral and written style which was fully welcomed. Boorstin reminds us of the contrast between metaphysical preaching and the Puritan speech: for effect, the former depended on intricate literary concepts whereas the latter relied on homely examples (BOORSTIN, 1958, p. 11). In sum, the British metaphysical sermons were supposed to please and inspire; colonial sermons to inform and convince, and, in this sense, these were incompatible in every way with magniloquent communication.

Without a doubt, plainness was the main substance of New England sermons. Nonetheless, close attention to persuasion as well as practical consequences of a doctrine in detriment of the elaboration of a theory also constituted this genre. The persuasive tone and practical purpose led American historian Perry G. E. Miller to compare the Puritan sermon to a legal argument:

> […] the Anglican sermon […] much more an oration, much closer to classical and patristic eloquence, while the Puritan work is mechanically and rigidly divided into sections and subheads, and appears on the printed page more like a lawyer's brief than a work of art. (quoted in GORDIS, 2003, p. 14)

The Puritan sermon's persuasion and practicality can be seen in its characteristically three-part configuration: doctrines, reasons, and uses. The doctrine was the starting point, being either a quote from the Bible or a biblical anecdote. The reason supported the doctrine, giving the sermon its logical frame. In the end, the use approached the topic of the sermon to

the listener's practical life. It is because of this double characteristic that scholars have divided the Puritan sermon into subsets. For instance, election-day sermons coped with political issues, pointing out that a worldly government could only be successful under an agreement between God and citizens to promote the good of the community; artillery sermons were delivered during the muster of a militia and the choice of officers; and the execution sermons preached to a condemned criminal before the gallows pole (BOORSTIN, 1958, p. 13).

Karen Halttunen (1998, p. 11) states that the execution sermon was the prevailing form of crime account in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century colonial US. Being a public speech or text designed to deal with the capital crimes among Puritan settlers, it was usually made of two voices: the preacher's and the criminal's. Rather than shaping criminals into monsters, executions sermons depicted them as penitent sinners. Its fundamental concerns in fact came down to transcendental affairs, to the defendant's afterlife reputation, and hence the questions to be answered revolved around these affairs: "What course of smaller sins had brought this sinner to the terrible transgression for which she or he was about to be hanged? What was her spiritual state now, and where would she spend eternity" (p. 2).

The criminal-as-sinner formula of this type of religious narrative was then to utilize a common rhetorical strategy: (i) there was a close inspection of the sins the condemned Puritan had been committed, from the small misbehaviors to the final capital violation; but conversely (ii) there was neither a detailed description of the homicide, nor a dramatic reenactment of the violence, nor the dying words of the victim. An execution sermon directed its attention to the regret, so the preacher's voice, authoritative and emphatic, was in charge of "obviate any undesirable attention to the social and physical realities of murder: they expressly redirected readers' attention from 'the blood of Abel' – the murder victim – to the 'blood of sprinkling'- Christ the Savior'" (p. 17-8, quotes in original). The criminal's voice, apologetic and weak, served as the recognition of a guilty mind, or as Halttunen writes, a "dramatic demonstration of repentance and spiritual awakening to restore a backsliding New England people to their earliest relationship with God" (p. 25).

In *Pillars of Salt*, the Puritan minister Cotton Mather (1663-1728), a man famous for his prolific written production, compiles twelve execution sermons. This single book, originally published in 1699, puts together true crimes and last words, as the first half of its title reveals: "a history of some criminals executed in this land, for capital crimes, with some of their dying speeches […]". Mather explains in the preface to *Pillars of Salt* that the sermons (on piracy, rape, bestial sex and, for the most part, murder) fulfill a double purpose,

namely, a historical one – "[…] some fragments of those dying speeches, might be preserved and published" – and a didactical one – " […] in hopes, that among many other essays to suppress growing vice, it may signify something […]" (SCHECHTER, 2008, p. 5). This didactical purpose is clearly endorsed by the second half of the book's title: "[…] collected and published for the warning of such as live in destructive courses of ungodliness".

From the start, we notice that, be it for paucity of further documented data or for particular unnecessity, Mather's compilation suppresses pieces of information that the modern true crime narrative does not happen to lack. As an example, names are at times offered in full; at others in initials; and at other times simply omitted. The seventh sermon, for instance, provides the criminal's full name, the location, the exact date of crime, and the weapon used to kill. On the other hand, it withholds the victim's name, the relationship between perpetrator and victim, and the motivation. Mather describes the imbroglio scarcely, leaving unanswered questions which would certainly stain his collection, had he been published it in contemporary times: "On March 11. 1689. was executed at Boston, one James Morgan, for a horrible murder. A man, finding it necessary to come to his house, he swore he would run a spit into his bowels, and he was as bad as his word" (p. 11).

Moral judgment also makes its way into the Puritan sermons as ministers hold their position of authority throughout their public preaching. Adjectives and adverbs evidence the evaluative mood of preachers and their efforts to, not seldom, convince rather than to inform. To give but a few examples, phrases such as "wretched woman" (p. 6), "abominable adulteries" (p. 6), "most infandous buggeries" (p. 6), "hideously" (p. 7), "horrible murder" (p. 11), "very barbarously" (p. 20), "wicked nature" (p. 21), "undoing wickedness" (p. 32), "filthy debauches" (p. 33) are used to describe criminals and crimes, and additionally to instruct listeners and readers to evaluate such elements on a negative footing.

Despite the narrative strategy mentioned above, the criminal about which the execution sermon speaks does not rhetorically change into a monstrous figure. The execution sermon, ultimately, manages to set empathy towards the condemned wrongdoer as a target. Its failing information and moral evaluation reflect the characteristic mental attitude of Puritanism, an attitude in conformity with its plain style and moral qualities. In such a religion-centered society, capital crimes are to be utterly vituperated for the advancement of the common good, and for this reason individuality does not prevail over community. In other words, in execution sermons, names are less important than sins because the former is individually given whereas the latter is collectively committed. As Halttunen (1998, p. 21) has already reminded us, the execution sermon aims at demonstrating that the criminal has

repented his or her sins. So, on the one hand, there is a noticeable usage of negative adjectives and adverbs, but on the other there is, as well, a want of a positive pathetical effect.

For the colonial Puritans (as well as for Christians, in a broader sense), the body is perishable, temporary and worldly-wise. Conversely, the soul is everlasting, eternal and otherworldly. It means to say that, for a Puritan who has committed a capital crime, the pain the body suffers goes away along with his or her execution. But the pain the soul experiences in afterlife, goes on and on repeatedly and endlessly. This is, for example, the greatest concern expressed by the murderer James Morgan in the seventh sermon of Mather's collection:

> "Sir, as for the pain that my body must presently feel, I matter it not: I know what pain is; but what shall I do for my poor soul? I'm terrified with the wrath of God; this, this terrifies me, Hell terrifies me: I should not mind my death, if it were not for that" (SCHECTHER, 2008, p. 14).

The execution sermon, in this context, is narratively designed to concentrate on the salvation of the soul. The minister then tries to convince capital criminals that their bodies are forever lost, but their souls are not. To offer another example, in the eighth sermon, Hugh Stone, a man who killed his pregnant wife over a quarrel about selling a piece of land, hears from the minister an explanation about the advantages of Christ's blood on the soul: "The blood of the Lord Jesus is not only sin pardoning blood, but also soul purifying, and heart softening blood. It embitters all sin unto the soul, that it is applied unto, and mortifies every lust in such a soul. Are you desirous of this?" (p. 23). This is the reason why we also find, all over Cotton Mather's *Pillars of Salt*, empathetic adjectives, such as "horrible regret of mind" (p. 4), "miserable soul" (p. 11), "farewell poor heart" (p. 19), "grievous horror of mind" (p. 30), "miserable young woman" (p. 32), and so on. This grammatical element functions as a tool to help depict the criminal as applaudable somewhat, as a criminal who has finally regretted all her or his sins and, in doing so, will be allowed to enter heaven:

> The moral and spiritual parity of ordinary sinners and the convicted murderer was encouraged in execution sermons through the clergy's careful delineation of how the audience was supposed to feel when confronting an exemplary sinner. Repeated references to "the sorrowful object before us" and the "unhappy Malefactor" invited hearers and readers to respond to the murderer with a compassionate fellow-feeling bordering on the modern psychological concept of empathy. (HALTTUNEN, 1998, p. 14)

If the rhetoric of monstrosity could gain some prominence in the presence of negative adjectives and adverbs, the sermons' emphasis on the salvation of the criminal's soul

immediately cast a shadow over it. The affect of fear or the sensationalistic appeal which the execution sermon might eventually have brought to the fore (however dimly) becomes a demand for moral judgment. This demand subsequently moves from condemnation here in our very world to salvation in a hereafter through an act of forgiveness granted by God. It is equally worth calling attention to the fact that execution sermons after all reinforce God's benevolence, a quality that allows the deity to mercifully save even those who have committed the cruelest of crimes:

> Once an irreligious, unchaste woman willing to destroy her own child to conceal her vicious conduct, she had been spiritually transformed during her eight months of bondage, and had emerged from prison "Sprinkled, Cleansed, Comforted, a Candidate of Heaven." This condemned young servant demonstrated God's mercy to even the greatest of sinners: if an infant-killer could emerge from her spiritual struggles as a "Candidate of Heaven," so too could any sinner who undertook to confess, repent, and hope in Christ. (p. 8)

In *Pillars of Salt*, all capital criminals are forgiven provided that they "[…] confess and bewail the sins that have undone you, and publicly advise, and exhort, and charge all that you can […]" (SCHECHTER, 2008, p. 23-4). As seen in chapter 2, monsters are equivalent to Satan under an apocalyptic standpoint. If God therefore has mercy on a feminicidal or infanticidal (in brief, on those morally regarded as the lowest human beings of the Puritan community) by forgiving them and letting them ascend to heaven, these sinners cannot be considered fully horrible. Accordingly, the execution sermon will be exempted from applying narrative devices to shape these murderers into monsters.

3.2.2 From Salvation to Monstrosity

Although seventeenth-century execution sermons fail to depict the capital criminal as a monster, late eighteenth-century ones seem to show otherwise. The 1780-religious account *A Brief Narrative of the Life and Confession of Barnett Davenport*[66], to which I have referred in chapter 2, demonstrates that even religious discourses had held onto the rhetoric of monstrosity. The earliest documentation about a mass murderer in the US, Barnett

[66] My version of Davenport's life narrative and confession is downloaded from the website *University of Michigan Digital Library Text Collections*. Its first pages are unnumbered and its numbered pages go from six to fifteen. For being a short text, I have decided not to refer to pages in my quotes. The link to this version is: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N13253.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext . Last accessed on January 20th, 2021.

Davenport's confession is a biographical narrative[67] which encompasses Davenport's life incidents from birth, in the town of New Milford, Connecticut, to death at Gallows Hill. Working under bound service as a farmhand for the Mallory family, Davenport assaulted Jane Mallory, her husband Caleb, and their eight-year-old granddaugther in their sleep, beating them to death with a swingle. After killing them, he set the house on fire, burning both the three dead bodies and Mallorys five- and six-year old grandsons who were still alive in another bedroom.

Just like in Cotton Mather's religious reports, the title of Davenport's confession is long enough to sum up what the sermon is all about. What is eye-catching at first glance is its sensationalistic tone. Davenport's quintuple homicide is introduced as "[…] a series of the most horrid murders, ever perpetrated in this country, or perhaps any other […]". The body of the text follows the same strategy, so readers come across a swarm of hyperboles, such as "the most shocking", "horrid plan", "shocking crime", the most vile, ungrateful, and detestable returns", "the blackest crimes that ever mortal committed", "bloody, land-defiling, soul-ruining, and heaven-daring plan", and so on. Moreover, the night of the murder is "A night with uncommon horror", and in similar fashion the crime scene is "this most tremendous, cruel, bloody, and amazing scene". These phrases, replete with negative connotations, seem to force this true account to move closer to the sensations of horror literature than to the salvation-oriented drives of early execution sermons.

As a public speech, *A Brief Narrative of the Life and Confession of Barnett Davenport* must serve didactical purposes. Its preface then tells us that "The following account […] may be of some service to mankind". In addition, the course of small sins to explain the mass murder is eagerly sought in Davenport's confession. So, bad language, profanity, ill-temperance, telling of lies, pilfering, stealing, avoidance of family prayers and public worships made up the list of offenses that, when combined, led the criminal to multicide:

> Here I was guilty of pillaging a neighbour's garden, stole some water-melons, &c. However small these crimes may appear to some, yet, when viewed in the light of eternity, and as leading to the most dreadful enormities, they must appear awfully fearful.

From the very beginning, Barnett Davenport paints his own image as though he had always been abnormal of some sort. His narrative lists his small sins coming down to his

[67] There is a news item about Davenport's mass killing at the online newspaper *Hatford Courant*: https://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-xpm-2011-02-07-hc-mallory-murders-0208-20110208-story.html, and also at the website *Gizmodo US*: https://gizmodo.com/in-1780-americas-first-mass-murder-was-a-crime-of-unc-1706814529 . Both items are based on the study by New Milford historian Michael-John Cavallaro. Last accessed on January 20th, 2021.

capital crime, but it does not explain why he has become a sinner. In fact, it insinuates that Davenport is an inherent deviant, a helpless wrongdoer given to blaspheming since his early days of childhood:

> As they tell me, I was born at New-Milford, the 25th of October, 1760, and lived with my parents until I was about nine years of age. By this time, I was become quite expert in using bad language, having been accustomed to profaneness, from the time I was capable of forming articulate sounds. How early was the infernal dialect become habitual!

Apparently, this inherent tendency to evildoing was not to be detached from his self whatsoever. Firstly, Davenport was born in a very poor family, had little opportunity (as he makes it clear) to go to school, and was not able to read or write – much likely, his parents had offered him to wealthy families for bound service due to lack of financial resources. However, in his confession, Davenport does not call his social condition into play to justify his sins. A sociopathic behavior is what emerges from his words, especially for his inability to stay long with the families for whom he works. Secondly, it is striking that, as his confession unfolds, his sociopathy changes into psychopathy. His lack of empathy becomes conspicuous by the murderous thoughts he admits to have been bearing: "I was haunted and possessed with the thoughts of murder, from the time of my first entertaining them, both day and night". Soon enough, readers realize that, for Davenport, homicide should be committed just for the sake of it:

> While I lived here, I once laid a plan to murder Mr. Stillwell, and how to conceal it, in the following manner: When we were in the field, drawing logs, and Mr. Stillwell was stooping down to put the chain round the log, I took up the ax to knock him on the head, and then designed to draw the log over him, tear him to pieces, and so conceal the murdering of him. But my heart then failed me, not being yet so hardened in sin, as to carry into execution my horrid plan, and perpetrate the shocking crime.

Like a pile of events being placed on top of each other until the highest one becomes the heaviest, his consecutive small sins and murderous thoughts culminate in actual multicide. This moment in the narrative is preceded by Davenport's explanation on his motivations to kill the entire family: "I determined upon the murder of Mr. Mallory and his family, the first opportunity; and this, merely, for the sake of plundering his house; without the least provocation, or prejudice against any of them". I should shed some light upon two points here: (i) in the text, his murderous thoughts come before his plan to rob the house; and (ii) he underscores he bears no animosity towards the family – thus the adverb 'merely' may be the keyword to downplay his robbery as motivation. These points appear to be the circumstances to substantiate Barnett Davenport's psychopathy. If an early Puritan sermon expectedly reproached a capital criminal to save her or his soul right after, a late eighteenth-

century one unexpectedly promoted the murderer's condemnation to turn him or her into a monstrous figure. During the graphic description of the mass killing, Davenport is nothing but a pitiless, heartless, and remorseless multicidal:

> But I continued paying on; feeling no remorse at killing my aged patrons and benefactors. For the child, I seemed to feel, some small relentings, without remitting in the least, my execrable exertions. This anger was cursed, for it was most barbarous and cruel. Probably this child was at this time mortally wounded; for she gave a few terrible shrieks, which (one would think) were enough to pierce the hardest heart, and reach the center of the most obdurate sinner's soul: And then she lay still, sighing and groaning in the most affecting manner.

A confession is the telling of a life story as a series of faults, misdeeds, tribulations or crimes. It is ideally a first-person life tale. Davenport confesses to his sins with the pronoun 'I' all along, but, in the preface, we learn that what we are about to read is a transcription: "The narrative is penned from the criminal's mouth, though not always exactly in his own words. Some moral reflections are interspersed". According to New Milford historian Michael-John Cavallaro, the written confession is possibly the work of Judah Champion, a very esteemed reverend in Litchfield County, jotted down while Davenport was in prison:

> The confession was not written by Davenport, who was illiterate, but most likely transcribed during Davenport's jail time by the "very well-known and much-loved" Rev. Judah Champion of the First Congregational Church in Litchfield, says Cavallaro. It didn't just detail what happened that night. It also explained the history of the 19-year-old killer[68].

In the segment above, Cavallaro indicates that the reverend details the night of the murders and explains Davenport's background. But what I think it is worth calling attention to is that Judah Champion mentions that the confession is not a word-for-word transcription. This failure opens up some speculations on the intentions of the judgmental charges we find in Davenport's words. Reverend Champion, imbued with the moral urges clergymen commonly foster and preach, splashes (or intersperses, as he declares) those negative connotations aforementioned all over the narrative, producing a double outcome: (i) he admonishes Davenport on his mass murder; and by doing so, (ii) he turns the murderer into a monster. What is more, Champion may have deliberately chosen to unbalance the confession to give more emphasis to Davenport and his crimes than to a gospel lesson. In the end, the reverend apparently just gave up spending pages and pages on a typically threefold sermon (composed of doctrines, reasons and uses) because he understood that, as the crime had been so atrocious, its pathetical and sensationalistic power would win over more effectively. By

[68] Please, check previous note at *Hatford Courant*. The quotes come from the original text.

recurring to techniques to expose a multicidal's monstrosity, *A Brief Narrative of the Life and Confession of Barnett Davenport* demonstrates that the religious discourse would no longer suffice to touch readers.

3.3 **Fact and Fiction**

Davenport's written confession illustrates the origins of the monster discourse in American true crime accounts. Simultaneously, it signals that the informative and didactical purposes of early execution sermons reached through the construction of a positive image of the defendant after repentance were to be substituted by a demand, in later sermons, to make the criminal into a horrible figure. But Judah Champion's emphasis on the multicide and multicidal rather than on the gospel lesson raises yet matters regarding the dichotomy between fact and fiction, mainly because the non-verbatim transcript and the moral reflections of the text call into question the role of the writer in true crime narratives.

Since truth is a central feature of true accounts, it has been a long-standing (and sometimes tedious) bone of contention for writers and critics alike. Fact checking, for instance, has always been a burning issue in journalism, so much so that American editor Roy Peter Clark reminds us that a concern about reliable sourcing can be even found in the first American newspaper: "A Boston newspaper called *Publick Occurrences* made this claim on September 25, 1690: '[N]othing shall be entered, but what we have reason to believe is true, repairing to the best fountain for our Information'"[69] (CLARK, 2007, p. 167).

French essayist Philippe Lejeune argues that, in autobiographies, there is a pact between three elements: author, narrator, and character. This pact, says he, is made under, rather than a textual, a paratextual criterion – the criterion of identity (LEJEUNE, 2014, p. 30-1). An autobiographical text, to be regarded as such, must equate those elements by assuring readers that the proper name on the cover, the voice which tells the story, and the

[69] The entire paragraph actually reads: "Thirdly, that something may be done towards the Curing, or at least the Charming of that Spirit of Lying, which prevails amongst us, wherefore nothing shall be entered, but what we have reason to believe is true, repairing to the best fountains for our Information. And when there appears any material mistake in anything that is collected, it shall be corrected in the next". We can find a scanned facsimile copy of the issue at https://www.newspapers.com/paper/publick-occurrences/6613/ and a pdf copy in modern English at http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/amerbegin/power/text5/PublickOccurrences.pdf . Last accessed on January 20th, 2021.

character who acts throughout are all the same. In other words, the proper name must belong to author, narrator and character at once. For Lejeune, autobiographies depend first and foremost on the correct alignment of identity, and readers will believe the autobiographical account is true as long as this alignment[70] remains even.

Obviously, true crime stories such as *Fatal Vision* (and as those previously mentioned, or those to be mentioned soon) do not fit the autobiographical genre. Nevertheless, I contend we may also think, like Lejeune does, of a pact between readers and authors of true accounts, a pact built upon trustworthiness, that is, on the reader's trust that the author's reporting on the murder is accurate, and thus should be taken as true. In this sense, the moment a true crime book is opened to be read, readers expect to be informed, overtly or covertly, that the author is based on reliable background research, be it field notes, interviews, etc. (which indicate she or he has personally taken part in the event), or trial transcripts, medical records, tape records, footage, newspaper items, etc. (which attest she or he has studied the case with care). It is not surprising that information about this research usually comes in the foreword or afterword. Or, like Truman Capote does, in the acknowledgements in the paratextual space of his nonfiction novel:

> All the material in this book not derived from my own observation is either taken from official records or is the result of interviews with the persons directly concerned, more often than not numerous interviews conducted over a considerable period of time.

Sometimes, what had been told to be fact before becomes false later, and then the true crime author needs to fix the mistake quickly for fear that trustworthiness may be lost. In a foreword to one of her latest editions of *The Stranger Beside Me*, Ann Rule mends her previous accounts on Ted Bundy's execution. She explains that, back then, she did not talk personally to anyone who had been in the execution chamber where Bundy died. But in 2008 she received a letter from Dr. Clark Hoshall Jr., a dentist who was an eyewitness of the multiple killer's last moments on the electric chair. Since he was sitting in the first row, Hoshall is reliable enough to describe "what he had seen, heard, smelled, and experienced on that January morning in 1989" (RULE, 2009, p. xxviii). The dentist thus proves to be the source to wipe off the previous falsehood Rule had been erroneously based on:

> Some of the information I added to my original book turned out to be untrue – folktales and rumor that most of the Bundy experts believed – and I want to correct those. The single executioner who pulled down the arm that activated the electric

[70] Phillipe Lejeune has been revised his theory along the decades; however, he has maintained the importance of this alignment.

> chair in Starke, Florida, wore no mask, nor did he have a thick, mascaraed eyelashes. That was part of the legend of Ted (p. xi).

This research, or sourcing (PROVOST, 1991, p. 69), as it is technically named, is intimately connected to the factual characteristic of the true crime genre. Coming from nonfiction, true crime narratives read like a novel, possibly leading readers to assume that authors might have invented the pieces of information on the pages. In order to avoid this assumption, these authors (as well as nonfiction writers in general) resort to sourcing in order to clarify that details have been carefully researched (HOCHSCHILD, 2007, p. 135). As a matter of choice, some authors decide to go unperceptive in some scenes. They include the sources implicitly, subtly embedded in the narrative so that reading is not troubled:

> Georgia Scharenberg, who lived next door, recalled Jeff as being "a nice boy" who spent his out-of-school hours prowling in the woods, climbing the stony ledges and dashing among the trees. There were few playmates, she said. (DAVIS, 1995, p. 22-3)

Quotes are meant to be taken as somebody else's voice, other than the author's. In the segment above, Georgia Scharenberg is introduced casually in the narrative to be used as a reliable source. With this introduction, the writer implies that an interview has been conducted, and that the quoted phrase belongs to the interviewee. Because of its indirect speech, readers may experience the segment as a novel, but, because of the sourcing, they cannot consider it a case of fabrication.

There are instances, especially in first-person narration, in which the writer exposes the sources openly and unashamedly, as integrating the account. In this case, though the flow of the narrative might be harmed to a small or great extent, the scene maintains its consolidation to the fact. In *Fatal Vision*, this is what Joe McGinniss does:

> In a report filed on October 14, 1970 – slightly more than a month after the conclusion of the hearing – the Investigating Office wrote: "After listening to the lengthy testimony of the accused and closely observing his actions and manner of answering questions, it is [my] opinion that he was telling the truth". (McGINNISS, 2012, p. 267).

True crime writers seem to be aware that sourcing may fail notwithstanding its factual nature. They possibly know that subtractions, setting of scenes, sequence of events as much as narrative distance, dialogues, detailing, to name but some literary devices, may distort the reality the true crime account tries to represent. The contemporary widespread notion that Truth (with a capital T) is unattainable has forced fact-based workers (such as historians, journalists, documentarists, nonfiction authors, and so on) to admit that we can never get that

capital T; however, "with hard work, we can get *at* it" (CLARK, 2007, p. 167, italics in original); to wit, we may come as close to Truth as possible. In this regard, Normal Mailer, in an afterword to his Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Executioner's Song* (1979) synthesizes this potential failure. The writer asserts that his book has made great efforts to hand over the facts in the life of Gary Gilmore, an American killer who gained international attention for supporting his own death penalty in 1977. In the afterword, Mailer makes a long list of sources put into service in his true narrative: more than one hundred interviews, dozens of telephone calls, many hours of tape recordings, records of court proceedings, documents, etc. Despite this bountiful supply, Mailer signalizes that the final result the author publishes should not be carved in stone:

> Out of such revelations was this book built and the story is as accurate as one can make it. This does not mean it has come a great deal closer to the truth than the recollections of the witnesses. While important events were corroborated by other accounts wherever possible, that could not, given the nature of the story, always be done, and, of course, two accounts of the same episode would sometimes diverge. In such conflict of evidence, the author chose the version that seemed most likely. It would be vanity to assume he was always right.

Truth has forced true crime writers to spend a lot of ink and pages, for they know that fact and fiction might never go well together. To begin with, fiction is a prose form whose events and people narrated are imaginary. It is a fabrication and it openly says so because, unlike fact, it is not closed around actuality. Before any second-level attribute we may expect from fiction (be it didactical, political, social or the like), fiction ultimately covers a ground which has a strong entertainment bias. This attribute may have influenced Norman Mailer, even after listing that bountiful supply, to catalogue *The Executioner's Song* as a "true life novel"[71], explicitly incorporating imagination as a feature of his work. The addition of entertainment to the production of nonfiction demands a full answer to some practical questions, like those raised by American journalist DeNeen L. Brown:

> Beginning to read a story should feel like embarking on a journey, starting toward a destination. The writer must decide what larger meaning the story represents and lead the reader to that. Is it about fear? Is it about shame? Pain? Love? Betrayal? Hate? Faith? As I consider how to begin, I ask myself: What is the story about? What's the theme? What can I use to place a character quickly in a scene? How can I tempt the reader? How can I allow a reader to enter the subject's thoughts, share her feelings? (BROWN, 2007, p. 101)

[71] The 1979 article "Is New Mailer Book Fiction, or Fact?, written by Tony Schwartz for American newspaper *The New York Times* can be read here: https://www.nytimes.com/1979/10/26/archives/is-new-mailer-book-fiction-in-fact-tries-to-explain.html . Last accessed in January 20th, 2021.

Brown's listing of meanings is noteworthy because it goes hand in hand with the conception of 'New Journalism' offered by Tom Wolfe, a prolific American journalist and fictionist, who claims that nonfiction stories must be designed to affect readers emotionally. One of the leaders of the New Journalism movement back in the 1960s and 1970s, Wolfe avers that there are "two varieties of the species Nonfiction narratives" (WOLFE, 2007, p. 150, capital in original), at least in the US. One of these varieties is the good old autobiography which is frequently on the top five list of best-selling books, and, from Benito Cellini's *Confession* to Malala Yousafzai's *I Am Malala*, has never waned its popularity. The other variety is "nonfiction using the technical devices of the novel and the short story, the specific devices that give fiction its absorbing or gripping quality" (p. 150). For Wolfe, this latter kind of nonfiction mingles reporting, providing the facts on one hand, with narrative strategies, granting the aesthetics on the other (WOLFE, 1973, p. 11).

With fact and fiction effectively conformed to one another under the banner of New Journalism, nonfiction writers would have the chance to intertwine the pedagogical extent of the journalism with the entertaining qualities of the fictional writing. This interlacement was celebrated and practiced but embraced with reservations by some true crime writers, who would feel uneasy about the alliance between murder and recreation. As one example, in *The Stranger Beside Me*, Ann Rule confesses she is ethically concerned about making her living out of other people's tragedies. But she is immediately told[72] to keep on writing because her story, even though it is consumed as entertainment, can also save lives and change laws, and thus it should be regarded as a public service: "Let them know how we hurt, and how we try to save other parents' children by working for new legislation that requires mandatory sentencing and the death penalty for killers" (RULE, 2009, p. 87). The author could only ease her mind after she found a benefit from coupling didactics and entertainment together.

This appropriation of the narrative techniques of fictional literature, Wolfe insists, should at long last bring out the affective dimension of the news. From now on, journalism would instruct and amuse, eliciting the reader's response to intelligence in company with emotion:

> What interested me was not simply the discovery that it was possible to write accurate nonfiction with techniques usually associated with novels and short stories. It was that – plus. It was the discovery that it was possible in nonfiction, in journalism, to use any literary device, from the traditional dialogisms of the essay to stream-of-consciousness, and to use many different kinds simultaneously, or within a relatively short space… to excite the reader both intellectually and emotionally. (WOLFE, 1973, p. 15, ellipsis in original)

[72] While writing *The Stranger Beside Me*, Rule joins the Committee of Friends and Families of Missing Persons and Victims of Violent Crimes. The members of this committee encouraged her to continue her work.

What this, say, sensation-wise nonfiction wants is to insert emotion into the narrative so that it arouses certain feelings. For instance, the subject of crime, according to Wolfe, becomes a story of fear the moment the author, for the purpose of exposing the struggles in life, fortunately extracts the sensations lying beneath the assault:

> On Long Island, there's an epidemic of break-ins while people are in their homes. The robbers want the owners there, so they can be forced to reveal where jewelry and money are hidden. Invariably the news reports tell you how much was stolen, and perhaps what sorts of arms the assailants carried. But that's not the story. The story is fear, on the part of the victims and sometimes the assailants – or their ecstatic yodels after successfully dominating and humiliating their victims. Such are the vital facts of crime. The underlying emotions reveal so much about life, and they should be developed in journalism and not just in novels. (WOLFE, 2007, p. 152)

To push fact closer to fiction, Tom Wolfe presents four narrative devices nonfiction writers generally exploit to promote the reader's emotional involvement: (1) **scene-by-scene construction**: narrative is presented in a series of scenes rather than in an ordinary historical narration; (2) **full record of dialogue**: subjects'[73] distinctive features are preferably shown through dialogues to make them more concrete and palpable as well as to involve the reader more effectively in the narrative; (3) **record of people's status-life**: author's detailing of any patterns to potentially reveal the subjects' social rank or aspirations – or as American communication critic Richard A. Kallan (2001) elucidates: "*Recording status-life symbols* involves observing all the ways people communicate" (p. 74, italics in original). Wolfe himself provides a list of these symbols:

> everyday gestures, habits, manners, customs, styles of furniture, clothing, decoration, styles of traveling, eating, keeping house, modes of behaving toward children, servants, superiors, inferiors, peers, plus the various looks, glances, poses, styles of walking and other symbolic details that might exist within a scene" (WOLFE, 1973, p. 32)

And finally (4) **point of view**: scenes are depicted through the eyes of a particular subject, "in the Henry Jamesian sense of putting the reader inside the mind of someone other than the writer" (WOLFE, 2007, p. 151). Wolfe elucidates that this last device allows readers to experience the narrative through those who have been through the situation. It is an involvement, underlines the author, more efficient than when writers use their own first-person point-of-view, a view naturally limiting and sometimes irritating to the reader.

[73] Subjects here must be understood as the same as characters in a novel or short story.

These narrative devices certainly do not mean other strategies cannot be detected. Some may include more elements, such as the nonchronological presentation of events or even the cities treated as characters. However, those four strategies have been the guideline for sensation-wise nonfiction since Tom Wolfe has uncovered them. For now, I would like to take up some pages to briefly pinpoint one device unrepeatably in each of the four true crime books with which I am coping, with the intention of exemplification: Harold Schechter's *Deviant* counts on records of status-life, especially Ed Gein's mother; Don Davis's *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* tells its story from scene to scene, more evidently in the case of victim Konerak Sinthasomphone; Ann Rule's *The Stranger Beside Me* records full dialogues, be it conversations with Rule herself or between subjects; and Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* is replete with the point-of-view of subjects to make the writer remain, as Capote himself used to state, "as invisible as possible" (NUTTALL, 2009, p. 175).

(i) record of people's status-life: Ed Gein's mother, as informed in chapter 1, was a dictatorial matriarch who shut her two sons off all along from any relationship with women. In her mind, sex was nothing but a means to spread diseases whose results were pain and death. In *Deviant*, Augusta is described as a thick and heavy woman, with a permanent fierce countenance, full of strict manners for believing that the modern world was unequivocally immoral. Born and raised in an industrious family of German descent, Augusta was a practicing Lutheran, a religious sect that includes among its principles the belief that salvation and forgiveness come solely from faith in Christ's expiation:

> She was, in the end, her father's daughter – a stern disciplinarian, self-righteous, domineering, and inflexible, who never doubted for a moment the absolute correctness of her beliefs or her right to impose them, by whatever means possible, on the people around her. (SCHECHTER, 1989, p. 11)

Augusta was pious to near-fanaticism and inflexible to the point of considering sexual intercourse limited to mere procreation, anything other than this should be utterly sinful. After revealing Augusta's status-life, Harold Schechter speculates about her interest in Ed Gein's father – "What she and George saw in each other is mostly a matter of conjecture" (p. 11) – and the couple's subsequent pregnancies – "Perhaps, she thought, a child would comfort her in her trials, even serve as an ally in her struggles with George" (p. 12). Ed Gein's father was not as industrious as his wife. On the contrary, Schechter describes George Gein as worthless, incompetent and lazy, a man who would spend his meager earnings in the local taverns of Plainfield, Wisconsin. Augusta and George's marriage turned sour with many

episodes of verbal fight and physical abuse. Yet, the couple had two sons together. It is in this environment of unfit parenthood – much to an autocratic female figure – that Schechter discloses the origin of a multiple killing:

> On August 27, 1906, Augusta gave birth to her second child. He was a boy, and they named him Edward Theodore. When Augusta first heard she had delivered a second child, she felt bitter, betrayed. But Augusta was not the kind to give in to despair. She was made of stronger stuff. And so she took the swaddled newborn in her arms and made a sacred vow. This one would not grow up to be like all the rest of them. Men. Those lustful, sweating, foul-mouthed creatures who made use of women's bodies in such filthy ways. This one, she promised, would be different. Augusta would see to that. (p. 13)

(ii) scene-by-scene construction: Jeffrey Dahmer's thirteenth victim, Konerak Sinthasomphone was a fourteen-year-old Laotian immigrant whose family, in 1979, had moved from a Thai refugee camp to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. On a Sunday 1991, Dahmer approached Sinthasomphone downtown and offered the teenager some money to convince him to pose for pictures in Dahmer's apartment. This serial killer's usual M. O. consisted of, once inside, offering the victims some drink with drugs, and then murdering them by knocking them on the head.

Regarding Sinthasomphone, however, Dahmer drugged him, but let him lie unconscious on the couch while he went shopping for a pack of beers. Still in stupor, the boy managed to escape the apartment and, naked and bleeding, was approached on the streets by three police officers. As he returned from shopping to find the trouble, Dahmer got rid of the situation very soft-spoken and persuasively. He told the officers it had merely been a frivolous brief quarrel between homosexual lovers after too many drinks. The three officers bought Dahmer's made up, escorted the couple back to the apartment, and went away. The serial killer murdered the teenager immediately after:

> They all went to the apartment number 213, where Dahmer sold them a bill of goods, literally smooth-talking his way out of what should have been an impossible jam. While Konerak sat on the sofa, wrapped in a blanket, Dahmer played the role of his life. Not only was a live victim sitting over there by the aquarium, but the body of Tony Hughes was still in the next room. But he did it. He actually talked his way out of it! The police left his apartment. (DAVIS, 1995, p. 137)

This particular case sparked massive outcry[74]. The three police officers were accused of racism for easily believing in a white man, holding blind prejudice against homosexuals, and for not doing their job properly. They should have run a thorough background check on

[74] A summary of this case and its public rally can be found here: https://stmuhistorymedia.org/konerak-sinthasomphone-dahmers-victim-who-didnt-have-to-die/ . Last accessed on November 6th, 2020.

both males to see that Jeffrey Dahmer was on probation for second-degree sexual assault on a teenage boy two years earlier, and to find out that Konerak Sinthasomphone, who was told by the serial killer to be nineteen years old, was actually fourteen. Furthermore, running the check, they would have realized that the assaulted teenage boy was Konerak's older brother.

In *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, readers get in touch with this case scene by scene. Although the scenes are not constructed in the present tense, the sense of present prevails as though the events were happening now. The opening chapter distorts chronology by inserting the Konerak Sinthasomphone case. The first paragraph refers to the serial killer as a "tall man" (DAVIS, 1995, p. 1) to tell his full name only later in the account. Conversely, it unfolds Konerak's background and the moments before his murder, exciting both empathy and fear:

> Stark terror fueled what little energy he could muster to escape, for he knew the tall man would be coming after him. Konerak could only hope someone might intervene. That was his only chance. One foot ahead of another, he wobbled along, out into the street. But the tall man was striding quickly toward him, catching up. (p. 3)

In chapter four, Don Davis focalizes the three women who dialed the police to report Sinthasomphone's situation. Based, for source, on the police's telephone call transcript, the writer reenacts the conversation between one of the women and the operator. Finally, in chapter seven, the three officers who permitted a teenage boy to be killed are committed for trial. Despite his narration built upon past verbs, as already mentioned, Davis evokes the sense of present tense by the time he brings back the shoddy police search in Jeffrey Dahmer's apartment through the eyes of the officers. The outcome is that readers are supplied with the historical past, but the entire episode sounds like the immediacy of an action going on now:

> […] they entered the Oxford Apartments in the early hours of that Memorial Day Monday, trying to figure out what was happening between the big white guy and the zonked Asian male. They knew that any number of things might happen as a result of whatever decision they made in such a field investigation […]. But they had no idea whatsoever that they were about to unleash a whirlwind that would rock their employer, the city of Milwaukee to its foundations. (p. 73-4)

(iii) full record of dialogue: There are, throughout *The Stranger Beside Me*, dialogues recorded in full. Just like in a novel, these dialogues add more concreteness to the names mentioned in the true crime book because it shows more than it tells. Ann Rule,

herself a subject in her own account, is possibly easily materialized by her very name on the cover as an author (and also by her photo in the back-cover blurb). But her materialization heightens by virtue of her voice in the dialogues. Many subjects revolving around Rule and Bundy (the investigators, the surviving victims, Bundy's mother, Bundy's girlfriends, etc.) seem to become more plausible through the records of their conversations. In true crime, according to Richard A. Kallan (2001), dialogues are enthusiastically expected and motivated by editors: "'Add more dialogue' frequently reads the advice to beginning writers by experienced editors who have long since recognized dialogue's engrossing appeal" (p. 74, quotes in original). If Ted Bundy is taken as an instance, the fact that his voice is on the pages has the effect of believability, a fundamental matter of modern true crime accounts:

> "One of the things that makes it difficult is that, at this point, she was quite lucid, talking about things… Funny – it isn't funny, but it's odd – the things that people say under those circumstances. And she thought – she said that she thought that – she had a Spanish test the next day – and she thought that I had taken her to help get ready for her Spanish test. Odd. Things they say. Anyway… the long and short of it was that I again knocked her unconscious. And strangled her, and dragged her about ten yards into the small grove of trees that was there."
> "What'd you strangle her with?" […]
> "A cord – er, an old piece of rope that was there."
> "… then what happened?" (RULE, 2009 p. 596-7, quotes in original)

(iv) point of view: In Capote's *In Cold Blood*, it is possible to pinpoint Wolfe's four devices being used in full potential. Holcomb, the small farm town where the mass murder of the Clutter family took place, lodges inhabitants whose status-life symbols are constantly called to mind. Also, from the very beginning, the crime account is presented in a scene-by-scene technique, and these scenes pile up on top of each other. The opening chapter "The Last to See Them Alive" resembles a pendulum, as the narrative moves back and forth from the events in the Clutters' routine to those in the murderers' routine until they finally come down to the multiple murder. Finally, Capote makes use of extensive dialogues throughout, and they, many times, allow readers to get to know what is happening through the pair of eyes of a certain subject.

In the book, the mass murder, a moment of greatest drama in the account, is presented through different perspectives at different times: teenage girls Nancy Ewalt and Susan Kidwell's; teacher Larry Hendricks's; and mass killer Perry Smith's. In one instance, by the end of the opening chapter, we read the scene in which the Clutters' bodies are found in the house by Nancy and Susan. Their point of view makes the episode believable because, as focalizers, they narrate the scene as they experienced it.

> "So I did", said Susan, in a statement made at a later date, "I called the house and the phone ring – at least, I had *the impression* it was ringing – oh, a minute or more. Nobody answered, so Mr. Ewalt suggested that we go there – I didn't want to do it. Go inside the house. I was frightened, and I don't know why, because it never occurred to me – well, something like that just doesn't" (CAPOTE, 1993, p. 59, italics in original).

3.3.1 Monstrosity in True Crime Narratives

If Tom Wolfe's devices are still a safe refuge for sensation-wise nonfiction in general (viz., that variety of true account which reports events but also entertains readers through excitement of emotions), they do not seem enough for modern true crime accounts in particular. The record of people's status-life, the scene-by-scene construction, the dialogue recorded in full, and subject's point-of-view are devices nonfiction accounts employ, to a large or small extent, to affect the readers' emotions as a means to make them engage into the narrative. These devices are also adopted considerably by modern true crime accounts not only for engagement, but also as an attempt to arouse the affect of fear on readers, consequently turning ordinary crime biographies into entertaining texts.

Even though these devices are helpful, they seem, however, insufficient to transform a multiple killer into a monster, for the killer's biography alone, as already discussed by Nicola Nixon, cannot sustain the burden of narrative. That is to say, the repetition of murders, and subsequent disclosure of the killer's family background, modus operandi, description of victims, eventual arrest, and interviews are not enough to entertain. Apparently, modern true crime writers have applied additional devices to succeed in creating an appealing account.

The analysis of Schechter's *Deviant*, Davis's *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, Ann Rule's *The Stranger Beside Me*, and Capote's *In Cold Blood* has led me to suggest that there are at least four narrative strategies these true crime authors have used, to a high or low degree, to grow a multiple killer into a monster. These strategies are: (1) ***locus horribilis***: the setting, or crime scene(s), in which murder(s) or attempts to murder(s) take place; the narrator foregrounds the negative aspects of the setting, such as its rundown walls, dark rooms, creaking sounds, and/or oppressive atmosphere; (2) **gothic qualities**: grammatical qualifications (adjectives, adjectivals, hyperboles, etc.) which help portray the multicidal(s) and/or the multicide as monstrous; (3) **graphic descriptions**: scenes in which rape, torture, and murders are described explicitly, detailing the behavior of the killer, the attacks on

victims, the moment of murders, and/or postmortem activities; and (4) **people's reactions**: the emotional response of townspeople, acquaintances, law enforcement professionals, or the narrator to the multicide as well as their impressions about the multicidal(s). From now on, I will identify each of these strategies in these four true crime books.

3.3.1.1 Deviant: The Shocking True Story of Ed Gein, The Original Psycho

Falling under the definition of a hedonistic lust killer in chapter 1, Edward Theodore Gein was sentenced to serve an indeterminate term in the Wisconsin Central State Hospital for the Criminally Insane in 1968. The most widely-known picture of Ed Gein, when looked closer, displays a middle-aged fragile-looking man whose outfit, in Schechter's words, have become nowadays his "trademark" (SCHECHTER, 1989, p. 98): rubber boots, baggy pants, red cloth gloves, workshirt buttoned to the neck, woolen jacket, and plaid deerhunter's cap.

In Deviant, Schechter mentions that the press was given a chance to a ten-minute interview with Gein right after his trial. The conference room had a table at which the killer was sitting while reporters asked questions. In a wrinkled suit, Gein seemed as ordinary as any other person inside that place: "Like the other spectators at the trial, it was hard for the newsmen to envision the shy little figure who sat before them as a monster" (p. 230). Ed Gein is described as reserved and polite, speaking in a voice so low that, for those in the back of the room, it was hard to hear him. Schechter brings up some spectators' comments to show that, though being a serial killer who snatched bodies from graves to upholster his furniture out of human skin, his looks were vulnerable so much so that some would sympathize with him:

> Shy, quiet-spoken, and elderly, he seemed so unlike the mad ghoul of legend that, seeing his discomfiture, some of the spectators were astonished to find themselves pitying him. "I don't believe it", one middle-aged woman remarked, turning to a friend. "I actually almost feel sorry for that lonely old guy. But then I start to think back…" (p. 227)

What the middle-aged woman thinks back is the realization that Ed Gein is a serial killer who has gutted and skinned at least two ladies in his farm in Plainfield. In *Deviant*, this location becomes the *locus horribilis* which attaches Gein to monstrosity. After Ed's father's

death, the Gein family could not properly make a good living like before. They ran out of money, and improvements around the property were impractical:

> In every essential respect, their house remained the same as it had been in 1914, unequipped with either electricity or indoor plumbing. The only major change was in the deterioration of its once trim exterior. With its flaking gray paint, splintered front steps, poorly patched roof, and sagging porch, the house Augusta had once been so proud of looked weatherworn and increasingly dilapidated. (p. 25)

From this description, the picture readers paint of the farm in their minds is as gothic as the house of Usher, already quoted in Chapter 2. The words 'deterioration' and 'dilapidated' lead the way to a gloomy environment. Outside, the image of decay is in the surroundings, stimulating, to say the least, a sense of discomfort by the putative shrub running over the land as much as by the ruined roof patch and pervasive paint cracks. Inside, the all-time dark rooms for lack of electricity add to the entire premises the negative aspect of horror stories.

Schechter makes the farmstead more fearful by the time he informs us that, after Augusta's death, that gloomy environment has become gloomier:

> Now that he was all alone, Eddie had simply stopped working the place. The front yard was overgrown with weeds, and the pastures were receding to woodland. The last few head of livestock were gone, sold off by Eddie to pay for his mother's funeral. Unused pieces of farming equipment – cultivator, fanning mill, manure spreader – sat rusting in the barnyard. (p. 36-7)

Here, we learn that Gein gives up improving the farm altogether. The unwanted plants I had remarked as being putatively covering the ground is confirmed: weeds have spread all over. Moreover, the mention of rust turns the outside as dark as the inside. But what appears to be worth noting in this second description of the farm is that, without livestock, life in that environment is reduced to only one individual. His loneliness seems to have reached its peak, and the absence of any living being other than the serial killer causes the location to be even more frightening.

Schechter also applies a myriad of gothic qualities to describe the farm: "haunted house" (p. 56), "lonely, decaying farmstead" (p. 75), "death farm" (p. 78), "madhouse" (p. 78), "grotesque furnishings" (p. 78), "human slaughterhouse" (p. 78), "Gein's horror house" (p. 83), and "house of horrors" (p. 119). Interestingly, these qualities, scattered over the narrative, permit Schechter to dehumanize the serial killer to a point where parallelism becomes a mechanism of evaluation: "It was hard to believe that anything human could make its home in such a place" (p. 75). In other words, that myriad of gothic qualities to the farm

forces readers, by following Schechter, to deny Ed Gein a place in the human race. Thus, if not human, the individual who lives in that house has to be something else, or rather has to be as horrible as the house is. By stablishing a parallel between the location and the serial killer, Schechter uses the strategy of the *locus horribilis* to approach monstrosity.

Ed Gein's farmhouse as the *locus horribilis* of *Deviant* tops off with a long description of the indoor artifacts made of human parts. Schechter goes as far as stressing that the disorganized house inside results from an equally disorganized mind, the decoration mimicking the psychopathy. After all this characterization of the space, readers regard Gein and his farm as one. The human-skin objects found everywhere in the house, from soup bowls to lampshades to chairs, are "just too horrible. Horrible beyond belief" (p. 79), as sheriff Arthur Schley underlines – horrible because a product of a monstrous figure living in a monstrous location:

> There were other skullcaps scattered around the place. And there were several complete skulls, too, including a pair that had been stuck on Eddie's bedposts as a decoration. One of the chairs by the kitchen table had a distinctly peculiar look to it. When Captain Schoephoerster bent to examine it, he discovered that the woven cane seat had been replaced by smooth strips of human skin. The underside was lumpy with fat. Four such chairs where eventually found. (p. 78)

The same gothic qualities applied to the farmhouse can also be seen coming along with the description of Ed Gein. In this context, the serial killer's ordinariness fades away to give rise to adjectives which contribute to the transformation of the serial killer into a monster. Not surprisingly, Gein is compared, though covertly, to a Jekyll-and-Hyde behavior: "During the day, his neighbors knew him as a slightly strange but accommodating man […] his nights were spent performing the darkest and most appalling rituals" (p. xii). Intensifiers, such as 'darkest' and 'most' inevitably come to be the stylistic core of hyperbolic depictions of Ed Gein. Sentences to qualify this killer also contain hyperboles. So, George Gein is "the father of an authentic American monster" (p. 10-1); traffic warden Dan Chase just interacted with "America's most notorious maniac" (p. 74); and, after the farm is destroyed by fire, a criminologist agrees that the incident is "a fittingly grotesque finish […] to the most bizarre case in criminal records since medieval times" (p. 212).

In *Deviant*, gothic qualities also convert Ed Gein into a metonymical subject. The description of Gein repeatedly recalls his eyes as a source of fear. In his teenage years, according to Schechter, Gein's madness was already there, but no one was sharp enough to perceive it. Nevertheless, the killer's eyes "shifting around whenever he tried to talk to you" (p. 20) were supposed to give his madness away. Gein's persistent stare is spoken about

whenever the author has the chance to. From time to time, Ed Gein was hired by locals to help harvest crops. At dinnertime, when the meal was over, men used to relax on the grass for a while. Gein would conversely stay at the table:

> […] gazing fixedly at the farmer's wife and daughters as they bustled about the kitchen. Many of the females – even the very young ones – felt a little disconcerted by the way Eddie sat there inspecting them, his lips twisted into that strange little leering half-smile of his" (p. 37).

Schechter additionally underscores that news outlets, eager to profit from the case, gave vent to questionable statements about Gein's cannibalism. A barber claimed Gein had pinched him to check out his flesh, and then, once again, the killer's eye is alluded: "The barber also revealed that, though he 'didn't think too much of the remark at the time', he definitely noticed that 'Gein had a peculiar look in his eye' when he said it" (p. 118). In reality, for some inhabitants, it seems that ultimately it is not the serial killer at all, but his eyes that hold all his monstrosity, as if once taken away, Gein would possibly cease to be monstrous: "Indeed, apart from certain peculiarities – the disconcerting way he would stare fixedly at nurses or any other female staff members who wandered into his line of vision, for example – it was hard to tell that he was particularly crazy at all" (p. 224).

Ed Gein, as aforementioned, was a body snatcher. No one knows for sure but it is said he had probably dug out from graves as many as ten women, all of them resembling his own mother Augusta. In *Deviant*, Harold Schechter reenacts one of these snatches to push readers into graphic descriptions. It is worth noticing that the entire scene counts on two narrative tools: present tense and internal action. The present tense makes the scene livelier as it steps away from the historical past. The internal action, namely the narration of what characters, or subjects, think and feel as opposed to what they say and do (PRINCE, 2003, p. 45), allows us to get inside the killer's mind while he dissects the body of fifty-one-year-old Eleanor Adams.

Schechter does not use the words 'snatch', 'grave', 'dissection', or the like, to describe the scene. But for the adjective "balmy" (p. 58) chosen to qualify the month of August, readers infer that Mrs. Adams is taken from her tomb to Ed Gein's farm. As we read the episode, we note that the present tense is strengthened by a deictic lexis: the words 'tonight' and 'at the moment' forces us to picture the scene as happening now. The internal actions, in turn, let us know that the killer (a) is excited about the body; (b) perceives Mrs. Adams as a doll; and (c) believes Mrs. Adams has a close resemblance to his mother. We even learn that the nasty smell the body gives off disgusts Gein, though it does not prevent

him from dissecting: “Standing by the foot of the bed, he moves her legs apart and, with the lamp in one hand, bends nearer for a better look. Abruptly, he jerks back, repulsed by her smell. Mrs. Adams lies absolutely still” (p. 58-9). It may be contended that this passage implies a mirroring effect, that is, Gein’s reaction to the bad smell instructs readers to react alike. In the end, the sensation is not only the killer’s, but also ours.

The butcher of Plainfield is the moniker the press has given to Ed Gein. His upbringing, his mother, his farm, and his outfit have been remembered in news reports, novels, documentaries, television shows, and even in a low-budget musical[75]. *In Deviant*, Schechter insists on saying that Americans usually mythicize the 1950s for its simplicity and innocence: “the era of sock hops, after-school milkshakes at Pop’s Sweet Shoppe, and Davy Crockett coonskin caps” (p. 64). On the other hand, the author reminds us that the Eisenhower era was a frightening time as well, due to Cold War, A-bomb fears, and the haunting of Second-World-War death camps. Schechter nonetheless remarks that, although political horrors had been in the air in the West and East, the US also suffered from Ed Gein’s multiple murder: “And in mid-November of that year, the country would be jolted again, this time by a crime so appalling that, in a very real sense, American culture still hasn’t recovered from the shock” (p. 64).

People’s reactions to multiple murders is another strategy present in modern true crime accounts to turn multicidals into monsters. As I have pointed out some paragraphs earlier, these reactions are like guidelines for readers, instructing them to mirror, on an ideal level, the townspeople’s emotions. In one of his interviews with locals, Schechter stresses that some would remember Gein positively, as an awkward, yet good worker. In opposition, others would describe Gein as possessing something particularly disturbing, be it his persistent eyes or his mischievous grin. In the townspeople’s perspective, the killer’s facial expression (plus his behavior in general) would change him into a repulsive figure. Gein thus becomes a killer whose physical attributes are to disgust. So repugnant he is that touching him – just like human characters react in the presence of Noel Carroll’s horror monsters – must be avoided:

> ‘He had a sly sort of grin when he would talk to you’, one of Ed’s neighbors told reporters, and a local storekeeper who preferred to remain anonymous admitted that whenever he gave change to Gein, ‘I put on the counter rather than touch his hand’ (p. 115).

[75] The trailer to *Ed Gein: The Musical*, first released in 2010, can be watched here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mt9dFlDiC6k . Last accessed on November 8th, 2020.

3.3.1.2 The Jeffrey Dahmer Story: An American Nightmare

For a multiple murderer who has a killing span of over ten years, Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer should have been able to pass as an ordinary citizen somewhat. It is not any wonder thus that Don Davis describes, in *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, this killer at first as nothing but a middle-class white tall man. Davis brings up reports in which next door neighbors, such as Georgia Scharenberg, recalls Dahmer as a "nice boy" (DAVIS, 1995, p. 23) when he was young – not to mention other childhood acquaintances who would see him as respectful and polite: "Other grown-ups who knew the child concurred that if anything marked Jeffrey's behavior in childhood, it was his sense of politeness and good manners" (p. 23). This initial image of the multiple killer as a run-of-the-mill subject is usually true crime account's first step before moving towards extraordinariness.

In order to present an appealing crime biography, Davis goes little by little into some further information about Dahmer's behavior. The author suggests, for example, that, despite Jeffrey's politeness, his reaction to a fellow's accident suggested lack of compassion: "Although tall for his age, Jeff would not bully smaller classmates, but at the same time, if one were hurt, his reaction was to laugh, not help" (p. 22). And even when the author levels out Dahmer's curiosity about life and death with a typical childhood attitude, he seems to do so as to foreshadow Dahmer's murderous tendencies: "And like many children, even among today's generation, he was fascinated by the mystical nature of things, particularly about how things lived, and how things died" (p. 22).

In 1992, Jeffrey Dahmer was sentenced to sixteen consecutive life imprisonments for killing sixteen men, most of them strangled to death in his townhouse unit 213, on 924 North 25th Street, Milwaukee. It is this place that comes to be the *locus horribilis* of *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*. Dahmer's apartment was infamous for sheltering so much human decomposition. As attested by taphonomic studies, a dead body starts to bloat, with foam leaking from nose and mouth, within about four days, and such information leads Don Davis to first qualify the location as "foul-smelling" (p. 2). The smell, it is important to highlight, is mentioned more than once. For instance, the episode of Konerak Sinthasomphone's escape to the streets is followed by the sentence: "[…] that horrible apartment with its rancid smell" (p. 6). In addition, after killing his eighth victim, "[…] a smell beginning to permeate the air in the hallway" (p. 120-1) annoys neighbors, then some knock on Dahmer's door to inquire what the awful odor was. In fact, the corpses in Dahmer's home are openly communicated

only later in the narrative, but the allusion to them anticipates a mild horror, to say the least, conveyed by the space.

In *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, Don Davis fills up the pages with many gothic-centered phrases in close connection to the apartment. This is the reason why readers come across "slaughterhouse" (p 77), "apartment of death" (p. 145), "torture chamber" (p. 157), "bloody lair" (p. 159), "house of horrors" (p. 202), and "little flat of horrors" (p. 282). By using these phrases, Don Davis tags along after that contemporary transmutation of the urban residence into a *locus horribilis*. In *Deviant*, Ed Gein's farmstead replaces the medieval castles of the eighteenth-century gothic tales because that location still carries similarities to those aristocratic premises, especially for being secluded, run-down, and for holding inside a mother-son secret past. In *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, Dahmer's apartment is not isolated; it is, on the contrary, surrounded by more apartments and next door neighbors. To a certain extent, it is comparable to French literary critic Fanny Lacôte's definition of the neo-Gothic house:

> The neo-Gothic house, though certainly hidden from view by a wall, a hedge of shrubs or thick curtains drawn on the inside, is no longer located in a place cut off from the world. It is in the neighbourhood: one of those houses you can glimpse at from home (you only need to raise a curtain to see it), but, held back by rumours and superstitions, you never really approach it. (2016, p. 208)

Inside those walls, the rancid smell reported to be part and parcel of the killer's private location comes from numerous body remains, from victims of a deranged mind who would respond violently to rejection. As told in Chapter 1, Jeffrey Dahmer wanted to create a zombie through lobotomy procedures, so he could have a submissive lover who would never reject him. In *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, this episode is brought to the trial by defense attorney Gerald Boyle:

> The lawyer then described how Dahmer performed experimental surgery on some of his unconscious victims, drilling hose in their heads while they were still alive and pouring acid into their wounds. Why? "He wanted to create zombies, people who would be there for him". (DAVIS, 1995, p. 286)

In a way, Dahmer's anatomic experiment inside his apartment resembles that of Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll at his laboratory table while blending the last ingredient in his elixir. As a row of attached dwellings sharing side walls, townhouses are expected to be very similar to one another to the point of being identical at times, and hard to distinguish as a result. If neo-Gothic houses sustain rumors and superstitions, displaying thus a certain distinction from other houses nearby, Dahmer's apartment is exactly like the other ones in the

building, without blemishes of any sort to tell us that that location is fearful. On the outside, there is no difference. On the inside, the true crime account reveals that the creation of a zombie is attempted repeatedly, and that the successive failures produce a horrible smell:

> Now that they had the guy, the two cops began to look around at the little one-bedroom apartment. Electrical power tools lay over there near the sofa. Dozens of Polaroid photographs lay about, pictures of bodies that were being chopped up. A bloodstain mottled the bed. A foul stench that could knock down an ox clung to their throats as they looked around. When the refrigerator door was open, a severed human head, the face still on it, stared back at them. all that and much, much more: the blood and memories of many dead men were calling to them from a nightmare landscape of evil. (p. 156)

In the beginning of *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, as stated before, Dahmer is enigmatically referred to as a 'tall man'. Its first pages do not run the risk of despising its main subject too soon: Dahmer is just "the slender white man with the wispy mustache" (p. 8). Nevertheless, once his full name is proffered for the first time, this true crime account unleashes innumerable gothic qualities to exhibit this serial killer as a monster. Progressively, readers pile up negative marks about Jeffrey Dahmer: he suffers from alcoholism; he is racist; he feels contempt for his own homosexuality; he is a liar for saying he was sorry for molesting a child; he first kills when he is eighteen years old; he kills fifteen more nine years later; and he is "a master manipulator" (p. 186).

All this information contributes to guide readers through the killer's personality. In any case, it amounts to him generalities that will be particularized as the account unfolds. For example, the observation of alcoholism leads the way to the dichotomy sobriety versus drunkenness: the image of the nice guy Don Davis calls to our minds every now and then falls flat as soon as that dichotomy comes in. Davis reports that, when sober, Jeffrey Dahmer is a good company for his amiability and a funny company for his jokes. On the other hand, alcohol can ruin Dahmer's temperament to the very opposite:

> But with a snoot full of booze, he would lose what little control he might possess. Then his face would change into an angry mask and the pale eyes would just go empty, and the transformation would inevitably be followed by the shouts, the fights, the surliness, the arguments, and the eruptions of racist epithets. […] he was simply out of control when he was drunk. It was easier just to leave him alone. (p. 57)

This opposition triggered by alcohol imitates the killer's transformation on the verge to murder. Perhaps, the highest peak of this particularization is Dahmer's empty eyes[76], not only underscored in the segment above, but in fact, like Gein's eyes, in other scenes. Don Davis recurrently evokes the eyes to generate a sense of doom, markedly when the victims find the serial killer right in front of them. In this sense, Konerak's brother is believed to have been allured by "a tall blond man with strangely empty eyes" (p. 5-6); Konerak himself had seen "those empty eyes and a face that was suddenly churning with anger" before he died; the city of Milwaukee is not aware of the multiple murderer, "A very ordinary man, tall, slim, and with blond hair and empty eyes […]" (p. 104) on the loose walking its streets; and, again, Davis tells that Konerak "saw those big, glazed eyes and the face of death coming at him and was afraid" (p. 138).

This last scene quoted above, furthermore, offers what may be the most salient transformation of a multiple killer into a monster in this true crime book. After convincing the three police officers that an actual torture was a couple's silly quarrel, Dahmer, hidden by the walls of his apartment, changes his self. The soft-spoken blond man who managed to talk himself out of an arrest expresses all his brutality over a teenage boy too intoxicated to run for his life. The killer depicted at first as a tall man gets metaphorically taller, is compared to a legendary giant, and loses his human characteristics in favor of monstrous ones:

> When he closed the door, knowing that he had won, he began that metamorphosis that changed him almost immediately from a reasonable guy able to chat up a couple of cops, to a terrible ogre with a furious fire in his belly. He quickly did the locks on the door and turned toward the shuddering child across the room. (p. 138)

In horror tales, gothic adjectives (including here the adjective clauses) are important syntactic devices of the narrative. As we read, they furnish us with clues, to say the least, about the character's personality or intentions as she or he moves about the storyworld. Moreover, adjectives may intensify or may soften the impact of a given scene, affecting our perception of the episode being narrated. Likewise, in true crime accounts, writers employ these syntactic devices in great abundance, be it to show or to tell, not surprisingly touching our moral judgment over the subjects. Apparently, in *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, more particularly, gothic adjectives are used to describe more the multiple killer's crimes and less the multiple killer himself – albeit Dahmer is textually called a "monster" (p. 159). For this reason, to give but few examples, the murder of Steven Hicks, Dahmer's first victim,

[76] During my dissertation defense, professor Claudio Zanini reminded me that empty eyes are indicative of demonic possession.

constitutes a "particularly gruesome manner" (p. 14); Dahmer's M. O., namely his body disposal techniques, acquires a "macabre trademark" (p. 14); Konerak Sinthasomphone undergoes a "horrible fate" (p. 76); the suspicion of a victim's family turns into "a terrible sense of certainty" (p. 111); Jeffrey's calls to his victims' families are a "horrifying call" (p. 111); the result of befriending Dahmer is "grim" (p. 85); the solution for disposing the bodies is "a gory one" (p. 86); and messages to Dahmer come from "inner hell" (p. 97).

In Don Davis's true crime account (as in Schechter's), adjectives seem to be the gateway to graphicality. Many of the scenes of Dahmer's murders are detailedly constructed, details which include even an imagined conversation between victim and killer, as in the case of Steven Hicks. Some descriptions of murders are fast on its discourse level, serving to disclose no more than a modus operandi that would be repeated a dozen times in other scenes:

> Dahmer offered a drink. Sure, said Turner. A few gulps and he was out like a light and Dahmer picked up his favorite strap and put it around the throat of the gay black man and tightened it slowly until Turner was breathing no more. Later, he would dismember the body, putting the severed head into his freezer. He later identified Turner as one of those he had killed. Victim Number Fourteen. (p. 140)

Other descriptions take longer. One of them is again the case of Konerak Sinthasomphone. Don Davis disperses the account of this murder over different chapters for the sake of reaching two targets. One is political, as the murder of the Laotian teenage boy set up a great commotion, with activists for child protection joining anti-racist demonstrations to force stiff penalties upon the three police officers. The other target has to do with the rhetoric of monstrosity. Sinthasomphone case is indeed a larger-than-life episode, and the scene of his murder narrated graphically enhances our empathy for the victim (the boy is helpless, naked, crying, cold, disoriented, and bleeding owing to a savage rape) whereas it reinforces our fear of Jeffrey Dahmer for being the monster who terrifies the teenager:

> The legs of the dark-haired, olive-skinned youngster were streaked with some of the blood that had oozed from his violated anus. Tears coated his cheeks with a dry sheen. He was cold, and his head felt stuffed with cotton because he had been drugged. Konerak Sinthasomphone was terrified, trapped in a nightmare on the hard streets of Milwaukee, still unable to do much more than shake his head and softly say, "No". (p. 2)

In *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story,* Don Davis also brings up people's reactions as a narrative strategy to transform Dahmer into a monster. Unlike Schechter's *Deviant,* Davis does not generate reactions from locals, but rather relies on a full-based focalization of Tracy Edwards, the victim who lived to tell the tale. Dahmer and Edwards meet somewhere at a

shopping complex downtown Milwaukee, and then Dahmer, in his typical M. O., offers Edwards some money to take pictures of him. While outdoors, the focus goes alternately from the killer to the victim. But once in Dahmer's apartment, the narrative attaches to Edwards. The author walks into the victim's mind to tell us his thoughts and feelings towards the entire situation.

In this context, we notice that the account runs from understated hints, taken as unimportant, to mortal danger, taken as horrifying. Firstly, an awful smell is detected but not pondered. Secondly, Edwards, the holder of the point of view, sees pictures of torsos of men on the walls, finds them peculiar, and yet he overlooks their hazard: "Those were odd, but Tracy Edwards had seen worse in his life" (p. 150). Thirdly, Dahmer, looking at the aquarium next to the couch, admits his admiration for fish battles, all the more admirable when one fish is maimed or killed. To this, Edwards reacts almost indifferently: "Edwards sipped his beer and figure that watching fish fight was little strange" (p. 150).

The mortal danger takes place by the time the serial killer, giving in to impatience, handcuffs one of the victim's hands. From this point on, Edwards's reaction changes dramatically, as his understatement is replaced by fear. The victim devotes his full attention to the multicidal, not only for the knife held against his chest, but also for the face that "contorted into a mask of hatred and rage" (p. 151). In *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, the transformation of a multiple killer into a monster springs up before the victims' eyes. Tracy Edwards ceases to recognize, given the horror the murderer arouses, Jeffrey Dahmer as a human being – "devil" (p. 151) is the noun to depict him. Edwards is later dragged from the living room to the bedroom, with the walls in there decorated all over by more pictures of torsos. Don Davis admits the reader's close encounter with the victim's perspective to improve our pathetical response to the scene:

> Edwards felt as if he had been marched into a chamber of horrors and was absolutely terrified when Dahmer, the big knife still clutched in his right hand, explained that The Exorcist was his favorite film and that they would watch it for a while. (p. 152)

Tracy Edwards advances from a harmless meeting in the beginning to a near-death experience in the end. At the same time, Dahmer changes rhetorically from a human to a monster. After all these things considered, it is little wonder that the account is able deliver an intense reaction of the victim.

3.3.1.3 The Stranger Beside Me: The Shocking Inside Story of Serial Killer Ted Bundy

It is not too much to say that Ted Bundy's biography of murders has always been in the limelight. Intelligent, cunning, well-spoken, heterosexual and good-looking – as summarized in Chapter 2, the epitome of the white American – Ted Bundy is still nowadays a cognitive challenge for those who wonder why such so-called normal attributes could not prevent him from being a schemer, a multicidal and a necrophiliac. This serial killer's case has been debated, superficially or deeply, by several scholars in several studies. It has furthermore been adapted to novels and movies, and new editions of his crime biography have been published[77] every now and then. Much of the limelight over Bundy, as comments David Schmid in *Natural Born Celebrities* (2005), should be thankful to Ann Rule's *The Stranger Beside Me*:

> In the process, *Stranger* was instrumental in turning Ted Bundy into the world's best-known serial killer, ensuring Bundy a definitional status in the pantheon of serial killers only rivaled by that of Jack the Ripper. Moreover, the success of *Stranger* established that true-crime writers themselves could become celebrities, albeit second-order celebrities, whose fame in some sense depended upon the fame of their criminal subjects. (SCHMID, 2005, 197)

This book has been a best-seller for years, and many agree that its success is explained by the chance meeting between the author and the subject. Rule and Bundy, as mentioned pages earlier, worked together in a hotline suicide center, and then it comes as no surprise that the deictic 'me' in the title of her book refers back to that occasion. In its foreword, the author claims to have been always proud of herself for her "ability to detect aberrance in other humans" (RULE, 2009, p. xxxvi), both through a natural talent and through experience and training. And yet, she acknowledges that this ability came to nothing in her relationship with Ted Bundy – she could not see him as anything extraordinary. Later in her account, Rule reports that his "prosaic appearance" (p. 109) troubled not only her, but also victims and police officers alike. Police artist Ben Smith, for instance, is said to have been puzzled while drawing a composite picture of this serial killer from witnesses' statements, erasing and redrawing it over and over. The composite was supposed to be aired

[77] Take, for instance, *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil, and Vile*, the movie, and *Ted Bundy: Um Estranho ao Meu Lado*, a Brazilian edition to Ann Rule's *The Stranger Beside Me*. Both works were released as recently as 2019.

on TV to help citizens connect the face on paper with any leads for the case. The face though, remarks the author, was decidedly ordinary:

> As soon as the composite appeared on television, hundreds of calls came in. But then "Ted" seemed to have had no particularly unusual characteristics. A good-looking young man appearing to be in his early twenties, blondish-brown hair, a little wavy, even features, no scars, no outstanding differences that might set him apart from hundreds, thousands of young men at the beach. (p. 108, quotes in original)

Ironically, Rule's aberrance-detection ability keeps sabotaging her. Unlike what Harold Schechter and Don Davis do, many are the times in *The Stranger Beside Me* in which Ted Bundy is portrayed positively. I have pointed out earlier that sourcing is essential to the modern true-crime genre because it reiterates trustworthiness. To comply with the facts as much as possible, the true-crime writer maintains information source available within the lines of the book, so readers can establish veracity to what has been informed. To tell readers what the subject looks like, pictures and videos may be the source for authors who have not been in touch with the multiple killer, such as Schechter and Davis. To tell us what the subject is like, interviews with friends and family may serve well. Ann Rule does interview Bundy's relatives (chiefly his ex-girlfriend Carole Ann Boone), but she had also been Bundy's friend herself. This circumstance may have influenced her discursive construction of this serial killer because, on the whole, the rhetoric of monstrosity in *The Stranger Beside Me* appears not to strike readers as harshly as in those two true crime books previously analyzed. For having being close enough to Bundy for months, many depictions of this serial killer assume a positive slant. Their friendship, presumably, motivates a sympathetic standpoint.

We can trace this positive slant whenever the author recollects her days in the Crisis Clinic. She underlines that Ted Bundy, infamously linked later to more than thirty vicious assaults, did his job competently, always trying hard to assist those with suicidal tendencies: "If, as many people believe today, Ted Bundy took lives, he also saved lives. I know he did, because I was there when he did it" (p. 28). What is more, Ted's voice was "courtly" (p. 29) on the phone and, during conversations with her, he was a very good listener: "He was one of those rare people who listen with full attention […]" (p. 29). In her recollections, Bundy was considerate, mannerly and protective to the point of being almost one of a kind for his good qualities:

> Compared to my old friends, the Seattle homicide detectives who routinely saw me leave their offices after a night's interviewing, at midnight in downtown Seattle, with a laughing "We'll watch out the window and if any one mugs you, we'll call 911", Ted was like a knight in shining armor! (p. 37-8)

It is worth comparing Rule's rhetoric with the two true crime accounts debated earlier. In both Schechter's *Deviant* and Davis's *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, albeit their emphasis on ordinariness, the authors do not compassionate with their main subjects. In those accounts, the gothic qualities used on Ed Gein and Jeffrey Dahmer do not recede, not even when we read the technical evaluations (as expected to be unbiased discourses) from experts – psychiatrists, in particular. All in all, the four narrative strategies of rhetoric of monstrosity appear to converge at one aim: to turn an ordinary subject into an extraordinary one. For this, Gein's multicide is constantly showered with superlatives – such as "the grisliest crimes" (SCHECHTER, 1989, p. 114); "the most significant case" (p. 161); "some of mankind's most deranged sex criminals" (p. 174); and "the darkest and most appalling rituals" (p. xii) – as to mold our mental picture of that multiple killer into a trigger for fear. In *Deviant*, additionally, the words "aberration" (p. 135), "ghoul-slayer" (p. 145), and "night-demon" (p. 156) exaggerate Gein's criminal status by marking that his actions have set him, from now on, apart from humanity. In *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, similar moves are adopted. Harold Schechter recurs to Dahmer's school days as a "loner" (DAVIS, 1995, p. 23) and an "oddball" (p. 30) – as much as a probable dog killer (p. 24-5) – to later start to repeatedly label him as a "mass slaughter" (p. 77), a "mass murderer"[78] (p. 104) and a "serial killer" (p. 108).

In *The Stranger Beside Me*, Ted Bundy does not carry such qualities. In this account, there is a sympathetic standpoint which seems to go further, that is, it changes into empathy as the pages turn. While reading the minutiae of Bundy's trial for the abduction of Carol DaRonch, we learn that Rule has exchanged correspondence with him. Her letters, says the author, are vapid and full of trivialities, deliberately avoiding treating, even allusively, the matters of the trial. Rule soon explains that she is held back by an ethical behavior which demands "suspended judgment" (RULE, 2009, p. 229), then she adds: "Until I had proof that Ted was guilty of this, and perhaps of other crimes, I would wait" (p. 229).

Out of the four true-crime books examined in this section, Rule's account is the only one in the first-person. Unlike Capote, Ann Rule does not aspire invisibility to reach objectiveness. On the contrary, she unabashedly embraces the homodiegetic voice the title anticipates to give us access to her feelings for Bundy. The prison facility where she visits him is minutely described: stern guards, claustrophobic atmosphere, and old furniture with dull walls and sagging chairs. The air smells like "stale cigarette smoke, Pine-Sol, urine,

[78] To be specific, this term is used at least four times in Schechter's true crime account.

sweat, and dust" (p. 234). After her observations, Rule concludes Bundy has lived in humiliating conditions, and this humiliation is shared by her, so much so that she refuses at first to look at Bundy when they meet at the prison hall. Consequently, her sympathy becomes empathy:

> I looked to my right and saw the twin towers with guards armed with shotguns. The old prison and the landscape around it seemed to be all the same gray-brown color. A feeling of hopelessness seized me; I could empathize with Ted's despair at being locked up. (p. 233)

Rule avows openly that her narrative style steps away from the violence and bloodshed which commonly reside in true accounts of multicides: "I never wanted to become tough, to seek out the sensational and the gory and I never have" (p. 86). Even though the scrutiny of *The Stranger Beside Me* confirms that Rule's approach to the rhetoric of monstrosity is mild in comparison to *Deviant* and *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, it is still possible to identify the strategies to turn Ted Bundy into a monster.

Unlike Ed Gein and Jeffrey Dahmer, Bundy did not have a 'house of horrors' to where he would often take victims to be tortured, killed, and dismembered. If Schechter and Davis were able to attach more straightforwardly their subjects to a *locus horribilis*, the same could not be done by Ann Rule. Still, once we come across her accounts of the sorority houses, we realized her effort to make those locations into sites of fear.

In a newspaper article of 2018[79], Deena Williams Newman, who was a college student at Florida State University in 1978, recollects the night in which Ted Bundy broke into the Chi Omega dormitories to fatally assault Lisa Levy and Margaret Bowman, and injured three more girls. Newman had been living in a house a block away from Chi Omega, but she underlines the dread which took over all the sorority houses of the neighborhood. In the article, she labels that time as "scary days" and reproduces a picture of a handwritten sign strongly recommending students to lock the windows and bolt the doors "until the man is caught".

In *The Stranger Beside Me*, Rule seems to want to replicate rhetorically the same fearful environment as in Newman's recollections. She uses instead an interview with a young woman who had been a Chi Omega tenant during Bundy's attack to bring to the fore the elements to turn the dormitory into a horrible milieu. Rule recurrently gives vent to

[79] The article "40 Years Ago, Ted Bundy Terrified City With Chi Omega Murders", from the newspaper *Tallahassee Democrat*, can be found in full version at https://www.tallahassee.com/story/life/2018/01/13/lest-we-forget-remembering-margaret-and-lisa/1026999001/ . Last accessed on November 21st, 2020.

inexplicable incidents as to build up a supernatural overtone out of natural affairs. To Rule, the young woman states that the house had been empty for some hours – because "For some reason, we were all gone Saturday afternoon, even the housemother" (RULE, 2009, p. 510) – and later their cat was mysteriously frightened, desperately wanting to leave the house: "It ran through our legs and out the door – and it didn't come back for two weeks" (p. 510). Moreover, the woman reports that the students were restless and apprehensive inside the house, though there was nothing so far to explain such a feeling: "She said some of the girls had felt the presence of a kind of evil that night. […] at least two of the girls who were upstairs in the sleeping area had experienced stark terror, a free-floating dread with nothing to pin it to" (p. 510-1).

To determine the close connection between multicide and *locus horribilis*, the depictions of Gein's farm and Dahmer's apartment wallow in gothic lexis. In comparison, Rule does not furnish her account of the events in the sorority houses with so many gothic words, but she crafts victims' statements over a suspenseful diegesis, and in so doing she shifts the dormitories, supposed to shelter and safeguard, into horrible premises, where residents expect to be assaulted at any moment by somebody lurking in the corners:

> She saw that the lights were out in the hallway. They were almost always on, and it was pitch-dark – but she just had a little way to walk to touch the switch. But she said she suddenly felt such unreasoning terror – as if something awful was waiting for her. She had a terrible cough and she really needed a drink of water – but she backed into her room and locked the door. She didn't come out until the police banged on the door later… (p. 511)

This clean-cut all-American serial killer, who is distinguishable for his physical and intellectual features, is rhetorically remodeled as a monster under the same gothic qualities as those utilized for Ed Gein and Jeffrey Dahmer. Rule reminds readers that Ted Bundy "obviously had to be quite intelligent, attractive, and charming" (p. 113); and that his M. O. demanded him to look trustable: "None of the eight girls would have gone with a man who had not seemed safe, whose manner was not so urbane and ingratiating that their normal caution […] would have been ignored" (p. 113-4). But in contrast, he is equally described as a "sexual psychopath" (p. 113), a "mass killer" (p. 213), a "mass murderer" (p. 315), a "serial killer" (p. 612) as well as a "demon" (p. 241), a "monster" (p. 545), and a "vampire" (p. 598).

Like Schechter and Davis, Ann Rule frequently calls the reader's attention to the killer's eyes, said to be "pitiless" (p. 155), "glassy" (p. 399), and frightening: "I was almost going to… until I noticed his eyes… they were very weird and they gave me the creeps" (p.

116). Additionally, the doppelganger phenomenon of Jekyll and Hyde is called upon in Rule's strategies, for the author asserts that she ended up clashing with "*two* Teds" (p. 618, italics in original). She notes, based on Ted Bundy's ex-girlfriend's testimonies, that his manners could quickly change to extremes: "suddenly from one of warmth and affection to cold fury" (p. 203), and that there was a part of this murderer no one knew but his victims: "If all the off-the-record and off-the-tape remarks made by Ted Bundy are to be given weight, there is, indeed, a side to the man never revealed to anyone but his alleged victim – and they cannot talk" (p. 384). By the end of the book, Rule conjectures – very similarly to what Stephen G. Michaud's conclusions talked over in chapter 2 – that she had befriended a double-persona man: "One is the young man who sat beside me two nights a week in Seattle's Crisis Clinic. The other is the voyeur, the rapist, the killer, and the necrophile" (p. 618).

Aside from the fact that these gothic qualities also apply to the two previous multicidals, Rule brings something singular to Bundy's monstrosity: fantastic characteristics. The author, at times, expresses her own astonishment for the murderer being so manipulative as though he had certain non-human or superhuman powers, such as to recognize vulnerabilities: 'Had the man who approached these young women divined somehow that he had come upon his victims at a time when they were particularly vulnerable […]? It would almost seem so" (p. 164). Besides, she wonders why victims appear to be unreasonably suggestible and be convinced to follow Ted Bundy due merely to his smooth eloquence:

> The general consensus of opinion was that it was only one man who was responsible for the girls' vanishing, and we were trying to figure out what ruse he could use that would put the women at ease enough so that they would drop their natural caution. (p. 95)

By the same token, Ted Bundy obtains fantastic skills for moving stealthily while abducting victims from dorms and alleyways. She tells us that this serial killer could assault so quietly and quickly that his presence could be proved by the abductions, yet he could never be seen. In some scenes, his abilities resemble those of a ghost-like creature that suddenly vanishes without a trace: "The runner [Ted Bundy] had leapt over the retaining wall, directly into the backyard of The Oak… and disappeared" (p. 361). Lastly, after going into the fruitless tips offered by citizens to the police, Rule declares that "'Ted' had been seen here, there, everywhere – and nowhere" (p. 115, quotes in original), just as if this murderer were at once a ghost – for not being found anywhere – and omnipresent, able to be in all places simultaneously. Based on these statements, we notice that the rhetoric about Bundy

shapes him at times into a fantastic being, as though a serial killer, for slaying so many so furtively, could transcend the physical nature. The author converts a multicidal into an otherworldly figure by foregrounding actions which indicate his features can go beyond human possibilities.

In a deliberate attempt to weaken sensational appeals, the descriptions of Ted Bundy's assaults on victims come, more often than not, in a technical dress. Sourcing on victimology consists of information supplied mostly by county sheriffs, investigators, pathologists, and coroner's officers. Along with Ann Rule, these professionals explain crime investigations, evidence collection, forensic procedures, and corpse inquests. Despite her attempt to technicalize the descriptions of the assaults, the author does not fully overshadow the graphicality of the scenes, consequently giving room to sensationalism.

Rule's expositions of crime scenes and dead bodies are followed by hyperbolic remarks to make Ted Bundy's monstrosity appalling. The use of adjectives as a gateway to graphicality is found in *The Stranger Beside Me*, as proven by the words 'shocking' and 'bizarre' applied to describe the killer's attack on Joni Lenz, whose brutality astonishes even those seasoned officers:

> The year had barely begun when there was a shocking attack on a young woman who lived in a basement room […]. It happened sometime during the night of January 4, and it was bizarre enough that Detective Joyce Johnson mentioned it to me. Johnson, with twenty-two years on the force, dealt with crimes every day that would upset most laymen, but this assault had disturbed her mightily. (p. 56)

This narrative strategy of focusing on the reactions of legal professionals contributes to the monster discourse. Rule emphasizes how dreadful the murders are as she focuses on sensations engendered by the serial killer's multicides: "Pathologist Wood had been in practice for sixteen years; he had never seen anything like what he was seeing before him" (p. 343).

By claiming that these assaults disturb experienced legal professionals – those who are supposed to be unimpressionable before homicides, since they are in touch with crimes on a regular basis – the author singles out Ted Bundy as a subject who must be assessed differently. That is to say, he is to be regarded as monstrous as his attacks on the girls he murders. As a result, the more sensations she underlines, the more graphic her descriptions of assaults tend to be. Once she asserts that Bundy's multicides have stupefied long-serving law enforcement agents, she seems to be compelled to excite reader's emotions accordingly, and to do so, she exploits the vivid details of the conditions of victims' bodies as much as Don Davis and Harold Schechter do in their true crime accounts:

> As they approached her bed, they were horrified to see that her face and hair were covered with clotted blood. She was unconscious. Joni Lenz had been beaten with a metal rod wrenched from the bed frame, and when they pulled the covers away, they were stunned to see that the rod had been jammed viciously into her vagina, doing terrible damage to her internal organs. (p. 57)

The emphasis on the professionals' reactions seems to run parallel with other people's reactions to Ted Bundy's multicide, especially Ann Rule's. She constantly harps on the fact that this multicidal's behavior did not hold any useful clue about his psychopathy while they had worked together. For the author, the conflation of the killer's kindness towards her and his savagery over victims challenged her cognition so radically that denial appears to be her defense. The set of evidence collected (the statement of victim Carol DaRonch, the burglary tools found in his VW Bug, and his identification in a police line-up) had turned Ted Bundy into a prime suspect; and Rule herself had given investigators leads to follow up. However, she would not believe her friend was a serial killer: "I didn't want to be right. I didn't want to be right at all" (p. 177). In her view, this multicidal was somebody that puzzled her, a person that she ultimately could not understand: "There is a vast gray area somewhere in between that I have never been able to clearly define" (p. 179).

In *The Stranger Beside Me*, Ann Rule foregrounds the reactions of both the law enforcement professionals and her own to transform the serial killer into a monster. Possibly to avoid a vicarious response to the assaults (as Rule had not been to the crime scenes), she reports the doctors' and police officers' reactions to Ted Bundy's brutality. In order to arouse the reader's empathy, the author speculates upon the victims' future and how successful they could have been had they been alive: "Just two more quarters and Lynda would have graduated from the University, would have taken a job where she would have been of infinite help to the retarded children […]" (p. 64). But her reaction repeatedly concentrates on her own astonishment for finding out that the man beside her in the Crisis Clinic had been the monster she regarded as a kind friend:

> When I said goodbye to Ted and Meg in December 1973, I truly didn't expect to see him again; our bond had been through the Crisis Clinic and we were both moving away from that group. I had no way of knowing that Ted Bundy would one day change *my* life profoundly. (p. 48, italics in original)

3.3.1.4 In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences

For those who inhabit or visit Holcomb, Kansas, the quadruple mass murder that took place on River Valley Farm on November 15th 1959 has been nowadays brought back to mind by a memorial plaque that reads "Holcomb Community Park: Dedicated to the Herb & Bonnie Clutter Family"[80]. This plaque pays homage to Herbert, Bonnie Mae and their two children, sixteen-year-old Nancy and fifteen-year-old Kenyon, all killed by parolees Richard Hickock and Perry Smith. Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, first released as a four-part serial in the weekly magazine *The New Yorker* in 1965 and then published as a book the next year, details this mass murder. Despite the plaque, it is this true crime account that has made this multicide timeless.

In Cold Blood has been controversial since its publication, for both its classification – dubbed by Capote as a new genre, the 'nonfiction novel' – and its selection, that is to say, for the events on which Capote deliberately chose to focus as well as for those he chose to dismiss. Of the four books analyzed, In *Cold Blood* might be the one which keeps the rhetoric of monstrosity to the minimum, and it seems so for its depiction of the multicidals. As Ann M. Algeo observes, while quoting biographer Kenneth Reed, "Capote represents Hickock and Smith as moral perversion of decent men brought about by poverty, violence, and ill-luck that reached back for at least one generation" (quoted in ALGEO, 2009, p. 105). In plain English, their narrative representation regards what both criminals could have become had they had the ways and means for social mobility. The A-grade schoolboy Hickock, as pointed out in chapter 1, played sports skillfully, but his family lacked the financial means to put him through college. Though potentially talented, he had only menial jobs which would not pay off the high expenses he had after getting married and fathering three children. Likewise, Perry Smith – whose parents were rodeo performers who moved from town to town to make a living – never had proper schooling, lived for years in a truck, and had only enough money to survive.

The controversy of *In Cold Blood* centers on this allegedly sympathetic depiction of Hickock and Smith, whose backgrounds are inspected more closely than those of the victims. Herbert and Bonnie Clutters were survived by their two oldest daughters, Beverly and

[80] This information is given in the news article "In Cold Blood, Half a Century On", written by Ed Pilkington for the British daily newspaper *The Guardian*. The full version of this article can be found here: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/nov/16/truman-capote-in-cold-blood . Last accessed on December 21st, 2020.

Eveanna, who were staying elsewhere the night the family was killed. Capote affirmed and reaffirmed to have collected several testimonies, and yet he did not interview these daughters or reached them out to fact check what he had put on paper. This matter has been a frequent complaint concerning Capote's selection, so much so that, in 2018, filmmaker Joe Berlinger released *Cold Blooded: The Clutter Family Murders*, a docuseries which promised to seal the gaps open by Capote's focus on the killers. In an interview, Berlinger claims that:

> "It's just it's the first time anyone, I believe, has really pulled back, really focused on what was the family like and who they are and humanizing them, how did the investigation unfold. [It's] a little bit about how the reality differs a little bit from the [Capote] book."[81]

It was pointed out previously that Truman Capote sought to be invisible in his true crime narrative. In his possibly most oft-cited interview[82], Capote avers that a successful nonfiction novel should attempt to be plausible without containing an intrusive author's voice:

> "My feeling is that for the nonfiction-novel form to be entirely successful, the author should not appear in the work. Ideally. Once the narrator does appear, he has to appear throughout, all the way down the line, and the I-I-I intrudes when it really shouldn't. I think the single most difficult thing in my book, technically, was to write it without ever appearing myself, and yet, at the same time, create total credibility".

Still, some of us may contend that his invisibility applies better to his textual voice than to his selections. In this same interview, Capote is asked if he finds it difficult to put forward his own viewpoint, especially in the case of Perry Smith's reasons to shoot an entire family to death, and then he answers that it is by selecting what to tell that he expresses his personal angle:

> "Of course it's by the selection of what you choose to tell. […] I could have added a lot of other opinions. But that would have confused the issue, and indeed the book. I had to make up my mind and move toward that one view, always. You can say that the reportage is incomplete. But then it has to be. It's a question of selection, you wouldn't get anywhere if it wasn't for that".

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[81] Although Berlinger was interviewed by newspaper *Kansas City Star*, this quote comes from Amelia McDonnell-Parry's article "Cold Blooded: New Docuseries Picks Up Where 'In Cold Blood' Left Off", of January 22nd 2018. Link to the article: https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/cold-blooded-new-docuseries-picks-up-where-in-cold-blood-left-off-118056/ . Last accessed on December 27th 2020.

[82] On January 16th 1966, American journalist George Plimpton interviews Capote for the newspaper *The New York Times*. Plimpton devotes all his questions to the newly-published *In Cold Blood*. The interview can be read in full here: https://movies2.nytimes.com/books/97/12/28/home/capote-interview.html . Last accessed on December 28th 2020.

Even though, some lines earlier, I asserted that Capote's narrative representation of the mass murderers takes into account what both could have been, his interview discloses a biased approach in favor of Perry Smith. If textually Capote emphasizes that both multicidals did not stand a chance of social mobility; in reality he believes that only Smith would have markedly had a different outcome under better conditions. Apparently, for the writer, whereas Hickock is a natural-born criminal, inherently antagonistic and antisocial, Smith was supposed to be an artist by means of his talent and sensitivity:

> "Of course, there wasn't anything peculiar about Dick's social position. He was a very ordinary boy who simply couldn't sustain any kind of normal relationship with anybody. If he had been given $10,000, perhaps he might have settled into some small business. But I don't think so. He had a very natural criminal instinct towards everything. He was oriented towards stealing from the beginning. On the other hand, I think Perry could have been an entirely different person. I really do. His life had been so incredibly abysmal that I don't see what chance he had as a little child except to steal and run wild. […] Terrifying. Perry had extraordinary qualities, but they just weren't channeled properly to put it mildly. He was a really a talented boy in a limited way - he had genuine sensitivity - and, as I've said, when he talked about himself as an artist, he wasn't really joking at all".

Perry Smith is above all a complex presence in the book, capable of overwhelming readers for his nice touch (as he places a pillow beneath Kenyon's head), consideration (as he lies Mr. Clutter on a mattress), and ethical principles (as he stops Hickock from raping Nancy), showing all of these qualities right before pulling the trigger four times at the family members' heads. In contrast, Richard Hickock has a straightforward presence because he is depicted the way a criminal is expected to: he is shallow (as he cannot follow Perry's philosophical escapades), murderous (as he plans on eliminating all witnesses), and a pedophile (as he attempts to seduce young girls).

In *In Cold Blood*, this contrast is stretched to the limit, for Capote seems to want us to perceive how distant, albeit partners, the multicidals are from one another. In a scene during their conversation over where to escape to, Perry Smith has a Phillips 66 map of Mexico with handmade circles around regions such as Cozumel, Acapulco and Sierra Madre, places chosen for granting a hedonistic future with casinos, beautiful ladies, and gold hunting: "So why shouldn't they, the two of them, buy a pair of pack horses and try their luck in the Sierra Madre?" (CAPOTE, 1993, p. 15). Immediately, Hickock, qualified as practical by Capote, shatters his companion's dreams by reminding him that his all-romantic view of the future must include backlashes and hostile responses of reality:

> But Dick, the practical Dick, had said, "Whoa, honey, whoa. I seen that show. Ends up everybody nuts. On account of fever and bloodsuckers, mean conditions all

> around. Then, when they got the gold – remember, a big wind came along and blew it all away?" (p. 15)

Besides, as to ratify what is laid down in the interview aforementioned, Capote foregrounds Smith's artistic aspirations as he tells us what is inside the killer's mind. Born and raised among entertainers, Perry wishes to be an artist, like his parents had once been. Thus, he recurrently daydreams of performing his songs about "Singing parrots bringing April spring…" (p. 16) at a night club in Las Vegas before an audience made of celebrities. Again, Hickock, qualified as literal-minded this time, frustrates his friend's intentions, marking that parrots are not able to sing, a point that pulls Perry once more down to reality: "'Parrots don't sing. Talk, maybe. Holler. But they sure as hell don't sing'" (p. 16).

These distinctions between the two multicidals have a strategic reason why that can be explained through the rhetoric of monstrosity. Perry Smith is depicted as sensitive, romantic, artistic, and morally upright. On the other hand, he is the one who murdered all the four Clutters in cold blood. In fact, Smith is complex because he is a cognitive challenge, a figure (similar to Ted Bundy) whose killing act raises more question marks than full stops. The multicidals' features, repeatedly highlighted by Truman Capote in the beginning of his true crime account, erroneously push readers to the conclusion that Richard Hickock must have done the killings – or at least that both did. The moment we learn that Smith alone assassinated the entire family, the pieces of the puzzle do not fit together, and consequently all his positive traits (recalling Jeffrey Cohen's seventh monster thesis) have to be reevaluated.

Although I, following other scholars (ALGEO, 2009; NUTTAL, 2009), have asserted that the two multicidals receive a sympathetic narrative depiction, I should also contend that *In Cold Blood* presents the four narrative strategies of the rhetoric of monstrosity. Probably because he is friends with the mass murderers, Capote conveys the impression to be as involved with his subjects as Ann Rule is with hers. To be more specific, the friendship the author and the killers (mainly Perry Smith) developed over the five years numerous appeals had deferred these multicidals' capital punishment, may have influenced not only Capote's opinion about them, but also his positive standpoint in the narrative. In any case, though Capote maintains his positive depiction of Hickock and Smith, we can still unearth the strategies he utilizes to change both multiple killers into monsters.

In *In Cold Blood*, the crime scene is the *locus horribilis* of the account. River Valley Farm where four corpses lay inside grows into the gothic setting which compounds the negative outlook of the town. In the first paragraphs of the book, the description of the village

of Holcomb evokes a desert-looking environment: a "lonesome area" (CAPOTE, 1993, p. 3) where streets are "unnamed, unshaded, unpaved, turn from the thickest dust into the direst mud" (p. 3). Besides, the signs are dark, the windows are dirty, the post office falls apart, the train station is empty, and the storehouse is melancholic: "The depot itself, with its peeling sulphur-colored paint, is equally melancholy" (p. 4).

By the same token, readers are told that River Valley Farm is isolated, placed away from other farms and houses. The 1960-photographs of the Clutters' premises[83] display a remote land constituted by a main house, a small house (for the resident employee), silage towers, extended barns, and a livestock corral. The long private lane (dry and dusty all along) leading to the farmhouse is flanked on both sides by some Chinese elms and, adding up to all that, Capote's account lets us know that the location is faraway, for neighbors are not easily reachable: "The Stoeckleins and their three children lived in a house not a hundred yards from the main house; except for them, the Clutters had no neighbors within half a mile" (p. 12).

In the third part of the book, entitled "Answer", Perry Smith confesses having shot the four members of the family. This admission of guilt mirrors Capote's portrayal of the Clutters' residence given that Smith's detailing of the mass murder contributes to convert the farm into a horrible location. The killer tells the investigators that the time is past midnight and that the shadows of the trees allow them to lurk around. Once inside the house, his narrative focuses on the pervasive darkness (as only the moon brightened the office) and the sounds of nature (as silence is interrupted by the windy air and the moving branches):

> "The door was unlocked. A side door. It took us into Mr. Clutter's office. Then we waited in the dark. Listening. But the only sound was the wind. There was quite a little wind outside. It made the trees move, and you could hear the leaves. The one window was curtained with Venetian blinds, but the moonlight was coming through. I closed the blinds, and Dick turned on his flashlight". (p. 236)

We should bear in mind that these descriptions precede the brutal encounter between killers and victims, a fact that accounts for the suspenseful mood of the scene.

Extraordinarily, both the third-person Capote and the first-person Smith characterize the farmhouse and its surroundings through the narrative strategy of *locus horribilis*. The former portrays the residence as gothic as the village whereas the latter introduces the interior of the house as gloomy and ill-fated. It is not too much to say that, even if it is unsurprising

[83] Old images of the Clutter farm (front view and overview) can be seen in this article: https://www.inman.com/2019/10/24/in-cold-blood-home-site-of-clutter-murders-hits-the-market/ . Up-to-date ones (overview only) can be seen in this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2O-OJRyQeQ8 . Last accessed on January 1st, 2021.

that the author selects (or manipulates[84], as he puts it) what he chooses to tell, it is striking that the killer also narrates his confession strategically under the rhetoric of monstrosity. Indeed, Perry Smith is introduced to readers as a "dictionary buff" (p. 22), a grammar-conscience criminal peculiarly fond of fancy words. But even having this ability, it is unlikely that he could manage to intentionally paint the farm as a horrible milieu. The quotation marks throughout Smith's speech indicates that what we have been reading is a verbatim report of his confession. However, the unearthing of the narrative strategy of *locus horribilis* may show us that there is more of Capote in Smith's voice than it should in this true crime book. At any rate, the manipulation of the description of the town of Holcomb and River Valley Farm towards negative features attests to an attempt to arouse the affect of fear in readers.

When comparing the operation of hyperbolic sentences to enhance monstrosity, we note that Harold Schechter and Don Davis make thorough use of them while at the same time Ann Rule populates her true crime narrative with few hyperboles. Truman Capote in turn keeps this figure of speech to a minimum in his account, probably by reason of his urge to be invisible. Still, in *In Cold Blood*, readers can spot hyperboles in some moments, such as in investigator Alvin Adams Dewey's reaction to the mass murder. His feeling matters because it is an instance in which a trained man in law enforcement, having been a sheriff and an FBI agent in at least five states, is conspicuously affected by the multicide. Capote introduces this agent by using the same approach Ann Rule does in *The Stranger Beside Me*: state the legal professionals' background and then focus on their reaction to accentuate the dreadfulness of the crime. In this way, when readers first learn about Alvin Dewey, his credentials are immediately brought to the fore:

> For Dewey, himself a former sheriff of Finney County (from 1947 to 1955) and, prior to that, a Special Agent of the F. B. I. (between 1940 and 1945 he had served in New Orleans, in Saint Antonio, in Denver, in Miami, and in San Francisco), was professionally qualified to cope with even as intricate an affair as the apparently motiveless, all but clueless Clutter murders. (p. 80)

The hyperbolic sentence is supposed to function as a tool to singularize the crime so that the perpetrator emerges as a monster. Agent Alvin Dewey, even having investigated numerous homicides, declares to have never experienced such a case: "'Because I've seen some bad things, I sure as hell have. But nothing so vicious as this'" (p. 80). This statement contributes to the monster discourse and Capote selects it aiming to impact readers, showing us that this mass killing is one of a kind, dreadful enough to impress a seasoned legal professional.

[84] Please, check George Plimpton's interview with Truman Capote for *The New York Times*.

The fact that Capote keeps hyperboles to the minimum may reflect upon the gothic qualities he attributes to his criminal subjects. The author is not so regular in the application of this narrative strategy to transform Smith and Hickock into monsters, but we can spot these qualities in his account. For example, a recurrent source of fear in the three books previously analyzed is the eyes, and *In Cold Blood* also dedicates some lines to this element. On their way to River Valley Farm, the multiple killers decide to stop by a service station to fill the gas tank. The mention of the time and conditions of the space already creates a gothic atmosphere: "No one was abroad at this nearly midnight hour, and nothing was open except a string of desolately brilliant service stations. Dick turned into one – Hurd's Phillips 66" (p. 53). Hickock buys some candies while waiting for Smith to use the men's room, and, in the meantime, he stares at the store clerk, who reports being frightened by those eyes: "The attendant, whose name was James Spor, felt uneasy. Dick's eyes and sullen expression and Perry's strange, prolonged sojourn in the lavatory disturbed him" (p. 54). Similarly, Marie Dewey adverts to the murderers' eyes by the time she looks at pictures of them. Alvin Dewey, her husband, hands her police-made mug shots of Hickock and Smith, and Mrs. Dewey, after a short examination, comments that their eyes are "mean" (p. 164); Hickock's, in particular, is able to evoke memories of terror:

> Marie, transfixed by Hickock's eyes, was reminded of a childhood incident – of a bobcat she'd once seen caught in a trap, and of how, though she'd wanted to release it, the cat's eyes, radiant with pain and hatred, had drained her of pity and filled her with terror. (p. 164)

If both Richard Hickock and Perry Smith are frightening for their eyes, the latter goes further as his gothic qualities blend the opposed categories of human and animal as well. In a scene in which Smith, who is said to be small but dangerous, is compared to a venomous spider, this blend is subtle: "Yeah, he's little. But so is a tarantula" (p. 340). In another scene, on the other hand, Capote focalizes the investigator Harold Nye in order to clearly enhance the killer's animal features. In the interrogation room, Nye looks at the multicidal through a one-way observation window. As he can see Smith, but cannot hear what he says, Nye zeroes in on aspects other than questions and answers: his small feet, short legs, dark skin, stiff hair and disproportional head. Following up, the investigator stresses Smith's tongue: "But this chunky, misshapen child-man was not pretty; the pink end of his tongue darted forth, flickering like the tongue of a lizard" (p. 224). This human/animal coupling evidences the rhetoric of monstrosity as well as it takes us back to Nöel Carol's definition of a horror monster: a man as dangerous as a tarantula is threatening; this man with a lizard-like tongue

is also abnormal. Finally, this blend of opposed categories may have, later in the account, triggered the comments which drag these multicidals further away from human characteristics. Mr. Clutter's brother declares he wants "to see what kind of animals they are" (p. 280) and Perry Smith himself, feeling unremorseful, concludes that "Maybe we're not human" (p. 291).

Similar to what Ann Rule does, Capote restrains his use of gothic lexis, and hence the graphicality readers would expect to find while reading details about the murders is kept in check. It is true that the local radio station announcer relies on sensationalistic vocabulary to describe the multicide: "A tragedy, unbelievable and shocking beyond words struck four members of the Herb Clutter family late Saturday night or early today. Death, brutal and without apparent motive…" (p. 69-70, ellipsis in original). Likewise, the author employs this lexis to underscore some reactions to the crime: "amazement, shading into dismay; a shallow horror sensation that cold springs of personal fear swiftly deepened" (p. 70). Apart from these two instances, Capote seems to be unwilling to dive so profoundly into gothic words during his report on the night of the multicide.

Regardless, readers are still able to pinpoint graphic details when voice is given to teacher Larry Hendricks, one of the first to see the dead bodies. His statement is calculatedly preceded by the account of teenage girls Nancy Ewalt and Susan Kidwell in which a suspenseful diegesis takes place. From this moment on, Capote counts on the scene-by-scene nonfiction device to construct the segment and, as he slows down the pace of the narrative, suspense surfaces. We are first presented to Nancy's Sunday routine of being driven up to River Valley Farm so she could go to church with the Clutters. The family customarily answers the door quickly, but we are told that, after knocks and bellringings, nobody comes for her: "She knocked, rang, and at last walked around to the back of the house" (p. 58). The scene grows suspenseful because the author informs us that a routine has been broken, for the Clutters should have already been ready to go. Nancy Ewalt then heads to Susan's apartment to ask her about the family's whereabouts, but Susan is as clueless as she is. They both resolve to enter the farmhouse and then suspense emerges again:

> "Then I noticed something funny: Nancy's purse. It was lying on the floor, sort of open. We passed on through the dining room, and stopped at the bottom of the stairs. Nancy's room is just at the top. I called her name, and started up the stairs, and Nancy Ewalt followed. The sound of our footsteps frightened me more than anything, they were so loud and everything else was so silent. Nancy's door was open. The curtains hadn't been drawn, and the room was full of sunlight. I don't remember screaming. Nancy Ewalt says I did – screamed and screamed. I only remember Nancy's Teddy bear staring at me. And Nancy. And running…" (p. 60, ellipsis in original)

The narrative moves along with the girls' point of view, underlining every detail: the purse on the floor, the silence, the calling out in vain, the creaking sounds, and the open curtains. All these elements rise to a crescendo which culminates in the encounter with Nancy Clutter's body. Usually, readers of *In Cold Blood* are already familiar with what happened and who has done it, that is, we know beforehand the account centers on murders and identified criminals. In this sense, suspense does not emerge from lack of certainty on the part of the reader, but rather from the accumulation of elements aided by the scene-by-scene construction.

Nevertheless, it is Larry Hendricks, and not the teenagers, who is responsible for the graphicality of the descriptions of the corpses – surprisingly, their suspenseful diegesis paves the way to mild graphic details. As the multicidals used the same M. O. to commit their murders – mouth taped, wrists and ankles roped, shot in the head – the teacher's descriptions of the dead bodies are alike. We learn, for example, that Nancy Clutter:

> "[…] was pretty bad. That wonderful girl – but you would never have known her. She'd been shot in the back of the head with a shotgun held maybe two inches away. She was lying on her side, facing the wall, and the wall was covered with blood" (p. 62).

Despite the same fashion, we come across some small-scale differences while reading the descriptions of the remaining bodies. These differences add minute details to the graphicality of the scene, causing the account to be slightly more appalling. Thus, unlike her daughter, Bonnie Mae has her eyes open "As though she were still looking at the killer" (p. 63); Kenyon, also gagged and tied, is the member that "haunts [Larry Hendricks] the most […]" (p. 64) for being "the most recognizable" (p. 64), though the teenage boy has been shot in the face too; and Herbert Clutter, taped and roped like the others, had his throat sliced open before the headshot:

> Well, I took one look at Mr. Clutter, and it was hard to look again. I knew plain shooting couldn't account for that much blood. And I wasn't wrong. He'd been shot, all right, the same as Kenyon – with the gun held right in front of his face. But probably he was dead before he was shot. Or, anyway, dying. Because his throat had been cut, too. (p. 64-5)

Biographer Gerald Clarke reminds us that Truman Capote's original concern about the Clutter case had been the effect of the multicide on the townspeople, rather than the murderers themselves, who were unidentified and on the loose when the author initiated his enterprise:

> When he appeared at *The New Yorker* to show Mr. Shawn the clipping, the identity of the killer, or killers, was still unknown, and might never be known. But that, as he made clear to Shawn, was beside the point, or at least the point he wanted to make. What excited his curiosity was not the murders, but their effect on that small and isolated community. (CLARKE, 2005, p. 318-9)

This point is important because it leads us to the last narrative strategy of the rhetoric of monstrosity: people's reactions. The village of Holcomb was small and slow-paced, with a population of 270 in 1959. In the first pages of *In Cold Blood*, Capote makes it clear that Holcombites were not accustomed to "exceptional happenings" (p. 5), and had always known and cherished one another: "sufficiently unfearful of each other to seldom trouble to lock their doors" (p. 5). After the mass murder, this village, a quasi-utopian ground when portrayed by the author, becomes dystopic, a place where ordinariness gives room to suspicion and fear turns pervasive: "[…] those somber explosions that stimulated fires of mistrust in the glare of which many old neighbors viewed each other strangely, and as strangers" (p. 5).

Capote's concern has its part to play as reactions are brought to the fore in the narrative every now and then. For instance, after describing the four corpses, Larry Hendricks is walking back home when he sights the Clutter's dog. The view of the pet stirs his feelings, and thus his speech shows gothic words:

> "I'd been too dazed, too numb, to feel the full viciousness of it. The suffering. The horror. They were dead. A whole family. Gentle, kindly people, people *I* knew – *murdered*. You had to believe it, because it was really true". (p. 66, italics in original)

Few pages later, the topic of mistrustful neighbors comes up in the voice of one of the villagers. At this point of the true crime account, the perpetrators are still unknown, so Mrs. Clare echoes the author by asseverating that anyone in town is a potential killer:

> […] "The man in the airplane. The one Herb sued for crashing into his fruit trees. If it wasn't him, maybe it was you. Or somebody across the street. All the neighbors are rattlesnakes. Varmints looking for a chance to slam the door in your face. It's the same the whole world over. You know that". (p. 69)

All of these testimonies – whose examples can be stretched[85] – testify to the pervasive fear overrunning the small town. This fear has to do with a change of behavior and perspective. On behavior, all doors must be locked; on perspective, all friends must be suspected. The mass murdering of Richard Hickock and Perry Smith engenders this shift, for

[85] To give but one more instance, Mrs. Dewey asks her husband: "Alvin, do you think we'll ever get back to normal living?" (p. 105).

those who commit such a horrible crime cannot (as Smith himself puts it) be human. But in a true crime account, they must be turned into monsters, otherwise fear does not impact readers. Paradoxically, the perpetrator said to arouse more sympathy (owing to his underprivileged background) is the one who kills the entire family motivelessly and unremorsefully.

In *In Cold Blood*, Perry Smith is also the multicidal who gains all the features which make up a horror monster: (i) he is abnormal, when compared to a tarantula and a lizard; (ii) he is lethal, when able to massacre a family; and (iii) he is repulsive: "When he wants a cigarette, Dewey must light it for him and place it between his lips, a task that the detective finds 'repellent', for it seems such an intimate action […]" (p. 232, quotes in original). This last feature perhaps serves as an instructional reaction for readers, that is to say, if on one hand, we may sympathize with Smith for his poverty and ill-luck, on the other, we may feel disgusted for his murders.

All things considered, the four true crime accounts examined in this chapter – *Deviant*, *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, *The Stranger Beside Me*, and *In Cold Blood* – make use, to a high or low degree, of the rhetoric of monstrosity. That is to say, these books employ the narrative strategies of *locus horribilis*, gothic qualities, graphic descriptions, and people's reactions to convert the ordinary multiple killers Ed Gein, Jeffrey Dahmer, Ted Bundy, and Richard Hickock and Perry Smith into extraordinary characters; in short, into monstrous figures.

Some authors, such as Harold Schechter and Don Davis, build up their subjects upon a prominent negative footing. Others, such as Ann Rule and Truman Capote, attenuate what is negative with positive counterparts. These five multiple killers, however, would not stand out their monstrosity narratively had it not been for that type of rhetoric employed. If we take Ed Gein as an example, we see that, albeit his abnormalities, he could not be monstrous on his own. Given his singular upbringing and grotesque farmhouse (furnished with body parts), Ed Gein appears to have the ability of self-sensationalism, being a subject who possesses the ingredients to become a monster almost effortlessly. But even after his arrest, trial and conviction, he would not arouse fear over those who eventually interacted with him. The view of the short, shy and quiet Gein (a patient admitted to the Mendota Mental Health Institute because of his insane condition) could not match the characteristics of the body-snatcher serial killer. It is not an easy task to conform his presence to the monicker 'The Plainfield Butcher', as he is known nowadays:

> He immediately became the hospital's resident celebrity. New employees – nurses, orderlies, administrative staffers – could hardly wait to get their first glimpse of the notorious Edward Gein. And they could hardly believe, when he was pointed out to them, that the gentle little man, shuffling slowly down the hallways or around the sprawling grounds of the institution, was the monster who had haunted their childhood dreams. (SCHECHTER, 1989, p. 236).

One way or another, the same can be underlined about Dahmer, Bundy, Hickock and Smith. Those who look at these multicidals do not immediately and automatically spot monstrosity in their appearance, so authors need to turn them into larger-than-life narrative subjects. Even though Schechter and Davis resorted more to the rhetoric of monstrosity than Rule and Capote, it has been demonstrated that all authors take advantage of the monster discourse, producing accounts which report but also entertain by exciting fear on us readers.

CONCLUSION

In October 1991, in a text published for *The New York Times*[86], crime columnist Marilyn Stasio announced that true crime books about "showy subjects" – serial killers, drug dealers, movie stars with nasty secrets and Mafiosi – were facing a period of decline. Her central point was that those narratives on "celebrity criminals" had been losing ground to "cozy domestic crimes", such as Jerry Bledsoe's *Blood Games: a true account of a family murder* (1991) – the story of the homicide of Lieth Peter von Stein, a wealthy businessman, by his stepson Christopher Wayne Pritchard and two more friends in 1988, North Carolina – and Thomas French's *Unanswered Cries: a true story of friends, neighbors, and murder in a small town* (1991) – the account of the rape-murder of graphic artist Karen Gregory in 1984, Florida. Unlike those true crime editions built upon a marketing temper (for those showy subjects Stasio lists were expected to draw American audiences more easily), Bledsoe's and French's books, according to the columnist, indicated a trend not towards a reader's "less bloodthirsty mood", but instead towards "homier homicides". As a result, Americans would be growing more fearful of violent crime; more distrustful of conventional law-enforcement procedures for containing it; and thus more suspicious of potential killers in their own neighborhood – or worse, in their own home or bed.

Almost twenty years later, we can say rather surely that Stasio's prediction about the decline of true crime accounts about celebrity criminals turned out to be wrong – at least, for serial killers. They have been the subjects of numerous books, and the reader's interest on multicidals in general (albeit the frequent ups and downs publishing houses go through) have not been so low to the point of outright rejection by editors. In an article originally published in 2018 for *Time*[87] magazine, journalist Gabby Raymond shortlists sixteen true crime books she believes to be the best of all time. Even though such choices may be uncritical and biased, it is still worth commenting that five books she mentions focus on multiple killers[88],

[86] The article "Crime/Mystery; the killer next door: we can't get enough of them" can be read at: https://www.nytimes.com/1991/10/20/books/crime-mystery-the-killers-next-door-we-can-t-get-enough-of-them.html . Last accessed on January 21st, 2021.

[87] The full article " The 16 best true crime books of all time" can be read at: https://time.com/5355643/best-true-crime-books-of-all-time/ . Last accessed on January 22nd, 2021.

[88] The books are: Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1965); Ann Rule's *The Stranger Beside Me* (1980); Erik Larson's *The Devil in the White City* (2003), Christine Pelisek's *The Grim Sleeper: the lost women of South Central* (2017), Michelle McNamara's *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* (2018).

and three of them were published after the 2000s. This sort of list has been released from time to time – by magazines, newspapers, websites, etc. – and, despite its chief purpose (to praise some true crime stories), it additionally reinforces that multiple murders and multiple murderers still entice audiences[89] to turn pages about them.

I have also mentioned Marilyn Stasio's text because she distinguishes celebrity criminals from what she calls "homier homicides" – those murders committed by ordinary people, such as neighbors, friends, family members, etc. I presume that the columnist wants to lay out indeed a difference between famous criminals and non-famous ones. Supposedly, this latter group is not as entertaining as celebrities are, given that they are not movie stars, drug dealers, Mafia gangsters or serial killers. If my inference is right, Stasio may be ultimately stating that multicidals are no longer ordinary. She might have in mind those well-established murderers of the American folklore (she mentions Jeffrey Dahmer, for instance) about which true crime authors have written oftentimes.

If I can make a quick correction in Stasio's distinction, I would argue that, as neighbors, friends, and family members, multiple killers are as ordinary as homier criminals. Many have been the moments in which true crime writers let us know about their ordinariness. To recollect some examples from previous chapters: Harold Schechter informs us that shy and quiet-spoken Ed Gein, in his press conference, astonished reporters and spectators alike for failing to offer anything physically extraordinary; in the first pages of his true crime account, Don Davis withholds Jeffrey Dahmer's identity – referring to him as merely 'the tall man' – so as to justify the reason why Dahmer's victims never saw anything out of place to mark him as a threat; in a 2008 foreword to her book, Ann Rule admits that her ability to discover 'aberrance in other humans' were useless over Ted Bundy – by looking at him, she could only see an ordinary façade; and, in his 1966 interview with George Plimpton, Truman Capote comments that mass murderer Richard Hickock was 'a very ordinary boy'.

But I should argue as well that, as main subjects of true crime narratives, multiple killers cannot be ordinary. True crime book covers and dust jackets highlight that the

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[89] To give but two more examples, please, check the list made by Mary Kreizman in 2018 for *Esquire* magazine as well as the one made by Swapna Krishna and Elena Nicolaou in 2019 for *The Oprah Magazine*. Each list comprises twenty-five books: in Kreizman's, there are ten books dealing with multicidals whereas, in Krishna and Nicolaou's, there are eight. Links to the lists at:
https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/books/g19094206/best-true-crime-books/ and
https://www.oprahmag.com/entertainment/books/g28480673/best-true-crime-books/ . Last accessed on January 22nd, 2021.

accounts with which readers are about to get in touch are ‘shocking’, ‘shattering’, ‘chilling’, ‘bloody’; or else they are a ‘tragedy’, a ‘madness’, ‘an American nightmare’. All these words, having in common a negative standpoint, exhibit the author’s intent on arousing the affect of fear in the audience. In this regard, true crime accounts about multicidals have a close connection with the gothic genre, a narrative essentially fashioned upon this same negative tone. Both the gothic genre and the true crime obtain their distinctive affect through a crucial element: the monstrous figure, the character whose presence kindles the emotion of fear. In true crime narratives, these monsters – the real-life Geins, Dahmers, Bundies, Ricks and Perries – are originally ordinary. Therefore, in an effort to create an effective account (compatible with those adjectives we read on the book covers and jackets), true crime authors narratively transform their main subjects into extraordinary characters.

In this doctoral dissertation, I have approached three components – multiple killers, monsters, and true crime narratives – with the purpose of demonstrating that there is, fundamentally, a dichotomy between ordinariness and extraordinariness. If we roughly adapt Noël Carroll’s definition of monsters, multiple killers are ordinary subjects in our ordinary world, which means that these assailants, unlike the fictional gothic creatures contemporary science cannot explain, do not expose physical abnormalities to give away their monstrosity. As mentioned earlier, Ed Gein, Jeffrey Dahmer, Ted Bundy, Richard Hickock and Perry Smith were said to be taken, by townspeople, reporters, investigators, and writers, as run-of-the-mill individuals who did not excite any negative emotion at first sight. Thus, to produce an entertaining account out of these ordinary subjects, true crime authors narratively change multicidals into monstrous figures through the rhetoric of monstrosity.

In chapter 1, I have presented the definition of multicidals along with its three main subsets: (1) mass killers, (2) spree killers and (3) serial killers. Often, criminologists, journalists, editors, and writers adhere to the commonsense by applying the term ‘serial killer’ indiscriminately, so those subsets wish, to say the least, for a more accurate comprehension of this violent phenomenon. But be that as it may, I have shown that the definitions of multiple killers are still open to refutations, notably in view of body count, timing and the cooling-off period. Pursuing maximum efficiency of investigative procedures, some crime experts have been requiring a higher or lower body count. By the same token, they have been asking for a precise timing other than the vague ‘short’ and ‘long’. What is more, they have been remarking that the cooling-off period – the dormant season when serial killers return to their routinely social life between homicides – is not a reliable feature to set these murderers and spree killers apart.

Since I am not a crime expert, I could only make these disputes known to readers. Forensic researchers are still coming to grips with the nature of these offenders, as attested by an article published as recently as 2020[90]. For my purposes, I have adopted the crime classification manual of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Besides being a source of reference in the US law enforcement, it concisely explains the differences between multicidals. That being said, what has been apparently more agreed is that mass killers are murderers who kill four or more victims at once in one location; spree killers kill three or more victims in more than one location in a short period of time; and serial killers kill two or more victims in more than one location in a long period of time. For this reason, Ed Gein, imprisoned for committing two homicides, is a multicidal as much as Ted Bundy, who confessed having murdered thirty women.

When it comes to multiple killers, method of operating, or *modus operandi*, also characterizes their manners of bringing about homicides. M. O. are the steps these criminals take to perform their crimes successfully, including weapons and tools used to kill as well as how they handle them. By the time Ted Bundy was arrested, a pantyhose mask, handcuffs, ropes, a crowbar, and an ice pick were found in his VW Bug, ratifying that he generally preplanned his assaults. Bundy is always mentioned to be an intelligent murderer who used to convince his victims to follow him somewhere to, once there, subjugate, rape, and kill them. Apart from those weapons, one of his potent tools was acting, then he would fake: an arm in a sling, a broken leg in a cast, or wearing crutches – he would go as far as disguising into a police officer to abduct a woman at a shopping mall. His convincing skills had also to do with his smooth speech, an almost fantastic ability to persuade victims he was beyond suspicion.

Like Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer was smooth-spoken. His M. O. consisted of offering his victims money to come to his apartment so that he could take pictures of them. In the apartment, he would give them a drink with some drugs to weaken their senses so that he could subjugate them easily. These steps corroborate Dahmer's high degree of preplanning and organization, two factors which helped him slaughter more than a dozen men while moving unsuspectedly. Perhaps, the apex of his smooth speech was the incident with the three police officers who brought the young Laotian Konerak Sinthasomphone back to his apartment to be murdered afterwards. If, on the one hand, racism and unprofessionalism can explain the officers' attitude; on the other, this incident overwhelms us for Dahmer's (like

[90] Please, see CHOO, Tae Myung & CHOI, Young-Shik. "Defining and Explaining Serial Murders in the United States". In: *The Korean Society for Legal Medicine*. Volume 44, January 2020, pp. 1-6. Link to the article: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339743048_Defining_and_Explaining_Serial_Murders_in_the_United_States. Last accessed on January 23rd, 2021.

Bundy's) quasi-supernatural ability to softly talk himself out of trouble, effectively convincing both the police and the victims to drop their caution.

Richard Hickock and Perry Smith had also preplanned their steps before committing their massive murder in 1959 – they arrived at Holcomb at midnight, parked near the Clutter farm under the shadows of trees, waited inside the car for the best moment, put on their gloves, walked into the house, cut off the phone wire, etc. This proceeding signifies that their M. O. was highly organized, carefully thought over to keep them from failing. In fact, unlike other mass murderers (who are commonly killed or arrested at the crime scene for absence of escape plan), Hickock and Smith decided not to leave witnesses behind; hence they murdered the entire family with headshots and ran away. The Clutter family tragedy affected the townspeople's opinion (from thinking of Holcomb as a safe place to Holcomb as unpredictably dangerous) and behavior (from leaving their front doors unlock at night to distrusting their neighbors), a change that maybe only a phenomenon as violent as multicide, at least by the middle of last century, could have unleashed.

Differently from his peers, Ed Gein lacked the preplanning and organization which constitute organized multicidals. Police did not connect him to the disappearance of his first victim because his disorganized M. O. had been covered up by some luck: Mary Hogan was shot in the head, placed in his sled, and taken to his farm. The traces the led had left behind vanished by reason of the heavy snowstorm of the month of December, 1954. Nevertheless, his disorganization was evident three years later, when he shot Bernice Worden, by daylight, in the head at her own hardware store, put her body in his car, and drove back home. This time, a sales slip of a gallon of antifreeze linked Gein to the victim, the product he had promised to buy the day before. In his farmhouse, the police found other indications of disorganization – sprawling heaps of rubbish, old cartons on the floor, tin cans, bottles, food scraps, and newspapers all over – which true crime authors often explain through psychology: Gein's disorganized house was the result of a disorganized mind. The headless corpse of Mrs. Worden hanging from rafters, the masks made of the flesh of female faces, the body parts scattered throughout, and the skin-made furniture confirmed the close bond between *locus* and killer.

The definitions and anecdotes have functioned as a pathway into an accurate taxonomy of multiple killers, but they have also been an attempt to pull abnormalities out of these offenders, since abnormality is the essence of monsters. Criminologists, the media, true crime writers, or the like, are constantly revisiting the incompatible personalities of Jekyll and Hyde to come to terms with the phenomenon of multicide. Stevenson's character

provides a metaphor for the seeming double personality of multiple killers, for both the fictional and the actual individuals hold the normal and the abnormal inside the same person. In chapter 2, I have discussed two kinds of monsters: (i) the biological-supernatural, whose body is abnormal; and (ii) the moral, whose actions, rather than the body, are abnormal.

The original characteristics of the monster consist of malformations of the body and deviations from a normal type of organism. Consequently, monsters embody divergences, aberrations, and defects, a group of qualities pointed out in studies as early as ancient treatises. Looking back at three fundamental analyses of monsters – the Aristotelian, the Plinian, and the Agostinian – we acknowledge that alterity springs up as the starting point for any debate over the nature of the monster.

First, the Aristotelian examination of differences and similarities between parents and offspring of the fauna teaches us that what is originally monstrous is what is deformed as well as what couples together the categories of human and animal. Taking the parental features as the norm, an offspring whose attributes were anything but parent-like had to be regarded as abnormal. Second, Pliny the Elder enthusiastically catalogued monstrosities for his studies of natural history, mentioning, for instance, cannibals, cyclopes, backward-faced-feet peoples, and night-eyed ones in his encyclopedia. The words 'wonderful', 'prodigious', and 'incredible' the Roman naturalist utilizes to describe populations around the globe manifest not only his enthusiasm for making the acquaintance of so many monsters, but also his criterion of choosing abnormal traits for his catalog. Third, the theologian Augustine has a concern other than defining or cataloging monstrosities. In reality, he wants to prove that the human body can be modified to endure the everlasting hellfire afterlife, and in so doing he stands his ground by alluding to monsters. These creatures are the Augustinian example of a natural body turned abnormal at God's will, malformed to reassure the divine power over every living being.

Notwithstanding Augustine's persistence in making monsters a godly creation, when we think over the behavior of apocalyptic monsters – disrespectful, blasphemous, destructive, lethal – we may presume that part of the teratology is overrun creatures which are abnormal, as expected, but evil as well, closer to Satan than to God. These creatures are horses with lion heads, grasshoppers with human faces, and beasts with several heads, some of which exhibiting unnatural bodies marked by vicious actions. It seems that the scatology of the Book of Revelations suggests that, if monsters have been created by God (in a manifestation of the pervasive power of the deity), their apocalyptic branch has chosen to side with Satan, to torment, devastate, and kill the inhabitants of the Earth.

This set of apocalyptic creatures may go hand in hand with the horror monsters, impossible fictional beings which threaten the lives of human characters in a horror story. In chapter 2, I have focused on these monsters owing to the three ingredients which make them what they are: (i) abnormality – as their very presence violates the norms of the reality-based storyworld (for they are extraordinary characters living under ordinary physical laws); (ii) lethality – as their very presence is assessed as a physical threat (for they constitute a serious menace to life) and a cognitive threat (for their nature is unexplainable); (iii) and impurity – as they transgress long-established parameters by amalgamating categories which should be apart (human/animal, alive/dead, animate/inanimate, and so on), resulting in a feeling of disgust. In horror stories, an evaluative thought impels the positive human character to respond negatively to the presence of the monstrous figure. In short, a horror monster is unnatural, deadly, and repulsive.

I have tried to demonstrate that this definition of horror monsters, since it is entity-based, falls short of the inclusion of multiple killers, a phenomenon popularly considered to be equally horrifying. Allegedly, multicidals could be horror monsters if taken as science fictions, not of the body, but of the mind – that is, as extrapolations of the murderers we come across in real life. To object, I have pointed out that one of the most famous fictional serial killers to date, Norman Bates, is not as horrific as Ed Gein, his actual counterpart: in Robert Bloch's *Psycho* (1959), we learn of the rumors, sensationalized by the media, that Bates was a cannibal, Satanist, necrophiliac, and incestuous (we also learn that the sheriff has not done anything to contradict these rumors). In turn, Gein was indeed a body snatcher who used to upholster his furniture all over his farmhouse with human skin. Even Hannibal Lecter, who guts and eats his victims in *The Silence of the Lamb* (1988), does not extrapolate real-life multicidals. To give but one example, Jeffrey Dahmer confessed to have lobotomized and cannibalized some of his victims, keeping part of them in the fridge and in a gallon drum in his apartment.

What these cases may have confirmed is that fictional multicidals as science fictions of the mind do not seem to extrapolate real-life multicidals. We may also be affected by monsters whose features do not include supernatural and/or biological impossibilities. These monsters may be frightening for the vicious murders they repeatedly commit, rather than for their physical abnormalities scientifically unexplained. Then, it is recommendable that an entity-based definition of horror monsters should try to reach further by enveloping event-based monstrosities.

This recommendation is not only important for its broader scope, but also for the singularities of the United States – its religion, political system, and geography – in comparison with England. For instance, in colonial America, Puritanism (tending to fatal excesses as those occurred in the Salem Witch Trials of 1692-3), the settlements (producing constant battles between settlers and Natives), and the landscape (made out of the combination of impressive nature and unexplored territories) all contributed to fears which would not be found anywhere else. The American horror came to life by the time religious texts, the European Enlightenment, and the Romantic movement could no longer fill the void of understanding of crime and murder. Religion saw evil as nothing but the inevitable fact of fallen existence on Earth while the European Enlightenment and the Romantic movement postulated that violent crimes were mysterious, and thus incomprehensible. It was then that the void was filled with a fascination with horror, fascination made noticeable by the publications of several captivity narratives in the seventeenth century. These narratives explored alterity as a source of fear, describing Native Americans as the evil other, violent and bloodthirsty. But, concomitantly, they showed that the British castle with its supernatural occurrences was alien to the American setting, not affecting readers as deeply as local concerns would.

The other as a source of fear has apparently gained force as time went by. Psychologically, our very relationship with other people has made us suffer because we find it hard to believe that our interactions are inevitably painful. Historically, the act of looking back in time has disclosed a shift: the institutionalized battles between nations gave room to individualized fights, maintaining the impression that nobody can come to our aid. Sociologically, contemporary times have imposed upon us a feeling of everlasting vigilance, forcing us to ever suspect our social interactions. We tend to perceive the other's actions as deliberately intentional, prone to violence and crime. To fight this feeling, we repudiate those who do not fit our standard reference of normality. The importance of these references changes over time and space, but all in all they express economic, biological, social, geographical, and/or sexual anxieties. In this sense, this other who does not fit standard may be abnormal due to bodily features; however, his/her abnormality will also come up in the wake of his/her actions. If alterity is a starting point when it comes to monsters, it seems so because it reiterates that a definition of a monster also comes down to moral deviation.

We get to know about the moral deviations of multiple killers by their crime profiles, generally published by the media or true crime accounts. In this respect, crime profiling has a double mission. It investigates likely suspects in order to identify links between perpetrators

and crime cases. At the same time, it pulls otherness (inapt parents, low-level education, mental illness, physical abuse, sexual perversion, addictions, etc.) out of the killer. As a forensic technique, crime profiling seeks conviction whereas, as an investigative device, it quests for any piece of information which can explain the moral monstrosity of the multicidal. But in the long run, crime profiling indicates that we have been approaching multiple killers with the same parameters used for biological-supernatural horror monsters, viz., with an eye to finding visible abnormalities which would somehow place these killers out of our reference of normality.

Nonetheless, in chapter 2, I have discussed that, in the American gothic folklore, there is at least one multicidal who resists to be crime-profiled as unfit. Serial killer Ted Bundy, who confessed to be a rapist, a murder, and a necrophile, has been portrayed as an all-American archetype: male, white, handsome, intelligent, and articulate. In his biography, dysfunctional family, schizophrenia, poverty, gayness, or the like, are non-existent. It is true that Bundy, in his last interview before his execution, attempted to blame an exposure to pornography at a younger age as a proper explanation for his serial murders. Nevertheless, his final words were disregarded altogether, being considered a desperate cry, or subterfuge, of a con-man about to die. Bundy was the overlooked guy next-door, a perfect fit to the American standard reference of normality. He did not possess any otherness to spot him as a threat. For this reason, he is likely the product of the contemporary American fear: the ordinary-looking monster.

This cut-in-half division between supernatural-biological monsters and moral monsters also represents a division between fictional monsters and actual monsters, in which the former group admits all of those impossible beings – such as ghosts, vampires, haunted house, etc. – while the latter accommodates possible, real-life-based individuals – such as multicidals. These offenders came to prominence in the US by the 1970s, and their very presence in the American daily life seems to evidence indisputably the power of reality to excite the affect of fear, even allowing them for the pantheon of gothic imagination.

In chapter 3, it was argued that this division raised problems given that multiple killers, albeit potentially more frightening than fictional monsters for their existence among us, are too ordinary to provide entertaining plots by themselves. True crime authors of multicide accounts need to face the fact that crime biographies of multiple killers must cope with (intrinsically, I would add) elements which may not sustain the burden of narrative: listing of victims, repetition of *modus operandi*, lack of motivation, clichèd speech, and ordinary subjects. Even though true crime books eventually promise to shock with truth

through an inside story of friendship between a writer and a serial killer, they inevitably fall short of meeting that shock without some narrative strategies of literary fiction which may transform their ordinariness into extraordinariness. In other words, because multicidals are not likely to offer appalling autofictionalizing life stories to be put on paper, true crime authors of multicide must make use of the rhetoric of monstrosity – a set of literary devices built upon a negative footing which narratively targets the arousal of fear in readers by shaping a subject into a monstrous figure.

What should be underscored is that this move from ordinariness to extraordinariness might attest a true crime author's deliberate intent upon entertainment, despite several allegations to the contrary. True crime authors have stated oftentimes that what they ever release is public service, be it a want to bring the criminal to justice, a help for victims' families to substantiate their demands for tougher laws, or a chance to explicate the deviations of subjects. In essence, what these authors believe they publish is nothing but information. On the other hand, modern true crime (as much as nonfiction, in general) has openly explored amusement in order to engage the audience in the account. The narrative strategies of the rhetoric of monstrosity may have suggested that information means only half these authors' purpose.

In the true crime accounts I have analyzed, the *locus horribilis* range from a rather isolated farmstead in a small town to an apartment in the middle of a city. Ed Gein's farm resembles those old houses of the American Southern gothic, described as rundown, overgrown with weeds, unattended, and lifeless. On the outside, Gein's farm mimics his loneliness, as he is the only inhabitant (and the only living being) of the house. On the inside, it matches Gein's mental derangement due to his domineering mother, since it is reported that the only inaccessible part of the house (which remained boarded up after his mother's death) was Augusta's bedroom. By the same token, Jeffrey Dahmer's townhouse reproduces his monstrous state of mind. Its interior with Polaroid pictures of victims on the walls and corpses in gallon drums runs parallel with his compulsion to create a zombie he could keep (just like the pictures and corpses) with him. If we can possibly say that the exterior façade of Dahmer's apartment does not differ from any other of his block (like an onlooker who cannot identify unfit traits which could tell on Dahmer's danger because he does not differ from other people), its interior imitates his paraphilic avidity for a submissive lover.

On the other hand, the Chi Omega dormitories and the Clutters farm may be interpreted as a disconnection between killers and settings. Both the outside and the inside were orderly premises put into disarray by the brutal actions of Ted Bundy, and Richard

Hickock and Perry Smith. In this sense, these two settings do not represent states of mind – the multicidals' connection with the crime scenes is circumstantial, not intimate. Indeed, *locus horribilis* here seems to lodge a sudden rage: not an accumulation of corpses over time, but accumulation at once. Bundy breaks into the dorms late at night, assaults his victims, and leaves without a trace. Likewise, Hickock and Smith enter the farm, shoot the entire family, steal some items, and drive off also without a trace. Probably, we cannot find intense descriptions of *locus horribilis* in *The Stranger Beside Me* and *In Cold Blood* – as we do in *Deviant* and *The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* – because Ann Rule and Truman Capote did not see a strong bond between subject and place.

In true crime books, we frequently find gothic qualities as soon as we look at their covers. The title of Harold Schechter's account states, from the start, that Ed Gein is a deviant. But the titles of all of the books upon which I have worked imprint adjectives to describe either the story or the multiple killer as negative somewhat. Perhaps, the easiest technique to turn multicidals into monsters is simply calling them this way. Schechter abounds his true story with adjectives which denotes monstrosity ('ghoul-slayer', 'night demon', 'aberration', etc.) as much as he is straightforward in his transformation ('the father of the authentic American monster'). Don Davis follows Schechter in calling Dahmer a 'monster'. However, his gothic qualities focus more on the multicide and less on the multicidal.

More interestingly, maybe, Rule puts gothic qualities to use to depict Ted Bundy as a highly manipulative and sneaky criminal, and consequently to convey an image of a fantastic serial killer. She is not as straightforward as Schechter and Davis are, for she does not apply adjectives, but rather she speculates on how Bundy could convince so many women to follow him, and how he managed to escape the crime scene many times without being seen or heard. These fantastic powers lead readers to approximate Bundy to a ghost, having the impossible quality of being simultaneously nowhere and everywhere. Yet, the author who apparently keeps the rhetoric of monstrosity to a low degree is the one who more closely turns his subject into a biological horror monster. Capote lets us know that investigators subtly compare Perry Smith to a tarantula, and, metonymically, his tongue to a lizard's tongue, not a human's. Perry's lethality for killing a family and his abnormality for resembling animals result in a feeling of repulsion when detective Alvin Dewey avoids touching him. So, this multicidal's lethal, abnormal, and repulsive qualities conspicuously transform him into a monster.

The strategy of gothic qualities also makes multiple killers into a metonymical subject, and the eye plays a pervasive role in these four accounts. Albeit done in different degrees, all narratives mention the eye as a body organ which gives monstrosity away. The descriptions of this organ, though differently narrated, are always negative, so as to arouse the affect of fear when singularized. Gein's eyes are staring and shifting, as if he could fix his stare at a person, but could not stop moving his eyes. Davis asserts that Dahmer's eyes are 'empty', an adjective he believes best depicts the moment immediately before a victim is murdered. Bundy's eyes seem to be so frightening to the point of holding a woman back from entering his car. In *In Cold Blood*, Capote tells us that Hickock's eyes terrified Marie Dewey. Davis also briefly comments on Ed Gein's 'mischievous' grin, being, in *Deviant*, another source of fear. Nevertheless, it is the eyes that, when zoomed in, becomes the element which brings the monstrosity out of the multiple killers.

In the four books examined, the authors resort to graphic descriptions to walk readers through the particulars of the scene, explicitly and minutely described. But at the same time, this strategy also teaches us how we are supposed to be affected by the scene. The mirroring effect seems to emerge whenever an unrestrained narration gives details about the violent acts of the multiple killers. Schechter describes a scene of body snatching minutely not only by recurring to specifications, but also by using the present tense and internal actions. The author momentarily gives up the historical past for the present tense with the aim of creating a more vivid and disturbing atmosphere by the time we learn what Gein is thinking. The details of the assassination of young boy Konerak Sinthasomphone in *Jeffrey Dahmer Story* appears to have a different result. We feel disturbed by the graphicality of the scene as much as empathetic for the victim.

In *The Stranger Beside Me*, graphic descriptions normally come along with law enforcement agents' reactions to the multiple murders. These reactions may be read as a mirroring effect. Nonetheless, the technique is different from that utilized by Schechter. Whereas this author employs the present tense and internal action, Rule counts on a vicarious approach to affect readers, forcing us to react less to the condition of the body through our own eyes, and more through the eyes of legal professionals. Out of all the four authors, Capote is possibly the subtlest in exploring graphic details. Although he lets us know the specific conditions of the corpses, he is seemingly targeting suspense rather than graphicality. Furthermore, like Rule, he makes use of a vicarious approach: we learn about the bodies through Larry Hendricks, not through the narrator. But differently, while the legal

professionals of *The Stranger Beside Me* are shocked (instructing us to react accordingly), Hendricks is pitiful. As a result, graphicality may not excite us so deeply.

The last narrative strategy with which I have coped was people's reactions, be it to the criminals, their crimes, or both. Even though, we can see the mirroring effect in other strategies, it is here that this technique best instructs readers. Harold Schechter reports that locals were incredulous that Ed Gein was a body snatcher, whereas foreigners were fascinated, traveling in droves to the town of Plainfield to have a look at his farmstead. However, there is one reaction in *Deviant* which has called my attention: an anonymous local storekeeper is said to avoid touching Gein. Like Perry Smith, Gein is also portrayed as a repugnant monster. In a different manner, Don Davis focalizes, not a townsperson, but a victim who escaped Jeffrey Dahmer to arouse our pathetical response to the scene. Similarly to what Capote does, Davis constructs the segment scene by scene in order to offer a suspenseful narration.

Rule's true crime book is the only account written in first-person narration, a fact that allows her to share her own reactions with readers. The author repeatedly informs us that Ted Bundy had never given any clue about his monstrousness, able to hide his pathology from her the entire time. Rule's reactions ultimately bring out Bundy's strong capacity of ordinariness, proven by her positive comments on him throughout the book, even knowing he was a serial killer. Finally, Truman Capote significantly highlights the townspeople's reaction to the Clutter family case, as it is signaled by the subtitle of his book, namely, 'a true account of a multiple murder and its consequences'. One of the consequences is a double change in the small town of Holcomb: on behavior, as unlocked doors are to be locked; and on perspective, all neighbors are potentially mistrustful. Certainly, this change was perpetrated by the presence of multiple killers, and the product of this very presence was fear.

These four narrative strategies of the rhetoric of monstrosity debated so far may corroborate that, in modern true crime accounts about multiple killers, reporting alone is not enough to produce an entertaining text. The facts seem to compound only part of an account in which fiction is the counterpart. These two parts come long to instruct and to amuse, in a rather symbiotic relationship. But even though I have concentrated on narrative strategies, it may be right to say that fact and fiction in modern true crime about multiple killers are two useful elements to come to terms with a cognitive bafflement: how can this such ordinary subject have possibly murdered so many so viciously? The fields of psychology, sociology, biography, and crime profiling have been offering their share of the answer. These fields, however, are not exempt from failures, and hence the question remains unanswered.

Ultimately, we realize that fact cannot fully satisfy the reader's appeal. It is this gap left behind by fact that fiction fills in with the use of the rhetoric of monstrosity.

To conclude, I would like to stress that this PhD dissertation – like fact and fiction in modern true crime – covers half of my proposal. We could see that the rhetoric of monstrosity possibly balances the discrepancy between ordinary figures and fearful accomplishments. Nevertheless, this dissertation has put the analysis of fictional multiple killers and their murders as a poetics of autodiegesis on hold. My next steps want to follow this path, to pick my studies up where I left off.

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