

XVII међународни научни скуп
Српски језик, књижевност, уметност

Књига IV

ЗЛОБНИЦИ, ЗЛИКОВЦИ, ЧУДОВИШТА, ПСИХОПАТЕ

**КЊИЖЕВНО-ЛИНГВИСТИЧКО-КУЛТУРОЛОШКА
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Зборник радова са научног округлог стола ЗЛОБНИЦИ, ЗЛИКОВЦИ, ЧУДОВИШТА, ПСИХОПАТЕ одржаног у оквиру XVII међународног научног скупа *Српски језик, књижевности, уметности* (Крагујевац/Андрићград, 11–13. новембар 2022) и то као резултат рада на пројекту КЊИЖЕВНО ЛИНГВИСТИЧКО-КУЛТУРОЛОШКА ХУМАНО(ПО)ЕТИКА: ДОБАР – ЛОШ, ЗАО Центра за научноистраживачки рад Филолошко-уметничког факултета 2022-2023.

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Aleksandra Z. STOJANOVIĆ¹
University of Kragujevac
Faculty of Philology and Arts
Center for Scientific Research

SERIAL KILLER, CANNIBAL AND CONSUMER: THE CASE OF JEFFREY DAHMER'S MONSTROSITY²

With the recent release of two Netflix true crime documentary series about Jeffrey Dahmer – *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (2022) and *Conversations with a Killer: The Jeffrey Dahmer Tapes* (2022) – interest in the three-decade-old case has significantly increased. The research aims to investigate the popularity of the serial killer narrative and the role of the monstrous serial killer in society through examples of the Jeffrey Dahmer case. By determining the meaning of monstrosity and the modes of creating a monster, we shall present Dahmer as a figure opposing but also mirroring society. Dahmer's cannibalism is equated with contemporary consumerist habits, especially regarding the steady influx of true crime narratives over the years and people's subsequent obsession with consuming and distributing them and, as a result, commodifying violent murders. An analysis of the Jeffrey Dahmer case raises and answers the following questions: *What is a monster? Does society need monsters?*

Keywords: Jeffrey Dahmer, true crime, serial killer, monster, cannibal, consumerism

1. True Crime and Serial Killers

It has become increasingly difficult and rare to turn on the television and not stumble upon a crime drama, true crime documentary, or news coverage of violent murders. Many authors have attempted to explain the growing public fascination with murderers and the prevalence of such stories on widely accessible media outlets that lead to the fame and celebrity status of some of the most notorious serial killers (Schmid 2005). The story of the serial killer in contemporary society has become inescapable, whether as a reference in films and television shows or any of the numerous true crime formats – books, podcasts, and documentary series. Additionally, real names and crimes are often utilized for fictional works. It is important to note that although the increased interest in serial killers in fiction is a topic worth exploring further³,

1 aleksandra.stojanovic@filum.kg.ac.rs

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3 The representation of serial killers in fiction is often based on real-life criminals, thus linking them closely to the true crime genre. Both fiction and non-fiction offer biographical portraits of serial killers, but true crime is seen as a more valuable source providing insight into the mind of killers. True crime books are often placed next to sociology books in many

the research will focus on the true crime genre and its impact on the masses consuming it.

The global nature of mass media has made it easier to spread information and acquaint people with the details of various crimes; however, true crime, or sensationalism as it was referred to in the previous era, is not a new concept. In discussing the origins of true crime, J. Wiltenburg (2004) reminds us that pamphlets were used to recount the excruciating details of crimes and executions as early as the 16th century. Unlike the sensationalism of previous centuries where “[t]he chief focus of imagined experience was on the victims – with perhaps some shift to the killer once he or she was condemned and repentant, suffering the excruciating, but well-deserved pangs of execution” (Wiltenburg 2004: 1391), contemporary true crime reports examine the criminals as individuals, focused on revealing their thought process, trying to unwrap the childhood traumas and past events that could have caused them to commit the crimes.

The new mediums of true crime reporting, such as podcasts and documentary series, have allowed for audience interaction and an easier implementation across various platforms by creating an “active, engaged and supportive audience” (Boling 2019: 175) and content in which the facts of crimes are not merely reported. Instead, the viewer becomes immersed in the story through videos or recordings of the killer himself or those close to him. The true crime genre

[...] has seen exponential growth, with hundreds of titles emerging every year. All these sources contribute to the public’s unending thirst for information on bizarre and violent crime. It may be truly said that to reach the status of national news crime stories must contain elements of extreme violence or special-interest issues that can be expected to elicit a response in a broad spectrum of media consumers. (Dowler, Fleming & Muzzatti 2006: 839)

True crime reports “exert substantial political and cultural power” (Wiltenburg 2004: 1377), irrespective of the writers’ intentions to deliver a neutral, objective, and factual report. With detailed descriptions of gruesome acts of violence and analyses of serial killers’ lives, motives, and crimes permeating nearly all popular media, there has been a change in individuals’ perceptions of violence and criminality. Therefore, a “distorted picture of the world of crime and criminality” (Dowler, Fleming & Muzzatti 2006: 839) has been produced. By consuming such content in one’s everyday surroundings, audiences become less objective, immersing themselves in the story they are being entertained by, leading consequently to desensitization to the evil of serial killing. True crime discourse has the power to shape people’s perceptions of crime and create a lack of awareness of the severity of crimes so regularly broadcast on television.

bookstores (Newitz 1999: 66), showing their impact on today’s consumer society.

D. Schmid (2005) explains the fascination with serial killers and popularity of the true crime genre as something that dates back to Puritan times, described then as society's need to appropriately define criminals and decide where they should be placed within a community: "Criminals tended to be portrayed more as nonrepresentative outsiders, as sources of pollution and/or monstrosity in the body politic that needed to be excluded from the community" (Schmid 2005: 177). The problem with the widespread popularity and accessibility of true crime narratives today is the blurred boundary between *outside* and *inside*, as serial killers have entered the homes of many through the television screen. They are made more relatable and ordinary by presenting the details of their lives and innermost thoughts. The quality of ordinariness poses a problem for representation and "makes it difficult to distinguish serial killers from 'normal' men" (Schmid 2005: 177). As opposed to the prior agenda of removing them from society, displaying them as outsiders and outcasts, now they have become a topic frequently discussed and consumed for entertainment purposes.

The serial killer is established as an inescapable dominant cultural category. Serial killers are everywhere. Their names have become known and their crimes notorious. Fame follows the stories of serial killers, bringing them celebrity status and worldwide recognition. Jeffrey Dahmer's court appearances, for example, are described as having "the air of a movie premiere. At his initial entrance cameras clicked incessantly [...]" (Schwartz 1992: 151). The true crime genre, in a sense, memorializes the horrifyingly violent acts by capturing the story and preserving it for generations to come so that their deeds will continue to live on in society. Becoming one of the leading genres in popularity and a large and profitable business, true crime shows have solidified their status as a valuable and sought-after product on the market. The most violent serial murders become nothing more than a story, disfiguring reality and moving away from any objective perception of events, ultimately creating murder as a commodity to be sold.

Following the release of Netflix's true crime drama series *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* on September 21st, 2022, there was an upsurge in Jeffrey Dahmer Halloween costumes which were the topic of public debate across social media platforms. The demand for Dahmer costumes was so high that eBay banned all sales of Dahmer paraphernalia (Cerullo 2022) in an attempt to promote safety and raise awareness of the implications that dressing up as a serial killer may have on the victims' families. The Jeffrey Dahmer costume is not the first instance of people making light of serious and violent crimes, but it shows the impact a television series can have on the masses. The complete lack of awareness, judgment, and true understanding of crimes points to the commodification of serial killer narratives and the consumption of people's lives and traumas as entertainment.

In his documentary *Collectors* (2000), Julian Hobbs investigates the oversaturated market for the so-called murderabilia, the collection of artifacts such as serial killer merchandise or their personal belongings, letters, and even

locks of their hair. This phenomenon reveals society's obsession with monsters and desire to get close to them, if only through objects. While buying body parts of serial killers or attempting to purchase objects from crime scenes is ascribed to a minority, the concept of murderabilia can be translated into an overall consuming obsession with the narrative of the serial killer. The popularity of serial killer documentaries, reenactments, video footage, and interviews points to a much larger phenomenon present in the everyday lives of ordinary people. Murderabilia, and the consequent obsession with serial killers, has become a "defining feature of American popular culture since the 1970s" (Schmid 2005: 1). With the emergence of even more true crime films and television series, the impact of the serial killer narrative on society does not show signs of decreasing.

2. The Case of Jeffrey Dahmer – Cannibal or Consumer?

As "contemporary monstrosity assumes its most compelling form for us as the serial killer" (Tithecott 1997: 3), the thesis will be exemplified by a case study of the Milwaukee Cannibal, Jeffrey Dahmer – a man described as ordinary-looking, even pleasant, and meek shows the possibility of monstrosity being undetectable at first glance. Perhaps the greatest trouble with the Dahmer case was the duplicity of his identity and the shock people faced when they realized that monsters can be hidden in plain sight:

For hours he lay with corpses, hugging them, cherishing them, and he was sane. He kept eleven assorted heads and skulls, and two complete skeletons, for eventual use in a home-made temple, and he was sane. The trouble was, in addition to all this, he was polite, diffident, deferential, obliging, just the sort of young man one could imagine weeding his grandmother's garden. (Masters 1993: 21)

Jeffrey Dahmer was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on May 21st, 1968, as the son of Lionel Dahmer, a middle-class, respected research chemist with a Ph.D. in chemistry, and Joyce Dahmer. Traumatic events did not mark his childhood; many authors describe it as a common upbringing (Schwartz 1992, Tithecott 1997, Knudten 1998). Dahmer developed a drinking problem in his teenage years, which followed him throughout life, leading to him being expelled from Ohio State University and discharged from the army for excessive drinking. The events around his drinking caused him to move into his grandmother's house in West Allis, a suburban area of Milwaukee, where he got employment at the Ambrosia Chocolate Company in 1985. During these years, Dahmer was arrested several times for "indecent exposure," exhibitionism, and public masturbation, only some of the paraphilias observed in his case (Purcell & Arrigo 2006: 106).⁴ Jeffrey Dahmer killed a total of seventeen men;

4 "Moreover, Dahmer had an evolving array of sexually aberrant interests, which served as stimuli and fueled his increasingly violent fantasy system. In his case, several paraphilias were observed, including exhibitionism, public masturbation, hebephilia, pygmalionism, vampirism, necrophilia, necrosadism, anthropophagy, and souvenir fetishisms. Several

“the majority of the victims were homosexual and had been reported missing by their families for many weeks to months” (Jentzen 2017: 445).⁵ He kept the victims in his apartment – hands and genitals in pots, skulls on shelves, and skeletons in his closet (Schwartz 1992: 8).

There was a great deal of media coverage regarding the Jeffrey Dahmer case, including Oprah Winfrey’s segment “Are You Raising a Jeffrey Dahmer?,” Geraldo Rivera’s “Cannibal Killers,” the Vanity Fair article and a crowd of television and news reporters covering the trial (Schwartz 1999: 134–135). The reaction of the press to the discovery of body parts in apartment 213 made Dahmer a public persona, an individual of great interest for research, and someone who raises the curiosity of professionals and civilians alike. According to J. Jentzen (2017: 445), the case was unique due to the intense media coverage, the amount of detail provided by Dahmer and the televised trial.

The year 2022 was especially prolific for Jeffrey Dahmer true crime stories, with two successful series released by Netflix within a month. *Conversations with a Killer: The Jeffrey Dahmer Tapes* (2022), directed by Joe Berlinger, is a true crime documentary series that investigates the life and crimes of Jeffrey Dahmer, with a particular focus on the aftermath of the events. It consists of actual crime footage, recordings of Dahmer himself and interviews of his neighbors, acquaintances, police officials, and medical professionals that were in close contact with him throughout the questioning and trial. The series does not feature crime scene re-enactments and the cast is comprised of the individuals that are portraying themselves. With three episodes entitled “Sympathy for the Devil,” “Can I Take Your Picture,” and “Evil or Insane?,” the series focuses on Dahmer’s development and psychological state as well as the implications of Dahmer’s insanity plea. Compared to *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (2022), it lacks dramatic suspense and morbid appeal regarding the means of presenting the facts of the Dahmer case.

Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story (2022) became the most-viewed series of the week of its release and the tenth most-streamed show ever recorded by Nielsen (Hailu 2022). The mini-series, created by Ryan Murphy and Ian Brennan for Netflix, has ten episodes. Unlike *Conversations with a Killer: The Jeffrey Dahmer Tapes* (2022), it does not present the events in chronological order, but instead starts with the night of Dahmer’s arrest and, following a non-linear timeline, slowly reveals Dahmer’s crimes through flashbacks. The series has disturbing visuals of the crime scenes and re-enactments of both Dahmer’s murders and his ritualistic, fetishistic, cannibalistic acts with the corpses of his victims. For the poster of the series,

biographical and historical reports substantiate Dahmer’s use of sexually deviant behaviors in the commission of his crimes.” (Purcell & Arrigo 2006: 106)

5 The Jeffrey Dahmer killings had a substantial number of victims, not just the seventeen men killed as primary victims, but also the secondary victims, which included the victims’ families, and the tertiary victims who lived in the community and were “traumatized by his [Dahmer’s] actions and the sudden media intrusion into their lives” (Knutten 1998: 372–373).

[t]he media feeds us images of our worst nightmare: Jeffrey Dahmer's gaze fixed menacingly, hypnotically, upon the spectator, as if to remind us that we are not only the subjects of identification, but the objects as well – food for the other's insatiable oral appetite. Typically in these media representations, color, lighting, and graphics are used to fragment, over-expose, and disfigure Dahmer's face, framing his image much in the manner of a photographic negative or a medical x-ray. (Fuss 1993: 197–198)

Additionally, Dahmer's yellow eyes in the photo emphasize his monstrosity. In the first episode of the series, "Episode One," Dahmer brings home Tracy Edwards. He threatens him with a knife and makes him watch *The Exorcist III*, about which Edwards testified that it seemed like Dahmer was attempting to become a character in the movie (Ingebretsen 2004: 28). In the second episode, "Please Don't Go," Dahmer puts on his yellow contacts and explains that they are like Emperor Palpatine's, the main antagonist of *Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi*. Jarvis (2007: 328) notes that "serial killers themselves are often avid consumers of films and books about serial killing," showing the boundary between fictional and actual killers being blurred and that Dahmer identifies with demonic figures and fictional antagonists. However, "[t]he inability to distinguish between the reality and fictionality of a role affects attempts to provide a 'cultural context' for the serial killer. Attempts to provide such a context are usually criticized for helping to absolve the criminal of the crime" (Tithecott 1997: 120).

Jeffrey Dahmer treated his victims as objects, playthings which he exerted complete control and ownership over. He photographed dead bodies to preserve their memory and grow his collection of Polaroids and severed body parts (Masters 1993: 158). The obsessive collecting of objects that one has an inexplicable desire for can be related to today's consumer capitalism. A. Newitz (1999: 71) views the serial killer's murderous desires as a stand-in "for their inability to stop working and consuming. They kill after reaching a point where they begin to confuse living people with the inanimate objects they produce and consume as workers." It is important to note that Dahmer worked at a chocolate factory, caught up in mass production and becoming distanced from the product itself.⁶ Dahmer started to view his victims as a commodity he was able to consume for his own entertainment when he pleased.

"There is a photograph of a man who has been opened up, with a cut from the neck right down to the groin, revealing all the internal organs. When asked

6 Dahmer's fear of abandonment may be seen not only on a personal and emotional level but also on an economic one, as the relationship between workers and commodities: "In a capitalist culture, the commodity is an object that appears to abandon the workers who make it. Marx has called this process 'alienation': workers find themselves alienated from what they produce because they do not own the means of production, nor do they own the products of their labor. Therefore, it would appear that the mass production of commodities is a kind of mass abandonment, for nothing that workers create while on the job belongs properly to them – they cannot keep what they make" (Newitz 1999: 72).

why he should do this, Dahmer said, ‘I wanted to see what someone looked like inside’” (Masters 1993: 159). In the episode “Can I Take Your Picture” of *Conversations with a Killer: The Jeffrey Dahmer Tapes*, Dahmer refers to himself as “a shell of a human being,” openly testifying to the emptiness he feels within that he has not been able to fill despite his desperate attempts. In “Sympathy for the Devil,” an actual voice recording of Dahmer is included in which he states:

I had wondered why I was compelled to do all the murders. What I was searching for that would, uh, fill the emptiness that I felt. The murdering someone and ... and disposing of them right away gives no great lasting pleasure or a feeling of fulfillment. And yet I still felt the compulsion to do it throughout these years.

Perhaps Dahmer’s obsession with a person’s insides is driven by his wish to find fulfillment, but, like most men, no amount of consumption or acquirement of goods can satisfy the hunger. Dahmer’s cannibalism was rooted in the idea that killing and keeping parts of his victims was not enough. Instead, he consumed them so “they became part of him and made him more potent” (Purcell & Arrigo 2006: 100). Dahmer’s cannibalism takes on the role of a social metaphor for consumer capitalism and our reliance on possession of objects to provide happiness. After all, Jeffrey Dahmer, as he himself stated, did not wish to kill; he wanted to “keep.”⁷ Paradoxically, Dahmer’s attempts to control people turned out to be futile as he “was all the time controlled by it” (Masters 1993: 198).

In the first episode of *Conversations with a Killer: The Jeffrey Dahmer Tapes*, “Sympathy for the Devil,” Dahmer’s defense attorney, Wendy Patrickus, describes him as “polite” and “cordial.” When walking into his apartment for the first time, reporter Anne E. Schwartz (1992: 8) described it as “unremarkable.” It is those ordinary-looking characters that cause the most shock because they “wear a mask of normalcy, rupturing the Apollonian surface of ‘real life’” (Pizzato 1999: 87), causing disillusionment and disbelief as to how a normal American family could produce a monster like the Milwaukee Cannibal.

3. Making the Monster

To define Jeffrey Dahmer as a monster, we must discuss what the notion of monstrosity entails and how it has evolved from an animal/creature of terrifying appearance to an abnormality, easy to spot outside of myths, legends, and fairytales in the very society we live in. However, recognizing a monster is not as straightforward a path as in narratives of vampires or werewolves. Jacques Derrida (1995: 385) states that “the notion of the monster is rather difficult to deal with, to get a hold on, to stabilize [...] Monstrosity may reveal or make one aware of what normality is.” The monster of contemporary

7 When asked by his lawyer Wendy Patrickus about the murders, Dahmer stated: “Uh, I would’ve rather he’d stayed alive, but strangling seemed to be the way to *keep him*” (*Conversations with a Killer: The Jeffrey Dahmer Tapes*, “Can I Take Your Picture?”).

society is “a discursive monster” (Derrida 1995: 386) that stands opposed to social, cultural, philosophical, and historical norms and creates awareness by presenting itself as a frightening opposition. “The monster, then, serves to displace the antagonisms and horrors evidenced within society outside society itself” (Moretti 1997: 84). A monster stands as a reversed mirror image of man – “the monster is man turned upside-down, negated” (Moretti 1997: 88), showing that man and monster share their origins, both created by the same society as something “not found in nature, but built” (Moretti 1997: 85).

Having established that the monster is created, we ask ourselves: *Why do we need to create monsters?* E. J. Ingebretsen (2004) asserts that monsters are, in essence, always political beings, serving to establish a hermeneutics of fear. Simply, men need monsters so they can destroy them. With monsters expressing “the anxiety that the future will be monstrous” (Moretti 1997: 84), their destruction provides a sense of security and a false sense of power over future events. Even though monsters are at the root of fear and anxiety, their existence and subsequent destruction are necessary for people’s peace of mind (Ingebretsen 2001: 15).

Dahmer’s sexual orientation cannot be disregarded when discussing his crimes, not only because his victims were young men, but also because his frustration, violent outbursts, and sadism are thought to have been caused by his inability to accept his homosexuality. He was ambivalent toward his homosexuality and hated the men he killed, resented them for the attraction he felt toward them as much as he was fascinated by their bodies (Jentzen *et al.* 1994). W. Martens (2011: 509) writes that Dahmer’s sexual fantasies of ultimate control were “a coping mechanism against frustration, shame, lack of self-esteem, and feelings of inferiority and powerlessness.” But what caused Dahmer to have such feelings to begin with? Despite being Caucasian and from a middle-class family, a homosexual man is considered an outsider on the margins of society, somebody who is demonized and should be disposed of. Dahmer’s feelings and dismissal of his own sexuality were emphasized by the idea that homosexuality is a shameful sin. He is by no means the first and only serial killer who has committed such shocking crimes. While some killed, tortured, and dismembered more people, Dahmer’s homosexuality partly contributed to his monstrosity in the public eye. At the time of Dahmer’s killing spree in Milwaukee, Club Baths was used by homosexuals for private meetings (Schwartz 1992: 51) in the dark, hidden away from the rest of society. Monsters, as Ingebretsen (2004: 32) reminds us, are to be hidden away, “found in dark, culturally marginal places;” they are those who represent “deviations from a presumptive natural order” (Ingebretsen 2001: 6). Thus, Dahmer’s sexuality alone stands as an oddity that goes against social, cultural, and religious norms of the time amid the AIDS epidemic in the United States, during which hatred was geared toward the gay community.⁸

8 “One anonymous letter, postmarked July 26, was addressed to the executive editor of the

Perhaps the allure of the Jeffrey Dahmer story, much like most serial killer narratives, “lie[s] in the form’s ability to discharge us of our own misogyny, homophobia, or racism by locating guilt in the killer alone?” (Fuss 1993: 199). Societies are built on the idea of monsters, scapegoats for humanity’s darkest urges, which is why they have moved from the margins into the spotlight. Representing monsters in the most public way – via television, films, news – solidifies their crucial position in establishing normalcy. “For this reason, the creation of the monster is as important a civic duty as the ritualized spectacle of its exorcism” (Ingebretsen 2004: 25), which is why monsters are made public for the sole purpose of watching them die (Ingebretsen 2004: 30).

Dahmer was killed in prison by a fellow inmate in 1994, serving what seemed to be justice and relief, a type of catharsis and release from the burden of the monster. M. Pizzato (1999: 88) presents an understanding of Dahmer’s crimes and trial as a revenge tragedy in which “Dahmer’s execution in prison became the final act of,” involving “the mass audience as chorus.” But Jeffrey Dahmer continues to live on, even more than expected, following the steady stream of true crime documentaries released to this day. “For the victims’ families the pain continues. Each civil suit, report of a proposed settlement, or revisitation of the murders by newspapers or television reopens the wounds. The Dahmer case did not die” (Knudten 1998: 387–388) and the wounds created by the crimes of the Milwaukee Cannibal “cut deeply into the city’s sense of itself” (Dvorchak & Holewa 1991: 169).

4. Conclusion

Dahmer’s crimes are no less despicable than those of other notorious serial killers, but the difference lies in the media coverage they got, along with how they were represented. Not all monsters and killers are equal in the eyes of the public due to the language used to describe them. Dahmer stands out as a figure of contemporary monstrosity that paints a picture of the current state of humanity, even thirty years after his crimes. “Dahmer, who was just like us in so many ways, lived out perhaps too intensely, we fear, our identity as Consumer” (Ingebretsen 2001: 68). The insatiable cannibal with a fetishistic love of collecting objects continues to live on “beyond language, beyond culture” (Tithecott 1997: 5). Dahmer’s ‘perversion’ can be seen as the realization of what we consider civilization. “Another way of saying this is that ‘normality’ and ‘perversion’ exist together on a dynamic continuum as much as they are oppositional structures giving each other meaning” (Tithecott 1997: 7). The society we take part in is defined by the Jeffrey Dahmers of the world, and no matter how many documentaries are filmed or how many books are written trying to explain our fascination and attraction to such morbid narratives, the truth is found in

Wisconsin Light, a newspaper serving the gay and lesbian community: ‘I don’t care if you queers die of AIDS or dismemberment. Do us all a favor and hurry it up, ok? I hope Dahmer gets off on a technicality.’” (Dvorchak & Holewa 1991: 205)

the silence of continuing to consume narratives of monstrosity without asking about the repercussions. The word *monster* “transgresses linguistic and social boundaries, collapsing categories of biology, sociology, ethics and aesthetics, theology and philosophy” (Ingebretsen 2001: 19). For if the crimes of Jeffrey Dahmer are *unspeakable* and *unrepresentable*, why do we as a society continue to try to give them voice?

Our serial killer can provoke the speaking of the unspeakable, the voicing of silence. We signify that unspeakableness with words. We go on talking about how unspeakable he is. We figure him beyond the pale of language only to discover that he is merely beyond the language that comes naturally. We are left with a figure of monstrosity whom we are unable to comfortably condemn to unspeakableness, who stubbornly remains *of* language. We are left uncomfortably with only language, language with no ‘other.’ (Tithcott 1997: 64)

We, thus, share a language with the monster by allowing him to come into our homes, appear on our television screens, and inform our daily lives with his presence. True crime documentaries have enabled the serial killer to reach us directly and speak to us through television, meaning “monstrosity has once again become spectacle” (Tithcott 1997: 138). But the monster is not alone in this spectacle. The serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer “fulfilled his role by giving us contemporary necrophilic rites and a mythic, yet normal, face as extensions of our desire. We fulfill another role – lost in the millions of eyes watching him on television, we still participate to some degree in the recreation of his transcendent acts” (Pizzato 1999: 89). Jeffrey Dahmer has indeed established himself as a transcendent figure, an idea and symbol in society.

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SERIJSKI UBICA, KANIBAL I POTROŠAČ: SLUČAJ ČUDOVIŠNOSTI DŽEFRIJA DAMERA

Rezime

Nedavno su snimljene i objavljene dve dokumentarne serije producentske kuće *Netflix* o serijskom ubici Džefriju Dameru – *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (2022) i *Conversations with a Killer: The Jeffrey Dahmer Tapes* (2022). Shodno tome, interesovanje za ovaj slučaj iz 1991. godine znatno se povećalo. Cilj rada jeste istražiti popularnost narativa o serijskim ubicama i otkriti ulogu čudovišta u društvu. Istraživanje će biti sprovedeno na primeru Džefrija Damera. Ispitaćemo značenje „čudovišnosti”, kao i načine stvaranja čudovišta. Dž. Damer jeste ličnost sa kojom se „običan” čovek, onaj koji se ne smatra čudovištem, identifikuje. Kanibalizam Dž. Damera izjednačava se sa konzumerističkim navikama savremenog društva, posebno u pogledu povećanja popularnosti narativa o ubistvima i ljudskoj opsesiji da ih konzumira i podeli, što posledično dovodi do toga da nasilna ubistva postanu izvor zarade. Analiza ovog slučaja postavlja i odgovara na sledeća pitanja: *Šta je čudovište? Da li su društvu potrebna čudovišta?*

Ključne reči: Džefri Damer, zločin, serijski ubica, monstrum, kanibal, konzumerizam

Aleksandra Z. Stojanović

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