



Post-modernism, Paraphilia, Sadism, Necrophilia, and Sexually Motivated Homicide: An Interdisciplinary Reading of Dennis Cooper's "Frisk" (1991)

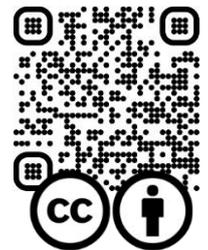
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Abstract— This paper explores the representation of sexually motivated homicide in Dennis Cooper's "Frisk" (1991) while employing an interdisciplinary framework in methodology, specifically: psychopathology and forensic psychology. First, the novel's cultural context points to its postmodern strategies, indicative of the psychopathological effects of late capitalist culture. Then the paper turns its attention to the novel's protagonist, Dennis, who is initially diagnosed with paraphilic disorder as defined by the "Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders" (2013). Afterward, implementing a typology developed by Anglo-Canadian criminologist Lee Mellor, Dennis is analyzed and categorized as a homicidal necrophilic offender and a homicidal sexual sadist. The detailed investigation of his sexually motivated crimes places the character among the most notorious serial killers in the world.

Keywords— Dennis Cooper, Frisk, forensic psychology and literature, serial killers in literature, necrophilia in literature, sexual sadism in literature



I. INTRODUCTION

Sexual sadism and necrophilia—two of the most revolting manifestations of abnormal sexual behavior and pervert sensuality—have been recorded since ancient times. Homicidal sexual sadism and necrophilia are themes and motifs that seldom obtain much literary space and even less interdisciplinary academic exploration; however, a literary tradition dates back to the scandalous writing of the Marquise de Sade and his philosophy of libertine sexuality. De Sade's combination of pornography and hedonistic philosophical discourse resulted in Western literature's most controversial piece of fiction: *The 120 Days of Sodom* (1785). While the term 'sadism' is derived from his name, his opulent sadism did not denote a disposition for a mental disorder, but his licentiousness may have been considered an impetus.

Throughout the 80s and the 90s, a group of American authors—unbound by norms or convention—explored and wrote about issues such as sexual freedom, violence, crime,

and drug culture. Of these, the queer novelist, poet, critic, and activist, "[Dennis] Cooper is on the order of the Marquise de Sade: one which disrupts the demands of utilitarian, or an ordered and rationally productive society" (Viegner 1994, 113). Whereas the publication of his novel *Frisk* (1991), along those of Bret Easton Ellis or Chuck Palahniuk, caused the most histrionic reactions and controversy, it received the least critical attention from scholars. Only recently has Dennis Cooper achieved wider attention outside the obscure underground circles and gained some scholarly attention he deserves.

This paper addresses the novel's protagonist, Dennis, applying an interdisciplinary framework of psychopathology and forensic psychology.¹ It employs one of the most recent typologies of serial killers while attempting to categorize the character as a curious combination of homicidal sexual sadist and a homicidal necrophilic offender. First, the analysis approaches the novel's cultural context; then, the attention is turned to the

postmodern framework of the narration. The multivalency of the framework is very much reminiscent of the processes operating in the late capitalistic culture's background, the same processes that have been pathologizing a cultural neurosis. As sexual sadism and necrophilia are classified as types of paraphilia by the *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual*, the 5th ed. (*DSM-V*) published by American Psychiatric Association, Dennis is initially diagnosed with paraphilia. While *DSM-V* (2013) is a valuable diagnostic tool, in order to analyze the particular paraphilic expression, the study instead applies a more sophisticated typology of sexually motivated homicidal offenders from the field of forensic psychology, namely: Lee Mellor's *Homicide: A Forensic Psychology Casebook* (2016).

Dennis Cooper and Frisk

James Annesley (1998, 140) dubbed the writing of Dennis Cooper—together with artists such as Susanna Moore, Lynne Tillman, and Bret Easton Ellis, whereas Jay McInerney, Gary Indiana, and Chuck Palahniuk and their vapid, post-punk nihilism should have been also included—"Blank fiction/Blank generation" (note the reference to the generational cohort of the Beat generation that explored the issues of sexual freedom, drug abuse and transgression of social norms as well). According to Annesley (1998, 140), the literary output of Blank generation privileged minimalistic superficiality over complexity and valued the mass/pulp culture over the highbrow one. In his discussion on violence in blank fiction, Annesley obliquely references the ethics and aesthetics of Generation X. The term Generation X was popularized by Douglas Coupland's *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* (1991). As a demographic cohort, it refers to the generation that came to age during the epilogue of Cold War anxieties, the proliferation of free market economics, the dominance of conservative politics, the demise of the nuclear family, and the labor emancipation of women. As a countercultural movement that crystallized in Pacific North-west, Seattle, WA, in the second half of the 80s and reached its peak by the end of the first half of the 90s, this generation was characterized by existential nihilism, antisocial behavior, radical cynicism, and passive revolt, along their anti-consumerist, anti-establishment, and non-conformist outlooks. Kurt Cobain was reluctantly crowned the spokesman of Generation X, and according to Fisher (2008, 9):

"In his dreadful lassitude and objectless rage, Cobain seemed to have given wearied voice to the despondency of the generation that had come after history, whose every move was anticipated,

tracked, bought and sold before it had even happened...."

At the same time, another literary term inclusive of Cooper's name, "transgressive fiction", became part of critical discussion. According to Michael Silverblatt (1993), who was the first one to popularize and define—let us use the sacred word—genre of "transgressive fiction" in his article for *Los Angeles Times*: "[E]xploring the sexual frontiers," he argues that the transgressive writing, has violation at its core as definitive: "violation of norms, of humanistic enterprise, of the body. Really, it's the Marquis de Sade who officiates at the American orgy" (Silverblatt 1993).² Thus, human body—often objectified and commoditized—is the central object of narrations that disturbingly progress to subsequent intentional transgressions. While providing explicit descriptions of such hideous crimes as sexual assaults, rape, torture, mutilation, homicide, and even pedophilia and necrophilia, the characters of transgressive fiction regularly harbor illicit and distressing thoughts. At the same time, the concurrence of nihilism and antisocial behavior indicates persisting mental illness among the genre's protagonists.

Although Fran Mason (2016, 193), unlike Annesley (1998), defines the generational cohort marked with 'X' as a specific literary movement—and most importantly subsequently derivative of "blank fiction" while referencing Bret Easton Ellis and Chuck Palahniuk as representatives of the latter—in summary, all three terms: "blank generation", "generation X", or "transgressive fiction" are used almost interchangeable. They attempt to encompass the same assembly of authors, whereas each addresses different aspects, whether it is the style, the philosophical orientation, or the central object of this literature, yet predicated upon similar impetuses.

The countercultural movement of the 90s was consequently assimilated into the mainstream; the entertainment industry labeled, commoditized, and sold the marginalized demographic, geographic, and artistic subculture as "grunge". Fisher—following Frederic Jameson's (1988) assumption that postmodern culture is a *mélange* of "dead styles" in an "imaginary museum"—described the process, where the late capitalist culture pre-emptively employs the gestures of the counterculture:

Cobain knew he was just another piece of spectacle, that nothing runs better on MTV than a protest against MTV; knew that his every move was a cliché scripted in advance, knew that even realizing it is cliché. In the same context, the alternative zone's cyclical repetition of previously

recycled gestures of rebellion has proven to be pointless (2008, 9-10).

According to Mason (2016), Generation X's postmodern employment of retro vision operates as a form of rebellion against this capitalistic commoditization. Therefore, it was probably Kurt Cobain's demise in the spirit of his predecessors—Jimmy Hendrix and Sid Vicious—that most readily epitomized the impossibility of stylistic innovation.

With its place at the heart of the American cultural mainstream, this cultural mode entered academic grounds; thus, "[N]o longer can blank fiction be dismissed as the aberrant productions of a marginalized group" (Annesley 1998, 140). Even though Mason accused Generations X's questioning of grand narrative (Mason 2016, 193), he does not recognize the fact that the particular strain of fiction does so not by deconstructing them or through overt intertextuality, but through incorporation of marginalized, pulp genres such as snuff writing, scat pornography, splatterpunk, body horror, queer literature, and neo-noir.

Cooper's novel *Frisk* (1991) is evocative and inclusive of the fact since his combination of pornography with social discourse as a vehicle of his narration is justified by his utilitarian ends. Seemingly, a novel of casual surfaces about sex, homosexuality, violence, sadism, pornography, death, HIV/AIDS, and drug culture but even such taboo issues as necrophilia, pedophilia, coprophagy, and cannibalism; the text was composed as a reaction to Cooper's stay abroad in Europe. While he called it his "revenge on Holland for the unpleasant time [he] had there" (Hester 2020, 135), the novel is *ipso facto* a dissection of American society. Before providing minute insights into a character in Dennis Cooper's semi-autobiographical novel *Frisk* (1991), it seems necessary to introduce some previous perspectives on the text. Even though there are only a handful of critical essays, the novel has achieved a notorious cult status. A dominant portion of the narrative revolves around Dennis and is focalized from his perspective—it primarily focuses on the etiology of his deep sexual fascination with excessive sexual behavior and his obsession with death influenced by snuff pornography; it also documents several of his failed relationships. Conclusively, he embarks on a sexually motivated necrosadistic killing spree in Amsterdam, which is the object of the latter analysis.

The transgressive author Jean Genet provides a paratextual link in the novel's epigraph. Furthermore, Young (1992, 258) recalls references to Bataille's *Story of the Eye*³, and argues that the text abounds with allusions and references to surrealism. Whereas his critical interpretations of Cooper's fiction focused on the intertextual influences on his obscene and decadent prose, he somehow omits Cooper's comments

on such popular contemporaneous slasher franchises as *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Although the novel depicts the times when "[T]he detours around AIDS weren't marked yet" (Cooper 1991, 39), the epidemics of HIV that affected the homosexual community is not an explored discourse in the narrative, nor serves as a metaphoric/symbolic death in the exclusively homosexual environment of the novel. Cooper rather transposes the attention to the American decaying urban/industrial setting; maybe therefore, Ben Gove (2000) excluded Cooper from the growing pantheon of recognized American queer literature. According to Diarmuid Hesters, who wrote an exhausting biography about Cooper, queer studies pioneers at the University of Sussex, Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore included Dennis Cooper's *Frisk* on the syllabus in a class on Sexuality, Fiction, and Subculture (Jonathan, 2020). However, Dennis' queerness/otherness does not represent what Dollimore considers the internalized cultural guilt in texts of other queer authors, paradoxically affirmative with homophobic texts, nor confirms Dollimore's assumptions about homosexuality's artistic imagination of death, cultural degeneration, and sterility (1988, 295-305). Also, the narration does not perceive sexual orientation as a social restriction, nor regards imposition of such labels as abusive or constituting the essence of radical difference, perpetuating what Phillips considers the violence among homosexuals constructed as fragmented, fractured, and frustrated—creating an identity that simultaneously is a social taboo (Phillips 1999; 154, 156, 66-67). The last word to say has the author himself since Cooper has been distancing himself from the gay community with quite an audacity, he stated "To put it in a cliché, [my work is] a kind of thorn in [the homosexual community's] side or something" (Nicolini, 1993,3). So the novel does not operate as a vicious probe into the American queer society, specifically to the margins of this community engaging with fetishism.

According to Matthias Viegner, Cooper "demystifies" the interiority of post-modernism (1994, 112). Rather than focusing on a singular prominent protagonist, the narrative offers several perspectives and points of view and presents some fictional accounts, digressions, and questionable histories. Overall, the novel is a fragmented, erratic compilation—a pastiche of genres, containing letters, telegrams, journal entries, and even "an artsy murder-mystery novel, some salvageable fragments of which are interspersed through the section"(Cooper 1991, 40) "TORN 1986 (1987)". The narration can be described as moving away from the rigidly imposed hierarchy to a more arborescent form, moving freely between characters, resulting in constant dynamic changes of interconnected, fluent narrations with no boundaries or discreet units.

Despite its fragmented character, the non-linear narration simultaneously indicates the post-modern self-reflexivity of the text. Cooper invites the reader repeatedly to explore the boundaries of fiction and reality, and the limits of narrative truth: for example, Cooper's fictional character of Dennis and the real persona confuse and span reality and fiction. Eventually, the narration's last invitation of the reader to its artificiality makes it apparent that the main body of the narrative is a mere fabrication of Dennis. The series of five murders that takes the form of bleak memoir and claustrophobic adjacent letters describing at length Dennis' sexually motivated atrocities is revealed as a pure fantasy of an unreliable narrator. The final confrontation between Dennis and his ex-boyfriends—Julian and his younger brother, Kevin, who both traveled to the Netherlands—consequently decenters the narration. Cooper personally accentuated how the disregarding cumulated suspension of disbelief and horror reveals the text's ethical orientations. Cooper does not engage in a conversation with the reader through post-modern minimalistic omissions; the communication instead functions as based on the metafictional disturbance in the conclusion, which transposes the moral responsibility upon the reader as he is confronted with these facts:

The novel is about the difference between what is possible in one's fantasy life, and what is possible in one's real life. It tries, in various ways, to seduce readers into believing a series of murders are real, then announces itself as a fiction, hopefully leaving readers responsible for whatever pleasure they took in believing the murders were real. I mean it to challenge readers around issues of morality, and to make them wonder why the novel's ending leaves them feeling disappointed or relieved (Hester 2020, 136).

Whereas the complexities of the postmodern framework point to specific strategies like fragmentation, generic hybridity, indeterminacy, metafiction, and intertextuality, the novel is ultimately a critique of America: its decadent consumerism, obsession with destructive violence, serialization and commoditization of sex, existential nihilism, and artificiality of its experience in hyperreality. *Frisk* introduces the narration with an ascending countdown, each number a picture presenting a young model—Henry—in five ephebophilic pornographic snuff acts including bondage and mutilation. The quintet is a central pivot of the novel that shocked the protagonist with its mesmerizing power:

Five. Close-up. The blotch is actually the mouth of a shallow cave, like the sort ocean waves carve in cliffs. The uneven frame of ass skin is impeccably smooth. The inside of the cave is gray, chopped-up, mushy. At its centre's a pit, or a small tunnel entrance, too out-of-focus to actually explore with one's eyes, but too mysterious not to want to try (Cooper 1991, 4).

This quotation is very much indicative of Generation X's indifference with its countercultural ethics and aesthetics through the explicit pulp obscenity of marginalized genres. Through the fragmented initial setup of five snuff photos, Cooper invites his reader into a never-ending loop of ropes, orifices, and mysterious wounds, but also introduces the bleak and fragmented landscape of American society where death and sex have been homogenized, serialized, and sold along drugs, slasher horrors, images of death in the news, prostitution, and pornography. The polaroid enumeration points to the commodification of sexual experience, which became an object torn by the economic processes taking place between the social forces of offer and demand—insistent on the necessary meditation between the realm of desire, the social production, and their respective repressions.

Capitalist society requires an effective mechanism to counteract the explosive force of desire with the potential to threaten its structures of exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy. When Dennis discovers Henry—the young model from the photographic set—is very much alive, the object of his desires and the center of their acquisition has been radically dislocated. The postmodern scholar Fredric Jameson (1988) accuses the incoherence of the postmodern economy and corporate media of society's schizophrenic ills. He argues schizophrenia is an extreme mental state coexistent within capitalism, enforcing psychological repression linked to social oppression. Further elaborating on "the view of schizophrenia" by Lacan, although questioning its clinical accuracy (118), he assumes that schizophrenic ills of postmodern culture are "closely related to the emergence of this new moment of late, consumer or multinational capitalism" (125).⁴

Jean Baudrillard (1983, 4) claims that substituting a sign of a real thing in hyperreality creates a simulation that no longer refers to an external model. According to Baudrillard, the first real novel about simulation, J. G. Ballard in *Crash* (1973), conflates the human body with the car's mechanics in the dimension of photography and cinema (1991). What inextricably links the texts is the lens of camera. However, Cooper's dimension of hyperreality

does not operate as an analogical mixture of technology with sex. Dennis eventually discovers the photographs to be just an *escamotge* with its seductively arousing yet imitated reality of sex, violence, and death. Cooper concludes the novel the same way he begins it, with a re-enactment of the initial photoshoot, this time pointing to its artificial, simulated, recycled character. Following the cultural logic of late capitalism, where simulations replace reality with hyperreality, the final composition becomes a Baudrillardian *simulacrum* of the initial composition, which was a simulation of a snuff sexual act:

Five. Close-up. The 'wound' is actually a glop of paint, ink, makeup, tape, cotton, tissue, and papier-mâché sculpted to suggest the inside of a human body. It sits on the ass, crushed and deflated. In the central indentation there's a smaller notch maybe one-half-inch deep. It's a bit out of focus. Still, you can see the fingerprints of the person or persons who made it (Cooper 1991, 128).

Here Cooper's style becomes more telegraphic and artificial—the apex captured by an emblematic camera deciphers the previous perverse imagery as a gabble of parts that sound like a demented inventory, a list of unrelated objects, and a subject—all recruited to repopulate or, more ambiguously, recombine them in an unexpected but more meaningful way:

Still, Kevin and/or his camera would have to be God, Julian thought, to transform a mud pie on someone's ass into the sort of nightmarish image one spends ones adult life obsessing about.

Julian took his seat . . . clack, clack . . . I came to mind. Not the psychotic me, but the teenager gaying purposefully into the holes in boys' bodies. Back in those days my compulsions were rigueur, business as usual, part and parcel of sex, as far as Julian knew (Cooper 1991, 126).

The quotation points to a postmodern fragmentation as manifested through an abrupt shift in perspective. The fluent transfusion of identity cumulates in a potent sense of identity, and paradoxically, the seemingly empty centre functions positively as it is productive and produces new reality, a material reality. In light of Jameson's perspective, Cooper seems to depict the distinct culture arising from this schizophrenia and accuses the postmodern industry of pathologizing neurotic behavior, ruptured personality, and isolated self and fractured identity. Maybe that is why, according to Elizabeth Young, Cooper's representation of

death attempts to counter the cyclical structures of post-modernity (1992, 260-61). Dennis' perversion is no longer on the order of the neurotic, the repressed, or the transgressive. On the contrary, it leads to non-perverted pleasure where every wound and eroticized vocabulary of intimacy and sex is replaced by indifferent language. Thus, Dennis Cooper's *Frisk* is a prime example of a literary account about the dysfunctionality of hyperreality. This dimension, which is inseparable from Cooper's text as well, has become more than a thematic restriction of the text. His imitation indicates an effort toward an expression of uniqueness while following its utilitarian ends and overcoming the continuously dysfunctional circulation of figures in the capitalist market. So while Ballard's topography of the human body coincides with the industrialized landscapes and its machinery, Cooper's corporal exploration of superficial appearances operates as a vicious critique of shallow capitalism, deprivation and affluence of consumerist need, objectification and the deafening effects of serialization of sex, violence, and death.

Dennis: Paraphilia

Both *DSM-V* (2013) and the *International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10)* (1992) by WHO (the World Health Organization) categorized necrophilia and sexual sadistic disorder under paraphilic disorders. There is a consensus that paraphilias are not *ipso facto* psychiatric disorders. "The term *paraphilia* denotes any intense and persistent sexual interest other than an interest in genital stimulation or preparatory fondling with phenotypically normal, physically mature, consenting human partners" (APA 2013, 685). The term "paraphilic coercive disorder" refers specifically to the preference for non-consenting sexual acts" (Thornton 2010). The number and taxonomy of paraphilia have been debated and, in some cases, lists 549 specific types (Aggrawal 2008, 369-382).

Ballard's internalization of the dystopian setting and technology in *Crash* is a probe into several paraphilic subjects and their derivative sexual fetishism. The novel's protagonist, Ballard, develops a specific car-crash sexual fetishism combined with obsessive symphorophilic thoughts about certain celebrities. Unbound by norms and seemingly nihilistic, Dennis' anti-social behavior also indicates a severe psychological disturbance. Hester defines the novel's thematic restrictions to sex, death, and corporal investigation as bordering with the attentiveness of a "psychotic" (2020, 136). Collin Harrison (2010) identifies not only the concerns of this defining piece of 90s fiction as pedophilia, necrophilia, pornography, and drugs but regards the text as an elaboration on the "serial killer motif". Even though Hester and Harrison point in the directions this paper ventures into, they do not engage with serious analysis.

Their researches have not explored the links between postmodern capitalism and its correlated social neurosis nor have entered into analyses of minute psychopathology and forensic psychology in interpretation.

The etiology of *paraphilia* in connection with the character seems like a plausible point of entry into the diagnosis. While the current state of research in the field has found so far no empirical evidence of genetic factors contributing to the development and no conclusive support for brain trauma, "ineffective social environment" and "formative events" are often cited as determinants, and substance abuse is considered as inhibitive (Mellor 2016a, 84-89). While there is no proof of substance abuse as an etiologic factor, Dennis is a frequent drug taker, which could be considered an inhibitor of sexually motivated offenses, and explain how openly he articulates his violent, perverse, and destructive imagination. John Money (2011) offered a theory of paraphilia based on *vandalized lovemaps*. Any change in the *lovemap* after puberty occurs through "decoding" an already extant *lovemap* rather than "encoding" it. In cases where a juvenile has been subjected to abusive sexual activity with a partner that may be years older than them, he may act out a *paraphilic lovemap* that mirrors this experience, but with themselves now in the role of the more senior participant. Dennis describes the formation of his *lovemap* beginning in 1969, at the age of thirteen, as an avid reader of homosexual pulp pornography; he is strongly affected by his regular visits to a local shop, where he often masturbates. Being sexually active by this age and engaging in light BDSM, his paraphilic preference and interest in sexually gratifying sadism and necrophilia are constituted by his exposure to the same snuff pornographies presented at the novel's beginning. Dennis claims they "went on to completely direct or destroy [his] life" (Cooper 1991, 30). As a result, he becomes obsessed with sadism and death as his paraphilic preference. Another character closely tied to the central polaroid quintet, Henry, describes his sexual development in a similar fragmented framework of "encoding" and "decoding" as Money (2011):

'Wild.' Henry *knew* it. His feelings, thoughts, etc., were the work of people around him. Men particularly. The first made a weirdly detached person out of his body and mind when he was thirteen or something. The next man corrected his predecessor's mistakes. The next changed other stuff. The last few only tinkered because Henry was perfect, aside from some bad habits (Cooper 1991, 5).

Dennis' *fantasyscape*, borrowing Moller's (2016b, 98) term referring to "the scenario in the imagination where the *lovemap* becomes animated, and occurs in space and

sequentially", includes such scenes as when Dennis "lay in bed putting Finn through hell in [his] thoughts. [He] tore up his body like it was a paper bag and pulled out dripping fistfuls of veins, organs, muscles, tubes" (Cooper 1991, 38). Even Dennis' atrocities with his two German companions, including a handful of victims, are all paraphilic, revealing Dennis' "[I]nterest in sexual death" (Cooper 1991, 40). This especially Sadean section is an explicit and nauseating excursion into the world of sexual sadism, necrophilia, coprophagia, and anthropophagi. Dennis' confession portrays explicit details and representations of brutally executed torture, rape, mutilation, armed assault, murder, bondage, and drug abuse perpetrated upon innocent people. However, the postmodern interplay decenters this narration, and the serial murder account is *defacto* a fantasy. Dennis eventually confesses:

I sort of know... well, basically because I realized at some point that I couldn't and wouldn't kill anyone, no matter how persuasive the fantasy is. And theorizing about it, wondering why, never helped at all. Writing it down was and still is exciting in a pornographic way. But I couldn't see how it would ever fit into anything as legitimate as a novel or whatever (Cooper 1991, 123).

His imagination, repressed for years, is reconstructed; he can exercise his most deviant impulses and no longer suppresses his wayward, malevolent needs. Ian Brady (2001, 92) talks about how the inability to enact fantasy fuels the compulsions of homicidal offenders. While Dennis can conquer the desires of his *Id*, and the narration could be ascribed with a particular therapeutic effect, when he encounters Julian and Kevin, he confesses "[A]bout Kevin". Their interaction after the years intensifies the postmodern cyclical structures, as "[Kevin] reminds [him] of something [he] felt before [he] stopped feeling anything. Pre-desire, pre-violence" (Cooper 1991, 114). Thus, Kevin is proposed as a subject capable of triggering the encoding process retroactively. In the failing world of Dennis' simulation, substituting the first model with Kevin operates as a compelling illusion, opening a glimmer of possibility. However, rather than being a coping mechanism or a last resort, the account was composed to invite Julian and Kevin into his escalating, accelerated madness. Without a gravitational pull, his desires—magnified here to an uncanny extent—are disfigured and may give rise to a more neurotic lust and incorrigible perversion of drives. In contrast, his desired self-repressions as a purposeful variance is no romanticization of mental disorder:

So I started sending letters to people who already knew me, thinking they’d either write back and give me some sort of objective analysis, or else relate to the fantasy, come here, and give me the courage or amorality or whatever to actually kill somebody in league with them. You’re the only ones who ever answered, though (Cooper 1991, 123).

Here, the metafictional strategy operates at its most explicit. At this point of the narration, it is evident that Dennis is not just an unreliable narrator but also innocuous. The unapologetic crimes, described in an unapologetic tone, are just lucid accounts influenced by obsession. Thus, Dennis’ *fantasyscape* is the object of his subsequent categorization as a homicidal offender. Otherwise, the paper would have to consider the fictitious murders—executed in an isolated windmill in the Netherlands operating as a brewery and providing the perfect setting for the realization of his wicked fantasies while finding accomplices in two Germans from Köln who are hiding from the German authorities after strangulation of one person—depicting a less innocuous form of neurosis from the perspective of forensic-psychology.

Not every sexual homicide is necessarily indicative of paraphilia; the diagnosis ascertains paraphilia according to the nature of the urges, fantasies, and behaviors but diagnoses the disorder based on distress and impairment in social and occupational space. Dennis’ disregard for others, obsessive thoughts, turbulent relationships, and occupational distortion occupy the entirety of the narration. Thus, on the surface, Cooper’s unapologetic prose informs of Dennis’ diverse unapologetic homicidal acts motivated by paraphilia: necrophilia and sexual sadism. Considering the *DSM-V* (2013), categorizing sexual sadists and necrophilic homicidal offenders as representatives of disorder with paraphilic character is examined from the perspective of a typology developed by criminologist Mellor (2016a, 2016b). The interdisciplinary nature of the study applies the typology for homicidal necrophilic offenders that distinguish eight categories (A-H) of homicidal necrophilia with existing accounts and examples (see Figure 1). His typology of homicidal sexual sadists and his elaboration on the subject present eight categories, while two are hypothetical ones without any actual examples (see Table 1). The divisions of these typologies are compatible, and their combination produces hybrid categorization, which attempts to pigeonhole the totality of paraphilic desires and experience in sexually motivated homicides.

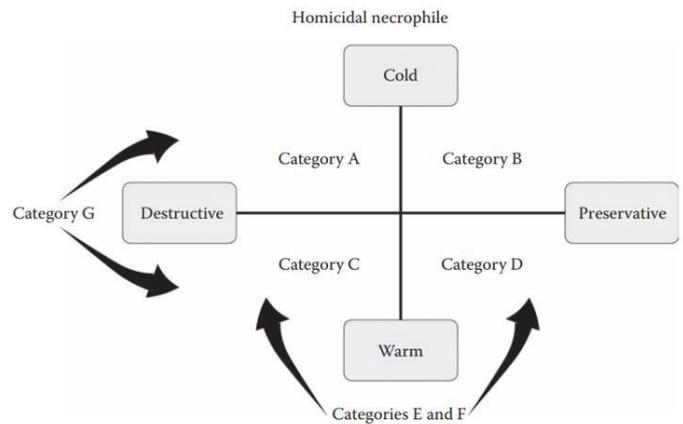


Fig.1: Mellor’s new typology of homicidal necrophiles (2016, 104)

Table 2: Mellor’s (2016, 135) Typology of Homicidal Sexual Sadists

Category	Destructive	Prolonged	Elaborate	Example
1 ^a	Y	Y	Y	Fred West
2 ^a	N	Y	Y	Robert Berdella
3	Y	Y	N	Chicago Rippers
4	N	Y	N	Keith Jespersion
5	Y	N	N	Andrei Chikatilo
6	N	N	N	Dennis Rader
7	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N/A</i>
8	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N/A</i>

Note: Categories in *italics* may hypothetically exist, though our research has revealed no examples of offenders who exemplify the category.

^a Categories that would be considered sexual sadists by the standards of Dietz, Hazelwood, and Warren in their numerous collaborative studies and articles on the phenomenon. Such offenders have been termed *complex sexual sadists*.

Dennis: Necrophilia

There are records of necrophilia dating back to the ascend of civilization—practiced by the embalmers of Ancient Egypt, by the Moche civilization in South America, while Herodotus wrote of Greek tyrant Periander (Aggrawal 2016, 4-7). Richard von Krafft-Ebing dubbed it as a “horrible manifestation of sadism”(referring to mutilation rather than actual sexual acts.)(1999). In literature, the theme exists in examples from Greek myths (Dimoetes, Achilles, and Penthesilea) and Egyptian myths (conceiving of Horus by Isis and Osiris) (Aggrawal 2016, 4-7); Aggrawal mentions “Sleeping Beauty” as a variation on the theme in folklore; provides an example of *Hamlet* and revenge tragedy genre in general as abounding with necrophilic desires; and discusses William Faulkner’s *A Rose for Emily* (Ibid, 17-18). Paradoxically, Aggrawal ignores the growing body of Sadean tradition and authors like Poppy Z. Brite and Tony Burgess

Closely associated with other activities, namely: cannibalism, vampirism, and necrophagia; necrophilia is also known as “necrophilism, necrolagnia, necrocoitus,

necrochlesis, and thanatophilia" (Aggrawal 2016, 1). The fifth edition of *DSM* (2013) diagnoses it under "other specified paraphilic disorder" (705) with other specific paraphilias and does not assign it a specific subclass, nor does *ICD-10* (1992), instead is grouped under Code 302.89 (*ICD-10*: F.65.89). It is characterized by recurrent, intense sexual interests in corpses, causing obvious distress and impairment in critical areas of social functioning; when combined with associated and often comorbid sadism, the specific paraphilia is called "necrosadism" (Aggrawal 2016, 2). From the four types of necrophilic attachment in Mellor's (2016a, 100) "Thematic-Derivative Model of Sexual Progression", Dennis enters only the first stage: *necrophilic fantasies* in the *fantasy* stage. Since it is revealed that his colossal crimes were not more than an uncanny blur of fantasy, fiction, and reality, thus Dennis belongs to a group of necrophiles who are somewhat less innocuous from a legal standpoint. However, from a psychosocial perspective, their behavior manifests aberrant impulses; they do not engage in intercourse with corpses yet are content with fantasizing about these acts.

Mellor (2016b, 98) identifies several allures of necrophilia that coexist in various combinations. The "passivity/inertia" is the most common allure in connection with corpses (unrejective, uncritical); however, not in the case of Dennis. While he casually comments on the passivity of his victims, in a few instances injects them with heroin for complicity, even binds them, this should be perceived as his *modus operandi*. For example, his *vincilagnia* is not paraphilic in character, and also, the rest of these actions do not satisfy sexual arousal nor present an eroticized ritual relevant to the motivation of his murders. Their employment functions but a necessary precaution. He restrains his partner but for practical reasons, not erotic, aesthetic, nor somatosensory stimulation:

What's weird is he didn't fight back. He just accepted death. Every single time I've killed a Dutch boy this happens. It must be a part of the problem that makes them so cold and unknowable in general. They're like rabbits, at least in the sense that when rabbit gets scared it freezes up. You can threaten to kick it, it won't move. If one of those boy sever actually fought with me now, I'd probably have a brain hemorrhage I'd be so shocked (Cooper 1991, 94).

Dennis—a "predator aesthete" (Cooper 1991, 39)—rather represents "corporeal/sensory" allure. According to Mellor (2016b, 98), this allure's sexual stimulation arises from looking at, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching the body-

including its innards. This allure is exhibited during the last, most brutal murder of a prepubescent boy when he engages in intercourse ante-,peri-, and post-mortem, indicative of possible pseudo-vampirism and cannibalism. "The Germans felt weird about killing a kid, but they did it" (Cooper 1991, 102); they assisted him throughout the act and subsequent disposal of the mutilated body:

I rolled the kid over, cut his ropes. I pressed the point of the blade into the base of his throat and made a long, straight slit all the way down his chest, stomach. It wasn't deep enough, so I went over it again....I licked all inside there. It was incredibly lush. ... I went over the cut once more. It opened up. I pulled back the halves of white stomach flesh and saw his jumbled yellow guts, which had a weird strong stench. His chest was still rising and falling. That fascinated me for some reason, so I punched his face several more times. Then I deep-tongued his slobbery mouth for a while (Cooper 1991, 105).

Observing several factors related to the physical transformation of the body after death, the focus is on the corporeal/sensory necrophilic allure. Furthermore, this allure is empowered by the appeal of "spiritual/magical" (Moller 2016b, 98), where the eroticization of the metaphysical ideas regarding death as a state or force, including mythical figures. In one of his fantasies, he "imagined that [he with his sexual partner, Finn] were on top of an Aztec Pyramid. [He] held a knife or whatever they used in those days to sacrifice Finn to whoever they thought they worshipped back then. [He] couldn't sustain an illusion like that for more than a second or two, so [he] came on [Finn's] chest, with groan . . ." (Cooper 1991, 39), connecting himself casually with the ancient cult of bloody sacrifices to gods. However, a deeper analysis of Dennis' homicidal motivations reveals other complexities arising from the combination of these two allures. While he identifies the corporeal/sensory allure of his sexual gratifications, stating: "I'm pretty sure if I tore a guy open, I'd know him as well as anyone could because I'd have what he consists of right there in my hands, mouths, wherever." (ibid., 52), a murder for him has secret connotations knowledge and liberation, and in his account of fit he invites his ex-boyfriend Julian to "participate in this discovery...this major transcendence or answer [he has] found in killing cute guys" (ibid., 107). His depiction of sex is not identifying, elating, liberating, or cathartic; it is hardly adequately satisfying with regard to the psychological intensity of his sexual deprivation.

Although the murders do not exhibit “ritual/iconography” allure and Dennis does not sexualize cultural symbols associated with death or funerary practices (Moller 2016b, 98), his fantasies and discussions include fascination with splatter horrors and associated probes from the filming sets. The last allure, “reminiscent/identity”, relates to necrophilic attraction to deceased loved ones (Moller 2016b, 98); this allure is echoed in his fixation upon a reminiscence of the specific model, Henry. The choice of victims seems random, and the impulses often motiveless his victims are preferentially male. His obsession with the model manifests in his physiologic preferences in partners, as well his projection upon them: Male, younger, lean, pale, dark-haired, full-lipped, dazed looking. ... Every guy I’ve wanted since has had his same basic look (Ibid, 44).

Excluding Aggrawal’s (2016) focus on the severity of manifested psychosis in his typologies; Moller’s (2016a) categorization of homicidal necrophilia—not defined by motivation—considers the interplay of two relevant factors in profiling: destructiveness and duration. Both binary in character, “destructiveness” refers to the propensity of paraphilic mutilation in opposition to “preservative” while “duration” determines offenders as “warm” or “cold” based on the period of the sexual activities post-mortem (103).

Dennis engages in single situational post-mortem intercourse, but all of his murders depict ante-, and peri-mortem coitus, sometimes post-mortem masturbation and fellatio. All the phases are a mixture of sexually motivated sadistic torture and mutilation. However, he is not necessarily preferential to excision as a necromutilophil. When returning to the last murder, it captures a dissection of an eleven-year-old boy, whom they inject with heroin, tie up, eviscerate, and dismember. Dennis sodomizes the corpse, and engages in coprophagy as well:

I was really delirious. ...his system was too broken down by that point or whatever. When I looked up, Jorg was trying to carve off the kid's left leg. ...The kid's insides were much more science-fictional than I imagined. Still, there was something ugly and earthy about them. I could understand why they were meant to be hidden. ...We tipped the kid onto his side. At that, guts sloshed out of the stomach wound onto the futon. (Cooper 1991, 105).

This dark scheme with two German accomplices, replete with destruction and mutilation beyond simple incision appearing ante-, peri-, and post-mortem, includes beating and bondage. However, it is Cooper’s language, unapologetic as Dennis’ murders and proportional with that

of de Sade, Genet, Bataille, Ellis, or even Burroughs, which encompasses a narration of mechanical fantasies and insistence of quantitative obsession and fulfillment, and his enfranchised exploration of necrophilia is not for the squeamish. Following the vertical behavioral axis of Moller’s model (see Figure 1), “duration” is determined by the growing number of factors correlated with physiological transformations upon the body consisting of many stages starting with clinical death and concluding with full skeletonization (Moller 2016a, 103). After the second murder, Dennis becomes “more imaginative and violent now” (Cooper 1991, 94-95). Furthermore, he becomes more methodical as he finds accomplices in the two German murder guys, Jorg and Ferdinand, who live in a squat not far from the mill. Their initiative facilitates the orchestration of the third murder just moments after their initial rendezvous. The next victim “was a typical Dutch yuppie guy ...” (Cooper 1991, 95). After an armed assault on him, “... They kicked every part of his body ... He was semi-unconscious when they quit the battering, etc.” (Cooper 1991, 96):

The guy was all bruised and sliced up, but cute nevertheless, though I’ve seen better bodies. ... I stabbed the buttocks a couple of times. They didn’t bleed. ... Jorg ran over and stomped the shit into his face. I heard more stuff break in his head. I asked if they thought he was dead. Ferdinand asked if I wanted that. I said, Okay. Ferdinand picked up a kitchen knife, Jorg took the Swiss army knife, and they stabbed his chest, making ‘oof’ noises. He bled really wildly. He had to be dead after that.

The paper has already discussed that the homicides executed by Dennis focus on the “corporeal/sensory” and “spiritual/magical” allures. Dennis’ first necrophilic defining allure is closely related to his profiling as a “warm” homicidal offender. His fascination with corpses is limited to immediate post-mortem activity. He describes the decapitation that happens during the fourth murder; Dennis’ primary interest in the mutilation of the corpse seemed “kind of pointless with him dead” (Cooper 1991, 101). Even when he asks them to decapitate him: “They left the head behind resting on one ear. It continued to hold this incredible allure, but in a weird way, obviously, since it didn’t mean much anymore” (Cooper 1991, 101-102). The constellation of his excessive behavior sufficiently exhibits enough evidence, and his predilections place Dennis in Moller’s (2016a) category C of homicidal necrophilic offenders—belonging in a group including some of the most bizarre and heinous serial killers. Based on the observable

behavior, the character is an intersection of a "destructive" and "warm" offender.

Dennis: Sadism

The presence of sadism in literature has already been mentioned briefly, yet the subject has attracted some serious attention from academic circles. For example, Kearney (1982) and Muchembled (2008) dates the theme in fiction back to the early modern writings, specifically: Nicolas Choderlos de Laclos's *A Dialogue between a Married Woman and a Maid* (1660). On the other hand, Storr (2013) ascribes sadism to Western society in general; maybe, therefore, Kuncich (2009) discussed its relevance in British colonial fiction.

Sexual Sadism Disorder in *DSM-V* refers to "recurrent and intense sexual arousal from the physical or psychological suffering of another person, as manifested by fantasies, urges, or behaviors" (2013, 696). It is classified as "algolagnic disorder" (685), characterized by causing considerable distress in the individual and urges of inflicting pain upon a non-consenting partner. As a paraphilic, Dennis is an individual "whose satisfaction has entailed personal harm, or risk of harm, to others" (APA 2013, 685-86). The paper has provided two examples of Dennis' necrophilic activities. Offenders, however, should not be regarded as a single specific paraphilic deviation—instead, a curious mixture with dominant paraphilia. According to Moller (2016a, 92), the traits of a sexual sadist—typically psychopathic—usually supersede those of the homicidal necrophile. Money (1990, 27) characterized sexual sadism as involving "an obsessive and compelling repetition of sexual thoughts, dreams or fantasies that may be translated into acts in which the mental or physical suffering of a victim is intensely sexually arousing". Thus, homicidal sexual sadist's paraphilia pertains to the infliction of real suffering and subsequent sexual arousal stemming from acts of rape, torture, and mutilation. In order to categorize Dennis as a homicidal sexual sadist, the paper considers the typology created by criminologist Lee Mellor (2016a, 136). The typology consists of eight classes oriented around three binary factors in the killers behavior: *Destructive/Preservative; Prolonged/Brief; Elaborate/Simple* (137). Additionally, he elaborates methodology of torture among elaborate sadists, following four characteristics: (i) variation in torture methods, (ii) complex torture apparatus, (iii) psychological torture, (iv) record making (e.g., using notes/media to document the process)(137-138). His rendering of eight possible categories, six of which Mellor identified and exemplified among multiple criminal offenders. Dennis is a "destructive" sadist. His progressively more vicious murders refer to incidences of intentional torture,

mutilation, disfigurement, and excision in the ante- and perimortem stages transforming him from initially preservative into a destructive offender. He engages in extreme kinds of "destructiveness": dismemberment, evisceration, even in the fourth murder decapitation:

I said, No, his death was important to me... When he screamed his mouth opened incredibly wide.. Then I really wanted to kill him. The red mouth triggered the need, because it was a preview or something. ... I pulled out the knife and made a light horizontal cut across his stomach, which dribbled more blood I stretched out his penis and tried to saw it in two. ... I wanted the Germans to cut off his head for some reason, so they severed the rope suspending him and turned the corpse on its stomach. They sawed through its neck—carving, hacking, abrading, etc. ... When none of us cared about the corpse anymore, the Germans picked it up by the armpits and started downstairs (Cooper 1991, 100-101).

Description of the fourth murder orchestrated with his German accomplices is accompanied by some beating, bondage, necrophagy, incision, rape and mutilation of sexual organs, and victim's decapitation. Taking into consideration the second binary factor, Dennis does not engage in prolonged or episodic tortures of his victims, defining him as a brief offender in opposition to a prolonged sadist who tortures his victim for an hour or more. For example, the second murder of a boy of fifteen, which commences as consensual hebephilic intercourse and culminates in his death by asphyxiation:

I was starving for him. . . . When he answered, Okay, I decided to kill him for some reason. Then I got so emotionally weird that I almost broke down. . . . He opened his eyes very wide. Otherwise he didn't fight me at all. It takes a lot longer to strangle someone than I'd think. At some point his eyes changed. They got kind of empty, fake. . . . He looked so beautiful with his eyes empty, I don't know why. I walked back to the futon, sat down, and gazed into their glassiness a long, long time, daydreaming and numb. . . . I had million ideas how I wanted to carve up and study the kid. I couldn't do it, I don't know why (Cooper 1991, 92-94).

Sexual sadism is best understood as a process; the function operates in a progressive eroticized communication- a sadistic cycle: 1. sadist inflicts negative stimulus; 2. he perceives victims reaction; 3. finally the murderer experiences an enhancement in self-concept (Mellor 2016a, 139). Here, the sadistic cycle follows the sensory/corporeal allure, and the dynamism of responsiveness of behavior influencing the events and emotions occurring during the homicide accentuates the necrophilic character of the murder. Furthermore, the sadistic cycle in the example does not follow a prescribed orgasmic fantasy narration, but Dennis' case is improvisational, experimental, and brief.

The third dichotomy is the most subjective, and Mellor (2016a, 137) states that a useful heuristic is the identification of at least three characteristics of an "elaborate" sadist. Dennis does not inflict pain in various methods; he does not employ complex torture apparatus; he does not intentionally engage in psychological torture; however, he documents the suffering of his victims, recording the murders in the form of letters. However, he does so in order to mediate his experiences, not recapitulate them for his personal pleasure and gratification. His first murder—"Call him Jan" (Cooper 1991, 91)—best describes the simplicity of his methodology as its execution happens in a sudden outburst of violence during their intercourse:

I was about to come. I picked up an empty beer bottle without even thinking and hit the guy over the head. ... I grabbed hold of his neck and ground the broken bottle into his face, really twisting and shoving it in. Then I crawled across the room and sat cross-legged, watching him bleed to death. (Cooper., 91)

What seems a situational, catathymic homicide is just a prelude to the superficial character of torturous and permutatory designs upon his subsequent captives. Afterward, he describes his disposal of the body in a detached, almost dissociative manner:

Hours passed. At some point I dragged Jan upstairs to the top of the mill. ... There's a smallish room shaped like a bell that nobody's gone into for hundred of years or whatever. I stuffed him inside and washed the stairs, floor. Whatever's left of the body is there. I've never checked. I'm not interested in a dead body's smell, no matter how cute it was (Cooper 1991, 92).

When the sexual sadism takes precedence, the investigator should expect a suspect to have more of the sex sadist's charming, psychopathic character (Moller 2016a, 92). From

all the murders mentioned above, it is evident that the vast majority of Dennis' murders centers on motifs of sexual torture and mutilation driven by perverse lust; on the other hand, the necrophilic murders and his willingness to have sex with a dead body more accurately reflect his psychopathy - more specifically, the "secondary psychopath" type as understood by Karpman (1948). His lack of self-control and impulsivity, combined with his low emotional intelligence, stand in contrast to the communicative skills, persuasive charm, and histrionic nature of a "primary psychopath". While affective deficits, grandiosity, and social predation indicative of narcissism characterize primary psychopaths, Dennis, as a "secondary psychopathy", is spontaneous and opportunistic in the "simple" selection of his methods of execution. Thus, his behavior is theoretically phenotypical of his paraphilia's comorbidity with the antisocial personality disorder. In conclusion, Dennis is destructive/brief/simple. Therefore, he belongs into class 5 of homicidal sexual sadistic offenders as outlined by Mellor.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER DISCUSSION

In summary, through the demystification and employment of marginalized genres, Cooper analyzes the relationship between material reality and deprivation in acquiring a need in the capitalistic society. Dennis' paraphilic ruminations here and there interrupted by scattered fragments of fiction confluent obsessed with a male body, sex, violence, and death ultimately constitute the postmodern framework of *Frisk* where affluent society's offered simulation extracted the transcendent from the sexual experience, depriving it of its essence. In Dennis' narration, no longer repressing his malevolent and wayward compulsions, any person can be substituted for another, and the airless atmosphere has asphyxiated its reference. His realization that the object of his desire revolves around an empty centre forces him to radically reconsider the psychological self-repression imposed on him by the social oppressions of capitalism. Dennis attempts to break the chains of simulation through the positive force of production, constituting the new immanent model. The general image of a serial killer, both in the media and popular culture, is relatively consistent and complicit with etiology of paraphilia: a white male, odd and eccentric behavior, dysfunctional relationships (Yaksic 2005); he tortures, mutilates, and murders animals, and his engagement in sexually motivated sadism is a result of a severe sexual/physical abuse and neglect in his childhood (Beasley 2004). Statistically homosexually oriented paraphilic homicidal offenders represent 17%, which Mellor regards conflated and overrepresentation, while staggering in

number, 43%, victimize both children and adults (2016a, 139). These staggering facts do not provide a further insight into Dennis' character. However, they inform on his obvious mediocrity among the actual homicidal sexual offenders.

In conclusion, reconsidering the narration from the perspective of Aggrawal's proposed a ten-tier typology of necrophilic behavior determined by the severity of manifested psychosis. Dennis belongs to class III (2009, 317): homicidal necrophiles that only fantasize about murder. When the study eliminates the artificiality of the narration from the premise and analyzes the fantasyscape, Dennis, the serial killer, can be categorized as an exciting combination of a type C homicidal necrophile with a pretty common type 5 sexual sadist. He belongs among the most dangerous group of people globally; it includes killers who compulsively prey on people and resort to killing to fulfill their desires. The narration is equally gruesome as Dennis is a genuine representative of necrophilia and sexual sadism whose desires are reflected and accentuated by other proposed mental disorders and psychotic states proposed in the paper.

These assumptions may possibly serve as a point of entry for further discussion with a similar interdisciplinary framework in psychology and forensic medicine. For example, Dennis can be discussed in connection with cluster B personality disorders or in terms of psychopathy and sociopathy. Furthermore, following Holmes and Holmes' 2009 typology based on the crime scene, Dennis oscillates between visionary/hedonist lust murder. Anil Aggrawal's (2009, 320) ten-tier typology of homicidal necrophiles and subclasses (Aggrawal 2016, 74), together with his categorization of thirteen classes among necromutilosexuals (Aggrawal 2016, 80-81), is also a plausible choice. According to Mellor (2016a, 92), this 5C lust murderer is often a mutilophile and in tabloids usually dubbed ripper. The most shocking example is Andrei Chikatilo, who was paradoxically not sheltered in a capitalistic background; he is a possible contestant for a comparative study or other characters of transgressive/blank/Generation-X fiction, for example, Bret Easton Ellis' cannibalistic sadist, Patrick Bateman, or the paraphilics from J. G. Ballard's *Crash*.

Notes

¹ The name Dennis without a surname always refers to the novel's character while the study always references Cooper by his surname.

² Silverblatt (1993) provided an alphabetical list containing French and American names of the most scandalous writers along the most prominent post-modern scholars: Kathy Acker, Roland Barthes, Georges Bataille, Jean Baudrillard,

Dennis Cooper, Joan Didion, Bret Easton Ellis, Michael Foucault, William Gass, Jean Genet, William Burroughs, De Sade.

³ The methodological origin of the concept of transgression in fiction is associated with Michel Foucault's essay *A Preface to Transgression* (1963). Foucault analyzes *Story of the Eye* (1928) by Georges Bataille as an example of the genre.

⁴ However, it is necessary to add that Jameson perceives Lacan's understanding of schizophrenia as essentially "a language disorder" and "schizophrenic experience of a whole view of language acquisition [...], giving us a linguistic version [...] in terms not of biological individual" (Jameson 1988, 118).

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