SERIAL MURDER AS ALLEGORY: A SUBCONSCIOUS ECHO OF UNRESOLVED CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the notion that we may be able to more fully understand the etiology of serial murder. Specifically, it concludes that the behaviours of serial murderers can be allegorical of unresolved childhood trauma – that in the murderous actions of the adult there can be a depth of subconscious allegorical connection to the repressed (forgotten) and unresolved trauma of the murderer's own childhood. The focus for this hermeneutic inquiry is the intersection that can be constructed between the phenomenon of serial murder and the assertion of the psychoanalyst Alice Miller that *every* perpetrator of violence was once a child who was (himself or herself) a victim.

Alice Miller's concept of *Poisonous Pedagogy* is explained and critiqued. Her belief that our childhoods tell the stories of our adult behaviours is questioned in light of the similar theoretical ground of Life History, Life Narrative, Psychobiography, and Psychoanalytic Narrative. Miller's contention that there are directly allegorical connections between childhood abuse and adult murderous behaviours is illustrated by her analysis of the life of Jurgen Bartsch. A hermeneutic examination of the biographic records of two other serial murderers (Ted Bundy and John Wayne Gacy) is then undertaken to question the available support for Miller's contentions.

It is concluded that there is strong support for Miller's assertions regarding the etiology of violence, and that violent adult behaviour, even serial murder, *can* be allegorical of unresolved childhood trauma. It is suggested that there is a need to extend this area of research through face-to-face engagement with perpetrators of violence. It is recommended that we directly engage serial murderers in personal discourses that will allow further exploration of Miller's notion that serial murderers' behaviours are allegorical echoes of harm that was done to them.

CONTENTS

Statement of original authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature:_____

Date:_____

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CHAPTER 1

SERIAL MURDER – A PSYCHODYNAMIC APPROACH

Introduction

> *…every act of cruelty, no matter how brutal and shocking, has traceable antecedents in its perpetrator's past.* (Miller, 1987:ix)

This thesis will examine the assertion of the psychoanalyst Alice Miller that every perpetrator of violence was once a victim of violence. The specific vehicle chosen to facilitate this examination of Miller's theory is serial murder.

Alice Miller is a psychoanalyst who theorises that violent adult behaviour has its roots in childhood trauma at the hand of adult pedagogues. More directly than most other authors, she asserts that violence is a learned behaviour. She postulates that the connection between repressed childhood trauma and violent adult behaviour is real and direct. Adults will not act in violent ways, she claims, if they have (at any time or age) experienced the love, support and advocacy from another that is necessary for the resolution of (otherwise repressed) trauma.

Miller radically questions the validity of the Freudian psychoanalytic model and its central contention that the child is ushered into this world possessed of innate drives. Although she agrees with Freud's early position that therapy involves the catharsis of recalling repressed memory, she dismisses Freud's sex drive theory.

Her extensive work (1987, 1990, 1991, 1995 and 1998) centres on the concept that the existence of *unresolved, repressed childhood trauma* is a necessary precondition for the phenomenon of violent adult behaviour:

> ...it is absolutely impossible for someone who has grown up in an environment of honesty, respect, and affection ever to feel driven to torment a weaker person in such a way as to inflict lifelong damage. (Miller, 1990: 190 - 191)

Miller's categorical stance needs to be tested. This is particularly the case, since she chose, in her extensive writing on the subject she labelled 'Poisonous Pedagogy', to eschew the more formal academic publishing route and to publish in the more populist press. She notes that she was thankful that, through the efforts of her publisher, her "…works did not disappear on the list of a technical publisher but were able to reach a wider circle of 'patients', i.e., of the suffering people for whom they were actually written" (Miller, 1987: xvii).

Yet, largely because of this publishing strategy, there has been a substantial neglect by academia of Miller's extensive work. Her forceful stance that violence is the result of unresolved early trauma should be challenged, because *if* Miller is right, then Western society's unfailing impulse to lay the blame for violence solely at the feet of individuals is misdirected. Support for Miller's thesis would argue for a change in the focus of our criminal justice system, away from the *individualisation* of blame and punishment, towards a more *global, shared responsibility* for violence.

Research Aim

In order to examine Miller's assertion of a relationship between repressed trauma and violent behaviour, this thesis will examine an extreme of violent behaviour - *serial murder*. As well as expounding a general theory of the etiology of violence, Miller deals directly with the violence of murder. Miller doesn't clarify the type (or types) of murder that she is talking about, but since she goes on to analyse the life of a serial murderer, it seems reasonable to assume that she is referring to all types of murder (since serial murder would seem to be an apotheosis of the subset 'murder') when she makes the following statement:

> …I believe that every murder committed…on innocent surrogate objects is the expression of an inner compulsion, a compulsion to avenge the gross abuse, neglect, and confusion suffered during childhood… (Miller, 1990:26)

Miller examines, in detail, the story of the German serial murderer Jurgen Bartsch, and her analysis of his behaviour will be scrutinised in this thesis. The available biographic data on the lives of two other serial murderers will also be searched for credible resonances with Miller's explanation of the etiology of violence. The primary objective of this research process is the observation of any possible links between the violence of serial murder and storied accounts of serial murderer's lives that may indicate unresolved trauma in the childhoods of the subjects. The occurrence of adult behaviours that may be *allegorical* of unresolved childhood trauma is of particular interest in this inquiry, since the presence of such allegory would lend weight to Miller's claims.

A Psychodynamic Perspective

This thesis embraces a psychodynamic perspective of violent behaviour. A testing of Miller's explication of the genesis of serial murder is the goal. Miller's analysis of the effect of childhood abuse on later adult behaviour is seminal to this enquiry. Her views will, of course, be tested throughout the course of this thesis, but the adopted starting point for this analysis of serial murder is Miller's definition of 'poisonous pedagogy'. In simplistic terms, her approach insists that serial murderers must have suffered significantly damaging childhood abuse, and not resolved it. Miller's thesis is outlined and critiqued in Chapter 2.

Miller's *non-Freudian* psychodynamic approach possesses a theoretical resonance with a diverse body of research in the discipline areas of Life History, Narrative, and Psychobiography. There is a substantial body of research in the area of Life History methodology in the 1980s (Bertaux, 1981; Craik, 1986) that reflected on the pre-World War 2 work of many authors in European psychology, sociology and anthropology (Buhler, 1933; Frenkel, 1936; Shaw, 1930; Dollard, 1935). This body of work on Life History seems to have natural connections with late twentieth century writings in the areas of Psychobiography (McAdams, 1988; Rosenwald, 1988; Wiersma, 1988) and Psychoanalytic Narrative (Spence, 1982; Schafer, 1980; Gusdorf, 1980). The connection between Miller's work and these psychological or psychoanalytic writings lies in the willingness of these approaches to behavioural inquiry to search for antecedents of contemporary behaviour in past experience. These connections will be examined in Chapter 3.

Miller (1984, 1987, and 1990), writing from a psychoanalytic perspective, seems to be pointing in a common direction with much of this 1980s research. The common thread that can be seen to bind these various writings to Miller is the concept that

violent adult behaviour can be *allegorical* of significant abuse in childhood that has gone unresolved. In the case of serial murderers, this would mean that *murderous behaviour is an allegory* (an echo, or a representation) *of significant abuse in the childhood of the murderer*.

The implications of a Psychodynamic Perspective

If support can be suggested for the thesis that serial murder is, at the subconscious level, a symbolic narrative of repressed trauma, then there are significant implications for contemporary justice and social justice policies. Court practices that pay little heed to antecedent childhood trauma in the process of guilt determination may need to be changed. Correctional systems that treat rehabilitation with a short-term, packaged, the-past-is-not-important approach may need to reconsider the place of long-term, in-depth, psychodynamic examinations of aberrant behaviour. In short, if the long-past is an important influence on current behaviour, Western justice systems may need ideological reorientation.

A Focus on Serial Murder

It is the specific task of this thesis to examine the extent to which childhood trauma may be antecedent to the adult behaviour described as *serial murder* or *serial killing*. (The terms *murder* and *killing* are synonymous, appearing throughout the literature interchangeably, usually in concert with other descriptors, such as *serial, mass, spree, multiple,* and the like – these definitions are explained later in this chapter).

The theme that is perhaps most striking in the extensive literature on serial murderers is one that could best be described as *violence begetting violence*.

> Most had been brutalized themselves as children and made murderous careers out of an effort to avenge wrongs actually done to them to restore a shattered self-esteem. (Stone, 1989: 647)

It is significant to note that the literature often expresses the opinion that many serial killers were brutalised during their childhood (Reinhardt, 1962; Storr, 1972; Hazelwood and Douglas, 1980; Starr et al, 1984). It is also of interest that the data on which such opinions are based appears to come predominantly from self-report by the various serial murderers themselves. The parents of such perpetrators of violence are unlikely to volunteer the information that they abused their child before he or she grew up to become a serial killer. Similarly, it is likely that serial killers will *under-report* the incidence of violence against themselves in their childhood, since even abused children universally desire the approval and love of their parents. Corroboration of a suspected abusive past may come from various referent persons (family and friends) who may be able to provide some biographic information, but such evidence is not always conclusive, nor is it always available or forthcoming. What we are left with is a situation where we are *unable* to say with certainty that *not all* serial killers have significantly abusive experiences in childhood. However, despite the logic of this null hypothesis, we often find in the literature the illogical assumption that the absence of such evidence implies that the murderous behaviour of serial killers does *not* grow out of the experience of violence:

> Despite the accepting and non-abusive qualities of his foster home, Brady showed uncommon cruelty from earliest childhood, limited at first to torturing dogs and rabbits and to burying cats alive. (Stone, 1989: 649)

This is a somewhat glib reference by Stone to the childhood experience of Ian Brady, who, with Myra Hindley, committed the infamous ‘Moors murders’ in England

in the mid 1960's. It seems logically improbable that an inability to comprehend the suffering of other sentient beings would grow from an apparently normative and nurturing childhood that is blithely described as 'accepting and non-abusive'.

Miller would dismiss such simplistic summaries of abusers' childhoods in the same way that she criticises statistical data about the prevalence of abuse in murderer's childhoods:

> …they are often based on uncritical assumptions and ideas that are either meaningless (such as 'a sheltered childhood'), vague, ambiguous ('received a lot of love'), or deceptive ('the father was strict but fair'), or that even contain obvious contradictions ('he was loved and spoiled'). (Miller, 1987:199)

For Miller, the focus of enquiry lies not in objective statistics, but in empathic subjectivity. Only the latter approach, she contends, can illuminate the human feelings and emotions that underlie and drive our behaviours.

Although the populist media tends to characterise serial murderers as simply 'monsters', thereby homogenising the phenomenon, those who attempt to study this facet of human behaviour with scientific rigour often seem to find confusing variability between the perpetrators of such violence. Beattie, for instance, suggested that the scientific study of serial murder is:

> …compounded…by a possibility that serial murder is not a unified phenomenon, that murder is the only factor which links killers together. (1996: 32)

There appear to be some common factors in serial murderers' modi operandi, such as a deliberate premeditation, some form of compulsion, and an apparent cyclical process. This cycle of offence, fear of capture, hiatus, build up of tension, and then re-offence is a cycle that, interestingly, seems similar in process to the well-described cycle of domestic violence. The variability of offender characteristics amongst serial murderers, however, has made scientific study of the phenomenon difficult.

> With these methodological difficulties, it is little wonder that the main focus of research on serial murder has been on the detection and apprehension of offenders, rather than probing into the aetiology of the crime. (Beattie, 1996: 32)

It is the aetiology that we should focus on, not the mythologisation of the phenomenon and the demonisation of the individuals who murder. Upon apprehension, serial murderers are universally found to be psychologically fractured individuals who are significantly socially maladjusted.

> Although the stories of the individual killers were different, the patterns of parental abuse, violence, neglect, childhood cognitive disabilities, and alcohol and drug abuse were virtually identical. (Norris, 1989: 5)

Serial murderers, Norris suggests, do not appear from 'thin air', and they are not simply 'evil'. They emerge from childhoods of abuse. This is exactly the claim of Alice Miller.

Why focus on serial murderers?

Violence, in all its manifestations, is a human preoccupation – daily 'news' broadcasts on radio, television, the internet, and in the print media, assert that this is the case. Paradoxically, social discourse on the causes or explanations of violence does not seem to be as extensive as this media coverage suggests it should be. Whilst media portrayal of violence is almost constant, relatively little effort is devoted to the attempted explanation of violence. The sensational and abhorrent seems to take precedence over the logical and analytical.

The populist media's treatment of serial murder often seems preoccupied with the demonisation of the offenders. 'Monster' is a term reverted to frequently when we are grappling for an explanation for such apparently inexplicable behaviours. Even close relatives of serial murderers raise the 'monster' label in their desperate need to find some reason in their loved one's abnormally violent behaviour. Jeffrey Dahmer's father, for instance, trying to come to terms with the murders his son had committed, remarked:

> I didn't look at him and see a monster. He acts – under most conditions – polite, kind, courteous. I can only imagine in my mind those occasions when he attacked the victims that was the monster who was out of control. (Hall, 1993: 63)

It is the apparent inability of modern scholarship to capture, describe and explain this 'monster within' that sets the first of the two epistemological orientations for this thesis. Put simply, there is a need to try and explicate this 'monster'. Miller has given us a particular view, and in the light of a paucity of other plausible explanations, her view should logically be tested.

The second of the two major orientations of this thesis involves the adoption of a psychodynamic approach to facilitate that explication. Both research orientations will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters, but first, a brief definition of serial murder is needed.

Definition of Serial Murder

Serial murder refers to the killing of a number of (usually) unrelated people over a longer period of time (from months to years or even decades) and with a distinct hiatus or 'cooling off period' in between the separated acts of murder. Unlike mass and spree killers, serial killers are adept at avoiding detection and actively plan their crimes in an effort to avoid detection (Holmes and Holmes, 1992: 53). In a reference to what he called 'front stage' and 'back stage' behaviour, Surrette (1992) suggests that mass and spree murderers are usually seen by family, friends and acquaintances (in retrospect) to have been behaving in a 'crazy' or 'mad' manner. Serial murderers, on the other hand, almost always appear to display either accepted or benign behaviour in their public life.

There are a number of terms that refer to the killing of more than one person, and these need to be separated from the subject matter of this thesis. There is a quite large body of literature that deals with the theoretical definition of the various classifications of what is most usually termed *multiple murder* (Ressler, Burgess, D'Agostino and Douglass, 1984; Busch and Cavanaugh, 1986; Stone, 1989; Leyton, 1989; Holmes and Holmes, 1992; Egger, 1990; Jenkins, 1994; Giannangelo, 1996). *Multiple murder* is defined simply as the murder of more than one person. The three subclassifications of multiple murder (mass murder, spree killing, and serial murder) refer to both the *context* of the murders and the *types of relationships* between the murderers and their victims.

The term *mass murder* is generally used in cases where a number of people have been killed in one incident that has taken place over a short time frame - often a period of minutes and usually no more than several hours. This sort of incident takes place in one location, and frequently ends with the perpetrator taking his own life as a final act (perpetrators are almost always male):

> ...mass murderers often die at the scene of the multiple slayings. They either commit suicide or place themselves in situations where they 'force' the police to take lethal action. (Holmes and Holmes, 1992: 53)

Spree killing is a term used to denote a series of murders over a short period of some hours to perhaps several days, where the murders all relate to one central triggering event, but may take place at several different locations. One of the significant differences between this classification and that of serial killing is that with spree killings there is no hiatus between the acts of murder. Spree killers are more likely than mass killers to be 'taken alive'.

There are other definitions that may appear in the literature, such as *familicide* (the murder of related people in one family), *multiple sexual murder* and *serial sexual murder*, but these are clearly subset classifications of the three primary classifications of multiple murder. Multiple murderers usually attack strangers, although many of the victims of mass murderers (and some victims of spree murderers) are known to the offender. Serial murderers always seem to choose strangers as victims.

There is one other category of multiple murder that can be identified, but it lies in an area by itself: the professional murderer, whose victims are predominantly strangers, and who are murdered in return for financial gain. This last category is

even more obscure than the other forms of multiple murder – few professional murderers are caught, and fewer still seem to talk about it.

Nature or Nurture?

There is an old (and often overly simplified) debate in our society about the basic explanation of human behaviour, and a brief visitation with this debate is of relevance in the introductory phase of this thesis. The 'nature versus nurture' question dates back to the classical Greek philosophers, but contemporary interpretations of this question have moved well beyond the first notions of *which* is responsible for behaviour. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the question has become: "…*how* (do) specific hereditary and environmental factors *interact* to produce particular characteristics and behaviours?"(Vander Zanden, 1996: 70; italics in original). The individual interacts with his or her environment in a constant feedback loop that influences the ways in which genotypic potentialities develop into phenotypic expressions of behaviour. *"Human beings literally change themselves through acting*" (Vander Zanden, 1996: 71; italics in original). The changes written by experience, at least in the case of the early childhood development of language, are now known to leave observable changes in brain structure and functioning (Locke, 1993). In the same way that environmental interaction may change the individual's language development, that same process must logically be capable of altering cognitive processes – of changing the way we think and feel. From this perspective, the intuitive notion that continual childhood abuse will produce a damaged psyche makes scientific sense as well.

This contemporary notion of interactive nature and nurture is, of course, positivistic in its philosophical orientation. Positivists interpret 'criminals' to be "…individually motivated toward crime, either through biology or temptation and circumstances"

(Pollock-Byrne, 1989: 41). Positivism, with its focus on individual uniqueness, allows for notions that individuals will behave differently under similar influences, and that individual aberration can be both explicated and treated (White and Haines, 2001: 41).

Classical theorists, on the other hand, assert that, since individuals innately possess rationality and free will, individual behaviour is the result of conscious choice (White and Haines, 2001: 25). To the classicist, the suggestion that a serial murderer may be influenced towards his homicidal behaviour by environmental influences does not negate the primacy of free will. Deliberate decisions by murderers, such as the admission by Henry Lee Lucas (Beattie, 1996: 32-33) that he would kill possible witnesses to his murders so they couldn't inform on him, are pointed to as evidence of free will decisions governing behaviour. From the classical perspective, the serial murderer's "…choice of victim is seen as a logical and rational one" (Beattie, 1996: 33). Is it possible, though, that in such instances, the *rational* is being confused with the *methodical*? The notion of free will is challenged by Alice Miller's view of violence, and will be explored throughout this thesis.

It does seem that Western criminal justice systems process serial murder cases predominantly from a classical perspective of human behaviour. Judgements of courts against the Jeffrey Dahmers or the Ted Bundys of this world seem to focus primarily on *what* they did, and the extent of the *conscious intent* in their behaviour. Indeed, our courts are concerned almost exclusively with the question of 'did the accused actually commit the crime' (*actus reus*), and 'was the accused in a culpable state of mind at the time?' (*mens rea*) (Moore, in Audi, 1999: 556). The interpretation of the actions of individuals by our courts often seems to be heavily dependent on the basic notion of *free will*:

> Because only humans have the capacity to be “good”, which involves a voluntary, rational decision and subsequent action, only humans, of all members of the animal kingdom, have the capacity to be “bad”. (Pollock-Byrne, 1989: 2; emphasis in original)

The equation here appears to be obvious: *conscious intent* equals *rational, free will* equals *sole individual responsibility*. The detailed analysis of *why* seriously violent people behave in the ways they do seems to be left to the vagaries of the sensationalist, populist media (since they alone seem to be interested in the *why* of the *what* that our courts deal with in cases such as murder). If our courts pay insufficient attention to the explication of serial murder, then it is hardly surprising that the media and society persist with the demonisation of such individuals and their aberrant behaviours. Alice Miller’s analysis promises a different approach to the question: ‘where do serial murderers come from?’

Methodological Orientation

This thesis is hermeneutic in its philosophical orientation, psychodynamic in its disciplinary perspective, and uses the storying approach of Life History in its method.

The purely qualitative methodology of this research thesis encompasses the related disciplinary perspectives of psychoanalysis, psychobiography, life history and psychodynamic narrative. It uses biographic data to build storied, holistic accounts of the lives of several serial murderers. Narrative analysis provides the synthesis of connected ‘wholes’ from the disparate ‘bits and pieces’ of the lives of serial murderers that are sporadically committed to the public record.

Philosophical hermeneutics, as Gadamer (1975, 1976, 1981, 1997) and Taylor (1985a, 1985b, 1995) have elucidated, is a philosophy that rejects the imposition of rules on the interpretive process, and views meaning interpretation as a process of construction that is mediated by the interpreter's cultural and traditional learning.

> Philosophical hermeneutics argues that understanding is not, in the first instance, a procedure- or rule-governed undertaking; rather, it is a very condition of being human. Understanding *is* interpretation. (Schwandt, 2000: 194)

In the process of interpreting the world, we cannot escape our biases, but we need to be aware that they colour our interpretations. The scholastically dominant scientific methodology, based in the Cartesian notion of an observer who can objectively measure any phenomenon encountered, is not held to by philosophical hermeneutics. Instead:

> This different conception of meaning signifies a radical departure from the interpretivist idea that human action *has* meaning and that that meaning is in principle determinable or decipherable by the interpreter. (Schwandt, 2000: 195, italics in the original)

Meaning in human interaction is not 'there' to be discovered. Rather, it is *arrived at* through dialogue, and, moreover, it changes with different times and different actors observing the same phenomena. There is no final, 'correct' interpretation of meaning, and there is a temporal element to any interpretation arrived at:

> The meaning one seeks in "making sense" of a social action or text is temporal and processive and always coming into being in the specific occasion of understanding. (Schwandt, 2000: 195)

Life History methodology lies firmly in the philosophical hermeneutics domain. In Life History, the priority in interpretation of recalled life events is given to the individual's explanations rather than to theory-based interpretation by a researcher (Jones, 1983). There is a dialectic between an individual's actions in the world at any point in time and the world as it is constituted at that moment around that individual. The interpretation of life meaning in this context is far removed from logical empiricism's conception of knowledge as independent reality. Here, reality is subjective, temporal, and both culturally and individually relative.

Why take this approach to the analysis of behaviour? One answer to that question is that social science research could listen to the victims of the world, rather than impose analysis on them:

> Of consequence, life histories…eschew the paternalism that has imbued so much social science research in the 20th century, and instead seek to create ways to decolonize those who have been silenced, forgotten, or mangled by life's forces. (Tierney, 2000: 550)

As a methodology, Life History seeks to leave the power of interpretation in the hands of the storyteller (the subject of any story). This is frequently an autobiographic process, but can also encompass hermeneutic processes applied to biography. As Tierney (2000: 539) notes: "…life history is related to biography, it is a retrospective account, and it involves some form of narrative statement".

The logical application of this methodological orientation would best be expressed in the form of stories that are told directly by the 'owners' of the stories – the persons whose lives are being described. Obviously, in the case of this thesis, the three serial murderers have not written their own 'parts'. Instead, both Miller and myself have used the vehicle of biography to explore their stories. The attempt here is to allow the subjects' stories to emerge from their recorded words and actions. That record is necessarily incomplete, of course. It would be more useful to have recorded dialogues between Miller and Bartsch, or between myself, Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy. Such immediacy of involvement in the discussion of the life stories studied here was impossible for a number of reasons – the main one being that all three subjects were deceased at the time of writing of this thesis. Miller's approach, though, gives a template for the exploration of such stories in a manner that endeavours to let the subjects speak for themselves. Although both Miller and this thesis retrospectively examine the life stories of Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy, that examination is conducted through a hermeneutic lens.

Since this thesis examines the stories of three serial murderers, the approach of the case study is also obviously involved in the current methodological construction. Stake (2000: 437) has noted three types of case studies - the *intrinsic,* the *instrumental* and the *collective.* All seem to apply in this research project.

The *intrinsic* case study is not concerned with theory building or the explication of abstract phenomena, but merely a better understanding of one particular case. Such a study is undertaken simply because the case is interesting. Some theory extension may result from this study focus, but this is not the initial intention.

In the *instrumental* case study, the purpose is "…to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization" (Stake, 2000:437). The case, in this instance, is chosen

because of its representativeness of some wider social phenomenon. The central objective is to extend current understanding of the background phenomenon, not to extend understanding of the particular case.

By putting several cases together in an analysis, we arrive at the *collective* case study. Cases are chosen in this context in the hope that they will "…lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases" (Stake, 2000:437).

The three cases of serial murder examined in the second half of this thesis can be seen to fit into all three of Stake's case study types. Individually, these cases are *intrinsic*, since each is of interest in itself. Each story is unique, and each story is interesting in itself. The three cases are also *instrumental* studies, since they are clearly undertaken to facilitate a wider understanding of serial murder. Each case study is also *collective* in orientation because a wider understanding of these cases of serial murder should extend our collective understanding of the even wider phenomenon of violence.

This thesis begins its journey with an analysis of the psychodynamic interpretation of violence and serial murder that Alice Miller propounds. Miller's approach can be seen to mesh with that of philosophical hermeneutics. Her approach uses no formal rules of enquiry, and adheres to no academically rigorous methodology. What she does bring to her interpretation of the processes of parenting and the phenomenon of violent behaviour is an unerringly victim-focussed view. Her interpretation of the psychoanalytic process sees the child within the adult encouraged to tell his or her own story. There is a strong element of advocacy in Miller's work – advocacy for the rights of the child that have been ignored by those very adults who should have been teaching the child what advocacy is through their life-supporting actions.

Miller's psychodynamic approach is essentially the same as the life history approach. She listens to the story of the abusive pasts of her subjects and searches for connections between past traumas in life experience and contemporary explosions of violent behaviour. Her processes allow the meaning of experience to be hermeneutically constructed. She does impose her own interpretation on the stories she relates, but those interpretations arise out of the hermeneutic circles she traverses in the analysis of the cases she studies. Stake (2000) notes this inevitability of the case study:

> …the researcher decides what the case's *own* story is, or at least what will be included in the report. More will be pursued than was volunteered. Less will be reported than was learned…What results may be the case's own story, but the report will be the researcher's dressing of the case's own story. (Stake, 2000: 441)

The notion of *allegory* is a central element in Miller's psychoanalytical approach. This is the notion that contemporary behaviours can be a subconscious representation of forgotten (or repressed) past trauma. This 'past in the present' reflection (usually distorted) is the key contribution of the psychodynamic perspective to the hermeneutic approach of this thesis. It is this approach, examined in Miller's work and then tested by reflection with other literature (in the first half of this thesis), that is applied in the second half of this thesis to elucidate the three cases of serial murder that are studied.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the usefulness of Alice Miller's theory of 'Poisonous Pedagogy' to the analysis of serial murder.

2. To examine the relationship between unresolved childhood trauma and violent adult behaviour in the lives of three serial murderers.

3. To assess the allegorical content of the violent life histories of these serial murderers.

4. To suggest possible implications of this research for social justice policy.

Research Questions

There are two central research questions that this thesis sets out to examine:

1. Is there a connective relationship between unresolved childhood trauma and violent adult behaviour?

2. Can violent behaviour be subconsciously allegorical of repressed traumatic events?

Thesis Structure

With a critique of Miller's psychodynamic approach as the starting point, this thesis will take a research path that can be clearly seen in the chapter titles:

CHAPTER 1: *Serial Murder – A Psychodynamic Approach*

Chapter 1 (the current chapter) sets out the research aim of the thesis and explains the psychodynamic methodology used and the focus on serial murder and serial

murderers. It also sets out clearly the research objectives and questions of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2: *The Genesis of Violent Behaviour – Miller and Poisonous Pedagogy*

This chapter presents a critical analysis of Miller's central contention that the roots of adult violence lie in unresolved childhood trauma. Miller's departure from Freudian theory and the construction of early memory are examined. The therapeutic methodology used by Miller in the resolution of her own childhood traumas is briefly explained. The notion of repressed memory is questioned, and Miller's central notions of *poisonous pedagogy* are elucidated.

CHAPTER 3: *Congruence with Miller – Other Psychodynamic Interpretations Of The Etiology Of Behaviour.*

This chapter sets out to test Miller's model of Poisonous Pedagogy against other interpretations of violence. Six disciplinary perspectives are juxtaposed with Miller's interpretive orientation: Psychobiography; Psychoanalytic Narrative; Life History; Life Narratives; Psychoanalysis and Anamnesis; and Psychoanalytic Life History.

CHAPTER 4: *Alice Miller's Examination of the Life of Jurgen Bartsch*

Miller's analysis of a case of the genesis of murderous behaviour is examined to illustrate her key theoretical conceptualisations. This critical analysis of Miller's work also informs the hermeneutic approach used in the analyses of the two other serial murderers whose lives are examined in chapters 5 and 6 .

CHAPTER 5: *Ted Bundy*

Ted's illegitimacy, his first three years of life, the sanitised family environment of his grandfather's home, and the 'three butcher's knives incident' are examined. Louise's (Ted's mother) move away from her father and Ted's life in the Bundy household are then discussed. Several other major themes in Ted's life are then dealt with: his illegitimacy; 'the mask of sanity'; Ted's self image; possession (of his victims); 'the flaw' and 'the entity'; 'the hunt'; and disappearance. The central questioned examined is that of the evidence of allegory in Ted's behaviour – did his murderous behaviour echo elements of abuse in his own childhood?

CHAPTER 6: *John Wayne Gacy*

This chapter opens with information about Gacy's parents and his parenting. His childhood sexual development is explored, as is his leaving home at an early age and his business success in early adulthood. Gacy's homosexuality and the evidence of his first displays of violence are noted. The history of the development of his adult murderous behaviour is then traced, leading to the descent of his life into chaos and his eventual arrest for murder. This hermeneutic circling through Gacy's life story has as its goal the elucidation of allegorical connections between Gacy's early life and his later aberrant behaviour.

CHAPTER 7: *Discussion: Three lives summarised*

This chapter endeavours to pull together all the strands of hermeneutic exploration that have been used to examine the lives of the three serial murderers in question. Evidence for the presence of the Repetition Compulsion and allegorical behaviour in

these three lives is summarised, and the major life themes of the three serial murderers are compared.

CHAPTER 8: *Conclusion – Can murder be allegory?*

The final chapter concludes that the research objectives and the research questions that this thesis set out to address are largely answerable in the affirmative. Miller's central assertions are given credence: murderous behaviour can logically be seen as an allegorical expression of unresolved childhood trauma.

CHAPTER 2

MILLER'S PSYCHODYNAMIC EXPLICATION OF THE GENESIS OF ABERRANT BEHAVIOUR

Alice Miller's psychodynamic explanation of human behaviour covers no substantially new theoretical ground (she is a psychoanalyst, albeit one who dismisses sex drive theory), yet her explication of the genesis of violent behaviour prompts a different and compellingly holistic answer to the question of 'where does violence come from?'. Her extension of the analysis of the effects of childhood trauma to the specific example of serial murder provides a significant reason for considering her particular explanation of the origins of violence in the pursuit of the aims and objectives of the current thesis. This chapter will seek to summarise, then to separately criticise, Miller's attack on what she terms 'Poisonous Pedagogy'.

Two brief explanatory notes are needed, though, before this chapter proceeds. Firstly, the gendered terms 'he' and 'she' need to be seen as interchangeable throughout this explanation of Miller's theory. Miller does not see a gender differentiation in the application or effects of the process of Poisonous Pedagogy. The second point of clarification is that Poisonous Pedagogy is not, according to Miller, the sole province of parents - other significant adults (teachers, uncles, grandmothers, family friends and so on) can (and do) have a pedagogic effect on children. Consequently, where 'parents' are referred to in this chapter, the reader should interpret 'parents/caregivers' – those who spend the most time with, and exert the most influence on, children.

Miller's theories of the origins of aberrant adult behaviour

Miller theorises that violent adult behaviour has its roots in childhood trauma at the hand of adult pedagogues. She postulates that the connection between repressed childhood trauma and violent adult behaviour is real and direct. If a child suffers violence (either physical or psychological), *and* can find no adult who will listen to his complaints at such treatment and *believe* his story, then, says Miller, such experiences of violence will be buried deep in the child's psyche, only to erupt at some future time in aberrant behaviour that seems to have no cause.

Miller radically questions the validity of the Freudian psychoanalytic model and its central contention that the child is ushered into this world possessed of innate drives that, left unchecked by adult correction, will result in humanly destructive behaviour. Although she agrees with Freud's early position that therapy involves the catharsis of recalling repressed memory, she dismisses Freud's *Oedipus complex*. This sex drive theory, she believes, lies in the way of catharsis because it excuses parents from blame for their behaviour towards their children, and instead blames the child's supposedly innate desires for the opposite sex parent for the traumatic content of repressed memory in the child's subconscious (Greif, 1992).

Miller's theory of the etiology of violence involves three concepts:

1. *Poisonous Pedagogy*
2. *Splitting Off* and *Projection*
3. *Repetition Compulsion*.

Poisonous Pedagogy

Miller uses the term *poisonous pedagogy* to refer to those child-rearing practices

that inhibit, restrain, or constrain the child from being able (or being *allowed*) to express feelings of anger, indignation or rage at the way they have been treated by those adults who have assumed ‘responsibility’ for the child's upbringing. She sees this approach to child-rearing as deliberately designed to blame the child for all that is ‘wrong’ or ‘evil’, and to exonerate the adult pedagogue at all times.

Poisonous pedagogy is typified, Miller (1987:59) suggests, by beliefs such as:

- adults are god-like in their correctness and their infallibility;
- the parent is always right;
- the child is always wrong (when the adult says so);
- the child cannot threaten the adult's superiority by questioning his or her (the adult's) judgment;
- the child's subjugation to the subservient and compliant role must be inculcated at an early age so that the child is unable to expose the adult as subjugator.

Such beliefs produce in the adult a subconsciously manipulative attitude towards the 'errant' child. The adult may use a variety of methods to ensure the child will be compliant with a submissive, repressed role:

> ...laying traps, lying, duplicity, subterfuge, manipulation, 'scare' tactics, withdrawal of love, isolation, distrust, humiliating and disgracing the child, scorn, ridicule, and coercion even to the point of torture. (Miller, 1987:59)

These are extremely powerful tools, and they are, in Miller’s terms, exclusively in the hands of adults. A child may use or seek to use such tactics against others (even, perhaps, against parents who are victimising them) but the child's success in

using such tactics is limited in that they are only effective against persons less powerful than the manipulator.

The adult, for example, can *lay traps* for the child (Miller, 1987: 59). A parent may forbid a child to eat between meals and then (intentionally or otherwise) place a packet of opened biscuits in an easily accessible spot such as the kitchen table. When the child succumbs to 'temptation', the adult can feel righteous in administering punishment. The message the child internalises is that he is wrong, naughty, and to blame. He is unable to see the manipulation he has been subjected to. Paradoxically, the manipulating adult is similarly blind to the victimisation that he has practiced, since the adult was, himself, in a poisonously pedagogic world, a formerly manipulated child. Miller (1987: 239) refers to the inability of the poisonous pedagogue to see "…the anguish of the battered child, who they themselves once were too…". Abuse is effectively intergenerationally transmitted:

> Someone who was not allowed to "be aware" of what was being done has no way of telling about it except to repeat it. (Miller, 1987: 239, emphasis in original)

In even more direct language, Miller (1987: 249, italics in original) noted: "*…every persecutor was once a victim.*"

To offer another example of the adult manipulation of the child, we can imagine that a father who sexually abuses his young daughter may tell her that if she mentions what has happened to anyone, her mother will go away for ever. The young child, trusting that the adult is telling the truth (because the child believes that the adult *knows* what will happen), sees herself as being responsible for this possible eventuality, and again feels wrong or to blame. This guilt, in turn, works with the

threat to ensure that the child does not attempt to talk to other adults about her experience.

It is also the function of *poisonous pedagogy* to instil in the unsuspecting and unknowing child false beliefs about the world that, once accepted by the child, will likely be perpetuated from generation to generation. Miller (1987:59-60) lists seventeen examples of such beliefs:

1. A feeling of duty produces love.
2. Hatred can be done away with by forbidding it.
3. Parents deserve respect simply because they are parents.
4. Children are undeserving of respect simply because they are children.
5. Obedience makes a child strong.
6. A high degree of self-esteem is harmful.
7. A low degree of self-esteem makes a person altruistic.
8. Tenderness (doting) is harmful.
9. Responding to a child's needs is wrong.
10. Severity and coldness are a good preparation for life.
11. A pretence of gratitude is better than honest ingratitude.
12. The way you behave is more important than the way you really are.
13. Neither parents nor God would survive being offended.
14. The body is something dirty and disgusting.
15. Strong feelings are harmful.
16. Parents are creatures free of drives and guilt.
17. Parents are always right.

The central theme behind the teaching of such beliefs to children, or the *internalised commandment*, as Miller refers to it (which the child adheres to unconsciously) is:

“Thou shalt not be aware of what your parents are doing to you” (Miller, 1987: 61). If a child is treated in such a way by his parents that he grows up internalising beliefs that perpetually predispose him to *self-blaming,* then the greatest harm that will have been done to the child is the suppression in his psyche of his ability to express his own feelings in an honest, open and non-destructive way. The child's ability to think critically will not be fostered, and he will perpetuate in adulthood the biases of his pedagogues.

What becomes of those people who are 'successful' products of poisonous pedagogy (that is, those who are never allowed to question the treatment they receive from adults)? If, as a child, a person is not allowed (by those adults who hold power over him) to express feelings of anger at the way he is being treated, that anger will be repressed until such time as the child, in adulthood, can find substitute (for the oppressing parent/adult) objects or persons towards which that repressed anger can rage (Miller, 1987:61).

Is it possible to avoid this suppression of anger in the psyche throughout childhood? Miller asserts that it is, providing the child finds the opportunity, through an empathic adult, to express her feelings when she perceives that the adult(s) in control of her life have consciously or unconsciously done her some wrong. If allowed unconstrained verbal expression of feelings as a child, then as an adult the individual will be able to react reasonably to the psychological wounds inflicted by others in the world. The need to lash out angrily and defensively at others as an adult…

> ...arises only for people who must always be on their guard to keep the dam that restrains their feelings from breaking. For if this dam breaks, everything becomes unpredictable. (Miller, 1987: 65)

This feeling of unpredictability, says Miller, explains why some people may avoid interaction with others, fearing the consequences, while others may exhibit violent outbursts of anger, venting their fury on inappropriate and undeserving objects or persons. The former are afraid of their 'dam' bursting, of their feelings being exposed, while the latter are continually perplexed at the seemingly uncontrollable 'spill overs' or ‘bursting outs’ of their emotions and feelings.

Miller relates this repression of emotions to violence in the following way:

> A person who can understand and integrate his anger as part of himself will not become violent. He has the need to strike out at others only if he is thoroughly unable to understand his rage, if he was not permitted to become familiar with his feeling as a small child, was never able to experience it as a part of himself because such a thing was totally unthinkable in his surroundings. (Miller,1987:65)

Splitting Off and Projection

This apparently inexplicable rage that simply bursts out at what seems to be the nearest object (animate or inanimate) illustrates the process that Miller (1987) labels as *splitting off* and *projection*. Essentially, this is a defence mechanism for the psyche - the repression of the rage and anger that the child feels when he is victimised (but not allowed to complain or object to) builds a pressure in his psyche that demands release in some way. At the same time, this repression into the subconscious of traumatic experience leaves a *conscious* perception in the child's mind that *he* is evil, wrong or to blame. Often this self-perception will be ill-defined or nebulous. What is *not* ill-defined, though, is the feeling of generalised anger. While the memory of traumatic events that accompany these generalised feelings

cannot be accessed by the child (precisely because to bring those memories into the open without any means of resolving them would risk psychic annihilation), the *anger* that arises from those feelings *seeks* to be released. The process of that release is the process of splitting off and projection.

Simply put, those parts of the self that are despised or disliked, the elements of self that *appear* to the individual to be responsible for his suffering, can be *split off from the self and projected onto others.* Those others can then be *punished* for having caused the *harm originally felt by the child.* Whilst still a child, a traumatised victim is quite powerless to vent anger or rage at physically larger adults, so will seek victims less powerful than himself for this purpose. Those children who significantly abuse animals smaller than themselves are illustrating that they have succeeded in finding an object onto which they can project all that is evil about themselves and then punish that evil. A child in this situation will report that he is punishing the dog (for example) *'because it was naughty'.* It is interesting to note that extraordinary cruelty to animals is cited as a significant identifier of future serial killers (Norris, 1989: 244).

As the child grows into adulthood, the range of potential projection victims increases proportionately with the physical power of biological maturity. While the child may victimise less powerful animals, the same driving forces will lead the child grown to adulthood to victimise other persons less powerful than himself - either children or adults, depending on the perpetrator's own sense of power.

The Repetition Compulsion

Miller's (1987) concept of the *repetition compulsion* is her vehicle for the explanation of the repetitive nature of violence. Her examination of this compulsion prompts us

to ask questions such as: Why do child abusers continually repeat their offences? Why do serial killers continue to kill victim after victim? Why isn't the desire for expression of violent anger satiated by just one or a few outbursts?

The desire for revenge isn't satiated, Miller says, simply because it is *not aimed at the original perpetrator(s) of the abuse that the child in the adult once suffered.* Victims seem unable to retaliate against their own abuser, even if they consciously want to, because of the perceived power imbalance between themselves and their abuser. They seek victims who are less powerful than themselves, and this precludes seeing the original perpetrator as a suitable victim.

Because the childhood experience of abuse has to be repressed in order for the child to survive physically and psychologically, the *feelings* that remain in consciousness - feelings of anger, rage and indignation - are nebulous. The adult literally doesn't understand his own anger, and doesn't connect those feelings of anger to the original (now repressed) events. He is as mystified as onlookers are at the unreasonableness of his outbursts towards others. There is a *dissociation* between the *events* of the abuse and the *feelings* those events generated.

Violence as Allegory

These misunderstood and randomly-directed outbursts can be seen as attempts by the child within the adult to *repeatedly tell his story* until someone listens. The inner child, it appears, is subconsciously compelled to repeat what can be seen as an *allegorical* tale of abuse. In summarising the behaviours of the serial murderer Jurgen Bartsch (see Chapter 4), Miller comments directly on the allegorical nature of his murderous behaviour, saying that her purpose in analysing his actions was not to excuse him, "…but to show that every one of his actions had a

meaning…"(Miller, 1987: 226). His actions towards his victims were a subconscious attempt to communicate to anyone who might listen that, like his victims, the perpetrator was once a victim himself - as powerless as those he later subjugated.

Miller also sees another side to the expression of violence. The perpetrator (who was once a victim himself) is also seeking, in any violent encounter, a sort of release of tension that comes from the *reversal* of the roles experienced in childhood. As the perpetrator, the one-time victim can feel the role of the *powerful adult* and can subconsciously *escape* the role of the subjugated, victimised and powerless child. Herein lies the explanation of how the adult can exert *poisonous pedagogic techniques* on the child. Having repressed into unconsciousness the experience of being the victim himself, the child that still lies within the adult is condemned to repeat the pattern. Caught in a repetition compulsion, he involves other innocent victims in replays - perpetual *allegorical re-enactments* (albeit with obfuscating variations) - of previous scenes of abuse. The search for evidence of such allegory in the behaviours of serial murderers is the *raison d'etre* of this thesis.

Miller's departure from Freudian theory

It is important to note that Miller disagreed with Freud. She is by no means a Freudian psychoanalyst. Her early (career-wise) point of departure from mainstream psychoanalysis lies in her rejection of Freud's Drive Theory (Miller, 1984). Later, she rejected the psychoanalytic method entirely (Miller, 1990). Her writing in the early 1980's clearly indicates that she regarded the drive theory as an integral part of that socially and culturally transmitted pedagogy that exhorts us to respect our parents at all cost. She rejected the social beliefs and the psychoanalysis doctrines that held that parents are "god-like in their correctness and their infallibility" and that "the parent is always right" (Miller, 1987:59).

It is interesting to remember that Freud's early research (prior to 1897) had led him to talk about empirical findings of the effects of childhood trauma. Originally, his inclination was to treat the stories that children told in therapy as *literal* accounts of trauma. Miller suggests that it was Freud's inability to find resolution for his *own* memories of unresolved childhood trauma that led him to abandon his trauma theory and substitute the dogma of the Drive Theory (Miller, 1984:220-221). This theory ignored or negated the empirical information Freud had to support the damaging effect of childhood trauma.

> ...I think it correct to assume that the trauma theory was abandoned of necessity in the course of Freud's self-analysis because it is not possible to relive one's own early traumas without the help of an empathic, supportive, and non-judgmental person (who was not available to Freud)... (Miller, 1984: 221, footnote)

Interestingly, Miller notes, Freud had indicated his inability to deal with the trauma he recollected from his own childhood when, in the German and English published versions of his *Origins of Psychoanalysis*, he omitted a reference to his own father. The original text, referring to case histories of his patients, includes the sentence:

> Then there was the astonishing thing that in every case blame was laid on perverse acts by the father, my own not excluded. (in Miller, 1984: 220, footnote)

In the published texts, the words 'my own not excluded' were omitted.

Miller suggests that, despite his patients being able to relive some details of their early traumas in therapy, Freud himself was unable to take the role of empathic

listener to such stories of remembered trauma. He had not experienced such an empathic listener himself, and was therefore compelled to excuse his own parents (and, therefore, everyone else's) from all blame for any trauma they had visited on him. Unable to entertain the thought that his own parents might be responsible for his suffering, Freud then (Miller argues) unconsciously fabricated his dogmatic sex-drive theory. This theoretical reversal by Freud has arguably contributed to the entrenchment of the dominant Western social belief that children are inherently evil and that their actions are governed by innate drives to sexually possess the opposite sex parent (Miller, 1984).

The drive theory, in Miller's eyes, inhibits the catharsis of psychoanalysis to the point of negating any value from the therapeutic process. Indeed, she sees the drive theory, with its emphasis on the exoneration of parents, as actively contributing to the further traumatisation of the client. Because the therapist cannot allow parents to be blamed, the stories of the child within the adult that tell of physical and psychological trauma in childhood *must* be interpreted by the therapist as the *imaginings* of the client/patient. This process repeats the initial traumatisation - once again, the child is simply not believed. (Greif, 1992: 310; Miller, 1984)

In order to clearly differentiate herself from Freud, Miller uses the term *abuse* to refer to the sexual traumas that children suffer at the hands of their parents (or other pedagogues), whilst Freud uses the term *seduction* (Greif, 1992:311). Freud's chosen term indicates directly that the responsibility for what appears to be sexual drives in the child lies *with* the child, while Miller's terminology focuses attention on the question of whose needs are being served by the sexual interaction between adult and child. To Freud, the narcissistic needs of the child, driven by the Oedipal drive, are paramount. To Miller, the narcissistic needs of the child are *subjugated* to the needs of the adult (Greif, 1992:311). The adult, Miller contends, *uses* the child,

and the child has to repress any feelings of anger, indignation or rage at such treatment. These feelings of anger or rage arise for the child because the adult will not accept blame for the 'bad' thing(s) done, but contrives always to blame the child for any 'wrong'. Left with the blame for what is happening, and unable to talk to anyone about it (because the perpetrator prohibits such action), the child is compelled into silence. The child is then forever locked into self-blame or into the projection of blame onto substitute objects (what Miller terms 'splitting off' and 'projection'). Unless the child (or the child in the adult) encounters a genuinely empathic listener who will encourage the retelling of the story of the original trauma, and who will *believe* the story implicitly, the narcissistic needs of the child will forever be subordinate to the narcissistic needs of the adult. A person thus treated will, in adulthood, unknowingly project this unresolved trauma (in some manner) on other subordinate individuals.

The attempts of the injured child to articulate the essence of this endured trauma to others is explained by the process Miller refers to as the *repetition compulsion*. This is the attempt by the child or the child within the adult to subconsciously articulate the details of the trauma suffered through the vehicle of *allegory* (Miller, 1984:160; Greif, 1992:311). That is, a person's behaviour may be subconsciously allegorical of unresolved and repressed trauma. The person who continually attempts suicide may be acting allegorically - the repressed memory of the psychically or physically murderous abuse he encountered as a child may be subconsciously represented by such actions. The adult who murders others may be taking another route to the subconscious allegory of the same intolerable (to the unsupported child) forces of annihilation.

Since both Freud's view of *seduction* and Miller's view of *abuse* depend largely on their separate views on the nature of sexuality in the child, it is instructive to

examine their disparate perceptions of this subject. Miller examined the many analyses she conducted over her years of psychoanalytic practice, and came to six conclusions about what Freud termed 'infantile sexuality' (Miller, 1984:121-123):

1. Her first point is that to survive, the child needs "...love, care, attention, and tenderness from the adult" (Miller, 1984:121). Since these things are necessary for survival, the child will do anything to obtain them, even to the point of complying with any sexual needs the adult may express. The child, Miller suggests, will strive to always make the adult pleased, since it has learned that this will elicit the responses from the adult that are necessary for the child's survival. Even if the adult's requirements have a sexual content (and have a frightening or disorienting effect), the child "...will still make every effort to satisfy the adult's desires or at least not to frustrate them to any great extent, because he doesn't want to offend the adult and thus run the risk of rejection" (Miller, 1984:121).

2. The needs of the parents, rather than the needs of the child, govern most of the early stages of a child's existence. It is the needs of the parents that are given attention, by both the parent and the child (who has to collude for survival).

3. 'infantile sexuality' is complex, and composed of eight basic elements:
    - autoeroticism
    - curiosity - a natural interest in all experience, including anything sexual
    - jealousy - the attention the two parents give to each other may be seen as detracting from the child's needs
    - physical pleasure - the small boy may feel fear that the adult will try to stop him experiencing the pleasurable sensations of touching his penis (what Freud referred to as the fear of castration)

- penis envy - if adults attempt to explain the difference in genitalia to a young girl in terms of 'haves' and 'have nots' (referring to a penis), then the girl may interpret that a penis is desirable
- intense physical sensations - the child's sensations are a new ground for self-exploration, and oral, genital and anal sensations are natural experiential territory. It is a peculiarly adult view that interprets such exploration as sexual rather than sensual
- the power struggle - toilet training is often seen by the adult in these terms. From the child's perspective, this is often interpreted in terms of loss of power or an imposed control on the child's sensuous drives and desires
- adjustment to adult desires - early childhood may be seen by the adult as a period during which the child tries to defy the adult. To the child, the same period may be interpreted as an exhausting and bewildering series of desires and needs on the part of the adult that have to be catered to in order to obtain life-supporting love and attention

4. Children are naturally attractive to adults - they show affection readily, they cuddle and kiss adults readily, and they are considered 'beautiful' in many ways. If the adult's own life experience has been such that he has problems with his own sexuality, and finds his adult sex life unrewarding, he may turn his efforts to find sexual fulfilment towards the less demanding and more maleable child.

5. Adult sexual desires are primarily narcissistic desires, and may, in some cases (pedophilia, for example), be expressions more of a desire for power than a desire for sexual gratification.

6. The seductive behaviour of a patient in therapy should not be interpreted as an

> expression of the patient's sexual desires, but should rather be seen as a repeated allegory of the trauma that the patient suffered in childhood. Thus, the unconscious communication from the patient who exhibits overt sexual precociousness towards the therapist may be one of sexual traumatic experiences in childhood which were repressed into the subconscious.

Miller's view of childhood is that the child's problems that stem from the Oedipal phase come not from the conflict between innate drives, but from the direct power conflict between the adult and the child. Paradoxically, in the ancient Greek tale of Oedipus, it is Oedipus himself that endures all blame for what he has done - neither of his parents are reproached in any way whatsoever (Greif, 1992:312). Miller notes this point with interest:

> ...to this very day no one seems to have objected to the fact that Oedipus was assigned all the blame. It has always been taken for granted that children are responsible for what was done to them, and it has been essential that when children grow up, they must not be aware of the true nature of their past. In return, they are given the right to treat their own children in the same fashion. (Miller, 1984:145)

Oedipus' dilemma reflects, for Miller, the central problem with classical Freudian psychoanalysis: it perpetuates the power relationship between adult and child that is based on the doctrine that the parent is blameless and the child is condemned to responsibility for all evil. The child, in this relationship, is consumed by the inner conflict between innate drives and the god-like infallibility of parents. Freud and classical psychoanalysts are guilty of perpetuating what Miller referred to as poisonous pedagogy. They have taught parents to "...teach their children to deny emotionally any validity to their own feeling and to accept as absolutely valid all

demands upon them by their parents" (Greif, 1992:412-313).

If a patient undergoing classical psychoanalysis finds the therapeutic process reviving repressed memories of childhood trauma, any attempt by the patient to direct anger towards parents or other adult perpetrators will likely be met by the therapist with a reinterpretation of those events in terms of the narcissistic drives of the patient. This process turns the blame back onto the patient. The patient's real suffering is ignored by the therapist, thus repeating the traumatic experience of the patient in childhood, when his needs were rejected by his adult persecutors. (Miller, 1984:145; Greif, 1992:313)

Freud's interpretation of the famous Paul Schreber case presents an example of such a rejection of relevant information regarding childhood trauma. In Freud's interpretation, Schreber's fears of persecution are seen to emanate from his resistance to his narcissistic drive towards homosexual love for his father. Unfortunately, Freud's inquiry did not attempt to look at the evidence regarding Schreber's father's pedagogic techniques. In Miller's terms:

> ...even the ill son's most absurd ideas, fantasies, and fears of persecution are a retelling, without his realizing it, of the story of the persecution he was subjected to in early childhood. The father's writings reveal the way he raised his sons, a method of child-rearing leading to suicide for one and paranoia for the other. (Miller, 1984:198)

Miller accepts that Schreber may well have had a homosexual fixation on his father, but suggests that this is understandable, given the father's pedagogic practices. Schreber's father, it seems, sexually abused his sons from infancy, manipulating their genitals, "...sometimes with the help of various mechanical contrivances..."

(Miller, 1984:198). In contemporary terms, Schreber's father was a pedophile.

As in all cases of the sexual abuse of children, the adult perpetrator in this case also gave his victims mixed and confusing messages of love, pleasure, taboo and blame. Torn between feelings of physical pleasure, a need to be loved by his father, and internalised-over-time messages that *he* was to blame for this unacceptable behaviour, Paul Schreber's paranoiac stories were simply subconscious allegories of the trauma he had endured. Freud's analysis of this case obscured the real story:

> ...it would be totally misleading to insist on understanding paranoia in general and the genesis of this case in particular as the child's defence against his (and not the father's!) homosexual desires. (Miller, 1984:198)

Miller goes further than criticism of the application of psychoanalytic analysis - she dismisses the technique of classical psychoanalysis as being "...useless for getting at the truth" (Miller, 1990:183). In her earlier writings, Miller had suggested that the pedagogic content of the psychoanalytic process could be removed, thus leaving a therapeutic technique of value to those wounded by abuse in childhood. More recently, though, she has moved to a position of dismissing the value of Freudian psychoanalysis entirely. She sees the pedagogic model (the adult is always right) as being "...indissolubly coupled...with Freudian constructs..." (Miller, 1990: 183).

The two basic rules of psychoanalysis, the therapeutic setting and the free association method, suggests Miller, are governed by pedagogic mechanisms, and cannot, therefore, provide a truly empathic setting in which the client can openly explore previously repressed feelings from their traumatic past. The *psychoanalytic setting* imposes the analyst as "...a superior, informed interpreter…" (Miller, 1990: 183), whose task it is to *explain to* the *patient* the meaning of the recalled images

and feelings that are encountered. The *rule of free association* functions to inhibit in the patient the formation of connections between emerging repressed feelings and the reality of experience that lies behind those feelings. What is substituted for understanding is an artificially constructed intellectualisation based on the theory of innate narcissistic drives. Ultimately, both setting and technique perpetuate poisonous pedagogy:

> Thus the authoritarian structure of child-rearing is preserved unthinkingly in both basic rules. Parents, too, told the child from *their* perspective how he felt, or how he was supposed to feel, and the child believed that they knew better than he did. (Miller, 1990: 183)

Transference in the therapeutic setting is also a problem. The transference that typically accompanies the psychoanalytic process results in the patient transferring his need for approval from his parents to the therapeutic situation, so that the therapist becomes the person that the patient feels he must please. Because the child once learned that he *must* shield his parents from all blame or threat, the adult patient will now seek to shield his 'new parent' from similar exposure to responsibility. He will comply or collude with the therapist's subtle demand that he (the therapist) be respected as the repository of all knowledge, understanding, and rational analytical ability. In this situation, the injured child within the adult is once more condemned to an avoidance of connection with the real feelings and real events that lie beneath his maladaptive behaviour in the world. (Miller, 1990: 182-185)

One of Miller's central contentions is that before a person can find relief from psychic injury, he must dispense with an *intellectual attempt* to understand his past, and instead allow his *feelings* to be experienced. Those repressed feelings are

those associated with trauma in childhood. The expression of those feelings was earlier forbidden by the perpetrator of the abuse. If the adult, in beginning to remember those repressed feelings, tries to interpret them (either at the urging of a therapist or at the urging of the adult's own intellect) in terms of the labelled, named, categorised dogma of psychoanalysis, then the adult will retain control (through the language) of the child within. The suffering of the past will be rationalised in a way that finds excuses for the adult perpetrators of the original abuse.

Miller describes her own journey to self-knowledge in this way:

> As long as I could put a name to my feelings, I retained mastery over the child within me, making it impossible for her to find her language, the language of hitherto unnamed sensations and feelings...she could feel only when the adult, educated part of me allowed this to happen and without the interference of explanations and associations (Miller, 1990:185).

The (re)construction of early memory

It is absolutely essential, if we are to understand what Miller is talking about, that we consider the way in which early memory is laid down or constructed. The issue of repressed memory will be dealt with later in this chapter, but it is relevant at this point to focus on the very earliest stage of human life experience. What role does learning during our infant, pre-language state have in the development of our later life attitudes and behaviours?

The infant child does not yet have the language and the attendant intellectual constructs that are part of language that enable us to describe feelings as an adult. That is why, Miller suggests, the adult must get in touch with feelings *without* the

hindrance of language.

> Not until we begin to perceive this destruction (the destruction of the psyche wrought by poisonous pedagogy) with the sensory powers of a child, with the knowledge of the victim, can we rid ourselves of the unconscious identification with the destructive actions of parents and thus break the chain of repetition. (Miller, 1990: 158)

To relive the memory of early childhood trauma, which isn't stored in *languaged* terms, it would appear that the adult must suspend adult conceptualisation and re-enter the world of infant conceptualisation. Only then can the full meaning of the childhood memory be allowed to surface. If a purely sensate memory is interpreted through language rather than feeling, the memory recall will be incomplete or distorted.

How can this be done? Miller (1990: 158) refers to the therapeutic method of J. Konrad Stettbacher (1991), having used his method in her own self-analysis. However, before explaining Stettbacher's method, it would be instructive to try to conceptualise (even if it is in adult language) just what the infant child may feel as it first encounters the world outside the womb. Liedloff (1986) allows us a possible glimpse of that experience:

> In the maternity wards of Western civilization there is little chance of consolation... The newborn infant, with his skin crying out for the ancient touch of smooth, warmth-radiating, living flesh, is wrapped in dry, lifeless cloth. He is put in a box where he is left, no matter how he weeps, in a limbo that is utterly motionless (for the first time in all his body's experience, during the eons of its evolution or during its eternity of bliss in the womb). The only

> sounds he can hear are the wails of other victims of the same ineffable agony. The sound can mean nothing to him. He cries and cries; his lungs, new to air, are strained with the desperation in his heart. No one comes. Trusting in the rightness of life, as by nature he must, he does the only act he can, which is to cry on. Eventually, a timeless lifetime later, he falls asleep exhausted. (Liedloff, 1986: 70)

Liedloff, it should be noted, is talking about a time and a culture now some several decades removed (her research was undertaken in the 1970s). She is talking about the common experience of newborns in western culture in the second half of the twentieth century. Hospitals were then more schedule-driven, and infants were not regarded as so psychologically fragile as they are now at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Liedloff's contribution here, though, is that her words give us some opportunity to enter that purely sensate world of the newborn infant – entry to the experience of that pre-language world. This consideration of that earliest, unrecallable experience is of relevance to the unfolding of this thesis' examination of the importance to adult behaviour of early childhood trauma.

Liedloff's articulation of the newborn's experience is compelling:

> When he awakens he wets his diaper and is distracted from his torment by the event. But the pleasant feeling of wetting and the warm, damp, flowing sensation around his lower body are quickly gone. The warmth is now immobile and turning cold and clammy. He kicks his legs. Stiffens his body. Sobs. Desperate with longing, his lifeless surroundings wet and uncomfortable, he screams through his misery until it is stilled by lonely sleep.

Suddenly he is lifted; his expectations come forward for what is to be his. The wet diaper is taken away. Relief. Living hands touch his skin. His feet are lifted and a new, bone-dry, lifeless cloth is folded around his loins. In an instant it is as though the hands had never been there, nor the wet diaper. There is no conscious memory, no inkling of hope. He is in unbearable emptiness, timeless, motionless, silent, wanting, wanting. His continuum tries its emergency measures, but they are all meant for bridging short lapses in correct treatment or for summoning relief from someone, it is assumed, who will want to provide it. His continuum has no solution for this extremity. The situation is beyond its vast experience....

Someone comes and lifts him deliciously through the air. He is in life. He is carried a bit too gingerly for his taste, but there is motion. Then he is in his place. All the agony he has undergone is nonexistent. He rests in the enfolding arms, and though his skin is sending no message of relief from the cloth, no news of live flesh on his flesh, his hands and mouth are reporting normal. The positive pleasure of life, which is continuum normal, is almost complete. The taste and texture of the breast are there, the warm milk is flowing into his eager mouth, there is a heartbeat, which should have been his link, his reassurance of continuity from the womb, there is movement perceptible to his dim vision. The sound of the voice is right, too. There is only the cloth and the smell (his mother uses cologne) that leave something missing. He sucks and when he feels full and rosy, dozes off.

When he awakens he is in hell. No memory, no hope, no thought can bring the comfort of his visit to his mother into this bleak purgatory. Hours pass and days and nights. He screams, tires, sleeps. He wakens and wets his diaper. By now there is no pleasure in this act. No sooner is the pleasure of

> relief prompted by his innards than it is replaced, as the hot, acid urine touches his by-now chafed body, by a searing crescendo of pain. He screams. His exhausted lungs must scream to override the fiery stinging. He screams until the pain and screaming use him up before he falls asleep.
>
> At this not unusual hospital the busy nurses change all diapers on schedule, whether they are dry, wet, or long wet, and send the infants home chafed raw, to be healed by someone who has time for such things.
>
> By the time he is taken to his mother's home (surely it cannot be called his) he is well versed in the character of life. On a preconscious plane that will qualify all his further impressions, as it is qualified by them, he knows life to be unspeakably lonely, unresponsive to his signals, and full of pain. (Liedloff, 1986:71-72)

Liedloff, of course, cannot prove the validity of such a conceptualisation of the early infant experience. None of us can, locked as we are in adulthood with our understandings of the world intimately linked to language. It would also be generally accepted that contemporary Western practices would pay more attention to the needs of the newborn than are depicted in this bleak view from the past. If, though, we accept the basic premise behind Liedloff's imaginings - that in our earliest experiences of life, we record impressions in *pre-language memory* that later impinge on our *language-contextualised* interpretations of life - then we can begin to understand why Miller would suggest that to uncover and resolve repressed childhood trauma, we first have to *feel* the memories of the child we once were.

This conceptualisation of a different sort of memory in childhood can be logically seen to apply not only to our earliest few months of life. It may well be the case that the way in which we lay down memory gradually changes from a *purely sensate* to a

developing languaged to a *fully languaged* conceptualisation. Thus, when we try to understand our past with our fully languaged mechanisms of interpretation, we may fail to fully comprehend much that is available in those parts of our memory that we have lost communication with.

> Since the injured child in us can express himself only by means of physical sensations and feelings related to his traumas, it is essential that therapy secure access to these sensations and feelings and enable the person to articulate them. However, this access remains completely blocked whenever we are satisfied with intellectual speculations, as is the case in psychoanalysis. No matter how impressive and fashionable these speculations may be, they never go beyond the state of self-deception. (Miller, 1990:188-189)

So, how do we move beyond a state of self-deception? How do we access feelings and sensations and articulate them? Miller refers us to Stettbacher (1991). It is his therapeutic model that Miller used to examine her connections with her own childhood history. Stettbacher's approach to therapy will be examined here (briefly) for its contribution to the extension of this analysis of Miller.

Stettbacher - psychic illness and its resolution

Unconscious fear that arises out of the anxieties and pains of childhood, Stettbacher says, combine with feelings of guilt (*I* am to blame) to produce 'primal overloads' (Stettbacher, 1991:7). This overload situation is commonly referred to as psychic illness, and its genesis begins in our earliest childhood experience when we either find a situation where our needs are catered for or where our needs are partially or wholly denied.

> If the child's natural, primal needs are satisfied, it will be endowed with a fundamental feeling of security, trust and vitality. Together these will form the foundation for a positive ability to form human attachments. (Stettbacher, 1991:9)

The primal needs are nutrition, caring, devoted attention, calmness, encouragement, and appropriate information (Stettbacher, 1991:9). If all these requirements are met in a way which is optimal to the child, then the child will develop "...a positive, confident relationship to itself and its environment" (Stettbacher, 1991:9). If these primal needs are neglected in some way, then the child's ability to form relationships will be commensurately affected.

It is important to note that Stettbacher is talking about purely *sensate* experience when he talks of attention to primal needs. He gives the hypothetical example of the experience of a foetus whose mother tries to hide her pregnancy from the world by tightly binding her midriff in an attempt to conceal the pregnancy. (This thought takes us even further down the road that Liedloff was treading…). A likely lifelong psychic disturbance thus engendered in the child may exhibit itself to the world in behaviour that illustrates feelings of intimidation, oppression and insecurity (Stettbacher, 1991:14). Unable to initially rationalise the physical discomfort it receives from the constriction, the foetus, *at the sensate memory level*, records that the environment is not supportive. As the child grows outside the womb after birth, the accumulating memories of *feelings* and *thoughts* are influenced by the already existent memory of an unsupportive, constricting world. The child is likely to react with fear to any situation that threatens constriction, whether physical or psychological. Thus an unconscious compulsion, or, in Miller's terms, a *repetition compulsion*, may be set within the behavioural patterns of a human being from the very earliest of experiences. Moreover, unless the origins of such a compulsion are

understood, the psychic wound will persist throughout adulthood, with attendant maladaptive behavioural outcomes (Stettbacher, 1991: 8-18).

Stettbacher is not alone in viewing early psychic experience in this way. Spitz (1956) pointed out that the helplessness of the newborn human necessitates a developmental progression that moves from object non-differentiation to object differentiation. Mahler, Pine and Bergman (1975) and Winnicott (1975) present sequential infantile developmental stage theories that echo Spitz.

Spitz (1965) sees the first three months of life in terms of an absence of ego. The infant experiences the environment as part of himself, unable to differentiate his existence from other objects - unable, in fact, to perceive 'other objectness'. Mahler, Pine and Bergam (1975) describe the first two months of life as being autistic: the infant is enclosed in a sensory state that perceives nothing but the satisfaction or non-satisfaction of its basic needs for food and comfort. Mahler also describes a 'normal symbiotic phase' that starts at two months and is characterised by the infant behaving as though itself and the mother are in a state of fusion - there is no differentiation of the 'I' and the 'not I'. Rather than being a phase with a distinct beginning and end, this second stage of Mahler's gradually moves the child to increasing separation of the inside and outside world.

Winnicott (1975) views the earliest infant experience as the period of 'primary maternal preoccupation'. The infant is totally dependent on the mother, to the extent that it is almost in a state of oneness with the mother, who must cater to all of the infant's needs. Winnicott refers to the concept of 'good-enough' holding and handling by the mother (good enough, that is, for the meeting of the child's needs).

Spitz suggests a second stage of infant development from the ages of three months

to one year. This is the stage during which the child first establishes libidinal objects. The infant begins to perceive stimuli from objects that are increasingly recognised as differentiated from itself, and thus ego begins to emerge. Mahler refers to a similar concept in a stage dubbed 'separation-individuation'. From four months onwards, the infant establishes an increasing sense of separateness from the world, beginning with recognition of distinct boundaries of its own body and of its mother, the primary love object. In Mahler's terms, this is the 'hatching' of the psychological self. Similarly, Winnicott (1975) sees a stage of development from four months onwards that begins to move the infant from relative independence towards fuller independence. This is conceptualised as the stage during which the infant acquires a sense of itself as separate from the outside world, and a sense of self and of object-relation begins to emerge.

It seems that this process of development towards object differentiation is one that stems from the biologically-programed helplessness of the human infant. The earliest stage of this development is seen as one that does not involve a perception of self - a perception of separateness from the world outside the experience of bodily needs. This, indeed, is a purely sensate period, yet appropriate nourishment of all those sensed desires is of utmost importance to the normative development of the individual. The formation of those earliest object relations sets the scene for all subsequent transference relationship formation. If early object relation formation is damaged by inadequate satisfaction of the primary needs of the undifferentiated infant, then the individual will develop relationships that repeatedly recreate the suffering of these early disappointments (Martin, 1986).

It is not coincidence that the psychoanalytic setting endeavours to reduce the adult therapy client to a sensate state that mimics that earliest stage of infant experience. The analytic setting typically tries to isolate the analysand from visual, auditory and

tactile perceptions, and the prone position on the couch or chair limits physical or muscular movement. All this is designed to induce "...the feeling tone of infancy, a regression to a life period from which few or no memories have been preserved" (Martin, 1986:83). In this earlier, sensate state, the individual can begin to work through and resolve the feelings of relation to the world that the he has carried into all his life interactions.

As we grow from birth in our environment of experience, we seem to progress through three developmental levels of memory encoding - sensing (physical), feeling (emotional), and thinking (cognitive). As we progress on to each level of memory encoding, the previous levels remain functional, so that memory encoding becomes progressively more powerful, more complex. This also means, however, that from the earliest time, our new experiences are interpreted with strong elements of expectation or bias from our past encodings. Stettbacher refers to this process as 'transference':

> Experiences in a specific environment with things or people that manifest particular, though variable, signs will become linked to one another. These determine the foundation of our way of orienting and our system of 'transferences'. (Stettbacher, 1991:23)

Such transference, of course, works positively for us. In our negotiation of all the complex interrelated events and persons we encounter, we need to be able to say 'I know what to expect in this situation.' This 'shorthand' method of interpreting the environment is obviously adaptive, but it also allows us (regardless of our age or the particular circumstance) to make *biased judgements* of the situation at hand. Transferences that are biased by the subconscious (or repressed) fear that emanates from earlier, unresolved trauma, can negatively affect our ability to relate

to others. When we don't (or are unable to) *think* about the judgements we are making about others, then we are at the mercy of unconscious fears and biases.

> In psychotic behaviour, conscious appraisal of the process of transference is almost entirely absent. Uncontrollable urges gain the upper hand, and the conflict becomes loaded with a crippling expectation of pain and/or anxiety. Neurotic or psychotic forms of behaviour arise from an attitude of expectation invested with an extreme degree of transference disturbance. (Stettbacher, 1991:24).

If unconscious or repressed and unresolved trauma is heavily influencing any given transference, and if there is no conscious appraisal of that transference, then chaotic behavioural outcomes will likely ensue. This seems to be precisely what Miller talks about when she refers to the repetition compulsion - the splitting off of feelings of rage, anger or indignation and the projection of those feelings onto other objects. In Stettbacher's terms:

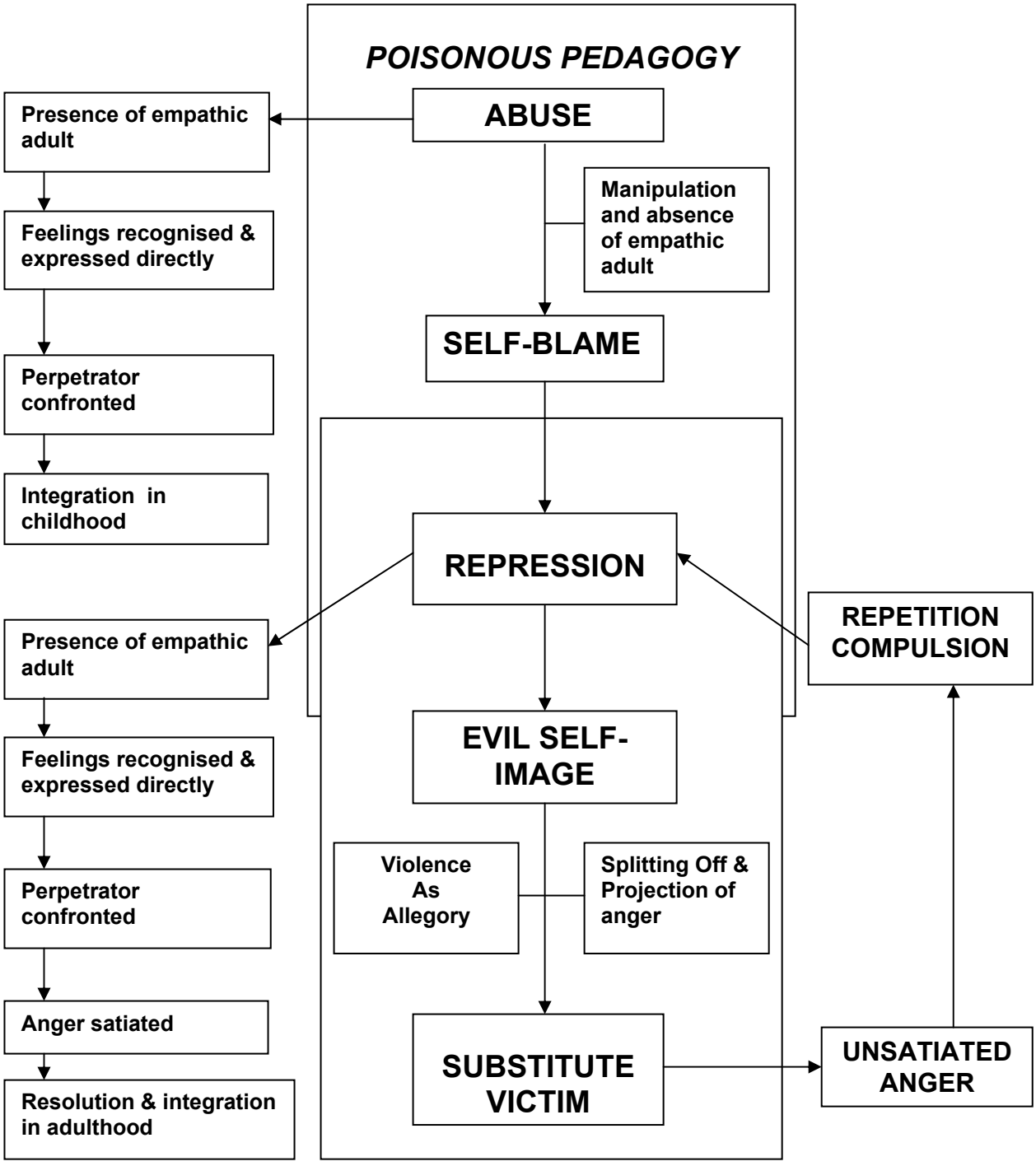
> Chaotic transferences take place at the unconscious level, and the resultant outbreaks of rage, anger, distress, and fear usually have little or nothing to do with the real situation. (Stettbacher, 1991:24)

Transference *can* be a positive process, but only if we are able to raise to consciousness the sensate, the emotional, and the cognitive memories that inform and direct the attitudes we take in a given situation. If negative or destructive events are stored unconsciously (repressed) and left at that level during transference, then we are re-victimised by those original events as we transfer feelings, thoughts, and actions into the present (Stettbacher, 1991:26).

Modelling Miller's *Poisonous Pedagogy*

Miller's explanations of Poisonous Pedagogy are easily understood, and they are also easily diagrammed. Miller might question such a reductionist approach, but the model below has been generated in this thesis to provide a visual summary of Poisonous Pedagogy. It serves to succinctly summarise her key concepts.

A MODEL OF MILLER'S POISONOUS PEDAGOGY



The essence of Poisonous Pedagogy is the three elements of *abuse, self-blame* and *repression*. Self-blame arises in the presence of manipulation by the perpetrator of violence (the manipulation or coercion of the victim into silence), and in the concomitant absence of an empathic listener. If the victim *does* find an empathic listener, even the manipulation and coercion of the perpetrator can be overcome. If talked about, the victimising experience can become an integrated story within the victim's life. In this case, the self-blame and resulting repression are diminished or even obviated, and the repetition compulsion is avoided.

It should be noted, though, that the catharsis possible through the storying process with an empathic listener is something that is gained incrementally – instantaneous catharsis seems unlikely. Logically, a lifetime of aberrant learning about the self and relationships with others can not be easily overcome.

The *repetition compulsion* overlaps with poisonous pedagogy at the intersection point of *repression*. From repression comes feelings and thoughts that could be typified as an *evil self-image*. Indeed, it is the evil self-image that threatens psychic destruction and needs to therefore be repressed. Some conscious elements of feelings and thoughts associated with this evil self-image, however, seem to avoid repression and remain at a conscious level. It is as though the anger, rage, and indignation (or parts of these feelings) become separated from the memories of the traumatic events. The memory of the event may be repressed from consciousness, but these free-floating feelings, cut off from the memory of the event, seem to maintain a continuing presence in consciousness. These are the feelings that must, if the victim is to avoid psychic annihilation, be dealt with by *splitting off* and *projection*. These unbearable feelings must be cut off from association with the self and projected onto a substitute object (usually another, less powerful, person). They

cannot simply be cast off into the ether and forgotten. Deposited or superimposed on another, however, those feelings that vaguely define the evil self (that is subconsciously despised as the 'cause' of all these feelings) can then be railed against in an attempt to purge the 'demons'. This attempt to satiate the need for release from these feelings, however, cannot find fulfilment in this way, simply because the feelings are not directed at the primary object that provided their genesis – the perpetrator of the childhood abuse. Unsatiated, the feelings are once more repressed (after an outburst at the reviled, substitute other), and the circle of the *repetition compulsion* is perpetuated.

Without the intervention of an *empathic listener*, this repetition compulsion can never be interrupted. If the adult, locked within the circle of the repetition compulsion, encounters another who will listen, who will encourage the telling of stories that will allow the dissociated anger and rage to be *reconnected* to buried (repressed) memories of *events*, then the repetition compulsion can be broken. Reconnected to their precipitating events, these feelings can be expressed and explored. The perpetrator(s) can be confronted, either literally or metaphorically (the confrontation can be imagined). The anger, rage and indignation, *now aimed at the perpetrator of the original abuse*, can be satiated. The result of this process is a resolution of the feelings associated with the abuse and the integration into the victim's life story of the memories that were previously compelled to the psychic oblivion of repressed memory. The victim is still scarred, but the scars are now visible to the world, can be openly acknowledged as existing, and can be talked about. Others are no longer needed as substitute objects for punishment.

<u>Repressed Memory – Abstract reality or mythical excuse?</u>

Central to Miller's psychodynamic theory is the concept of *repression.* Seen in the

light of a *developmental* conceptualisation of memory, (from purely sensate to fully languaged), repression seems to be a less problematic concept than is often assumed to be the case. Discussions in the literature tend to question whether repression exists rather than to examine how it might happen (Loftus and Ketcham, 1994). That is, repression seems to be cast as having an identity and an existence of its own, rather than being merely a descriptive term for a part of the complex way in which human memory happens.

Reports of repressed memories of childhood abuse, particularly sexual abuse, have become commonplace in the last decade. From reports in the popular press (Darnton,1991; Oldenberg,1991; Ritter,1991; Dormen,1991; Edmiston,1991; Kantrowitz,1991; Toufexis, 1991) to legal cases (Lofft v. Lofft, 1989; Collier v. Collier,1991), the revival of repressed memories of childhood sexual abuse seems to be focussing a public debate on the reality of repressed memory. The quality of these memories, or the detail of recollection, as Loftus (1993) points out, is variable both from person to person and over time for any given person. Some memories are rich and vivid in detail, while others are vague and indistinct. Since most of these memories (certainly those that involve alleged sexual abuse, and which therefore get most publicity) have been uncovered with the assistance or guidance of a therapist, the role of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy have been called into question.

A number of these cases of recalled sexual abuse have also come from adults in their twenties or thirties, in cases where, under therapy, persons have recalled memories of abuse at very early ages - often involving the first three years of life. This factor raises the question of childhood amnesia, which Freud (1953: 174) defined as "...the peculiar amnesia which...hides the earliest beginnings of the childhood up to their sixth or eighth year." A number of recent empirical studies

have suggested that our adult memories for events that occur in the first three to five years of our lives are either non-existent or unreliable (Morton, 1990; Kihlstrom & Harackiewicz, 1982; Howe & Courage, 1993; Pillemer & White, 1989).

However, it should be observed that, of necessity to empirical design, these studies had to search for recall of *verifiable* events - events that were in some way public, and can therefore be said with certainty to have happened. Winograd & Killinger (1983), for instance, tested the memory of subjects regarding the assassination of the American President John F. Kennedy. They concluded that few subjects who were three years old (or younger) at the time could remember the event. What is wrong with the generalisation of such findings to statements about the nature of repressed memory, of course, is that a straight measure of our recollection of such publicly notable events takes no cognisance of the *significance* of such events to us as individuals. It is perhaps more likely that, if a news broadcast of President Kennedy's assassination had a temporal congruence for an individual with an incident of sexual or physical abuse, the memory of the public event might couple in some way with the personal significance of the abuse, leaving a memory trace for both events (or perhaps even an amalgam of the two).

Do therapists believe in the repressed memories of their clients? In general, the answer to that question seems to be 'yes'. Since the role of therapist in the clinical setting is construed primarily in terms of empathic listening, such a conclusion is not surprising. It is, however, supported by research. Bottoms, Shaver, and Goodman (1991) examined the experiences of 200 clinicians who had reported cases of satanic ritual abuse (ritualistic and religion-related abuse). The clinicians were asked if they believed the stories their clients had told them. Ninety-three percent (186 out of 200) reported that they took their clients' stories as they were presented. Loftus and Hertzog (in Loftus, 1993: 524) interviewed 16 clinicians who had seen

clients reporting recollected repressed memories. Thirteen of these clinicians reported that they believed their clients' reports. This study noted that a primary reinforcer for the belief the clinicians had for their clients' accounts of repressed memories was the presence of symptomatology that echoed the recalled trauma. Self-abusive behaviour, low self-esteem, sexual dysfunction and the like were taken as mirrors of the reported abuse that had been repressed and later recalled. This approach is analogous to Miller's repetition compulsion.

Such confidence in the accuracy of recalled repressed memories that are essentially unverifiable has been criticised by many people. Dawes (1992), in particular, is dismissive of such a stance, referring to an 'epidemic' of belief by therapists in their clients' recalled stories. He suggests that this tendency to unconditional belief is based on two factors: the therapists' need to remain authority figures (which rejection of clients' stories' authenticity may undermine) and a growing social consensus that childhood abuse memories can be repressed and later recalled.

This latter social consensus regarding repressed memories can be attributed largely to the growth of our society's understanding of the widespread existence of sexual abuse of children by adults. Although estimates of the extent of childhood sexual abuse vary widely across the spectrum of empirical research, there is general agreement that statistically (as well as in reality) the problem is enormous (Freyd, 1991). There are examples in the literature on this subject of confirmed cases of repressed memory retrieval. Mack (1980), for instance, tells of a case where during therapy a client recovered a memory of his mother attempting suicide by hanging. The client's father confirmed that this had indeed happened. Loftus (1993), citing this case, queries whether the memory might be the result of stories or discussions about the incident that the child may have overheard. That child, as an adult in

therapy, remembered that he had actually seen the attempted suicide of his mother. No corroboration was available for this. In most cases of claimed recall of repressed memories, we have this ambiguous situation. Family stories and myths must influence peoples' recall of past events (as later discussion of life history and the narratives we construct about ourselves will underline), but they do not logically urge us to discount the authenticity of repression. A recalled memory may be influenced in its construction by intervening variables, but the original story may be subsumed quite accurately in the current-time version. In Miller's terms, the stories we remember might have either a literal *or* an allegorical content, or both.

The stories that serious sex offenders tend to tell of their crimes typically involve what Gudjonsson (1992) referred to as cognitive distortions. That is, such offenders will often tell their stories in a way that seeks to minimise the impact of their offence - they will infer that the event was not as traumatic as the victim's memory of the event suggests. For similar reasons, it is clear that a parent accused of incest against a child many years after the event would also have a vested interest in maintaining that the recalled memory was fabricated and not real. Neither of these situations, of course, can provide a refutation for the authenticity of repressed memories.

Another possible explanation for repressed memories is that a person may fabricate a previously non-existent story of abuse using a number of cues from his or her environment in an effort to explain depression, anger, guilt, or such like burdens. Ganaway (1989) suggests that in such cases the storyteller may genuinely believe the constructed memory is authentic, even though it may be largely a construction from previously encountered movies, books, stories, or television programs. Such fabrications, though, could also be seen to fit into Miller's theory of the repetition compulsion. The stories we tell to the world, says Miller (1983) can be

representations of the past rather than a video-like replay of events. It may be that the message that *abuse happened* is the important part of the communication, rather than the details of the actual events. Even if memories are reconstructed allegorically (and unintentionally so), this does not dismiss the phenomenon of repression.

One of the biggest problems in the debate about the reality of repressed memory is the part that may unwittingly be played by those who might, through the questions they ask, unintentionally elicit fabrications of memories from those seeking therapy. Here, of course, we are talking about therapists and authors of self-help publications. DelMonte (2000: 7) suggested that “there is a concern that false memories can be ‘planted’ and later ‘exhumed’ by ideologically motivated psychotherapists deliberately following a particular agenda”. Simply asking a person if they think they have been sexually abused in the past may be enough to elicit a positive response. A person who is confused and bewildered over recurring depressive episodes, for instance, may be so traumatised by the ordeal of trying to fathom the roots of that depression that they will seize on the first vaguely plausible explanation with a conviction that here, indeed, is the answer they have been searching for. Even if a direct suggestion is not forthcoming from a therapist, the client may still be encouraged:

> When the client does not remember what happened to her, the therapist's encouragement to 'guess' or 'tell a story' will help the survivor regain access to the lost material. (Olio, 1989: 6)

Such an approach by a therapist is predicated on the usefulness of storytelling as a mechanism for approximating reality and providing a possible lead on to further recovery of original details from repressed memory. The problem seems to lie in the

extent to which any given therapist may prompt that recall, as opposed to suggesting the use of storytelling and then leaving decisions about what is actually recalled (and what is fabricated or allegorical) to the client.

Olio (1989) relates the story of a woman who presented for therapy with no memory of sexual abuse. The client did relate an overwhelming feeling of anxiety at seeing a little girl at a social gathering. For some unexplained reason, the client told her therapist, she had an urgent need to tell the little girl to keep her dress down. In this case, the therapist seems to have let the client come to her own conclusion that the anxiety she felt for the little girl was in fact anxiety for her own self, and related directly to her own childhood experience of sexual abuse.

Contrast this approach with that taken by Bass and Davis (1988). In their popular self-help book for female survivors of sexual abuse, they encourage the idea that mere suspicion of a sexually abusive past is enough:

> If you are unable to remember any specific instances [of sexual abuse in childhood]...but still have a feeling that something abusive happened to you, it probably did. (Bass & Davis, 1988, p.21)

Bass and Davis' approach may well be based more on considerations of product marketability than soundly researched theory, since it suggests that the merest suspicion of sexual abuse is a certain indicator that you will eventually remember the actual abuse. “So far, no one we've talked to thought she might have been abused, and then later discovered she hadn't been"(Bass & Davis, 1988, p.22).

The trouble with this 'it happened even if you can't remember it' approach, whether it is generated from encounters with popular literature or from therapy sessions, is

that there have been a number of reported cases in the last decade where convictions for sexual offences based on recall of repressed memory have been overturned (Watters, 1993). Such cases have received much publicity in the media, and have tended to perhaps push public perception on these issues in the direction of disbelief in repression. Miller, of course, would suggest that the public is largely composed of adults who are parents with a vested interest in finding evidence to dismiss the idea that they are the victimisers.

A psychodynamic approach to therapy is based on delving into the past in order to reveal forgotten realities that impinge on current behaviour. One of the primary dangers with this approach, as Baron, Beattie and Hershey (1988) noted, is the opportunity for 'confirmatory bias' to influence a therapist's method. People tend to look for confirmation of what they already believe, rather than for refutation of familiar convictions. Once we form beliefs about how the world works, we are universally reluctant to give up or change those beliefs. Therapists are no exception here, and may even be influenced by a 'professionalism' factor - if I am the professional therapist, I am supposed to be able to explain your problems. This combination of entrenched beliefs and the need to appear wise or knowledgeable may be heavily influencing the outcome of many therapy situations. This is still not enough reason to discount the authenticity of repressed memory. It does caution us, though, to regard the outcomes of therapy with a healthily sceptical eye.

How reliable is memory in general? There is a large body of empirical work that can attest to the unreliability of eye-witness recall of events. By intentionally exposing eye-witnesses to misinformation (such as 'did you see the blue car', when the car involved was green), distorted memories can be induced (Loftus & Ketcham, 1991). If it seems relatively easy to induce distortion in short term memory experimentally, then it is likely that the potential misinformation we acquire or are exposed to from

our everyday environment may impinge on the accuracy of our memories. Even a relatively simple incident like an argument between two colleagues in a workplace will be interpreted slightly differently by bystanders who see the incident. Those who might hear but not see the incident may have a different view again of what happened. People's allegiances to either of the antagonists can also influence the way they interpret and therefore remember the incident. Then the witnesses will discuss the incident with each other, comparing stories and perhaps arguing over what 'really happened'. The memory that each witness will encode in their own minds regarding the event will be different, and each time the story is revisited, it may be modified in the retelling and discussion. As Loftus suggests, “...new, post event information often becomes incorporated into memory, supplementing and altering a person's recollection" (Loftus, 1993: 530).

But can false memories be artificially created in peoples' minds? Loftus and Ketcham (1991) referred to the story of Piaget's apparent memory from his childhood that an attempt was made to kidnap him. This was supposed to have occurred when he was an infant, with the original story coming from his nanny at the time. The family, and Piaget himself, regarded this story as fact. Some years later, the nanny recanted the story, saying that she had made it up. Piaget assumed he had constructed his own memories of the incident in response to the cues he had received, and the story, assumed to *be* real, *became* real.

Piaget's story seems somewhat reminiscent of some of the claims made in the media in recent years regarding recanted stories of childhood sexual abuse (Watters, 1993). In Piaget's case, though, questions need to be asked (and apparently they were not) regarding the nanny's motives - either for fabricating the story in the first place, or for recanting the story years later. Did she in fact lie? We can assume with certainty that she did lie once - what we can't know is on which

occasion. With no other eye-witnesses, no other evidence, and Piaget's belief in what he was told on each occasion, this case can contribute nothing but more speculation to the debate on memory recall.

Loftus (1993) recounts a more empirical approach to this question of whether or not false memories can be deliberately implanted. The older brother of a fourteen year old boy was coopted to tell his younger brother a fabricated story. The story related how the younger brother had, when he was five years old, been lost in a shopping mall. The older brother related how the family had felt some panic, and how the child had been found in the presence of an older man, who had come to the child's rescue and begun searching through the mall for the boy's parents. The fourteen year old initially had no recollection of this event, but within several days he had begun to remember some details of the experience. This experiment was allowed to continue for two weeks, with the subject gradually recalling more and more details of the events involved. In fact, the believing youth was able to construct some amazing detail about his 'experience'. When he was debriefed, he was reluctant to accept that what he had 'remembered' had not happened – the subject, in fact, believed his own fabricated memory.

However, even in this case of the fabricated 'lost in a shopping mall' memory, the researchers failed to ask some relevant questions. Whilst there is no doubt that the memory in this case was fabricated, no questions were asked regarding any anxieties that the subject may have had about becoming lost. It does seem feasible that generalised childhood fears of becoming lost in crowds, or separated from parents (and safety) in such a situation could have been brought into play in this fabrication. Neither was there any attempt by the researchers to ascertain from the boy's parents and relatives whether any vaguely similar event had ever befallen the boy. Whether based on generalised childhood fears or real but not obviously related

childhood experiences, the story constructed by the youth may, in fact, have been *allegorical* of actual experience. Since such variables were not accounted for, this case cannot provide a convincing rebuttal to the notion of repressed memory. More importantly, such examples of story fabrication do not negate the possibility of the presence of allegorical content in any story fabricated.

Allegory in Words *and* Actions

One of the major tasks for this thesis is the examination of the possible usefulness of the extension of this notion of allegory in *stories* to the notion of allegory in *behaviour*. This thesis draws stories of serial murderers from the extant biographic literature, rather than from direct contact with subjects (a logistical choice, related to research resources). With no first-hand stories from the subjects themselves, the analysis has had to come from stories others have recorded *about* the subjects' behaviours. (This even applies to Ted Bundy, who gives an indirect, third-person account of his behaviours – see Chapter 5). What should be discernible, though, in the record of these socially aberrant actions, is the presence or absence of behaviours that can be seen to be allegorical of recorded or suspected past abuse in the violent person's background.

Before moving on to that analysis of serial murderer behaviour, however, an examination of other literature that comments on the subject matter of Miller's central contentions will be undertaken.

CHAPTER 3

CONGRUENCE WITH MILLER – OTHER PSYCHODYNAMIC INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ETIOLOGY OF BEHAVIOUR.

Chapter 2 detailed Alice Miller's psychodynamic and psychoanalytic explanation of the consequences of unresolved childhood trauma. This chapter will consider other approaches to the examination of the etiology of behaviour. The fields of psychobiography, psychoanalytic narrative, life history, life narratives, psychoanalysis and anamnesis, and psychoanalytic life history all take a hermeneutic approach to the study of human behaviour. The methodological orientation of these six approaches to human enquiry each hold elements in common with Miller's approach. The juxtaposition of these approaches with Miller's work will serve to expand the notion of a hermeneutic methodology in the analysis of violent behaviour.

Psychobiography

Psychobiography is defined by McAdams (1988: 2) as "...the systematic use of psychological (especially personality) theory to transform a life into a coherent and illuminating story." Such positivist approaches, though, tend to avoid the study of the particular and concentrate instead on quantifications of generalisable individual experience. That is, psychobiography tends to study *life details*, but to reject the study of lives *in detail*. The primary problem with such a reductionist approach to the study of human behaviour is that it tends to conceptually segregate the individual from his meaningful social context. Rosenwald (1988:240) commented that psychology's "...obsession with uniqueness...breaks the dialectic of individual and society". It is precisely that dialectic between the individual and society that

approaches such as Miller's endeavour to illuminate.

If we isolate individuals from their experience in contact with others then their lives have no meaning in a social context. In effect, there seems no social context other than that which is created by dialectic. Smith (1999: 233) notes that Hegel reinterpreted the process of dialectic, transforming it "…into a theory not simply of arguments but of historical processes within the development of 'spirit'". Fuchs (2003) referred to a similar notion when he talked about the creation of self (and of society) in terms of a perpetual dialectical process that sees the creators of society continually created by their creation. This is a diallelon (a circular definition), but it emphasises the concept of individual selves in intimate coexistence with social contexts. Rosenwald (1988: 240) was making the same point when he suggested that, if isolated from social context, individual stories "…are reduced to no more than an entertainment, perhaps captivating, but scientifically marginal". In effect, the self is inevitably social, and if we are to examine any life, it must be examined within the constraints and influences of its social context.

It is interesting to note that the stories our society tells about its serial killers are stories that are captivating and entertaining (the repulsive, less-than-human 'monster'), but that they are stories which frequently lack a contribution of significance to our understanding of the phenomenon of serial murder. The reciprocal relationship between a person's self-image and the reaction of others to the projection of that conceptual fabrication is the essence of dialectic, and the study of that fabrication in isolation from its social context seems logically incomplete. The populist press on 'serial killers' seems, too often, to simplistically dismiss serial murderers as 'monsters', adopting an illogical and irrational approach to behavioural analysis.

With its emphasis on individuality, psychology has contributed to "...the common misperception of social problems as individual ones" (Rosenwald, 1988: 242). Perhaps we should see social problems as *both* social *and* individual. Science has tended to fragment our knowledge of social problems in a fashion that both follows and creates psychology's segregative and restrictive methodological conceptualisations that are underpinned by reductionist, deductive logic. We try to categorise the actions of the serial killer rather than to understand his feelings. Miller's approach is to reach for feelings first, before trying to explain actions.

If we adopt a research methodology that takes isolated, individual case information as being representative of social trends, then we are in danger of ignoring the discrepancy of viewpoints and images held by different individuals of any particular event or behaviour. It is widely accepted that when two or more individuals witness the same event and are then asked to recount what they saw, that their perceptions of the 'what, who and why' of the event will vary. Subjective accounts, taken as fact, obviously have the potential to lead to bias.

Taking a number of such subjective accounts together, though, in a multiple-case research model, can qualitatively enrich the images of a problem or area of dispute that observers perceive. Rosenwald (1988) observes that multiple-case research is not simply a compilation of single-case studies, but rather an additive process that builds overlapping picture upon picture to enhance our depth of perception of the nuances of the problem under consideration. Just such a process is attempted in this thesis, via the hermeneutic exploration of the lives of the three serial murderers that is untaken in later chapters.

Rosenwald sees psychology as acting only on a hypothesis-testing model:

> The philosophy of science that forms the foundation of hypothesis testing is beholden to the Cartesian mind-body split and the Kantian conception of a knower unaltered by his knowledge. (Rosenwald, 1988: 248-249)

This, of course, is the core of the debate between the positivist method and the more subjectively focussed methods of human enquiry: Is reality there to be measured, or is it created by our cognitions? We get one answer if we are talking about the physical universe, but quite another if we are talking about the universe of individual experience.

> Contrary to the contentions of positivists, we, as researchers, cannot know this (the meanings that people give to their experiences) independently of people's interpretations of it. The only thing we can know with certainty is how people interpret the world around them. (May, 1997: 13)

Morgan (1983), exploring the use of reflective conversation in social research, used a similarly ideographic approach when he emphasised the value of research that listens to individual stories:

> …the point is to learn from the process itself, and to encourage the conversation to continue so long as disagreement lasts. In so doing, we are able to minimize the hegemony of a fixed evaluative stance or of any conventional wisdom that seeks to brush disagreement aside under the delusion that it can know what is true and right… (Morgan, 1983: 375-376)

Social researchers who take such an approach argue that, rather than reality being 'there' for the measurement, as the positivists might contend, the meanings that people give to their experiences cannot be fathomed independently of their own interpretations of it. If we want to know what sense people make of their world, we

need to listen to what they say about that world.

This is just the approach taken by Alice Miller (1987), when she suggests that, in order to understand aberrant behaviour, we need to take on the role of empathic listener. This even applies, she asserts, in cases of seriously violent behaviour such as serial murderer (see the analysis of Jurgen Bartsch in Chapter 4).

When confronted with a series of variable reports on an issue such as serial murder, psychology's response would traditionally be to ask formalised questions and subject the answers to mathematical tests for significance. Case research, though, presents a more useful approach for the study of such phenomena. It has different goals to an hypothesis testing approach. Whereas hypothesis testing attempts to increase our confidence in a given proposition, case research methodology (single or multiple) endeavours to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the relationship and interaction between social knowledge and personal development.

Case research is necessarily life-historical, involving reflecting on past experience. On re-imaging the past, however, it seems that we not only recall the past, but that we reconfigure it. In that process of reconfiguration of the past lies an influence on our configuration of the present which will influence both current and future behaviour (when the reconfigured present becomes the past and is in turn fed into future reconfigurations of the now expanded past). Put simplistically, when we tell stories about our past, we alter our current perceptions of 'what happened', and that influences the way we may recall those events again in the future.

The case research process can involve explorations that look at themes of continuity and transformation of life stories over time. It can look at transformations

within individual lives, and compare the experiences of multiple individuals. This process seeks to continually uncover more detail, with no end point necessarily envisaged. What is being aimed for is simply a changed perspective on the phenomenon under study. If each case study in a multiple case design is the result of interaction between a researcher or interviewer and a subject (whose story is being told) then the resultant story is arrived at through the joint influences of interviewer and subject. The aim of such research is not the elucidation of a definitive story (of any life), but merely a new story that is a product of the storying interaction between those involved in the telling and the listening. As Rosenwald (1988: 256) stated, "…the synthesis (of the life story) is sculpted in a series of approximations".

Wiersma (1988) has noted the presence in storytelling of 'press releases'. These are stories we tell others (about ourselves) that are designed to avoid our public humiliation. Such stories are untrue in the sense that they are deliberate misrepresentations of what we perceive to be the truth about ourselves. When related to the notion of *allegory* in story and behaviour, it is conceivable that 'press releases' may sometimes become 'fact'. It is further obvious that we can indulge in 'press releases' in any form of story telling - verbal or written. Psychologists often refer to a behaviour that is similar to this notion of the creation of 'press releases' – they refer to the behaviour of 'faking good' or 'faking bad' (Gregory, 1996: 58). Benedict and Lanyon (1992), in a study of deliberate deception in self-presentation amongst male inmates, commented on this behaviour when they suggested that:

> Deliberate deception in self-presentation is always an issue in psychological assessment settings, particularly when there is something to be gained by the respondent. (Benedict and Lanyon, 1992: 23)

Miller would probably see a connection between such deliberate 'front' behaviours and the less obvious allegorical behaviours that echo traumatising pasts. While a 'press release' may represent a tale we want to consciously tell, an allegory may represent a tale we need to subconsciously expose.

The extensive debate on the concept of repressed memory indicates the importance of the question: Can people accurately recall their past experience? The stories we tell others in conversation about our past seem to be "...shot through with perplexities - with various omissions, self-deceptions, and cliches which disfigure the images they contribute and thence the final construction" (Rosenwald, 1988: 257). It would also be reasonable to suggest that the same array of dysfunctional interpretation might be present in the behaviours that we exhibit to the world.

The chief methodological distinction of the multiple case approach is that it is aimed at finding good examples of the developmental processes of social knowledge. The selection of participants in such research is opportunistic rather than random - researchers seek out those who are most fluent, expressive, available, agreeable and apparently representative of the behaviour being studied. Alternatively (as is the case in this research project), researchers may seek out the most informative records of information that may illuminate the behavioural patterns of the subjects being studied.

Replication, an important consideration with empirical social science methods, is unimportant in a multiple case approach. Instead of searching for closer and closer relationships between variables (thereby confirming some higher truth as more and more data is compiled), multiple case design seeks an interpretive construction of social objects (those individuals or groups being examined or defined). That construction is sought in terms of how well a new interpretation "...fits the exemplary images and the needs of the subsequent interpreter" (Rosenwald, 1988: 260).

Construction of social objects can be revised by the addition of new images or by reinterpretation of old images. Multiple case researchers move in and out of hermeneutic circles, offering examples, images or stories as illustrations of the *process* of the definition of social objects, rather than as evidence of social object definition (Rosenwald, 1988). This process can be illustrated by example: a man's problems of relationship with his father may be echoed in his choice of a particular occupation (Ochberg, 1987); or, for some women, childbirth may be a way of attempting reconciliation with their mothers (Ballou, 1978). In Miller's terms, these are allegorical behaviours. Both these examples show behavioural attempts by the subjects to communicate a psychological need that has its origins in earlier life experience and the psychic scars that that experience has produced. It is that type of overt behavioural representation of past trauma (allegorical behaviour) that this thesis is trying to find evidence of in the stories of the serial murderers investigated.

Rosenwald (1988) sees what *should be* as the critical human question behind the actualisation of social objects. By providing an opportunity and method for readers to engage or participate in the definition of what should be, a case research methodology can help us to comprehend and construct or reconstruct the social world. To understand our world, we need to ask more and more people how *they* understand it.

Psychoanalytic Narrative

Criticism of the authenticity of repressed memories and their recall in later therapy often fails to take into account the possibility that a person's construction (or re-construction) of an event (a memory) may be more important than the facts of the event (Baker and Baker, 1987: 7). This is likely to be all the more important if we are dealing with a pre-linguistic memory (from early childhood). It is *feelings* that constitute pre-linguistic memory, and these are reconstructed in *linguistic* form as

the child develops language. Only in that form are the memories intelligible to a mind increasingly (with age) preoccupied with language. This thought leads us to examine the relevant literature on allegory and story telling in the narrative reconstruction of past events.

Spence (1983) suggests that one of the most significant aspects of the narrative form is double-time structuring - the tendency for events in a narrative to be ordered differently than those same events as they actually happened. He distinguishes between the *fabula* (the basic information from which the story is constructed) and the *sujet* (the story produced). Since the latter is derived from the former, it follows that there are many possible forms of *sujet* for any given *fabula*. Although Spence is talking (primarily) about verbal or written reconstructions of stories, there is a logical connection here to the allegorical content of the storying involved in what Miller (1987) referred to as the *repetition compulsion*. With the notion of the repetition compulsion, though, the story is told in deeds, rather than in words.

In essence, both Spence and Miller are suggesting that every story is a reconstruction. Replication of any given story is impossible. Any new version of an old story will be just that - a new version. Spence refers to this phenomenon as ‘slippage’, and suggests it has implications for psychoanalytic theory:

> The slippage between *fabula* and *sujet* ... helps to make clear the central error in Freud’s description of free association. (Spence, 1983: 459)

The analysand, suggests Spence, is more than the passive relayer of information, more than the passenger on the metaphorical train that Freud saw passing through the landscape of the mind. Rather than merely describing the landscape of his own mind as he travels through it, the analysand, in Spence’s view, is actively

participating in the construction of a *new* narrative about the past. Brammer, Abrego and Shostrom (1993: 37) echoed a similar notion of the construction of new narratives in the retelling of stories.

What of the role of the analyst? Schafer (1980) describes analysts as:

> ...people who listen to the narratives of analysands and help them to transform these narrations into others that are more complete, coherent, convincing, and adaptively useful than those they have been accustomed to constructing. (Schafer, 1980: 63)

In that case, there are always *two* persons in the psychoanalytic situation that contribute to slippage between *fabula* and *sujet*. Rather than being the translator, as Freud envisaged, the analyst may be seen in this light as having no more claim on correct or useful interpretation of stories than the analysand. As Spence (1983: 460) points out, the analyst is no more able to recover the original experience an analysand sets out to describe than the analysand himself. Indeed, the analyst, unless he was present in the past and witnessed the events that the analysand is later describing, has no way of knowing 'the truth'. (Even in that case, the analyst would merely have *his* unique interpretation of what had happened, rather than 'the truth'). There seems to be a growing recognition on the part of analysts that there are multiple possible narratives that can be constructed out of any recollection of past events, and the role for the clinician seems now to be "...more as a pattern-maker than as a pattern-finder"(Spence, 1983: 460). This pattern-making takes the form of searching for common elements in the analysand's narration in order to generate a separate possible narrative - an alternative to the analysand's - rather than a definitive explanation. In Spence's words:

> Pattern-matching...becomes our way of generating a possible narrative rather than a way of finding a final explanation. (Spence, 1983: 464)

Since the analyst must logically have less grip on the client's historical truth than the client himself (who has lived the history), there appears to be no way of arriving at 'the' interpretation of recalled information.

In answer to the question of what we are supposed to do with narrative to make sense of it, or to make use of it, Spence (1983: 461-463) talks of the notion of narrative persuasion, and suggests four grounds on which persuasiveness might hinge:

1. *Argument from exclusion* - in the absence of another explanation, or another more plausible explanation, a new explanation will be readily acceptable. In this situation, a *best fit* is arrived at, since almost any explanation is preferred by most people to no explanation at all.

2. *Scope of explanation* - perhaps largely influenced by a cultural tradition of scientific rational-deductive reasoning, we tend to seek overarching theories or themes that explain all questions of our existence. Therefore, if a set of *life themes* can be offered which look as though they offer boxes into which we can categorise all our multifarious life experiences, we will be likely to accept such a limiting simplification.

3. *Frequency and familiarity* - we seem to be creatures of habit - the more often we hear a particular life theme, the more likely we are to accept it. New themes may be regarded more sceptically. The more familiar a theme is, the more persuasive it will seem. Presumably, any theme that survives selection to become repeated and

familiar has already proven itself hard to reject. Such a theme is, then, more likely to be repeated and accepted with little questioning.

4. *Here-and-now fit* - the more a current narrative fits with the feelings and life-view the client holds in the present, the more acceptable or plausible that particular narrative will be.

How persuasive should a narrative be in order for us to accept it, or, to put it another way, how do we decide on the 'truthfulness' of a given narrative? Spence (1982) regards *narrative truth* as basically goodness of fit. As the apparently contradictory and conflicting images of the past are melded together by analyst and analysand into a story with apparent pattern, the narrative that grows gradually acquires an authenticity or truth value. The more the story *seems to fit* for both story constructors, the more *truth* is attributed to the narrative.

All autobiography is necessarily retrospective and therefore interpretive. Even if a person attempts to record his or her autobiography as it happens, a large amount of retrospectivity is involved. In order to record life as it happens (literally), one would need a film or video crew present at every moment. If the resultant material were to be condensed into a form that could be viewed or read by others, a large amount of reduction of that material would be necessary (unless, of course, one wanted to spend one's life viewing the movie of another person's life in real time).

In reality, most autobiography is composed many years, and often many decades, after the events that are being described have happened. It would seem illogical to attribute historical accuracy to all stories told by persons looking back at the past. This is not to say there is no historical truth in such accounts, though, for as Spence observes, such accounts:

> ...may not represent a historical truth, but...a certain kind of experienced truth; the author cannot help but see his past in the way he has come to describe it. (Spence,1983: 466)

Gusdorf (1980: 43) suggests that "...in autobiography the truth of facts is subordinate to the truth of the man...The literary, artistic function is thus of greater importance than the historic and objective function...". Historical fact may form the framework on which an autobiography is built, but it is through the interpretive and expressive power of language that the story of a person emerges. Even given the same bare facts as a starting point, different people will generate different stories about one life, depending on the peculiar interpretation of events and information that each person might make.

Where does this leave us in relation to the role of the analyst in psychoanalysis? Spence (1983: 469) argues that, since the truth cannot be known, the task of the analyst is to generate "...as convincing a story as possible with the facts at his disposal and with his best guesses about what the facts might have been like, drawing heavily on clues that come to light in the transference". Spence is not talking, however, about single interpretations that are assumed to hold an adequate condensation of historical truth. Rather, he is referring to a process that generates multiple narratives, each of which advances the analyst and client further towards a conglomeration of narratives that together provide sufficient narrative truth for both participants in the story search. Essentially, there is no single truth to be discovered.

> ...part of the force of the narrative being constructed comes from its here-and-now fit; the story newly told, amplified perhaps by current associations to such themes as masculinity and mastery, will always be more compelling than an earlier 'draft' which was, after all, written by a somewhat different

> person. Thus once again we find that narrative truth cannot be reduced to historical truth. (Spence, 1983: 472)

Narrative truth, as envisaged by Spence, seems to have an inherent flaw: the *story of best fit* decision is essentially in the hands of the storyteller (the analysand in the psychoanalytic setting). This may lead to stories of most convenience rather than to stories of most interpretive accuracy. Spence uses the term “narrative smoothing” (1983: 473) to refer to the way in which a storyteller will adjust each retelling, each re-narration, in a way that fits in with his current world and self view. In effect, the mistakes, misperceptions and biases of the past are condemned to be continually reinterpreted in light of the mistakes, misperceptions and biases of the present. In this way, it seems, many of us spend our lives repeating our past mistakes, since the narratives of our selves that provide the cognitive background against which we make life decisions is perpetually flawed.

Gusdorf (1980: 40) termed this phenomenon the “original sin of autobiography”. Since the details of our day-to-day existence involve an incredibly complex set of actions, interactions, random outside influences and chance happenings, any narrative of even one day of our lives would be a condensation, a modelling, a shorthand representation of reality. Moreover, Gusdorf suggests, we believe our own stories. That is, having constructed a story of our own past, we are most likely to be convinced by the conclusions that story suggests regarding the reasons for our past and present behaviour:

> The narrative is conscious, and since the narrator’s consciousness directs the narrative, it seems to him incontestable that it has also directed life. (Gusdorf, 1980: 41)

There seems to be two warnings for analysts in this discussion of narrative smoothing and the tendency of people to believe their own 'best fit' stories. The first is that analysts should be wary of suggesting their own narratives of the client's experience before as much data as possible is gathered. The second is that any story the analyst may construct will likely shape the subsequently developed stories of the client (Spence, 1983: 474). Interestingly, it seems but a small step from this cautionary position of Spence to the position of those in the field of Life History methodology, where the evolution of the storyteller's story lies not primarily in the hands of the analyst, but in those of the storyteller himself (Denzin, 1990).

Life History

Life History methodology was used extensively in European psychology, sociology and anthropology prior to World War 2 (Buhler, 1933; Frenkel, 1936; Shaw, 1930; Dollard, 1935). The methodology wasn't revived into general use until the 1980's (Bertaux, 1981; Craik, 1986). Anthropologists seem to have viewed Life History primarily in terms of stories that need to be interpreted by the Anthropologist before they can be analysed for content that sheds light on social structure (Angrosino, 1989). Psychobiographers, on the other hand, seem to have been mainly concerned with deconstructive analyses of biographic stories in isolation from interaction with the analysand. A third group of Social Scientists, less classifiable in conventional terminology, have emerged recently with an orientation to Life History that *includes* the person whose story is being examined in the process of the construction of the life story and any analysis thereof. For example, Palombo (1992:268) stated, in relation to the problem of psychological disharmonies (or psychopathologies) and their resolution:

> It is not events or actions that cause disharmonies, it is their meanings that cause people grief...(and that) personal meaning is only accessible through the patient's sharing of the effects embedded in the concepts.

Palombo (1992:268) also added that "While the sharing leads to the construction of a narrative, it is not only the narrative, but also the process of its construction that has ultimate value". There are parallels here with Miller's work, as she would certainly advocate the inclusion of the traumatised person in the construction of any stories about past experience.

With this emerging Life History methodology, the creation of an individual's world is left to that individual. The priority in interpretation of recalled life events is given to the individual's explanations rather than to theory-based interpretation by a researcher (Jones, 1983). There is a dialectic between an individual's actions in the world at any point in time and the world as it is constituted at that moment around that individual. Our humanness, it seems, is learned - our ability to interact with and make meaning of social situations enables us to act on and in the world, which in turn leads to changes in individual and social constructions of meaning:

> Human beings impose themselves on, and create, their world, yet they do so through a network of typifications that endow a particular culture with a coherent 'rationality' as a system of shared meaning. (Jones, 1983: 148)

Jones (1983) offers the example of Helen Keller to illustrate the learning of humanness. She could not make sense of the world that those around her perceived until she shared the language of their perceptions. Cut off from the visual and audible world from birth, the frames of reference that she used to interpret

meaning from her interaction in time and space were *different* from those others that she lived with. Initially, she had no concept that 'things' had names, such as 'water'. It was only when she began to understand and interpret the world in the *words* that others used that she could make sense of that world and her encounters in it and *share* her views with those around her. "As human beings, we must learn how to negotiate the social world before we can impose ourselves on it" (Jones, 1983: 149).

It is interesting to reflect, at this point, on the point made by Liedloff (1986) regarding pre-languaged sensate memory (see Chapter 2). Helen Keller obviously had a sensate memory of her interactions with her world. Only when *exposed* to language could she *construct* those memories in languaged terms. This seems to have altered Keller's perceptions of the world. Language *does* appear to be an important modifier of cognitive perceptions. It follows logically that the language we use to describe our experiences is directly generative of the 'reality' we hold of those experiences.

The epistemological position that Life History methodology takes is interpretive rather than normative. It is concerned with the elucidation of reality rather than the determination of causality (Dhunpath, 2000; Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The researcher using this methodology, whether gathering data by interview or from autobiography, needs to approach the examination of the subject's meaning construction with an open awareness of his or her (the researcher's) apriori convictions, thoughts, beliefs or biases. Methodological validity, Jones (1983) contends, is established when the explanation or interpretation of the researcher meshes with the meaning constructs of reality that the storyteller perceives.

Jones (1983: 153-154) gives five criteria for the interpretation of information gathered through Life History methodology:

(1) The person whose life history is being examined must be regarded as a creature of culture. That is, constructs cannot be divorced from culture.

(2) The importance of the role of others in the transmission of culture must be recognised. All understanding of 'the world' comes initially from the interpretations and typifications of others - from family, peers or significant others.

(3) Rules, codes, standards, myths, beliefs and rituals of the subject's culture must be examined. These are the background assumptions against which the individual's constructs of reality are reflected.

(4) Social constructs, concepts and beliefs are *dynamic* - they change over time. Life History method shows up the links between changing definitions of reality and changes in an individual's constructs and interpretations of life meaning.

(5) All behaviour is social context bound. The action of any individual in the world cannot be separated from the temporal and environmental contexts in which it occurs.

One of the problems with Life History methodology lies in the possibility that individuals can behave in accordance with learned rules, yet be unable to grasp why they follow such rules, or even that they *are* following rules. Life History method can counter this problem by the creations of what Jones (1983) refers to as *oppositions*. These are simply different interpretations, from different perspectives or persons of the same life details. Oppositions can be set up between an individual's accounts (the individual's different recalling of the same event at

different points in time), between the subject's and his or her family members' accounts of the same incidents, or between the individual's accounts and the researcher's constructions. It is important to note that Jones was not referring here to a confrontational process, but rather to a supportive one. Brammer, Abrego and Shostrom used the same approach when discussing the use of supportive questioning of clients' stories in the therapeutic process: "Challenges can facilitate functioning and growth, if done in a non-threatening way" (Brammer, Abrego and Shostrom, 1993: 224).

The longitudinal dimension of the Life History method, as Jones (1983) has noted, gives the researcher access to the evolutionary process of a subject's self definition over time, which elucidates the individual's behavioural development. To this end, as well as personal recall, the researcher can use any written correspondence or records (even photographs or audio or visual recordings) that relate to any changes in the life history being examined. Such records may be useful in helping both researcher and subject to understand the evolution of the conceptual constructs that underpin the behaviour of the individual whose story is being told.

It is to the written record (primarily the biographic record) that this thesis turns in an effort to elucidate the lives and behaviours of the several serial murderers considered. This process of Life History analysis seems to have much congruence with Miller's psychodynamic approach to the analysis of behavioural development.

The stories that people tell in counselling, Gerkin (1984) suggests, present two possible problems for the observer: either they indicate blockages or obstacles that are frustrating the client's desire to move ahead, or the narrative as told has an underlying, secondary meaning. This interpretation of secondary meaning from the given stories echoes what Miller (1987) refers to as the Repetition Compulsion. Gerkin (1984) sees the stories we tell as seldom being literal - there seems to be

hidden meaning in our conscious interpretation. We construct somewhat mythic central themes that run throughout our narrations of our life experience in a variety of ways. Gerkin (1984:135) gives the example of a client who, throughout all her narratives, portrayed: “A deep-lying mythic theme…that she is one who does not belong where she is”. This mythic theme seems analogous to Miller’s Repetition Compulsion.

One of the major problems with the Life History methodology is the problem of facts versus interpretation. How is one to know ‘the truth’? Is ‘true interpretation’ either necessary or useful? Gerkin (1984: 130) posits that ‘facts’, as presented by the interpreter, whether client or counsellor, are merely interpretations overlayered with interpretations that lead to simply another (rather than *the*) perception of reality.

There are two basic approaches to the interpretation of a life history. The first is a search-for-the-facts approach, attempting to elucidate complex patterns of developmental experience that will lead to the prescription of processes the subject should follow to correct behavioural problems. The second, alternative approach is to use a Rogerian methodology. This approach supports the client, treats his or her interpretations as valid, and puts trust in the client’s ability (given a supportive environment) to draw appropriate conclusions. It is this second approach, supportive of the story teller’s own interpretations, that has much in common with Miller’s exploration of the impact of childhood trauma on adult behaviour.

The Hermeneutic Circle (Bauman, 1978) provides a process for going over and over the same stories in an attempt to allow both client and counsellor to reach new insight - to remember something else, to see some ‘fact’ in a new light. This process is continued until a new, more adaptive life narrative is arrived at. In the therapeutic setting, this long-term process requires considerable commitment on the part of

both client and counsellor, and is one in which the interrelationship between the two participants layers extra influences on the process of interpretation of life history. This same hermeneutic process of visiting stories repeatedly (and from different perspectives) can be accomplished to some degree through the more psychobiographic process of searching through written records (or stories) of events in one life.

To Oritz (1985), Life History implies a holistic view of social reality, and "...the particular intimacy which characterises it as a research process..."(Oritz, 1985: 100) requires that we take note of the psychological impact of that process on the participants. In the more empirical social science methodologies, there is an ethical focus on the rights of subjects, on confidentiality and the protection of those being examined. In Life History methodology, the ethical concern shifts to the effect of the processes involved on *both* the observed and the observer. The extent to which the observer *invades* the subject's privacy, and the *method* of that intrusion are important questions about the *boundaries* of social science inquiry. Oritz (1985) uses the contrasting analogy of medicine - the skin of our bodies presents a palpable barrier or boundary for medicine where questions of 'under what circumstances do I cross this boundary and how should that crossing take place?' can be asked. Social science has no such physically perceptible boundaries.

An interesting point arises here for this thesis. Since the adopted methodology in this research uses only written biographic sources (no interviews were conducted with the subjects), the question of boundaries becomes slightly problematic. There is a sense of talking about a person without their permission. The subjects whose lives are examined cannot reply or object to any interpretation placed upon their actions (or the public record of those actions).

Life History, says Oritz (1985: 102), "...is a *collaborative* venture: life history is not

'done to' the storyteller, but researcher and storyteller agree to produce it together." Whilst both interviewer and respondent share the task of seeking out details to extend the explanatory power of the respondent's story (explanatory, that is, in terms of the story's ability to show how behavioural characteristics have arisen), the power to choose what form the story takes always lies with the respondent.

This process of collaboratively working on repeated refinement of the story "...has a significant impact on the mental health of the participants" (Oritz, 1985: 102). It is impossible for the researcher to not become a part of the respondent's life story. This point raises the further question of to what extent the researcher should intrude on the life of the subject. If the researcher studies the life of a person by reading his or her biographies and if the person being studied remains unaware that his or her life is under scrutiny, then we may concede that the researcher will have no effect on the life of the subject. If the subject in this example reads some comments made by the researcher or by someone else who is commenting on the biographical study that has been conducted by the researcher, then that researcher has had an effect on the future development of the life story of the subject.

At the other end of this continuum of effect is the situation where the lives of the researcher and subject become enmeshed. In this scenario, the two people involved share their life stories with each other (even though the main objective of their interaction is to detail the story of only one of them). The researcher, in fact, can't avoid this enmeshment if he or she chooses to make personal contact with the subject. It seems logical, in such cases, to urge the researcher to not try to hold back from this interrelationship or to fear it. The only safeguard that need be heeded, it seems, is to always ensure that the right of decision about what is to be included in the story lies with the original storyteller.

Validation for the Life History method emerges through the process of the

generation of mutual understanding between researcher and respondent. By repeatedly querying each other's perspectives on the story as it unfolds over time, the two persons sharing that story development move together towards new and more adaptive interpretations (Oritz, 1985).

It is interesting to compare Life History method to the psychotherapy process. Life History automatically accepts the participant's suffering as real and the participant's responses as acceptable. Psychotherapy includes this process as only part of the overall treatment. For Life History, 'treatment' is the process of researcher and respondent interaction. There are no goals in Life History method that presuppose illness on the part of the client and expertise on the part of the therapist.

The life history process also has a cathartic effect on the storyteller - the opportunity presented by the enquiry into a life story gives the storyteller the chance to view his or her own life as an ongoing process. For many participants in such life storying processes, the encounter allows them, for the first time, "…to see their lives as a process over time" (Oritz, 1985: 108). Many complex factors influence behavioural directions. Seen as isolated incidents, these factors may not be meaningful, but seen as steps in a continuum of development, they may take on generative proportions. The therapeutic element of the Life History method lies within the catharsis of the story telling.

There is much here in common with Miller's structure for overcoming the negative effects of Poisonous Pedagogy (Miller, 1984; Miller, 1987). Only in the telling of stories about past trauma to an empathic listener can the victim of abuse find resolution to the repressed feelings that, unresolved, condemn the victim to the Repetition Compulsion. As with Life History methodology, the presence of the empathic listener is the key.

This process of searching for the interrelatedness of varying life incidents also provides a process for the validation of the Life History method. By re-examining and re-visiting the numerous life memories that exist (by moving in Oritz's hermeneutic circles), the storyteller moves gradually closer, not to 'the truth', but to an increasingly valid self-story. The life history method requires that the storyteller explains himself to himself in the process of explaining to others. Major life choices, decisions, opinions, biases and the like have to be admitted and examined. The process of *explanation* is concurrently a process of *learning*. Through this process, storytellers can be caused to look at their faulty learning and to redefine previously defined realities. Life history method puts the storyteller in control of the enquiry into his own life and builds and reasserts his control over his present and future.

Life Narratives

McAdams, discussing biography, narratives and lives, defined life narratives as "...storied autobiographical accounts told in the person's own words"(McAdams, 1988: 2). Psychobiography, he suggests, examines lives by "...the systematic use of psychological (especially personality) theory to transform a life into a coherent and illuminating story"(McAdams, 1988: 2). Alternatively, a hermeneutic approach to the study of such matters treats lives as "...texts to be interpreted" (McAdams, 1988: 3). There are clear overlaps between these theoretical approaches to the study of lives, and clear resonances between these theories and Miller's work. Although each approaches the study of lives from a slightly different perspective, each is driven by the underlying conviction that lives are *wholes*, and that you cannot make sense of that whole without seeing it through the eyes of the person who has lived it.

Sarbin (1986) has referred to the *root metaphor* of narrative - the idea that narrative is *representative* of behaviour and experience. (There is an echo here of Miller's

notion of *allegory*, although Sarbin is referring only to narrative, whereas Miller refers to both narrative and *behaviour* as potentially allegorical). Erikson (1963) considered that only by going around in circles over the three areas of what he called *triple bookkeeping* could one hope to find some sense or meaning in the data of individual life experience. The three areas of triple bookkeeping are defined by the body (all biological givens that might constrain or effect behaviour), the ego (the ways in which the individual interprets, understands or makes sense of the world), and the family and society (their influence on the individual's development).

This general notion of the importance of the story in understanding human behaviour has quite a long history. Murray (1938), for instance, emphasised the importance of the examination of life stories, and referred to the *long unit* of psychology:

> The organism consists of an infinitely complex series of temporally related activities extending from birth to death. Because of the meaningful connection of sequences the life cycle of a single individual should be taken as a unit, the *long unit* of psychology. It is feasible to study the organism during one episode of its existence, but it should be recognised that this is but an arbitrarily selected part of the whole. The history of the organism *is* the organism. This proposition calls for biographical studies. (Murray, 1938: 39)

Murray's ultimate aim was the development of a taxonomy of biographical/narrative types - the idea that scientific psychology could develop abstracted generalisations from research into biographical data that would form a typology of personality (White, 1981). Whilst that exactingly scientific taxonomy has not been realised, Murray's very early recognition of the importance of a holistic approach to the study

of lives finds resonance with all the approaches discussed in this thesis. More recently, even developmental psychology has taken this total life cycle approach (Peterson, 1989).

Tomkins is another theorist in the area of narrative construction of life meaning. His *Script Theory* (Tomkins, 1979) takes the view that individuals construct dramatic narratives of their lives. These scripts are seen as rules that underpin life narratives rather than descriptions of the person. Tomkins is on similar ground, here, to McAdams' (1988) notion that people tend to operate from *unconscious mandates* - mandates that dictate how they 'see' the world (for example, in either optimistic or pessimistic terms). For Miller, a similar idea is expressed in the concept of the *Repetition Compulsion* – all three theorists are talking about *unconscious drivers* of behaviour.

Wiersma (1988) investigated career stories of subjects for narrative truth. She concluded that her subjects were really giving *Press Releases* - distorted views of past realities that conceal personal pain and conflict. These Press Releases are abstractions of reality that blame 'the system', society or history, but *not* the individual telling the story. Tomkin's *scripts*, McAdams' *unconscious mandates*, Miller's *repetition compulsion*, and Wiersma's *press releases* are all revealing the same key phenomenon of human behaviour – we often say things and do things that are *unconsciously allegorical*, rather than *literally representative,* of our experience.

McAdams refers to Rosenwald's idiographic concept of individual uniqueness that disregards "...the dialectic of individual and society" (McAdams, 1988: 11). Multiple case research, it is suggested, focuses on specific individual experiences and their individual interpretations. That is, what meaning experience has for *individuals*

rather than what *universal facts* about human nature can be extracted from individual experience. The value of sharing experience (or, more correctly, of sharing the *narrative* of experience) lies not in finding truths, but in seeing echoes of one's own life experience.

Alexander (1988) provided nine guidelines for the examination of important information within narrative: primacy, frequency, uniqueness, negation, emphasis, omission, error, isolation and incompletion. Analysis of narrative within these guidelines, Alexander suggested, can produce *themes*, *scripts*, or *guiding messages* about a life story. As evinced in the other works cited in this chapter, there is here, again, this notion that our lives are only partially under our conscious control. Many thoughts and actions seem to be driven by unconscious 'shorthand' interpretations of our experience that distort our memories, our interpretation of the past, and our present actions based on those conceptualisations.

Runyan (1982, 1987), commenting on strategies for analysing behaviour from written (rather than spoken) narrative, discussed an eight-step model for conceptualising and understanding biography. The first step is the collection of new evidence. The second is the critical examination of that evidence. Next is the consideration of the background theory and knowledge of the person (cultural/historical factors). The fourth step is the generation of new interpretations regarding the life under review. Then the researcher should critically evaluate those interpretations, and attempt to falsify those new interpretations. The sixth step involves the construction of a new, synthesised narrative. The penultimate step is the critical evaluation of that new narrative. The final (eighth) step is a critical analysis that involves the integration of the story through the reworking of any or all of the previous seven steps (as necessary). Again, although the specifics of the methodology may be different, the thrust of this approach is identical to the other

approaches to life analysis examined here – it is, in essence, a hermeneutic process.

Somewhat in opposition to all these strategies for interpreting the lives of others, Denzin (1990) argues that textual narratives of lives are *double constructions*. He notes that the individual telling his own story first constructs his own 'truth' about the past, then the listener or recorder imposes his own (cultural) constructions and interpretations on the life which is being described and recorded. This is perhaps most obviously seen in biographies. To avoid this double construction, asserts Denzin, the only strategy we can use is that of telling *only our own* story. He considers that objective stories about the lives of others *can't* be told. If we do try to tell the story of others, or even to interpret what they have said about their own lives, says Denzin, then "...the text perpetuates the larger cultural myth that the 'real' life experiences of 'real' people can be captured with this 'constructionist' methodology" (Denzin, 1990: 1089).

The logical flaw in Denzin's argument is not that he asserts that the 'ownership' of any story lies with its subject, but in his apparent assumption that anyone who listens to a story will be able to replicate it in conversation with others (or, indeed, in conversations with the self). It is axiomatic that any retelling of someone else's story will be an altered construction. Denzin also seems to have ignored that the same reconstructing opportunities occur for the original narrator of any experience. The value of Denzin's commentary on this subject lies in his reiteration of the concept that the individual's interpretation of his own experience should be given primacy when we are searching for 'truth'. This regard for the interpretation of the 'experiencer' is a common theme in all the other theoretical approaches to life interpretation reviewed here. All of those theorists, though, also point to the value of allowing that other interpretations of 'reality' are possible.

Psychoanalysis and Anamnesis

The area of hermeneutic psychoanalysis and anamnesis (recollection, or recalling to mind) covers much of the same theoretical ground reviewed by Life History and narrative approaches. It is primarily concerned with the stories we tell about ourselves. Roosjen (1990), for instance, considers that we tell stories about ourselves to *others* in response to their requests for information and to *ourselves* in response to our need to *interpret, understand and integrate* our past experience. Van de Zwaal (1987) sees the analyst in psychoanalysis as being an interpreter of the client's story, but that interpretation is itself a retelling which introduces change to the previous story. Whether the story is being told by the client or the analyst, something is always 'left out': "...description is always selection: telling something always means that something else is not being told" (Van de Zwaal, 1987: 23).

In the process of telling a story we inevitably change some aspect of it - even if we *try* to repeat a previously told story exactly, some small nuance at least will be changed. We continually reconstruct our own self-order and meaning by reinterpreting and retelling our life story (Cohler, 1979). Our images of the past do not necessarily mirror reality - as we continually revise our own life story, we frequently make changes to what is recorded in order that we may be able to feel more comfortable with that history. As we order our lives by ordering our stories, the possibility that our created or modified stories can begin to alter our future emerges.

The traditional stories handed down through various societies over millennia have more or less continually been told, retold or interpreted to fit, at any given point in history, the contemporary mores, beliefs and political agendas of dominant social forces. This phenomenon parallels Cohler's (1979) contention that individuals

reinterpret their own stories in light of personal change or crises. On both the individual and the societal level, then, contemporary events can be seen to influence story development.

Weima (in Roosjen, 1990:27) draws a distinction in storytelling between symbol, sign and allegory. He refers to Jung's conceptualisation of the three facets of narrative: the *semiotic* (the known), the *allegorical* (the deliberate transformation) and the *symbolic* (the unknown). The semiotic narrative may use symbols in an obvious way, such as the family 'tree' that represents the historical 'branching' of a family, and summarises some aspects of that history (who married whom, number of children to any pairing, birth and death dates and the like). So the symbol in narrative can serve a summarising function. The allegorical use of narrative, in this Jungian view, is perhaps similar to Wiersma's (1988) *press releases*, and Miller might argue that the use of allegory could be deliberate but unconscious. The symbolic use of the symbol in narrative is particularly important in man's relationship with his god, where the symbol (for example, the Christian crucifix) serves to represent the unspeakable or unknowable, or perhaps the inexpressible in religion.

Regardless of how we use the symbol in our narratives, it would appear (on the surface) that, if we *choose* to retell our own life stories, then they should consequently always be adaptive to the purpose of living satisfying lives. The story-circles that we create, however, with new interpretations overlapping previous interpretations, may not always be adaptive:

> ....one may easily be trapped into a vicious story-circle, a circle in which a pathological story and traumatic events influence one another in a way that from it will emerge a horrible intrigue which repeats itself continuously. (Roosjen,1990: 30)

Roosjen's maladaptive, 'vicious story-circles' seem to be a mirror image of Miller's Poisonous Pedagogy and its effects. Both see the story teller trapped within a confining and condemning false reality. Both see story telling as the only way out of that false reality.

> The first tactic in this fight prescribes that people who are trapped in repeatedly performing a horrifying story, and who suffer from doing this, should be encouraged to tell their story. (Roosjen, 1990:31)

Miller echoes and extends this expression of the importance of story telling:

> Since the injured child in us can express himself only by means of physical sensations and feelings related to his traumas, it is essential that therapy secure access to these sensations and feelings and enable the person to articulate them. (Miller,1990:189)

Psychoanalytic Life History

A number of significant authors (Habermas, 1971; Sherwood, 1969; Ricoeur, 1977; Loch, 1977; Schafer, 1978, 1983; Spence, 1982, 1987; and Geha, 1984) have expressed the opinion that psychoanalysis is a coauthoring process. This view suggests that analysand and analyst work *together* in a hermeneutical process that leads to increasingly useful narratives of the analysand's life story.

Habermas (1971) regarded psychoanalysis as a cooperative venture between analyst and analysand that sought to reveal those stories from the analysand's past that were hidden to him. The analyst's task is to use the transference, dreams and

associations that are offered by the analysand to construct different stories of the past. It is then the analysand's turn to reflect on those new constructions, accepting or rejecting stories or content and explaining why. This process of self-reflection is seen by Habermas as central to the psychoanalytic process. This is a hermeneutical method, and does not view the search for underlying causal links as central. The analyst is not cast as the detached, objective, scientific interpreter, but rather as a subjective co-journeyer in the development of the analysand's life story.

Habermas (1971), Spence (1982) and Schafer (1983) all view historical truth (the veridical past) as unknowable. Truth and reality seem to come into existence only through the narratives that are constructed at any given point in time, and since stories change over time, what is viewed as truth and history also changes. Loch (1977) took a similar view of the past, suggesting it was problematic to ascertain whether one version of a life story at a given point in time was more representative of truth than another version at another point in time. What he suggests is that "Psychoanalysis...*constructs truth* in the service of self-coherence for the present and the future" (Loch, 1977: 238). In this circumstance, maladaptive *allegories* or *press releases* may be constructed by the analyst or therapist, as well as by the story's 'owner'.

For Ricoeur (1977), the internal consistency of a narrative and the degree to which it made sense were primary criteria for assessing narrative truth. Spence (1982; 1987) was referring to the same concepts when he suggested that continuity and coherence in a narrative were major measures of narrative truth. Internal consistency, coherence, and intelligibility have also been cited by Geha (1984a; b) and Schafer (1984) as central criteria for assessing the truth of narrative. Such searching for consistency in stories may be useful for constructing those adjuncts to narrative inquiry that Jones(1983) refers to as *oppositions*.

This narrativist view of the psychoanalytic life history as possessing validity through the internal consistency and the appeal of stories leads logically to the concept of the story or narrative as metaphor or allegory. Ricoeur (1983) suggests this:

> By means of the plot, goals, causes and chance are brought together within the temporal unity of a whole and complete action. (Ricoeur, 1983: ix)

The narrative takes that which is disparate, fragmented, and loosely or illogically related, and imposes an order on the reconstruction that fits with current feelings and needs.

> Narrative is a metaphor in its affirmation of resemblance, in that it brings into relation different actions, combines them through perceived similarities...appropriates them into a common plot, which implies the rejection of merely contingent (or unassimilable) incident or action. (Brooks, 1984:280)

If narrative is metaphor, as indeed it appears to be, then we are as likely to construct maladaptive metaphors as we are to construct adaptive ones, and are in constant danger of falling into Roosjen's (1990) vicious and repeating story-circles, constrained by our inability to uncover our veridical past. In the psychoanalytic or counselling setting, with a co-journeyer to help us search through the past, there is some hope that the narratives we build will be adaptive or useful in the present. Perhaps, though, in the biographic generation of life story or narrative, the subject is more likely to be lost in maladaptive story-circles, simply because of the absence of the empathic listener. It may be possible to 'listen' to biography with some of the strategies of the co-journeyer or listener who would support the narration of a story.

This point is most important in the following analysis of the biographical narratives of the lives of serial murderers.

CHAPTER 4

ALICE MILLER'S EXAMINATION OF THE LIFE OF JURGEN BARTSCH

Miller (1987) provides us with an account of the etiology of a serial murderer. She gives a deliberately subjective analysis of Bartsch's life, stating unequivocally:

> I am not searching for statistical objectivity but for the subjectivity of the victim in question, to the degree that my empathy permits. In the process I have discovered the interplay between hatred and love: on the one hand, lack of respect, lack of interest in the unique being dependent on his parents' needs, abuse, manipulation, curtailment of freedom, humiliation, and mistreatment; on the other hand caresses, spoiling, and seductive behavior (sic) to the extent that the child is experienced as a part of the parents' self. (Miller, 1987: 199)

It is crucial to note that the victim Miller is referring to here is Jurgen himself. For Miller, every perpetrator was once a victim, and, through the *Repetition Compulsion*, remains one until (or unless) an empathic listener is encountered and the story of the abuse told. It is of great significance that Bartsch, when presented with an opportunity to tell his story by Paul Moor (who started a correspondence with him after he was sentenced) was most eager to do so. In Miller's terms, this was the first time in his life that Bartsch had encountered an empathic listener.

The question of whether that encounter opened up a possibility for the eventual resolution of the trauma that 'drove' Bartsch's behaviour is, unfortunately, unanswerable. Jurgen agreed (in prison) with the medical authorities' recommendation of physical castration "On the basis…that he could not control his

'excessive sex drive'" (Miller, 1987:222). He died while the surgery was being performed. No apparent explanation for the death appears to have been given (Miller, 1987: footnote, 222).

What follows here is a brief summary of Miller's analysis (in retrospect) of Bartsch's life. The objective of this summary is to both elucidate Miller's central themes, and to search for allegorical behaviours in Bartsch's life. This example of Miller's theory in analytical action informs the methodology used in this thesis for the subsequent analysis of other serial murderers and the attempted explication of the etiology of their violent behaviours. Miller's analysis of her subject was based on the biographic record of Bartsch's life that was provided by Moor (1972). Miller's use of the written record, rather than personal interview, sets a precedent for the research methodology adopted in this thesis.

Jurgen Bartsch's offences

In the mid-1960s, the German public was horrified by the brutal and macabre murder of four young boys. The murders were committed over the four year period between 1962 and 1966 by Jurgen Bartsch. Bartsch was twenty years old when he was arrested after the final murder. He estimated that in addition to these four murders, he made more than a hundred unsuccessful attempts. His serial killings followed a distinct pattern. He would spend hours at a time in arcades, looking for the right victim. He chose young boys under ten years of age and lured the victim each time to a disused air-raid shelter close to his own home. There he would beat the child into submission, tie him up with butchers string, play with the child's genitals whilst sometimes masturbating himself, and then kill the child by blows or strangulation. He would then proceed to literally butcher his victims. The stomach and breast cavities were cut open and emptied, and the remains of the victim were

buried. The various mutilations practiced over the four murders included the removal of limbs from the dead bodies, decapitation, castration, removal of the eyes from the corpse, cutting the body into pieces, slicing sections of flesh from the thighs (which he then smelled), and apparently unsuccessful attempts at anal intercourse (Miller, 1987: 203-204).

Bartsch, in his willing and detailed confessions (after his arrest), described how the peak of his arousal during these murders was not connected with simple sexual stimulation. He was aroused by the fear and terror in his victim's eyes, but found the height of his arousal in the dismemberment, the cutting up, of the bodies. In his fourth and final murder he seemed to reach some ultimate goal: "...he tied his victim to a post and butchered the screaming child without killing him first" (Moor, in Miller, 1987: 203).

The first reaction of people, upon hearing of such acts of sadistic brutality, is to feel that here, indeed, is a person who is a monster - something less than human. We are left with a feeling of incomprehensible revulsion. Are such murderers indeed inhuman, or can such behaviours be understood? Is it possible that the etiology of all violent behaviour, including murder, can be fathomed? Does the responsibility for violent acts perpetrated by one individual on another lie *solely* with the individual who is *physically* responsible for the act? Do parents and other adults who have had significant influences on the phenotypic development of an individual share some measure of responsibility for the homicidal acts of their adult children?

The psychological landscape that constitutes what we refer to as 'mind' can be seen to not have a singular genesis. A large number of other human beings, with their influencing words and deeds, play across and alter that landscape in each one of us over the time of our existence. This psychodynamic perspective of human behaviour

underpins Miller's thesis. By searching through the life Jurgen led, we can examine, in Miller's terms, where his murderous behaviour came from and if it could have been averted.

Jurgen's early life

Jurgen Bartsch was born on November 6, 1946 in Essen, Germany. He was the illegitimate son of a woman whose surname was Sadrozinsky. His father was an unknown Dutch seasonal worker. The baby was abandoned by his mother shortly after his birth - his mother secretly left the hospital without him. She died of tuberculosis several weeks later. Jurgen was originally given the name Karl-Heinz by hospital staff, and he spent most of his first year in the hospital nursery. (There is a striking similarity of experience here with the immediate post-birth trauma of Ted Bundy, who was also abandoned by his mother and left in the hospital for three months following his birth – see Chapter 5). Although the staff were sympathetic to his plight, the hospital where Jurgen spent that first developmentally vital year was run on a quite regimented schedule (this *was* immediate post-World War Two Germany), and his cries for warmth, affection and touch, along with his cries for food, would have gone unheeded until they coincided with routine. Jurgen was adopted and renamed by Gertrud Bartsch and her husband, a successful butcher in Essen. They had no other children, and Jurgen remained their only child. Adoption officials at the hospital had objections to the adoption, with reservations that seem unexplained, and could have centred either on the suitability of the adoptee or the adopters. Although Jurgen was in the care of the Bartschs from approximately one year of age onwards, he was not officially adopted by them until seven years later (Miller, 1987: 203, 208).

Jurgen was raised very strictly. He was isolated almost completely from other

children until he went to school, primarily, his parents indicated, to avoid any possibility that he would find out that he was adopted. (Again, there is a similarity between Jurgen's experience in this regard and the experience of Ted Bundy. Ted was also not allowed to know who his biological father was, and in his early years, he was led to believe that his mother was his sister – see Chapter 5). When Jurgen was still very young (before he went to school), his father opened a second butcher shop, with the idea that Jurgen would have a shop of his own to take over when he was older. The extra workload meant Mrs. Bartsch had to work full time, and so much of Jurgen's early upbringing was entrusted to his adoptive grandmother. The grandmother agreed with the parent's stance on isolating the child, and apparently also had an overriding concern that he should not get his clothes dirty by playing with other children, who 'probably weren't the sort of children he should be associating with, anyway.' For many hours each week of his young life, the grandmother locked Jurgen alone in her underground cellar (Miller, 1987: 210).

Jurgen's adoptive mother physically abused him from the outset: "Acquaintances of the Bartsch family noticed around that time (the period immediately after the unofficial adoption at about eleven months of age) that the baby was always black and blue" (Moor, in Miller, 1987: 209). Even the adoptive father acknowledged this brutality:

> At least once during this period the downcast father, Gerhard Bartsch, confessed to a friend that he was considering divorce: "She beats the baby so badly I simply can't stand it any more." Another time, when he was taking his leave, Herr Bartsch excused himself for being in such a hurry: "I have to get home or she will beat the child to death." (Moor, in Miller, 1987: 209)

It is important to note that our knowledge of Jurgen's life story comes primarily from

his own writing and from his conversations with the journalist Paul Moor, which were recorded only after his fourth and last murder was committed. Not until he was arrested and imprisoned did Jurgen find the opportunity to verbally express the pain of his own childhood. When he was arrested, he was only too willing to tell, in explicit detail, the story of the murders he had committed. He was particularly willing to tell his story to Moor, a person in whom, it seems, Jurgen had found (for the first time) an *empathic listener*.

It is clear that Jurgen's early socialisation was non-normative. He was physically small and found it hard to form relationships with his peers. This is hardly surprising, given the extent to which his parents and grandmother isolated him from other children. For the first six years of his life, those vital formative years, that isolation was thorough, deliberate and oppressive. He was put in solitary confinement in his grandmother's cellar on a frequent basis, apparently for about two days out of each week, in accordance with whether his grandmother had the inclination to chaperone him or not (Moor, in Miller, 1987: 210). Contemporarily, such treatment would constitute gross child abuse, and its perpetrators would likely be imprisoned. In Germany in the late 1940s, such behaviour towards children was more easily sanctioned, and probably more easily hidden.

As though infrequent contact with his parents was insufficient punishment, Jurgen also found that when he did have contact with them, his presence was basically an imposition on his parents. They seem to have considered their business of greater importance than their adopted child. The second business opened by Jurgen's father (while Jurgen was still a child) was ostensibly started to provide the child with a secure future, but that financial security obviously had a price in terms of the child's emotional and psychological security. Jurgen the child was the victim of the adults who were his 'care-givers', and as abused children tend to do, he seems to

have resigned himself to his fate.

As a child and even as a young adult, Jurgen is physically beaten by his mother. Her behaviour towards him is inconsistent, as well, yet he hardly speaks out against her to others, even when he is finally in prison:

> Whenever my mother flung the curtain in the doorway to one side and came charging out of the shop like an amazon and I was in the way, then slap! slap! slap! I got it in the face. Simply because I was in the way, often enough that was the only reason. A few minutes later I was suddenly the dear boy you put your arm around and kissed. Then she was surprised that I resisted and was afraid of her... I don't mean to run my mother down. I'm fond of my mother, I love my mother, but I don't believe she is a person who is capable of the slightest understanding. My mother must love me very much. I find it really astonishing, otherwise she wouldn't be doing everything for me that she is. I used to get it in the neck a lot. She's broken coathangers on me, like when I didn't get my homework right or didn't do it fast enough. (Moor, in Miller, 1987: 211)

It is interesting to note the extreme juxtaposition of Jurgen's own statements in the passage above – his comments are a verbatim transcript from conversations with Paul Moor. Beat me if you must, Jurgen seems to be saying, treat me inconsistently if you must, but let me love you. I have to love you - you're my mother. Jurgen here is complying with one of the central tenets of *Poisonous Pedagogy* - he is believing that parents cannot be wrong. It is not the physical (or even the psychological) punishment that becomes so unbearable that Jurgen feels he has to murder others in retaliation - *it is the suppression into silence of feelings of intolerable victimisation*

that seems to compel his behaviours. These suppressed feelings appear to later erupt in an *allegorical* communication to the world - like his victims, Jurgen was once, himself, a powerless victim (of his parents, grandmother and teachers).

Abuse at boarding school

Jurgen also found himself a victim (along with many fellow-sufferers) in the Catholic boarding school at Marienhausen that he was sent to at age twelve by his parents.

> Here we see how a child must learn to accept the absurdities and whims of the educators without any opposition and without any feelings of hatred and at the same time condemn and stifle any desire for the physical or emotional closeness of another human being, which would have eased the burden. (Miller, 1987: 217-218)

Jurgen had been, for the previous two years, attending a smaller school where he felt quite at home. He had not wanted to change schools, but the discipline of the new school would be good for him, his parents had thought. In Marienhausen, Jurgen had to tolerate the morally inconsistent behaviour of the priests, and to deliberately avoid friendship and closeness with the other boys. Here, at the age of twelve, in this repressive Catholic Boarding School, with some three hundred other boys, Jurgen was repeatedly indoctrinated with the not-so-hidden curriculum that homosexuality is the natural outcome of friendship between boys, and that it was to be abhorred. Moreover, even the *suspicion* of homosexual activity was cause for severe corporal punishment. Pater Pulitz (or PaPu as Jurgen called him), the priest who made such an impression on Jurgen, was a most vehement opponent to this evil, ranting and raving about this sin on a more-or-less constant basis, both in class and in private with the boys (Moor, in Miller, 1987: 217-221).

The Pater, however, this self-righteous adult who continually harangued the young schoolboys about the intolerable evil of sexuality, was not quite as good at warding of the ‘advances of Satan’ as he would have had the boys believe. Jurgen recounts a sexual assault by Pater Pulitz on himself when both he and ‘PaPu’ were sick in the school infirmary. ‘PaPu’ instructed Jurgen to get into bed with him (there appears to have been only the two of them present at the time) and proceeded to manipulate the boy’s genitals (Moor, in Miller, 1987: 219).

This most vociferous of Satan’s opponents, who had so often told the boys with great pride that he had never given in to such desires, was a persistent sexual abuser of his young charges (Miller, 1987: 219). Not only did he manipulate chosen boys into his sexual perversions, he simultaneously ensured the silence of his victims by threatening dire consequences if they told anyone of what had happened. Jurgen remarked (about his encounter with ‘PaPu’ in the school infirmary): "I don't remember the words he used but he told me he would finish me off if I opened my trap" (Moor, in Miller, 1987:219). The powerful adult in this instance provides a classic mirroring of *Poisonous Pedagogic* techniques - the powerless child is manipulated into a planned encounter on the adult’s terms, and then prevented from telling others by the use of scare tactics (in this case, a death threat).

Pater Pulitz also used other forms of child abuse, in the name of education and with the auspice of the authority of his profession. His method for extracting information from his students when he thought something untoward had gone on was to herd them into the school courtyard and force them to run around it until they fell in exhaustion. Eventually, some boy or other would ‘crack’ under this physical torture and inform (Moor, in Miller, 1987:219).

The Third Reich and the horror of the mass extermination of the Jews was something that also played incessantly on Pater Pulitz's mind. He apparently had a compulsion to use every opportunity at his disposal to tell his young students, in the greatest of detail, and with the aid of graphic photographs, of the gruesome carnage. "He seemed to enjoy doing this" remarked Jurgen (Moor, in Miller, 1987:218).

Jurgen, along with the other 'inmates' at Marienhausen, was prevented from following his natural desire to find and forge close friendships with others his own age. The rules of the institution were arranged to prevent, as far as possible, any opportunity for individual interaction or contact between the boys. Like prisoners in oppressive incarceration, the boys were woken early in the morning, required to dress in silence, marched in silence and in line to a church service to celebrate mass, then marched, in line and in silence again, back to their rooms before other daily activities began (Moor, in Miller, 1987: 218). Personal contact in an atmosphere that might allow friendships to form was formally forbidden at this school. The inference was that any closeness between any two boys bespoke of homosexuality.

What lessons does a child of twelve - especially a child with the emotionally impoverished background of Jurgen - learn at the hands of pedagogues such as those at Marienhausen? In Jurgen's case, what was learned reinforced what he already knew from his family's pedagogy - he was *not allowed closeness with other human beings.* The friendships and relationships with others that had been denied him in his earlier years were again forbidden and disallowed as he reached puberty. Moreover, he was coerced into homosexual acts whilst being continually told that they were evil, and he was coerced into *blaming himself* for being evil. After all, if you have to hold your feelings and thoughts about such things to yourself, you

cannot check your perception that others might bear some of the responsibility.

Allegory in Jurgen's murderous behaviours

Jurgen's story clearly illustrates the central mechanisms of Miller's *Poisonous Pedagogy* - *splitting off* and *projection*. These mechanisms can be seen to be operating in Jurgen's case, as he tries to eradicate in his victims the weak, helpless, humiliated child within himself. So much of Jurgen's actions in the murders he committed can be seen as *allegorical* of the traumas of his own childhood (Miller, 1987: 228):

1. The air-raid shelter that was the place where he overpowered, imprisoned, tortured and murdered his victims is a macabre echo of the underground cellar where, for much of the first six years of his life, Jurgen's grandmother imprisoned him.

2. Jurgen selected his victims deliberately and carefully. He apparently spent hours wandering through arcades searching for the right victim. In a somewhat similar fashion, he had been selected by his parents and then, in his eyes, subjected to torturous treatment. Pater Pulitz, the priest at Marienhausen, also selected Jurgen for his peculiar type of deliberate and systematic victimisation.

3. The knife that Jurgen used to dismember the corpses of his strangled victims, and which he used to kill his final victim, was a butcher's knife. The victimisation he had been subject to as a child combined fatefully with images of dismemberment and blood shedding from his parent's butchers shop and with the violence frequently displayed towards him by his parents when he was present in the shop. Indeed, one of Jurgen's repeated childhood nightmares

involved his mother either selling him or attacking him with a butcher's knife (Moor, in Miller, 1987: 212-213). By using the knife himself, he was subconsciously trying to avoid that fate. By *splitting off* his victimised self and *projecting* it onto his victims, he avoided his own nightmare of the ultimate victimisation.

4. Jurgen's kissing behaviour with some of his victims seems to also be a macabre reflection of his childhood experience. It was his mother who, by her actions, blurred for him the relationship between displays of affection and physical beatings. It was she who would beat him for no apparent reason, then almost in the same breath expect him to respond warmly when she kissed and hugged him, without ever explaining why she had struck him.

5. Jurgen's senses were aroused and excited as he watched his victims experiencing horror and pain. In their suffering he subconsciously saw his own suffering reflected, but with an important difference - this time, *he was not feeling the pain.* By seeing but not feeling that pain he could finally imagine he had escaped his life threatening past. Simultaneously, he was able to feel the power of the role of his dominators, reversing the roles he had been powerless to avoid. The *splitting off* and *projection* mechanism seems to have precluded awareness (at that point in time) of the suffering of the victim who now substituted, in this *allegorical* scene, for himself.

There is an obvious question that arises out of such an examination of the significant life events of a murderer: Does the illumination of such echoes or allegories of experience necessarily *explain* such violent behaviour? Miller(1987) suggests that it does. The anger and anguish that found expression in Jurgen's acts

of murder, she asserts, need not have sought expression in that way. The presence of (or access to) an empathic listener would have made it possible to break the cycle of the *repetition compulsion*. As adults, Miller suggests, we retain (in our subconscious) the effects of the poisonous pedagogic experiences encountered in our childhood. Many of the details of that experience are suppressed, lying dormant and waiting for an opportunity to find expression in an effort to seek explanation. If a truly empathic listener can be found by the child (or by the child within the adult) then what has been traumatic and repressed in childhood can be remembered and expressed verbally. This open expression of feelings abrogates the need to seek vengeance through deeds - the need to *split off* a part of the self and *project* it onto another person (or persons) who then becomes the recipient of vengeful rage.

If denied the opportunity for open expression, the repressed trauma of childhood will reveal itself in the misunderstood *allegory* of the *repetition compulsion*. If a child is beaten, he will beat others as an adult, if humiliated, he will humiliate others, if intimidated, he will become an intimidator, and if his soul is murdered, he will want to murder (Miller, 1987:232). Unless it can be expressed verbally, violence from childhood will find an *allegorical 'out'* in violence in adulthood. This violence will not always exactly duplicate what has happened in childhood, though, says Miller (1987). Psychological violence perpetrated on the child may find expression later either as psychological *or* physical violence towards others. In other words, the details of the scripts may differ, but the message communicated by the allegory or story will be the same.

If violent adult behaviour *is* etiologically rooted in childhood trauma that is repressed, then the implications for both the ways in which we raise our children and the ways in which we treat violent offenders are significant. If Miller is right - if perpetrators of such violent acts as murder were, without exception, once victims

themselves of some form of intolerable violence - then a change in investment strategy in our judicial system may be needed. Most societies like to hold a single individual solely responsible for any murder. Perhaps those others who may have (through their own violence) significantly contributed to the evolution of the behavioural disposition of the person who has committed murder should be held (in some official and public way) accountable for their part - for their portion - of the responsibility. They should be accountable for the influence of their footsteps on the landscape of the mind of the perpetrator. They are responsible, to a degree, for the act of murder that our judicial system is happy to attribute to just one individual.

Central to Miller's thesis seems to be the idea that, as human beings, when we encounter each other, we *irrevocably affect* each other's future, even if only in some small way. When we take account of the complex concatenation of the myriad events and encounters (most of them forgotten) that constitute that abstraction we call 'our life', it seems possible that some patterns that influence the individual towards particular behavioural dispositions can become evident. Seeing the patterns in our past would seem to allow us the opportunity to alter their future expression in some way. Ignoring the patterns of the past and trying to change our futures by regarding only present consciousness seems limiting.

If this stance that unresolved childhood trauma underpins aberrant adult behaviour is to be more fully elucidated, then the lives of other seriously violent persons need to be examined for corroborating evidence. What follows in the next two chapters is a search through the biographic records of two other serial murderers for evidence of any antecedent abuse in their childhoods that may have found allegorical expression in their murderous behaviour as adults. Such evidence would support Miller's central thesis of poisonous pedagogy and her analysis of Bartsch.

CHAPTER 5

TED BUNDY

Theodore Robert (Ted) Bundy was one of America's most notorious serial murderers. He killed at least twenty-five women and is suspected of having murdered a total of forty or fifty. He was executed by the state of Florida in January, 1989, for the murder of one of those victims. His notoriety comes primarily not from the number of women he killed, nor from the way that he killed them. Rather, what is remarked upon by commentator after commentator is the perception of almost everyone who met him that he was handsome, articulate, affable, and educated - in short, he was the epitome of middle American respectability.

In order to examine the behavioural etiology of Ted Bundy, it is necessary to first set out a brief chronological history of the person. This life history will not be exhaustive in detail, but will set the scene for a subsequent discussion of the central themes of allegory that seem to present themselves in the development of Ted's murderous behaviour. These allegorical themes will be explored by extensive reference to Ted's own discussion of his life that was recorded on audio tape and transcribed in some detail by Stephen Michaud and Hugh Aynesworth (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b).

The sanitised family

Probably the one person who was the key to Ted's early childhood experiences was his grandfather, Sam Cowell. Sam was, by family accounts, a man with a violent temper who was frequently verbally abusive towards both employees (in his gardening business) and family. He was obsessive about the social acceptability of

his family's image: he "... tended a genealogical tree as obsessively as he did his plants, (and) had a fantasy of perfection about the family" (MacPherson, 1989: 107).

By the same family accounts, Sam Cowell's wife, Eleanor, was submissive in the extreme, frequently depressed, and apparently agoraphobic. She was also hospitalised and given shock therapy for depression on more than one occasion (MacPherson, 1989: 106).

Louise Bundy (nee Cowell) was a model child in her father's eyes. Like her father, she "... had an explosive temper, was very secretive, undemonstrative, and difficult to get close to" (MacPherson, 1989: 106). In the recorded dealings that Michaud and Aynesworth later had with the aging mother of the condemned serial murderer, this character synopsis seems to hold true, with the exception of the reference to an 'explosive temper'. If Louise did have trouble containing her anger as a child, she had, it seems, gained control of her outbursts by adulthood.

Ted's illegitimacy

Ted's mother, Louise, was twenty-two years old and living at home with her parents when Ted was conceived. The identity of Ted's biological father has never been revealed. Louise has always told a story of a brief affair with a serviceman she met through her work as a clerk with an insurance company not long after finishing high school. His name, she has always contended, was Jack Worthington, he was 'passing through town' and he never passed her way again. Indeed, Jack Worthington seems to have vanished into thin air – "...there was no record of a Jack Worthington at the proper prep school he said he had attended, or at the high-paying job he said he had held" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a:47).

Louise has always claimed that this illegitimate pregnancy caused her little shame, yet she was ostracised from the church group that seems to have been the focal point of her social identity at that point in time, and she was sent away (accompanied only by the wife of her minister) to a home for unwed mothers in Burlington, Vermont (MacPherson, 1989: 107). It seems that there was no discussion of the pregnancy in the Cowell household, and Louise's sudden and secretive disappearance to Burlington coincided with her seventh month of pregnancy, when, presumably, she was 'beginning to show'.

Significantly, Louise abandoned her newborn baby. She had an easy labour and Theodore Robert Cowell was born with no complications. Although details of this period of Ted's history are scarce, it seems that Louise returned home to her parents within days of the birth, leaving the baby in the Burlington home. For the first two months after his birth on November 24, 1946, Ted was deprived totally of the opportunity to bond with his biological mother. How he was treated by the staff at the unwed mothers' home, how the other mothers reacted to him, who nurtured his body and who, if anyone, nurtured his fragile newborn psyche, is not recorded. The records of the home were requested for Ted's 1987 court hearing on his competency to stand trial, but the home would not divulge all details of its records regarding the Cowell case, claiming that Louise would not allow the release of much of the filed information (MacPherson, 1989: 107).

By Louise's own account (MacPherson, 1989: 107), it was her father, Sam Cowell who wanted to keep the baby. It appears that, for those first two significant months of his life, the Cowell household was in some sort of family debate about whether he would be abandoned to adoption or kept by Louise. On the basis that Louise left her baby as soon as possible after birth and elected to have no contact with him for those first two months, it would appear that her 'maternal instincts' towards this

baby were not strong. When he was finally retrieved from the home in Burlington, the story was put about that Sam and Eleanor had adopted a baby. Years later, Ted's great-aunt Virginia Bristol (Sam's sister) remarked about this incident:

> I was smart enough to know damn well they weren't adopting this baby. No adoption agency would give them one; Eleanor wasn't well enough to take care of one! I knew it had to be Louise's baby. But they wanted to cover up. All we ever got were evasions. I had a secretive brother. (MacPherson, 1989: 140)

Ted's first three years

Although details of this period where Ted and Louise resided in the Cowell family home are scant, at a surface level, it appears that all was fine. Perhaps many Cowell friends and family members had their suspicions about Ted's 'adoption', but this ruse seems to have allowed the face saving that was so important to the Cowell family under the control of the patriarch Sam. Louise seems to have been accepted back into her small-town society, and even into her old church fellowship. On the surface, she appears to have avoided the stigma of bearing an illegitimate child.

Did the growing child ever ask about his father? Surely, as he associated in normal play in his neighbourhood, questions regarding his father would have surfaced, even in those first three to four years? Apparently, Ted didn't have very much opportunity for association with other children, and Louise suggests that his paternity was never a problem for him:

> Ted never asked about the - the 'other man' because he never heard about him or had seen him or anything. ....In our neighbourhood, there were no

> other children his age. He didn't know any differently. When I lived with my parents, it was 'This is Granddad, this is Grandmother and here is Mother'. (MacPherson, 1989: 143)

There is no doubt that Louise and the rest of the Cowell family contrived to establish and maintain Ted's ignorance about his biological father. Louise herself confirmed the extent to which Ted's need to inquire about his real father was crushed into submission - when asked if this question ever bothered Ted, she replied: "Not that I know of. It wasn't something we ever talked about" (MacPherson, 1989: 143).

It is notable that there seem to be some parallels between the early childhoods of Ted Bundy and Jurgen Bartsch:

- both were unwanted children, abandoned at birth
- both spent the first several months of their lives with no maternal connection
- both were deprived of normative socialising influences (playmates) at an early age
- both lived with parents who 'didn't talk about things'
- both seemed incapable of empathy for others

By themselves, of course, such factors seem relatively innocuous, but when they are added to other factors in a complex behavioural etiology, their significance deepens.

<u>Louise moves away from her father</u>

Although it had seemed that Louise and Ted had settled easily into the family home,

something was not quite right in the Cowell household. When Ted was three years old, Louise made what seems to be a deliberate effort to distance herself from her family situation. She moved to Tacoma, taking Ted with her. Louise's aunt, Virginia Bristol, provided financial, and, it seems, emotional support for this move. Virginia observed: "It was unhealthy for her, living at home, working for her dad, no chance to meet anyone" (MacPherson, 1989: 143). The move to Tacoma was apparently deliberately designed to place Louise and Ted near to a perhaps more desirable (from Virginia's and Louise's point of view) adult male role model – Louise's uncle Jack Cowell, a university professor.

What had precipitated this move? By all accounts, Sam Cowell doted on young Ted - why would Louise make such an effort to break away from the family ties that had bound her for so long and that still offered her ongoing support as a secret single mother? We could speculate that Louise wanted to escape the domineering Sam and his fanatical insistence on the public presentation of the perfect family face. It may also have been true that Louise wanted to find a father for her son, and, with an unavoidable knowledge in the town of her real situation, she may have thought it unlikely she would find a suitable husband there.

Whilst these and other such speculative considerations may have been present in Louise's mind when she made her decision, there is one incident involving the very young Ted that hints at another, more sinister influence in the Cowell Family home that she may have been trying to escape.

<u>The three butcher's knives</u>

Ted's aunt (Louise's sister) Julia revealed a long-hidden family secret when Ted was on Death Row. In conversations with Dr. Dorothy Otnow Lewis, a psychiatrist

engaged by Ted's attorneys, Julia revealed evidence of an early aberration in Ted's psychological development.

Julia was fifteen years old at the time, and Ted would have been two or three. She recalled being woken early on perhaps two occasions to find the young Ted standing beside her bed. He had pulled back the covers and sheets and had placed three butcher's knives on the bed beside his aunt. Years later, Julia said of the incident:

> I don't think it happened more than once or twice. He just stood there and grinned. I shooed him out of the room and took the implements back down to the kitchen and told my mother about it. I remember thinking at the time that I was the only one who thought it was strange. Nobody did anything. (MacPherson, 1989: 142)

Dr. Lewis described this as:

> ...extraordinarily bizarre behaviour... It's the kind of behaviour that to the best of my knowledge you only see in youngsters who themselves have been seriously traumatized, who have either themselves been the victims of extraordinary abuse, or who have witnessed extreme violence among family members. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 318)

This is clearly not normal behaviour for a three year old. Childhood behavioural development texts and our own family experiences indicate that children at the toddler to pre-school stage will often imitate or try to emulate the actions of significant adults (usually, at this stage, their parents). We are used to images such as a young child dragging a power drill around the yard in an effort to 'drill things like

daddy'. Ted's behaviour with the knives, though, seems more sinister than the mere play repetitions of adult actions. Indeed, the young Ted's actions in this instance seem to be more likely allegorical of something he had seen others (another?) do.

Two factors about the knives incident stand out:

- There is stealth and design (or ritual) involved in the placement of the butcher's knives. Julia was apparently asleep on both(?) occasions as Ted carefully pulled back the sheets and placed the knives side by side on the bed. It seems that it was the young child's intention that she awake to find the knives in that presentation placement. Such actions have to be planned. Since this happened, on Julia's admission, at least twice, there is an indication either that these actions were practised, or that these incidents were themselves practice.

- There is, in these incidents, a striking element of victimisation and the demonstration of power over another that typifies the relationship between a perpetrator and his victim. It would be difficult to imagine that Ted, at three years of age, could actually be capable of feeling the emotions of a perpetrator in such a situation. It is not too difficult, however, to imagine the young Ted as capable of emulating a powerful role model's actions. What Ted had learned, it seems, is that it is desirable to be able to surprise another in such a way.

Although it is largely speculative, four elements presented in Ted's story so far seem to have the potential to explain the etiological origins of his later murderous behaviour:

- Ted's grandfather's violent temperament and his obsessiveness regarding his family's public image.

- Ted's grandmother's psychological or psychiatric condition.

- The knives incidents.

- Ted's grandfather's and his mother's inability to talk about 'things that mattered'.

Eleanor, Ted's grandmother, is an almost invisible person within the family history. She is referred to as submissive, depressive and agoraphobic (MacPherson, 1989: 106). Additionally, on Louise's own admission, we know she was subjected to violence: "My dad *did* beat up on my mother once in a while" (MacPherson, 1989: 141). Knowing that Louise always guarded the virtuous family façade as she did, this admission *must* be taken as a gross under-reporting of reality.

Is it possible that Sam Cowell, in these 'beatings', regularly threatened his wife's life for some reason - that he threatened her with butcher's knives (common kitchen equipment) in some ritualised or semi-ritualised way? Did the young Ted either secretly witness such behaviour? Even more horrifyingly, was he included as an observer, an 'apprentice' by a sadistic grandfather – 'violent coaching', as Athens (1989) referred it?

Such a scenario seems improbable, and is merely speculation. Unfortunately, because of the wall of silence erected around the Cowell/Bundy family by Sam, Louise and Ted, those trying to understand Ted Bundy's actions are left with no recourse but to speculate. An analysis of Ted's own recollections of his life

(presented below), however, indicates some allegorical content that could support this scenario.

It is also possible (although, again, not verifiable) that the knives events described by Julia were contiguous with Louise's decision to leave home. One might speculate that this incident could have been a trigger in her decision to leave. In the words of a psychiatrist, Ted's actions on this occasion were "…extraordinarily bizarre…" (Lewis, in MacPherson, 1989: 142). Was this an indicator for Louise – a 'final straw' – that caused her to decide to finally leave the family home and the dominion of her father? Neither Louise nor Ted ever explained this move.

Ted's life in the Bundy household

Louise married John Bundy not long after moving to Tacoma. Johnnie, as he was known, was recently demobbed from the navy and was working as a cook at a hospital. He held that same job till retirement. Ted seems to have had trouble adapting to his new stepfather, and apparently felt a strong sense of dislocation at having been separated from his doting grandfather (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 48).

Ted was reportedly "…jealous of his 'new daddy'…" (MacPherson, 1989: 143). He probably saw Johnny Bundy as a contestant for his mother's meagre outward showings of affection, perhaps diverting feelings of hostility from his mother to this new substitute father. Ted seems to have also been affected by being torn away from his apparently comfortable relationship with his grandfather:

> Ted went away with a very angry, rejecting, cold woman who didn't really want him, who took him away from the one person who was really warm to

him". (Lewis, in MacPherson, 1989: 143)

Whatever the reasons, the young Ted displayed hostility towards Johnnie in temper tantrums that included one episode at five years of age of wetting his pants in public (MacPherson, 1989:143).

This theme of abandonment, or loss of a comforting relationship, was repeated early in that first year in Ted's new home - his First Grade teacher (a Mrs Oyster), whom he was very attached to, left teaching to have a baby (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 49). The young Ted didn't understand human reproduction and was probably unable to understand the need for her departure.

This seems to have been a third major unexplained abandonment that Ted suffered - first his mother left him for two whole months as a new-born, then he was torn away from his doting grandfather, and now he was separated from the school teacher in whose presence he felt comfort.

Ted's subsequent experience with Mrs Oyster's replacement was not positive - he described his new teacher (Miss Geri) as "... about five feet tall, with the shape and menacing attitude of a cannonball about to explode" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 49).

Life in the Bundy household was modest in terms of material possessions. This seemed to annoy the pre-adolescent Ted, who had developed a taste for expensive material possessions - something he had learned, perhaps, in the Cowell family home. He saw a strong contrast between the lifestyle of his Uncle Jack (the cultured music lecturer) and his own family's more modest surroundings. He reported feeling 'humiliated' at being seen by others in his stepfather's very ordinary car, a Rambler

(Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 50). Later, as a young man, Ted would simply steal to furnish himself with the lifestyle he desired.

There is some evidence from this period of immediate pre-adolescence and adolescence that indicates that Ted had developed a 'short fuse'. Several of his childhood schoolmates would later tell stories of fights where Ted would move very quickly from a calm state to something resembling fury. One incident, perhaps more interesting than the other few, is described by former schoolmate Terry Storwick:

> He and John Moon got into a scuffle. Bundy hit him over the head with a stick. It was a very deliberate attack on another person, and the way John Moon described it, he was attacked from behind. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 51)

There is an ominous shudder of similarity between the surprise attack described in this story and the method Ted later used to subdue his victims. There seems to be an especially strong parallel between the actions in this incident and the actions Ted later described when recounting what was probably his first 'hunting' experience, where he stalked a woman, planning to ambush her and strike her with a piece of wood (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 72-73).

Ted's first public encounter with his illegitimacy

One other incident from this period stands out in Ted's story. When he was ten or so years old, his cousin John (the cultured Uncle Jack's son) taunted Ted, saying he was a bastard. Ted's one-time fiancee, in relating this story, said that Ted angrily refused to believe this claim until his cousin showed him his birth certificate (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 53). Ted claimed to Michaud and Aynesworth

that he had discovered his birth certificate himself whilst rummaging through family papers. Whatever the true story is, it seems that Ted was deeply affected by this confrontation with his illegitimacy. His friend Terry Storwick later recalled a conversation they had had regarding his illegitimacy - when Terry tried to make Ted feel better about this situation by suggesting it was no big deal, Ted reportedly replied: “Well, it’s not you that’s a bastard” (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 54).

Significantly, Louise dismisses the importance of this story, claiming that there was no need for her to explain anything to Ted about his biological father, wiping away any conception that the young boy may have had a need to be told the truth: “... He understood. He was just irritated with his cousin for teasing him about it” (MacPherson, 1989: 143). Once more in his life, at another point where he vitally needed the advocacy of an understanding, open, honest parent, Ted was left alone to bear the guilt and shame that his church and family upbringing must have made him feel about his ‘bastard’ status. With no-one to talk to about this, it was buried away in the recesses of his mind as something that didn’t need to be (or wasn’t *allowed* to be) dealt with.

The mask of sanity

By the onset of adolescence and the beginning of high school, Ted was aware that he felt different:

> In junior high everything was fine. Nothing that I can recall happened that summer before my sophomore year to stunt me or otherwise hinder my progress. But I got to high school and I didn’t make any progress.....I felt alienated from my old friends. They just seemed to move on and I didn’t. I don’t know why and I don’t know if there’s an explanation. Maybe it’s

> something that was programmed by some kind of genetic thing. In my early schooling, it seemed like there was no problem in learning what the appropriate social behaviours were. It just seemed like I hit a wall in high school. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 54-55)

This dislocation, this social awkwardness that Ted felt seemed to disappear in only two situations - when he could use his verbal skills in the formalised setting of classroom discussions, and in the solitary sport of skiing (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 56-57). In these settings, he could demonstrate a facade of mastery, but in any unstructured social encounter, he was left floundering. He later talked of a profound bewilderment at this stage in his life regarding social relationships.

> I didn't know what made things tick. I didn't know what made people want to be friends. I didn't know what made people attractive to one another. I didn't know what underlay social interactions. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 57)

Since these are the words of the adult Ted reflecting on his adolescence, it is perhaps possible that he was here simply trying to provide an excuse for the adult behaviour he couldn't even admit to, let alone explain. It is also possible that Ted was expressing the genuine feelings he experienced in high school - feelings that had lain buried and compartmentalised away in a vault of inexplicability. What is certain is that such feelings would not be incompatible with the social deprivation that characterised Ted's early life. Deprived of the instinctual reassurance of security that is provided immediately after birth by prolonged contact with a physically and psychologically nurturing human presence, brought up in a very carefully structured environment that was calculated to project a show of social 'rightness' but devoid of any real human warmth, and kept away from early

childhood experimentation through extensive play with others, there is little wonder that Ted Bundy felt he did not understand friendship and love.

By early adolescence, the public and private sides of Ted's character had started to differentiate. He began shoplifting ski equipment and household furnishings. His mother explained these away as "... just gifts from the department store where he worked" (MacPherson, 1989: 144). From this early stage, it seems, Ted began to illicitly procure the material possessions he thought necessary to project an air of success socially.

Ted's nocturnal voyeuristic behaviour also appears in adolescence:

> ...the vice-president of the Methodist Youth Fellowship by day was a voyeur at night, sneaking out to peer in windows to watch women undress - a classic early route for rapists and serial killers. (MacPherson, 1989: 144)

His school report cards generally showed high scholastic achievement, but Ted didn't feel accepted or acceptable in any non-structured situation. What emerged during this period was an ever more polished public facade of high achievement, whilst his private behaviour was showing increasing signs of significant psychological disturbance. He was learning to project the desirable public face, just as his mother and his grandfather had (perhaps unknowingly, but insidiously) taught him to. With no avenue for (indeed, a lifetime of exaltation against) talking to others about his aberrant self, these behaviours became more and more compartmentalised and any desire to search for explanation receded into oblivion. This is the phenomenon that was once described as "His one terrible genius...creating his mask of sanity" (MacPherson, 1989: 145).

An obsession with detective magazines and their gory pictures of bodies that had been sexually assaulted apparently began in adolescence, at the time that Ted felt distanced from what he perceived to be 'normal' sexual development (MacPherson, 1989: 144). He reported only one date in high school, and observed of himself during that time that sex sort of mystified him (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989a: 55-56). He didn't see himself as handsome during adolescence, but he later had no problem as an adult in attracting women to himself. Indeed, he exhibited quite anomalous behaviour for a serial killer in this area of relationships - the adult Ted was carrying on normal sexual relationships whilst he was murdering and assaulting other female victims (MacPherson, 1989: 145).

Autobiographical notations on Ted Bundy's life

Michaud and Aynesworth (1983; 1989) provide perhaps the best chance that we have to analyse the mind of Ted Bundy. Although Bundy maintained his innocence on all charges until immediately prior to his execution, Michaud and Aynesworth provided Bundy with the perfect vehicle for his attempt to explain his actions to himself and the world. They invited him to speculate in the third person on just how a serial killer might behave (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 58). Certainly, Bundy was playing his own game as he told his 'speculative' tales about the various murders he had allegedly committed - he was revelling in his own cleverness and in his own imagined notoriety. Concurrently, though, he was giving the best insight we are going to be afforded into his development as a serial murderer.

I have divided Bundy's inadvertent autobiographic comments into five life themes for analysis:

- Family history

- Self image
- The Flaw and the Entity
- Possession
- Disappearance

Each of these areas of Bundy's life narrative will be analysed for allegorical content in an attempt to fathom any connections that may exist between past environmental stimuli and his adult behaviour.

Family history

Bundy's illegitimacy seems to have been, despite his protestations to the contrary, an ongoing problem for him. He had little or no understanding of what a father was - his relationship to his adoptive father, Johnnie Bundy, was never good. The only adult male role models he seems to have had were his grandfather (Sam Cowell) and his mother's uncle (Uncle Jack). Most importantly, though, he was never allowed to know who his father was - his mother stifled all discussion of the topic.

> Did I ever wonder about my father during that period of time? (The first four years of his life.) No, I didn't. Not that I can ever say for sure. Perhaps somewhere down in my little childhood mind, at the time, I probably did. But if at all, it was fleeting. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 6)

Why had he not been inquisitive? Had he not wanted to know?

> ...My mother has never made the attempt - when I was growing up, never made the attempt to tell me. If she had wanted to, she would have. Since she didn't, I figure she didn't want to and there was good reason for it. It

> didn't bother me one way or the other. So, uh, it was never a source of any kind of problem. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 205)

It seems that the topic of his illegitimacy never surfaced with his siblings in the Bundy family, either:

> I'm sure this topic (the identity of his father) had not been discussed by my mother and I. And so, it was sort of taboo, and I'm not *sur*e, but I have a feeling that even my brothers and sisters weren't made aware of it...we never talked about it, my brothers and sisters and I. (Michaud and Aynesworth. 1989: 206)

Bundy's anger (described earlier) at being teased by his cousin for being a bastard indicates that this question of who his father was *did* cause problems for him, and it *did* bother him. Yet the adult Ted had rationalised away his need to know his real father:

> ...we're probably 95 percent the way we are because of the way we were raised and where we were raised...the way I am and the way I view society didn't emanate from my natural father... He contributed absolutely nothing, substantially, to my, uh, development. So it's never been a problem to me. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 205-206)

There was one significant time in his life when he had an opportunity to discover the truth about his father. He was twenty-nine years old, he had been arrested in Salt Lake City, USA, on minor charges, had been in prison for a short time and was out on bond (bail). His mother approached him with an obvious need to talk to him:

> ... she had this real *concern* in her voice - something in her tone indicated to me that she had something real serious to talk to me about. She wanted us to talk alone. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 206)

Ted was convinced, from the situation he is recalling here, that his mother was on the point of disclosure about his biological father. It seems to be the only time in history that she felt a need to tell anyone. Ted, however, had learned his lesson that he was *not to know*. He rejected her advance. Several years later, discussing this incident with Hugh Aynesworth, he offered a rationalisation for why he rejected his mother's apparent offer of information:

> ... I was just out of jail, you know, and I was knee deep in a lot of trouble. I didn't need anything more right then... It wouldn't help me. I was, I mean, I had a lot to deal with then. I had, uh, court the next day. I was in a lot of trouble, and I *still* didn't give a shit. I didn't need any more burdens. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 206-207)

The complaint that he was overburdened with other (legal) problems appears to be a weak excuse for his action - he had previously given an indication that the question of his paternity bothered him greatly. What is more interesting is his statement that he "*still* didn't give a shit" - this sounds like an angry child reacting to his mother's ingrained commandment that he was not to know. His lesson had been learned so well, it seems, that he could not accept the information, even when it was offered.

Many people, including Ted himself, have speculated that Ted's grandfather, Sam Cowell, was his biological father. One member of the family once asked Sam about

Ted's paternity (MacPherson, 1989: 140) - the result was an extremely angry outburst from Sam, indicating, perhaps, that he had something to hide. Unfortunately for history, the full details of this event remain obscure.

Although there is scant evidence of Bundy having contact with his grandfather from the age of four, he is reported to have held him in high regard, remembering of his first three years in the Cowell household "... only pleasant moments in the greenhouse with his grandfather and...no recollection of family violence" (MacPherson, 1989: 143). When Hugh Aynesworth wanted to interview Sam Cowell for the book that Ted was collaborating on whilst on death row (the source of Bundy's autobiographical statements examined in this thesis), Bundy tried to block his inclusion in the research:

> ...I *don't* want you to talk to my grandfather. He's in his late seventies and they've shielded him from all this... I hate to see something like this push him over the edge. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 225, italics in original)

The unanswerable question here is who is Ted trying to protect - his grandfather or himself? It is hard to imagine, with the huge mass of the American popular press spending years merchandising Bundy's story, that Sam Cowell *could* have been 'shielded from all this'. He could (and it would seem to be in character for him to do this) try to ignore the media attention that Ted continually received. His powers of denial, though would have to have been strong.

What is also possible, of course, is that Ted was trying, consciously or unconsciously, to avoid his own fears about what might come out of an enquiry into Sam Cowell's memory of Ted's childhood.

On the subject of his mother, Bundy has little to say directly. She has undoubtedly had a significant influence on his character. The family tendency to present a socially correct face no matter what was happening behind the scenes seems to have been passed down through at least three generations - from grandfather to mother to son. This dedication to maintaining a public facade was sometimes interpreted as coldness. MacPherson (1989) quotes 'one close observer' (unidentified) who commented on the behaviour of Ted and his mother during Ted's murder trial:

> There was something chilling about how cold she was. In many ways, she talked like Ted.... It was absolutely freaky, as if the two had sat down and collaborated on what they could say. (MacPherson, 1989: 149)

When, during Bundy's 1979 murder trial, Louise Bundy pleaded in court for her son's life, Ted was reportedly talking to his legal representative while all other eyes in the courtroom were transfixed on his mother as she made her statement (MacPherson, 1989: 149). Is there an allegory in Ted's action here (conscious or unconscious) of the abandonment - the turning away from - that Ted himself endured as a newborn? At the least, there is a message in his action that his mother and what she was saying were unimportant.

Despite their apparently unspoken agreement to preserve the family 'face', there is evidence of an emotional gulf between mother and son. James Coleman, a lawyer who worked on Bundy's last appeals before his execution, said of Louise Bundy:

> Mrs Bundy was in fact singularly unhelpful. My impression was that she felt nothing would save Ted, so she was going to protect her family. (MacPherson,1989: 149)

Interestingly, MacPherson found a 'bitter edge' when she talked to Louise Bundy about Ted's birth and the months that followed (Louise is speaking):

> "Hindsight is great. You can look back and think, 'Well, maybe I shouldn't have done it'". The sigh escapes. "But there's no point in going over that. What is, is." Finally, a chink appears in the carefully crafted armour. Wouldn't she have felt awful giving him up for adoption? Her answer is one word - flat, expressionless: "Probably". (MacPherson, 1989: 141)

For a mother to abandon her baby at birth, to much later express ambivalent feelings about having been persuaded to keep him, and to view the saving of 'family face' as more important than her son's life, the circumstances surrounding that child's conception must have been in some way traumatic.

The explanations Louise gave for Ted's murders, when faced with his conviction and imminent execution, were more concerned with absolving the family from blame than, it seems, absolving Ted from blame. Mrs Bundy, in an interview conducted two weeks after Ted's execution, referred to the horrendous murders he had committed as "those things" and "those terrible thing" (MacPherson, 1989: 140). She was, at this point in time, trying to present a virtuous family face to the world. She continually painted a picture of Ted's childhood as normal:

> He never gave us any trouble at all.... From the time he was born, Ted had as much love as anybody. We just can't imagine whatever happened. (MacPherson, 1989: 144)

Such a statement does not seem to logically echo the two central experiences of Ted's early life: *1) he was abandoned at birth* - for two months, in the nursing home

where he was born, and *2) he had some early connection with violence* - when he was finally taken to the Cowell home, it was an environment where there *was* violence. On Louise's own admission, "My dad *did* beat up on my mother once in a while" (MacPherson, 1989: 141).

A psychiatric assessment of Ted Bundy's feelings towards his mother, recorded in the twenty-four hours before his execution, reveals some very deep seated discord in the relationship between mother and son:

> To the very end, Ted wanted to understand why he had so much rage. He'd say, "It doesn't matter what went on between me and my mother then, because we've patched it up now." At the same time, he did feel it was *very, very* important. (Lewis, in MacPherson, 1989: 106)

Ted Bundy, it seems, did not have a 'normal' childhood. He suffered unimaginable psychological and emotional trauma at being separated from his mother from birth to the age of two months. He had a very superficial relationship with his mother, and a very deep and inexplicable anger at being forbidden access to knowledge of his father. He was taken from his grandfather at an early age, ending a relationship that he recalled, as an adult, as being positive. As a toddler, he may have witnessed the physical abuse of his grandmother. (Was he somehow convinced that this was normal – that the subjugation of powerless others was acceptable and even desirable behaviour?) He had, at best, an antagonistic relationship to his adoptive father, Johnnie Bundy. He was never able to talk with his mother or his siblings, or, it appears, anyone else, about 'the things that mattered'. Ted Bundy's experience of family was not the picture postcard of Middle America that it was held up to be.

Self image

One of Bundy's earliest recollections of himself concerns his fascination with radio talk shows. Even before he was six, he was listening for hours at night to a crystal radio set.

> I would lie in bed for hours and hours, listening to news broadcasts exclusively....My favorite thing on Sunday nights was to hunt the radio bands for talk shows, call-in programs, documentary-like things.....I genuinely derived pleasure from listening to people talk at that age. It gave me comfort. Often it didn't matter what they were talking about. And I realized, even then, that a lot of the affection I had for programs of that type came not because of their content, but because it was people talking! And I was eavesdropping on their conversations. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 10-11)

Is there an allegory here of that first crucial month of Bundy's life? The newborn baby, left without the frequent reassurance of physical, aural, sensual contact with a familiar nurturer, fed instead by a bottle offered by whichever nurse was on shift, left for long periods of time in a state of physical isolation in his cot, might have 'keyed in' to the one sense that could receive frequent stimulation - hearing. Voices, unintelligible, of course, but voices, would have been all around him. Did he gain some sense of relationship to his newly experienced world by simply listening? Was he later, as a young boy, seeking the same sort of stimulation from radio broadcasts? Again, he was lying alone, experiencing the sound of the world of beings around him, separate from them, remote, isolated, yet able to draw some sense of peripheral belonging from the hubbub.

An electroencephalogram performed on Bundy when he was on death row indicated

"... an extraordinary gap between his verbally superior IQ and his poor ability to see spatial relationships" (MacPherson, 1989: 147). The possible significance of this information is the psychiatrist's conclusion that such discrepancies often suggest that there might be some central nervous system dysfunction, but the extent or effect of such dysfunction cannot be determined (MacPherson, 1989: 147). Ted Bundy always did exhibit superior verbal skills, but whether these were a legacy of genetics or of early phenotypic development is impossible to say.

In Junior High School, Bundy began to feel self-conscious physically. He felt small and unable to find acceptance in the group sports like football, basketball or baseball. Moreover, his parents don't appear to have encouraged him in sport:

> My dad (Johnnie Bundy) never had any feeling for it, none at all. He never came to my football games. My mom didn't like it because it cost money. I didn't have that parental stamp of approval. My dad never played baseball or basketball or football with me. We never threw the ball around. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 11-12)

As an adult on death row, talking about his adolescent self image, Bundy's statements seem to echo the separateness, the aloneness that must have been such a central component of his earliest conscious experiences:

> I have to tell you. These kinds of innocuous admissions about always being concerned that I was underweight... not liking team sports and being traumatized by not making the hardball team. Whatever it is. Observations about my mother and not communicating in a way that was satisfactory for me. I've really never discussed this with *anyone* before. Not anyone! Not with my mom, my brothers or sisters, Liz (his one-time fiancee) or anybody.

> Maybe there's never been an occasion for it. But you would think there *would* have been an occasion for it, wouldn't you? (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 12)

This sounds like what Miller (1983) would have called the child within the adult - like an assertion from the child that those significant others who should have been nurturing his psyche were not there when they should have been. Is there an allegory in Ted's life here that harks back to that central, initial life experience of his - abandonment? Even if his significant others did not intend such abandonment, it is clear that the adolescent Ted, desperate for support in whatever field he could find it, *felt* the pain of abandonment again in his school sports experiences.

In senior high school, Bundy reported feeling more and more alienated from social acceptance. He was able to feel a sense of mastery of the social environment only in structured settings such as the classroom:

> ...Believe me, if anything characterizes my classroom performance, it's being precocious. I've always been that way. In those kinds of settings. It's a formalized setting. And the ground rules are fairly strict. And your performance is measured by different rules than what happens when everybody is peeling off into little cliques down the hallway. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 13)

When it came to intimate, interpersonal interaction, Ted Bundy's early childhood learning experiences ensured that he would suffer significant problems. In 1986, while he was on death row, a psychiatric report on Bundy concluded:

> He lacks any core experience of care and nurturing or early emotional

> sustenance... Severe rejection experiences have seriously warped his personality development and led to deep denial or repression of any basic needs for affection. Severe early deprivation has led to a poor ability to relate or understand other people. (Feldman, in MacPherson,1989: 142)

Two areas where Ted did find some feelings of mastery whilst in high school were in the sport of skiing and in the arena of political campaigns. Interestingly, he probably stole all the ski equipment he ever owned (MacPherson, 1989: 144), indicating not so much that his parents would not or could not provide such things as it did Ted's need to have the best in order to impress. With his easy verbal skills, he also found it easy to impress several candidates for political office, and to become part of their campaign staff. From senior high school on he worked for several different political candidates in their campaign teams (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 15). Only, it seems, in the structured confines of the schoolroom, on the ski slopes in the one (notably singular, not group) sport he mastered, or in the burlesque world of the political campaign room did Bundy find a feeling close to acceptance by others.

At least one psychiatrist believes Bundy suffered from a manic-depressive disorder, the disorder perhaps first surfacing in 1967 when Ted was about nineteen years old (MacPherson, 1989: 144). Bundy himself admitted to mood swings, or what he termed 'changes':

> I'm very aware of them myself...perhaps the phraseology 'mood swings' isn't accurate. It's just *changes* . It's harder than hell to describe, but all I want to do is lay (sic) around . I'm not motivated to do *anything* ! ... I'm not particularly depressed. There's just no momentum.... It became a part of my character, of my facade, that I would conceal these periods of inactivity.... I became expert at projecting something very different. That I was very busy.

> It is clear now, I think, that a huge part of my life was hidden from everyone - secret, as it were. It didn't take much effort at all. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 16-17)

Bundy seems fairly dismissive of these 'changes' - they are cast as nothing more than spells of indolent inactivity. Yet these periods need to be seen in light of other important factors in Bundy's life from late adolescence on. He was engaged in voyeuristic activities (watching through windows as women undressed), shoplifting and stealing household goods and sports equipment, and generally riding a roller-coaster of success and failure as a student (MacPherson, 1989:144). Those parts of his life that were not socially acceptable - that didn't measure up to the social standards instilled in his psyche by the Cowell family legacy - were hidden from public scrutiny. "Ted Bundy learned almost at birth that if nothing was said, you could pretend that it never happened." (MacPherson, 1989: 146)

Is there evidence of the manic behaviour expected from a person with manic-depressive disorder? Yes, there is. Ted talks about the 'high' he experienced when he escaped from custody in Colorado in 1977, and he alludes indirectly to what could be seen as his manic side when he tells his stories about 'the entity' and talks about possession. (These latter two topics are covered later in this thesis).

Bundy goes into quite exhaustive detail about the several days following his escape in Colorado (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 17-22). He describes his actions - walking calmly around, looking for a car with keys in the ignition, stealing a vehicle, making his getaway, finding assistance from unsuspecting passers-by, chatting with strangers in various bars across the country and cheerfully telling them fictitious but convincing stories about where he was going and why. While relaying this story, Ted is swept up once more into the 'high' of the experience. His storytelling is

excitedly animated. The story ends as the original experience did - Ted runs out of excitement, and feels himself lapsing into a depressive state. Interestingly, this change of state coincides with a realisation that his existence is not 'real' - he is sitting in a bus station, waiting for a bus to transport him to another city, when he suddenly becomes aware of the fiction he is living:

> ...I was watching all these people - these people who had *real* lives, backgrounds, histories, girlfriends, husbands and families. Who were smiling and laughing and talking with each other. Who seemed to have so much of what I wanted! All of a sudden I felt smaller and smaller and smaller. More insecure. And more *alone*! (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 22, italics in original)

Encapsulated in this one brief story ending is an expression, it would seem, of Ted Bundy's feelings about his own life in total. He longs for a state of socially acceptable normalcy that he feels he has never had and perhaps feels he will never attain. In an ominous echo of his earliest experiences, he is alone amongst a sea of people with whom he has no connection.

The Flaw and the Entity

The 'Flaw' and the 'Entity' are Bundy's vehicles for explaining the aberrant behaviour of the serial murderer. His central thesis is that some sort of genetic and innate flaw pre-exists in such persons. The Flaw, Bundy posits, allows a gradual development of pathological behaviour, responding in totally unpredictable ways to environmental stressors (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 60-66). The Entity is the phenotypic expression of that genetic flaw in response to the encountered environment. Bundy suggests that family background has an influence on adult

behaviour - that stress in general acts on the weak points of the innate flaw to produce psychopathological behaviour in the long term, but that these influences cannot be predicted.

> Society wants to believe it can identify evil people, or bad or harmful people, but it's not practical. If someone does something antisocial or deviant, that is a manifestation of something that's going on inside. Once they do something, *then* they can be labelled. Predictions can't be made until that point is reached. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 61)

Very early on in his discussions about the entity, Bundy speculated on the role of pornography in the development of a murderous psychopathology. He sees a general interest in the images presented by such publications (and pornography in general) as inconsequential in itself. It is when such an interest in sexual images interacts with an innate flaw in a person's make-up that disaster is allowed to emerge.

> For most everyone that (an interest in soft porn images) would simply be a sign of healthy interest, normal. But this interest, for some unknown reason, becomes geared toward matters of a sexual nature that involve violence. I cannot emphasise enough the gradual development of this. It is not short term. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 66)

Conveniently, Bundy's explanation absolves the family in general, and parents in particular, from all blame - it is 'the flaw' that explains aberration. This is the central theme of his explanation of serial killing.

Bundy goes to some length to underline his contention that an interest in sexual

images can develop from the innocuous 'Playboy' stage through more pornographic images and then to images that combine sex and violence. The interest in this more aberrant pornography grows slowly but insidiously, with an ever increasing focus on the pleasure derived from victimising another (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 66-68). At this point, it is the 'flaw' in a personality that, according to Bundy, provides the opportunity to unlock the potential chaos that violent pornography holds.

Dr. Lewis, the psychiatrist who talked with Bundy just hours before his execution, adds a crucial extra dimension to this discussion of the flaw, pornography and victimisation. She said that he:

> ...really talked about how *very, very early* he had a fascination with stories of murders and murderers and death. At that time, the fascination was not with pornography. Later on, it fused. (MacPherson, 1989: 142, italics in original)

Importantly, Dr Lewis reported that of the several times she interviewed Bundy, on this last occasion, with his own death imminent, "...he was more coherent and logical than at any other time I met him. He was letting his guard down for the first time with me" (MacPherson, 1989: 105). If Ted was being truthful, then, this single piece of information counters the carefully constructed argument he had been advancing in his conversations with Michaud and Aynesworth about violence growing out of pornography. It seems that Ted's interest in murderous violence and the images of suffering victims predated his interest in pornography. The knives incident (outlined earlier in this thesis) indicates a very early connection with violence in Ted Bundy's life.

Bundy gives us a very interesting picture of the developmental nature of the phenomenon he termed 'the entity'. The entity, for Ted, is that uncontrollable

'otherness' that gradually takes control of conscious actions. This is not a demonic or even an unconscious overwhelming of innate feelings of right and wrong - it is an insidious, creeping desire to victimise others that is at one and the same time conscious but undeniable. This progression from vague thought to tentative action to increasingly victimising thoughts and then to victimising action is illustrated by Bundy's account of the development of voyeurism.

It seems that quite early on, probably in his teens, Bundy began developing fantasies about entrapping women. This is a most significant point, and will be expanded on in the following discussion of his need to *possess* women. An early indication of this drive comes from his discussions with Michaud and Aynesworth. They note that he related an early fantasy that involved him disabling cars by surreptitiously removing their distributor caps or letting air out of tyres. This would, he envisaged, disable the cars. He would then wait nearby in order to come to the aid of the stricken female motorist (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 68). At this early stage, it appears that the objective was simply to 'capture' his quarry - he makes no mention of any desire to do anything but ingratiate himself to his unknowing victims. The impetus for this behaviour, Ted insisted, came from the entity - even at this stage, he denies having control over (and therefore responsibility for) his actions.

As Bundy tells the story, his voyeurism emanated out of this early fantasising about creating these captive situations:

> Say he [Bundy is talking about a 'fictitious' person] was walking down the street on one occasion, one evening, and just totally, uh, by chance...looked up into the window of a house and saw a woman undressing.

> And it just occurred to him... that there was a viable alternative to this nonsense of the flat tyres and distributor caps. Certainly a less, a more acceptable one, one that put everybody in less jeopardy - would...might be realized by indulging in a form of voyeurism.
>
> And he began, with some regularity, with *increasing* regularity, to, uh, canvass, as it were, the community he lived in. By peeping in windows, as it were, and watching a woman undress, or watching whatever could be seen, you know, during the evening, and approaching it almost like a project, throwing himself into it, uh, literally for years. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 68-69)

The central elements in these twin stories of car immobilisation and voyeurism are deception, manipulation, entrapment, and stealth. Overarching these elements is perhaps the reason for their employment - the desire to exert power over others. This desire to overpower others does not seem to be conscious. Bundy's explanation for the gradual expansion of his activities is always couched in terms of the overpowering of his own will or inhibitions by the entity - a force which is part of him, but simply cannot be denied. The entity, as Bundy sees it, sounds much like Miller's (1989) *repetition compulsion*.

Bundy saw the control over voyeurism as being gradually overwhelmed by the entity:

> ...as this condition develops and becomes more distinct, there's pressure, a sort of contest, as it were. The tension between normal individual, uh, normal consciousness of this individual and those demands being submitted to him via this competing...this condition inside him seems to be competing

> for attention. Okay? And it's not, it's not an independent thing. One doesn't switch on and the other doesn't switch off. They're more or less active at the same time. Sometimes one is more active, you know. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 70-71)

Although this seems to be a conscious process, the entity is certainly seen as possessing some form of 'otherness' - it is not, according to Ted, a natural or desired part of his essential self. It overpowers Ted's essential self: "Finally, inevitably, this force - this entity - would make a breakthrough" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 71).

To explain the point at which the entity makes the breakthrough, Bundy refers to the role he saw alcohol taking in the whole process:

> I think you could make a little more sense of much of this if you take into account the effect of alcohol. It's important. It's *very* important as a trigger. When this person drank a good deal, his inhibitions were significantly diminished. He would find that his urge to engage in voyeuristic behaviour...would become more prevalent, more urgent. On every occasion when he engaged in such behaviour, he was intoxicated. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 71-72, italics in original)

Whether Bundy drank to try to avoid having to deal with the thoughts in his conscious fantasies, or whether he was rationalising his inability to control his other self is unclear. What is clear is that as he drank, the inevitability of his failure to control 'the entity' increased. His control slips to the point where stalking and watching quarry moves on to attack.

> And we can say that the, the...on one particular evening, when he [the 'fictitious person'] had been drinking a great deal...and as he was passing a bar, he saw a woman leaving the bar and walk up a fairly dark side street. And for no, uh, we'd say that, something seemed to seize him! I was going to say something crystallized, but that's another way of looking at it. But the urge to do something to that person seized him - in a way he'd never been affected before.
>
> And it seized him strongly. And to the point where, uh, without giving a great deal of thought, he searched around for some instrumentality to uh, uh, *attack* this woman with. He found a piece of two-by-four in a lot somewhere and proceeded to follow and track this girl. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 72-73)

On this particular occasion, although he followed the woman to a house, she disappeared inside before he could take any action to assault her. But what had happened, in this one experience, Bundy related, was that something fundamental about the *way* he fantasised changed:

> ...the sort of revelation...of that experience and the frenzied desire that seized him, uh, really seemed to usher in a new dimension to the, that part of himself that was obsessed with, or otherwise enamored with, violence and women and sexual activity - a composite kind of thing. Not terribly well defined, but more defined as time went on. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 73-74)

Again, it is interesting to speculate that there is a very direct connection between the knives episode in Ted Bundy's very early childhood and the behaviour that we see emerging in these stories. The stealth, the entrapment, the observation - these

elements are common to both points in time. Indeed, it seems that the adult Ted has no better understanding of, or reason for, behaving as he does than did the apparently innocent toddler. Could the same experiences be powering both examples of aberrant behaviour, and if so, how did it happen that the adult Ted had developed no understanding of his condition?

The adult Bundy progressed quite rapidly, apparently, from that first 'failed' encounter with assault to 'successful' 'hunts'. Bundy describes that first attempted assault as having the effect of providing a great relief for the inner tension that he felt from his constant fantasies and voyeurism. It is described almost as a 'high' or a 'rush': "[the event] sort of signalled a breakthrough. The breaking of the tension - making a hole in the dam. Not bursting it down, but again, we begin to see the cracks, as it were" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 74).

The 'cracks' widened still further with his first actual assault:

> ...on one *particular* occasion, he saw a woman park her car and walk up to her door and fumble for her keys. He walked up behind her and struck her with a...a piece of wood he was carrying. And she fell down and began screaming, and he panicked and ran. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 74)

This is deliberate, planned action - he had the piece of wood with him for the purpose. The reaction of his victim, though, seems to have surprised him. Perhaps he had imagined that she would fall, compliant, subdued and silent at his feet. Perhaps that is how he imagined it would be. But she screamed - she showed a very human, a very 'alive' response. He had not prepared for the possible consequences of his action, and he seemed to lose control at that point. Later, he would develop a macabre mastery of victims' responses.

Now, though, all he could feel was panic and fear. Significantly, although Bundy talks about feelings of remorse over this incident, the feelings were clearly not connected with any empathic understanding of his victim's experience - his remorse was connected simply to his fear of apprehension, of discovery. The result of this reflection was a resolve to not do such a thing again, *not* for the sake of the victim, but for the sake of avoiding detection. The central lesson of his childhood that nothing mattered except appearances had been well learned:

> The sobering effect of that [first assault] was to...for some time, close up the cracks again. And not do anything. For the first time, he sat back and swore to himself that he wouldn't do something like that again...or even, anything that would lead to it. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 75)

What Ted Bundy was launching himself on was a cycle of killing that he described as a battle between himself and the entity, and what research describes as a cyclical series of events that typify the actions of serial murderers. In terms of Norris's (1989: 23-35) seven phases of serial murder (Aura, Trolling, Wooing, Capture, Murder, Totem, and Depression) Bundy, at this point, is in his first Depression Phase. The 'high' has quickly dissipated, and he is afraid, fearful of discovery and determined not to do it again. However, he has no understanding of why he has behaved in this way. He has no point of connection with whatever early childhood trauma lies behind his desire to victimise, to traumatise, to overpower and subjugate others, and therefore has no chance of fathoming 'the entity'. It is not surprising that Bundy's own stories show him then entering what Norris (1989: 23) would describe as the Aura Phase of the *next* cycle. Ted illustrated this phenomenon with these words:

> ...within a matter of months, slowly but surely, the impact of this event lost its, uh, deterrent value. And within months he was back, uh, uh, peeping in windows again and slipping back into that old routine. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 75)

The slight moral revulsion that he had felt at his actions in that initial assault receded, but what remained in his consciousness was the danger he had exposed himself to. He began to think "...of alternative means of engaging in similar activity, but not...not something that would be likely [to] result in apprehension...or failure of one sort or another" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 76).

From this early point, the resolve that emerges from the hiatus created by the jarring back into 'reality' after the assault is a resolve to be smarter next time - to not get caught. This prompts Bundy to plan his next assault more carefully. He stalks another woman and attacks her in her own bed. This attack again goes wrong, the woman screaming and the attacker fleeing. Again, he feels a mixture of repulsion, fear and disgust at what he has done. This time, though, the feeling that this must not be repeated lasts only one month, not three (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 75-77). What Norris (1988) describes as repetition through the seven phases of serial murder, Miller (1987) would describe as the *repetition compulsion*.

When these attacks progressed from assault to killing (the process of that transition is dealt with below under the 'possession' theme), the battle with the entity took on much greater significance. The victim always remained depersonalised until after the sexual gratification, whereupon more rational thought processes would take over, dictating that the victim would have to be killed in order to avoid detection (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 89). It seems that Bundy regarded the entity as in control virtually from the trolling phase, from the beginning of 'the hunt', to the

completion of the sexual gratification. From that point on, the 'rational' Ted, the non-entity Ted was left to deal with the consequences of the entity's actions:

> A certain amount of the need of that malignant condition had been satisfied [Ted is 'hypothesising' about a particular, early murder] through the sexual release...That driving force would recede somewhat, allowing the normal individual's mental mechanisms to again begin to take hold. To control the situation, or more so than previously. You'd expect a certain amount of debate, or regret, as it were, that it was faced with a situation...
>
> [There'd be] a considerable degree of remorse over the killing, and also a high degree of concern over detection, capture, whatever. But furthermore, we'd expect a great almost panic because of the novel nature of the situation. The panic, initially at least, would interfere with the ability to be meticulous about it - i.e., the cleaning up, and so on (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 88-89).

In the immediate post-killing period, Bundy suggested, the rational self would try to reassert dominance over the entity. There would be a strong anxiety about detection during this period, and vigilance for any indication (in the media in particular) that the event had been detected, or worse still, tied to the perpetrator:

> It would be a time for observing, and then there'd be that period of time when the normal self would be exerting its control and convincing itself that it now could be in total control and this wouldn't happen again. That would be the period of remission. At that point, I suppose, there would be some reflection about the satisfactory nature of the crime. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 90)

This period of 'remission' (the depression phase in Norris's language) illustrates an almost complete lack of empathy with the victim. The concern that exists is a concern for self-preservation, and the 'satisfactoriness' of the whole event seems to be judged in terms of what could have been done 'better' - how could the event have been made even more undetectable? This thought process was accompanied by a vestige of moral self-reproach that excused the perpetrator with a simple promise to himself that 'this won't happen again':

> As far as remorse for the act, that would last for a period of time. But it could all be justified. The person would attempt to justify it by saying, "Well, listen you, you fucked up this time, but you're never going to do it again. So let's just stay together, and it won't ever happen again". Why sacrifice this person's whole life? (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 91)

Again, what is striking is the near total inability to empathise with the victim! The concern felt is for the future of the perpetrator. Had Bundy's earliest (infant) experiences of psychological isolation and his lifelong denial of permission to talk about his feelings conditioned out any ability to feel for others? One statement he made to his lawyers indicates that he was capable of concern for nothing but his public self:

> What I knew (I had done) was unimportant, I could live with that. It was the prospect of other people even suspecting me that made me shake and sweat. (MacPherson, 1989: 146)

The intergenerational transmission of an all-consuming preoccupation with a public facade of social acceptability had, after three (and perhaps more?) generations, bourn the ultimate disregard for others.

Possession

Possession is a theme that recurs frequently throughout Ted Bundy's recorded narratives (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b). There is a clear developmental progression in the nature of Ted's desire to 'possess'. He moves from early adolescent desires to possess things (physical objects such as television sets and furniture) to late adolescent and adult desires to possess his victims as objects. The allegorical messages behind these two phases of possessive obsession are probably different. The obsession to steal such things as furniture seems to relate directly to the need to project a socially successful façade. The obsession to possess his depersonalised victims probably relates to the central allegory of Ted's life – in his earliest experiences, he himself was (like his victims) considered worthless, rejected as important, and his existence was denied.

Stealing physical possessions to furnish an acceptable lifestyle was something that Ted seems to have practiced throughout much of his adolescence. By the time he was at university, his thieving activities had developed a boldness that would be echoed in his later abductions of his murder victims. He related an incident concerning a small television set that he decided he wanted. First came the desire: "All of a sudden I said 'I'm going to *get* that Sony!'" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 30, italics in original). Then came the build-up phase, where he got 'pumped up' on his favourite beer, then the action of stealing.

> I was really pumped up. Intoxicated. I ambled on through the chinaware department and opened the door – and there were people looking right in the window at me, right? I reached in and gave a little wave to the people and picked up the TV and walked out of the window, closing the door behind me. Then walked straight through the sales area and out the door, and

> straight to my car. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 30)

The thrill was obviously not primarily in the possession of the object, but in the cleverness of the possessing action. It seems that if Ted needed something, or wanted it badly enough, he would take it, in 'broad daylight' and in the full public gaze. This sort of stealing, surely, is about power over others.

Another time, he stole a stereo player, wheeling it out of the store in a shopping trolley, like any normal shopper. He was in the process of returning to the store for the speakers when pandemonium broke out in the store – someone had realised the stereo was missing. A store assistant, Ted relates, came running up to him and asked if he'd seen a man with a stereo in a shopping trolley. Ted's brazenness was such that he could reply to the shop assistant: "Let me think. Yes, I just saw a fellow carrying some stuff and headed toward the bowling alley over there" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 31). Ted was outsmarting everybody. Later, during his murdering, he would consider that he could outsmart the police, detectives and the courts.

Ted considered that the driving force in his thieving was merely possession, but his own words hint at other 'drivers' behind his behaviour:

> The big payoff was actually *possessing* whatever it was I had stolen. It wasn't the act, necessarily. Ofttimes I would have to get intoxicated to get loose enough to be able to do it right. Apart from that, I really enjoyed having something on my wall or sitting in my apartment that I had wanted and gone out and taken. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 33, italics in original)

'Wanting' and 'taking' had become inseparable bedfellows for Ted, and the psychological intoxication of his boldness, cleverness and cunning seems to have

outlasted (or reinforced) his pleasure in possession.

Possession is a theme that reoccurs in Ted Bundy's 'third person speculation' about serial murder. If we assume that his conversations with the journalists Michaud and Aynesworth were, in fact, autobiographical, then Ted revealed a need to not only *possess* his victims, but to simultaneously *control* them. In the *modus operandi* evident in the Kathy Parks case, for instance, the theme of control with possession is clearly shown. The abductor doesn't use violence to subdue his prey, but instead uses the guile of the confident, charming, personable fellow student (Parks was a university student) offering a friendly distraction:

> Let's say she was having a snack in the cafeteria and [he] just sat down next to her and began talking, and representing himself to be a student there, and suggested they go out somewhere to get a bite to eat or to get a drink. Either he was convincing enough or she was depressed enough to accept his invitation.
>
> Of course, once she got in the car, then he had her in a position where he wanted her – and could then assume control over her. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 95-96)

Unlike some earlier abductions, the victim is not subdued physically at this point. Instead, having exerted a psychological, rather than physical power over the victim, Ted seems to enjoy extending this more subtle form of control and possession. Having gotten Parks into his car, it appears that Ted proceeded to continue to persuade her towards confidence in him. He even used an excuse about having to drive over to someone's place to collect a copy of a thesis that was being typed for him to prolong the car journey, and to explain the isolated destination he was taking her to (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 96).

The insidiousness of this form of controlling possession is clearly underlined by Ted's dismissal of the need for weapons to overpower his victim:

> Wouldn't need a gun, necessarily. This guy pulls up in a cornfield somewhere, you know, fairly abruptly.
>
> And this girl…let's say that as she travels further and further away from a populated area, she probably is becoming uncomfortable. But she still wants to believe in the face validity of the situation her would-be abductor had created for her [clears throat]. And, of course, by the time he pulled up and stopped, there would be virtually nothing she could do about it. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 97)

The cognitive dissonance in the mind of the victim – the unimaginable juxtaposition between the façade of benign friendliness and the possibility of extreme personal danger – was the psychological tool that the abductor was using to subdue his victim to helplessness. After an initial sexual assault, it appears that Kathy Parks was transported interstate, tied up in the back of Ted's car, before being assaulted again, and then killed. For Ted, though, the psychological state of his victim was not a conscious consideration. His concern was focussed on his own needs: "A combination of desire to continue that possession, in addition to the indecision about murdering her, would result in the rather extraordinary act of transporting her that great amount of distance" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 99).

Interestingly, Ted described the victim in this situation as a 'body'. In conversation with Stephen Michaud, he corrected Michaud's use of the term 'cargo' to describe what the hypothetical murderer they were discussing was carrying in his car on that occasion:

> I don't know what you mean by "cargo". He didn't have any cargo in there. He had a body! (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 101)

The possession of Kathy Parks' body seems to have been a prolonged event. It is possible that Ted not only transported her, alive, interstate, but also kept her alive in a 'safe house' for some hours after the journey. There seems to have been, not so much an indecisiveness about killing her, but a delay that gave the abductor both time to plan her disappearance, and time to subconsciously absorb the possession of her body (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 101-103). The person Kathy Parks, that part of her existence that was alive and conscious, was not visible to her abductor. Is there an allegory here of Ted's earliest existence? Was *he*, also, in those first two months of *his* life, treated by those around him as a body? As a newborn infant, craving for the warmth of human touch and the intimate sounds of a soft voice that spoke of connection to the world, was he, like Kathy Parks several decades later, treated as though he had no soul?

In conversations with the US Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Bill Hagmaier, Bundy said something else about the possession of his victims:

> …you are the last one *there*. You *feel* the last bit of breath leaving their body. You're looking into their eyes…a person in that situation is God! You possess them and they shall forever be a part of you. And the grounds where you kill them or leave them become sacred to you, and you will always be drawn back to them. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989bb: 328)

This apparent apotheosis of possession seems to have been the end point of a progression of 'need' that seemed to accompany each murder. Ted speculated to Michaud that the possession progressed through three phases each time:

> I think that initially this individual perceived just the bluff…where the victim would be under his control…I think we see a point reached – slowly, perhaps – where the control, the possession aspect, came to include…the necessity…for purposes of gratification…the killing of the victim…the *ultimate* possession was, in fact, the taking of the life. And then purely…the physical possession of the remains. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 123, italics in the original)

What was the driving force behind the need to possess? Ted grapples with that question at length in his conversations with Michaud and Aynesworth, and perhaps comes closest to grasping an explanation in this comment:

> We can only say again, as I've said before, I believe that in the beginning – the act of killing – we would *not* expect it to be the goal. Remember, it was the *possession* of this desired thing, which was, in itself – the very act of assuming possession was a very antisocial act – was giving expression to this person's need to *sieze* something that was…uh, uh, highly valued, at least on the surface, by society. Uh, sought after, uh, a material possession, as it were. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 202, italics in original)

It appears that what Ted needed to possess was something that society said he should have, but didn't have. His adolescent behaviour of stealing socially desirable objects such as furniture seems to fit this equation, but what was Ted 'stealing' when he took lives? Was he trying to steal the human intimacy that his whole life (his mother, his family, his *society*) had denied him? Was his murderous, possessive behaviour allegorical of a subconscious need for an unsatiated need for human connection – a need that was fractured in his first two months of life?

Ted is silent on this notion that his earliest infant experiences were seminal to his adult behaviour, but he does note that his murderous possessings failed to satisfy the hunger that drove them. In this later instance, his behaviour seems to fit closely with Alice Miller's notions of the *repetition compulsion*. Ted reflected to Hugh Aynesworth:

> When people have – are unable to cope with some part of their life – the feelings of discontent, loneliness, alienation, self esteem, or whatever it is…they finally choose some way of venting what they have inside.
>
> Or suppressing what they feel…But you're right, you're right, its…there is *not* that fulfillment there. I'm not saying there is. I've *never* said that!
>
> I've said over and over that there was this need to satiate the urge to possess in this particular fashion. These kinds of victims would drive this kind of individual *on*, hoping or looking for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow kind of thing. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 203, italics in the original)

Ted's choice of metaphor in this instance may have been trite, but his words express an unfathomable sense of bewilderment at why murderous possession might be ultimately unfulfilling. What he hasn't been able to understand is what drove his need to possess. Indeed, no-one has ever seemed to question what it was that drove the core of Ted's behaviour – not Michaud or Aynesworth, not his police interrogators, not the courts he faced. What *was* Ted's 'pot of gold'? Perhaps it was – simply - *intimacy*.

To speculate that Bundy's murderous behaviour was etiologically rooted in a need for the human intimacy that he was denied at the beginning of his life, some evidence needs to proffered. There is, in Ted's semi-autobiographic conversations

with Michaud and Aynesworth, one identifiable life theme that appears to contain an allegory of this denial of a chance to learn what intimacy was. That allegorical life theme could be labelled *disappearance*.

Disappearance

People disappear all the time, without trace, and without anyone noticing they're gone. This is a theme that Bundy doesn't touch on often in his recorded conversations, but it is, arguably, a theme that bears close scrutiny. It *may* be the most important theme in Ted's life – it may be his *central allegory*. The posited connection between what he says about the disappearance of others, the connection of disappearance to murder, and the connection of these elements to Ted's life is a simple one. He was 'disappeared' by his mother, or she disappeared out of his life at its beginning (this is a sensate memory, rather than a cognitive one). His father also 'disappeared'.

Ted speculated that the greater social freedom for women that the women's liberation movement produced in the 1970's produced a greater vulnerability to murderous predation that would result in their (some women's) disappearance:

> …women have a great deal more freedom to move here and there. They are no longer stuck in their homes. They are not watched over. It seems that it is happening in a geometric fashion. The more they expose themselves as victims to this potential behaviour (sic). (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 118)

'They are not watched over'. It is speculative, but could we interpret that this was an allegory – a subconscious echo – of Ted's life experience in his crib in the home for

unwed mothers in Burlington, Vermont? The protective eye and arm of the family was not offered to the infant Ted. His earliest fate did not receive the diligent protection that humans seem innately, biologically, programed to expect. Did his sensate memory of the uncertainty of this time survive as an echo in his alertness to the real world phenomenon of people disappearing without trace? If this did happen, he had no idea of the connection.

Unable to cognitively connect with the reality of his own abandonment, the adult Ted instead blames a morally decaying society for the 'availability' of victims who might easily disappear:

> …as the culture declines, as people are cut loose and don't know what to do, they are floating around without the protection of the family, without protection of experience, tradition or anything…they become more vulnerable to people who want to exploit them. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 120)

Was Ted 'floating around'? He certainly had anxieties about his place in society – his illegitimacy, his lack of anything but a façade of success – and he seems to have felt these acutely. Did he lack the 'protection of the family'? In the sense that the family always projected a polished façade of social acceptability, he lacked nothing. In the sense that the family protected and nourished his psyche, he arguably lacked a great deal. Did he feel 'vulnerable'? Yes, he did. His glaring (and conscious) vulnerability was the constant risk of the exposure of himself as a fiction, a façade. He feared this as a college student, and he feared it as a serial murderer.

Because there are so many people cut off, floating around, or unwatched over, Ted postulated that a predatory killer might see this group of persons as a ready pool of

victims. He imagined this constant supply of runaways and drop outs might be prime targets for any serial murderer:

> In devising his scheme or plan, he (the 'hypothetical' serial murderer) had taken this somewhat unrealistic conclusion that under the correct circumstances, he could select *any* person as a victim. And that there would be virtually no attention paid to that person's disappearance. Because people disappear every day! It happens all the time. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 135, italics in original)

There seem to have been disappearances in Ted's life – Ted disappeared, to all intents and purposes, for the first two months of his life. His mother disappeared after giving birth to him. His father disappeared so completely that he was, throughout Ted's life, no more than a figment of imagination, a person without substance. Ted's grandfather also seems to have faded from contact with him after his mother moved out of the parental home (when Ted was four). He seems to have had little contact with his grandfather, whom he was reportedly fond of, from that early time.

Is it possible that this is the *central allegory* of Ted's life? Just as he was once made to disappear, just as he was once considered so insignificant that his existence could be ignored, *he* will now (in adulthood) make others disappear. *He* will regard others as of so little significance that they deserve to disappear without trace. It is interesting, also, that Ted notes (in the quote above) that this notion that people could be made to disappear without trace is a "somewhat unrealistic conclusion". Is he being self-contradictory, or does he indicate here that, despite his own deeply subconscious feelings of abandonment, he holds out some hope that we are all, in the final analysis, of some intrinsic worth – that there is, somewhere, someone who

will miss even the most abjectly unlovable of us? Someone who will even miss Ted?

Bundy's reflections on this theme of disappearance are few – partly because he doesn't seem to have considered it a theme of great importance, and partly because the primary recorders of his words and thoughts, Michaud and Aynesworth, didn't see it as a theme worth pursuing in extensive detail. There is, though, one more intriguing glimmer of comment from Ted on the subject. It comes from a conversation between Bundy and Aynesworth about something another author had written about Ted. This article was published at a point where Ted's time on death row was close to running out, and basically suggested that Ted was mad. He suggests to Aynesworth, in response to this projection about his sanity, that as long as people see him as psychologically disorganised, and out of self-control, that they will never understand him – that they will continue to underestimate him. Then he says something that has a potentially significant resonance with his other thoughts on disappearance:

> I want to be forgotten. I want people to forget me. I don't want people to remember what I look like or what I sound like. I want them to think I'm just laying there on my bunk quivering. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 265)

This is a startling image. It is an image of either an abjectly fearful or a totally beaten being. It is, more tellingly, an image of a person abandoned by his world – a person in the process of disappearing.

Perhaps Ted's resiliency (his ability to deal with the pains of life) was crushed beyond repair in those first three months of his life, as he lay abandoned and without the hope that springs from normative nurturing (touch, comfort, affection – the human communication of 'worthfulness'). Perhaps he was unable to overcome

(or even be aware of) his central feeling of worthlessness. If you are completely without worth, then it literally does not matter what happens to you. Suffering ceases to matter if you are worthless – if no-one holds any care for your existence. You could suffer any imaginable deprivation or pain, and it would not matter, because in the end, you would simply disappear. Ted said this about victims.

Ted's victims suffered unimaginably, then disappeared. Did Ted also suffer? It appears likely that he did. Was his suffering as horrendous as his victims'? From an outside observer's perspective, no. From the internal, subconscious perspective of Ted's own tortured life, perhaps the answer is different.

Did Ted believe that internal landscapes of psychic suffering are simply milestones on the journey to an inevitable oblivion? He seems to have believed that, like his victims, he would disappear without trace. He seems to have believed that, like his victims, no-one would notice. He seems to have believed that, like his victims, no-one would care.

CHAPTER 6

JOHN WAYNE GACY

Having followed Miller's lead and examined, in depth, the life history of one serial murderer, some further attempt is needed to slightly broaden the coverage of this study. Miller's work on Bartsch and the analysis in this thesis of Bundy both show that complex life history details need to be considered in some depth if we are to hope to develop a better understanding of the individual etiology of serial murder. The space available in this thesis, unfortunately, precludes such in-depth analysis on a large number of such life histories. What is needed, though, is one more case study of a serial murderer. Can the hints of allegorical behaviour evident in these first two etiological investigations be echoed in a third?

The case studies of Bartsch and Bundy are intrinsic case studies. That is, they have been examined in detail because they were interesting in themselves. The purpose here was *not* the construction of abstract generalisations, but the development of a deeper understanding of those two particular human beings. By adding, in this chapter, one more case study of serial murderer, this thesis attempts to move toward an opportunity for some level of generalised comment on the central phenomenon under study. This third case moves the study design more towards the realm of the instrumental case study, where the construction of generalisations to provide further insight into a study area is facilitated. This thesis design does not extend into the realm of the collective case study, so the generalisation of conclusions does have limitations.

The serial murderer whose case history will be examined in this brief format is John Wayne Gacy. A simple convenience sampling approach explains the selection of

this last case – for Gacy's case, there is a reasonable amount of biographic information available on the public record.

Family background

John Wayne Gacy was born to John Stanley and Marion Gacy on 17 March, 1942. Little is known about his childhood. As is the case with most serial murderers, what has been written about Gacy concentrates on the modus operandi of his murderous behaviour, and largely ignores the potential importance of any antecedent childhood trauma.

Like so many other serial murderers, Gacy is ascribed a 'normal childhood'. His family was middle class, Catholic, and he grew up in North Chicago. He had two sisters, one two years older than him, and one two years younger. As a young boy, Gacy was active in the Boy Scouts, and earned pocket money after school with jobs such as paper runs, packing bags in a grocery store, and working as a store clerk. He was not overly popular with his school peers, but tended to relate easily to his teachers and co-workers (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). Most reports of Gacy's early life tend to conclude (blithely) that his childhood was 'normal'. "His sister described him as a normal person like everyone else" (Egger, 1998: 95).

Alec Wilkinson, a journalist with The New Yorker during the last several years before Gacy's execution, conducted a number of interviews with Gacy. Gacy gave him a copy of a manuscript he had written. Many of the quotes from Gacy that appear below have come from Wilkinson's quotations from that document.

Gacy's father

'Normal', of course, is a nonsense descriptor in anything but a statistical context. Writers tend to use it when they have no substantial information. The term 'a normal upbringing' is also used as a euphemism for 'his parents didn't harm him'. Gacy's parents *did* harm him. His father was an alcoholic, and he was violent:

> Apparently, John's father got drunk almost every night. When Gacy tried to help his mother when she was being beaten by his father, his father called him a mama's boy or a sissy. (Egger, 1998: 98)

His father would brook no contradiction, as Gacy himself reported in his conversations with the New York Times journalist Alec Wilkinson:

> "O.K., my dad drank, and he was Jekyll and Hyde when he drank. If he came up from the basement and said the walls were pink, you said the walls were pink, but you learned to stay away from him and keep your mouth shut at the dinner table". (Wilkinson, 1994: 72)

Gacy's father was also homophobic, as he indicates in this statement:

> "When I grew up, my father always said that corduroys and khakis were the proper way for a man to dress. If you were wearing jeans, you were making sexual gestures. I went to school in flannel shirts and corduroy pants". (Wilkinson, 1994: 72)

Gacy was always trying desperately to please his father, but never seemed able to gain this sought approval. On the contrary – it seems that his father handed him little but physical and verbal abuse:

> "If we went fishing, though, like we did for a week every summer, and I rocked the boat, or got my line tangled, or it happened to rain, Jesus, it was all my fault". (Wilkinson, 1994: 72)

The display of emotions was also apparently not acceptable to Gacy's father. "His father reportedly never showed his emotions…" (Egger, 1998: 98). This would be perhaps expected from a man who was a violent, homophobic alcoholic. The ghosts of Gacy's father's childhood, one imagines, must have been horrifying.

Gacy was, as a child, in a 'catch-22' situation – he was always seeking his father's approval, but never able to attain it. Any time that Gacy didn't live up to his father's standards (an apparently impossible task), he was called dumb or stupid (Egger, 1998: 98). Yet, like all children condemned to constant parental disapproval, he still professed 'love' for his father:

> "I thought I could never please him, but I still loved him". (Wilkinson, 1994: 72)

Not all Gacy's memories of his father, later in life, were so forgiving, though – it seems that he did harbour some resentment at the way his life-long efforts to please his father were dismissed. From his cell on death row, he ventured this comment:

> "My way to remember my dad is not to be like him", he said. "That's my way of getting back at the son of a bitch". (Wilkinson, 1994:72)

Gacy's mother

Even less is recorded about Gacy's mother than is noted about his father. Current knowledge of the phenomenon of domestic violence (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger and Chyi-In, 1991; Walker and Browne, 1985) suggests that Gacy's mother may have experienced domestic violence in her family of origin and endured her marriage to Gacy's father in a state of learned helplessness, unable to advocate for herself or her children during her husband's rages, because she had never experienced such advocacy herself in her own childhood.

One small echo of the abusive past Gacy's mother may have endured comes from brief references to her lack of nurturing of appropriate sexual identity in the infant Gacy:

> As a newborn, Gacy was given daily enemas by his mother for no apparent reason. (Egger, 1998: 98)

Insufficient information is available regarding this behaviour by Gacy's mother. (For instance, how frequent was this behaviour, and for how many years was it continued?) The administration of unnecessary enemas, however, could be a form of abuse of a small and defenceless child by a mother who had herself been abused in some way. Such behaviour may reflect the intergenerational transmission of abuse (Dodge, Bates and Pettit, 1990; Widom, 1989). Regardless of the explanation for such treatment, it is likely that these early childhood experiences had an influence on Gacy's developing sexuality.

Childhood sexual development

There are three other brief records of childhood incidents that may have had an effect on Gacy's sexual development – three incidents at ages five, seven and eight, respectively.

At age five, Gacy reports an incident that seems to have been seminal in the development of his sexual self-concept. At that age, while his father was at work, his mother would often take Gacy and his sisters to friends' houses nearby – a socialising opportunity for both the mothers and the children of several local families. On one such occasion, Gacy was playing with an older female child. He described her as being fifteen years of age and "mentally retarded" (Wilkinson, 1994:64). Gacy and this older girl were found by the adults in an upstairs room by themselves. Gacy was naked and the girl was fondling his genitals. Gacy remembers the mothers reacting with anger and accusation about wrongdoing:

> And their mother while yelling came in and grabbed the girl, while yelling about what she was up to. My mother came over to me, asked me what I was doing with my clothes off or something to that nature, and got me dressed and took me downstairs. (Wilkinson, 1994: 64)

Gacy felt that he was going to get hit for what he had done, but remembers not understanding why his behaviour was wrong:

> …it left a profound feeling on me in my thinking about taking off clothes in front of others, even my sisters, thinking that I was going to get hit for doing it…I was told that what we were doing was dirty and wrong. (Wilkinson, 1994:64)

This *was* 1947. American middle-class mothers were not yet given social permission to explain sex and sexuality to their children. Gacy himself, in recounting this incident to Wilkinson years later, referred to it as 'sexual bewilderment'. That is probably an accurate estimation of the effect that incident had on his developing sexual self-concept, and it is indicative of the sexually repressive social environment in which Gacy was raised. He gave a seemingly accurate assessment of the incident, himself, when he said:

> I think now all it was was (sic) curiosity, me not knowing, and her for her age, even being retarded. (Wilkinson, 1994: 64)

At age seven, Peterson (1998) reports, Gacy stole some of his mother's panties and hid them in a bag in a playground. Egger (1998: 98) mentions what is perhaps the same incident, but says that Gacy's mother "…found a bag full of her underpants under the porch of their house where John played". Whether these are the same or separate incidents, the behaviour obviously raises questions about Gacy's developing notions of sex and sexuality. Egger's (1998: 98) brief note recounts that his mother was not pleased, and that she made him wear a pair of her panties "…to embarrass him". His father, upon being told of this incident, beat him with a leather strap. It seems that both parents interpreted this behaviour as abnormal and deserving of punishment. Again, the message to the young child is fairly straightforward – anything to do with sex is 'dirty' and punishable.

The third childhood incident that we have some record of may reflect Gacy's first encounter with homosexual behaviour. (This story, again, comes from Gacy's own recollection). In early 1950 (when Gacy was eight years old), a new house was being built next door to the Gacy family home in North Chicago. The contractor who was laying the concrete slab foundations for this house struck up a conversation

with Gacy's father, and a friendly relationship started to develop between them. The contractor, after a couple of weeks, suggested that he could take the young Gacy to see other building sites he was working on, and that he would shout him an ice cream. Gacy's parents agreed (the friendly gesture from the new acquaintance was doubtless seen as a positive adult male/child interaction opportunity). On the first outing, the man started talking with the young Gacy about wrestling. (This had been a topic of conversation, it seems, between Gacy's father and the new friend). The man suggested to Gacy that he could show him a new wresting hold. (They were sitting in the contractor's car at this point). He put the young Gacy's head between his legs and held him there "…for several minutes, tightly so that I could not move, and in fact I had tears in my eyes. When he seen that, he let me go, and said let's go get that ice cream I told you about" (Wilkinson, 1994: 66). They got the ice cream (a bribe to buy the child's silence) and Gacy was returned home.

This same pattern was repeated on three more occasions, Gacy said, probably several weeks apart. The process would always be the same – the contractor would offer to take the young Gacy to see other building sites, 'play' wrestling with him in the car (touching, holding, restraining, and fondling), then buy him an ice cream and return him home. The young Gacy soon felt the impact of these assaults:

> After a fourth time of the same thing each time when I saw him coming down the street, I ran and hid from him. (Wilkinson, 1994: 66)

He told his mother that he didn't like the man, and refused to go with him. When Gacy's mother told his father about this, his father asked Gacy what was going on. The young boy confided in his father, telling him exactly what had happened. His father apparently confronted the contractor about these incidents, warning him he

would call the police if it didn't stop. The warning seems to have had the desired effect - there was no further contact between the contractor and the Gacy family.

One interpretation of this story is that Gacy's father had (perhaps surprisingly) acted as an advocate for him. Another interpretation is that Gacy's father was simply acting from his own homophobic fears and hatreds – there is no mention of any discussions about how the abused boy had felt, which one would expect if the father's actions had been based on advocacy. There is no mention, either, of any discussions about Gacy's feelings regarding this episode with his mother.

One other comment from Gacy, while he was on death row, gives the briefest glimpse of his 'formal' sex education from his parents:

> My mother told me about sex, my father never did. She said try to make it an act of love and never force yourself on anyone. And I never have. (Wilkinson, 1994: 70)

Clearly, the last sentence in this statement from Gacy is part of his fantasy of denial about the murders he committed (see below). His mother's comments are interesting, though – why would she mention 'not forcing yourself' on someone? Did her sex life with her husband involve forced sex when he was drunk? After he had beaten her? If this was 'normal' behaviour in the Gacy household, what interpretations of sex, love and intimacy did the young Gacy absorb in his early years? Unfortunately, no-one asked these questions before Gacy was executed.

Leaving home

Gacy left home at age twenty, in 1962. He had failed to graduate from high school, attending four different schools in his last year or two at high school (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). He spent the next year or so (age nineteen/twenty) unemployed, and had borrowed money from his father to buy a car. He was paying his father back at the rate of $100 a month, but had, in early 1962, fallen one month behind. Gacy's father threatened to take the car from him, so he decided to run away (Wilkinson, 1994: 61). His destination was vague, and he obviously had a naivety about the world at large that had been bred by never before venturing out on his own. He decided to visit a cousin of his who lived in Las Vegas. Gacy referred to her as "…a high priced hooker, not married but with a child. She had run away from home two years before me" (Wilkinson, 1994: 61). He seems to have been attracted to her display of independence, calling her a "…black sheep of the family" (Wilkinson, 1994: 61). Gacy undoubtedly felt something of a 'black sheep' status himself, and he admired her 'making it' by herself.

The story Gacy tells of his leaving contains a strong overtone of the lack of any significant bond between mother and son. He had decided to leave, and was not going to tell anyone. (One imagines that his father would have forbidden it, accusing him of running away from responsibilities – of again being a failure). He had the car loaded (he was home alone), and was ready to go, when the phone rang:

> …mother was calling, to ask me to pick her up from work at noon, as she wasn't feeling well. I went out to Dor-O-Matic and brought her home, dropped her off and told her I was going to get the car gassed up. Then I just left. (Wilkinson, 1994: 61)

Gacy was not leaving for the weekend – he was leaving for good. He had, it seems, no compunction at leaving without telling her. He offered no reason, in recounting this story, for being so dismissive of his mother's potential feelings over his sudden disappearance. There is little information in this story, but it does speak of a lack of depth in the relationship between mother and son.

When he got to Las Vegas, he did visit his cousin. He reported that she discussed her life as a sex worker with him openly, and he seems to have been impressed with her financial success and her expensive lifestyle. Moreover, he was fascinated by the world of liberal sexual permissiveness that he saw her inhabiting:

> It was a new enlightenment to me, so open about sexual conversation, as if nothing was wrong with anything. (Wilkinson, 1994: 61)

Gacy says that she offered to arrange sexual encounters for him, but he declined these offers. Interestingly, the reason he gave for rejecting these readily available opportunities for sex may have had allegorical connections to his earliest memories of sexual embarrassment – to that episode of punishment and rejection when the fifteen year old 'mentally retarded' girl had been fondling the genitals of the infant Gacy:

> …she (Gacy's sex worker cousin) said she would fix me up with any of them (her friends) I wanted, meaning sexually, but I turned her down. I told her I would find my own. I felt funny doing that with her knowing. (Wilkinson, 1994: 61)

Despite the fact that he admired the world of sexual permissiveness, it seems that Gacy's internalised embarrassment at the thought of exposure, in any guise,

precluded him from participation in open promiscuity. As an adult, he professed to sexual libertarianism, but kept his own sexual behaviour secluded and secret.

One particular work experience in this early period when Gacy had just left home also stands out as potentially influential in the development of his aberrant behaviour. Gacy had arrived in Las Vegas with very little money, and it was the middle of a hot summer. He spent some hours in his car, and passed out from heat stroke at one stage. Some passer-by called an ambulance, and he was taken to hospital. He ended up with an ambulance bill he couldn't pay, so he went to the ambulance station and offered to work for them in whatever capacity he could. This initiative was apparently rewarded – he was given a job of some sort (probably cleaning) at the ambulance station, and was allowed to sleep at the station, since he had no accommodation (Wilkinson, 1994: 61). Gacy reports that he worked two months in the ambulance station, but then had to find another job. The person who took him in at the ambulance station helped him find another live-in job, this time in a mortuary, as Gacy remembered:

> The room where I stayed was known as the call room. During May (1962) the mortuary had 86 funerals and over two months I was pall-bearer for some 75, never knowing the person or family. (Wilkinson, 1994: 61)

Living alone, with no friends or family, surrounded by dead bodies – did Gacy absorb some notion during this time about the anonymity of death? He was certainly living in a situation where he was intimately connected with, yet emotionally dissociated from, death. He would later be so dissociated from the normal intimacy of death that he could methodically dispose of the bodies of his murder victims, and even referred to them, in his later years on death row, by number rather than by name (Wilkinson, 1994:69).

There is another incident associated with Gacy's brief experience as a live-in attendant at the mortuary:

> …one night in the mortuary he climbed into a coffin containing the body of a boy whose manner of death had left him with an erection, and arranged the body on top of him. (Wilkinson,1994: 61)

This brush with necrophilia occurred ten years before Gacy murdered his first victim. Wilkinson reports that Gacy scared himself with his actions, and the next day, called his mother and asked if he could come home. It seems that he was welcomed back, at least by his mother and sisters, but it took him three months to get the money together for the bus fare back to Chicago. (Bell and Bardsley, 2001).

Business success in early adulthood

Whatever else he had learned from his childhood and adolescent experiences, it is clear that, from somewhere, Gacy had learned 'the gift of the gab'. He attended a commercial business college in Chicago after returning home from his Las Vegas adventure, and found himself propelled into a successful career as a salesman. Bell and Bardsley (2001) referred to him as "…a born salesman who could talk his way in and out of almost anything". Graduating from his business course, he got a job with the Nunn-Bush Shoe Company (Bell and Bardsley, 2001), and was placed in charge of shoe sales for the company in a department store in Springfield, Illinois (Wilkinson, 1994: 62). Gacy obviously enjoyed this time, recounting to Wilkinson (1994) his many (perhaps exaggerated) claims of how successful he was, how well he dressed, and how everyone thought, from the way he looked and talked, that he was the manager – that he was successful and important:

> Psychologically, I got recognition from the customers, always remarking about my cuff links, or ties, and never the same. I enjoyed the attention…and it made a good impression on the customer, not only would they know I was the manager, but just by looking at me, you knew I had to be the boss…I dressed and looked like an owner or a millionaire even when I was young… (Wilkinson, 1994: 62)

This picture of success, that Gacy himself seemed to believe, sits in stark contrast to the picture of the incompetent little boy who his father blamed for everything. Parental criticism can leave deep psychological scars, and can prompt a lifetime of vain attempts to prove that the label of 'failure' is not warranted. Gacy managed, as a young man, to project a fairly convincing outward show of business and social success, and in time, perhaps, he learned to leave his consciousness entirely within this façade.

The manifestations of Gacy's attempt to prove to himself, his father, and the world that he was a success came in many guises. Aside from his business success, he made a great show of being a publicly responsible citizen. In Springfield, he became involved in a number of social service clubs: the Chi Rho Club, the Catholic Inter-Club Council, the Federal Civil Defence for Illinois, the Chicago Civil Defence, the Holy Name Society, and the Jaycees (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). All his social and civic efforts seemed to be aimed at gaining him prestige, notoriety and personal recognition. Gacy's need for the reward of recognition for a job well done seems directly allegorical of his need for his father's approval – an approval and recognition that he was never allowed.

Egger (1998: 97) notes that part of this seeking for public recognition took the form, in 1976, of involvement as a volunteer in (U.S.) President Carter's re-election

campaign. Gacy organised a fund-raising dinner as part of his volunteer support efforts. It is interesting to remember that Ted Bundy was also driven to seek reward and recognition in working for a political party in a re-election campaign. Both were eager to please, eager to help, and willing workers for their respective political causes. The similarity between them on this dimension seems to be that neither was acting selflessly for a cause. Both, on the contrary, seem to have been subconsciously trying to address an unmet childhood need for parental approval by desperately seeking (as adults) the approval of others.

Another manifestation of Gacy's need for recognition and importance comes from his apparently life-long preoccupation with police and uniforms. Egger (1998: 96) notes: "He was always interested in being a police officer…(and) that he was active in a civil defense organisation that allowed him to go to accidents and fires with a flashing blue light on his car". Gacy's first wife referred to him as a "police freak" (Sullivan and Maiken, 1983: 263). There is perhaps an allegorical reflection here – Gacy chasing after recognition, importance, and approval – things his father denied him.

Whilst selling shoes in Springfield, Gacy met and married Marilynn Myers, a co-worker in the department store where he sold shoes. They married in September 1964 (Wilkinson, 1994: 62). Marilyn's father owned several Kentucky Fried Chicken franchises, and, although Gacy's new father-in-law viewed him as a "braggart and a liar" (Sullivan and Maiken, 1983: 261), Gacy soon found himself moving to Waterloo, Iowa, to work in, then manage several of the family's fast food outlets. Marilyn's parents lived in Waterloo, and were pleased to have their daughter close to them.

Gacy's homosexuality

The significance of Gacy's marriage to Marilyn lies in his consequent work environment. His management of his father-in-law's fast food outlets immediately exposed him to constant contact with young boys (his employees). At the same time that he became exposed to an environment replete with young boys, Gacy reports he had his first homosexual encounter (Wilkinson, 1994: 62; Egger, 1998: 97). Marilyn was pregnant at the time, and it was soon after their marriage. Gacy claims to have gotten drunk at a party, fallen asleep, and was woken by a male friend performing fellatio on him.

> Gacy felt that he couldn't ask the man to stop, and, besides, he enjoyed it. For months, though, recalling the experience depressed him. (Wilkinson, 1994: 62)

This incident encapsulates Gacy's lifelong ambivalence towards sexuality. From his infant sexual experience to his adult admiration of his sexually free cousin, to his father's constant homophobia, to the vague instructions from his mother to 'not use force', Gacy was confused about sex and sexuality. He wanted to do what he found pleasurable, yet he had an inescapable feeling that homosexual sex was inexcusable.

It is at this point in time - when Gacy is arguably achieving his greatest social success - that his homosexual behaviour begins to escalate. He has a new marriage, new business success (managing his father-in-law's fast food outlets), and he and his wife have their two children (in 1965 and 1967), and he is active in the Waterloo Junior Chamber of Commerce (Egger, 1998: 96). About this time, he

featured in a local newspaper article (presumably about local commerce) and was referred to as ‘the Colonel’, a reference, doubtless, to his business activities.

Yet, at the same time that his public and business persona was enjoying quite reasonable success, Gacy was also beginning to show signs of an underlying fracturing of his sexual identity. He was frequenting a local ‘strip joint’, reportedly bragging about his sexual (heterosexual) prowess, and at the same time trying to obtain fellatio from males by offering his wife for sex (Egger, 1998: 96).

Significantly, Gacy, in 1966, was a member of a cooperative self-help security force organised by some of the local merchants in Waterloo. This loose coalition of local business people was designed to provide voluntary security surveillance for members’ businesses. Gacy was a willing volunteer for night patrols, and he recruited selected young males from his fast food business to accompany him. Gacy was entering the paedophilic phase of ‘grooming’:

> …a paedophile’s offending activities are only the end stage of a long and complex process often called “grooming”, which begins with the nurturing of deviant fantasies, proceeds through the long-term planning and rehearsal of the abuse and culminates in a complex relationship that, for the child, is both exploitative and loving, cruel and kind, perverted and normal, all at the same time. (Glaser, 1997: 7)

On these security patrols with his young accomplices, Gacy would sometimes break into some of the premises he was ‘guarding’, taking things like car parts and money (from vending machines). He had a police radio monitor to avoid the detection of these activities (Egger, 1998: 107). Gacy was building relationships of power and dependency with these selected young men. They were obligated to him – he gave

them gifts of the stolen booty, and he could have accused them of the thefts. Gacy's public reputation, carefully nurtured, would have countered any accusations from any accused young accomplice that he (Gacy) was involved. Thus entrapped in obligation, his selected targets would be less likely to either resist his sexual advances, or publicly accuse him of assault.

Gacy used another strategy for grooming his victims at this point in time. He started a 'social club' in the basement of his house. In return for a monthly fee, Gacy would allow his young male employees from the fast food outlets to drink alcohol and play pool at his 'club' (Egger, 1998: 107). With the constant turnover of young male staff at his businesses, Gacy could provide himself with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of potential sex partners. Doubtless, some of the employees he took on his security patrols also frequented his club. Egger (1998: 107) reports that he was regularly having selected boys perform fellatio on him at his club "…by intimidating and coercing them or by convincing them that he was conducting scientific experiments for a commission on sexual behaviour in Illinois". Gacy was becoming a master of entrapment, although at this stage, it seems he was only using his victims for his sexual gratification. He had created, though, an environment that was conducive to an escalation into violence.

First evidence of violence

The first report of violence entering into Gacy's sexual activities comes in 1967. Egger recounts that Gacy's wife, Marilyn, was in hospital, about to give birth to their second child. Gacy tried to get one of his 'social club' charges to perform fellatio on him. The boy refused, and Gacy's anger flared (perhaps for the first time in this situation of sexual manipulation):

> Gacy attacked him with a knife and cut the boy on the arm. Gacy quickly apologized and insisted that the boy stay and watch some pornographic films. After showing the films, Gacy chained the boy's hands behind his back and then tried to attack him sexually. The boy resisted and Gacy began choking him. The boy pretended to black out. Gacy revived him and agreed to take the boy home. (Egger, 1998: 107)

Unfortunately, Egger (1998) does not give his source for this story, yet this incident seems to represent the beginning of Gacy's escalation into coupling murderous violence with sex. It also shows the pattern that Gacy would apply in all his murders – entrapment into sex through alcohol (or other drugs) and pornography, enforced/coerced fellatio (with Gacy as the receiver, never the giver), restraint (usually with handcuffs – the 'chains' mentioned by Egger were probably handcuffs), then strangulation. But at the time of this young victim's experience, in 1967, Gacy was not yet murdering. He still, at that point, had some moral compunction against taking life. Gacy's descent into murder had a progressive, developmental nature.

Perhaps Gacy briefly told himself (after this incident) that he should beware the rage that he had started to express in his sexual activity. Perhaps he even asked himself where this rage came from. Whether he did think such thoughts, or ask himself such questions, we will never know – the opportunity to gather that information died when Gacy died on the execution table. What is clear, though, is that, slight compunctions or not, his grooming of sex victims did not slacken after this incident.

The next incident that came to light concerns a young male, Mark Miller, a fifteen-year-old who worked for Gacy in one of his fast food outlets (Nemo, 1997: 3). Egger (1998: 107) says that Miller was coerced into fellating Gacy on a number of occasions in 1967 and 1968, and that alcohol was involved in these entrapments.

Doubtless, Gacy's 'social club' provided the basis for this predation. Gacy also seems to have used the 'this is a sex experiment' line on this victim (Egger, 1998:107). Miller eventually spoke out against these encounters, though – he went to the police in 1968, charging Gacy with sodomy (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). Gacy gave two responses to this accusation. His public response was to tell the police that Miller had been a willing partner, engaging in sex for money. His private response was to engage the paid services of another of his part-time employees to beat Miller up:

> Gacy offered Dwight Andersson ten dollars plus three hundred more dollars to pay off his car loan if he carried out the beating. Andersson lured Miller to his car and drove him to a wooded area where he sprayed mace in his eyes and began to beat him. Miller fought back and broke Andersson's nose and managed to break away and run to safety. (Bell and Bardsley, 2001)

Miller went to the police, and Andersson confessed, giving evidence that Gacy organised the beating. After being subjected to a psychiatric evaluation, Gacy was classed as competent to stand trial on the charges. He then pleaded guilty to the original charge of sodomy and was sentenced to ten years imprisonment. He would be out of prison on parole in eighteen months.

Gacy's first prison sojourn

There is next to nothing written about Gacy's first term of imprisonment. What is known is that his proclivity for routine and regimentation meant that he could easily project the façade of the model prisoner. He was also intelligent enough to realise "…that there was a high possibility of an early parole if he remained non-violent and well behaved" (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). He did manage to stay out of trouble,

obviously adapted easily to prison routines, and lived the life of a model prison. He was paroled in eighteen months, on June 18, 1970 (Bell and Bardsley, 2001).

We are left to wonder at the sexual experiences Gacy may have had in prison during those eighteen months. It is possible that he temporarily suspended any sexual activity with other persons. It would seem that he had no access to the mid-teen youths he had been cultivating in his 'social club' at his home. However, because he had management and organisational skills, Gacy would doubtless have been employed in areas like the prison kitchen (he worked in the kitchen when he was returned to prison for murder in 1980) or the prison infirmary – areas of the prison where the very young-looking (and therefore sexually vulnerable) and those in danger of violence from other prisoners worked and lived. It is possible that he found 'groomable' young sex partners in that environment. If he did, he kept it from the prison authorities.

The point about this speculation regarding Gacy's sexual activity in prison is that the development of his fantasies surrounding sex and violence cannot have been suspended for eighteen months. Gacy hid his sexually aberrant behaviours on the outside, and it is well known that prison is an environment where the realities of sexual activity are well hidden (Tewksbury and West, 2000). Whether he was engaging in consensual or coercive sex, it is probable that Gacy was able to continue to manipulate young men into his sexual activities.

Two other developments in Gacy's life hinge on this period when he first went to prison. His first wife, Marilyn, divorced him, citing his homosexual activity as a violation of their marriage vows (Bell and Bardsley, 2001), and his father died.

Following the divorce in 1969, Marilynn cut off all contact with Gacy, refusing to allow the children to visit him in prison. The separation appears to have been final, since Gacy "…told his friends in prison that as far as he was concerned his children were dead" (Egger, 1998: 98). What connection Gacy really felt with his children, and how this imposed separation (that he had no control over) affected him, we are left to wonder. Gacy himself is largely silent about his feelings for his children, and his public parental persona, as we can imagine, would have been fairly carefully crafted. "According to neighbours, Gacy was a loving and attentive father to his children" (Egger, 1998: 98).

Gacy's father, the primary source, it seems, of his lingering self-disapproval, died on Christmas day, 1969, while Gacy was in prison. "Gacy told a friend that the prison officials had not told him about his father's death until a month later" (Egger, 1998: 98). His father's death undoubtedly disturbed him, because it removed any chance of obtaining the parental approval that he had never been able to gain from his father.

> Gacy went through difficult periods of depression after his release from prison because he regretted never saying goodbye to his father. He felt cheated that he never had a chance to improve his relationship with John W. Gacy, Sr., a man whom he loved dearly despite of (sic) his abusive behaviour. (Bell and Bardsley, 2001)

'Loved dearly' is perhaps how Gacy himself put it, but this probably reflects the desperate need of the rejected child for his spurning parent's approval. Gacy's feelings of regret at being irrevocably separated from his father in this way probably reflects an subconscious realisation that the desired fatherly approval is now unattainable.

Gacy's escalation into violence

What role Gacy's father's death played in the further development of his offending behaviour is hard to quantify. Did his father's death mean that Gacy was unable to resolve the tensions that existed between father and son? One interesting statement from Gacy was recorded by Wilkinson (1994) not long before Gacy's execution. It hints at something deeply sinister in the father-son relationship that was never addressed.

Gacy and Wilkinson were talking about the boys Gacy had murdered. Gacy was again denying the murders, saying that he couldn't possibly kill, because he was a coward – one who would always avoid fights. He also claimed to have always had plenty of access to sex, so suggested there was no sexual motive for any murders. Then he said something that begged further explanation:

> "Why would I want to kill these boys, anyway?" he said then. "I'm not their father". (Wilkinson, 1994: 73)

Unfortunately, Wilkinson waited until the next day to ask Gacy what he had meant by this statement – what 'being their father' had to do with it. Gacy denied having uttered those words, and would talk no more about it (Wilkinson, 1994: 73). The unanswerable question is: *Did Gacy's father try (or threaten) to kill him?* Is this the central allegory of Gacy's offending behaviour? Were his murders a subconscious attempt to avoid his own annihilation at his father's hands by the annihilation of his homosexual self projected onto his victims? In Alice Miller's (1987) terms, this would be a *repetition compulsion*.

Whatever it was that troubled Gacy about his father's death, at the time he was released from his first prison term on early parole, it was weighing heavily on his mind. Gacy had been a 'model prisoner' during his first incarceration, responding well to the regimented routines in prison, keeping himself busy, and being a cooperative, rather than a troublesome prisoner. He was paroled very early in his prison term – in June 1970, just eighteen months into his ten year sentence (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). Yet, just eight months after his release on parole, Gacy was again in serious trouble over an alleged sexual assault. In February, 1971, a young male in Chicago (where Gacy had returned to live upon his parole) "…told the police that Gacy had picked him up and tried to force him to have sex" (Wilkinson, 1994: 62). Gacy responded with an excuse he had used before – he claimed that it was the boy who propositioned him. He had picked up the boy at a bus terminal (Bell and Bardsley, 2001), and he claimed that, when the young man had asked him for sex, he had stopped his car and thrown the boy out. Gacy was charged over the incident, but the witness did not appear in court, and the charge was dropped.

Gacy's brief sojourn in prison, it seems, had not altered his need to trawl for sex partners. (A question should be asked about what sexual behaviour modification programs Gacy was exposed to in prison. The answer is, likely, none). It is also interesting to note that, in his immediate post-release period, Gacy did not have direct access to young boys – he no longer (of course) was working in his former father-in-law's fast food outlets – so he would have had to have found his sexual victims by trawling in his car or by trawling on foot in homosexual bars. Bus stations, of course, are well known as repositories of transient and displaced youth. The important point here is the continuation of Gacy's need to seek young males that he could entrap into his sexual encounters. Unfortunately, it is at this point in time that we also begin to see an escalation of Gacy's behaviour from mere sexual exploitation to sexual exploitation with increasing overtones of sadistic violence.

A ‘new start’?

Gacy went to live with his mother in Chicago when he was released on parole in 1970. He got a job as a cook in a restaurant, and soon began doing odd-jobs of painting and renovating for people he knew or met at work. This led to the establishment of his contract painting and decorating business, P.D.M. (Painting, Decorating and Maintenance). In August 1970, because he needed more storage space for this new business, Gacy’s mother sold her apartment (where they were living) and helped him buy a house (Wilkinson, 1994: 62). This was the house in Chicago where he would shortly start to bury many of his victims, although there is nothing to suggest that Gacy bought the house in order to find a place to bury his victims. It is more likely that the house merely presented the most immediate solution to body disposal when that arose as a problem. Gacy’s new business, P.D.M., of course, was a perfect vehicle for the entrapment of young males – the business would need lots of cheap (young) unskilled labourers. Again, there is no direct evidence to suggest that Gacy deliberately moved into this sort of business because it would provide him with a new ‘catchment’ for young male sex victims, but it seems likely that that consideration (unlike the body disposal problem) would have occupied Gacy’s conscious thoughts at the time of the move to the new house.

The next significant point in Gacy’s escalation into violence is reflected by an incident that happened in about August of 1971. (This is one year after he and his mother moved into the new house in Chicago, and Gacy probably carried on his predatory sexual behaviours during this period). Egger (1998: 108) records that Gacy, in a fit of rage on that day in August 1971, hit a P.D.M. employee over the head with a hammer. Little is recorded about this incident, and the victim apparently was not seriously harmed, but Gacy’s explanation for this sudden outburst of violence is interesting:

> When the employee asked why Gacy had hit him, he replied he didn't know but that he had a sudden urge to kill the man. (Egger, 1998: 108)

Sudden outbursts of rage in violent actions are compatible with Miller's (1987) notions of *splitting off* and *projection* – a generalised rage that emanates from unresolved, repressed trauma in early childhood can begin to 'surface' in the form of inextricable outbursts. This incident, glossed over as it is in the sparse literature that records snippets of Gacy's life, may have been the metaphorical tip of the iceberg of murderous rage that was beginning to erupt through the normative façade of Gacy's existence.

Gacy's first murder

Shortly after the incident with the hammer – about five months later, in January, 1972 – Gacy committed his first murder. From the account of this incident recorded by Wilkinson (1994), it seems likely that Gacy did not intend to kill his victim. He had picked up the young male at a Greyhound bus depot (one of his favourite trawling spots for sex victims). Significantly, Gacy's mother (who was living with him at the time) was spending the night at her sister's, so he had plenty of time for his planned sexual encounter. Gacy obviously did plan to find a sex partner for the night. He coaxed the young male back to his house for sex. They drank alcohol, fellated each other, then slept in separate rooms (Wilkinson, 1994: 62). The part of this story that unfolds next seems to have been unplanned:

> Early in the morning, he (Gacy) woke and saw the boy in the doorway of his room with a kitchen knife in one hand. Gacy charged the boy. They wrestled. Gacy got control of the knife and stabbed him several times. For a while, the boy made a sound as though he had fluid in his windpipe. Gacy left the room

> and did not go back until the sound had stopped. He dumped the body into the crawl space through a trapdoor in the floor of his closet, and a few days later he buried the boy there. (Wilkinson, 1994: 62)

It is impossible to gauge the veracity of this story – it may be a literal interpretation of the event as it unfolded, or it may be obfuscation by Gacy that hides and denies his moral and criminal culpability for a deliberate murder. If it is the former, then we see, in this incident, another step in the escalation of Gacy's development into planned murders. If it is the latter, then it gives no clue at all to explain why Gacy needed to kill.

The account does sound realistic – particularly in terms of Gacy's deliberate avoidance of the obviously dying victim. Gacy's inability to empathise with others is well documented. Why did the young male have a knife in his hand? Did he intend to do Gacy harm, or to ask him what he wanted for breakfast? Did Gacy's paranoiac reaction stem from years of childhood threats of harm from his drunken, abusing father? Did Gacy's father ever present a sudden and unexpected threat to his life? Did his father ever threaten him with a knife? It is easy to imagine that Gacy, only half awake as the young male stood in his bedroom doorway, saw the knife and reacted in fear and panic – the same fear and panic he would have felt countless times as a child confronted by his dangerous father. The stranger with the knife would have reacted in retaliation or self-defence. Was Gacy, having gained control of the knife, simply unable to control his reactions to the threat he perceived? As he slammed the knife repeatedly into his victim, was he desperately trying to avoid the overwhelming feelings of imminent annihilation from his childhood – the feelings locked deep within his subconscious from years of enduring the rages of his father?

Whatever interpretation is placed on this story, it marks a turning point in Gacy's behaviour. He does not immediately descend into a murderous spree, but from early 1972 onwards, the possibility of killing his sex partners seems likely to have been in Gacy's mind.

The mitigating effect of family presence

If the assumption (above) that Gacy crossed some line of behavioural possibility when he committed his first murder is correct, then the fascinating question is: Why didn't he quickly move into serial murdering behaviour? Almost all of his thirty-three murder victims (Wilkinson, 1994: 64) were killed in the short four year period between 1974 and his arrest in December 1978 (Bella and Bardsley, 2001). Egger (1998: 109) notes that "…Gacy had killed five people in less than a month in June 1978". There is no evidence of any traumatic event that may have tipped Gacy into a murderous frenzy from 1974 onwards, so it would seem that he had been capable of such behaviour from (at least) the earlier date of 1972. Why no murders between 1972 and 1974? The answer seems to be the presence of family members in his home.

Gacy's mother had moved with him to the house they had bought together in Chicago in August 1970 (just four months after Gacy's release from his first prison sentence). This was the house bought so that Gacy could conduct his PDM business, and it was the house where he would later bury most of his victims. His mother was not working (she is an aging woman at this stage), and so she is almost constantly at the house. Gacy appears to have kept his homosexual behaviour from his mother, so his sexual predation was constrained to locations outside the house.

Another factor that adds to this mitigating family presence is Gacy's second marriage. In July 1972, Gacy married Carol Hoff (Wilkinson, 1994: 62; Egger, 1998: 99). Carol was a family friend who had divorced in 1971, and she turned to Gacy and his mother for support:

> Toward the end of 1971, after Carol and her husband divorced, she often visited Gacy and his mother. Gacy was kind to her and her two daughters, and she liked listening to him talk. When Gacy's mother heard that Carol was having trouble paying her rent, she suggested that Carol and her daughters move in with her and John. (Wilkinson, 1994: 62-63)

Egger (1998: 99) reports that Gacy's mother moved out of the house shortly after Gacy and Carol were married, and that Carol's mother moved in with them. Gacy threw out his new mother-in-law after one year, but the relationship with Carol lasted until early 1975. So, for the five year period between 1970 and 1975 (between Gacy and his mother moving into the house and the beginning of his murder spree), Gacy was not living alone. First he lived with his mother, then with Carol, her mother and her daughters, then with just Carol and her daughters. In 1975, when Gacy's mother (who had gone to live with Gacy's sister in Arkansas) fell and broke her hip, Carol went to her aid (Wilkinson, 1994: 63). It seems likely that, by this point in their relationship, Carol was glad to have an excuse to move away from her husband:

> Gacy's relationship with his second wife deteriorated rapidly, when shortly after their marriage he began to associate more and more with young boys. After declaring his bisexuality less than two years after their marriage and stating that he would no longer have sex with her, Gacy and his wife lived separately in the same house. (Egger, 1998: 99)

Whether Carol's two daughters moved with her to Arkansas to help look after Gacy's mother, or whether they moved in with relatives is unclear. What does stand out is that, from the point when Carol moved out, not only was the relationship over, but Gacy was alone in his house. In the absence of the presence of others, alone with his fantasies, all constraints on Gacy's behaviour were lifted. He was now able to do whatever he liked to his victims.

This is not to say, of course, that Gacy's murderous behaviour was not escalating during this period from 1970 to 1975. It is clear (as noted above) that his first murder was committed just six months before he married Carol. Wilkinson notes that the new bride noticed a peculiar smell in her new home:

> Throughout the summer of 1972, Carol noticed a smell that seemed to come from something decaying in the crawl space (under the house). (Wilkinson, 1994: 63)

This was, of course, the body of Gacy's first victim, killed in January of 1972. Gacy explained the odour as a broken sewer pipe, and spread more lime in the crawl space to control it. The odour apparently lingered, although diminished. The interesting question arises of what would have happened if Carol had been of a mind to investigate the smell for herself.

In another incident that illustrates how Gacy's sexual predation was slowly escalating into violence, he had been in trouble with the police just a week before he and Carol were married, although he seems to have been able to keep this from her. A young male had complained to the police that Gacy had posed as a deputy sheriff and ordered the boy into his car. He had then tried to force his victim to fellate him. The young male escaped, jumping out of Gacy's car, but Gacy tried (unsuccessfully)

to run over him (Wilkinson, 1994: 63). Egger (1998: 108) also reports this incident, adding that the man was twenty-four years old, that Gacy had used a badge to back his claim of being a police officer, and told the young man he was under arrest. The ruse worked to the point of getting the young man in the car, but when Gacy drove him to a secluded spot and tried to force him to fellate him, the resulting scuffle saw the young victim escape.

> The complainant later identified Gacy as his assailant and police arrested Gacy on June 22, 1972. Gacy told police that the complainant was threatening him and trying to extort money from him. After finding marked money given by Gacy on the complainant, police dropped the charges against Gacy. (Egger, 1998: 108)

By 1973, Gacy's sexually predatory behaviour was becoming more overt. He proclaimed to Carol and her daughters that the garage at the house was strictly off-limits to all but himself. His stated reason for this edict was that he needed the garage for his business. What he did in his garage is not known – it seems Carol and her daughters obeyed Gacy's 'off limits' command.

The secluded garage has an ominous *allegorical* ring – Gacy's father used to lock himself in his own basement, and what he did in that place was always hidden from anyone's knowledge:

> When Gacy was a child, his father spent hours by himself in the basement of the house where they were living, in Chicago. His wife and son and two daughters were prohibited from going down there. Through the floor they sometimes heard him talking in different voices. (Wilkinson, 1994: 60)

Whatever else he was doing, Gacy's father was drinking in his cellar, since it is recorded that he often emerged from the cellar in a drunken and violent state. But the voices – was it Gacy senior talking to himself? Why? Was there someone else in the cellar? What was said? Did no-one ever hear any detail? The questions are tantalising, but the evidence to support any answers (even tentative ones) is absent. Was Gacy, in his later banishment of his wife and family from his garage, repeating something of the behaviours of his father in that secluded cellar? It is likely that Gacy knew more about those voices from his father's cellar - we can reasonably expect any child who has the opportunity to eavesdrop on an adult conversation, undetected, to do so. Surely, Gacy would have been intrigued by his father's secret cellar. No-one, however, seems to have asked for more information about this element of Gacy's past, and the opportunity to do so is now lost.

At this point, Gacy also began to frequently stay out for most of the night. He claimed to Carol that, late at night, he could check out potential building sites for deals that he was making, and have more business conversations with potential clients than he could organise during the day (Wilkinson, 1994: 63). Carol must have had her suspicions, especially given Gacy's declared bisexuality and the (by this stage) deteriorating sex life of the marriage. It seems unlikely that Carol could not have had suspicions that her husband was out trawling for sex with young males, but it is apparent that she didn't confront him about his activities in any significant way. She 'put up with it' it seems, for another two years.

While Carol was away in Arkansas helping to look after Gacy's mother, Gacy murdered one of his PDM employees and buried his body under the floor of the garage (Wilkinson, 1994: 63). It seems that Carol did return to the house briefly in early 1975, but had already told Gacy she wanted a divorce, and she moved out for good shortly after her return. Egger (1998: 99) suggests that Gacy was unconcerned

at Carol's departure: "The next day one of Gacy's male employees moved into the house". Clearly, Gacy no longer saw the need for any restriction of his predatory behaviours. Between April 1975 and the end of 1976, Gacy had killed six more victims (Wilkinson, 1994:63). His 'count' to that point was eight, if the first victim and the victim buried in the garage are included. Free from any surveillance of his behaviour (deliberate or otherwise) Gacy's murderous potential is quickly realised.

In the midst of chaos, a façade of order and normality

Gacy had long been capable of presenting a reasonably convincing façade of the good public citizen. From his early career as a shoe salesman, to his work in his first father-in-law's fast food outlets, to his public service clubs participation, Gacy had polished the outward presentation of the respectable, caring citizen. At the very time that his murderous rage starts to find its exploding expression, he launches his public career as Pogo the part-time clown, working voluntarily to amuse sick children in local (Chicago) hospitals. This is an interesting aspect of his behaviour at this time. Does it indicate that he is trying to convince himself (rather than others) that he is still a 'good person'? There is no evidence to suggest that this behaviour formed any part of his sex victim trolling. That was still going on, but it was after hours, in the privacy of his own car, his own home, and the bars, dark back streets and secluded bus stops of his regular hunting grounds.

This paradox is often presented by serial murderers. 'Normal' society is shocked more by what is often perceived to be an evil cynicism on the part of the heinous murderer – a deliberate 'con' on the part of the 'evil' person that he (it is almost always 'he') is 'normal'. Gacy, like many other serial murderers, and like most of the rest of us, appears to have been capable of compartmentalising different aspects of

his behaviour. Perhaps, like all of us, he wanted to believe that there was some vestige of decency within his soul.

Perhaps this need for normalcy also provided the impetus to drive Gacy to one last attempt at a 'normal' sexual relationship. Wilkinson (1994: 63) records that Gacy was briefly engaged in 1977. This relationship appears to have lasted only a very brief time (several months), and the details of its genesis and termination are scant. Perhaps Gacy was unconvinced at his own efforts to re-enter a 'normal' relationship.

Increasing chaos – the beginning of the end

Serial murderers' behaviours often become increasingly chaotic just before they are caught. It often appears that the perpetrator has some latterly emergent subconscious perception that his murderous behaviour has to stop and that, unable to stop himself, he allows himself to be caught. Three stories from this end phase of Gacy's offending stand out, and they all emerge from 1978 - two of his victims escape death, and Gacy was diagnosed with syphilis.

In January, 1978, a nineteen year old male alleged that Gacy had sexually assaulted him. The report by the victim said that Gacy had abducted him at gun point while he was walking, alone at night, on a suburban footpath. As he had so often done, Gacy claimed to be a police person, and handcuffed his victim as soon as he got into the car. Gacy then took the young male back to his house, raped him and physically and psychologically tortured him:

> He held a gun in front of his face and, spinning the chambers as if he were playing Russian roulette, pulled the trigger a number of times before a blank cartridge fired. He caused the boy to lose consciousness several times by

> choking him and by holding his head under water in the bathtub. (Wilkinson, 1994: 64)

The victim appears to have been handcuffed throughout this ordeal. The vulnerability felt by this victim must have been extreme, since "The boy said that he had been in such pain that he begged to be killed" (Wilkinson, 1994: 64). Gacy didn't kill him. Why he didn't kill this victim, as he had thirty or more others at this point, seems (on the surface) inexplicable. Gacy himself indicated (whilst in prison awaiting the death penalty) that he had killed for two reasons: either his sex victim tried to raise the originally agreed price for sex (Gacy had many paid sexual encounters, that didn't end in murder, both before and during his murderous episodes), or Gacy feared that his victim would report him (Sullivan and Maiken, 1983: 225). This victim, who had been so systematically tortured – who had so given up on his chances of survival that he begged Gacy to end his suffering – was deliberately set free. He spent the night at Gacy's house (obviously in a state of capture) and then Gacy drove him to his place of work the next morning. Above all else, this victim would *not* remain silent after he was out of Gacy's control. Consciously or not, this seems like a deliberate attempt on Gacy's part to bring about his own undoing.

Yet, if that was Gacy's (conscious or subconscious) objective, it didn't work! Gacy *was* arrested (for sexual assault and kidnapping) when the young man went to the police, but, responding with his (by now) practiced self-assurance, Gacy claimed that the youth was the aggressor. He said that the encounter was a commercial one – that the young man had agreed to sadomasochistic sex for money, and that when Gacy didn't pay him his fee, he complained to the police. The police prosector thought that Gacy made a more credible witness than the young victim, and dropped the charges against Gacy (Wilkinson, 1994: 64).

The second story that relates to the imminent end of Gacy's offending is another story of *apparently deliberate release*. Gacy picked up a twenty-six year old man named Jeffrey Ringall. Jeffrey was walking between bars in an area frequented by Gacy on his trolling manoeuvres. This time, instead of using his police persona and some threat of force to ensnare his victim, Gacy must have decided to use charm (probably because of the relative maturity of this 'target'). He enticed Ringall to join him in the car, promising him a 'joint'. Once he had ensnared his victim, Gacy used a chloroform-soaked cloth to immobilise him. Gacy took him back to his house, using the chloroform each time Ringall started to regain consciousness (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). At the house, Gacy "…tortured him and raped him for several hours, while he drifted in and out of consciousness" (Wilkinson, 1994: 64). Ringall remembered bits and pieces of his horrific experience, and was conscious enough on several occasions to realise that his life was indeed in peril. Again, this is *not* the sort of victim who would remain silent if released. Yet released he was:

> He woke the next morning at the base of a statue in a park near where he'd been picked up. His pants were unzipped, his rectum was bleeding, and his face was burned from the chloroform. (Wilkinson, 1994: 64)

Ringall soon learned that he also had permanent liver damage from the excessive exposure to chloroform (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). Ringall *did* complain. He brought a civil warrant against Gacy, and also took his complaint to the police. Ringall identified Gacy from police pictures (Gacy was by now a significant suspect in several cases), but the police did not pursue charges. Ringall's background is obscure, but perhaps he himself had drug convictions or other charges and was known to the police. Again, the police failed to respond to provocative evidence that Gacy seems to have placed under their proverbial noses. Gacy paid Ringall three thousand dollars in an out of court settlement (Wilkinson, 1994: 64).

The third story from 1978 that indicates Gacy is moving towards some end phase in his offending concerns the medical news that Gacy had syphilis. To receive that news, Gacy had, of course, to have suspected that something was wrong, since he had visited a doctor for this complaint. The obvious onset of this disease seems to have prompted Gacy to ponder his past and future, and this element in the ending of his murderous career comes just after the two 'releases' of victims discussed above. Gacy was certainly entering a different mindset at this point, since, in prison (on death row), he recounted to Wilkinson that, not long before the news about his syphilitic condition (in June, 1978):

> …he'd had the idea that he would fill in the crawl space completely with concrete, and that he and Carol would get back together and leave Chicago for a small town where he could open a fried-chicken franchise. (Wilkinson, 1994: 64)

Whether the syphilis had reached his brain, or he was delusional for some other reason, or whether he was just engaging in vague daydreams, the message is the same – Gacy wanted to retreat from the world he had created. Nostalgia can overtake us all in times of stress, and we can long to escape to a simplistically idealised past.

Shortly after his arrest, records Wilkinson, Gacy appears to have felt pangs of conscience for his behaviour:

> …he wrote a letter to his mother and family that began, "Please forgive me for what I am about to tell you. I have been very sick for a long time". (Wilkinson, 1994: 64)

Do these stories paint a picture of a man so totally in charge of his offending power that he can afford to taunt the police and public, or do they paint a picture of a tired person subconsciously desperate to escape his self-created bondage?

A final victim leads to arrest

Gacy's final victim was a fifteen year old male named Robert Piest. The 'mistake' that Gacy made in his selection of this victim was that Robert Piest was *not disconnected from family*. Piest worked at a pharmacy, and his mother had come to the pharmacy to collect him after work. He left his mother waiting in the pharmacy, telling her that he had to go and briefly talk to a contractor about a job (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). That contractor was Gacy. Whether Piest was answering an advertisement, or whether he had heard about work with PDM contractors through a friend is not clear, but the young man never returned to his waiting mother.

Piest's mother raised the alarm within several hours, and the police, having Gacy's name as a connection, went to Gacy's house and asked him to come to the police station to answer questions regarding Piest's disappearance. Gacy feigned family troubles and declined to go with the police at that point:

> Gacy said he was unable to leave his home at the moment because there was a recent death in the family and he had to attend to some phone calls. Gacy showed up at the police station hours later and gave his statement to police. Gacy said he knew nothing about the boy's disappearance and left the station after further questioning. (Bell and Bardsley, 2001)

This sequence of events raises the chilling possibility that Robert Piest was still alive when the police first knocked on Gacy's door. Did Gacy kill Piest *after* the police had

left, then calmly go to the police station and maintain his innocence? Was Piest alive - bound by Gacy's handcuffs, with underclothes forced into his mouth (something many of Gacy's victims suffered) so that he was unable to cry out - as the police talked to Gacy at his door? Certainly, Gacy's ruse about the 'death in the family' had easily thrown the police 'off the scent'. Gacy perhaps thought that he was again going to get away with murder.

The police involved did not, at that point, know anything about Gacy's past. When they learned, several days later (December 13, 1978), that he had been in prison in another state for sodomy, they obtained a warrant to search his house (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). That first search did not find any bodies, although police did look in the crawl space (though obviously not too thoroughly). They found nothing to link Gacy to Piest's disappearance at that point, but they did find a ring that belonged to a young man who had previously disappeared (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). The police put a lot of pressure on Gacy during that eventful week and a half in 1978 (between December 13 [Piest's disappearance] and December 22 [Gacy's confession]). They had interviewed Gacy a number of times, interviewed a number of his friends, and extensively searched his house.

Whether Gacy 'cracked under the strain', or whether there was some growing but subconscious perception in his mind that the killing had to end, Gacy confessed to one murder. He said it was in self defence and that he had buried the body under the garage floor. Police obtained another search warrant and returned to Gacy's house. They began with the crawl space, looking a little more carefully this time. The first body was uncovered in short order. On 22 December, 1978, Gacy confessed to multiple murders (Bell and Bardsley, 2001). He was convicted on thirty-three counts of murder on 12 March, 1980 (Wilkinson, 1994: 58) and eventually executed by lethal injection on 10 May, 1994 (Nemo, 1997: 1).

There are a number of texts that describe in some detail the investigative and trial processes that ensued from the point of Gacy's arrest (Sullivan and Maiken, 1983; Bell and Bardsley, 2001; Egger, 1998; Nemo, 1997; Peterson, 1998; Wilkinson, 1994), but these details are of peripheral concern to this examination of Gacy's behaviours and motives. The central questions that this thesis wanted to ask remain essentially unanswerable in Gacy's case. Little that is written about Gacy is significantly revealing of his inner world, and the opportunity to question him further about the possible allegorical connections between his past and his murderous behaviours is now lost.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION – THREE LIVES SUMMARISED

Is Miller right? Does poisonous pedagogy prompt splitting off and projection, and can this phenomenon be revealed in an allegorical interpretation of the murderous behaviours of serial killers? The hermeneutic exploration of the three serial murderers whose life histories have been reviewed in this thesis has revealed support for Miller's contentions. It does seem that murderous behaviour can be interpreted as an allegorical expression of unresolved childhood trauma. The three stories explored can now be summarised in terms of their fit with what Miller termed the 'Repetition Compulsion', and in terms of their allegorical content.

The Repetition Compulsion

Earlier in this thesis, I produced a diagrammatic model of Alice Miller's conceptualisation of what she termed *Poisonous Pedagogy*. It is to that model that I now want to return, in an effort to see if Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy can be tracked in any systematic way through Miller's theoretical perspective.

The starting point for Poisonous Pedagogy is the presence of abuse. In Miller's terms, this would be concerned with any abusive action that a parent or adult care-giver might visit on a child. Abuse, of course, can take any combination of three basic forms – physical, sexual or psychological. Physical abuse *always* involves a psychological element, and sexual abuse *always* involves a physical *and* a psychological element, but psychological abuse does not necessarily involve either physical or sexual abuse. Miller would probably agree with my own stance that the deepest scars are left in the psyche by the psychological component of any abuse.

It seems common to the human story that physical wounds may heal, but psychological wounds seem to frequently have longer-lasting effects than physical ones.

The concomitant phenomenon that ensures the potency of any abuse effects, from the poisonous pedagogy perspective, is the *absence of any empathic listener*. Empathy is the ability to understand the feelings of others, and even to have some concern over what others might be feeling. It is the "…imaginative projection into another person's situation, especially for vicarious capture of its emotional and motivational qualities" (Audi, 2001: 261). The *empathic listener* is Miller's foil to the 'poisoning' effects of abuse. The presence of one who is available to listen empathically to a person's (child or adult) story of abuse provides the opportunity for confirmation of the victim's feelings that the abuse is, indeed, abuse – the unwanted imposition of harm. In the absence of the opportunity to confirm that the way one is being treated is *unfair*, it becomes quite easy for the perpetrator of that unfairness (abuse) to convince the victim that he or she is *to blame for* the unwanted, unwelcome, unsettling feelings that accompany the experience of victimisation. It is important to note (as Miller does) that in a perpetrator-victim relationship, the perpetrator always has the position of power, and that the empathic listener can redress that imbalance of power for the victim, not by overpowering the perpetrator, but by confirming the victim's feeling that the victimisation was unfair and that (therefore) the victim is *not to blame* for what has happened. If the victim is not able to find that support to lay responsibility for the abuse at the perpetrator's feet, then the rest of the Poisonous Pedagogy cycle will ensue.

Can we find, then, find these two precursors to the Poisonous Pedagogy cycle - abuse and the absence of the empathic listener - in the earlier stages of the lives of Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy? This question seems answerable in the affirmative.

Bartsch was abused from birth – he was abandoned by his mother, and he was denied normative post-birth nurturing. (Despite any possible protest that the nursing staff were just following orders or that they didn't want him to become attached to any one person, the effect is the same - Jurgen experienced no initial maternal bonding). He then suffered physical abuse at the hands of his adoptive mother, whose behaviour towards him seems to have vacillated between beatings and smothering attempts at affection. He also suffered psychological abuse at the hands of his parents and his grandmother, when he was repeatedly (it seems like it was almost a daily occurrence) imprisoned (there can be no other word for it) in his grandmother's cellar. Bartsch also suffered physical, sexual and psychological abuse at the hands of his private boarding school's teachers, especially Pater Pulitz. Abuse definitely appears to show a constant presence throughout Bartsch's life.

The second key to the poisonous pedagogy cycle also seems to be present in the case of Bartsch. Perhaps the first empathic listener Jurgen meets is the journalist Paul Moor, who he meets shortly before his (Bartsch's) death. Jurgen's adoptive parents do not seem to have provided any empathic nurturing during his childhood – his mother was inconsistent (violent, then 'affectionate'), and his father didn't act as his advocate. His grandmother must have been the antithesis of the empathic listener, since it was she who was prepared to ruthlessly isolate Jurgen from other children. (Again, we should note that, regardless of the grandmother's motive for this behaviour, the outcome is classical child abuse – isolation from interaction with childhood peers). Neither did Jurgen find any empathic listener at the boarding school at Marienhausen. The duplicity of Pater Pulitz does not appear to have been offset by any other staff member, and the opportunity to find a confidant amongst his school mates was denied by the school's systematic isolation of the children – the enforced silence at almost all times that was designed to preclude the opportunity for personal interaction amongst the boys. (Again, regardless of the

motive behind this rule of silence, the effect is the same – the children are cut off from any opportunity to check their feelings that their treatment is unfair).

With the presence of both of the initiating elements of poisonous pedagogy, Bartsch does fit the cycle's pattern of then entering self-blame for the 'bad' elements of his life (and little of Jurgen's life seemed to be anything *but* 'bad'). Unable to live with this self-blame (as the cycle predicts), Bartsch repressed much of the trauma that he had suffered. He only started to recall the abusive treatment he suffered in childhood when he encountered Paul Moor. Until that point – after his capture and conviction – he had probably lived his life either without remembering those childhood traumas or without connecting his murderous behaviours with them. Having repressed the memories of his childhood trauma, Jurgen found himself left with psychically annihilating feelings of self-loathing that he couldn't explain. These are the 'fuel' for the 'end phase' of the poisonous pedagogy cycle – the splitting off of those feelings of anger, rage, indignation and humiliation, and their projection onto other (substitute) objects. The *repetition compulsion* is thus set in motion – a compulsion that produces only a vague and temporary relief from the psychic pain felt, rather than the lasting resolution of feelings that is required. Jurgen goes on trying to annihilate the weak and helpless victim within himself (via his murder of young boys that substitute for his own childhood psyche) until he is caught. Paradoxically, it is only then that he encounters the empathic listener who might be able to help him resolve his feelings. By then, of course, it is too late – too late for his victims, and too late for Jurgen.

Perhaps it is not so surprising that Bartsch's story fits Miller's poisonous pedagogy model, since she chose his story as an example to illustrate her theoretical perspective. What, though, of Bundy and Gacy – two lives that Miller herself did *not*

examine – do *they* fit her model of the influence of unresolved childhood trauma on later adult behaviour?

Bundy had a startlingly similar birth experience to Bartsch. Like Jurgen, Ted was abandoned by his birth mother. He, too, spent the first several months of his life in a state of what we would now recognise as sensory deprivation. Like Jurgen, he was fed (in the hospital) to a quite rigid schedule, and the nurses were required to over-ride any maternal instincts they might have had in an effort to not bond with the infant who would be adopted at some point in the near future. It is significant that much recent research into early childhood learning emphasises the vital importance of immediate post-birth nurturing to the development of normative behavioural development (Gowen and Nebrig, 2002; Muir and Slater, 2000; Pucket and Black, 2001). The fact that Ted was subjected to the child-raising strategies of his time is not significant. What *is* significant is that we now understand the psychological damage such treatment can engender.

Unlike Jurgen, Ted *did* return to his birth mother's household, but only under the ruse of adoption by his mother's parents, and only after that first several months of life that were spent in physical and psychic isolation. The effect of that isolation might be similar to the social and sensory deprivation of adult prisoners in conditions of extreme solitary confinement. Although, as a newborn, the infant Ted was in a purely sensate state of being, without the capacity (at that point) for psychological cognition of his experience, the effect of the absence of normative nurturing must have been written into his psyche. This is *not* an emotive point – the effect of that early developmental deprivation on Ted's psychic development cannot have been anything but drastic. It is the key, I contend, to Ted Bundy's inability to empathise with others. He simply didn't learn what human connectedness was, and the rest of his life experience exacerbated what Miller would have called the most

poisonous of pedagogic actions – the abandonment of a child at that point of maximum need for nurturing.

Louise Cowell, herself, must have experienced significant abandonment in her own life, or she would not have been able, Miller would say, to abandon her own child. Empathy for others, it seems, is learned through the experience of empathy and advocacy (that is, through being the recipient of those valuing regards). If Louise had had empathy, she would not have denied her child at birth, or continued that denial throughout his life by refusing to ever allow him to know who his father was. Bundy and his family present a strong case for the notion of an inter-generational transmission of psychological violence in the form of an absence of empathy and advocacy – that phenomenon that Miller labelled 'Poisonous Pedagogy'. This earliest experience of abandonment is perhaps the most hugely violent experience in Ted's life. In terms of looking for the presence of violence in childhoods, all commentators seem to have glossed over the significance of *this* violence that Ted suffered, making the mistake of considering that the only significant violence is physical.

Details of Bundy's early life in the Cowell family home (with his mother, grandfather and grandmother) are minimalist – it *appears* that Ted had the archetypal 'wholesome American' upbringing. Juxtaposed against this appearance of normality, though, is the certain knowledge (because Ted talked about this) that both his mother and his grandfather deliberately cultivated a public appearance of familial bliss. It seems that Louise Cowell's father taught her to meticulously tend the 'garden' of the family's public face. The lessons were transferred (by both grandfather and mother) to Ted in his early years, and he learned the lessons so well that his whole life became a façade. Unable to actually *be* 'normal', Ted carefully fabricated a thoroughly convincing image of the successful middle class

all-American boy. He stole items to furnish his lifestyle whilst in college, he became involved in (mainstream) political campaigning, and he was in a 'normative' relationship with a female spouse at the same time that he was committing some of his later murders.

The lesson Ted had learned, and the paramount rule that he lived his life by was: 'appearance is all that matters'. His grandmother had had several 'nervous breakdowns', but these were explained away by the family as simply 'something that was wrong with her'. It wasn't her fault, and it certainly wasn't the family's fault! No suggestion that there was anything amiss within familial inter-relationships was ever entertained by Sam or Louise. This vague and unquestioning notion of a biological flaw was later echoed by Ted - in conversations with Michaud and Aynesworth, he produced the explanation of 'the entity' or 'the flaw' in an attempt to explain the aberrant behaviour of serial murder.

There are, however, two indications that there was something seriously amiss within the Cowell household. The first indication came from the 'knives incident' reported by MacPherson (1989: 142), and the second comes from Louise's determination to eventually leave her father's household. Neither of these glimpses of disharmony provides concrete evidence that there was abuse in the Cowell family home, but they do raise questions.

Where (or how) does a three-year-old learn to meticulously arrange knives on the side of your bed while you sleep? Why would such a young child do this, and apparently find enjoyment in the surprise on your face when you awoke to find the knives arranged by your side? Premeditation to surprise and unsettle others - in a mind so young - seems unusual. It seems possible that this behaviour involved

some mimicry, a well documented element of childhood behavioural development (Hess, Philippot, and Blairy, 1999; Nadel and Butterworth, 1999). If mimicry was involved, who was Ted imitating? Did someone *show* him how to do this? Was he coached, or did he learn through surreptitious observation? If he learned by observation, who and what was he observing? Is there a link here with the 'nervous breakdowns' of Ted's grandmother – was she threatened by her husband in some way with knives? These questions are, of course, highly speculative, but they illustrate how impenetrable the biographic record of Ted's early life is. Nobody has bothered to try to answer these questions. Neither Ted himself, nor his mother or other family members - not even Ted's Aunt, who was the object (or victim) of the 'knives incident' - bothered to ask questions regarding this extremely peculiar behaviour from a child. Even later, when Michaud and Aynesworth publicly uncovered the incident, an explanation was not pursued.

What of Louise's determination to move away from her father's house? Why was there a sense of urgency (or determination), after all those years, to move some distance from her parents? There is no explanation offered from anywhere within the family, so the question (once again) is speculative – but it is a question that begs to be asked and answered.

What can be summarised from an examination of the available information about Ted's early life is this: it *appears* as though there was no obvious (physical) traumatic abuse in his early experience. This, of course, is a large part of the reason that Ted Bundy is such an enigmatic serial murderer. My own interpretation of Ted's early life experience, as has been outlined, is that his at-birth separation from his mother, his learning regarding attention to public facades, and his mother's disallowance of any knowledge of his biological father were all, in fact, hugely

traumatic events. Each one of these elements caused deep psychic or psychological damage to the developing Ted. It seems logical that he grew up *unable to form normative loving relationships*, and *unable to empathise with the plight of others*.

Ted's *repetition compulsion* emanates from this inability to understand normative human connection. Ted referred to 'the flaw' or 'the entity' which drove his behaviours – a compulsion to act in ways that harmed others, with an inability to stop. It started with stealing. It progressed to damaging cars, then to voyeurism. The voyeurism developed gradually into an extended form that involved assault, and that grew into abduction and murder. Why was Ted unable to stop any of this behaviour? He felt that, once these urges arose, he was unable to stop. Miller would definitely say that he was within the grip of a repetition compulsion, and that the central element powering this absence of normative inhibition was focussed in those two central elements in the totality of Ted's life experience – a *denial of love* and a *denial of the right to know*. With no empathic listener, Ted was condemned to repeat his compulsive behaviours until someone else stopped him. Like Bartsch, Bundy encountered a journalist (two, actually) after his imprisonment. Unlike Jurgen, Ted doesn't seem to have found an empathic listener, so there is little that either Ted or the world learned from the storying that Ted engaged in with his two in-prison interviewers. Perhaps Ted's learned dedication to preserving the family façade would have precluded him from honestly exploring his feelings with anybody. The point here is not that Michaud and Aynesworth 'failed' in any way – it is simply that there was no empathic listener available to Ted at any point in his life. Had there been, his denial of his own feelings might not have been so complete.

Perhaps the most enigmatic aspect of Bundy's behaviour, when seen through Miller's perspectives, is that it is difficult to rationalise the 'content' of his repetition

compulsion - just what was it that Ted was trying to split off from himself and project onto others? Both Bartsch (see above) and Gacy (see below) present easily rationalised explanations regarding this splitting off and projection mechanism, but Bundy is different. Bartsch's and Gacy's victims can easily be seen as representations of those aspects of the self that these two perpetrators wanted to rid themselves of. Bundy's choice of young college women (or women whose appearance fitted that mould) is more problematic. There is no direct evidence to support the notion, but my intuitive suggestion is that it may be his own mother that he was trying to rid his psychically unacceptable self of. He never seems to have spoken a word against his mother, yet it is she who abandoned him, and it is she who denied him access to knowing. Having been imbued with the family imperative of presenting a constantly perfect public façade, he had become unable to criticise his mother. Did his subconscious and inexpressible rage (at denial of love and denial of knowing) find allegorical expression in an attempt to expunge the author of this psychic pain through the projection of anger and rage towards substitute objects (substitutes for his mother)? I have not seen a photo of the young (in her twenties) Louise Cowell, but I wonder if she looked something like the victims Ted wrought his anger on? Of course, the basic notion here might also fit, even if this was not the case – Ted may simply have targeted young college women (as subconsciously allegorical representations of his mother) simply because they were the 'young women' that he encountered in his day-to-day life as a college student.

If the behaviours of both Bartsch and Bundy can be seen to reasonably illustrate Miller's Repetition Compulsion, what, then, of Gacy? Does he, too fit this mould? To start with, Gacy's early childhood, like that of Bundy, *appears* to have been 'normal'. But his father was a violent drunk. He beat both his wife and his son (Gacy). He was homophobic and would accept no questioning of his biases. Gacy was always trying to please him, but always felt unable to do so. Gacy's mother repeatedly gave him

enemas as a child (for no apparent medical reason), and he has had little to say about the intimacy of his relationship with his mother. The enemas might easily be seen to constitute the sexual abuse of a child. As a young boy, he was also sexually assaulted (psychologically manipulated and physically fondled) by the builder friend of his father. All that the recorded biographic details of Gacy's life give us are glimpses of a somewhat troubled childhood. Three 'outcomes' emerge, though, from what we do know of his early experiences: he never gained his father's approval (which he desperately wanted); his behaviours towards his victims (if not his outwardly expressed attitudes) exhibited high levels of homophobia; and his sexual development (or the development of his attitudes towards sex) were non-normative.

How does this all feed into a repetition compulsion? Miller's explanation would be that Gacy's early sexual experiences led him towards the very behaviours that were most viciously and vociferously condemned by his father. Desperately wanting his father's approval, but drawn to the very behaviour that was most unacceptable to his father, he attempted to expunge the unacceptable within himself by eradicating it in others. In Miller's poisonous pedagogic terms, Gacy was, in murdering the young homosexual victims he entrapped, trying to annihilate the homosexual within himself that stood in the way of acceptance and affection from his father. Gacy had no such conscious interpretation of his own behaviours, and with no encounters with empathic listeners (who might have allowed him the opportunity to explore his buried thoughts on sex, relationships and intimacy), he was condemned to repeat the cycle of trying to expunge his hated inner self by murdering its projected image in others (the *splitting off* and *projection* phases of the repetition compulsion). Like Bartsch and Bundy, this repetition compulsion was only interrupted by his eventual arrest for murder.

Allegory in murder

In order to extend the comparison of these three serial murderers from a poisonous pedagogy perspective, it is useful to search the stories we have of these lives for any *allegorical content* that might reinforce the splitting off and projection mechanisms that Miller describes. First, each case will be examined separately for the presence of allegorical themes, and then those themes will be compared to search for any commonalities across the cases that might appear.

Jurgen Bartsch

Jurgen's story illustrates the central mechanisms behind *Poisonous Pedagogy* - *splitting off* and *projection*. These mechanisms can be seen to be operating in Jurgen's case, as he tries to eradicate in his victims the weak, helpless, humiliated child within himself. But beyond the evidence to support Miller's notions of poisonous pedagogy, so many of Jurgen's actions in the murders he committed can be seen as *allegorical* of the traumas of his own childhood (Miller, 1987: 228). There are six discernible allegorical themes in Jurgen's actions: **selection**, **imprisonment**, **persecution**, **abandonment**, **dismemberment** (overlapping physical and psychic elements), and **inconsistency**.

Jurgen **selected his victims** deliberately. He apparently spent hours in shopping malls, searching for the right victim. He went shopping for victims, choosing to some unknown (unknowable?) criteria. (This is what Norris 1989: 25] has called the 'Trolling phase' of a serial murder). In a somewhat similar fashion, Jurgen had been selected by his parents from the abandoned children in hospital - those up for adoption. (At the time of Jurgen's birth, immediately after World War two, Germany was in social upheaval – there were many babies to choose from). The allegory

here lies not just in the selection of a child by Jurgen, but in his selection of a child *to be a victim*. Jurgen may have felt, subconsciously, that he had been *selected to be a victim* of (and by) his adoptive parents.

The air-raid shelter that was the place where he overpowered, imprisoned, tortured and murdered his victims is a macabre echo of the underground cellar where, for much of the first six years of his life, Jurgen's grandmother **imprisoned** him. Strong images of the sights, sounds and feelings of that childhood fear and abandonment that Jurgen felt as a defenceless, helpless child must have echoed before him as he imprisoned his own victims. Here is Miller's splitting off and projection in action – the child within Jurgen attempts to avoid his own fate by 'flipping' the situation so that he is now the perpetrator, not the victim. By imprisoning others (representations of his childhood self, it seems), he was able to subconsciously avoid the feelings of fear that sprang from his own childhood imprisonment – feelings of fear that lay in his conscious mind, but were disconnected from memories of what had happened to him. The subconscious attempt to find catharsis takes the form here of seeing others suffer that which the perpetrator subconsciously desires to free himself from. The allegory in this instance is crystal clear.

Jurgen's perception of his own childhood seemed bound up with **persecution**. He was subjected to victimisation, he felt, both in his home, and at school. Pater Pulitz, the priest at Marienhausen (the boarding school he was sent to, against his strongest wishes), also **selected** Jurgen for his own peculiar type of deliberate, systematic persecution – at both a psychological and a sexual, physical level. Even his adoptive mother's **inconsistency** (of behaviour toward him) would have likely been interpreted by Jurgen as a form of persecution.

Jurgen's earliest, sensate experiences (in the days and weeks following his birth)

must have inculcated in him a strong feeling of **abandonment**. He was left in the hospital by his mother – she literally (for whatever reason) abandoned him. His initial, newborn needs – warmth, affection, touch – were largely ignored by the insular, harsh, regimented nursing routines of immediate post-war Germany. Perhaps not coincidentally, his earliest life experiences were echoed about a decade later by those of Ted Bundy. Do we underestimate the potential for life-long psychic damage (an inability to love, an inability to empathise with others?) that may result from such devastating aloneness at the point of your entry into the world. Humans live in sets of complex inter-relationships grounded in a learned ability to trust. Isolated from intimate human connection in those first hours, days and months, both Jurgen and Ted would later be quite unable to fathom what intimacy was.

Jurgen felt **abandoned again** (echoing his abandonment at birth), by both his adoptive parents and his teachers. Neither at home nor at school could Jurgen find the advocacy that children need to grow into well-nurtured human beings. The very persons whose support, help and love Jurgen needed were his major persecutors. Jurgen's own selected victims were also doubly abandoned – by a world that could not know where they were, and by Jurgen himself, the last possible advocate for his victims. Jurgen is mimicking his own abandonment in the suffering of his own victims. Unaware of what empathy was (because no-one had shown him what it was) he was quite unable to connect with the suffering of his victims. All he saw and felt was a subconscious relief from his own feelings.

The knife that Jurgen used to **dismember** the corpses of his strangled victims, and which he used to kill his final victim, was a butcher's knife. The victimisation he had been subject to as a child combined fatefully with images of dismemberment and blood shedding from his parent's butchers shop and with the violence frequently

displayed towards him by his parents when he was present in the shop. Indeed, one of Jurgen's repeated childhood nightmares involved his mother either selling him or attacking him with a butcher's knife (Moor, in Miller, 1987: 212-213). Was this dream a close reflection of reality? Did his mother actually threaten him (perhaps repeatedly) with a butcher's knife? Did she threaten to dismember him? It seems possible, even likely.

By using the knife himself, Jurgen was subconsciously trying to avoid that fate. By *splitting off* his victimised self and *projecting* it onto his victims, he avoided his own nightmare of the ultimate persecution – not merely psychic dismemberment, but physical dismemberment as well. There is perhaps no more complete expression of the worthlessness of a life than to cut it into pieces, literally and metaphorically, for no logical reason. Dismemberment, in this sense, is an expression of – an *allegory* of – worthlessness.

Jurgen's kissing behaviour with some of his victims seems to also be a macabre reflection of the **inconsistency** of his own childhood experience of 'love'. It was his mother who, by her actions, blurred for him the relationship between displays of affection and physical beatings. It was she who would beat him for no apparent reason, then, almost in the same breath, expect him to respond warmly when she kissed and hugged him, without ever explaining why she had struck him. As a child, Jurgen must have been bewildered by these inconsistent messages. Such bewilderment would have been incredibly disconcerting – there would have been no room to develop reliable expectations of his mother's behaviour towards him. As an adult, he visited that same horrifying retraction of the possibility for expectations of what was about to happen on his victims. Imprisoned, bound, beaten, helpless, in abject fear of their lives – and then they were kissed on the lips. Again, the unbearable fears of Jurgen's childhood (separated in his consciousness from any

logical understanding of what had happened to him) were split off and projected onto a substitute victim, and the act becomes an unconscious allegory of his own lived experience.

Jurgen's senses were aroused and excited as he watched his victims experiencing horror and pain. In their suffering he subconsciously saw his own suffering reflected, but with an important difference - this time, *he was not feeling the pain.* By seeing but not feeling that pain he could finally imagine he had escaped his life threatening past. Simultaneously, he was able to feel the power of the role of his dominators, reversing the roles he had been powerless to avoid. The *splitting off* and *projection* mechanism seems to have precluded awareness (at that point in time) of the suffering of the victim who now substituted, in this *allegorical* scene, for himself.

Theodore (Ted) Bundy

Alice Miller (1987) provided a clear explanation of the allegorical content in the murderous behaviours of Jurgen Bartsch. She drew convincing parallels between the traumas Jurgen suffered in his childhood and his behaviours towards his victims. With chilling reciprocity, Jurgen mirrored, in his torture of (and disregard for) *his* victims, what others had done to *him* in *his* childhood.

Can similarly allegorical connections be drawn between Ted Bundy's early childhood trauma and his later (adult) murders? Not so easily, perhaps, but four allegorical elements do emerge from Ted's story: **deception**, **abandonment**, **possession** and **disappearance**.

Bundy's victims were *not allowed to know* – the truth was hidden from them, in a deliberate deception designed to control. This mirrors the essence of Ted's mother's

deliberate secrecy regarding his father. He was *not allowed to know*. It is interesting to note that one of Alice Miller's books on childhood trauma and its effect was titled "Thou Shalt Not be Aware" (Miller, 1984). This title expresses the essence of what Miller referred to as 'poisonous pedagogy' – the deliberate, deceptive manipulation of the child's understanding of the world in order to control the child for the adult's purposes. Louise Bundy never revealed her reasons for denying Ted the knowledge of who his father was. It has been the speculation of this thesis (and it can only be speculation) that the reason for Louise's secrecy was that Ted's grandfather was his father. If this was the case, it would explain why Sam Cowell wanted to adopt Ted, when his own mother (Louise) wanted him put up for adoption – she had left him in the hospital after birth, and appears to have not wanted to see him again. Couple this with the fastidiousness with which both Sam Cowell and his daughter tended the public image of 'the family', and you have an explanation for why the truth about Ted's parentage was denied him. Public respectability (protection of the adults' public images) mattered more than Ted's feelings.

His mother had asked him to trust her when she repeatedly told him that the identity of his father 'didn't matter' – Ted was forced to live with not knowing, but the uncertainty must have gnawed cruelly at his perceptions of himself. As an adult, Ted echoed the mantra his mother had taught him (at least in public) – that he didn't care who his father was – that it was of no consequence, and that he was not interested in the least in finding out the truth. At least one outburst from Ted (when his cousin called him a 'bastard') indicates that it was not 'of no concern'. A lifetime of subconsciously (sometimes consciously?) wanting to know who his father was, and a lifetime of *denial of permission to know* seems to have helped to create the schism between the publicly projected persona and the reality below the surface that was such an integral part of Ted's existence.

This deceitfulness of behaviour and manner seems to be allegorically echoed in Ted's actions towards his victims. One story he told of ensnaring a victim shows how well he had learned the 'art' of creating an appearance of normality that belied a hidden maelstrom of uncertainty and deceit. He is referring here to a 'hypothetical' construction of what may have happened during the abduction of Brenda Ball. He suggests the killer may have picked her up hitchhiking, started a 'chatty' conversation with her, easily gained her confidence with his suave demeanour, and talked her into going to his house with him. He comments on what the killer would be thinking about as this encounter progresses:

> Conversation. To remove himself from the personal aspects of the encounter, the interchange. Chatting and flattering and entertaining, as if seen through a motion picture screen. He would be engaging in the pattern just for the purpose of making the whole encounter seem legitimate…and to keep her at ease. He didn't want this girl to get second thoughts about going with him to his place. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989: 109)

His abductions always involved a deception of the victim – a luring of the victim into trusting him. One of his first strategies was to fake a broken arm - the disarmingly polite student with his arm in a sling who needed assistance carrying books to his car. As the young woman whose help he had elicited bent over to place the books in Ted's car, he would bludgeon the unsuspecting victim on the head with a tyre lever he had hidden under the car, rendering her unconscious.

At another level of this *not allowed to know* theme, Ted's victims may have been killed because they had seen behind his public façade, and they could not be allowed to expose him. It is well documented that Ted feared public exposure and humiliation far more than the logical responsibility for his own actions. He postulated

that the source of aberrant human behaviour lies in some innate (probably genetic) 'flaw', that responds to environmental stressors (such as the violence in some pornography) to produce psychopathy, or what he referred to as 'the entity' (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989: 64-68). The 'flaw' and the 'entity' neatly excuse Ted himself, his mother, and his family from personal responsibility for any of the vortex of violence that surrounded Ted.

Whether, then, on the level of the denial of information to his victims that echoes the denial of his own access to information about his parentage, or on the level of the denial of personal responsibility for his actions that 'the flaw' and 'the entity' afforded him, Ted's life was immersed in deceit.

Ted's **abandonment** has been examined in some detail – it is a theme that arguably directs strong undercurrents in his psyche. Is it possible that there is an echo of that abandonment in his treatment of the corpses of his victims? Was there an element of abandonment in his actions of leaving their bodies alone, isolated in the wilderness? It seems possible that this action is partly allegorical of Ted's own experience.

One difficulty here is that Ted gives no indication at all of what happened at these 'dump sites'. We do know that he revisited his dump sites. (Some victims were also murdered at the sites where they were left). Ted speculated that a killer using these disposal strategies would return to the dump sites for purely pragmatic reasons – to see if the bodies had been consumed by the animals (the 'little beasties', as Ted called them)(Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989b: 124). Unfortunately, we have no indication of any other thoughts or feelings Ted might have had as he revisited those several sites. This is an area that he refused to 'speculate' on.

There is one other story from Ted's 'speculation' about serial killing that may have some content that is allegorical of his core of inner feelings of abandonment. It is the story of the murders of Janice Ott and Denise Naslund, at Lake Sammamish, near Seattle (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989: 128-140). These two victims were abducted separately, but within a few hours of each other. It appears that the first victim was left, restrained in some way, in a house near the abduction point. The second victim was then lured into capture and taken to the same house. The *abandonment* of the first victim, an unusual element in Bundy's *modus operandi*, may have been an unintentionally allegorical action. It certainly has the hallmarks of Ted's own post-birth abandonment. In both cases, the 'victim' is left in a state of bewilderment, with no possible comprehension of what was to happen next. The abandoned baby and the abandoned abductee were both in an alien world – should they feel fear or hope? To be left so totally alone, with no connections that might make sense of that moment of existence, must be to come close to psychic annihilation.

Who was Ted trying to **possess** through his victims? His mother? She had abandoned him, physically and morally, at the point of his greatest physical and psychological vulnerability. Was he grasping at what he did not, *could* not, obtain – intimate, human relationship? Was he, at the same time, trying to possess approximations of his mother so that he could then reject them - abandon them – as she had, him? As the *possessor*, was Bundy able to reverse the pattern of his own subjugation to his mother, and become the perpetrator of the abuse, rather than the recipient, just as Jurgen Bartsch seems to have tried to do?

In Alice Miller's terms, Ted appears to be in the grip of a *repetition compulsion*. He is unable to stop his murderous behaviour, repeatedly replicating the same pattern of hunting, ensnaring, and murdering his victims. Why couldn't he stop? Miller's

thesis says that the killer is unable to stop because the victim is always a substitute. The real object of the murderer's anger, rage and indignation is someone else. Until the original object of this anger or hatred is confronted directly, the repetition compulsion will repeat itself (Miller, 1987). Ted asserted that it was the *possession* that was important – *that* was the objective of the killer. Yet that possession *never* provided *fulfilment* (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989: 202-203). The hunger was never satiated, so the compulsive behaviour was repeated.

Part of the repetition compulsion, Miller suggests, is the mechanism of *splitting off and projection*. In Bundy's case, it could be argued that he is splitting off from himself the defenceless victim that *he* was as a small child, and projecting that unbearably bewildered recipient of psychological violation *onto* his victims. Now they, not him, are the ones who are rejected, dismissed, and treated as worthless. In order to treat his victims in this way, he had to first possess them – to 'own' them, so that he could abandon them. His mother had owned him – solely – and abandoned him.

Ted was preoccupied with the notion of people **disappearing** (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989: 118-120, 135, 265). The disappearance of Ted's victims seems directly allegorical of the disappearance of the infant Ted. No-one noticed that he was missing. His mother knew he was 'missing', but *she* told no-one. Ted knew his victims were missing, but *he* told no-one. By causing the disappearance of others, was he trying to communicate to a hard-of-hearing world that he, too, had once been so *unvalued* that he had *disappeared*? At the same time that he was subconsciously sending this message, Ted may have also been trying to again 'flip the coin' of the victim-perpetrator relationship, so that *he* was now the perpetrator, rather than the victim. This false catharsis is an attempt to avoid the reencounter with his own deeply buried feelings of victimisation.

Was Ted's behaviour allegorical? It definitely involved **deception** - Ted deliberately used this to control victims. There are echoes also echoes of **abandonment** in his treatment of his victims (he certainly abandoned them all in terms of paying no heed to their suffering, and he physically abandoned at least one of his Lake Sammamish victims). In terms of **possession**, a clutching entrapment of his victims can be seen to substitute for a missing capacity for emotional closeness, and he seems to have taken possession of his victims' bodies, both before, during, and even after their deaths. The final allegorical theme of **disappearance** is illustrated by Ted's dismissal of the worth of his victims, to the point of their psychic and physical annulment. They were of such insignificance that they could be 'disappeared' – an allegorical echo, it seems likely, of his own 'disappearance' at birth.

To bring these four allegorical elements of Ted's behaviour together, there is one question: Was his horrible murderous rampage over time, distances and lives, merely a desperate attempt by his subconscious to communicate to the world that he, like his victims, was once the victim of an intolerable assault himself? I suggest that we should entertain the notion that such extensive human depravity *can* have its etiological roots in the types of life developmental experiences that Ted was subjected to - abandonment at birth, no early experience of empathy and advocacy (and so no incorporation of those abilities through learning), and no permission to ask questions about himself.

<u>John Wayne Gacy</u>

John Wayne Gacy presents a third life history that we can search for allegorical content and echoes of poisonous pedagogy. Can we find allegorical elements in his story? Gacy's *modus operandi* does seem to have had five distinct elements, and

these do appear to have some allegorical content: **entrapment**, **subjugation**, **manipulation**, **brutalisation**, and **strangulation**.

Gacy's **entrapment** of his victims was primarily psychological, although there was also an obvious element of physical entrapment in his binding of his victims with rope. The initial entrapment, of course, was psychological - his victims were lured into his car or to his home with promises of a good time, money, or marijuana. Is there an allegorical echo here of Gacy's childhood experiences with the paedophilic building contractor who had entrapped him? We know that the contractor used enticements (visiting interesting building sites and ice cream) to lure the young Gacy into going with him (and to convince his parents that all was 'above board'). We know also that the contractor used physical force to restrain the young Gacy so that he could fondle his genitals. Whether Gacy has told all that there was to tell about those incidents of his own abuse or not, the central element of his own entrapment is mirrored in his carefully calculated 'capture' of his own victims.

Gacy used both physical and psychological **subjugation**. His victims were either tricked into allowing him to handcuff them or overpowered with alcohol, drugs, or a chloroform-soaked rag. The subjugation his victims suffered also extended over significant time periods – Gacy's victims were his to do with as he liked, at his leisure. Interestingly, there seems to be a concomitant element of **possession** here – the same need to 'own' the victim that Bundy (and many other serial murderers) exhibited.

Can this element of subjugation be interpreted as allegorical? Gacy's own very early childhood involved subjugation at the hands of his mother (the unnecessary and frequent enemas), and he was certainly subjugated by his father's frequent drunken rages as he grew up. The powerlessness that Gacy would have felt in the presence

of his father is probably underestimated by Gacy's own remarks about his childhood. His father was a violent, homophobic alcoholic who beat and belittled his wife and child. Gacy never gained his father's approval, and the very inconsistency of treatment he endured was in itself a subjugating influence.

The origin of the deliberate **manipulation** inherent in Gacy's entrapment and subjugation of his victims is less clear. Perhaps Gacy learned to manipulate the opinions of others by having to constantly offer his father excuses in order to avoid frequent punishment as a child? Above all else, remember, Gacy had to (as a child) avoid any behaviours, words, dress or any other outward show that might indicate homosexuality. He became adept at presenting believable facades at an early age.

Gacy certainly **brutalised** his victims. In their powerless and/or drugged state (unconscious or semi-conscious) Gacy's victims were sodomised and anally raped with dildos. The possible allegorical content of these actions is obscure, but three speculations are possible. The first speculation takes regard of Gacy's father's homophobia and alcoholism. Is it possible that Gacy's father sodomised his own son? Certainly, no such thing was suggested by Gacy, but those who are most vociferously homophobic are often secretly homosexual, and abuse victims often don't tell. The second speculation involves Gacy's father's cellar – that secluded, secretive place where no-one was allowed. What did go on down there? Can we marry these two speculations? Is it possible that the young Gacy was sodomised by his father in this secluded space? Gacy certainly used his own secluded space (his garage) as a place where he abused some of his victims. The third speculation regarding Gacy's brutalisation of his victims relates to his mother's early over-administration of enemas. The experience, for a very young child, of repeatedly being given enemas must have been, at the experiential and feeling level, little different from anal rape. If the young child tried to resist these repeated

administrations that his mother would have insisted were ‘necessary’, the psychological interpretation of rape becomes even stronger.

Perhaps there is another, more distant element in Gacy’s childhood that is potentially relevant at this point – the enemas that his mother gave him as an infant. As noted before, we know that Gacy’s mother engaged in this practice, but we don’t know how often she subjected her child to this ‘treatment’, or for what period of time. Gacy doesn’t say anything about this himself. He may not even have a conscious memory of those events.

Recent research in the biological sciences, however, suggests that we should not easily dismiss the possible effect on adult behaviour of very early (unrecalled) childhood trauma. DeBellis, Keshaven, Clark, Casey, Giedd, Boring, Fruscati and Ryan (1999) conducted a detailed study of the brain growth of children who had suffered sexual and/or physical abuse, with abuse recorded as early as age one year. What they found was significant differences in brain growth and development between the experimental and control subjects. They had found evidence that early childhood trauma has direct consequences on brain development, leading to post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms that included intrusive thoughts, avoidance, hyperarousal, or dissociation.

The latter of these possible symptoms seems important in the cases of many serial murderers. Bundy, for instance, talked of ‘the entity’ or ‘the flaw’ – some entity other than himself that was responsible for his unacceptable behaviour. Gacy didn’t make any direct allusions to any ‘other self’, but he did regard himself, towards the end of his murderous history, as ‘sick’ - he had written to his mother, saying: “I have been very sick for a long time” (Wilkinson, 1994: 64).

Since the methodology of this thesis does not encompass a detailed neurobiological or neuropsychological examination of the phenomenon of serial murder, it is sufficient to simply flag that we should not dismiss the importance to adult behaviour of very early childhood trauma, nor, indeed, the possibility of the cumulative effects on brain development (and consequent behavioural outcomes) that childhood trauma may involve. Perhaps there is an allegorical element to Gacy's brutal anal raping of some of his victims – could this be a subconscious echo of the brutality the infant Gacy experienced at the hands of his mother? Is there a qualitative difference between being raped with a dildo and being raped with an enema?

Most of Gacy's victims were **strangled** to death with a rope tourniquet around their neck. Most were probably conscious at the time. The possible origins of this behavioural element are even more obscure than the others. The one possible connection that may be drawn, though, involves Miller's (1987) notion that the significantly abused child will often fear death at the hands of his or her adult perpetrator. If the childhood experiences are buried into the subconscious (repressed, in Miller's terms), they may erupt in adult behaviours in the form of an annihilation of others that attempts, subconsciously, to avoid the fate of death that the child within the adult still fears. By becoming the perpetrator, the powerful one, the victim within the adult subconscious tries to avoid his seemingly certain fate. Was Gacy, as a child, threatened with death? By his own father? By the abusive building contractor? Has Gacy (and his family) not revealed the real extent of the abuse that he suffered?

Since Gacy's victims all died by either suffocation or strangulation, it would be likely (if the allegory hypothesis holds) that we would find some trauma in Gacy's past that in some way echoes this violent threat to life. The biographic data we have to work with, though, is necessarily incomplete. No one seems to have bothered to ask

Gacy further questions about this particular matter, and, with his execution in 1994, the opportunity to delve deeper is no longer available.

Is there a *central allegory* in Gacy's story? Wilkinson (1994: 72) records that Gacy said he learned his values from his father. But what values *had* he learned? Had he learned, most of all, to despise himself – the weak, incompetent, homosexual failure that his father had always painted him as? Gacy's victims were all homosexual youths. Most were somewhat aimless, undereducated and unskilled – perhaps part of their role was to play the incompetent, sexually aberrant youth that Gacy's father had so despised.

Is this the central allegory of Gacy's murderous behaviour? Was he, in Alice Miller's terms, splitting off the hated, incompetent, homosexual youth in himself, projecting his parentally-rejected unacceptable self onto his victims, and then trying to expunge his hated self within his murdered victims? To most of us, such an explanation would seem too trivial. Mere homophobic disregard and rejection would not seem sufficient to power the systematic murders that Gacy committed. Speculation of more extensive abuse in Gacy's childhood allows the possibility of Miller's (1987) central thesis to be entertained, but, as with Ted Bundy's story, we are left with insufficient answers and, indeed, an insufficient questioning on the part of those who have told these stories.

<u>Comparison of themes</u>

The subjectively factored allegorical themes noted (above) for Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy can be used to draw further comparisons between the behaviours of these serial murderers. The commonalities between these allegorical themes is similar to the early life histories of these three persons – they don't fit into a 'standardised'

pattern (indeed, they were not expected to), but there are some commonalities, despite the individuality of each set of allegorical actions.

Abandonment is an allegorical element of the modus operandi of both Bartsch and Bundy. In what seems to be a quite concrete allegory of their respective earliest lives, both Bartsch and Bundy starkly echoed their own abandonment as newborns by *removing the right of care* that their victims innately possessed. From birth to death, we all hope for, desire, require, and (to a large extent) expect that others will be advocates for us. We expect that the natural state of human existence is that others *will* care about our well-being, at least at some basic level. Bartsch and Bundy had experienced a denial of this naturally expected nurturing at birth, and they were consequently quite unable to feel empathy for their victims. They were, in Miller's terms, trying desperately to avoid their own psychic annihilation by subconsciously splitting off and projecting their helpless infant selves onto other (substitute) victims. By visiting on others the total removal of the right to care, they were subconsciously trying to avoid their own fears of abandonment. Gacy showed a somewhat similar disregard for the rights of his victims – a similar lack of ability to empathise with others, but this does not seem to have come, in his case, from the sort of abject aloneness that the other two must have experienced in their earliest sensate (rather than 'conscious mind') state of being.

Much of Ted Bundy's discussions with Michaud and Aynesworth underlined the theme of **disappearance** that was such a feature of Ted's modus operandi. He pontificated directly about the number of people in modern western society who might 'go missing' without anyone noticing. This looks like an allegorical reference that links to the other theme of abandonment. Clearly, the infant Ted *did* 'go missing' - at birth! No one seemed to notice. His victims simply disappeared without trace, too. He abducted them in public places, but in secret. There's a strong

allegory here – the infant Ted disappeared into anonymity in the midst of teeming life (a hospital). His victims disappeared from public places, yet, as in his case, no one noticed. Neither Gacy nor Bartsch alluded directly to this theme, but both were aware that their victims had been removed from contact with others. Gacy, in particular, believed that his victims would hardly be missed (if at all). He was right in many cases. Some of his victims (after his eventual arrest and confession) were extremely hard to identify. (Gacy's 'undoing', remember, was precipitated by him taking a victim who *was* missed – almost immediately, and by his mother).

Little is recorded about Jurgen Bartsch's thoughts on this theme of disappearance, but his **selection** of his victims indicates a careful trolling for suitable young boys. They had to be the right age, they had to be too young to mistrust others, and they had to be alone (even if they were usually taken from shopping centres – an echo also, perhaps, of the disappearance allegory). These are features that neatly echo Jurgen's own status at the time of his adoption by Herr and Frau Bartsch. Bundy also selected victims with similar age and physiology – slim young women with long hair. Whether he was selecting women who represented the woman who had jilted him (as some researchers suggest), or whether he was selecting representations of his own young mother (as I have suggested) is open to debate. The 'availability factor' must surely have been an influence here, as well – Ted inhabited university campuses for most of the period of his murderous behaviour, and young, slim, long haired women were the 'norm' in that environment. Nevertheless, Ted *did* apply a selection process – consciously or unconsciously. Gacy was similarly selective in his victimisation – young, preferably homeless and unattached homosexual males. In his case, the allegorical connection seems as straightforward as it does with Bartsch – Gacy was trying to rid himself (through his victims) of the homosexuality within himself that he subconsciously saw as standing in the way of connection with his father.

Gacy's **entrapment** of his victims has overtones that echo parts of the disappearance and selection themes. He enticed his victims into a false sense of security – they did not feel that he would do them any harm, and willingly went with him. Bundy's victims also initially trusted him. In his 'hypothetical' descriptions of what a serial murderer 'might' do, Bundy illustrated clearly that he relished the 'art' of using his charm to disarm his victim's suspicions, enticing them to accompany him. He would then engage them in 'normative' conversations as he drove them to their doom. They would gradually begin to have doubts about what was going on, but Ted seemed to gain a macabre pleasure from keeping his captives in a state of (at least) semi-trust. Is there an echo here of the way that his own mother continually acted as though 'everything was alright', yet would not allow him knowledge about his father? Was Ted keeping his victims in suspense for as long as possible, allowing them to think about the possibility that all might not be right, but not allowing them to know? Certainly, both Bundy and Gacy used their intellect to entrap their victims - both appearing to relish the excitement of the process. Did Bartsch experience a similar frisson as he carefully trolled the shopping centres for victims? Again, little in what he said has provided any clues to answer this question, but he undoubtedly had to have used subterfuge and false promises (perhaps of sweets or of some fantastic adventure) to lure his young victims away with him – away from the safety of the company of those the victim knew. Clearly, Bartsch's behaviours also illustrate the allegorical theme of entrapment.

Bundy's **possession**, Gacy's **entrapment** and **subjugation**, and Bartsch's **imprisonment** themes all appear to be overlapping elements of allegory. All three perpetrators were exerting a complete control over their victims, echoing the completeness of control that they themselves had been subjected to. Bundy had been subject, all his life, to the control of his mother, in the form of her continual denial to him of knowledge of his birth father. Bundy said that this didn't matter to

him, but such statements merely mirrored the extent to which his mother's continual (but subtle) admonition that the family 'face' was all that mattered had pervaded his conscious thought patterns. It seems very likely that it *did* matter to him, and that it bothered him a lot. In his total possession of his victims, he had substitute objects onto which he could project *his* desire to be in control. The possession and control of others was an allegory of the control he wished to obtain in his own life, but never could. Bartsch's seclusion of his victims in the underground air-raid shelter mirrors, of course, his own childhood imprisonment in his grandmother's cellar. The total control exerted over Jurgen the child by the adults in his childhood is repeated on the substitute objects of his victims – they, like him, were utterly without hope of escape. Again, Miller's notion of splitting off and projection illustrates the power of the need to rid the troubled psyche of the intolerable burden that threatens to annihilate – by 'flipping' the experience, so that the victim becomes the perpetrator, the psyche is frantically striving for a catharsis. That catharsis is not achieved by this means, however, and so the repetition compulsion dictates further victimisation of others, until the end point of public exposure that interrupts the cycle. Gacy's *entrapment* and *subjugation* themes also seem to be moving along somewhat lines, although it is harder to find a directly allegorical exertion of power and control over the infant or young Gacy. Certainly, his father was overbearing, abusive, and controlling – especially in terms of the control of the young Gacy's attitudes towards homosexuality. Interestingly, very little has been revealed about Gacy's mother. Virtually all we know about her is that she was subject to her husband's drunken physical abuse, and that she had an apparently obsessive urge to administer enemas to the infant Gacy. How long this treatment went on for, and how often the child had to endure it is not known, but such action does bespeak an element of excessive control that was exerted on Gacy in his childhood. More needs to be known about the relationship between Gacy and his mother.

Bundy's **deception** and Gacy's **manipulation** themes have common elements. Both Bundy and Gacy learned, through their early life experiences, to project a façade of acceptability to the outside world – a façade that belied the psychic turmoil that lay below the surface of each character as they developed. Both were able to provide a convincing façade of normalcy, and even social and professional success. Behind their public personas, though, both lived in publicly unacceptable worlds. It is this ability to convince others that they were respectable, normal, and non-threatening that lay at the heart of the ability of each to psychologically disarm their victims' suspicions until they were in a state of capture from which they would not escape. Bundy and Gacy used quite different promises and small talk to lure their quite different victims into a state of capture, but both were clearly consciously manipulative of their chosen victims. Their aim was, in each case, to capture the victim *with words*. This was, for both perpetrators, an apparently exciting and rewarding phase of the process of overpowering others. It demonstrated that they were in control, that they had power, and that it was they, not others, who were in control of the arena of interaction. Both, in their respective childhoods, had been anything *but* in control of the arenas of interpersonal interaction they experienced. Bartsch can be seen to fit into this category of allegorical action, also, since he would undoubtedly have used psychological manipulation to lure his small victims away from safety.

All three murderers killed their victims (predominantly) by strangulation, and Bartsch's theme of **dismemberment**, along with Gacy's twinned themes of **brutalisation** and **strangulation** can be seen to contain similar allegorical elements. The actual killing of victims, for Bundy, seems to have been somewhat perfunctory – almost a practical precaution against his public exposure. The sadistic nature of Bundy's murders lie not in the killing per se, but in the psychological possession of his victim's being. Bartsch reportedly strangled all but the last of his

victims before his various attempts at dismemberment of their bodies. The extent of this physical abuse of the dead bodies seems to have had a progressive, or escalating, nature. The threats from his adoptive mother – threats of physical harm – combined with macabre images from his parents' butchers shop to produce the subconscious attempt to avoid his own threatened fate by visiting it on his victims. He eventually 'progressed' to an extremely macabre and sadistic illustration of his complete control over another's existence when he butchered the last of his victims while the child was alive. What was Bartsch feeling as the helpless, physically constrained child screamed in pain as Bartsch cut into his body with the butcher's knife? To be so unable to connect to the suffering of his victim, Bartsch must have internalised intolerable suffering in his own psyche. The extreme suffering of Bartsch's victim becomes an allegory for the extreme threat that Bartsch felt at the psychic level. Unable to avoid the threat of annihilation at this level, he split off this anxiety and projected it onto another. Gacy's allegorical themes of *brutalisation* and *strangulation* seem inter-related in that they illustrate his psyche's need to avoid such fates himself. His brutalisation of his victims by anally raping them with *objects* (many of his victims were in a drugged state at the time, and perhaps semi-conscious) is possibly an allegory of his mother's frequent anal assaults on him as a child. Like his victims, he too had been overpowered and forcefully subjected to such assault. The actual anal intercourse that Gacy engaged in with his victims seems to have usually been much more consensual. This intercourse involved interaction at a much more personal level, usually occurred while the victims were more clearly conscious, and may have represented the perhaps genuinely homosexual nature of Gacy's sexuality. Having revealed that unacceptable nature to himself and to his victim, perhaps he was punishing the homosexual within himself by then engaging in the more sadistic use of tools - aiming perhaps at pain – and then progressing on to annihilating the unacceptable through the death of the victim. Bundy also raped his victims – both while they were alive and, in some

cases, it seems likely, when they were dead. However, there is little that the record shows about Ted's feelings or motives regarding these rapes. His speculation regarding 'what a serial murderer might think' would always avoid such areas of discussion. It seems likely that Ted's sexual activities with his victims was an extension of his *possession* of them, and served mainly to illustrate to him that he was in control of their fate. Bartsch had attempted anal intercourse with his victims, but this appears to have been partly an attempt to 'turn the tables' on the rapes that he experienced at the hands of Pater Pulitz. It was intermingled with confused attempts at kissing and other physical contact that mirrored his own adoptive mother's confusing and **inconsistent** attempts at showing him affection in his childhood. Mixed, as they were, between attempts at rape and attempts at outward shows of affection, Bartsch's intercourse attempts must have been peculiar and confused. They do not seem to have been so directly related to pain and punishment as Gacy's do. Bundy, in this instance, remains the biggest enigma of the three, although Ressler and Shachtman's (1992: 119) quote regarding the "…strong indications that Bundy was physically and sexually abused…" is a tantalising glimpse at an underlying psychic turmoil that likely *did* erupt in some form of sadistic sexual behaviour towards Ted's victims. Unfortunately, further information on this point seems unavailable, from any source.

The **inconsistency** and **persecution** themes identified in Bartsch's behaviours have some overtones in the stories of Bundy and Gacy, but the overlaps here are less distinct. As noted above, Bartsch's mother's inconsistency loomed large in his life. It was her inability to show genuine love and affection – her inconsistently smothering and rejecting behaviours – which found allegorical echo in Bartsch's attempts to combine kissing, intercourse and pain in the experience of his victims. The stories we have of the childhoods of both Bundy and Gacy fail to illustrate a similar theme of inconsistency. Rather, their treatment at the hands of their

pedagogues was characterised by consistency. Bundy was consistently told that he did not need to know who his father was, and that he needed to project, at all costs, an outward show of righteous acceptability. Gacy was consistently rejected by his homophobic father, consistently unable to gain his father's approval, and consistently assaulted by his mother's ministrations of 'treatment' (the enemas). The *persecution* theme is perhaps a little easier to relate across all three characters, but it certainly seems that it is Bartsch who consciously felt the most persecuted of the three. He felt persecuted at the hands of his mother, his grandmother, and his teacher. Bundy undoubtedly felt, *subconsciously*, a persecution at the hands of his mother and her denial of information about his father, but he had learned his poisonous pedagogy lessons so well that he was not, even on death row, it seems, consciously in touch with any such feelings. Gacy translated his own feelings of persecution for his suspected (latent?) homosexuality into a conscious homophobia, and any conscious feelings he may have had about persecution seem to have been confined to the persecution that arose in his professional life. He interpreted failure at work as a form of persecution of himself by others – perhaps in a mirroring of that other, subconscious persecution against his own unacceptable homosexuality.

These allegorical themes that course through the actions of Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy have their definite correlations with each other, and they all illustrate, in quite powerful terms, Miller's central notions of poisonous pedagogy – the splitting off and projection mechanisms.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION – CAN MURDER BE ALLEGORY?

The *research objectives* and *research questions* posed at the beginning of this thesis have to now be re-examined in light of what has been written in the preceding pages. Have the objectives been reached? Have the questions been answered?

Research Objectives

1. *To examine the usefulness of Alice Miller's theory of 'Poisonous Pedagogy' to the analysis of serial murder.*

I have found Miller's theory of Poisonous Pedagogy to be eminently useful in my analysis of the serial murderer histories reviewed. Her central notions of splitting off and projection find ready application in the deconstruction of the modi operandi of Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy. All three can readily be seen to be trying to expunge their own demons in their hapless victims. All three were victims themselves, in their childhoods, of various parenting strategies that easily fall into Miller's description of poisonous pedagogic practice.

Of course, even the casual observer will quickly note that Miller's Poisonous Pedagogy is so broadly defined that none of us could escape being subject to it. The significance of viewing the life histories of serial murderers through this lens, however, is that this strategy highlights the extent to which the adult abusers in the early lives of Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy had such a profound effect on their victims. By applying Miller's lens to the earlier lives of these three people who went on to become such violent abusers themselves, we are afforded a view of serial murder

as something more than an inexplicably repulsive phenomenon that surely indicates 'non-human' proclivities. Instead, we can begin to see that the subjugation into inescapable violence that can happen in childhood can rationally point to aberrant behavioural possibilities in later adulthood.

2. *To examine the relationship between unresolved childhood trauma and violent adult behaviour in the lives of three serial murderers.*

The biographic material chosen as the raw material for the analysis of serial murder strongly suggests that there *is* a relationship between unresolved childhood trauma and the violent adult behaviour of serial murder. It is evident that there *was* unresolved childhood trauma in the lives of all three serial murderers whose stories I have retold. All of them – Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy – suffered either physical and/or psychological trauma of significance in their childhoods, and none of them can be seen to have come to significant resolutions of those traumas.

3. *To assess the allegorical content of the violent life histories of these serial murderers.*

From the inductive, hermeneutic methodological perspective of this thesis, it does seem that the behaviours of serial murderers can be seen as allegorical reflections of unresolved traumas from violent early life histories. The allegorical elements in each serial murderer's modus operandi have been singled out above. For Bartsch, the six discernible allegorical themes were selection, imprisonment, persecution, abandonment, dismemberment and inconsistency. For Bundy, four allegorical elements were listed: deception, abandonment, possession and disappearance. In Gacy's case, entrapment, subjugation, manipulation, brutalisation, and strangulation emerged.

In all these cases, the allegorical content of the adult behaviours of these seriously and serially violent persons only comes to light through the hermeneutic circling through early life stories. The echoes of earlier traumatic experience are sometimes literal (as in the case of Bartsch and his grandmother's cellar and the underground air-raid shelter he used with his victims), and sometimes obscure (as in Bundy's thoughts on the unnoticed disappearance of his victims that mirrored his own infant insignificance), but they are readily evident when looked for.

4. To suggest possible implications of this research for social justice policy.

There is one principal implication that emerges from this assertion of allegorical content in the violent life histories of serial murderers – *the lives of those who exhibit violence towards others cannot be viewed in less than holistic terms*. Any explanation of the aetiology of seriously violent behaviour that takes a simplistic and reductionist perspective may foster the perpetuation of mythical monsters. Our society has long thought that serial murderers are somehow inhuman – our populist press is full of such irrational sensationalism. From the perspective of this thesis, though, serial murderers seem all too human – 'their' difference from 'us' a matter of degree rather than kind. In Milleresque terms, the total absence of empathic listeners throughout the childhoods of Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy condemns each of them to a lifetime of splitting off and projection in a perpetually failing attempt to find catharsis for the subconscious self-loathing that emanates from their own unrecalled childhood victimisation.

What are the implications for social justice policy of such a conclusion? One simple but far reaching suggestion is that the short-term, time-limited and parameter-packaged 'rehabilitation' programs that currently dominate 'corrective services' strategies may be less than useful. If those who do violence to others arrive at their

violent behaviours after lifetimes of not understanding their own pasts, then it may be ludicrous to expect that treating current symptoms will alleviate underlying psychological pathologies. It is a more complex and less immediately rewarding path to follow, but if it has taken a lifetime to become a seriously violent victimiser, then it might take more than a short-term, finite program package to redress pathologies that have not only a contiguous, but also a continuous, existence.

Research Questions

There are two central research questions that this thesis sets out to examine:

1. *Is there a connective relationship between unresolved childhood trauma and violent adult behaviour?*

In constructing this question, I was careful to avoid a deductive approach that indicated a search for *causation*. The hermeneutic, inductive approach of this thesis set out to reveal possible *connections* between childhood trauma and later adult behaviour. Statements about *causation* would be inappropriate with this methodological approach.

From the research perspective taken, the answer is that first question is *'yes'*. It *does* appear that there is evidence to support the notion that if a person is psychically damaged in childhood and does not resolve the effects of that trauma, there will be consequences that will be reflected in that person's later adult behaviour.

There can, however, be no formula to quantify the potential effects of any given early trauma. If we, for instance, took another child and tried to replicate the life

experiences of Jurgen Bartsch, would we reproduce an identical serial murderer? The intuitive answer is 'no'. We would likely produce a very disturbed and probably sociopathic individual, whose adult behaviours would very likely cause harm of some sort to others. Whether or not these effects would take the form of serial murder is unanswerable.

If we are to learn one thing from the lives of Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy, it is that unresolved childhood trauma has a concatenating effect. If it remains unattended and unaddressed - if the child can find no opportunity to test his own perception of the wrongness of that treatment against referent adult standards (in Miller's terms, the process of finding the empathic listener) - then it seems that, as a defence mechanism, it is pushed into memory recesses, where the story of what has happened is allowed to fade from conscious thought. This seems to be, essentially, an attempt by the child to find relief from the feeling that he is to blame. Significantly, the confused and confusing feelings of anger, rage and indignation that might be associated with the original trauma appear to be *separable* from the story of what has happened. If it is the *story* (the 'what') alone that is repressed, then the associated *feelings* may 'float' in the conscious mind, dissociated from the original story – disconnected from their original context. If this is possible, then what does the individual do with these apparently random and unconnected feelings of rage, anger or indignation? Miller's answer to this question seems plausible: these feelings find expression in the splitting off and projection process she describes – they are fired as metaphorical arrows at substitute objects (usually people) in a vain attempt to expunge the anxiety they cause. Aimed, though, at objects that are mere substitutes for the 'real target' – the perpetrator of the original abuse – they are therefore never able to satiate the need for resolution of the trauma felt. The process will therefore be perpetuated (the Repetition Compulsion) until an external force stops them. Interestingly, serial murderers, in the final stages of their murderous

careers, often *look* like offenders *trying* (subconsciously) to be caught. Both Bundy and Gacy, for example, took increasing risks of exposure and became increasingly 'sloppy' with their attempts to hide their 'tracks' as they approached their denouement.

Is there a connective relationship between unresolved childhood trauma and violent adult behaviour? The hermeneutic circles that I have traced through the stories of Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy suggest that there is. Bundy is the biggest enigma of the three in this respect, of course, as his story *looks* so 'ordinary' – so free of obvious trauma. Nevertheless, I have outlined my case for asserting that he, too, was far more traumatised by his earlier life experiences than most other commentators consider.

2. *Can violent behaviour be subconsciously allegorical of repressed traumatic events?*

I consider that this question can be answered in the affirmative. I believe that this thesis has demonstrated two factors in the life stories of the three serial murderers examined:

i). That elements of the behaviours of serial murderers can be seen to be allegorical of their earlier childhood traumas.

ii). That, as adults, these serial murderers were *unaware* of both the effects of their own pasts on their adult behaviour and of any connection between what might have happened to them and what they were doing to others.

The allegorical content of Bartsch's behaviour is most starkly seen in his use of the air raid shelter and the dismemberment of his victims with a butcher's knife. His own imprisonment in his grandmother's cellar and the fear of his own mortal danger at the hands of his knife-wielding mother are startlingly replicated in his treatment of his child victims. Bundy's earliest abandonment is echoed in his dismissal of the worth of his victims – their lives were so insignificant that they, like him, could 'disappear'. His torture-in-capture of his victims *may* echo either his own learning, or his own experience at a very young age – that experience reflected by that tantalising glimpse into his past that is afforded by 'the knives incident'. Ted's mother's denial of his access to information about his father is echoed in his denial to his victims of any knowledge of what was going to happen to them – like him, they were so insignificant that they were not allowed to know. Gacy's murders seem potentially allegorical of his father's homophobic rage – by eradicating representations of his father's objects of hatred, he seems to have been trying to avoid his own victimisation.

Were any of these three aware of even the *slightest* element of allegory in their murderous behaviours? There seems no evidence of such self-awareness in any of these three lives. Bartsch could recall, in startling detail, and with almost the ease of a detached observer, the horrifying details of what he did to his victims, yet, when asked to recount stories involving his *own* early childhood victimisation, he was "…very reluctant to divulge his memories of when *he* was the helpless victim. He has to force himself to tell these things, which he does in a terse and imprecise way" (Miller, 1983: 226). The allegorical connections between his own trauma and that which he visited on others totally escaped him.

Bundy was at ease as the 'expert commentator', talking 'hypothetically' with Michaud and Aynesworth. He liked to assume the role of 'expert'. Conducting his

own defence in court allowed him to feel superior to all – even those who would condemn him to death. He was more than willing to pontificate on the habits of serial murderers, but he never admitted his own guilt, and, more importantly, he never talked about his own childhood and any trauma that may have been there. He had, perhaps, learned his mother's lesson too well – 'project a polished family image, and don't ask questions about things you are not allowed to know'. Not only did Bundy not have insight into his own childhood trauma – his mother had been such a thoroughly poisonous pedagogue that he never, it seems, allowed himself to ask the questions that would require answers he was 'not allowed to know'.

During his arrest, confession and trial, Gacy showed no significant insight into the significance of his own abuse. Fourteen years later, shortly before his execution order was finally enacted, he did author a book that indicated he had some conceptualisation of himself as a victim (A Question of Doubt: The John Wayne Gacy Story, 1991). He described himself therein as a victim, but his insight was a shallow rant against authority in general. Doubtless, underneath his words was a basic perception that the harm that he had suffered as a child had never been acknowledged, but an understanding of any allegorical echoes between his childhood abuse and the abuse he visited on his victims seemed to be absent.

In all three cases, it appears that the serial murderers whose stories have been examined were *quite* unaware of the both the harmful realities and the concatenating significances of their pasts. All three, it seems, were gripped by the Repetition Compulsion of Poisonous Pedagogy.

Suggestions for Future Research

The at once singular and quite complex recommendation for future research that emanates logically from this thesis is that the hermeneutic principles of enquiry adopted herein ought to be applied directly with subjects who have exhibited seriously violent behaviour. That is to say, serial murderers and other violent offenders ought to be engaged on a face-to-face basis by empathic listeners who would undertake with them the storying (through hermeneutic circles) of their lives. By relying on the extant biographic record of the lives of the persons studied in this thesis, I have been able to show that Alice Miller's notion of Poisonous Pedagogy (with its mechanisms of *splitting off, projection* and the *repetition compulsion*) is a useful screen of interpretation through which we can sieve the contents of violent life stories. If Miller's interpretive focus is coupled with the overlapping concepts of life narrative, life storying, and hermeneutic circling, we would then have a most useful tool for extending our understanding of violence. In a world driven (largely by Western media) into the increasing compartmentalisation of lives, this may be an unpopular path to suggest, but from the hermeneutic perspective of this thesis, contemporary Western analysis and treatment of seriously violent persons has been based too heavily on a reductionist analysis. Treatment strategies that journey along more holistic paths of interpretation and analysis offer the opportunity of explicating allegorical connections between present behaviours and past traumas.

The hermeneutic circles of analysis that this thesis has utilised have generated a conceptualisation of violence that separates violence primarily by severity, rather than by the reductionist notion of 'type'. Many texts project typologies of murder - serial murder, for instance, can be seen as a different 'type' of murder to murder prompted by what we might loosely refer to as 'passion', and that (in turn) can be seen to be different to other 'types' of violence such as child or spouse abuse. The

conclusions of this thesis suggest we could more usefully conceptualise violence as one integrated phenomenon – as a continuum, rather than as a list of segregated categories. The less serious forms of inter-personal violence, such as bullying and assault, might be seen to lie at the minimalist end of the continuum, while child abuse and domestic violence would lie further up the scale and murders of various forms at the extreme end. Serial murder, under this conceptualisation of the phenomenon, would indeed be at the extreme end of this continuum, but it would be different primarily in severity, rather than in essential nature, from other examples of violence. Applying Miller's interpretive processes to the phenomenon of serial murder suggests such a blurring of the rigid boundaries of murder typologies.

One final, practical suggestion emerges from this research, with direct implications for both criminal justice policy and future research directions: The West (and the United States of America, in particular) should stop all executions of serial murderers. My conclusion that Miller is right – that violence can be allegorical of unresolved childhood trauma – logically suggests that we should extend far greater effort to elicit the complex details of any connections between childhood abuse and adult abusers. To do this, we need to deliberately, systematically, and directly engage - face to face - with seriously violent persons in the storying of their lives. This is a long-term process, not a short-term one. Spending time and money on providing empathic listeners who might undertake such hermeneutic journeys with serial murderers would appear a more logical approach than spending time and money on executions. It is also literally true, as the adage goes, that 'dead men tell *no* tales'.

Can murder be allegory?

This thesis has underlined the importance of *allegory* as an interpretive tool. In the actions of the adult Bartsch, Bundy and Gacy, there do appear to be strong subconsciously allegorical connections to repressed (forgotten) and unresolved trauma in their own childhoods. Miller found allegorical connections between Bartsch's childhood trauma and his adult murderous behaviour. My own research into the lives of Bundy and Gacy has found evidence to support Miller's contentions. Miller's central contention that every perpetrator of *violence* was once a *victim* does seem to be supported by the hermeneutic exploration of the lives of these three serial murderers.

Given this support for Miller's assertions regarding the etiology of violence, it would seem logical that our justice systems should spend a far greater effort than they currently do to directly engage serial murderers in discourses that might further elucidate the etiology of violence. In depth, long term narrative discourses with such seriously violent perpetrators may well uncover allegorical elements that indicate unresolved early life traumas. It is, perhaps, within those hermeneutic circles that we might find the concatenated precursors to adult violence.

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