KAMA PIDA: THE DARK EMOTIONS EVOKED BY THE NETFLIX DAHMER STORY

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of emotional responses as expressed in user-generated content at International Movie Database (IMDb) concerning the 2022 series *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*. The series has triggered vehement emotional reactions. The theoretical point of departure for examining 679 reviews of this series is a phenomenon called kama muta (Sanskrit for "moved by love"), an experience of being deeply moved or touched by something amiable. Kama muta is an intense and elevating feeling of communal sharing (Fiske 2020). This article proposes kama pida (Sanskrit for "moved by pain") as a term for the opposite feeling. Kama pida is on the very "dark side" of the emotional spectrum. It is a multivalent emotion accompanied by bodily reactions or embodied experiences. The emotion of kama pida is in most cases expressed by metaphors concerning the stomach, the nerves, the heart, breathing, and other bodily functions, but also by more cognitive/mental reactions like the experience of being very stressed, seeing a nightmare, or sharing in a trauma. The affective content of kama pida concerns the utterly unspeakable experience of horror, but is all the same expressed verbally by the reviewers of the Netflix series about the serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer.

1. THE CONCEPT OF KAMA MUTA

Feelings can be very subtle. A feeling, for instance of being rejected, can have a wide array of degrees and shades, as well as countless contexts. Feelings rise, flow, transmute and overlap, are strengthened or weakened, often in unpredictable ways. They can be aroused for different reasons and on different occasions. Some feelings are strong, intense – even overwhelming. They can be lustful or painful, causing physiological reactions like heightened body temperature and rapid heart rate. Such reactions can have different real-life effects or consequences, negative or positive. There are also big differences in what is considered affective content, and people react differently and get different feelings from the same event, even though there are cultural conventions influencing emotional responses. There are emotional "management systems" in different cultures, appropriate to gender, age, social position, etc.[1] Early in life, we learn how to model our feelings, and this modeling is culture-specific.[2] In a culture, there are "affective spaces": for example, some spaces where you can, or even are supposed to, cry openly (for instance in a funeral), and where you should definitely not cry (at a job interview).

In media research, there are several studies on how different media texts evoke feelings and move the audience (Plantinga and Smith 1999, García 2016, Wahl-Jorgensen 2019, Döveling and Konijn 2021, Nannicelli and Pérez 2021, Fischer 2022). There has even been an assertion of an "emotional turn" in academic studies (Lemmings and Brooks 2014), indicating a distinct bend of interest towards audiences' emotional reactions. These media generated emotions are studied in various contexts and frameworks, often focusing on a combination of cognition[3] and embodied feelings. The discourse about media and emotions is rich and is becoming increasingly complex.

In recent years, one intense and positive feeling has been given particular attention, and even a specific name.

It's called *kama muta*, from the Sanskrit "moved by love", and has been the topic of study by an international research group.[4] Alongside a monography by the American anthropologist Alan Page Fiske – titled *Kama Muta: Discovering the Connecting Emotion* (2020) – several articles (Fiske et al. 2017, Zickfeld et al. 2019, Petersen and Andrew 2020, Zickfeld et al. 2020) and have been published, all of which seek to encircle, characterize and exemplify this emotion. It's a feeling[5] of intense sympathy and love, a heart-warming or -melting experience, a rapture. Fiske closes in on it with words like "joy", "tenderness", "compassion", "pride", "longing", "uplifting", "awe", "rapture", "ecstasy", but also "sweet sorrow", "mourning" and "pity" (2020: 142). So, an individual who tend to be moved intensely will quite often experience kama muta. It's the kind of "honourable" reaction that readers in the 18th century had when they cried while reading sentimental novels: they were "aristocrats of the heart", not by noble birth or money (Schneider 2004: 214). Kama muta instigates social relationships with others believed to feel the same way, creating a sense of social belonging and of sharing the best things in life, even if you are alone when the feeling arises. It can happen when "standing on a mountain top looking out on a beautiful and immense landscape" (Fiske 2020: 139), or when holding a baby or a puppy. In such situations we may be at a loss of words, or use clichés like "grand", "adorable", and "cute" – but Fiske assures us that "[w]hatever people call it or don't call it, kama muta is kama muta" (2020: 221).

There are plenty of examples of kama muta, in real life, and in the media. It happens for instance when somebody is overwhelmed by patriotism at a ceremony, or when a beloved family member you haven't met for years suddenly turns up at your doorstep, or when a kitten in a Youtube video comforts a puppy that has broken a leg. This last example is a media text, and media is capable of creating the same kind of feelings as actual events in real life. A literary text, a movie, or a computer game can generate the bodily reactions that is typical for kama muta: happy tears, goosebumps, a "heart-warming" burning in the bosom, and for a moment taking your breath away. This is pleasurable and gratifying,

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1 The German-British sociologist Norbert Elias studied manner books to uncover "regimes of manners and emotions", changes in "psychic makeup", and other social codes through history. See Wouters 2009.

2 The concept culture used in the restricted sense of "the customs and traditions bequeathed from earlier generations. Culture hence expresses both present and passed values" (Beckman 1997: 116). It's a 'common sensorium' dependent on customs and practices, with coded reactions and behaviour. In a culture, some feelings are appropriate and expected, some not.

3 Cognition includes dynamic relations between perceiving, remembering, conceiving, imagining, reasoning and judging.

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4 https://kamamutalab.org/

5 Fiske 2020 tends to use "emotions" and "feelings" as synonyms, for instance in this sentence: "In response to questions about their feelings at the moment, four spontaneously labeled their emotion *rørt* [Norwegian], the nearest term to the English *moved*" (p. 5). It can be argued that emotions are unconscious and physiological, while feelings are conscious and psychological, but in this article, I use "emotions" and "feelings" as synonyms.

so people long for kama muta, which is one reason why some videos go viral on the Net. We want this emotion, and we want to share it. Kama muta consequently has a social impact by virtually uniting people through embodied emotions. But of course, people are inclined to share negative feelings as well, as pointed out by Fiske: "lexemes such as *being moved* do not always denote kama muta; people sometimes say they are *moved* by something that makes them *sad*, by something that *awes* them, or by something that makes them *outraged*" (2020: 221).

2. KAMA PIDA – THE "EVIL TWIN" OF KAMA MUTA

This article is about the reverse of kama muta. I have chosen to call it *kama pida*, which in Sanskrit means "moved by pain", "suffering", "annoyance", "harm", "injury", "violation" or "damage". The word "pida" has an aura of significance concerning devastation, ache, agony, molestation, and evil. Kama pida is a strong emotional reaction, a feeling sensed in the physical body, as well as mentally. As a contrast to kama muta – without using any specific term – Fiske ascertains how suffering tends to abolish the sense of compassion, affiliation and relief that kama muta generates:

> Suffering often isolates the sufferer – she feels separated from others who aren't feeling her pain. Others can't understand, they don't know what it feels like. Moreover, other people often are uncomfortable dealing with those who are suffering, may feel disgusted by aspects of a person's disability or illness, may avoid them, and may blame or taunt them for their suffering; the suffering is a stigma, and may lead to effective exile (2020: 176).

You can empathize and identify with a torture victim, but unless you have experienced something similar in real life, it is hardly possible to understand what the victim has experienced. Hearing about, in real life, or watching a torture scene in a film, can however cause kama pida, for instance an overwhelming desperation for the sake of humanity. Kama pida is the opposite of the feelings that confirm the value of life and instigate love. It's depressing and can be paralyzing, even if rage and a wish for revenge is evoked. It can certainly cause deep grief, and grief may have bodily, affective, and cognitive consequences:

On the physical/somatic level, it can entail headaches, exhaustion, insomnia, and loss of appetite. On the affective level, it is associated with attendant feelings like sadness, anger, or guilt. Cognitively, it can bring on obsessive thinking, inattentiveness, apathy, and confusion. Behaviourally, it can lead to crying, social withdrawal, absentmindedness, and substance abuse (Richard Gross, referred from Fischer 2022: 44).

Kama pida can also evoke a tragic experience. Terry Eagleton claims there is a "traumatic horror at the heart of tragedy" (2003: 225). The tragic causes psychological pain, but there is also a suffering or dying body, i.e. corporeal pain (first mental suffering, then physical suffering added). The tragic disaster "is envisaged as final so far as those particular people or events are concerned. That is, no recovery is contemplated, there is no prospect of a 'happy ending'" (Brereton 1968: 6). When tragedy strikes, we are not in control of our existence, but at the mercy of the essential conditions of life, like pain, suffering, annihilation. It generates desperation, a feeling of brokenness, and of waste, that something valuable is lost forever. Again, Fiske touches upon this emotion when writing about "lonely, heavy, melancholy brokenness" (2020: 177). For Eagleton, tragedies are about "human distress and despair, breakdown and wretchedness" (2003: X). The tragedy genre on stage, in movies and novels "deals in blasted hopes and broken lives" (Eagleton 2003: 25).

This article intends to select formulations in reviews of *Dahmer – Monster*, then to classify or organize them into categories that capture aspects of the kama pida experience or feeling. I am interested in the way people express their emotional reactions to something awful, their extreme states or bad feelings. There are certainly some very strong reactions evoked by *Dahmer – Monster*, like this one: "I am STUNNED, SHOCKED, OUTRAGED, AND FEEL INCREDIBLE SORROW FOR ALL THE COUNTLESS UNSUSPECTING YOUNG MEN AND THEIR FAMILIES. [...] IM TOTALLY OUTRAGED!". According to another reviewer, Dahmer in the series "manages to reach the last level of horror, disgusto". How does this "last level" impress the reviewers? How does watching the series affect the body and the mind? Which emotions are evoked and which thoughts are inspired? What spontaneous symptoms emerge, and how are these expressed in the language of the reviewers?

3. RESEARCH ON HORROR, FASCINATION AND DISGUST

Nobody can claim that strong negative feelings haven't been studied and theorized before. In gothic literature, splatter movies and horror computer games, brutality, mutilation and butchering are anticipated ingredients, expected to cause some level of panic, terror, revulsion and shock. To read, watch, or play horror stories is to a certain extent "emotional risk-taking" (Leder 2009: 297), because there is likely to occur "viscerally shocking moments" (Church 2021: 18). The power of these visceral reactions can be overwhelming, causing nausea and a pounding pulse. But as harmless fictions, these works usually trigger both revulsion and fascination, disgust and curiosity, repellence and delight (Carroll 1990: 189).

True crime and other documentaries fascinate as well, but being closer to the truth than fiction, the reactions can be more uncomfortable and disturbing, because we in a sense are experiencing "real evil". The ethics can overshadow the aesthetics. Because of this attachment to actual reality, the element for disgust is potentially more forceful. According to Carolyn Korsmeyer "[d]isgust is a strong, visceral aversion – perhaps more palpably physical and sensory than any other emotion. [...] Disgust is so distinctively tied to visceral responses that it bears close association with physical reactions such as nausea" (2008: 369 and 372). The feeling of disgust is somatic (Hanich 2011: 16), i.e. very corporal, and a very hostile emotion, like contempt and fury. The disgusting is something that people define themselves against, even when (or maybe because) it harbours some level of fascination.

It can be hard to distinguish between the physically disgusting and the morally disgusting, since "disgust operates as a moral emotion" (Miller 1997: 80). "Immoral" and "disgusting" are even used as synonyms (Rozin et al. 2000: 643). Some acts are especially disgusting: "things for which there could be no plausible claim of right: rape, child abuse, torture, genocide, predatory murder and maiming" (Miller 1997: 36). According to Colin McGinn "the ultimate in disgustingly immoral acts is murder – an act with death as its purpose and outcome. So reverberations of death surround and shape our expressions of moral disgust" (2011: 121-122). Even if we are confronted with such an act at a distance in time and space, it's experienced as revolting: "Indirect contact with people who have committed moral offenses (such as murders) is highly aversive, to about the same extent as similar contact with someone with a serious contagious illness" (Rozin et al. 2000: 643).

Disgust is a feeling close to kama pida, but disgust can be evoked by bad smells and rotten food, as well as immoral actions. Kama pida is more existential, and I will claim always more desperate and depressing, more tragic and psychologically shocking. Disgust can be caused by something where no one is to blame, for instance when seeing and smelling a decaying carcass. Kama pida, as I define it, is evoked by human acts, by cruelty, evil and other immorality.

4. DAHMER THE MONSTER

Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story is an American biopic and crime docu-drama series in 10 episodes, created by Ryan Murphy and Ian Brennan for Netflix, and released there in 2022.[6] It is a rendering of the crimes committed by Jeffrey Dahmer and the consequences for other people involved, primarily the victims' families, Dahmer's neighbour and his father. Dahmer is one of the USA's most famous serial killers, operating from the 1970s up to the 1990s, and killing at least seventeen people. He tortured his victims and practiced necrophilia and cannibalism, even though – as it turned out when he was interrogated – he did know the difference between right and wrong. He grew up in a dysfunctional family and was an alcoholic from a young age. In his teenage years, he found out he was homosexual, not revealing this to his parents. Jeffrey Dahmer's "abandonment syndrome" is stressed in the series: he kills his partners than rather face abandonment by them. The series displays his loneliness, particularly in his youth. Added to this, American society is severely criticized in the series for its blatant racism, homophobia, and police unprofessionalism. The series is a rather untypical biopic, by not focusing only on Dahmer and the horrors he inflicted. Several of the 10 episodes display the consequences for victims' families that he left traumatized in his wake. Being a crime series about a serial killer, it is also rather untypical by visualizing little of the actual violence and gore that took place – leaving the audience to imagine.

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6 The series was produced by Netflix, Prospect Films and Ryan Murphy Productions. Central roles are played by Evan Peters (as Jeffrey Dahmer), Niecy Nash, Richard Jenkins, and Shaun J. Brown. The music is created by Nick Cave and Warren Ellis. Having actors in all roles it is not a true crime series.

5. **REVIEWS IN THE INTERNATIONAL MOVIE DATABASE**

My data consists of 679 viewer responses written at www.imdb.com. The reviews are dated from 21 September 2022 to 31 December 2022 and were collected by me on 3 January 2023. The reviewers' identities are usually unknown. The majority use nicknames like "amheba" and "tacticalvirtue-91875". Such names reveal neither gender nor nationality, but this is of little consequence in this article. Since, in most cases, we cannot know for certain the sex of the writer, the gendered tendencies of emotions are not studied in this material. In this paper, I have chosen to neglect the identities of the cited reviewers, and the date of the posting, even if these individuals have posted their responses to the TV series on a public website. This is in part due to the conflicts concerning the ethics of researching online audiences, but also because the individuals' identities are not important for my research goal. I quote a lot, but with one exception, I am not quoting the same viewer response twice.7

IMDb reviews are never as short as the written responses on YouTube and some other social media tend to be, because the minimum required length is 600 characters to be published.8 The respondents to the series give value points from 1 to 10, based on their personal evaluation of the series, indicated by stars added to the text written. It is also possible for all who visit the IMDb site to mark how helpful they found a review. A review may for instance be noticed with "19 out of 20 found this helpful". Several of the texts has a warning that they contain spoilers. Each respondent has to create an account at IMDb, so it's possible to read other reviews by most of these persons, understanding their preferences and tastes.

There are several research challenges when using reviews at IMDb as qualitative data. These have been described and reflected on by, for instance, Otterbacher (2011, 2013) and Boyle (2014). Their foci are not emotions, though Otterbacher (2011) sporadically mentions that there were many "emotionally charged reviews" of the movie *Schindler's List*. The studies by Bore (2011), Bader (2017) and Mokryn et al. (2020) are about movies and emotions. Mokryn et al. and Bader are studying many movies in different genres with a quantitative approach. Some of their comments on research design have relevance for the present article. Bader observes

that "[t]he prevalent approach to emotion detection in text is based on the premise that the emotion expressed in a text is the aggregate of the emotions associated with the words comprising it. The common emotion detection techniques therefore look for the presence of affective words in the text" (2017: 4). Bore (2011) observes in her study of reviews of a romantic comedy that "reviews also often use a more subjective and informal writing style that underlines the articulation of personal emotional responses to the film", and that the film facilitates "emotional and personal investment".

The tendency in the 679 reviews is to post an opinion on *Dahmer – Monster* without responding to the other reviews. The result is a lot of isolated personal reactions and very little dialogue. This indicates that commentators feel little or no "competition" to demonstrate that one feels the strongest abhorrence, and thus take a moral stand in accordance with the comments of others. Consequently, there are hardly any "bonds formed through affective display" (Lemmings and Brooks 2014: 13), or purely imaginary bonds. Still, there are a couple of exceptions, the most severe being this: "People who write poor reviews here because the show featured the victims more are sick. Just say you're a psychopath and go." In a few cases, a reviewer pays attention to what others may feel: "You might feel disgust, disbelief, and perhaps sick. Angry, sad, or sorry for Jeffrey. – Whatever you feel is not wrong."

Some reviewers have trouble with the genre, which they tend to call "true crime", even though the Dahmer crime series is not strictly a documentary. Still, the genre is close to true crime, generating the same kind of ethical agony as that genre does to some. One of the reviewers exclaims: "I feel guilty simply because so many people lost their lives and we are watching it like an entertainment (of their grief)". Another, who apparently hasn't seen the series, criticizes people for watching: "This genre of exploitative fiction, passing for non fiction is disgusting, it should be criminal. To force victims to relive this is ridiculous, all to turn a buck. It's gross…. if you support it, you are to blame".

What I am doing in this article is searching for linguistic "proofs" of feelings, sampling and categorizing the reviewers' formulations of their emotional reactions. I treat the reviews in an analytic way, with several distinctions. One relevant distinction is between feeling for the series as a media product, and feeling for what is displayed in the series. The Dutch media researcher Ed S. Tan has made a useful analytical separation between what he names "artefact emotions" ("A emotions") and "fictional emotions" ("F emotions") (Tan 1996). A emotions are emotional reactions to the casting,

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7   As far as I have detected, the reviews are written by different 679 persons, nobody writing a review twice.

8   But in one case a reviewer has just copied her/his text twice to get it accepted.

the actors' performances (acting), directing, editing, visual style, cinematography etc. It's about the series as a product or art. These feelings are ignored by me in this article. I am interested in the F emotions which are evoked by the content of the series, i.e. the behaviour of the characters, the social dynamics or lack thereof, the portrait of Dahmer's family, the policemen's reactions, etc. It should be added, though, that the distinction between A and F emotions is not always clear cut. It is sometimes difficult to say whether an emotion concerns Dahmer, or the actor pretending to be Dahmer.

Only direct and strongly emotional formulations are included in my sample, including expressions using metaphors, as they are unavoidable in all human language. People use metaphors for feelings all the time, and it is often hard to find words that don't apply conventional metaphors. A researcher can never say exactly what kind of feelings these metaphors are meant to express, but (s)he usually gets an idea, an approximate. In the reviews there are plenty of metaphors like "The content makes your stomach turn" and the series is "emotionally raw".

A complicating factor is how feelings are formulated by different individuals and in different cultures. The reviewers may come from most countries on earth, and euphemisms are quite often used when it comes to harsh subjects, avoiding taboos and blunt expressions, and even strong emotive words. Unpleasant things are circumvented. Words like "uneasy", "uncomfortable", "disturbing", "unsettling" are frequently used in the IMDb responses, where the immediate context indicates that these formulations are meant to be strong, just like a grieving widow may say that her husband has "left her" and put an enormous amount of emotion in that idiom. The euphemisms used can cause misinterpretations. I have chosen not to quote from such formulations, because I cannot be certain whether expressions like "disagreeable", "painful", "odious", etc., are used as euphemisms, or not.

As presented above, my method has been to carefully read the IMDb-responses, not relying on any research software to sample and analyse the reviews. Acknowledging that personal interviews with the viewers of the series would have had advantages, I still maintain that their written and pondered statements in the reviews is a valuable source for a reception study. Their responses may have been written hours, or weeks after watching the show, so their immediate and spontaneous answers may have been different from those written down. Even so, opinions may be more reflective when refracted through written words published for everyone to read, but they are also less intimate and private. A third me-

thodical alternative would have been studying the reception by observing reactions while viewers actually saw the show, but such a research design was not obtainable for me. My material are the viewers' own retold reactions, opinions and evaluations.

6. **FINDINGS**

As with kama muta, there are certain bodily reactions evoked by kama pida. From the IMDb user reviews, it seems that the stomach is among the most affected, even though some formulations probably are metaphors for several ways of feeling unwell when watching the series. A typical example is a person who reports that the series "made me sick to my stomach". The stomach reacts to something very unpleasant: "That feeling of dread in the pit of your stomach". Viewers should be warned: "That said, don't watch it if you can't handle it. It will make your stomach turn inside out, but you won't be able to turn it off". The series "will leave audiences with churned stomachs". The stomach or the gut reacts in an abnormal way in this metaphor: "Disturbing. Horrific. Gut wrenching". Several other comments are in the same vein. Then there are reactions indicating sickness and vomiting: "There were times, especially in the early episodes, where I was literally nauseous"; "Yet I got very nauseous throughout the series, because of story itself"; "It makes you physically sick"; "You're gonna wanna avoid eating while watching though"; "Recommend for cast iron stomachs. Don't watch this if you're prone to puking"; "I almost threw up five times"; "It took me about 3 hours to recover from episode 4. The nausea, fear and depression that it had brought onto me was mind-blowing". We can clearly interpret this as symptoms for embodied abhorrence.

Another emotional embodiment concerns the heart in metaphors like this – of which there are plenty: the series "wrecked my heart". It is significant that the pleasant goosebumps so typical for kama muta, occur with a negative signature with the "evil twin" kama pida – in this case with coldness: *Dahmer – Monster* "made your skin crawl"; "The entire series gives you goosebumps"; "the facts that this was all real gave me the goosebumps". The series can generate a chilling emotion: "a chilling fear"; "even as a 'not easily getting scared' guy Myself got chills in my spine like never before!!"; "it gave me chills in my bones"; "Blood curdling to say the least. [...] I'll pretend it's fiction for my own sanity". The blood may so to speak boil: "It made my skin crawl and my blood boil".

With kama muta comes happy tears, but compassionate viewers get tears from kama pida as well: "Both me and my viewing companion couldn't stop tears shedding for Lionel Dahmer" [i.e. the killer's father]; a viewer "cried so much during the last episodes"; another was "brought to tears by the horror of what he did in this show". Likewise the feeling of suffocating or being choked can occur suddenly, without check. For one viewer *Dahmer – Monster* was "Suffocating. Nerve destroying". Also breathing is affected: "This was extremely extremely [sic] difficult to watch. I kept pausing every two seconds 'cause it was getting hard to breathe watching this". Unwilling body sounds might occur: "I don't get overly emotional watching or listening to documentaries but this one had me bawling"; "There are images from the show that are permanently seared into my brain and every time I think of them I wince".

There are other feelings as well, less directly connected to uncontrollable physical body reactions, and more cognitive, like anger: "But the fact that neither the police nor the justice system works pisses me off extremely"; "I truly felt so much anger and heartbreak over the victims and their loved ones and never once was comfortable in watching this series. No one should be"; the series "left me personally, anxious and angry". And there is, of course, sadness or depression: "it did have a depressing effect on me"; "this series is really mentally tough, it's truly depressive and hard to watch"; "This show is creepy and depressing". Several persons got scared by the series: it "scared me to death"; "I'm terrified for life now"; "I don't remember being so scared in so long, despite all horror movies in catalog and I've seen over the years. [...] you can feel it in the flesh, you can taste fear you can picture yourself as one of Dahmer's prey". According to criminology professor Scott Bonn, the public is drawn to true crime stories "because it triggers the most basic and powerful emotion in all of us – fear. As a source of popular culture entertainment, it allows us to experience fear and horror in a controlled environment, where the threat is exciting, but not real" (Bonn 2016). The human body is primed to some primary emotional states, like surprise, fear and anger. Fear is one of the basic emotions arranged in Robert Plutchik's "Wheel of emotions" (1980).9

Dahmer – Monster was for some viewers unbearable to watch, at least in full: The series "had me looking away from the tv in some parts as it portrayed dahmer for the sick twist-ed individual he was"; "at times I had to look away or turn it off completely until I could go back and continue watching"; "I have literally closed my laptop during certain scenes"; "Though no doubt disturbing, and in many cases I had to look away, I believe this film is of necessity to our society today"; "Absolutely a must see but there was a lot I couldn't watch"; "This series, is definitely hard to watch at times, and I have had to look away, cringing, but this side of the serial killer story, needed to be done". This feeling of the series being intolerable to watch can be ever so strong, but some viewers were still unwilling or unable to switch it off, or abandon the series: "This is one of those shows that will stay in your mind even after it ends. In fact that's why I'm writing this at 1am, because I can't fall asleep. This was difficult to watch and often times I wanted to stop watching it and couldn't. [...] You want to scream and shout out to save his victims and can't. The 14yr old and dead victim was pure torture to watch". But at least two viewers did turn it off: "I can't finish the show after episode six. It finally went too far to where it was beyond me to even finish the show"; "Disturbing and unwatchable. Makes Silence of the Lambs look like a stroll through Disneyland".

Even the word "trauma" occurs when describing the experience of watching the series: "The fact that it is based on a true story makes it even more shocking to watch, and perhaps some viewers may leave traumatized with certain scenes"; "To an extent this show captured the emotional trauma so brilliantly that sometimes you yourself will get traumatized of the world around you"; "watch it, if you want to get traumatized". We might, with Birgitta Höijer, call these experiences "symbolic traumas" as distinct from real traumas (1998: 78). Trauma can be connected to darkness, the feeling of entering a space without any light (i.e. hope, joy, consolation): "This show was one of the most disturbing things I've ever watched. [...] extremely difficult to watch especially episode 3. That episode was one of the hardest things I've ever watched. It was super dark and made me feel so disturbed while watching this show"; "it will blow your mind because it's very dark"; "it is daaaark and heartbreaking"; "very very dark"; "The vibe of the show is incredibly dark". According to George Lakoff and Mark Turner, "bad is black" is one of the fundamental metaphors in Western culture (1989 p. 185). Another basic metaphor is that "bad is down", connected with vortex and heaviness. According to two reviewers, *Dahmer – Monster* leads "Into the Vortex" and one must "watch at own risk. Its heavy as hell".

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9 The American psychologist Robert Plutchik made this model, with eight primary emotions: anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, anticipation, trust, and joy, all other emotions being aspects and degrees of these.

All these metaphors circumferences the same kind of feelings. The metaphors vary, but just as Fiske states that "[w]hatever people call it or don't call it, kama muta is kama muta" (2020: 221), we can state that "kama pida is kama pida". The problem for the reviewers is finding an expression for something which in its horror perhaps is unspeakable, with the "monster'" who committed the crime as a morally alien and fundamentally incomprehensible. One reviewer ponders: "What is it about serial killers that we find fascinating? Maybe it's because they are able to do things beyond our own comprehension or capabilities". For others, "his particular crimes seemed more 'humanly unimaginable' than those of most other notorious serial killers [...] the totally unfathomable monster"; "carries a heavy 'otherness' to it"; "nothingness, existential voids, and people without any redemption quality"; "the incomprehensibly crazy and awful things"; "I was left with a series that was heartbreaking, deplorable, sick, twisted, evil, deplorable, grotesque, and beyond human comprehension". In one instance, there is a vague hint, when a reviewer tells that (s)he has "watched many hard to watch movies or series but this one left me thinking days and nights ...".

Most humans want words to express and clarify their thoughts and feelings when those feelings concern what we may call "the common humanity", i.e. something of crucial importance and deep significance. However, feelings can be hard to put into words. An option is to compare X to something otherworldly Y, like a nightmare, a metaphor often used for events in the real world as well. According to some reviewers, *Dahmer – Monster* "is a real nightmare"; "This story really is the stuff of nightmares"; "Truly the stuff nightmares are made of. And images that can never be erased from the mind"; "A Nightmare Reality". A couple of viewers warned others, fearing they might get nightmares: "Watch at your own risk!! [...] Get ready for some serious nightmares"; "I had nightmares from watching this show".

Natural disasters like earthquakes can be like nightmares for the people who are casualties. It is even worse when the calamity is caused by humans, in pernicious acts and malice, in murder, torture and war. Here the concept of evil is adequate – evil as one of life's most profound mysteries. In the reviews of *Dahmer – Monster*, the word "evil" is used 79 times, for instance in expressions like this: "this show is a grossly real interpretation of real evil. [...] This is what evil looks like". The expression "pure evil" is used 7 times, mainly about the serial killer as a person: "Jeffrey, he is pure evil" and "this man was pure evil". But why did he become cruel and evil? We can search for explanations of evil acts in private, social, cultural, or political sources:

> Everywhere, the *how* and the *where* questions quickly revert to a nagging *why*, as if only a first cause – or a final cause – could resolve the mystery. So the scrutiny of conscience or crime leads inevitably back to some prior condition that will make sense of the whole. The root of all evil. That urge to understand is the driver. [...] the problem of evil is ultimately a problem of meaning. You can't deal with it until you understand its origin and raison d'être. (Andrew Beatty in Olsen and Csordas 2019: 71)

It is possible to interpret the concept "pure evil" as Immanuel Kant's concept "radical evil" (Kant 2019 [1792]). This is an innate propensity to evil, a will to cause other harm, without an understandable cause. Such evil is perhaps unfathomable. Eagleton as well refers to a metaphysical sense of evil concerning a murder case: "Calling the action evil meant that it was beyond comprehension. Evil is unintelligible. [...] The less sense it makes, the more evil it is. Evil has no relations to anything beyond itself, such as a cause" (2010: 2–3). Such evil is in a dimension of meaninglessness or Otherness. When we are confronted with it, as with the "monster" Dahmer, we seem to be staring into a black hole which saps us of courage and optimism in life.

7. CONCLUSION

Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story elicits strong, unpleasant emotions in most of the IMDb reviewers. The episodes seem cued to make the audience feel disgust, anger, terror, and to get a cluster of bodily reactions accompanying such feelings. There seems to be some uncontrollable physical sensations evoked in the bodies of the reviewers, as well as mental reactions. In the present reception study, these emotions and reactions are merged in the term *kama pida*. This emotional power of the series is so strong that several times it is expressed in metaphors and affective words like "trauma" and "evil". The respondents are showing those feelings through their manner of writing, using metaphors like "nauseous" and "dark". The reviewers are scared, shocked and convulsed. The inner, emotional reactions are a state of excess, tending towards the extreme. The series creates

bodily reactions as well as mental disturbances, which resembles staring into a terrifying void, into impenetrable darkness, etc. Such are the consequences of watching something dehumanizing.

With kama muta, a person is "swept away" in happiness – in kama pida one surrenders to very dark feelings. Kama muta is associated with overwhelmingly positive emotional value – whereas kama pida is associated with overwhelmingly negative emotional value. While kama muta concerns the intensely meaningful, kama pida concerns the intensely meaningless. This lack of meaning almost surpasses language, or at least indicates words' inadequacy, but the respondents to *Dahmer – Monster* still want to put words to their experiences. Experiencing kama pida can urge people to silence, or to communication. When confronted with the worst, it may be a relief to express the soaring emotions and publish them.

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