

## A Borderline Psychopath: "I was basically maladjusted ..."

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The case of a 21-year-old White man who committed a robbery and homicide is presented. His Rorschach is analyzed and interpreted using both psychostructural (Exner, 1986a) and psychodynamic (Cooper, Perry, & Arnow, 1988; Gacono & Meloy, 1992; Kwawer, 1980) methodologies. Findings are used to understand the presence and interaction of both psychopathic character and borderline personality organization in this explosive and sadistic young man.

Despite Knight's (1953) seminal paper in which he paradoxically recommended that *borderline* not be used as a diagnostic term, an enormous amount of research literature concerning borderline psychopathology has emerged in the past 40 years (Grotstein, Solomon, & Lang, 1987). Kernberg's early work (1966, 1967, 1968) advanced the concept of neurotic, borderline, and psychotic personality organization, culminating in his more recent explication (Kernberg, 1984) of the reality testing, identity, and defensive aspects that demarcate these "levels" of personality. Various character formations are theorized to cut vertically across these horizontal latitudes of development (Kernberg, 1975).

In this study, the fourth in a series of idiographic explorations of personality organization and character formation (Gacono, 1992; Meloy, 1992a; Meloy & Gacono, 1992b), we present the case of a young man who is organized at a borderline level of personality and is a psychopathic character. Rorschach findings are used to empirically understand these two dimensions of personality. Our approach to the Rorschach data is both psychostructural and psychodynamic.

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## CASE STUDY

Chet is a 21-year-old White man, the second child born to an intact family. His mother was raised in Jamaica and is employed as a medical technician. His father was born in Iowa and was following a Naval career; he now owns a bar. Father is described by both mother and son as a paranoid alcoholic who has attempted suicide on three different occasions. There is also a paternal familial history of alcoholism, depression, and schizophrenia.

Although the pregnancy and delivery of Chet are reported to have been normal, within several months, his mother moved away from her support system, became increasingly anxious, and had difficulty feeding Chet. In spite of these problems, which required medical attention, Chet gained weight and appeared to be developing normally.

Chet was enuretic until age 4 and by age 6 was exhibiting defiance toward his parents and teachers and aggression toward toys. His anger and aggression were reciprocated by his father, who was physically, although not sexually, cruel and abusive to both him and his mother. He later reported that he had been raped and molested when he was 6 years old but subsequently said that he had lied, adding, "when you're going to be an actor, you need to set the stage right." The frequent changes of living due to his father's career, and Chet's large physical size, resulted in continuous teasing and challenging from older children and left few opportunities for enduring peer relationships.

At age 8, Chet's psychiatric history began. His parents were told that he would function better if they separated. His mother disagreed. Chet was tried on methylphenidate for 1 1/2 years to address his hyperactivity. His mother became isolative and depressed when his father would return home from a Navy deployment and abuse Chet. Mother turned to astrology and religious groups to cope.

Chet started to hang around with other children who were delinquent. Consistent with a diagnosis of conduct disorder, his behavioral problems manifested in petty crimes, drug use, poor school performance, truancy, and chronic arguments within the family. By midadolescence he was diagnosed with a reactive depression to the violence he experienced with his father. As the doctor got to know him, he wrote, "despite paranoid trends and a symbiotic attachment to his mother, Chet in relationship is very shallow and talks about grandiose schemes to be someone, usually involving sociopathic ideas such as selling drugs and becoming rich." His drug history during adolescence involved marijuana, phencyclidine, LSD, methamphetamine, and alcohol.

Three years before the instant offense, when Chet was 17, his mother divorced his father. Chet threatened to kill his father and self-reported two suicide attempts. During that same year, Chet became more secretive and withdrawn from his mother. Following her mild rebuke, he set a fire at his high school, and was arrested while watching the firemen work. He was detained at Juvenile Hall and subsequently admitted to a psychiatric hospital for 2 months.

His physical exam was normal. Psychological testing, now 2 years before the instant offense, indicated an average range of intellectual ability. There was no

evidence of organic impairment. Projective testing revealed,

significant disturbance in the area of interpersonal relations and extremely low self esteem. Frustration tolerance and ability to handle stress are quite tenuous, and depression as well as aggressive feelings are prominent. Typical defense mechanisms are projection and denial, and a latent thought disorder is present.

The discharge summary stated, in part,

there are significant pseudo-sociopathic tendencies as well as deep seated latent, and sometimes not latent, aggressive feelings. Underlying narcissistic disturbance is quite severe and, though not formally psychotic, he at times does manifest rather extreme disturbances of thought and cognition indicative of a severe emotional disturbance.

The discharge diagnosis was conduct disorder and a borderline personality disorder with narcissistic features.

### Instant Offense

The victim was a 56-year-old church organist and retired Baptist minister who had been dead in his apartment for at least 5 days before the police discovered the body. The autopsy revealed bruises to the trunk and face, as well as fractures to the nasal bones. There were additional fractures of the supraorbital portion of the bones around his eyes, and a linear fracture at the base of his skull. The cause of death was head injury. The victim was found fully clothed, and his hands and feet were bound with telephone cord. His face was covered with a towel (Geberth, 1990).

Police investigation led to a 14-year-old boy who had been present during the killing. He had been taken to dinner by the victim, a known pedophile, and had subsequently granted him two sexual favors before Chet and another young man arrived at the victim's apartment. The four sat in the living room talking, and then Chet returned from the kitchen and placed a fork at the victim's throat, threatening him with harm. The boy was handcuffed and taken by the other man into the victim's bedroom, where he was later tied up. He did not see the killing, but heard noises consistent with blows to the victim's head, throat, stomach, and chest, and pleas for medical help. After the killing, Chet and his companion stole the victim's stereo, credit cards, and other property. They decided to let the juvenile live. Chet was heard to say to the victim, "I'm going to kill you. I am a crazy motherfucker. If I get caught they will put me in a mental hospital."

When Chet was arrested, he confessed to the crime.

I beat up the guy, kicked him, twisted his head around, then killed him because the guy had raped one of my little friends and the little boy's mother was not able to go to the police and tell them.

He reported that he was a "drug addict" and a "well-minded loner" whose relationships centered around criminal activity, such as vandalism, burglary, and

car theft. He maintained that he and his friend planned to rob and kill the victim before they got to his apartment. He reported feeling "upset" about the crime, but acknowledged that he might have killed again, because he had heard that it gets easier. He said, "my crime merits imprisonment."

During his incarceration and trial he was briefly treated in a forensic inpatient unit for suicidality, depression, crying, anxiety, and self-reported auditory and visual hallucinations. He did not respond, however, to antipsychotic medications but did respond to hydroxyzine pamoate (an antihistamine) and doxepin hydrochloride (an antidepressant). At the time of testing he was taking doxepin 50 mg bid and 100 mg hs. Chet was also administered the MMPI, the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R; Wechsler, 1981) and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT; Murray, 1943). His MMPI was an invalid, "fake bad" profile. On the WAIS-R he scored a VIQ of 96, a PIQ of 90, and a FSIQ of 94, consistent with prior testing. He defined the word *tirade* on the vocabulary subtest as "sadistic talk". In response to the comprehension subtest concerning finding an envelope in the street, he stated, "I'm supposed to mail it, but I would open it." His TAT response to Card 18GF is noteworthy: "This girl is a psychopathic killer, and she has her mom pinned up against the staircase and she is choking her to death. And then the old lady's body is limp because she's made her life miserable and she just got tired of it and she evened up the score and she is enjoying what she's doing to her mom cause she made her crazy." The Rorschach was administered 2 weeks after the homicide.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows the Rorschach protocol. Table 2 shows the sequence of scores, and Table 3 shows the structural summary, both generated by Rorschach Scoring Program, Version 2 (Exner, Cohen, & McGuire, 1990). Table 4 contains categories that define primitive interpersonal modes of relating (Kwawer, 1980), Table 5 shows the Rorschach defenses (Cooper, Perry, & Arnow, 1988), and Table 6 shows the aggression scores (Exner, 1986a; Meloy & Gacono, 1992a) for this protocol.

## DISCUSSION

Chet's Rorschach indicates both borderline personality organization and psychopathic character formation. Our approach to these idiographic data, which are both psychostructural and psychodynamic, is in the context of concurrent validity. What expectable clinical hypotheses could we generate, based upon Chet's background and behavior, and does the Rorschach support these hypotheses? We address each one in turn.

*Hypothesis 1: There is a strong identification with the aggressor, in this case, the father.* Meloy (1988) theorized that the primary identification of the psychopath is with the "stranger selfobject" (Grotstein, 1982) or, in Freudian terms, with the aggressor (Freud, 1966). It would be expected that Chet's internal

TABLE 1  
Rorschach Protocol of Borderline Psychopath

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- I. 1. ll the devil—see the ears, eyes, and horns on the head—that's what it's supposed to be, isn't it?  
[ears, horn, mouth, teeth, chin here.]
2. Two hummingbirds trying to suck the nectar out of a flower—wings, beak, flower here.  
[the beak, wings, flower here.]
3. ll a skull cuz it's hollowed out.  
[a cattle skull, bull, like on the ground in the desert (?) bone, horns, eyes, nostrils.]
- II. It doesn't ll anything—blobs on a piece of paper.
4. An upside down monarch butterfly.  
[the red ll two wings.]
5. Two cartoon characters, clowns slapping their wrists together like this (gestures).  
[the hands and faces are red on each side, you could make the body ll that.]
6. A technical instrument.  
[the shape, Idk, it looks manmade.]
- III. 7. A big fat creature—look at it this way, maybe a black widow cuz the thing in the middle—ever seen one? It ll a spider, claws, teeth, eyes here.  
[the arms, crab joints, shape.]
8. Two ladies, fighting over some grocery bags, the red stuff is the mess they're making, trying to rip the shopping cart bag in half, here's the stuff coming out of it.  
[legs, hip, boobs, neck—they're chickenpeople (?) yea, no mouths, just beaks. Marks here are rips. Stuff (stuff?) like Idk broken mayonnaise jars—but mayo isn't red, strawberry jelly.]
- IV. 9. It ll some kind of creature.  
[goat's head with wings folded, feet here, the tail.]
10. A creature with floppy feet, head, two eyes, hands like claws on each side.  
[like a dinosaur, the tail here, on each side eyes, hands like claws, tail is here, and floppy feet.]
- V. 11. A horse being eaten by a bear.  
[here, the horse head and hoof trying to get away.]
12. Also ll a bird.  
[here, skimming across the water, and the reflection.]
13. A butterfly.  
[this way, the whole thing.]
- VI. 14. A gun being fired, that's all it ll.  
[watch this (covers up half the card) it muffles the sound, handle, trigger, shell.]
- VII. 15. ll a pig, doesn't it? Just like it here, the eyes, nose, teeth right here.  
[the nose, teeth here.]
16. A lady dancing and her hair's on fire. Buttocks, pointy shoes, one hand and one arm up through here—she got her head blown off (laughs)—she's dancing.  
[the hair, arm here, head blown up.]
17. Bits and pieces of a pig, his head, they tore his stomach off, leg, head here. He's been chopped into little pieces, ya know?  
[right here.]
18. Two Mexicans, you know with that on their head? They're snobby and looking over their shoulder.  
[like when you stick your tongue out, stuck up.]
19. A nut and bolt here.  
[the space here.]

(Continued)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

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- VIII. 20. The rock he's on, a stump, branches, he's trying to fix it, the beaver, walk on it, fix it—one foot here, one in the air, on logs or branches.  
[like right here, log, branch, rock, a rodent.]
- IX. 21. The head and body of a baby—they didn't tie the umbilical cord and the guts are shooting out—can that really happen? Can it bleed to death?  
[nose, the color, more of a flesh tone—he's red when he comes out—this is green and orange guts coming out.]
22. A bug, eyeballs, skeleton, armor, feet, claws, his tail.  
[here, the eyes, claws, skeleton, armor and tail receding.]
- X. 23. It reminds me of sea crustaceans. That large red area on both sides, crustaceans.  
[red coral like that.]
24. Some guy's handing another guy something.  
[blue here, on a cliff.]
25. These are like lobsters.  
[all the feet.]
26. Il a bug here—someone used a drill press on him—blood here—drilling through one leg—the handle and power unit here.  
[cockroaches, two antenna and feet, and a wishbone here, the yellow handle.]
27. A man here, pulled along by two seahorses—like with Shamu—guy gets on his back, you ever been there?  
[the hair, feet, and seahorses, a shotgun here.]
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representations would be suffused with aggression, with indications that he also identified with the aggressor. Such is the case. Perusal of his protocol (Table 1) indicates many aggression responses: Comprehensive System (Exner, 1986a) aggression occurring only in the present (8, 11, 26) and other, more refined aggressive indices—aggressive content (1, 7, 10, 14, 22, 26, 27), aggressive past (16, 17, 26), and sadomasochism (16). Table 6 indicates a total of 14 aggression responses.

Although the relation of aggressive responses on the Rorschach to real world aggression is problematic in forensic populations (Gacono, Meloy, & Berg, 1992; Meloy & Gacono, 1992a), idiographic support abounds in this case for such a correlation. The aggression is particularly atavistic and cruel, apparent in the reader's probable visceral reactions to looking at the responses (see, for example, Responses 21 and 26). Aggressive drive derivatives predominate among his internal objects.

Weapons ("Gun", "shotgun") also emerge as aggressive content (14, 27) and can be theoretically understood as a hard object identification or attachment in psychopathy (Meloy, 1992b). Percepts of weapons are often imbued with characteristics of omnipotent control, grandiosity, and narcissistic invulnerability.

The absence of anxiety or felt helplessness ( $Y = 0$ ), coupled with an abundance of aggressive indices, suggests the egosyntonic nature of Chet's aggression. In this case,  $Y = 0$  is accompanied by emotional detachment ( $T = 0$ ), which both enhance the capacity for predatory violence toward the victim (Gacono & Meloy, in press), verified by Chet's preparation and planning for the robbery and killing. Both

TABLE 2  
Sequence of Scores of Borderline Psychopath

Card No.	Loc.	#	Determinant(s)	(2)	Content(s)	Pop.	Z	Special Scores
I	1	WSo	1	Fu	(Hd)		3.5	DR
	2	W+	1	FMau	2	A,Bt,Fd	4.0	
	3	WSo	1	Fo		An	3.5	
II	4	Do	3	Fo		A		
	5	W+	1	Ma.FCo	2	(H)	4.5	DR
	6	DSv	5	Fu		Sc		
III	7	Wo	1	F-		(A)	5.5	INC
	8	W+	1	Ma.CF.mau	2	(H),Hh,Sx,Fd	5.5	AG,INC2,MOR
IV	9	Wo	1	F-		(A)	2.0	INC
	10	Wo	1	Fo		(A)	2.0	
V	11	D+	4	FMa-		A,Ad	2.5	AG,FAB
	12	W+	1	FMa.Fru		A,Na	2.5	
	13	Wo	1	Fo		A	P 1.0	
VI	14	Ddo	99	mau		Sc,Ex		
VII	15	Do	3	Fo		Ad		
	16	Dd+	22	Mau		H,Fi,Sx,Cg	1.0	FAB2,MOR
	17	Ddo	23	F-		Ad		MOR
	18	Wo	1	Mpu	2	Hd	2.5	
	19	DSv	7	F-		Sc		
VIII	20	D+	1	FMao		A,Na	P 3.0	
	21	Dd+	99	ma.CF-		H,BI,An	2.5	MOR,DR,INC
IX	22	Wo	1	F-		A,An	5.5	INC
	23	Do	9	CFo		Ls		
X	24	D+	6	Mau	2	H,Ls	4.0	COP
	25	Do	1	Fu	2	A		INC
	26	D+	7	Ma-	2	A,Hh,BI	4.0	MOR,FAB2,AG
	27	D+	10	FMau	2	H,A	4.0	FAB,COP

Summary of Approach

I:W.S.W.WS	VI:Dd
II:D.W.DS	VII:D.Dd.Dd.W.DS
III:W.W	VIII:D
IV:W.W	IX:Dd.W
V:D.W.W.	X:D.D.D.D.D

chronic detachment and predatory violence (Meloy, 1988) have been found to differentiate between psychopathic and nonpsychopathic criminals (Gacono & Meloy, 1991; Williamson, Hare, & Wong, 1987). Psychopaths usually seek male strangers as victims, somewhat consistent with this case.

The final index of support for this hypothesis are the four space responses. Unexpected in adult normals (Exner, 1986a) but characteristic of antisocial personality disorder (Gacono & Meloy, 1992), these suggest a characterologically angry individual who will be sullen and oppositional. Inconsistent with this hypothesis is the mild expectation of cooperativeness from others ( $COP = 2$ ). The first cooperative response, however, is somewhat ambiguous (24), and the second one

TABLE 3  
Structural Summary of Borderline Psychopath

LOCATION FEATURES	DETERMINANTS		CONTENTS		S-CONSTELLATION	
	BLENDS	SINGLE			NO..FV+VF+V+FD>2	
Zf = 19	M.FC	M = 4	H = 4, 0		NO..Col-Shd BI>0	
ZSum = 63.0	M.CF.m	FM = 4	(H) = 2, 0		NO..Ego<.31,>.44	
ZEst = 63.0	FM.Fr	m = 1	Hd = 1, 0		YES..MOR>3	
	m.CF	FC = 0	(Hd) = 1, 0		NO..Zd>+3.5	
W = 12		CF = 1	Hx = 0, 0		NO..es>EA	
(Wv = 0)		C = 0	A = 9, 1		YES..CF+C>FC	
D = 11		Cn = 0	(A) = 3, 0		YES..X+%<.70	
Dd = 4		FC = 0	Ad = 2, 1		YES..S>3	
S = 4		C'F = 0	(Ad) = 0, 0		YES..P<3 or >8	
		C = 0	An = 1, 2		NO..Pure H < 2	
		FT = 0	Art = 0, 0		NO..R<17	
DQ		TF = 0	Ay = 0, 0		5.....TOTAL	
.....(FQ-)		T = 0	Bl = 0, 2			
+ = 11(3)		VF = 0	Bt = 0, 1		SPECIAL SCORINGS	
o = 14(4)		V = 0	Cg = 0, 1		Lv1 Lv2	
v/+ = 0(0)		YF = 0	Cl = 0, 0		DV = 0x1 0x2	
v = 2(I)		Y = 0	Ex = 0, 1		INC = 5x2 1x4	
		rF = 0	Fd = 0, 2		DR = 3x3 0x6	
		FD = 0	Fi = 0, 1		FAB = 2x4 2x7	
		F = 13	Ge = 0, 0		ALOG = 0x5	
			Hh = 0, 2		CON = 0x7	
FORM QUALITY			Ls = 1, 1		SUM6 = 13	
			Na = 0, 2		WSUM6 = 45	
			Sc = 3, 0			
			Sx = 0, 2		AB = 0 CP = 0	
			Xy = 0, 0		AG = 3 MOR = 5	
			Id = 0, 0		CFB = 0 PER = 0	
					COP = 2 PSV = 0	
none = 0 - 0 0 (2) = 8						
RATIOS, PERCENTAGES, AND DERIVATIONS						
R = 27	L = 0.93		FC:CF+C = 1:3	COP = 2	AG = 3	
EB = 6:3.5	EA = 9.5	EBPer = 1.7	Pure C = 0	Food = 2		
eb = 8:0	es = 8	D = 0	Afr = 0.42	Isolate/R = 0.26		
	Adj es = 6	Adj D = +1	S = 4	H:(H)Hd(Hd) = 4:4		
			Blends:R = 4:27	(HHd):(AAAd) = 3:3		
			CP = 0	H+A:Hd+Ad = 19:5		
FM = 5 : C = 0 T = 0						
m = 3 : V = 0 Y = 0						
			P = 2	Zf = 19	3r+(2)/R = 0.41	
a:p = 13:1	Sum6 = 13	X+% = 0.30		Zd = +0.0	Fr+rf = 1	
Ma:Mp = 5:1	Lv2 = 3	F+% = 0.38		W:D:Dd = 12:11:4	FD = 0	
2AB+Art+Ay = 0	WSum6 = 45	X-% = 0.30		W:M = 12:6	An+Xy = 3	
M- = 1	Mnone = 0	S-% = 0.13		DQ+ = 11	MOR = 5	
		Xu% = 0.41		DQv = 2		
SCZI = 4*	DEPI = 4	CDI = 2	S-CON = 5	HVI = Yes	OBS = No	



TABLE 4  
Primitive Interpersonal Modes  
(Kwawer, 1980)

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1. Engulfment	0
2. Symbiotic merging	0
3. Violent symbiosis, separation, and reunion	6
4. Malignant internal processes	1
5. Birth and rebirth	1
6. Metamorphosis and transformation	0
7. Narcissistic mirroring	1
8. Separation—division	0
9. Boundary disturbance	3
10. Womb imagery	0
	Total 12
	% of R = 30%

TABLE 5  
Rorschach Defense Scales  
(Cooper, Perry, & Arnow, 1988)

<i>Level of Personality Organization</i>	<i>Defense</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Neurotic	Higher level denial	2	
	Intellectualization	0	
	Isolation	2	
	Reaction formation	0	
	Repression	0	
	Rationalization	0	
	Pollyannish denial	0	
	Total	4	15%
Borderline	Devaluation	5	
	Omnipotence	0	
	Primitive idealization	0	
	Projection	5	
	Projective identification	2	
	Splitting	3	
	Total	15	58%
Psychotic	Hypomanic denial	0	
	Massive denial	7	
	Total	7	27%
	Total scored	26	100%

TABLE 6  
Aggression Scores (Meloy & Gacono, 1992a)

Aggression (Exner, 1986a)	3
Aggressive content	7
Aggressive past	3
Aggressive potential	0
Sadomasochism	1
Total aggression	14

is spoiled by an aggressive content during the inquiry (27) and cognitive slippage (*FAB*). Both responses are perceptually idiosyncratic (*Fu*).

*Hypothesis 2: There is a secondary identification with the victim.* Chet produced three aggressive past responses (16, 17, 26), which we and others (Meloy & Gacono, 1992a) have theoretically linked to a masochistic orientation. There are also five Morbid responses (8, 16, 17, 21, 26) that strongly suggest a sense of self as injured and damaged, data consistent with samples of individuals with posttraumatic stress disorder (Hartman et al., 1990) who often perceive themselves as victims. Elevated Morbid responses ( $M = 1.73$ ) were also found in a sample of Antisocial Personality Disordered (APD) incarcerated men (Gacono & Meloy, 1992), which provides some empirical support for the theoretical notion of grandiosity as a defense against a damaged self in some APD men.

There is also a serious preoccupation with physical vulnerability found in the three anatomy responses (3, 21, 22). This is most graphic in Response 21, "the head and body of a baby—they didn't tie the umbilical cord and the guts are shooting out . . ." This regressive response occurs with a loss of reality testing and is determined by both partially modulated affect (*CF*) and an ideational sense of helplessness (*m*). It also involves three special scores, including two indices of formal thought disorder (*DR*, *INC*). It is solely redeemed by a whole human representation (*H*), but in the milieu of a perinatal experience that is a wrenching, violent separation from the mother.

*Hypothesis 3: There is a primary object relation marked by violent attachment.* Kwawer's (1980) categories for primitive modes of interpersonal relatedness are listed in Table 4. Twelve of these responses are present and occur in 30% of *R*. Unlike the psychopathic character organized at a psychotic level of personality (Meloy & Gacono, 1992b), in which engulfment and womb imagery would be expected, organization at a borderline level would predict a plethora of symbiotic responses (Gacono, 1992). There are six in this protocol (8, 11, 16, 17, 21, 26), and they would all be categorized as violent symbiosis, separation, and reunion responses. Eighty-three percent of these responses are linked with Morbid special scores, and two thirds contain minus form quality or massive denial as a

psychotic defense (Cooper et al., 1988); for example, (11), "A horse being eaten by a bear. (?) The horse head and hoof trying to get away."

Chet also produced one food ambivalence response (8), "broken mayonnaise jars—but mayo isn't red, strawberry jelly." Such responses may be a metaphor for early ambivalent experiences wherein nurturing was suffused, at times, with aggression from the primary object (Gacono, 1992; Gacono & Meloy, 1991).

The adaptation by Chet to this internal world of violent symbiotic objects is sequentially evident in Responses 17 through 19. In Response 17, the violent symbiosis is startlingly evident, "bits and pieces of a pig, his head, they tore his stomach off", and is accompanied by a loss of reality testing ( $F-$ ). Reality testing is recovered on the next response (18) through the use of the borderline defense of devaluation: "Two Mexicans, you know with that on their head? They're snobby and looking over their shoulder," a ubiquitous defense in psychopathy (Gacono, 1990). But then reality testing is lost once again ( $F-$ ) when the neurotic defense of isolation is attempted on Response 19, "A nut and bolt here."

In contrast to this failure of neurotic adaptation, pathological narcissistic adaptation is successful in the sequence of Responses 11 through 13. Response 11, noted previously as a violent symbiotic response accompanied by a loss of reality testing, is followed by a narcissistic mirroring response with unusual form level (12), "a bird . . . skimming across the water, and the reflection," and then a popular response (13), "a butterfly." Reality convergence is attained and recovered from a violent symbiotic object relation through the use of a narcissistic defense ( $Rf$ ).

*Hypothesis 4: There is poor modulation of affect and an absence of unpleasant emotion.* One of the paradoxes of psychopathy is the presence of a primitive and violent object relational world and the absence of dysphoric or anxious affect. We would expect stimulus overload, dysphoria, and anxiety in other subjects with similar object relational worlds (Gacono et al., 1992) and find it in Borderline Personality Disorder (Exner, 1986b).

Chet's affective experience, despite his identifications and object relations, is like the quiet and calm reflecting pool, a marker of his fundamentally alloplastic character. He is avoidant of external stimuli that is emotionally provoking ( $Afr = .42$ , 2 standard deviations below the mean for nonpatient men), and is highly defended against his own affect ( $\Lambda .93$ ). His nonvolitional affective experience is detached and empty ( $C' = 0$ ,  $V = 0$ ,  $T = 0$ ,  $Y = 0$ ), suggestive of the conceptual meaninglessness of his experience in which two-dimensional perception (*Pure F*) is rarely imbued with the third dimension of affective depth, whether joyful or dysphoric. These data are also consistent with the inability of psychopaths to discriminate between words with and without affective meaning (Hare, 1991), which may have a biological substrate in the limbic system (Meloy, 1988).

Although Chet does not have an expected *Pure C* response, given his explosive violence, his modulation of affect ( $FC:CF + C = 1:3$ ) is consistent with APD men (1:3; Gacono & Meloy, in press) and like that of a 7-year-old boy (Exner, 1986a).

His stress tolerance and controls, however, are average, and even better than average when adjusted for situational factors (*Adj D* = +1). We would expect Chet to use his unmodulated affect, usually anger, in a deliberate and predictable manner to control objects in his environment, a proposition dramatized in the instant offense, and reinforcing the psychopathic fantasy of omnipotent control.

*Hypothesis 5: There is a fusion of aggressive and sexual drives, linked to sadomasochism, in the context of the self as an injured object.* The psychopathic character restores meaning through cruelty to others. Chet produced one *SM* response (Gacono, 1990; Meloy, 1988; Meloy & Gacono, 1992a), scored when pleasurable affect accompanies a Morbid, aggressive, or devalued response (16): "a lady dancing and her hair's on fire. Buttocks, pointy shoes, one hand and one arm up through here—she got her head blown off (laughs)." Chet's sadomasochism, moreover, is closely linked to both anality and homophobia. He remembers as a child watching his father masturbate in front of the television. He reported positive feelings while killing the victim because he was a "faggot" just like his father. He also remembered tying up an adolescent and "torturing" him 2 years before the homicide, and also cruelty to animals as an adolescent. He described his internal state at the time of the homicide as feeling "dismembered" because he had been reduced to "just two big eyes". This may be suggestive of dissociation at the time of the killing, and is a memory pervaded with an unconscious, paranoid fear of castration.

After Chet was in custody he assaulted another inmate whom he found shackled in a "holding tank." He laughed when he described this assault to clinical staff. Like the homicide, the victim was being held and controlled, an anal metaphor, just before Chet became violent, literally acting out the "beating fantasy" (Freud, 1919/1958).

The sadistic pleasure that Chet derives from these actions is a consequence of the complete control and domination of the victim and the projective identification of his passive feminine internal objects into the victim. It is also a retaliatory product of his feelings of helplessness as the victim of his father and is driven by the wish to convert passive into active (Freud, 1919/1958). The homophobic context of the killing probably contains both a wish and a fear of homosexual assault as "buttocks" are juxtaposed with "pointy shoes" (16), and "ladies" deteriorate into "chickenpeople" (8). This latter response, similar to the term "chickenhawks" used to describe young men in custody that may be prey to homosexual assault, also links sexual and aggressive content; both sex responses (8, 16) contain a Morbid, suggesting a dynamic association between erotic arousal and the self as an injured object, a sexually masochistic orientation. Although sadomasochism is endemic in Chet's intrapsychic economy and real world behavior, there is no irrefutable evidence for sexual sadism, unlike several of our previous case studies (Gacono, 1992; Meloy & Gacono, 1992b). Nevertheless, Chet has failed to integrate the "mother of pleasure and the mother of pain" (Bach, 1991, p. 85) during his development and sexual maturation.

*Hypothesis 6: There is a borderline personality organization.* We think the SCZI score of 4 on this protocol is a false positive for schizophrenia. There is a 13% false positive rate for BPD on the SCZI (Exner, 1986a). We would argue that Chet's protocol evidences a "lower level" character disorder (Kernberg, 1975) and a quite primitive borderline personality organization, perhaps developmentally near the psychotic border. An analysis of the Rorschach data concerning reality testing, unintegrated identity, and defensive operations is instructive.

First, Chet's cognitive mediation is unconventional and idiosyncratic ( $X+ \% = 30$ ,  $F+ \% = 38$ ), and his gross distortion of perceptual reality is significant ( $X- \% = 30$ ). Although this last index suggests severely impaired reality testing, it is still within 1 standard deviation of a sample of antisocial personality disordered men without a diagnosable psychosis ( $M = 23$ ,  $SD = 11$ ; Gacono & Meloy, 1992). Formal thought disorder is also pervasive in this record ( $WSum6 = 45$ ), but all the Level 2 scores occur within a violent symbiosis response (8, 16, 26), suggesting a psychodynamic, rather than structural, basis for thought disorder (Meloy & Singer, 1991). Thought disorganizes in this young man when early emotional trauma surrounding the differentiation subphase of separation-individuation is recathected (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975).

Second, Chet's lack of an integrated identity is manifest in his use of splitting to alternate between his primary identification as an aggressor and his secondary identification as a victim. Splitting between good and bad objects is evident in the sequencing of Responses 1 and 2: "looks like the Devil (1) . . . two hummingbirds (2)." Confusion between internal and external reality, pathognomonic of borderline rather than psychotic organization, is evident in the Kwawer (1980) category of boundary disturbance (8, 21, 22). Response 22, for example, "A bug, eyeballs, skeleton, armor, feet, claws, his tail", suggests the rapidly oscillating shift between internal (skeleton) and external (armor), implicates the defensive use of both projection and introjection, and points to the borderline person's confusion with the origination of stimuli: Is it within me or out there? In psychotic states, we see no confusion because the boundary is lost (Meloy, 1991). Likewise, Special Scores that mark psychotic perception (*CONTAM*) and psychotic association (*ALOG*) are absent in Chet's Rorschach protocol (Meloy & Singer, 1991).

And third, the defensive operations also implicate a borderline personality organization. Of the identifiable defenses in this protocol, 58% are borderline, 27% are psychotic, and 15% are neurotic (see Table 5; Cooper et al., 1988). Prominent borderline defenses include devaluation and projection, findings consistent with psychopaths in general (Gacono, 1990). Devaluation as a defense is used with instinctual aggression in Response 26: "Looks like a bug here—someone used a drill press on him, blood here, drilling through one leg, the handle and power unit here." This response would also be scored for projective identification and is another example of the psychopathic character relating to objects on the basis of power rather than affection. This method of quantifying the proportion of defenses at each level of personality is useful because it emphasizes the dynamic and changeable nature of intrapsychic life and also allows for statements concerning the most prominent level of defensive organization.

*Hypothesis 7: Psychopathic character formation is present.* Chet is positive for four of the five select Comprehensive System variables that discriminated between psychopathic and nonpsychopathic criminals (Gacono & Meloy, 1991; Gacono, Meloy, & Heaven, 1990). Indices suggest pathological narcissism ( $Rf = 1$ ), chronic emotional detachment ( $T = 0$ ), increased self-absorption ( $EgoC = .41$ ), and an absence of anxiety or felt helplessness ( $Y = 0$ ). This latter measure is consistent with the psychophysiological research on psychopathy (Hare, 1991). The one aspect of psychopathy that is missing in this protocol is grandiosity, measured by Personals (Exner, 1986a) and omnipotent defenses (Cooper et al., 1988). Although grandiosity is expected in most psychopaths (Gacono et al., 1990), it appears to fail continuously in this particular case, perhaps due to inherited cognitive and affective vulnerabilities.

Not that Chet doesn't try. The absence of idealization as a defense is expected in psychopathy, overshadowed by a plethora of devaluation responses (Gacono, 1990). Both findings are consistent with this protocol (see Table 5) and suggest repetitive attempts to shore up the grandiose self-structure (Kernberg, 1975) through the devaluation of others. And the one sadomasochism response (16) in this protocol, a specific although not necessarily sensitive indicator (Meloy & Gacono, 1992a) of sadism, has been found to distinguish between psychopathic and nonpsychopathic criminals.

## CONCLUSION

We have explored the case of a psychopathic character organized at a borderline level of personality. In the absence of a stable grandiose self-structure (Kernberg, 1975), intense aggression, often linked with homosexual impulse, is managed through an intricate defensive operation: Devaluation, projection, and projective identification keep the perceived (homo)sexual aggressor at bay, whereas splitting and massive denial facilitate the use of sadism toward real objects. This attempt to induce a "mutual sexualized misery" (Bach, 1991, p. 83) facilitates the conversion of passive into active, the projection of the injured self, the omnipotent control of the (father) aggressor, and momentary pleasure through the infliction of pain, the *lex talionis*, or law of revenge. To risk a condensation of the wisdom of Drs. Melitta Schmidberg and Hervey Cleckley, this young man wears a "stably unstable mask of sanity."

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