

## "Authors" of Dismemberment

### *To the Editor:*

With interest we read the article by Di Nunno et al<sup>1</sup> in which they describe 3 cases of dismemberment and review the literature. But we were puzzled and worried by the last paragraph of the article where the authors posted a lesson for the readers: "It should also be borne in mind that dismemberment, especially for purpose of offense, is often the ultimate act in a career of crime, and the authors have often already been accused of rape or robbery" [our underlining]. Earlier in their article, reviewing the literature, they state "Another important consideration is that authors of dismemberment are often, according to many studies, subjects

affected by psychiatric disease, or alcoholics or drug addicts." They further explain that "... the authors of the crime were described by their families and acquaintances as entirely normal people" [our underlining].

We hope that this is an incorrect use of the word "author," probably overlooked by the authors, editors, reviewers, and typesetters, and the authors of this excellent article and the authors of the articles they have reviewed are not being accused of rape or robbery or affected by psychiatric disease, or are alcoholic or drug addicts. We think that they want to mention that the actors in the horrible crimes they have described are subject to such classifications.

An "author" (from the Latin "auctor" [creator], old French "autor" or Middle English "auctour") is the writer of a book, article, or other text, or someone who practices writing as a profession, and who is

responsible for the content of a published text. An author can be a criminal, rapist, robber, psychiatric patient, drug or alcoholic addict, but we do not think that Di Nunno et al want to classify themselves or the other mentioned authors in this way.

**Cornelis W. Moeliker**

Natural History Museum Rotterdam  
Rotterdam, The Netherlands

**Erwin J. O. Kompanje, PhD**

**Tim C. Jansen, MD**

Department of Intensive Care  
Erasmus MC University Medical Center  
Rotterdam, The Netherlands

### REFERENCE

1. Di Nunno N, Costantinides F, Vacca M, et al. Dismemberment. A review of the literature and description of 3 cases. *Am J Forensic Med Pathol.* 2006;27:307-312.