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Publication Date

1982-06-30

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: THE CASE
OF WIFE BEATING
PART ONE

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My thanks to the Institute for giving me the opportunity to spend the year of 1980/81 and the summer of 1982 as a visiting scholar. The Institute's members provided useful criticism and support towards the completion of this project

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Violence against women - The case of wife beating

Introduction

This paper is the first of two working papers on wife beating. In the first paper I review the literature on the subject, including analysis and critique. The second paper will be a case study, mainly of the battered women in a German shelter, but including experiences of others in American and British shelters. The rediscovery of the problem of wife beating was accomplished by the international women's movement, as it spread from Europe to the United States; therefore, the scope of the problem is international and has to be seen and dealt with internationally.

The purpose of this first paper is to give an overview of the international literature, the theoretical approaches as well as the empirical findings; it is intended to be a resource document. "Wife beating" is still a comparatively new field of research: The phenomenon was uncovered less than ten years ago. For example, in Germany research in this field is still very much in its beginnings; in the U.S., it is in the stage of gathering extensive material and exploring useful theories to explain the phenomenon. Thus, it seems both necessary and appropriate to compile a detailed report on the most relevant international literature and findings.

In Section I the literature is summarized with a view

to understanding the diverse theoretical approaches to, and explanations of, wife beating. Section II, the core of the present document, deals with empirical findings on wife beating. In many cases, the studies did not lend themselves to comparison; in addition, their findings often proved to be contradictory. Beginning in Section II, I evaluate the data through the prism of my own position. In a short third Section, I have attempted to evaluate the theoretical and empirical approaches in the light of my own approach.

My approach is derived from my background as a student of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. One of the aims of the Frankfurt School was to analyze the relationship between the individual and society and to explain individual personality structures as a result of societal forces.

My own intention is twofold: first, to analyze the relationship between battered women and non-battered women in the overall context of the female role in our society, and second, to view women's struggle for an autonomous self from the inside, i.e., to analyze the psychic dimension of the problem in the sense of uncovering the roots of patriarchy in women's own selves. Such an analysis will demonstrate that the lives of battered women can be seen as an extreme example of the lives of women in general in a patriarchal society.

I. Review of the theoretical approaches to wife beating

1. Rediscovery of the problem of wife beating

The credit for the rediscovery and unveiling of the problem of wife beating does not belong to scholars, but to the women's movement, for the women's movement turned an acknowledged but neglected phenomenon into a publicly discussed issue recognized by society at large.

Whereas some scholars had come across the problem as part of their work as psychiatrists or, as the sociologist Straus, as part of findings on conflicts in families, the social sciences as academic disciplines only became involved in this field after wife-beating had been made known as a wide-spread problem by the women's movement. The early studies on wife-beating also do not focus on the situation of the battered woman in her own right, but are interested either in the precipitation of male violence by wives or in general questions of family violence.

It was in the early 1970's that women organizing women's community centers¹ and women working on crisis lines for women² became aware of how many women had to suffer from their husbands' beatings. By the mid 70's the movement against wife-beating and the organization of emergency shelters had spread internationally and by now is the fastest growing movement inside the women's movement and the fastest growing grassroots movement in general.

In this context the first literature against wife-beating was published. The women writers who pioneered in this field had a double focus in their books, which were written out of political concern for the oppression of women: first, to make the problem publicly known and, second, to help organize women around the issue.

The first book on wife-beating was written by Erin Pizzey,³ published in England in 1974. Pizzey was the founder of the first shelter in 1971. From England the movement and early literary accounts of the problem spread quickly through Europe, especially Holland and Germany, and to the U.S. In the U.S. the first important books on wife-beating--giving an account of the problem--were written in 1976 by active feminists like Del Martin⁴ and Betsy Warrior.⁵ (Warrior opened one of the first shelters in the U.S.) The first national attention to wife beating was given by the National Organization of Women (NOW) through their newsletter in the same year urging the establishment of a task force on the issue. Another important international event drawing attention to the problem of violence against women was the International Tribunal in Brussels in 1976⁶ which included the issue of battery on its agenda.

There are two reasons why the problem of wife beating was rediscovered in the 70's, and why it led to the development of an international movement and became an acknowledged social problem and a publically funded field of academic

research in less than a decade:

1. The growing strength of the women's movement in all patriarchal societies (especially in the capitalistic Western societies) which has given the movement the power to formulate issues of women's oppression and fight for the abolition of this oppression;
2. The changing situation of women, especially their role in the economy and the growing conflicts around the nuclear family and its crumbling patriarchal basis--the fertile soil in which the women's movement could grow.

2. Wife beating as personal pathology

Psychiatrists in particular have tried to analyze wife beating as a form of personal deviance. The most current version of this approach concentrates on the character of the wife and her active role in and precipitation of the battering incident. The theoretical background is a crude form of psychoanalysis, declaring the battered woman to be sado-masochistic. This theoretical approach, which places the blame quite openly on the victims themselves, was developed in the 1960's. In the 70's, when the extent of the problem of wife beating became more widely known, the reasoning of psychiatrists' writings on the subject became more subtle, taking objective problems and forms of male pathology in the husbands into account in varying degrees. But the concentration on the personal characteristics of the wife, which

in effect placed the blame for incidents of battery on her, remained the focus of their analysis. Another methodological problem of this research is that its results are drawn from very small samples⁷ and these are additionally biased since they consist of inmates of prisons and mental health institutions or of psychiatrists' patients. Schultz' study of 1960⁸ is based on the analysis of the marriage of four men who were charged with attempting to kill their wives. The men are described as passive and submissive and as dependent on their wives--men who became violent when their need for support was frustrated. The premise upon which Schultz based his conclusions is that

"the victim in spouse assaults can always be assumed to have played a crucial role in the offense, and may have directly or indirectly brought about or precipitated their own victimization."

Snell, Rosenwald and Robey¹⁰ come to a similar conclusion in their study of 12 women in 1964. The women had charged their husbands with battery after years of suffering. Snell and his colleagues do not hesitate to justify all violence on the part of the husband by blaming the victim and declaring the wife responsible as a result of her supposed aggressive and masculine personality structure.

In 1974 Faulk¹¹ studied 23 men who were serving prison sentences for severely assaulting their wives, the charges ranging from malicious wounding to murder. Although Faulk is studying the husbands, he makes strong assumptions about

the marriage relationships and the wives. Differentiating more than Schultz and Snell, et al., Faulk analyzes types of relationships, but he still explains the dangerous and life-threatening violent behavior of more than half of the men as the result of either a mental problem or a problem in the marriage relationship for which the wife is primarily responsible.

In his 1977 study Lion¹² concludes from three cases that "the victim plays a crucial role".¹³ A marriage in which the wife gets battered is seen as a system of 'hostile dependencies' of two pathological partners. Battering is seen as a consequence of a relationship between a strong woman who holds great power over her husband and a man who thereby has been made dependent on her. The wife evokes the violence in her husband by unconsciously repeating her own childhood experiences with violent and alcoholic parents.¹⁴ By precipitating violence, the woman seeks masochistic comfort within the framework of her personal pathology.

The studies of Gayford from 1975 and 1976¹⁵ stand apart from the chronological order of the psychiatric studies because he interviewed the women only and did not overtly argue that the women are masochistic. However, his work has been widely criticized by the feminist shelter movement for its negative bias against the women and by researchers in the field for methodological shortcomings.¹⁶ In 1975 Gayford interviewed 100 women in the Chiswick

shelter. Although, in contrast to the other researchers mentioned, he rejected the characterisation of the battered women as masochistic, he still blames the victims in his earlier research--at first cautiously, and later on openly--as violence-prone women.¹⁷

In contrast to the above, male literature, the psychiatric analysis of wife beating as a phenomenon due to masochistic or other pathological needs of the women in question has been strongly rejected by women psychologists.

Waites¹⁸ shows that women live under special restrictions and also are often granted positive rewards for suffering and for living for their families rather than for themselves. Women have to cope with external barriers such as immobilization, inhibitions and a lack of assertiveness--all of which are part of the female role in our society.

Horney¹⁹ notes how women in general are pushed into masochistic behavior by their subordinate role, by the ideal which promises female fulfillment through this role and by the reinforcement of this sort of behavior through the fact that it improves women's chances of finding a husband.

"...in our culture it is hard to see how any woman can escape becoming masochistic to some degree, from the effects of culture alone..."²⁰

A. Symonds²¹ raises an interesting point in explaining the woman's situation in a violent marriage. Instead of looking at the violence in psychodynamic terms, she looks at it in

criminal terms and compares the woman's reactions to the battering with similar reactions of victims of crime or catastrophic events.

Although the psychiatrists do make some interesting points, their presentation of the problem as one of individual pathologies independent of societal conditions gives their reasoning misleading connotations. The concept of sado-masochistic personality structure is valuable in the right context. Adorno and his colleagues²² analyzed this kind of psychic dynamics as typical of the authoritarian personality which still plays an important role in shaping society and family structures.

3. Wife beating as a functional consequence of a violent society

Sociologists working on the problem of wife beating reject the explanation of violence as a form of personal deviance. Researchers like Straus, Gelles, Steinmetz and others approach the phenomenon on the basis of a social-structural analysis in the tradition of American family sociology. They formulated a social-structural theory of violence, also called the "violent culture theory". In their early work these researchers concentrated on formulating a general systems theory of violence²³ in which they see the family as the "cradle of violence".²⁴ In their later work, having been influenced by the feminist shelter

movement, they try to take the "sexist organization of society"²⁵ into account. However, their main goal remains the formulation of a structural-functionalist theory of family violence formalized in schemes of boxes and diagrams.²⁶ Their theory is based on the assumption that almost all acts of family violence are committed by "normal people". Violence is learned behavior and part of the socialization process of most children. Interestingly, the authors refer to the child's learning process as "he will learn to be violent" (underlining mine),²⁷ without acknowledging the gender-specific character of the process through which violent behavior is learned. Straus and his colleagues regard the family as the most violent civil institution in American society, an institution in which the marriage license becomes a hitting license²⁸ and where violence is as common as love.²⁹ Since the authors see the husband-wife interaction as structured by society and transmitted to the individual through a process of social learning, they focus on the causation of family violence by the societal structure and its cultural and social organisation. The family is a social system which is structured by a dual conflicting set of values: on the one hand love and happiness, and on the other legitimized conflict and violence.

Violent families in our society are produced through a violent socialization experience, transmitted through "a carry over from one sphere of life to another".³⁰ Most significant in this process is the primary exposure to violence

in a context that teaches children to associate love and violence. Violence becomes an integrated part of the child's "personality and world view".³¹ This heavy reliance by Straus and his colleagues on the socialization process to explain violence in the family produces what Klein³² calls an "ironic underside", in other words, a hidden individualism. Since the violent culture approach is so broad and general that it is incapable of analyzing a specific social context, Straus and his colleagues have to resort to personality traits to explain the violent event. Violence on the part of the husband is seen as an unavoidable reaction to frustration when other means of asserting dominance over the wife are lacking. "Violence will be evoked by a person who lacks other resources to serve as a basis for power".³³ The wife's putting up with violence is seen as a result of her socially produced negative self-image.

"...Feelings of guilt and masochism develop, which permit women to tolerate male aggression and violence and, in some extreme cases, to seek it."³⁴

On the basis of the theoretical approach discussed above, Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz³⁵ made a national, random sample survey on violence in the family, comprising over 2000 couples. In accordance with their theory, this research included violence between all family members. It was conducted in 1976 and published in 1980. Only the data bearing on their theoretical evaluation of wife beating will

be discussed here.³⁶ In accordance with their gender-unspecific approach to family violence, they found that in violent families (28%), almost as many wives (24%) were violent towards their husbands, as husbands (27%) were violent towards their wives in the duration of the marriage. 49% of these couples engaged in mutual violence.³⁷ Violence was defined in eight steps of severity, ranging from throwing something at one's spouse to hitting or trying to hit one's spouse with something to using a knife or gun.

In the survey year of 1975 11.6% of the wives and 12.1% of the husbands engaged in violent acts. The wives who were violent were so even more frequently than their husbands (10.3 times a year compared to 8.8, including the more severe forms of violence). The gender-specific nature of the different forms of violence is explained as due to differences in physical strength. Wives throw something twice as frequently as husbands, while husbands are more apt to push and beat their wives.³⁸ Straus' figures on spouse violence can be criticized because the researchers did not ask whether the act was committed in self-defense or as an act of aggression, nor did they ask what the effect of the violence was in terms of injury. Both factors influence the interpretation of the data, since men have more strength than women and are more experienced in fighting. It is necessary to differentiate between aggression and self-defense in order to understand who is the victim and who is the offender. Other definitions of violence lead to

opposing results. The U.S. Department of Justice³⁹ released figures in 1980 showing that within the category of single offender home assaults, in 95% of the cases of spouse violence the victims were women. Another study that questions the results of the Straus study was conducted by Dobash and Dobash⁴⁰ in Scotland in 1974. This difference in the evidence on wife beating is explained by Stark, Flitcraft, and Frazier as:

"It reflects two quite different experiences: The private nature of family fights (in which women may clearly be as aggressive as men), and the social character of battering created when male aggression in the home is given implicit or explicit support from "outside". The broad enforcement of female subjugation distinguishes battering from fighting, causes women to show up⁴¹ at helping sites far more frequently than men..."⁴¹

4. Wife beating as a part of patriarchy: A socialist-feminist analysis

The socialist-feminist approach to wife beating sees society as based on male dominance in the form of patriarchy and on private property in the form of capitalism. Wife beating is seen as part of a general subordination of women, which includes various forms of violence against women. It is the only approach that takes the history of wife beating systematically into account, thereby demonstrating that wife beating is neither a form of individual pathology nor merely a form of family violence, but has been a structurally legitimized part of our misogynistic society for many centuries.

A theoretical analysis of wife beating must include the historical conditions under which wife beating occurs and how society deals with it.

Wife beating in today's Western societies is seen as a result of a growing contradiction between patriarchy and capitalism by authors like McGrath and Stark, Flitcraft and Frazier.⁴² Capitalism requires the male-dominated family system to assure the reproduction of labor power; it also requires women as free laborers in the market. The public attention given to the fact of wife beating today is seen as evidence of a crisis in patriarchal capitalism, as a faltering of a once "mutually sustaining relationship between capitalism and traditional patriarchal institutions"⁴³. This historically new contradiction is due, on the one hand, to recent changes in capitalist production and, on the other, to women's rights activities within the context of the increasing integration of women in the labor force, extensions of women's rights, growing chances for women to receive a higher education, and the liberation of women from the unpredictable "fate" of childbearing. Under these circumstances, female subordination within the family has, more than ever, to be insured by outside intervention.⁴⁴ The growing participation in, and control over, the process of reproduction by increasingly professionalized and expanding government agencies is evidence of this process.⁴⁵ These state or state approved institutions aid male dominance in so far as they make it difficult for the battered woman to

leave the family situation. The cumulative effect of ineffective social services, low wages, and the difficult housing situation is to produce battered women who want to leave but are forced to stay.⁴⁶ Stark et al.⁴⁷ see battering as a social condition resulting from the attempt to reconsolidate patriarchal male power with state help. This indirect support of male violence through state agencies by keeping the woman dependent on marriage is what makes battering a product of social forces. This is what makes battering different from other forms of family violence. Only under these conditions does the battered woman become a helpless victim.

This structural inequality between men and women which is the basis of the marriage concept, and which leads to built-in possibilities of violence, is the starting point for the research and theories by Dobash and Dobash.⁴⁸

"The life of a wife and mother bears little or no resemblance to that of a husband and father in terms of individual identity and status, marital authority, domestic responsibility, individual mobility, independent action and moral obligations to the household and family members."⁴⁹

A man adds a new sphere to his life by marrying whereas a woman loses all independent spheres. She becomes obliged to see the world interpreted through and represented by her husband, while he is free to move in both worlds, at home and in society as a whole.

A wife has to negotiate with her husband in the

framework of the marital hierarchy. She enters these negotiations from a structurally inferior position, thus putting herself principally at his mercy. This imbalance makes the wife vulnerable whether the individual husband takes advantage of this unequal distribution of power or not. Although these negotiations take place inside the family, the situation is highly prestructured by the societally prescribed role structure, the different economic and social situations of husband and wife.

5. Wife beating as learned behavior: A feminist-behavioristic approach

Two American feminist authors, Lenore Walker and Mildred Pagelow, concentrate their analysis of wife beating on longterm battering relationships. Whereas Walker mainly focuses on the behavior of the battered wives, Pagelow takes the learned role behavior of both wives and husbands into account. Since the two authors base their research and theories on social learning theory, they come to similar conclusions as to why some women stay in battering relationships. Walker calls the attitude of battered women "learned helplessness"; Pagelow sees traditional ideology as the main factor in preventing women from leaving such relationships. Both authors base their analysis on their own research with battered women.⁵⁰

Walker⁵¹ developed two theoretical paradigms which are the core of her theoretical approach: one, learned

helplessness and two, the cycle of violence. She considers them to be the "psychological rationale" of women who become victims of battering. Walker applies three basic components of the theory of helplessness to the victimization process of battering in the following manner. First, the woman becomes passive through repeated battering. Next, her cognitive ability to perceive the success of her actions undergoes a gradual change. Finally, this change leads to a general perception of helplessness: the woman feels incapable of influencing her own life, which makes her prone to aggression and to anxiety. Walker then puts these components in the societal context of the specific situation of married women, who are seen as being in a situation of economic and social powerlessness and physical inferiority.

The cycle theory of violence is Walker's⁵² second theoretical paradigm in explaining why women become victimized by being battered. The cycle consists of three phases: tension building, acute battering, kindness and loving behavior. The first phase consists of rising tensions where the woman still has some control over the situation and tries to prevent an outbreak of violence by conforming to her husband's needs as far as possible. The passive acceptance of his will makes the husband feel legitimated in his behavior but also makes him doubt her willingness to stay with him, which creates a fear of loss that adds to his oppressive actions. Phase two is marked by the husband's loss of control over his own behavior and his outright

violence. The wife often feels this phase to be inevitable, which creates a period of terror and anxiety before the incident. In this frame of mind she might consciously or unconsciously do something to trigger her husband's explosion in order to get it over with and to make the situation more predictable and more controllable. The last phase is marked by the husband's loving behavior as he tries to make it up to his wife. This change of behavior from violence into caring completes the cycle of victimization for the wife because she can feel loved again.

In evaluating her own data, Walker does not apply her cycle theory systematically since she never follows the life stories of the interviewed women through any cycles. She only illustrates her point with situational examples. Especially her last phase, which consists of the husband's loving behavior, is not confirmed by other researchers' interviews with battered women.⁵³

Pagelow's⁵⁴ theoretical explanation of wife beating is organized in three steps. The first is causation. She points out the importance of the socio-historical foundation of the family and although she sees traditional ideology derived from patriarchy and the hierarchal structure of society as the primary cause of wife battering, her approach is still unhistorical and uncritical.

Pagelow's distinction between primary and secondary battering -- Steps Two and Three -- is very useful in

considering relationships in which the beating is terminated after the first incidence, either by the woman's leaving or by her being able to stop the battering. In Pagelow's terminology this is called primary battering. According to Pagelow, the most important variable in this construct is traditional ideology, which stresses that men have to have control over their families. The next factor explaining primary battering is the "investment factor guiding behavior", which means that a woman has been taught to value her marriage highly and to assume responsibility for its functioning. The perfect conditions for battering are then formulated in proposition III.

"The more one actor is inculcated to respond to stressful situations by battering, and the greater the willingness to invest in conjugal relationships of another actor, and the more the traditional ideology of both, the more likely battering will occur."⁵⁵

If the woman maintains the relationship after the first beating, then the beating will increase and become more severe, because it is not punished.

The three variables which describe secondary battering, step three in Pagelow's theory, are: resources, institutional response, and traditional ideology. Pagelow's first variable --resources-- includes material goods, capabilities, physical features and a pool of human actors. The second variable -- institutional response -- includes support and assistance available to the battered woman as well

as pressures put on her to stay. By and large, the social institutions and the helping professions work to keep the family together: counselors, law officers and indirectly the medical system. The third variable -- traditional ideology -- is a set of attitudes and behaviors that limit the options for a battered woman. Thus, divorce becomes unthinkable when she believes in life-long marriage, a view often supported by her religious feelings, or her self-esteem might be tied to being a married woman or single parenthood might seem beyond her reach and abilities.

6. The transformation of "wife beating" into "domestic violence" through science and government policies

In less than ten years of scrutiny, the issue of wife beating has changed from a neglected social and scientific problem into a funded and popular field of research and government programs. This "success" of the issue and its wide societal recognition was achieved at a price: the involvement of the social sciences and the state resulted in the transformation of the problem of wife beating on a theoretical as well as on a practical level. The focus of the issue shifted from a societal critique of the subordinate situation of women, especially in their role as wives, to an individualized problem of specifiable families that has to be dealt with through domestic aids. Wife beating became "spouse abuse" and "domestic violence". To fit the issue into the framework of positivistic and

quantitatively-oriented research and functionalist theory it had to be redefined as a problem in which one or a few distinct variables could be measured and held responsible for the problem. The rationale behind this specific form of organisation of the social sciences and the reason for its state support is demonstrated by Patricia Morgan's analysis:

"These narrow theories enjoy support because they are easy to understand, they are created with built-in solutions and programs, and they turn away from larger, more uncomfortable questions of power, structural inequality, social inequality, social control and the shifting values and norms which permeate contemporary society."⁵⁶

In accordance with these preferences, the research which got the main share of government funding⁵⁷ -- provided in the U.S., for example, by the major funding institutions of the federal Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the National Institute of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (NIAA) -- concentrated on wife beating either as a subcategory of family violence or on personal deviances.

Research and government policy not only shaped the new perception of the problem of wife beating but also had a strong impact on the aid available to battered women. Whereas the women's movement emphasized the self-help aspect of women helping women, government programs and the helping professions emphasize the client status of the battered women.

"As the image shifted from wife battery to 'family violence', the analysis of gender domination was subsumed under violent culture. Priorities shifted to treatment and services for the family. The battered wife became a domestic program client."⁵⁸

The result of the transformation of the problem of battered women into the problem of domestic violence is the individualization of a gender problem into a problem of deviant families, releasing society from its responsibilities. The means to achieve this transformation were provided by the joint effort of the social sciences and the state.

II. The meaning of facts and figures concerning battered women: the uses and limitations of empirical research

1. Uses and limitations of empirical data on battered women

The growing interest of the social sciences in wife beating, especially in the U.S., led to a growing number of empirical research projects on the subject. The data now available show the extent and the seriousness of the problem, making clear the dependency of the married woman on her husband and her lack of control over her life. However, it is difficult to try to gain a coherent picture of wife beating even in one country -- in this case mainly the U.S. -- from these data because of the limited comparability of the studies in question. The results of the studies vary widely, depending on their theoretical approaches, the intentions of the researchers, the size and mode of selection of their samples, the instruments used in them, and

their definition of the problem. However, the likelihood of misinterpreting the data becomes smaller, if these approaches and intentions are kept in mind.

To show the importance of approach in studies of battered and non-battered women, three studies will be presented. Some of the above-mentioned difficulties will then be discussed as examples of the problems involved in interpreting facts and figures concerning wife beating.

Barbara Star¹ compared 48 battered to 12 non-battered women, all of whom volunteered to take part in the study. All the women were staying at a women's refuge at the time of the study. The refuge worked mainly on family alcohol problems, so most of the women's husbands were alcoholics; all lived on low incomes. Star collected information through interviews and two psychological tests, one on hostility and guilt and one on personality traits. It is doubtful whether two personality tests are sufficient instruments to understand and evaluate a human being; a major criticism of psychological tests like these² is that they do not yield data on personality structures or actual behavior, but mainly produce information about conscious and often normative views of oneself.

In spite of these limitations, it is interesting to observe the similarities and differences which showed themselves between the battered and non-battered women. The fathers of the battered women in the study tended to be

relatively better educated, but the women themselves had a comparatively low level of education. The majority of the battered women had not experienced or witnessed violence as children, whereas there was a greater tendency of non-battered women to have alcoholic or violent families of origin. These findings are contrary to those of other researchers. Nonabusing men more often had alcoholic parents and they themselves were heavier drinkers than the violent men. Abusing men came from abusing family backgrounds more often; this means abusing men rather than abused women tended to have a violent socialization. The result of the hostility scale measurements showed that battered women showed fewer angry feelings and submitted more often, whereas non-battered women scored higher on oppositional negative behavior. The personality trait scale showed that both groups of women had low ego strength, but non-battered women scored lowest. Battered women were more reserved, rigid and distrustful but less jealous and suspicious. Both groups scored high on insecurity, tension, frustration and anxiety. Star summarizes her findings by concluding that battered women tend to be passive and feel unable to effect change -- a situation that might be a result of the battering rather than a precondition of it.

Irene Hanson Frieze and her colleagues³ compared 137 battered women (identified through shelters, through a legal aid agency working on matters of family violence and through posted notices) to 137 randomly selected non-battered women

living in comparable neighborhoods. The researchers were interested in comparing various types of battered women, both with each other and with non-battered women. Through interviews and the application of a scale of violent actions and violent hurt, they formed three groups of women out of the total sample: 88 women who had experienced no violence; 87 women who had experienced mild violence, defined by the means used and the degree of injury; and 97 women who had experienced severe violence. Forty eight of the women (34%) of the control group had experienced some violence. The initial question of the researchers was to ask whether battered women were in fact as traditional and passive as they were often described in the literature. The demographic data collected showed that non-battered women married later and dated their future husbands longer. The income levels were about the same for all three groups. The more violent the husbands were, the more alcohol they drank. Non-violent marriages tended to be more religious, a fact that was especially true of the husbands. In measuring the degree of traditionality of the women, the researchers found: first, that severely battered women had more children, but mildly and non-battered women had equal numbers, second that both battered groups mentioned more parent-related traits as ideal traits for husbands and wives, whereas non-battered women saw their husbands as being the most androgenous and severely battered women most often found the abstract notion of being a good husband important without mentioning more

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specific traits for men related to being a good husband. The differences in degrees of traditionality were small, though, the largest being the stronger adherence to the norm of being a good mother mentioned by both battered groups.

mentioned by both battered groups. Overall, battered women were not significantly different from non-battered women regarding traditionality. Other findings were related to the socialization process. Severely battering men were most likely to come from violent family backgrounds -- a fact that was also true of both groups of battered women but less strongly. In general, however, there was not a strong link between violent family background and severely battering men.

Concerning the women, the group of mildly battered women showed the greatest differences with respect to the other groups: they had the most spending money, were away from home the most time, seemed to be more assertive in fighting back, enjoyed sexual relationships the most and were less religious; they were also the most violent towards their children and blamed themselves the most for being beaten. All the husbands in the sample were more powerful than their wives in their marriage relationships, but most women attempted to fight back. The non-violent couples spent more time together, were happier and more affectionate towards each other. The severely battered women found sex the least pleasant and were most likely to be raped by their husbands, and both spouses in this group were the most

jealous.

Barbara Parker and Dale Schumacher⁴ did a survey of 50 women who had applied for legal assistance, 20 of whom were battered. Demographic data for the battered and the non-battered women were similar. The researchers also collected data concerning two sets of phenomena. First, they looked at the family of origin and found that there was a significant probability that a woman whose mother had been beaten would marry a battering man. But there was no significant relationship between her marrying a battering man and her having been abused as a child. Second, they looked at 13 women of the 20 counted as non-battered (battering was defined as the occurrence of at least three incidents) who managed to end battering after the first incidence by leaving, seeking intervention or warning the husband effectively. In these women's families of origin significantly less violence was found.

In evaluating and comparing these three studies, it is interesting to note how many are the possible ways of forming subgroups and how the choices influence the research results. The studies show that there are various types of battered and non-battered groups among women, depending on one's sample and one's indices for subgroups. In spite of the differing results, all of the studies indicate, first, that women with comparable demographic data can be both battered or non-battered, and, second, that differences in the

characteristics of battered and non-battered women seem to depend greatly on the specific control group available and in any case do not seem to be clear cut. The most controversial results are those pertaining to childhood experiences, to the extent of the link between male violence and drinking behavior and to the question of whether or not battered women are more passive or traditional than non-battered women.

The interpreter of these studies feels somewhat helpless in the face of these various approaches and results, not knowing whether the differences in the data stem from differences in the samples and methods, or from real life diversities. The diversity in the results is in and of itself an important phenomenon since it seems to suggest that there are no clear cut circumstances or characteristics concerning wife beating. Just looking at battered women leads to artificial results in so far as wife beating is not an isolated phenomenon and cannot be explained as such, but is rather something inherent in the patriarchal marriage system which is based on male superiority and gives a man written and unwritten rights over his wife.

2. The extent of wife beating

This part will discuss the most common definitions of wife beating, collect some general figures on the extent of wife beating, the extent of fatalities, and finally relate the incidents of wife beating according to class and race.

The term wife beating or wife battering is used in slightly to widely differing ways: definitions range from very broad to very specific. For example:

"A battered woman is a woman who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical or psychological behavior by a man in order to coerce her to do something he wants her to do without any concern for her rights. (...) Any woman may find herself in an abusive relationship with a man once. If it occurs a second time, and she remains in the situation, she is defined as a battered woman."
(Walker)⁵

Other authors include the social context of the event in their definition.

"...the social character of battery created when male aggression in the home is given implicit or explicit support from "outside". The broad enforcement of female subjugation distinguishes battering from fighting..." (Stark, Flitcraft and Frazier)⁶

Depending on which of these definitions of wife beating is followed and on the source used, there are different figures and estimates available for the numbers of battered wives. The major national study for the U.S. is the one discussed with respect to its theoretical approach in section I by Straus and his colleagues.⁷ They estimate that 28% of all marriages are violent at some point, and that 3.8% of all wives are severely beaten by their husbands each year (in other words there are 1.8 million beaten wives per year). Stark et al.⁸ argue that the numbers of battered women who are divorced or separated must be added to these

1.8 million wives currently married to their batterers, estimating that the figure then would rise to 3 to 4 million battered women per year.

Dobash and Dobash⁹ reviewed the literature on wife beating in Britain and also conducted their own research. Over 30% of all police records on violent offences in England and Wales in the year 1950 and the year 1960 were cases of domestic violence, and 90% of these involved violence on the part of husbands against wives. Another study revealed that 90% of the 1500 divorce cases in Southern England involved women who had been beaten. Studying the police records of 2 Scottish cities, the researchers found that the second most frequent violent offence (26%) was husbands beating their wives.

Sarah Haffner's¹⁰ conservative estimate for Germany is 1 million beaten women. Another indication of the widespread existence of wife beating is the fact that in all countries where women set up shelters for battered wives, they are always overcrowded, so that women frequently have to be turned away.¹¹

The question of whether wife beating is linked to class or race is difficult to answer, because the figures available yield conflicting answers. Struas and his colleagues¹² argue that income and full-time employment are two of the most influential factors important in determining family violence, whereas race is one of the less influential

factors. According to their study, the incidence of spouse violence is twice as high among blue-collar couples as it is among white-collar couples, and unemployed men are twice as likely to beat their wives as men employed full-time. Taking education into account, husbands who graduated from high school are more violent than grammar school drop-outs and college educated men. An English study¹³ on cruelty as a reason for divorce shows a higher incidence of violence in the working class. A study by Lystad¹⁴ agrees with Straus et al. that race per se is less of a factor in predicting family violence than class. Other studies,¹⁵ though, suggest a rather even class distribution of wife beating. A study¹⁶ of 350 battered women in California showed that all classes were equally represented and that the education of the battered wives and the battering husband went up to doctoral degrees.

One reason for the difficulty in interpreting class-linked figures on wife beating may be the fact that wife beating is more visible in the working class because of the more public living conditions, greater frequency of police intervention and greater surveillance by social agencies. So, although there is no clear evidence available, Dorie Klein's assumption on class seems sensible.

"Although research on the relationship of class to battering is inconclusive, it would not be unexpected if many of those men with the fewest coping resources and fewest outlets for socially approved force should batter more. Nor would it be surprising if many of those women with the fewest

resources and alternatives should more frequently remain in abusive situations."¹⁷

Wife beating as a serious social problem is not only demonstrated by the numbers of incidents but also by the frighteningly high rate of deaths involved. In 1973, according to FBI statistics¹⁸ one quarter of all murders were committed within families and half of these were husband-wife killings. Whereas wives are the victims of assault in the vast majority of the cases, wives killed their husbands in the same year almost as often (48%) as husbands killed their wives (52%). But the murders committed by wives were 7 times more likely to be in self-defense.

3. The circumstances of wife beating

In this part the data on the immediate circumstances of the violent situation will be summarized in an attempt to answer the question of where and when a wife gets beaten, how the violence develops over time, how and why it might continue after a separation, and for what reasons a wife gets beaten. This approach to wife beating, i.e., examining the immediate circumstances, has to be treated cautiously, though, because it artificially creates an event with a definite beginning and end.

"To assume that a violent episode can be easily encapsulated in time and space ignores the enduring aspects of relationships that contribute to verbal confrontations and physical violence. Violent episodes occur in the context of the ongoing marital relationship and such episodes are

inextricably bound up with the day-to-day activities of the men and women, who live together."
(Dobash and Dobash)¹⁹

The two studies by Gelles and Dobash and Dobash mentioning the spatial location of the beating agree on the most important finding, that the typical place for the violence to happen is in the confinement of the home. Gelles sees the reason for this in the fact that usually no witnesses are around and argues further:

"Protected by the privacy of one's own walls, there is no need to maintain the presentation of family life as harmonious, loving and conflict-free."²⁰

The two studies do not agree on the details of the location inside the house. Gelles²¹ links the location of the outbreak around the kitchen table every day subjects cause the outbreak, in the living room the problems are centered around the alternative of TV watching or talking and in the bedroom around intimacy. These links are questioned by Dobash and Dobash, who argue that violence might happen in all rooms with no direct relationship between the type of argument and the room.

The question of when a violent act takes place can be answered in terms of the time during the day and the day of the week. All studies that include data on this topic agree with only slight variations that the most typical time of day is the evening or night and the most typical time during

the week is on weekends, especially Fridays and Saturdays. However, one has to keep in mind that most studies²² mention quite a number of cases where time (and location for that matter) do not make a difference.

Time is also a factor in wife beating in another sense: the length of the relationship. When does a woman get beaten for the first time, how long does the violent act last, how often does she get beaten, how long does a violent relationship last, and how does the length of the marriage influence the violence? The first beating often is treated as an exception and an isolated event by battered women and in most cases the husband apologizes. Dobash and Dobash give an example of this:

"I did his breakfast in a hurry, and he complained about the grease on the plate and I probably told him I hadn't time this morning... I think he said he wasn't a pig, he couldn't eat that, and he threw the plate at me. I think I picked up mine and threw mine at him. Then when it hit him, you see, I hurt his feelings more than anything else and he couldn't keep his hands off me... He couldn't bear it and he hit me... He grabbed my arm and pulled my hair. (...) I just ran down the road till I got myself back together and by that time he had calmed down and had come down the road, said he was sorry, and of course all was forgiven..."²³

In some cases the first beating²⁴ takes place before the marriage (in the Dobashes' study in 23% of all cases, according to Rounsaville in 28%) but then the women hope it will stop after marriage and they tend to ignore it at the time, because, for various reasons including pregnancy, they

feel pressure to get married. The majority of the women get beaten for the first time a short time after marriage. This first beating usually is not severe.

For 75% of the women in the Dobashes' study, the actual beating lasted thirty minutes or less, but for 25% it lasted as long as from 45 minutes to over 5 hours. They give two examples of what this means.

"Those carry-ons could last from eleven o'clock at night until about two or three in the morning, depending on when he got to sleep. It lasted the whole time when he was awake. He could be sleeping in half an hour, but it could maybe take him four hours."

"Oh, it was over, the actual battering, it was over in minutes you know. But it was this harassing and having a bit punch at my head, while he was hauling me on my hair, and this could last for a couple of hours ... while his hand was around my throat. And he just sat and told me all what I was from the year I was born. The same old thing every week, every week."²⁵

How often a woman was beaten varied widely, from once in the marriage to every day in most samples, and the samples differed widely as to the frequency of beatings. Samples taken from shelters tended to show a higher rate of violence and greater brutality.

Since some of the marriages exist over a long time, the pattern of violence undergoes changes. Researchers²⁶ found that battering relationships can last for over ten or twenty years. Many researchers²⁷ agree that in the course of time the violence tends to increase in many marriages, because

the husband loses his initial inhibitions, starts to feel safe and sees his behavior increasingly within his right. In the meantime, the wife feels more and more deeply trapped in the marriage, loses her self-esteem and increasingly doubts her ability to act for herself and on her own. Increasing hopelessness about the termination of the beatings and fear of the consequences of both staying and of leaving become part of the woman's life.

Even when a woman finally manages to leave a violent marriage it does not necessarily mean the end of her husband's brutality.²⁸ Since he feels he owns his wife and feels dependent on her, he might follow her, threaten and continue to beat her, possibly even more savagely, in some cases for several years.

The data on why a woman gets beaten with respect to the immediately preceding situation differ in the various studies. Also, the significance of the preceding situation in explaining the beating is evaluated differently by the researchers on the subject. Del Martin argues in her paragraph on "what triggers the batterer?":

"In my own conversation with battered women, I have discovered that however a batterer may rationalize his actions to himself, those actions never seem warranted by the actual triggering event. For example one woman told me she was beaten unmercifully for breaking the egg yolk while cooking her husband's breakfast. Another said her husband blew up because at their child's birthday party she instructed the youngster to give the first piece of cake to a guest, not to him. Another wife was battered because her

husband's driver's license was suspended. (...) Some women report that they just don't know what triggers their husband's violent outbursts. Husbands have been known to come home and just start flailing away. Several women told me that their husbands started beating them as they lay asleep in bed."²⁹

Strauss et al. ³⁰ found that there are five sources which cause the most disagreements between husband and wife. In order of their relative importance they are: housekeeping, sex, social activities, money and children. However, of these issues the one that most frequently led to all forms and degrees of violence was the conflict over children.

Maria Roy's³¹ findings on sources of conflict in her study of a random sample of 150 women out of a population of 1000 women seeking help from a New York women's agency for abused women in crisis are somewhat different, probably due in part to the fact that she used a different questionnaire. She found the greatest source of conflict in arguments over money, closely followed by husband's jealousy and sexual problems. The next most often mentioned problem was the husband's jealousy and sexual problems. The next most often mentioned problem was the husband's use of alcohol or drugs as a precipitant to violence, followed by disputes over children, the husband's unemployment, the wife's desire to work outside the home and the wife's pregnancy, all of which were mentioned about equally often.

Dobash and Dobash³² try to link their findings on the immediate causes of wife beating to structural components of

male-dominated marriages. According to their findings, most incidents of wife beating are preceded by verbal arguments, in which one of the spouses makes demands or complaints. The most common topics are: the husband's jealousy, the domestic duties of the wife and the allocation of money. These topics are also the major conflict areas throughout the marriage, with the husband's jealousy mentioned by 44% of the women, homemaking and money by 16% each.

To understand outbreaks of violence in marriage it seems necessary to differentiate between the immediate cause and the deeper conflicts behind it by analysing the meaning of the triggering situation in the dynamic of the marriage, both on the level of the relationship structure and in terms of the patriarchal structure which grants the husband rights over his wife, putting her fundamentally at his mercy.

4. Wife beating in relation to pregnancy, alcohol, isolation, and jealousy

Whereas the last section dealt with the more general circumstances of wife beating, this section will discuss four specific aspects of wife beating which are mentioned in the majority of the studies: the role of pregnancy, the influence of alcohol and drugs, the tendency to keep the woman in isolation and the husband's jealousy.

Many studies have found that pregnant women get beaten by their husbands. Boyd and Klingbeil³³ in their study of

300 battered women reported that for many women the first pregnancy led to the first beating and "nearly all women having children reported that violent incidents were more frequent throughout their pregnancy".³⁴ The reason many women gave for the beatings during pregnancy was their husbands' unfounded suspicions that they were not the fathers of the children. Many women also reported they thought miscarriages they had had were due to their husbands' beatings.

These findings were supported by Walker's study of 100 battered women and Hilberman and Munson's study³⁵ of 60 battered women. Both report increasing violence during pregnancy in many marriages, causing abortions, premature births and deformations. They also both state that the aim of the blows was shifted from other areas of the body to the pregnant woman's abdomen. Gelles³⁵ found in his study of 44 violent families that 10 women were beaten during pregnancy. Del Martin³⁷ added to these findings that the men who batter their pregnant wives often are the ones who also prevent their wives from taking the pill and reject birth control devices for themselves. A phenomenon Pizzey, as cited in Martin, explained as a result of the batterer's need to have control over his wife and to make her dependent on him.

While the findings on the relationship between pregnancy and beating are rather consistent, the findings on the link between alcohol and/or drugs and violence are contrad-

ictory. The most controversial points have to do with the questions of the percentage of cases of wife beating which occur when the husband is under the influence of alcohol, and even more importantly, the role alcohol plays in the violent event.

Boyd and Klingbeil³⁸ found in their study that the battered women interviewed reported frequent alcohol/drug abuse on the parts of their husbands. But most women stated that they were beaten whether their husbands were drunk at that time or not. Some women noted, though, that they were only beaten when their husbands were drunk. Kuhl³⁹ reported more detailed findings in her study on 22 battering men: seven men were never drunk while beating their wives, 7 men were drunk occasionally and 5 were drunk often to very often, thereby confirming the view that alcohol plays a role in violence but is not the primary cause. Menzies'⁴⁰ study of 35 women seeking refuge in a Canadian shelter reveals that 19 husbands were heavy drinkers. In Roy's study in 85% of the cases the more severe beating is done by men who had alcohol/drug problems. 80% of the occasional drinkers beat their wives only when they were drunk. But Roy also concludes:

"Husbands of this group [alcohol or drug abusers, M.B.] did not have to be drunk or on other drugs when committing a violent act; very often, the assaults came during sobriety or when the effects of hard drugs had worn off."⁴¹

Some studies contain a comparison of the use of alcohol or

drugs by both the victim and the offender, as well as a comparison with the cases in which abuse played no role. Martin⁴² cites a police study in West Harlem of 962 families whose calls were recorded in the police family crisis program. Only 26% of the complainants and 30% of the accused had been drinking alcohol. The police study estimates that alcohol was the primary cause of the conflict in only 14% of the total number of cases: otherwise it was seen as one of a number of factors playing a role in the triggering of the dispute. Rounsaville⁴³ found that 4 women out of her sample of 31 said they usually had drunk alcohol before being beaten and 9 women reported the same of their battering husbands which means that the majority of men and women involved were sober. Of 101 battered women interviewed by Carlson⁴⁴ 10% admitted abusing alcohol and 5% drugs. alcohol in his sample was a male crime except for one case of a woman. The wives themselves tended to see their husband's violence as a result of their drinking problems and often said that their husbands were not violent when they were sober. In 21 of the 44 violent families in this study, alcohol accompanied the violent events. In spite of the fact that many women blame the violence on the alcohol as part of the conventional wisdom that it reduces inhibitions, Gelles rejects the point of view that sees alcohol as a primary cause, because, as he points out, not all men who drink are violent, because there are families who are

violent without the presence of alcohol abuse, and because in some families where the husband drank, he beat his wife not only in situations where he had been drinking, but also when he was sober. Gelles sees alcohol as having two other functions: first, alcohol reduces the stigma attached to wife beating, that is, the husband is not so much a wife beater as an alcoholic; second, drinking makes the husband not responsible for his actions, it is an excuse to become violent and to be out of control of oneself. It is a socially accepted argument to say "I was so drunk I did not know what I was doing" or "I do not remember".

Another problem of wife beating that is mentioned over and over again is that the husband tries to keep his wife in isolation, to cut her off from the rest of the world, as a means of making her dependent on him, and of making her feel helpless and without options outside marriage. Boyd and Klingbeil⁴⁶ describe how all battered women of their sample are kept in a kind of confinement, which assumes many forms but includes the increasing loss of family and social contacts. It is interesting and sad to note that the women took the attentiveness of their husbands during courtship and early marriage -- at a time when the character of these confinements was of course more hidden -- as a sign of caring. These findings of increased isolation of the battered women as a result of their husbands' active prevention of social contacts are supported by Rounsaville.⁴⁷

Carlson⁴⁸ adds that another source of isolation is the fact that the women lose their friends' or relatives' support when they start feeling depleted. The extent of the isolation becomes visible in Menzies⁴⁹ study, where 74% of the women report that now that they are staying at the shelter, they have more friends than they used to while living with their husbands.

Dobash and Dobash⁵⁰ argue that the increasing isolation of the married woman far as women are encouraged to give up their own friends and to devote their time to their spouse, something which is not expected of married men to anywhere near the same extent. Walker⁵¹ reports on wives whose husbands' have high-powered jobs but who, themselves, have to ask permission for every social activity, which leads to humiliation, loss of individuality and social isolation on their part. These husbands insisted on deciding whom their wives could meet to make sure there was nobody except themselves who would influence her. The women themselves avoided inviting their own friends to their houses because of the unpredictable nature of their husbands, which included their becoming verbally abusive, in front of friends: he might be nice but he also might spoil every social situation. An example of how the behavior of the husbands affected these womens' lives is the following:

"I knew things were getting bad. The tension had been building up for the last two or three weeks. There were many more minor incidents. It was taking more and more effort for me to smooth them

over. I really began getting worried. My sister was getting married on Sunday, and I knew I'd die of embarrassment if George went to the wedding and was rude and obnoxious to my family.... His picking and picking just got on my nerves and I was worried about Sunday. How was I going to handle it? Did I have to cancel and not go myself? Should I go alone? All of the sudden George started screaming at me, his usual stuff. I couldn't stand it anymore and started screaming back at him. I knew he would explode..... I couldn't stand the tension. Besides, I knew that if George got the beating over with tonight, by Sunday he would be contrite and sorry. He would try to make it up to me by acting just as nice as he could in front of my family. That was really what was important that night, how to get George to go to my sister's wedding and make me proud."⁵²

The need of many batterers to keep their wives isolated seems to be closely linked to their widely reported jealousy, which was previously cited as one of the central issues leading to violent outbursts. Rounsaville⁵³ describes in his study how closely jealousy and keeping the woman in isolation are linked to each other; often each factor can be regarded as part of the other. 77% of the 31 women he interviewed rated their violent husbands as very possessive and their possessiveness as being the most frequent source of violence. Their husbands' behavior included calling many times a day from work to make sure the woman was at home and accompanying her on every errand. Hilberman and Munson⁵⁴ classified the husbands in 57 of the 60 marriages they studied as morbidly jealous, leading to a situation where the husbands monitored all activities of his wife: not allowing her to leave the house, not allowing friends in the house or scaring them away through his

behavior and not allowing her to work outside the house.

The statements of Dobash and Dobash⁵⁵ on the one hand and Walker⁵⁵ on the other are somewhat contradictory with respect to the importance of jealousy as a point of conflict in the duration of the marriage. While Dobash and Dobash report the highest incidence of violent events arising out of the husbands' jealousy before marriage and in early marriage, a circumstance which often lead the women to the false assumption that the men were serious about the relationship, Walker concludes that the degree of overwhelming jealousy increases in the course of the marriage. Husbands in her sample became more and more jealous of everybody the woman had contact with, be it the children or colleagues at work. This lead to a growing possessiveness on the part of the husband and his increasing intrusion into her life. Boyd and Klingbeil⁵⁶ describe the effect that the accusation of seductive behavior and infidelity has on many women. The women feel it necessary to spend a lot of energy in convincing their husbands of their fidelity, becoming very self-conscious about behaving in any way that he might interpret as trying to attract men. This includes which clothes a woman feels it is safe to wear, in which direction she turns her head, who she looks at and whom she talks to. These constraints fill her everyday life with subtle or open terror.⁵⁷

Martin⁵⁸ points out that our society enforces dif-

ferent standards of fidelity for men and women, making the wife a man's possession and permitting his jealousy and violent reaction. However, this social arrangement is also designed to make a woman feel important, and this it does very effectively. The violent man's reaction is not only brutal but also touching.

5. Wife beating and socialization experiences

The studies that will be summarized in this section deal with several points that are central to the issue: the socialization experience of the wife and that of the husband and how they compare, and the question of whether the spouses themselves were beaten as children or witnessed violence between their parents or both.

Gelles⁵⁹ concludes from his research that spouses who witnessed physical violence between their parents or were beaten themselves were more violent towards each other. Of 15 spouses who had observed such violence, 30% led violent marriages, and of 35 spouses who were hit frequently as children, 50% were violent. Of those who were never hit, 40% were violent, and of 37 who were infrequently hit, less than 20% were violent. Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz⁶⁰ support these findings. In their study, too, the most violent couples were those who were both beaten and had observed violence as children. Every 10th husband who had had a violent childhood became a wife beater, a rate 600 times higher than that of men with non-violent childhoods. In

both studies the researchers see their theoretical position affirmed, namely, the assumption that violent childhoods produce violent grown ups who accept and approve of violence.

These above studies leave important questions about wife beating unanswered, for they do not take battered women as a special category into account. In an essay on why battered women stay, Gelles⁶¹ does break his data down into gender specific figures and concludes that the more a woman has been struck as a child, the more she is inclined to stay with her battering husband. However, this finding is not confirmed by Pagelow's⁶² study, which shows that women who were treated very violently as children were more likely to leave shortly after the first abuse. Gelles and Pagelow are in agreement on one point concerning the question of why women stay: women who witnessed violence are slightly less tolerant of marital violence and slightly more likely to leave. Again, however, these results are contradicted by Parker et al.,⁶³ who found that women who had observed their mothers being beaten became battered women themselves significantly more often, whereas women who had observed no violence left significantly more often after the first beating.

Several studies⁶⁴ compare the childhood experiences of battering men and battered women. All agree, regardless of statistical differences, that violent husbands were more

often exposed to violence as children than battered wives. The influence of a violent home life for children's later development is definitely important, but theories of inter-generational cycles of violence do not seem very relevant for the majority of people, especially not in the case of women. The greater relatedness of the issue for male children could be due to the continual reinforcement of childhood experience by the kind of behavior which is later expected of men as men and by approved levels of male aggressiveness in society.

6. The woman's reaction to the beating

This section will deal with the battered woman's reaction to the violence in terms of her immediate response, how she experiences the beatings, her reasons for enduring it, and finally the long and difficult process of leaving.

Many women⁶⁵ first of all try to avoid the outbreak of violence by various means when they feel their husband's tension building. They try to stay calm, to reason, change the subject, withdraw, plead guilty to accusations even when they are unfounded, offer favors such as preparing a meal or even make sexual commitments. But often these attempts are either not successful at all or only for a short period. Between 1/3 and 1/2 of the women⁶⁶ defend themselves by fighting. This response only increases the husband's rage, in which case the women either stop defending themselves or they call others for help (informal or institutional

sources).

How the battered women experience the beating itself and how they feel afterwards changes in the course of the marriage. Dobash and Dobash⁶⁷ report that the first beating is dramatic and insignificant at the same time. Dramatic in so far as the women are surprised, shocked and hurt, and insignificant in so far as the first beating tends to be comparatively light and the women treat it as an exceptional event and forgive willingly, especially since the men feel guilty and promise not to do it again. Forty women (predominantly middle class) interviewed by Prescott and Lettko⁶⁸ described their reactions to the beatings they received during their marriages. 90% of them felt anger, 82% were fearful, 75% depressed, 60% felt trapped and 55% felt helpless. The violence resulted in weakening of the marriage relationship for 84%; 47% felt there was no possibility of discussing the violence with their husbands. 30% also reported feelings of humiliation; 26% felt guilty, due to their own shortcomings. The findings of Dobash and Dobash⁶⁹ study of predominantly working class women are similar: 65% of the women felt very upset, often felt angry and also ashamed, frightened and bitter. Often the women hoped that if they would try harder, become better wives and housekeepers, then the beating would stop. Their husbands typically expressed little or no remorse, acted as if nothing had happened, or blamed them. Rarely was it possible to discuss the violence, and the couple usually drifted back

together, although the woman felt dissatisfied. Hilberman and Munson⁷⁰ describe, in their study of 60 predominantly lower class heavily battered women, the psychological response to the battering. Since the study was done at a hospital, the women originally came to present their complaints, which clustered around somatic concerns (chronic symptomatology) marital problems (although battering itself was never mentioned) or mixed anxiety/depressive symptoms. In spite of these different complaints, all of the women were found to show a uniform psychological response to the battering: they reacted with paralyzing terror, and felt agitated and were anxiety-ridden to an extent bordering on panic. They had nightmares, were nervous and tense and always on the verge of panicking at loud noises, voices and other symbols of danger. They felt passive, fatigued and numb, unable to act on their own behalf and helpless. Also they all experienced a fear of loss of control, a fear that the researchers linked to their great passivity as measures taken by the women unconsciously to keep themselves from "exploding" - an interpretation based on evidence drawn from aggressive dreams and sometimes conscious fantasies about killing the batterer.

The reasons why women stay with a violent husband are numerous, and researchers utilize two basically different approaches in attempting to answer this question, either limiting the data to direct questioning or taking into account reasons on various analytical levels that determine

a woman's behavior.

Roy⁷¹ found two main reasons that women gave for staying: hoping that their husbands would change and having no place else to go. The belief in the improvement of the husband, in connection with the women's hope of being able to prevent the violence by improving themselves, was also reported by Boyd and Klingbeil.⁷² Rounsaville⁷³ describes the importance of the intermittent nature of the violence and the hopes attached to the nice and loving phases in marriage. Another main reason for the women to stay was that they felt needed by their husbands, for example, because they felt they had to make up for their husbands' bad childhood.

Walker⁷⁴ tries to reach deeper into the psychological reasoning behind staying in an abusive relationship. Walker analyzes the climate of fear that permeates these marriages. The realistic dimension of this fear is the husband's threatening behavior, that often extends to other family members when the wife tries to leave. But there is also another dimension of fear in which the battered woman tends to envision her husband as omnipotent, as being able to read her mind and predict all of her actions, making it necessary for her to be perfect as well as prohibiting all independent ideas of her own. Another reason to stay is the traditional belief in love and marriage and the moral obligation to keep the family together, especially for the sake of the chil-

dren. These values and beliefs add to her feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. She sees no chance to gain control over her life and virtually surrenders her identity, losing her self-esteem and hating herself for it. Many women saw their own death or the death of their husbands as the only way out of their violent marriages, and many were suicidal. Staying became a way of slow self-destruction. Another element of the fear of leaving was the horror of loneliness (a fear that most women saw as unrealistic after they dared to leave, because the loneliness in the marriage was far worse).

Martin⁷⁵ also mentions fear as a common denominator of battered women's reasons for staying, a fear that leads to the inability to take action, especially since the woman fears that her husband's violence might spill over to others who help her. Next, there are socially determined reasons, such as a woman's socialization which conditions her to see no alternative to life-long marriage, no matter what it is like for her, which leads to an inability on her part to influence her own life; this in turn leads to a loss of self-respect. Admitting the failure of the marriage is another disastrous alternative, because it means the woman has failed as a woman. Therefore, she has to believe the man will change, and she stays because he needs her and, more deeply, because she has learned she only is a woman if she takes care of a man. At yet another level, the woman's lack of money, no matter what her husband earns is a reason

to stay. But even if she has money of her own, if she lacks self-esteem and imagination she might not see herself as being able to live outside marriage.

No matter how violent a husband may be, the process of leaving is still difficult⁷⁶ because it means breaking away from a traditional woman's life and its safety, and it means dealing with failure of an ideal and fantasies one has believed in. For most battered women the question of leaving or staying is a problem they try to solve over a long period of time marked by indecision. Early in the relationship, the battered women might leave, with the intention of effecting changes in the relationship rather than leaving permanently. Usually the husband will apologize and promise to change. Later in the marriage she may return not because she believes things will be different but because she is put under external pressure or because she sees no alternative. According to Dobash and Dobash the decision to leave is made difficult by two factors: first, the fact that the husband is not always violent but also has positive traits, and, second, the enormous social and psychic difficulty involved in giving up the status of a wife. Another central issue involved in a woman's decision are her children. She often stays or returns in relation to what she feels would be better for the children. But also she often finally leaves when her husband's violence spills over to the children.

Leaving for the battered woman is a great relief, since

it is the end of her victimization and humiliation, but it also is a loss. A loss of her husband and her status, and a loss of a part of her life she may feel was wasted. Only one article, by Rita Weingourt⁷⁷ mentions the process of leaving as a loss that makes mourning necessary. The phase of grief is complex and difficult because it involves accepting the loss and the difficulties arising out of this step and, furthermore, it involves a change in her perception of herself, a change from seeing herself as a helpless victim to a painful realization that she allowed herself to become a victim and that now it is in her power to stop playing this role.

7. Wife beating and formal help agencies

This part will briefly summarize the data⁷⁸ on available forms of help and their limitations. Since these sources of help are social institutions, it is interesting in itself to look at how society is prepared to deal with wife beating.

Society provides two main sources of help for battered women: the legal system and the helping professions. The legal system itself can be broadly divided into three parts: the police, the courts and the law. The main complaints about the police with respect to the assistance they give to battered women are that they come late or not at all, do not make arrests in the vast majority of the cases or release the violent husband immediately, who then comes home in an

even more violent mood. The police in turn complain that the women often are reluctant to press charges,⁷⁹ the reasons being ignorance of their rights, fear of retaliation or ambivalent feelings. However, it is not infrequently the police who discourage the woman from pressing charges or refuse to take action. Although battering one's wife is a crime in most capitalistic western countries, battering men are rarely taken to court. Even less often are they found guilty, and if they are, they are charged with offences leading to light sentences. Instead, it is the women who are often intimidated by the entire court procedure. The options available in civil law, such as issuing restraining orders, are also of little use, since they are short-term in nature and offer no protection when the husband decides to take revenge.

The helping professions⁸⁰ also can be subdivided, into the social agencies and the medical system. Battered women are found to use the social services infrequently to solve their problems. If they do, they find them to be of little help for various reasons. First, the agencies lack resources, such as emergency housing, and cannot provide direct and immediate forms of social assistance which can be given without eligibility tests and similar time-consuming preconditions. Second, what Martin calls "the big run-around" is common, meaning the difficulty of finding the particular agency responsible for dealing with the particular problem. Often the women are referred from one agency

to another, since there is usually no one agency designed specifically to help battered women. Third, the philosophy of social work and counselling sees the problem of the battered woman as a marital conflict or an intrafamily disturbance. Traditionally, the aim of these services is to keep the family together and to concentrate on the well-being of the children, which is seen as best provided for in the intact nuclear family. The medical system is no more useful to the overall problem. The system is used frequently by battered women, as patients of hospital emergency rooms or of doctors in private practice,⁸¹ but the medical profession generally ignores the problem of wife beating, by not asking or not caring how the woman got injured so badly and simply dealing with the symptoms.

Some researchers⁸² found recent institutional changes favorable to the battered woman, such as growing general awareness of the seriousness of the problem of wife beating, crisis intervention projects, special police training programs and legislative reforms. However, the great majority of the institutions and professions concerned⁸³ still operate under male dominance and their main ideology and function is still to conserve the patriarchal family, albeit in an updated way. In other words, these institutions, having finally acknowledged the existence of the problem of wife beating, are now in the process of redefining it as part of a supposedly gender unspecific problem of "family violence".

8. The shelter movement: providing help for battered women

At the beginning of Part I the significance of the shelter movement for the rediscovery of the problem of wife beating was discussed; the last part of Part I dealt with the joint effort of social science research and government policies to direct the shelter movement away from a radical critique of patriarchal society and make it just one more social agency doing casework. In this section the importance of shelters for battered women and, in that context, the development of the shelter movement, will be looked at briefly -- too briefly, of course, to be able to do justice to the extreme importance of the shelter movement for battered women.

The shelter movement is the fastest growing grassroots movement in the U.S. and in some European countries. In spite of this growth, shelters in the U.S., Great Britain and Germany⁸⁴ frequently have to turn women away because of lack of space. According to a 1980 report,⁸⁵ there are 626 shelters in the U.S. In Great Britain⁸⁶ the National Women's Aid Federation operates 170 shelters and an equal number of support groups; in Germany⁸⁷ there exist 90 autonomous shelters or initiatives for shelters linked to the women's movement. Women interviewed in a Canadian shelter by Menzies⁸⁸ saw coming to the shelter as a good move for themselves (91%), as something that made them feel stronger (91%), gained them more friends (74%), and gave them new

ideas (63%). 71% reported that their children were doing better since coming to the shelter.

The international shelter movement⁸⁹ sees itself as part of the fight against the oppression of women. The principles according to which the shelters are organized and run are derived from the women's movement's goal of sisterhood. Since the women themselves are seen as the "experts" on their problems, an egalitarian structure, one without hierarchies but with collective responsibilities, is called for in the shelters. Although the experiments with this truly democratic structure are not always successful and run into problems on issues such as individual freedom vs. house rules, feminism vs. professionalization, self-help vs. state funding, clashes of life styles and burn-out of the women working in the shelters, these problems do not make the idea and the intention wrong, though they might make some realistic adjustments necessary. A much more serious threat to the goals of the shelter movement comes from state agencies, which are trying to co-opt the movement and force it to accept their organizational structure as well as their definition of the problem, a definition which sees in wife beating just another social problem caused by some violent families. Partial acceptance and fulfillment of the state's demands, in order to be able to negotiate for funding, seems to be the price which the movement must pay for its fast growth. This pressure of the state, together with the pressure of the internal strains within the shelters, is

producing a gradual change in the orientation of the movement; it is losing its character as a political feminist grassroots movement and becoming more and more of a semi-professional social-welfare type of agency. This possible change in the basic orientation and character of the movement is seen as a danger by many shelter activists. For the battered women seeking help in the shelters or using the crisis lines, such a change would be of vital importance, because it would mean that their problems would no longer be seen as a part of the overall problem of the oppression of women in society, but rather as a part of the crisis of the family, and this in turn would mean that the solution to their problems would no longer be seen in their liberation from that structural oppression, but rather in various forms of individual treatment.

III. Discussion of the theoretical and empirical approaches to the problems of wife beating

All of the approaches to the problem of wife beating that I have looked into, both those which I criticized and those which I drew upon to support my position, simultaneously made me question my own ideas and helped me to formulate my own approach. I found the "either - or" approach of most of the authors to be one of the limitations of the existing studies. Either they saw the cause of the problem very much on the level of personal behavior (especially true for the psychiatric literature) or else they disregarded

personal behavior almost entirely, characterizing consideration of the individual roots of wife beating as victim blaming (especially true for part of the societally oriented feminist literature). Although it is very difficult to link societal and individual levels of analysis when studying social problems such as wife beating, it is nonetheless necessary to at least concede the existence of this difficulty as an analytical problem in a dialectical sense.

Another limitation of part of the literature was that the theoretical basis used either did not take into account the unequal gender structure of society (this was especially true of the functional approach) or if it did, it did so by using a theory that in itself is shaped, in a bad sense, by masculine unempathetic values (this was especially true of the behavioristic approach; however, this had comparatively little adverse affect on the authors' analyses because their feminist convictions and their human sense of empathy were strong enough to make up for the deficiencies and limitations of the theory they employed).

The third limitation of the approaches discussed was the basic non-involvement of the researchers in their subject, in battered women. This neglected aspect would prompt one to ask oneself questions such as: what does the existence of battered women mean to me as a woman or a man, how does it relate to my own identity, how does it affect my image of women and men in general? It certainly would not

be appropriate at this stage in the development of theoretical approaches and research efforts to formulate this criticism as a new norm and a must,¹ but its complete lack in all the literature discussed astonished me all the more since it had become an important aspect of my own thinking and feeling while working on the subject of and with battered women, whether theoretically or practically. Not making this link between oneself as a gender-specific member of society and the situation of battered women should not be regarded merely as a moral problem, but as a methodological one, one of favoring one type of knowledge and omitting another type. Making the link between one's own personality in gender-specific terms and the issue of wife beating has an impact on one's theoretical approach in so far as it blurs the lines between the researcher's self and the phenomenon which he or she is studying and prevents the researcher from erecting barriers to discovering aspects of truth in the phenomenon that are relevant to his or her own life and personality. Such personal involvement would enable, and also perhaps force, researchers to pay more attention to underlying psychic structures, gender-specific beliefs and shared normative viewpoints and societal positions, putting the researcher in a shared setting with his/her subject.

In my own approach to the subject of battered women I have tried to engage these three points. I have tried to deal with the dialectical relationship between the social

structure shaping the lives of women -- battered and non-battered --, and the individual personality structures of women, and thus reveal in women both a side which reinforces and supports the social-structural arrangement and one which criticizes it. In other words, I have tried to show how women are part of this society and at the same time are victims of societal oppression and how this ambivalence and tension become visible in women's images in society on the one hand and women's personal identity on the other. My basic approach here is to view women from the inside, which includes a consideration of my own voluntary involvement in the problem as a woman. By so doing I hope to have an opportunity to test my assumption that the specific problems of battered women are an outgrowth of some of the problems faced by all women. I expect that this approach will also allow me to analyze the situation of battered women in a non-stigmatizing way, which in turn will enable me to present it as an issue which concerns all women.

The most appropriate way to carry out research in accordance with this approach was for me to work in a shelter for battered women, that is, to involve myself. This participatory method of research alone is not capable of solving all of the problems posed by research in the field, but it does bring me closer to my main goal, i.e., that of viewing the situation of battered women from the inside. The concept of self-involvement also helps answer my two other questions: It definitely is a gender-specific

approach to the subject since it deals above all with the battered women themselves, and thereby views the issue from the standpoint of the oppressed victims themselves. The shelter movement revealed the societal character of the problem of wife beating -- a problem made visible by wives leaving their husbands in great numbers -- and thereby created a growing awareness both of the actual extent of wife beating and of the way in which society in general, and certain institutions in particular, have either neglected or ignored the phenomenon completely or dealt with it in such a way as to implicitly reinforce patriarchal attitudes and structures.

It is possible to see in the wide range of problems becoming apparent in shelters and through the shelter movement nothing less than the intersection of the personal and social dimensions of the issue. This will be the subject of my second working paper.

Footnotes

Section I

1. Erin Pizzey founded a community center for women in London (1971) which developed into the first shelter, in: Erin Pizzey, Scream Quietly or the Neighbors Will Hear You, (London: Penguin Books, 1974).
2. In the U.S. the shelter movement developed out of rape crisis lines in the early 70s, in: Hillary Rose, "In Practice Supported in Theory Denied: An Account of an Invisible Urban Movement," International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1978).
3. Cf: Pizzey, op. cit.
4. Del Martin, Battered Wives, (New York: Pocket Books, 1977), (First edition in 1976).
5. Betsy, Warrior, Working on Wife Abuse (Cambridge, Mass. 1978), (First edition in 1976).
6. Diane Russell and Nicole Van de Ven (eds.) Crimes Against Women (Millbrae, Cal.: Les Femmes, 1976).
7. Except for Gayford who interviewed women in the Chiswick shelter (London), in: J.J. Gayford, "Wife Battering: A Preliminary Survey of 100 Cases" British Medical Journal, No. 1, (Jan. 1975).
8. L.G. Schultz, "The Wife Assaulter," Corrective Psychiatry and Journal of Social Therapy, No. 6 (1960).
9. Ibid. p. 103.
10. J.E. Snell, Rosenwald and Robey, "The Wife Beater's Wife," Archives of General Psychiatry, Vol. 11 (1964).
11. M. Faulk, "Men Who Assault Their Wives," Medicine, Science and the Law, Vol. 14, 1974, reprinted in: Maria Roy, (ed.) Battered Women (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977).
12. John Lion, "Clinical Aspects of Wife Battering," in: M. Roy, op. cit.
13. Ibid., p. 127.
14. This reasoning is not supported for the majority of battered women by other researchers, cf: Chapt. II, 6.

15. J.J. Gayford, Wife Battering, op. cit.; Gayford, "Battered Wives," Medicine, Science, and the Law, No. 4, Vol. 15, (1975); Gayford, "Ten Types of Battered Wives," Welfare Officer, No. 1 (1976).
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18. Elisabeth Waites, "Female Masochism and the Enforced Restriction of Choice," Victimology, Vol. 12, No. 3/4, (1977/78).
19. Karen Horney, "The Problem of Female Masochism," in: Horney, Feminine Psychology, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1973).
20. Ibid., p. 231.
21. A. Symonds, "Violence Against Women - the Myth of Masochism," American Journal of Psychotherapy, Vol. 33, No. 2 (1979).
22. Theodor W. Adorno, et al., The Authoritarian Personality, (New York: Harper and Row 1950).
23. Murray A. Straus, "A General Systems Approach to a Theory of Violence Between Family Members," Social Science Information, Vol. 12, No. 3, (1973).
24. Suzanne Steinmetz and M.A. Straus, "The Family as Cradle of Violence," Society, Vol. 10, No. 6, (1973).
25. Cf: M.A. Straus and G.T. Hotaling, (eds.) The Social Causes of Husband Wife Violence, (Minneapolis, Minn., University Press, 1980); and Richard Gelles in an interview on his earlier research, in: Mary Crowe, "Research Behind Closed Doors," Equal Times, (June 8, 1980).
26. Cf Straus' ultimate resource theory, in: Craig Allen and M.A. Straus, "Resources, Power, and Husband-Wife Violence," in: Straus/Hotaling, op. cit.; and R. Gelles, The Violent Home, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974). This structural-functionalist approach is criticized by: Dennis Marsden, "Sociological

- Perspectives on Family Violence," in: J.P. Martin, (ed.) Violence and the Family, (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1978); R.E. Dobash and R.P. Dobash, Violence Against Wives, (New York: McMillan, 1979) p. 25.
27. Steinmetz and Straus, "Family as Cradle," op. cit., p. 52.
 28. M.A. Straus, "The Marriage License as a Hitting License: Evidence from Popular Culture, Law, and Social Science," Straus and Hotaling, (eds.) op. cit.
 29. Hotaling and Straus, "Culture, Social Organization, and Irony in the Study of Family Violence," Straus and Hotaling, (eds.) op. cit.
 30. Straus, "Wife-Beating How Common and Why?" Straus and Hotaling, (eds.), op. cit., p.34.
 31. Ibid., p. 34.
 32. Dorie Klein, "Can this Marriage be Saved?" Crime and Social Justice, No. 12, (Winter 1979). p. 23.
 33. Allen and Straus, "Resources," op. cit., p. 190.
 34. Straus, "Sexual Inequality and Wife-Beating," Straus and Hotaling, (eds.) op. cit., p. 89.
 35. Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, Behind Closed Doors, (New York: Anchor Books, 1980).
 36. The empirical findings will be discussed in chapt. II.
 37. Straus, et al., Behind Closed Doors, op. cit., p. 36/37.
 38. Straus, Normative and Behavioral Aspects of Violence between Spouses: Preliminary Data on a Nationally Representative USA Sample, paper for a symposium on Violence in Canadian Society, unpublished, March 1977, p. 11.
 39. Cited in: Mildred Pagelow, Double Victimization of Battered Women, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, Nov. 8, 1980, p.4.
 40. Dobash and Dobash, Violence against Wives, op. cit., see also their summary of other researchers' data: Ibid. p. 18-20.

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42. Colleen McGrath, "The Crisis of Domestic Order," Socialist Review, No. 43, (1979); Stark, Flitcraft and Frazier, op. cit.
43. C. McGrath, op. cit., p. 23.
44. Cf. Stark, Flitcraft and Frazier, op. cit.
45. Dorie Klein, Violence Against Women: Some Consideration on its Causes and on its Elimination, paper of the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Institute, University of Washington, Seattle, June 1980.
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47. Cf: Stark, Flitcraft and Frazier, op. cit.
48. Cf: Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit.; Dobash and Dobash, Wife Beating: The Negotiation of Daily Life Under Patriarchal Domination, paper presented at the Conference for Researchers on Violence in the Family, Bristol, England, Oct. 1979; R.E. Dobash, The Negotiation of Daily Life and the 'Provocation' of Violence: A Patriarchal Concept in Support of the Wife Beater, paper presented at the 9th World Congress of Sociology, Uppsala, Sweden, Aug. 1978.
49. Dobash and Dobash, Wife Beating, op. cit., p. 15.
50. Walker did more than 100 unstructured interviews with battered women, in: Lenore Walker, The Battered Woman, (New York: Harper and Row, 1980); Pagelow did 150 interviews with battered women, 350 questionnaires, and 74 interviews with shelter workers, in: Mildred Pagelow, Secondary Battering: Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of Sociologists for Women in Society, Section of the American Sociological Association, Sept. 5-9, 1977; M. Pagelow, Double Victimization of Battered Women: Victimized by Spouses and the Legal System, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, Cal., Nov. 8, 1980.
51. Cf: Walker, Battered Woman, op. cit., chapt. 2; Walker, "Battered Women and Learned Helplessness," Victimology, Vol. 2, (1977/78).

52. Cf for this paragraph: Walker, Battered Woman, op. cit., chapt. 3.
53. Cf: Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit.
54. Cf for this paragraph: Pagelow, Secondary Battering, op. cit.
55. M. Pagelow, Battered Women: A New Perspective, paper presented at the International Sociological Association, Dublin, Ireland, Aug. 9-11, 1977, p. 20.
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58. P. Morgan, "From Battered Wife," op. cit., p. 22.

Section II

1. Barbara Star, "Comparing Battered and Non-battered Women," Victimology Vol. 3, (1978).
2. Cf for critique: Renate Duelli-Klein, "How To Do What We Want To Do: Thoughts about Feminist Methodology," in: Gloria Bowles and R. Duelli-Klein, (eds.), Theory of Women Studies, Womens' Studies at the University of California, 301 Campbell, Berkeley, CA 94720.
3. Irene Hanson Frieze, Jaimes Knoble, Gretchen Zommir and Carol Washburn, Types of Battered Women, paper presented at the Annual Research Conference of the Association for Women in Psychology, Santa Monica, California, March 1980.
4. Barbara Parker and Dale Schumacher, "The Battered Wife Syndrome and Violence in the Nuclear Family of Origin," American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 67, No. 8, (1977).
5. L. Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit., p. xv.

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11. For evidence of overflowing shelters see: Pagelow, Double Victimization, op. cit., p. 18; Marsden, "Sociological Perspective," op. cit., p. 105.
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14. M. Lystad, "Violence at Home," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 3, XLV, (1975) p. 328-345.
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16. M. Pagelow, Battered Women: Class and Race Differences and Similarities and their Implications for Future Social Policy, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, New York, Aug. 28, 1980.
17. Dorie Klein, "The Dark Side of Marriage," Hahn Rafter and Stanko (eds.), Judge, Lawyer, Victim, Thief, Boston 1982, (draft), chapt. 5, p. 11, (forthcoming).
18. All figures on homicides are taken from: Del Martin, Battered Wives, op. cit., p. 14/15.
19. Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., p.97.
20. R. Gelles, "No Place To Go," M. Roy, (ed.), op. cit., p. 49.
21. All data are taken from: R. Gelles, ibid. p. 48-51
22. Cf: Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., p. 120/121; Gelles, op. cit., p. 51-55; Elaine Hilberman and Kit Munson, "Sixty Battered Women," Victimology, Vol. 2, No. 3/4, (1977/78).

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25. Dobash and Dobash, ibid. p. 120.
26. Data on length of battering relationships are given in: Rounsaville, ibid.; Roy, ibid.; Bonnie Carlson, "Battered Women and Their Assailants," Social Work, Vol. 22, No. 6, (1977).
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28. Data on husbands who abuse their wives after they leave are given in: Davidson, ibid., chapt. 1; Rounsaville, op. cit.; Carlson, op. cit.
29. D. Martin, Battered Wives, op. cit., p. 50.
30. Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, op. cit., part 4.
31. M. Roy, Current Survey, op. cit.
32. Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., chapt. 6.
33. Boyd and Klingbeil, op. cit.
34. Ibid., p. 4.
35. Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit., p. 105/6; Hilberman and Munson, op. cit., p. 462.
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38. Boyd and Klingbeil, op. cit., in that context it is interesting to recollect the findings of B. Star, op. cit., that non-battering men were heavier drinkers than battering men and that 4 of the batterers did not drink at all, cf: chapt. II, 1.

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43. Rounsaville, op. cit., p. 19.
44. Carlson, op. cit., p. 457.
45. Gelles, Violent Home, op. cit., p. 111-118.
46. Boyd and Klingbeil, op. cit., p. 4/5.
47. Rounsaville, op. cit., p. 21.
48. Carlson, op. cit., p. 458.
49. Menzies, op. cit., p. 144.
50. Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., p. 85.
51. Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit., chapt. 8.
52. Ibid. p. 171/72
53. Rounsaville, op. cit., p. 21.
54. Hilberman and Munson, op. cit.
55. Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., chapt. 5, Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit., p. 73/74.
56. Boyd and Klingbeil, op. cit.
57. As a striking and moving example see: Faith McNulty, The Burning Bed, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Janovitch, 1980).
58. D. Martin, Battered Wives, op. cit., p. 58-62.
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60. Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, Violence Behind Closed Doors, op. cit., p. 113.

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62. M. Pagelow, Battered Women in Shelters, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association, Apr. 9-12, 1980.
63. B. Parker and D. Schumacher, op. cit., p. 761.
64. Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit., p. 35+38; Carlson, op. cit., p. 456; Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., p. 95; Gayford, "Wife Battering," op. cit., p. 194-197; Rounsaville, op. cit., p. 23; Roy, "Current Survey," op. cit., p. 30/31; Pagelow, Battered Women in Shelters, op. cit., p. 17.
65. Cf: Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., p. 104-106; Barbara Star, Carol Clark, Karen Goetz, Linda O'Malia, "Psychosocial Aspects of Wife Battering," Social Casework, (Oct. 1979), p. 484; Suzanne Prescott, Carolyn Lettko, "Battered Women: A Social Psychological Perspective," M. Roy, op. cit., p. 81/82; Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit., p. 56-59.
66. Cf: Hilberman and Munson, op. cit., p. 462; Carlson, op. cit., p. 457; Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., p. 108-110.
67. Dobash and Dobash, *ibid.* p. 94-96, it would be interesting to compare the reactions of these severely and long term battered women to those of women who left after the first beating, as Parker found in her study (see chapt. II, 1).
68. Prescott and Lettko, op. cit., p. 83/84.
69. Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., p. 116-120.
70. Hilberman and Munson, op. cit., p. 463-466.
71. Roy, "Current Survey," op. cit., p. 32.
72. Boyd and Klingbeil, op. cit.
73. Rounsaville, op. cit.
74. Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit., p. 148/49, 174, 184; Pizzey argues similarly, that women stay in battering relationships because of their fears and their imaginations of their husbands' omnipotence, in: Pizzey, Scream Quietly, op. cit., p. 39.

75. Martin, Battered Wives, op. cit., chapt. 5.
76. Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., chapt. 7.
77. Rita Weingourt, "Battered Women: The Grieving Process," Journal of Psychiatric Nursing and Mental Health Services, Vol. 17, No. 4, (1979).
78. Noninstitutional forms of help available to battered women, their helpfulness and their limitations are discussed in: Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., chapt. 9; Davidson, op. cit., p. 94-98; Pagelow, Double Victimization, op. cit., p. 16.
79. Cf: Martin, Battered Wives, op. cit., chapt. 6; Roy, "Current Survey," op. cit., p. 35-37; Davidson, op. cit., p. 10ff; Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., chapt. 11; J.B. Fleming, Stopping Wife Abuse, (New York: Anchor, 1979), chapt. 3.
80. Dobash and Dobash, op. cit., p. 199-206; Martin, Battered Wives, op. cit., p. 120-132; Davidson, op. cit., p. 83-85.
81. Stark, Flitcraft and Frazier, op. cit., p. 469-477.
82. Davidson, op. cit., p. 85; Martin, op. cit., p. 132-142; Pagelow, Double Victimization, op. cit., p. 11; Klein, "Dark Side of Marriage," op. cit., p. 22.
83. For the earlier discussion of this topic see chapt. I, 6, for literature on this topic see: P. Morgan, "From Battered Wife to Program Client," op. cit.
84. For evidence of overflowing shelters see: for US: Pagelow, Double Victimization, op. cit., p. 18; for Great Britain: Marsden, op. cit., p. 105; for Germany: my own experience in a shelter in Frankfurt, Germany.
85. Figure taken from: Monthly MEMO, National Technical Assistance Center on Family Violence, Ann Arbor, Mich., Dec. 1980, p. 5.
86. Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., p. 224.
87. Figure taken from, Courage, No. 4, 1981.
88. Menzies, op. cit., p. 145.
88. For information on shelters see: Great Britain: J. Sutton, "The Growth of the British Movement for Battered Women," Victimology, Vol. 2, No. 3/4, (1979); Dobash

and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., chapt. 12; H. Rose, op. cit.; for the US: Martin, Battered Wives, op. cit., chapt 10; Lisa Leghorn, "Grassroot Services for Battered Women," Battered Women, Issues of Public Policies, (Washington: 1978); for a critical evaluation of the development of the shelter movement see: Lois Ahrens, "Battered Women's Refuges," Radical America, Vol. 14, No. 3, (1980); McGrath, op. cit.; Morgan, "From Battered Wife," op. cit.; Klein, "Can This Marriage Be Saved," op. cit.; Klein, "Dark Side of Marriage," op. cit.

Section III

1. A group of German women scientists noted this problem: "The discursive confrontation with the existing sciences is as important as is the sharing of subjective experiences with these sciences at the moment. (...) But to formulate this link as a general methodological postulate, would have a harmonising effect at the moment." (transl. M.B.), v. Braunmuhl, Brick, Kontos, Reinke and Schlupmann, Editorial to: Gesellschaft, Beitrage zur Marxschen Theorie 14 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981), p. 10.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: THE CASE
OF WIFE BEATING
PART TWO

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My thanks to the Institute for giving me the opportunity to spend the year of 1980/81 and the summer of 1982 as a visiting scholar. The Institute's members provided useful criticism and support towards the completion of this project.

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INTRODUCTION: THE DIFFICULT PROCESS OF WORKING THROUGH THE THEME

1. Setting the Mood for the Journey

The idea of working on the subject of battered women was not borne immediately, but occurred as a long process, during which both the focus as well as my relationship to the subject changed -- bringing me closer, sometimes uncomfortably closer, to my ultimate theme.

Working on the theme was like going on a journey, surrendering myself to the subject, to woman, and to my hidden insights as a woman. Often I hesitated on this journey, having to push myself hard and again and again, because it started to become daring and sometimes frightening when I discovered how close it came to myself. I realized that each chapter and often each new idea was approached in concentric circles: I would start off with a scientific thesis and approach trying to get many scientists to my aid, then would cautiously let go. I realized I had fantasies and ideas which arose without any explicit knowledge of them. Could I trust them? This 'other' approach travelled with me beyond my boundaries as a sociologist and led me to unknown territories - hidden forms of insights into female souls (including my own), which often overwhelmed me in their power. As powerfully as I felt them work their way through inside me, as much power and energy did it seem to take for me to form them into words and sentences. Sometimes they lost their hold over me once I had them down on paper. Then they would feel like strangers to me, making me sad and giving me an actual feeling of loss. These insights and fantasies were strongest and I felt most attached to them, as long as I was struggling with them.

Writing on women became a process involving my whole person, not just my intellect, creating a strong tension between common scientific demands and the tender and reluctant emergence of my own concept and ideas.

This tension of balancing and judging, formulating and writing, which developed into a journey into the subject and into myself, I wanted to become part of the written work.

These two sides of myself and of my work on the theme - the formal educated sociologist and the experiences and knowledge of a woman exploring the wealth and limitations of centuries of female traditions and developments - often were in confrontation with each other. Seldom was I able to satisfy them both at the same time. I felt much more insecure with the second part, because there are no rules and procedures laid out for it, but it also was the bigger

challenge. I ended by going back and forth between my educational knowledge and my female life experience and its thoughts and ideas, while trying to pursue a sometimes painful and fatiguing process of opening up to the subject and the theories.

I finished the process by engaging in a twofold experiment: travelling into a new field of thoughts on women and relationships, that of trying to combine the experience of battered and non-battered women, and traveling with a new method, that of including myself in the questions and answers on the search for the origins and reasons of women's relationship in our society. That is why the following report includes the process of my own development concerning my theme, my slowly growing insights and my reluctant coming closer and going deeper into the topic. So my method involves this process: approaching the subject, gaining insights step by step, sometimes being conflicted between objective and subjective reasoning, sociological and psychological argumentations, personal and abstract views, closeness and moving away from the subject according to how I am affected - following my own speed and my own path of thinking.

2. Developing The Theme

Since my interest in battered women derived from my experience in working with them, my theme was not abstractly limited, but was relatively undefined and confused for a long time. I was subject to a nameless fascination, resulting from having taken part in other women's lives, having gotten to know some of them intimately and then comparing my own life, chances, wishes and anxieties to theirs. The result was a puzzling experience that became hard to pin down to a definite theme without losing what was puzzling for me and the other women working in the shelter. I started to write down what had made me think about battered women, about myself and about women in general. I became aware that the differences between the battered women and women like myself were often only differences in class and education (since the shelter mainly took working-class women), in conscious concepts about women and their roles, and in wishes concerning life styles. But beneath that level of existence appeared another level which was more fundamental to the hidden parts of the self and in which the differences were smaller or stemmed from the same roots and were only showing their opposite sides: the societally shaped ideal of female identity and each woman's individual struggles with it -- either accepting it or fighting it (most probably, both on different levels), but all together being confronted with it as women, across all dividing lines (although divisions of class made different aspects of the role either available or unavailable).

My hope was to find a possibility of looking beyond the separation of women into battered and non-battered categories by concentrating on the general struggle women have in leading and understanding their own lives and their oppression. I also wanted to show that only a holistic approach, embracing external oppression by others and internal oppression by oneself, can help overcome our distortions as women.

3. The Two Parts of the Thesis and the Two Sides of a Female Scientist

My work on the theme started with my own thoughts on my experience with battered women, non-battered women and myself, which then I wanted to link to and expand on by the literature available on the topic.

My search for the literature was concentrated in the USA, where I was at the time and where scientists have done the most work in the field. The result of this twofold approach was that I ended with two different parts to the work which I was not really able to integrate. While writing the two parts, I noticed the differences in the modes of thinking involved in them. The mode of scientific thinking of the first part meant there was a distance from the subject, with a clear line drawn between the observer and the observed. This mode of thinking was more definite, allowing for more clarity but thereby also limiting the issue. It was easier to understand, grasp, evaluate and criticize. The differences between battered and non-battered women were as definite as the differences between researcher and object. I could indulge in an interesting topic of societal significance that challenged and satisfied my scholarly interests. The second part, which dealt with intuitive thinking based on experience with others and myself, was more daring, dark and tentative and included the danger of losing the subject and the issue dealt with. Also, I found it difficult to fulfill the demands that this mode of writing needs to satisfy, demands put forward by Norbert Elias in relation to a Dutch female writer: "To write about problems that personally touch her most deeply, in a manner that is able to touch everybody". Whereas the objective way of thinking included the danger of losing the women as living human beings behind abstract categories, the subjective way of thinking included the danger of losing the argument and drifting away without goal, thereby losing the potential of being communicable and understandable.

To accept these different modes of approaching a theme as separate parts also meant accepting the divided reality of female scientists. Although an holistic concept of self and identity has not yet emerged, women have started to search for it, aiming at integrating search and research,

subject and object, so that there will a new understanding of women and potential for change in women.² Such a process needs time, time for experimenting and deciding. "I, if I had been allowed to invent us, I would have given us time. (Christa Wolf)³

My approach to the theme of battered women became connected not so much to the battering itself but rather to an interest in internal forces that bind women to their roles, putting them in subordinate positions, one aspect of which is being battered. I wanted to look at women's oppression from the inside as a woman not as a distant observer. Working on the theme of battered women became important for me in the sense that their lives could be seen as an extreme example of all women's lives. Thus, what interested me most in battered women's identity struggles was the general applicability to all women's lives, because, as Alice Schwarzer put it: "In all of us there also does exist patriarchy" This assumption deepens the meaning of the last sentences of the important book "Violence Against Wives" by Dobash/Dobash, "The problem lies in the domination of women. The answer lies in the struggle against it."⁵ The concept of male domination in the form of patriarchy made female oppression in a double sense possible: it helped shape a society in which women are second class citizens and it also shaped women's selves⁶ and women's concepts of love and marriage, making women both a passive and an active part of patriarchy. So the answer lies in the struggle against both these dimensions, the patriarchy in society and the patriarchal aspects in ourselves. So my thesis became a process of search and research, combining aspects drawn from literature on battered women, my own thoughts based on my experiences with battered women and myself as a woman, and a rather new body of literature which dares to look deep inside women--this includes new psychoanalytical literature, women's autobiographies and women's fiction.

It was important to me to clarify my understanding of the subject under two aspects: the various theoretical explanations and approaches and the empirical findings. To use both made it easier to grasp the major issues and to develop my own thoughts.

When I finished the literature review, I was quite astonished to find myself stressing the objective side of wife beating; this was contrary to my intentions in Part Two. The reasons seem to be twofold. The more psychological concepts and explanations of wife beating seemed to lack a true empathy and a thorough understanding of the linkage between social and psychic factors, on one hand, and, on the other hand, the literature challenged me in my identity as a sociologist and socialist feminist. Both of these factors lead me to stress the societal roots of social problems and

women's subordination. But there might also be a deeper reason for stressing the objective side of the roots of the problem--my bad conscience, I did not want to be suspected of blaming the victim, in this case the battered woman but in a wider sense also myself. So, subconsciously, I wrote a part that represents that side of me which wants to fight the societal circumstances theoretically and practically. In the second part, however, I dared to look into women's own active, though often unconscious, shaping of the patriarchal female role, identity and self-image. So for me both parts of the study represent true aspects of the same problem and of myself.

Part Two derives from my experiences as a woman, my experiences with battered women and my trust in psychoanalytically oriented explanations of the subconscious desires that shape much of our lives. If women are the experts on women, then the question arises, what do I find in myself to answer my questions on women, since I am one of them, actively shaping and passively being shaped by female identity. Although on one level of analysis it is necessary to distinguish between battered and non-battered women, to make battered women's suffering visible and to cause battering to be taken seriously, there is another level of analysis where it becomes wrong to talk about battered women as a separate category without looking at women in general.

Especially in the Part Two, I felt it made a difference that I was writing in a foreign language--although that might seem strange. It helped me to get rid of some of my inhibitions; it felt easier to just let my thoughts go and write them down. The foreignness of the language allowed me to put thoughts on paper that I might not have felt free enough to do in German. I had a less emotional relationship to the English language as well as a greater freedom from my educational heritage; both of these factors may have aided me--the first, to put enough distance between myself and my ideas to be able to formulate them into sentences; the second, to be more experimental in my approach. Also, the English language has a concreteness and directness that is lacking in German. This forces the writer to put forward statements and ideas more directly and clearly, though at the price of losing some of the depths of dialectical thinking.

I. Searching For Another Approach to the Issue of Wife Beating.

This section attempts to outline more thoroughly the basic assumptions and methods of my own approach along the lines previously mentioned, of acknowledging the societal and psychic conditions making wife beating possible and

relating it to the position of women in general, including myself. My own analysis in later sections will concentrate on the psychic level of the problem, on women's image and self image, fantasies, hopes, fears and behavior. I will first discuss the phenomenon of battered women on the societal level, including non-battered women; second, I will consider the phenomenon on the individual level, including myself; and third, I will outline the method used.

Not all women in our society are battered, but many are, so an explanation of the phenomenon has to take both of these facts into account. No easy theory seems to be available as to explain why certain women are battered and others are not. The same holds true for battering men: what do they have in common with each other, apart from their violence, and what separates them from other men? Since battered wives and battering husbands come from all walks of life, any explanation must include the underlying general possibility of male violence in our culture, which finds its expression in the individual batterers and the individual battered women. To approach the problem of wife-battery from the battering incident itself reveals how male violence is backed - if not supported - by society, by laws, reactions of police, judges, and welfare agencies. An inquiry from this standpoint is important in order to make the public aware of the existence of the problem and to formulate ways of fighting the denial of this crime. Such an approach cannot, however, take systematically into account how these societal structures and values actually penetrate a woman's existence and sense of identity, shaping her everyday life. While learning battered women's stories, I discovered general traits of a woman's fate concerning her societal position, her relationships with men and her concept of self, which do not necessarily explain the actual battering solutions, but which give an idea about the roots of male violence and why women, especially wives, have become targets of this aggression. If it is true that battered women reveal in extremity what is an integral part of all women's lives - whether as reality or as fantasy, strongly revealed or faintly visible, dominant or subordinate - then the study of battered women becomes a study of the prevalent image of femininity and women's identity in our patriarchal culture. The very existence of battered women unmasks the division of gender roles on a patriarchal basis, a division allowing for male violence. This means that there must be traits in the role that women play in society which allow for wife battery, whether it actually happens or not. Battered women seem to live through the extreme consequences of a woman's fate and thereby reveal the structure of the role of female identity.

Thus, my interest in battered women stems from an interest in the much more general roots of women's oppression of which battery is a part. Battery is a very special

part of oppression because the woman has at the same time an often strong relationship to her violent husband, which allows for a deep view into the entanglement between male oppression and female identity.

In order to analyze lives and the ideals of patriarchal femininity, two opposing dimensions have to be considered and interlinked with one another: 1) how women are kept in their societal role and why they fulfill it; 2) the necessity of deviating from idealized expectations, the possibility of conscious rejection of patriarchal femininity, and the emergence of the new concepts for every woman. So there is a dialectical process going on in women's lives: 1) we are put under patriarchal male definition, internalized by ourselves, and 2) we can have an area of autonomy in our identity by becoming conscious about ourselves, allowing for alternative definitions of womanhood. This means that women are dependent and independent at the same time. In sum: the phenomenon of battered women is not answerable in itself; it is answerable only by looking at the society that makes it possible. Society exists on many levels--for example, economical, juridical, political and normative--all of which have an important explanatory value for the problem. But since men batter their wives across all classes and races in our society, I am interested in looking at the societal representations inside ourselves, at how women--battered and unbattered--are unknowingly permeated by societal role structures and at how women produce and reproduce these structures - one as the consequences of the other.

Does that mean women have a part in the battering incident? Definitely not, but I am convinced that women play a part in men's patriarchal behavior, including violence, by our involvement in the patriarchal set-up of society. Patriarchy is not merely forced on us; we also live it and, with or against our will, help to reproduce it through our behavior and our feelings. Not to accept this active shaping of society and ourselves by ourselves would degrade women to mere passive recipients of male culture and capitalist society, a picture of women that would deny ourselves the capacity for visions of another life in another societal structure. This capacity, whether it is lived by the single woman or not, is what gives her human dignity. No woman, no matter how horrible and hard her actual life may be, is only the dependent and passive creature she might be supposed to be. Belief in this fundamental dignity gives her a responsibility over her own life, and a chance for taking this responsibility which is the base on which woman's liberation can grow. The ability to make an active change in one's life can only be conceived of when we believe that a woman is more than the unconscious slave of her situation, a truth which cannot be divided. Basic elements of this truth, that we also shape our own history and our own lives by our actions and by our personality, exist

in times of domination and oppression as well as in times of freedom and choice. We are a product of our society and of male domination, but we are also more than that, which is the basis for our capabilities, responsibilities and our future potential.

By daring to look into myself, I started to find the links between battered and nonbattered women. Listening to and reading the life-stories of battered women, I began to realize that I was greedily consuming these stories. I hoped it did not show, since even I was not aware of it for such a long time. I found my reaction scary, but that did not make me get rid of that strange and uncomfortable fascination. More often than not, I also felt angry about the women's fatalistic and passive views about their lives; this feeling I found the most difficult to admit--I believe it served to protect myself, since I did not want to come too close. Beyond my interest in battered women as a feminist activist, I discovered a much older hidden interest or rather a drive, tucked behind my conscious feminism. Some years ago I would have analyzed it as hatred of men, as a consequence of the fact that all women on a psychological or physical level have been suppressed by men. I had become conscious of male oppression in relationships, and I had to help other women who still suffer to free themselves, so that we could unite in the fight against male brutality. Apart from this general analysis, I was then quite convinced that something like being battered would never happen to myself, since I am a feminist. I still think the above is true, but during this recent study I also discovered a level of mutuality with battered women that went far beyond my fairly new feminist consciousness: this was my own traditional female beliefs, needs, desires, and anxieties. Working on the entanglement of women in battering relationships, I was drawn into dark female spheres, that I have always strongly rejected as a part of myself. I fight this adhesiveness through my work, not only by showing other options to women but also by supporting my own feminist options and beliefs. The story of battered women, however, brings me involuntarily closer to sides of myself that I sense as dangerous and that I don't want to know about--the fascination of total womanhood, omnipotent, burning and devoted. These ancient sides of female identity and female traditionalism--putting your fate into the hands of a man, not merging but submerging to a relationship, denying the possibility and the necessity of a personal self, always living for someone else but not for yourself, having omnipotent fantasies about the ability to change others and no concept that you could change yourself--have remained vivid inside me. This has been brought painfully close to me through the study of wife battering. My own reaction gives me a clue as to why it is so much more comfortable to perceive battered women as merely forced or seduced into their battering relationships. It removes the problem to a safe

distance from oneself.

To explore the range of female traditions that keep women in 'their' place and which work in varying degrees in battered and unbattered women and to find their connections to societal structures and values is the precondition of breaking away from them.

In the next sections I want to try the experiment of looking into the problems of wife beating by looking into the general image of women, especially concerning their relationships. To do this, I will gather the splinters of my own experience in a shelter for battered women, which became an adventure into women's lives, into the lives of battered women, of the non-battered women working at the shelter, and of my own. The experience in the shelter also taught me that women, even long-term battered women, are capable of changing their life-situation and of changing themselves; both starting out with a fascinating effort of breaking away, of becoming free and freeing themselves.

The reason I chose a women's shelter for looking into the phenomenon of wife beating is that the shelter is a human space responsive to the range of problems concerning the issue--though not solving them.

First: the shelter movement brought the issue into the open, not only by naming it but also by acting upon it, thereby revealing the depth and the range of the problem. This double involvement--of naming the problem and helping the victims--is to me the best method of trying to bridge the gulf between social research and the social problem it deals with. In that sense, the founding of the shelter and especially its early collective form of organization came closest to the new feminist methodology (as discussed in Part One), which demands a holistic approach to women's research.

Second: looking into a shelter for deeper knowledge of the problem of wife-beating opened up the possibility of analyzing the societal and structural impact on women fighting their oppression as wives as well as of analyzing women's subjective dealing with the issue.

Using the method of participatory research in this setting rather than interviewing or using questionnaires enabled me to view the problem from the inside and to bring the subject to life. It gave me the chance of subjective involvement into the phenomenon and enabled me to experience some of the strains and hardships of the battered wives myself through observation of the effects. So I became an engaged subject rather than a 'neutral' observer, a position that helped me avoid some of the misconceptions of research approaches, like gender unspecificity, construction of

victim-precipitated crime or the creation of personality types of battered women (as discussed in the literary report in Part One).

Working in a shelter as a means of giving a field account of the phenomenon of wife beating enabled me to become intellectually and emotionally aware of the multitude of problems involved that make it necessary to take the societal conditions and individuality structures into account.

II. EXPERIENCES WITH RELATIONSHIP STRUCTURES IN A SHELTER FOR BATTERED WOMEN

The following section has three subdivisions which tell: first, how I got involved in the shelter work; second, how the relationships between the women working in the shelter and the women living in the shelter developed and what problems they faced; and third, my ideas on the relationship dynamics between the battered women and their men according to their reports and my own associations.

1. My Involvement

The women's movement brought the problem of wife beating into the open, making it a public issue in the mid-seventies. Feminist shelters have been set up for crisis intervention, not as a long term solution but for satisfying an immediate need in the sense that battered women have a place to go. Further, besides this goal of protection of women by women, it is necessary to challenge a society which makes violence against women possible. Our other goal is not to have a society with a net of shelters and crisis-lines, but to build a society in which they are not necessary.

In 1978 a group of women opened a shelter as an autonomous project in Frankfurt, Germany. I saw this as a chance to link my feminist interests with my teaching job at a school of social welfare. A group of women students and I organized a project around the shelter including theoretical work (such as a seminar on violence in the family), volunteer work, and regular project group sessions of consciousness-raising that dealt with problems concerning our work. Discussing and analyzing the practical problems soon became a very important element in our work, because the experiences we had working in the shelter were often quite different from our fantasies and ideas. These experiences included political, financial and organizational problems - and the most difficult problem for us to deal with:

being ourselves, our relationship to the shelter and especially our relationships to the resident women. We were confronted with our limitations--being overwhelmed by the suffering of the women, having feelings of distance due to different life-styles and different life-situations, being disappointed by a lack of solidarity in the house, being critical of the educational methods used with the children of the resident women, feeling betrayed when battered women went back to their husbands or simply being afraid of arguments between us and them. There were also situations of deeply satisfactory work together and feelings of friendship, but that was what we had expected, what we could cope with, feelings of which we approved.

We had to learn that battered women were not "pure", waiting to be saved by us, but women with all their own contradictions and ambivalences, human beings in their own rights -- like ourselves.

Two points reflecting my experiences in the shelter come back to me repeatedly:

1. The relationship between ourselves (the supportive women) and the resident women, and
2. The relationship of the battered women to their men, including our feelings towards these relationships.

2. Relationships Between Ourselves (the Supportive Women) and the Resident Women

This section will sketch some of the problems between the two groups of women -- in the supportive and the resident -- in the shelter on two levels: The first level being the necessity of coping with the pressures from outside combined with internal differences; the second level being the differences in life situations and in expectations between resident and supportive women.

After working in the shelter for over a year, I realized that the gap between our idea and the reality of the shelter was widening. Our idea had been to open a shelter based on equality and shared responsibility, practicing a communal non-hierarchical lifestyle. Gradually, we realized that reality -- mainly behind our backs -- was transforming our concept and, to a certain extent, our beliefs, through two pressures: that from the welfare state, which required some formal organizational set-up for funding, and that from the battered women, who wanted us to exert authority and run the house.

2.1 The Shelter -- Subjectively and Objectively Trapped Between the Women's Movement and the Social Services

Both the women who came to live in the house and the social agencies dealing with the shelter tended to ignore the origin and the self-image of the house as part of the women's movement, because they both found it alien. The resident women, as well as the agencies, often regarded the shelter as just another institution of social welfare. This fatal union forced us to fight for women's liberation issues on two fronts: the resident women and the agencies, and these two forces seemed to pull us away from our feminist political intentions. The welfare system used us as a cheap convenient home for women, paying us badly and putting restrictions on us. For their part, the resident women often did not feel it was their house, that is, a house for which they took responsibility not only in terms of its existence but also in terms of its political intentions. One reason for our inability to establish ourselves as an autonomous self-governed shelter that was part of the women's movement was our feminine inability to make demands on or to be able to say no if necessary to the agencies and to the women. The result of our inability to take a firm political position according to our feminist beliefs vis a vis the welfare agencies and vis a vis the resident women was that we became discontented with our work. What he had wanted to avoid seemed to happen: we felt pushed into doing social work instead of doing political feminist work and did not know how to change this development. We felt exhausted, overwhelmed, discouraged, devoured, exploited and drowned in everyday work, unable to actively resist and stick to our intentions - therefore resentful and frustrated. As a consequence, many of the women who had started the shelter group left it.

2.2 The Effect on Relationships Within the Shelter of Redefining Political Problems into Social Problems

Coping with the objective problems around the shelter, like money, housing, legal matters, etc., a period of austerity and political apathy had more the quality of solving one more social problem than of raising a political issue. In a situation such as this the supportive women must deal with a twofold problem: pressing for help at the social agencies and activating the resident women to participate in the battle. It seemed to us that it would be faster rather than initiating a political campaign on these issues, to look for a resolution of these matters on an individual level through welfare agency channels. We were also pressed in this direction by the general political situation and by the individual needs of the resident women. However, by following this method, we were giving the issues a social bias only, and we felt this was politically wrong.

In a more politically active era, these problems could have been tackled on a united, collective basis, e.g., calling for strong egalitarian actions, bringing together all women of the shelter regardless of class barriers. But activities today often call for typical middle-class negotiating abilities, including the danger of engaging in politics for somebody rather than with somebody. This constellation seems to stress the role of the supportive women as super-mothers, a role which we rationally find wrong, but unconsciously find very seductive because it includes power and makes us feel good and needed.

2.3 Levels of Concern Over the Problem of Wife Battering

The resident women coming into the shelter were overwhelmed by their situation as battered women, whereas we had the freedom to occupy ourselves with the problems of others. This difference led to feelings of guilt among the supportive women about being privileged and to feelings of envy on the part of the resident women. The differences are not monetary alone but are long-term differences in ways of access to help. For example, if one of the supportive women had similar problems with being physically or psychologically abused, we would not turn to a shelter for help, but would get private help from our friends or we might go into therapy. We would not become eligible for social security or for public housing. (The degree of this difference might have to do with the affluent German society, where there is still a clear-cut gap between people on social welfare and the broad mass of the others -- middle-class and the stable working class).

The supportive women's involvement in the problems of wife battering stems from our general conviction that nobody has the right to hurt somebody, that there are no justifiable reasons whatsoever for men beating women or parents beating children. We feel that a society that legitimizes male violence as part of their role in a patriarchal structure has to be fought.

The battered women's involvement in the issue stems from actually being a victim of male violence, often without a general concern for violence, and sometimes without any clear feeling that no one, for any reason, has a right to touch someone violently. The concern of these women with battering is concrete, caused by immediate suffering. If they had not lived through this experience, the majority of them would not be concerned with the issue. What does this difference in the level of concern mean for the relationship between us? Is the supportive women's concern educational, 'do-gooder', egoistic or political? Is the relationship inherently that of a group of more educated, political women giving help to a group of less educated, needful, apolitical

women? Or is there a chance for common development? There does not seem to be a general and easy answer available.

2.4. The Women we Expected to Come and the Women Who Came

We saw the shelter as part of the women's movement, and therefore expected the women coming to the shelter to be at least open to feminist issues, which would have meant that there were shared interests and ideas. The majority of women who came to live in the house were instead women mainly from working-class or lower working-class backgrounds with traditional values and lifestyles -- having a concept of femininity that confronted us (mainly middle-class professionals and students) with our past -- and with the traditional aspects in ourselves we were trying to eradicate. So, being open to the resident women meant understanding of their giving men priority in their lives, finding marriage more important than education, and desiring to be protected by a man rather than taking responsibility for one's own life. This was difficult because we had tried, personally, to get rid of these values and needs -- and now they were presented to us as accepted without question, thereby disturbing our own fragile inner balance.

2.5. The Need to be Nurtured and the Power to Nurture

The supportive women's stage of development could be described as being a conscious attempt to leave the double trap of the traditional female role: the conscious need for male intervention vis a vis the outside world and the conscious need to exercise the female nurturing power inside the family. This process is painful and full of anxieties, since these needs are historically deeply rooted in ourselves. Altering them may lead to one's being (and/or feeling) alone, responsible for all aspects of one's life. Making choices rather than accepting the traditional female role leaves one with the uncertainty of what to choose.

The women coming to the shelter have just made a crucial choice in their lives, that being to leave a violent man, who took from them their dignity as human beings. But this choice often does not yet lead to the emergence of a new concept of life; in many cases it never goes beyond the stage of "just having to get out". Indeed, the set-up of the shelter and the acute crisis situation of the battered women tends to reinforce their needs to be guided and nurtured. Concomitantly, these needs urge us to play roles -- of the supporting power of the husband as the connection to the outside world, of the nurturing power of the mother, who is responsible for well-being. Besides being the good mother, we are expected to be the efficient father. Thereby, we are not only confronted with the divisions of

roles from which we are trying to free ourselves, but also with our ambivalence towards these roles, which have brought us both comfort and suffering. Both the role giving and the role accepting seemed to emerge from shared hidden fantasies in ourselves and in the resident women, fantasies that might be expressed as follows: if women dare to come out of the closet and become visible and active in employment or in self-determination, they feel society demands them to be perfect, otherwise they should not have done it at all. If they are not perfect, then that is the evidence that women are not capable of doing 'a man's job'. Both groups of women expected this judgement and their own failure to happen anyway - fearing it as a punishment for being a daring woman hoping for it as proof that women are better-off in their old roles.

2.6. The Female Urge to Rescue Others

The urge to rescue others was another fantasy the supportive and the resident women seemed to share secretly: we tried to save them as they often had tried to save their husbands (a point that will be discussed later). On the surface this urge appears as the very social wish of one woman to help another woman who is in a horrible situation: a selfless activity of being concerned with the well-being of a battered woman. But behind it we discovered not only the wish to help but the urge to rescue, which gives us the power to be saviors and the privileges that go along with that power. These privileges derive from the notion that we knew what was best for the battered women and how they should organize their lives from now on. Within limits this was true, but our subconscious did not want to know of the limits but wanted to gain the total right over the lives of the battered women. They were to become what we wanted them to be, we wanted to shape them according to our own image of a good (= emancipated) woman. Otherwise we would be very disappointed.

Here is an American shelter worker's answer to the question of whether she tells women who go back to their husbands that they are making a mistake:

"No, I might like to, but I watch her go and feel sick inside with my own sadness and powerlessness. To tell her she's making a mistake is to increase her sense of failure - she already knows in her gut what she's doing. My job is to make it possible for her to be able to come back."²

The precondition of this answer is one's own ability to deal with one's feelings of sadness and powerlessness. Consciously, we of course wanted the woman to make her own decision, and of course we hoped she would make the choice not

to go back, for her own good and for our work to have been successful. We also tried to give every woman the feeling she was welcome back any time, if we had space. But beneath this sensible behavior we still were confronted with the roots of our disappointment when women went back to battering husbands. To make our emotional engagement and our work not only worthwhile but to fulfill our hidden desires, we needed perfect victims of male violence. Only then could we indulge in the fantasy that we had helped a heroine, a pure woman, thereby getting the chance to become heroines and pure women ourselves.

To differentiate between our own greedy and omnipotent fantasies of both wanting the woman to find herself and giving her the right advice at the right time was not easy for us. So sometimes we did not dare to become active at all, because this greediness inside ourselves had made us insecure about acting at all. At other times we would feel we had waited long enough for things to settle themselves and with lots of bad conscience we then found it necessary to take radical actions. To respect the right for self determination for ourselves and for the battered women meant that we learned, painfully, that we are neither helpless nor omnipotent, neither had to let others intrude into ourselves nor had the right to do so with others. Accepting this does not leave us with nothing; what is left is the valuable and worthwhile spirit of continued effort.

3. Relationships Between the Battered Women and Their Men

In this part of the section on the reflections of my experiences, I want to sketch the flashes of insight, concerning intimate relationships between battered women and men that came to my mind. First, I will write about the supportive women's feelings towards these relationships, then about feelings the battered women might have had towards their men. Next are ideas about some hidden sides of the battered women, that kept them in their marriages. Finally, I will reflect upon the dynamics of the relationships and upon the capability of the battered women to leave.

3.1. Supportive Women's Feelings Towards the Relationships between battered women and their men

The relationships between the battered women and their men touched our, the supportive women's, feelings on various levels. First we had to deal with the women's ties to their husbands; then, on a second level, with our different roles and the anxieties in our relationships; finally, on a third level, with our feelings towards men.

Listening to the stories of the battered women over time, we went through a series of reactions. At first, all we felt was the horror of having to live through such terrible experiences, hating the wife-beating men and suffering with every beaten woman -- this was the easiest phase, because it seemed the morally appropriate reaction. Then we found that, in spite of the terror the women had gone through, quite a few women returned to their men. We were stunned, because we still felt the horror, and we felt left with the burden and exploited in our feelings. After having gone through this several times, we became more cautious in our reactions, our self-protection ranging from passively building up an inner wall against the stories we were told to aggressively thinking 'you will go back anyway'.

To be able to bear the frequent confrontations with the resident women's terrifying relationships without feeling either drowned or cynical, we have had to learn to understand the cycle a woman coming to the shelter has to go through. The immediate violent situation has made her finally leave. In the new situation, with the possibility of having someone to listen and be sympathetic, the whole misery of her life is released. But after the first shock and relief are gone, the often still-strong ties to the husband and the positive feelings about the relationship come back. Furthermore, after the first tension is released, the hardships of the new situation became clearer.³

To do successful work in the shelter, it is necessary not only to know about the existence of these old ties made up of love and hate, hope and resignation, but to try to understand how these ties work and how the dynamics of this relationship function. This gives us a chance to learn about relationships between women and men and of the distortions of the relationships which are rooted in a society which does not give the individuals a chance to grow emotionally.

The ties that hold a violent relationship together do not seem to be greatly different from nonviolent, more-or-less symbiotic relationships; the women and men involved are as "normal" as anybody. The difference is that the structure of their relationship opens up the volcano that is in all of us. Being so entangled in love and hate for each other, the whirl of the relationship seems to develop more and more power, to the extent that the woman loses her sense of herself as a human being in her own right and the man loses his inhibitions toward hurting the woman he feels is his, thereby also losing his sense of self and of his wife as having a separate self. This loss of a separate self is true for both of them; they are split into two parts according to traditional roles -- leaving the woman with the enduring part. Thus, the man can resolve his anxieties of being dependent by actively controlling his wife's life and

sometimes each of her moves, while the wife, as she submits passively, thereby also possesses him.

This situation causes the deepest anxieties for both of them. They are divided in the traditional roles, but deeply linked to each other: he is fighting his anxieties by physically attacking her, thereby defending his self; she is fighting her anxieties by taking his violence, thereby feeling alive passively. Having lost one's sense of a separate self brings about a situation in which the search for oneness has turned into the fear of dissolving. The dialectical process behind this dynamic is, that by completely controlling someone else, this other ceases to exist, and by completely being under control of another, oneself ceases to exist. In that sense there seems to be a fatal logic in these relationships. They leave open only two possibilities: leaving or killing oneself or the other, because staying means a continuing process of internal dissolution, of loss of the self.⁴ This underlying dynamic of mutually dependent violent relationships tends to lead to increasing violence⁵, and a frightening number of these relationships do indeed end with death.⁶ These ties that hold long-term violent relationships together in all their tragedy have a strange fascination for us, the supportive women. Even though the life stories of the battered women are horrifying, it is a horror of love and hate that permits us a safe view beneath the surface and into the hidden depth of ourselves. Our work with these women, who have gone through relationships involving the total denial of themselves, lets us participate in these experiences in a socially accepted way. We can have the anxiety producing fascination of a powerful human hell, without being burnt by it.

The two groups of women coming together in the shelter seem to represent the opposite sides of feelings involved in relationships - closeness and distance. We, educated middle-class feminists, are afraid of losing ourselves; the battered women are afraid of finding themselves as separate entities. Both fears, though, represent a shared inability to live in a deep relationship with interchanging roles of finding and losing oneself on the basis of certainty about one's identity. And both these -- opposite -- fears are essential in our shared longing for love. We need to share our opposite fears of losing and/or finding ourselves. This is our chance to help each other by becoming conscious of the limitations our fears impose on relationships. It is our chance to learn together how to integrate self and loss of self in order to develop a stable identity. The sensing of these different unconscious choices -- fearing predominantly distance or fearing predominantly closeness -- accounts for some of the deep anxieties between resident and supportive women. Each side is not without envy toward the women living the other half.

There is yet another level at which the supportive women substitute and delegate our own feelings: our hatred of men. It is easier and less hurtful to express our feelings of hate towards these wife-beating men because they have so clearly done wrong. It relieves some of the tensions and dissatisfactions in our own relationships. Helping the battered women free themselves of their relationships with men becomes our substitute for not leaving our own unequal relationships.

Our personal relationships become less important and look comparatively better. It is so much easier to deal with the harmful relationships of others than with one's own, the picture is so much clearer. The reverse is true as well: helping other women in their relationships makes us feel less guilty about our own entanglement in relationships or our own longings to be loved.

3.2 The Secret Fascination of the Macho Man

-A woman, 21 years old, married twice, two children, living in a shelter, is afraid to go to court to get her divorce, because her husband might beat her up there. When I suggest that there are lots of police around who'll prevent that, she answers -- not without pride -- he is so strong that they are not going to be able to hold him down.

-A woman in her early 30's, four children, working to support the family, goes back to her husband three times. Her husband doesn't work regularly, served sentences for abusing people, lives in the twilight zone of pubs and crime, getting into fights -- but in between he is the sweetest husband. She says about him: he is very strong, he beats up everybody.

-Three women, two sisters and a friend, sit in the kitchen of a shelter, telling the story of their lives in a pub which the sisters own and where all three of them work. But in fact the pub is run by the husband of one of the sisters, who tyrannizes them all. He runs the pub, he runs them, goes out with other women, hangs out in gambling groups. The women seem to fear and admire him. Not only we -- the supportive women listening -- but also they feel like part of a T.V. story, with all the excitement of a drama.

Being needed and wanted by a strong man like these described seems to add to the self-esteem of a woman, even

if the price is high. Some of the power and physical strength, and all that it stands for, spills over. This strong wild man needs you, which makes him vulnerable and dependent on your own power, that of the loving woman, who is giving him a home and nurturing him. This is an indirect means to get access to the world of 'real' men and their fantasized power over their environment. Who is not fascinated by the John Waynes, Charles Bronsons and Humphrey Bogarts. Who does not either want to have them or be them? They take what they want and they get it. They do not seem to have to ask for it. Thereby they represent the illusion of male omnipotence, which a woman can share at their side. Daring to take a man like this, nourishing the fantasy of coming closer to the ultimate man, might be the source that makes it necessary or even worthwhile to stay longer in a relationship that has turned violent than one "knows" one should. The rational side in ourselves prefers the non-macho, non adventurous, dependable man for a husband or a lover, because we know it is more sensible and we know he will hurt our feelings less. But the price is, he also touches our feelings especially our untamed feelings, less. He does not produce the hurting but neither does he create thrilling excitement. He fulfills our every day needs, but not our dreams. The macho man actually does none of this either, but he prolongs our hopes, holding us in the stage of promised expectations, even if we already know inside that the expectations will not be realized. For it would hurt us more to give them up. As long as there are sparkling moments in which these dreams come back to us, as in telling the story of our griefs, his spell is not yet completely broken. The same phenomenon, presenting itself in other details, is visible in the female fascination towards the adventurous man.

3.3. Easy-rider Mentality -- Looking for Adventure Second Hand

-An Austrian woman, 39 years old, is married for the second time. Her husband is in prison for forgery and has been in prison before for assault. He is violent towards his wife and her children. She is ambivalent about getting a divorce. He writes her poems from prison. When he wanted her to smuggle in his wedding ring, she spent hours in front of a factory, where prisoners were working and in a safe moment handed one of them a coffee jar with the ring in it. This was a very exciting and memorable event in her life; she tells the story three times in one afternoon. Her husband wants her back. He is calm, responsible and hard-working, but she doesn't want that.

-Annie, a British woman living in Central Africa,

is married to a civil servant, solid, responsible and writing bad poetry in secret. "She fell in love with a hard drinking miner. Not an organized miner, the manager, or clerk, or owner. He moved from small mine to small mine that were always precarious, on the point of making a fortune or of failing. He left a mine when it failed or was sold to a big combine. I was with the two of them one evening. He was just in from some mine in the bush three hundred miles off. There she was, rather fat, flushed, a pretty girl buried in a matron. He looked over at her and said: 'Annie you were born to be the wife of a pirate.' I remember how he laughed, because it was ludicrous, pirates in that suburban little room in the city; pirates and the nice kind husband and Annie, the good wife, so guilty because of this affair, more of the imagination than the flesh, with the roving miner. Yet I remember when he said it, how gratefully she looked at him. He drank himself to death years later. I got a letter from her, after years of silence 'You remember X? He died. You'll understand me -- the meaning of my life has gone.' This story, translated into English terms, should be the nice suburban wife in love with a hopeless coffee-bar bum, who says he is going to write, and perhaps does, one day, but that isn't the point. This story to be written from the point of view of the entirely responsible and decent husband, unable to understand the attraction of this bum."

One way to look into these stories of male fascination is to deal with the reasons behind it; another is to reflect on its conditions. The problem is not in the woman's need for adventure, but in a society that does not normally allow for a fulfilled creative life for women. In female fantasies, striving for adventure has a limited place; when there is adventure, it is vicariously gotten through a man. Striving for adventure on one's own would include not only breaking away from the traditional female limitations, but also giving up the dream of, being taken away by a prince on a white horse. The passive female way of admiring this male adventurousness seems to be rooted in the desire to merge with a human being rather than being absorbed in an object like an adventure. Women are raised to live through persons (mainly their family), men are raised to live through the objects they choose. This gender separation in self expression leads to wrong choices for both, because it creates one-sided psychic fixations in which each one gets only the possibility of passive participation in the self-realization of the other. If women were to change their vicarious experience of adventures and the outside world in general participation, the most painful part might be the battle against

the 'old' woman on oneself, who knows one has something to lose and who is a subtle but powerful part of the perpetuation of patriarchy. This painful change we have to go through in ourselves includes giving up the warmth and comfort of dependency; taking responsibility for our lives; being free -- which includes the questions free from what and for what? These considerations are the anxieties caused by the emancipation process.

3.4. Attractiveness of the Violent Man - Care and Control

The attractiveness of a battering man does not lie in his battering behavior, but in his having a dual personality structure, ¹⁰ often is a characteristic of these men, one side of which is caring. But what exactly is care, and when does it turn into control?

-A German woman in a shelter said: "When he was not drunk and beating me, he was the sweetest husband. When I came home from work ¹¹ then, he had dinner prepared for all of us."

-An American woman receives her first beating from her new husband when she wants to do something on her own for the first time (baby sitting for her grandchild) after some months of marriage. "Ed and I did everything together during the first few months of our marriage. It seemed so wonderful, so flattering, to wake up in the morning with him next to me. We went shopping together and spent day after day just enjoying each other's company. Ed went everywhere with me, and I went everywhere with him. I still did not understand that ¹² the closeness we were experiencing was so abnormal."

-Another American battered woman tells about her marriage: "He used to drive me to work in the morning, pick me up at noon so we could have lunch together, and then pick me up at five o'clock so that we could go home together. I couldn't have any friends at work except those I could talk to between the jobs I had to do during the day. I never could have lunch with a friend or go out for a drink after work. Bob was always there. At first I liked it. It gave me a feeling of security. After a while, however, it really started to grate ¹³ on my nerves because it restricted my freedom."

-A Scottish battered woman remembers her feelings during her early courtship: "He once got very angry with me. He didn't hit me, but he got very angry. I thought it was because he was fond of me

and he was jealous, but I didn't realize until afterward that it was nothing to do with fondness. It was quite different. He asked me a lot of questions about who I had been out with before I knew him and he made me bring from the house a whole pile of letters and photographs and he stood over me as I stood over an open drain in the road and I had to put them in one by one - tear them up and put them in."¹⁴

Although these experiences might seem extreme, they reveal a very common pattern in relationships: men having to protect women and women needing to be protected. This might take the form of caring, as a genuine side of a man's character, or it might take the form of control, out of fear of loss and as a means of exerting authority. Whatever form it takes, the underlying assumption, objectified in her role as a wife, always seems to be a woman's inherent need to be looked after. The danger of care turning into overt or covert control exists as long as women are perceived and treated as weak and men are perceived and treated as strong. In a patriarchal power structure this perception includes the protection and the possession of women, the caring and the controlling. To get rid of this double-faced male behavior towards us, women have to free themselves of both the courtesy and the submission. The opening of the door for a lady is just the one side of the double-faced patriarchal domination of the wife.

"We may even question whether women who knowingly marry violent men are very unusual, since in the repertoire of conventional stereotypes there are socially-approved images of masculine protectiveness and possessive jealousy, and the script where the good woman saves the man from the worse side of his nature and marriage settles him down."¹⁵

Men also need to be cared for by women, but within clear boundaries which are marked by their role as husbands, not as a trait of their gender. By the very definition of women as the helpless gender, women learn that they have to be taken care of by a man, and learn to trust a man's judgment more than their own. Thereby women are made and have become vulnerable to letting themselves be cared for even to the extent that they might find themselves trapped, by care turning into overt control. It seems much easier to recognize and worry about the subtle signs of a man's not caring as much for you as he used to, than to realize and to worry about your own wishes for independence - wishes more often than not involving anxieties. Centuries of patriarchal intimidation make it feel more comfortable to be closed in by a man, than to be on one's own. This is a situation for a woman, especially with children, is sanctioned by society

Thus, both her situation and her feelings mutually reinforce each other. The ambivalence on the subject of care and control in a relationship is more easily revealed in the more overt structure of a working-class relationship. "My boyfriend" or "my husband won't let me" is an often used phrase, "a phrase spoken unself-consciously, with a sense of resignation, as if that's the way of the world".¹⁶ Such "resignation" may come to be true in the middle years of marriage, but it was not always there. I have heard young women say these words proudly in the early phase of a relationship, meaning, he cares so much for me that he wants to have a say over me. As derogatory at this concept of caring may be, I could feel its seductiveness: feeling embedded, feeling safe. For a woman to step out of this sort of comforting and limiting relationship, she must be given a chance to find security inside herself and in the outside world.

Dobash and Dobash write about the early stages of couples' relationships (couples where the men became violent later on in the marriage):

"During this period most of the men were very attentive and the women felt loved and satisfied with the relationship. As the relationship continued there was a growing sense of exclusivity and possession.(...) The man's increasing possessiveness and periodic displays of sexual jealousy served as signs of commitment to the relationship. Although, in retrospect, many of the women saw these as early warning signs, the behavior was not uncharacteristic for courting couples and did not cause concern at the time."¹⁷

The changes in wives' attitudes toward being cared for and controlled have their basis in real changes in the relationship, especially with a battering man. In the beginning of the relationship, most men seem to be able and willing to integrate their loving and controlling feelings into positive expression of care. The closer the relationship becomes, however, the more he becomes dependent on it; the more he develops a need to gain complete control over his wife, not trusting himself to be able to keep her otherwise, and not trusting her to stay of her own free will. And the bigger the risk of having to grant her freedom becomes for him, the more he threatens her right to live her own life. At the same time she receives the message that she is needed, that she must help him, - and that she should and will feel guilty if she decides otherwise. The tragedy of this unconscious system lies in the fine line between a traditionally perceived good relationship and its perversion, and in a society which reproduces this structure.

The unconscious needs of both women and men, reinforced

by their roles as wives and husbands, seem to find their extreme expressions in the intermingling of care and control: the man's desire for total love finding its distorted expression in total control; the women's desire for total love in total dependency.

3.5. Motherhood Unlimited

Two battered American women express their feelings about their roles as wives and the expectations of mothering and limitless understanding:

- "The pressures on a man are terrible. He's got to be a super breadwinner, a super lover. A woman is often in the dual role of wife and mother, and a mother always forgives - and forgives and forgives."

- "A lot of husbands really do love their wives, but they have so much hate inside themselves. Sometimes they really want to hurt themselves, but they can't beat themselves, so they beat us. We are their wives. We are the closest people to them."¹⁹

Although the men in the violent relationships exert their male dominance brutally, they can also show themselves to be very vulnerable. They are the little boy needing the loving care of the wife and mother in huge proportions, not wanting to be left alone, being extremely jealous, giving the woman the sense that everything she does is of vital importance to him, even if his reactions are very negative. Also the process the husbands go through after their wives finally leave them has two sides to it: the men do everything to get the women back: threatening to kill the woman or to kill themselves, sending love letters, promising to be a good husband, threatening to kidnap the children, taking any trouble to find them. This mixture of threat and begging contains the possessive as well as the dependent side of the relationship, causing both anxieties and the feeling of being needed in the woman. Stories about how every husband tries to get his wife back again are told frequently in the shelter, including all the feelings of fear and excitement.

These very ambivalent men with their two faces seem to appeal to two sides of the women: feeling flattered as a woman both by his strength and by having to mother the little boy in him. These men give their women a strong sense of being needed: they most often have had a sad childhood, often have alcohol problems, often feel disliked and maltreated by the world. In this system of the man's self perception and his wife's perception of him, it is of secondary

importance whether all these sad circumstances are objectively true or not; more important is that they share this image of him. The logic behind this image seems to be that it makes him less responsible for his behavior and at the same time raises her importance in making up for these experiences and in mothering him. Indulging in his sad childhood, for example, increases the image of the needy little boy behind the big man, who has to be rescued by the ultimate mother and woman. This picture corresponds to our, the supportive women's, need for the perfect victim. The battered woman might want the absolutely needy man, a man who is also strong and powerful at the same time, whom she can rescue and make happy. Giving a man like this stability, bettering and shaping him, is a challenge open to a woman, is a woman's possibility for proving her ability and her worth.

Women accept their mothering responsibilities and fantasies across highly different social settings. There always seems to be a reason at hand why a man needs that motherly protection and why the world should not know about the beatings. A woman who is married to a man who has a working-class job, or who has no employment at all, might be the only one who sees any good in this man, thus strengthening her urge to save him. On the other hand, if the woman is middle-class, the mothering role presents her with a different dilemma. A woman married to a battering doctor or pilot might be the only one who knows about his violent side, a situation which can be even more horrifying because the set-up seems to suggest that the beatings might be all her fault, because everybody else thinks he is a nice and valuable person. This woman may start to doubt her own violent experiences and accept his interpretations of the events, may start seeing a psychiatrist because she is feeling depressed or crazy. The middle-class social setting is intimidating and adds to the woman's lonely situation, and this, plus the even stronger social pressures of a happy home, makes the violence of middle- and upper-class men more hidden.

The ideology of motherhood applies to all these kinds of relationship. The woman is always seen as a mother who never thinks of herself, who always feels responsible for her loved ones, including her husband. She is put in a dependent position but the family is dependent on her in turn. The situation amounts to a power play which causes a great deal of suffering for the woman -- but giving it up means giving up the nurturing power over the family and the feeling of ownership. Living in your own right and not for somebody and through somebody else is a frightening freedom.

The basis for the female power of mothering is the mother's selflessness. She becomes powerful by giving up herself, by living for others. In contrast to this, the

basis for male power in society is selfishness, fighting your way to the top in your own interest and in competition with everybody else. Both forms of power and both forms of self realization are only possible in the face of each other.

Expressions and reasons for female selflessness as the other side of the omnipotent mother will be discussed in the next paragraph.

3.6. Selflessness - A road to Female Heroism

"Whenever she did leave him he persuaded her back through his tears and entreaties and promised that things would change. More importantly though, she returned to him for the sake of the happiness and education of her children. As with the majority of our respondents, the selfless attitude of this woman is remarkable."²⁰

This vicious cycle of events is a common pattern in battered women's lives, and so is their selfless attitude towards it. But it does not seem enough to say that this selfless attitude is remarkable. It is necessary to try to see how it is produced and why it works. Selflessness has to be analyzed as a crucial part of the female role, in order to understand its importance for women, for their self-image and for their societal image. Selflessness is the female sacrifice to the patriarchal family, rewarded with the gratification of mothering and motherhood.

This selflessness is admirable in so far as it has a strength - not only a weakness - to it, which seems to be special in women: to stick to someone and to endure. A Brecht song, that always touched and puzzled me for the women's strength and devotion keeps coming back to me and I never was quite sure, whether it included this line:..."und wenn er ihr Schlaege gibt, es fragt die Hanna Cash mein Kind doch nur ob sie ihn liebt" (and even though he was beating her, Hanna Cash my child would only ask whether she loves him). Nine out of 10 women in America stay with their alcoholic husbands, whereas 9 out of 10 men leave their alcoholic wives, another example of female supportiveness.

Another form of selflessness is the battered woman's concern for her children. When she considers seeking help or leaving her husband, she often waits till he starts battering one or all children or till she feels they are tremendously harmed by the violent situation at home. She endures the suffering for herself, but when it starts affecting the children she may find the strength and the legitimacy go.

"Some have so completely internalized their lack of worth that one of the most common comments (based on observations with over 100 battered women) serving as an explanation for their seeking any form of assistance is, "I did it for the children."²¹

Although this female selflessness has a specific admirable strength, by feeding on old longings and nourishing our hopes of finding complete satisfaction through the all powerful mother it becomes a dangerous sacrifice. It allows the recipients' demands to grow limitlessly, to expect to get without giving reciprocally, to hate one who does not give us everything, to sink into endless disappointment and to feel guilty about our own greediness, to lose judgment about whether demands are right or wrong, ending up with either demanding nothing or everything.

A woman gains societal respect by sticking to 'a difficult man', 'a sick man', a man 'who is dependent on the woman's support'. She is made to feel responsible for the family's well-being; she is supposed to live for her family. Where exactly will the line be drawn when society turns around and calls it masochistic when a woman stays? On the other hand, there are societal punishments for leaving a husband, even a battering one: denial of the problem, disbelief of relatives, friends and agencies, and no provision of alternatives.

For the battered woman herself, staying can become a means of considering herself a good woman, especially a good wife, and this may include a strain of righteousness, of nonresponsibility for her own life, of accumulating a right to be treated as a saint and to feel a mistreated heroine, making the world responsible for her fate and suffering silently. Selflessness and suffering can take on grandiosity as the expression of a megalomaniac fantasy of the ability to endure, a fantasy very much supported by Christian faith. A woman's purity is derived from non-action concerning her own life.

- "A loving woman like myself always hopes that it (the beating, M.B.) will not happen again."²²
- "I didn't deserve it and that I can't forgive him for."²³
- "...If he does this (the battering M.B.) again he is going to kill my love..."²⁴

"Women married often lull their spirits into a deathlike fever."²⁵

3.7. Self - Blame and Control

As long as battered women stay in their marriages, they often put some or all of the blame for the incidents on themselves. They look for excuses: maybe it was my fault; maybe I didn't take enough care for his food etc; he didn't really mean it; it must have been an accident; he was not really himself; he only does it when he is drunk...

- a battered woman tries to explain the battering behavior of her husband: "I have a habit of not keeping my mouth shut. I keep at him and at him. He finally turned around and belted me. It was my fault. I asked for it."²⁶

- another battered woman tries to deal with the fact that she has been abused by her previous two husbands, whom she left because of it also: "I don't know what caused that fight, and I don't know what's caused the fights since. Sometimes I think they are all my fault when I scream and yell at him, or when I assert myself and say that I really want to do something independently. It seems too much for him to stand."²⁷

- "I'm sure I do provoke him. There's something I'm not doing right, even if it's being too submissive. I'm really worried about him. He doesn't deserve this. Somehow I must have brought him into it."²⁸

- "Well, when I went back it was more me saying to him, "Okay, I'm prepared to forget all about it." It was always that way, you know. I'd always kind of say it was all my fault."²⁹

Rather than explaining the women's self-blaming as part of her masochistic personality structure³⁰, it seems to be more reasonable to perceive it as a means of trying to gain some control over the violent behavior by making it understandable in this way.³¹ In a way, self-blame and excuses are a sign of low self-esteem in the sense Dorie Klein puts it:

"She may feel not so much that her shortcomings warrant the beatings as that if she were a better woman, she would not have such a dissatisfied, abusive man."³²

Self-blame's also a resistance to giving up completely to the situation. Being able to explain the violence of a husband by giving it an accessible reason may be less anxiety causing than facing the horror of a man's aggression and the

turning of love into hate. The major danger of a reaction like this lies in its utility as a justification for staying: things might get better when I try harder; it was accidental; it was not part of the behavior of my husband, at least not his real self.

To acknowledge that the reasons for his battering behavior lie in his personality structure and his way of coping with their relationship and his ideas of his manhood as demanded by a patriarchal society, would seem to the woman to deny any hopes she has that she herself has the power to change the situation for the better. This again brings about a feeling of powerlessness regarding the marriage life and the possibility to control it -- though, looked at another way, it brings about the chance to look for power and control over your own life through yourself and for yourself.

To sum up this section on the hidden sides in battered (and many other) women and to make the next parts on the dynamics of the relationships, understandable, I want to clarify the level of reality on which my associations are based. What struck me most, and engaged my curiosity, was the strength of fantasies, images and self-images in women and how important they are in their lives, how in fact they rule a great deal of it. So my arguments are based more on the fantasies about love in women than on whether a certain battered or non-battered woman 'loves' her specific husband and feels loved by him and that she married him and stayed with him because she especially wanted this person. Often the couples seem to have drifted together because of pregnancy or other reasons, such as that this man just was there and was persistent. All this outward material is for me an expression of the hidden fantasies of 'real' love, which remain forbidden and unreachable. But to keep them alive or have glimpses of them or just to continue to long for them persistently calls for a mixing of life with them, in which we pay much for our fantasies yet get very little from them. Within that context, the women love, nurture, mother, blame themselves, have all and no possibilities, complete powerlessness and absolute power.

3.8. Dynamics of a Battering Relationship -- and Many Other Relationships

To understand women who live in a battering relationship, and for the women to understand what is happening to themselves, it is necessary to look at the underlying mechanisms of the relationship, meaning the involvement of both people. A main factor seems to be the distribution of power, weakness, independence and dependency, their actual and their perceived roles.

- Ann was married from the age of 18 to 22 to a man who battered her and threatened her and her parents. He was an alcoholic and did not work, so she supported him. At the beginning she hit back, but he was stronger. He did all the thinking for her and completely controlled her. Still she found it very hard to leave him, and found it a matter of pride to stay. Today she says: "He really is, believe it or not, a very smart person, with an I.Q. of 152. He always talked about plans and goals that made a lot of sense to me, and I believed him. I sometimes felt that it was a compliment to be considered his friend, but there was the other side of Doug, too."³³

- An American woman is living with her man. She earns the money, so he is able to study. He starts to nag at her, undermines her self-esteem, tells her how incapable and stupid she is. She loses all faith in herself and believes everything he says. He doesn't beat her, but takes away her personality in her own right. In order to become a better woman, she tries to do everything right, following his criticism. The result is, that he is even less satisfied with her, so she tries harder and he becomes more discontent with her. This is a vicious cycle, because the more she'll try to satisfy him -- earning the money and doing the housework and being a good woman -- the more worthless he becomes because he fulfills neither his role as supporter of the family nor as a good husband. So in order not to feel a failure, he puts the blame on her even more strongly and more frequently. The more she does, the less he will do. She gives herself up for him, hoping to hold him like that. He made her feel worthless, now she feels worthless, so he thinks he was right in the first place. She cannot satisfy his needs, because he is grown-up, he can only do it himself. But she hopes she can, if she really tries hard, by that making him the little boy he wants to be (just as he makes her the little girl, who can't do anything). But they both also have to deal with the negative part of that wish: denying each other grown-up rights and responsibilities.³⁴

No matter what happens in real life, women seem to support their man's megalomaniac fantasies by maintaining his vision of his ideal self. But they also do it for themselves. It is hurtful to say, "I didn't marry a glorious, outstanding, special man, but someone who has to make himself bigger than he is." The reason for this is that a woman's prestige rises through her man, and so she doesn't want to have her dream of being married to a special man

shattered. This dynamic seems to operate no matter how educated and objectively independent the woman involved is. For example, after a German woman had finished her degree under hard conditions and had found a good job, her man was still studying under easy conditions, having for years been about to start his thesis about the most difficult of themes. For both of them, he remained the undoubted 'intellectual' in the relationship, whom she nourished and admired. Her keeping to the traditional roles seems to be due to two fears: being left alone as a successful woman -- losing her femininity through her success in a man's world -- and having to deal with the fact that her fantasies about his abilities did not come true. This produced the side effect that supporting this illusion gave her a hidden power over him, because in a way they both knew that she could shatter that grandiose picture of him by abandoning the shared image. They both hindered the development of a realistic, grown-up picture about themselves. He appeared bigger than he was, she smaller. In reality he might have been very dependent on her, including financially, but in the dynamics of their relationship she felt dependent on him. They must both have gotten something out of this fantasy, otherwise they would not have shared it. It is easy to see his advantage, although in the long run it will destroy him as a man and as an adult. But her? Deep inside she must know about her power over him, but why does she have to pay for it so bitterly? Maybe her desire to own someone completely is as great as his -- but their means of subduing the other are of opposite quality, shaped by their roles as man and woman.

What these couples share is the desire for grandiosity, specifically, according to traditional roles, for the man to fulfill this role and for the woman to participate. By taking part in the dynamic the woman supports the man's exaggerated self-image because it matches her fantasies of having the ultimate man. In the dynamic of their relationship the man becomes powerful and independent, she weak and dependent; but it is he who is dependent on her support for his role, whereas she without him would grow. This half-conscious knowledge, however, is what a woman has learned to fear: her power and her success in and for herself.

3.9. The Turning Point - Breaking Away

No matter how entangled a woman becomes in a battering (or non-battering) relationship, there are ways out of these ties, even after years of suffering and oppression. This point, at which a woman decides to leave and, through that, gathers the strength to do so, is of crucial importance, because it reveals a mobilization of energy and will that was lost before. Even someone who has totally given up on herself. Analyzing this turning point or turning period is

of importance for women who have given up hope for themselves.

- An American middle-class woman with college education is married to an upper middle-class professional for 13 years. He has beaten her severely. Now after leaving him, she feels a completely different woman and asks herself, who was that person who let all this misery happen to her? She decided to leave in the middle of a terrible beating. That did not stop the beating, but it immediately changed the effect it had on her; it harmed physically, but it did not have the old effect anymore of giving up on herself as a consequence. She felt very strongly that she had regained her will. Before that she had completely lost her self-esteem. After the decision was made, she could make the necessary steps to actually go.³⁵

- A grown-up daughter arranges a meeting with her father, a minister, who has terrorized the family ever since she can remember. The father never touched the children, but beat her mother. The mother never defended herself and always covered up for him. For the first time in her life she tries to openly argue with her father. "My years of struggle engulfed me suddenly, and I forgot my cool. "Father," I began, desperately serious to make him understand the reality of his experience, "you have made my life very difficult--" and my voice broke. "Why, you little--" He lunged out of his chair. My bodyguard moved toward him, and I retreated in paralyzed fear. I was the terrorized child again, the victim, as I always would be, forever and ever, impossible to cure. I shrank into the chair cringing, no longer a person. Defeated forever, I'd rather be dead... Hardly an instant had passed when I began to undergo an ineffable, changing experience, unlike anything I've ever known. A strength from beyond myself -- not my familiar attempts at bravado -- became a solid, dynamic thought which transformed my being, casting out fear: Enough! If he attacks me, this time I will fight back with all my strength, even if I die trying. And with this new credo, there was no doubt that the victimization was over. I felt light and free, calm and strong. Tall. It showed, that metamorphosis, I know it did, for the violent man came no nearer. My bodyguard resumed his seat. It takes longer to tell than it did to happen, but I would treasure the miraculous moment for years to come."³⁶

- After a long marriage with a battering husband,

living in economical dependency, a woman makes a very crucial decision, to get an education for herself and to leave her husband after she has finished it:

"One morning I woke up and decided this was it, I had just had enough. I was still sore from the beating I had suffered the night before, and I was exhausted from being up half the night while he was still harassing me. I don't know why that morning was any different from other mornings, but I decided that I had to make something of myself, or I'd be with him forever, or I'd be dead. Without thinking of what kinds of consequences there might be, I decided that I was going to enroll in school. I went to the phone and I called the medical technician school that one of my friends had gone to. I thought that was as good a career as any, and I knew it didn't take that long to get a degree. I enrolled in school that afternoon, and I loved it. It was my sanity."³⁷

- A battered woman, who left her husband, went to a shelter and now works there, tells about her point of breaking away. Her story includes a point of decision-making as well as a period of working it out. She was able to do this more for her son than for herself: Two months before I left, I was sure I was going to leave. We both had lost respect for each other and my love for him had gone by then. My husband had the philosophy that men have to beat women in order to control them. During our courtship he was a good man and I had told all my relatives and friends that. So I felt very isolated by now, because I never felt able to talk about his changing attitude to anybody. One day I sat down and decided I didn't want to live isolated anymore and I thought about my son who then was 8 months old and I didn't want him to grow up feeling you have to beat up your wife to get attention.³⁸

- A Scottish woman goes through a phase of transition, first she begins to fight back and then she actually leaves him and moves to a shelter: "I'm more defiant now than I ever was, you know. Earlier I'd jump up and do what he told me to do, but not now. He kneed me actually, right in front, you know. And we were outside the dispensary in Manchester and I just turned round and I says, "You mental bastard." I says, "you're at it again. You're always hitting me. It don't make no difference where you are." Mind you, as I say, this is all in this last six months, when I don't

know where I got the courage from, but somebody's given me the courage from somewhere. Maybe I've just taken enough and I couldn't take no more that I just had to answer him back. Normally, before this, I wouldn't have said a word. I would have just taken it and just cowered down on all this. About three days before - no, maybe five or six days before - I left, he picked a knife up. You know, you get a set of three knives - you know, the big one - and he come with this. He says, "You bastard. I'll stick it." So I just stood there. Don't ask me where I got the courage from, I don't know. I says, "Well, why the fucking hell don't you stick the bastard and have done with it?" Because at that time I just couldn't take no more. I just wasn't bothered. If he had stuck it and he'd killed me, I'd have been glad, you know. And maybe that's self-pity, I don't know what you call it. I just put me hands on me hips and I says, "Fucking stick it just there," I says, "put the bleeding knife there...If you don't," I says, "put the fucking thing down and stop talking about it."³⁹

- Francis had been battered for years. She had gotten a divorce on grounds of cruelty, but he forced his way back into her new house and into her life. Her only hope was to finish the school she had started, the one thing she had ever managed to carry through. One day he tore up her books and forced her to burn them, and demanded that she give up school. He beat her horribly, threatening to kill her, got drunk and then fell asleep. "No matter what I did Mickey would knock it down. I thought of my future: to be at his mercy, all day, every day, day after day, like I had been before but now without hope. (...) I thought, 'You don't owe him anything, Fran! You never did.' I thought of the children and how their lives were almost as terrible as mine. (...) My thoughts began to race. I felt very clear-headed, as though I had waked up from a long, refreshing sleep. I thought, 'You can take off. There's a car sitting out there with gas in it. (...) Suddenly this seemed very simple. I wondered why I hadn't thought of it that way before. I had made a discovery; by losing everything I had been set free! There were no chains around my ankles. All the things that had seemed important before - the house payments, car payments, welfare checks, leaving my mother and sisters, leaving the only place I knew - none of those things mattered. I felt thrilled; scared; elated; the way you feel just before the roller coaster begins to roll."⁴⁰

The decision to leave might not always be incentive enough to actually go ahead and do it, since leaving is a long and hurtful process⁴¹. Leaving for the battered woman involves losing two major aspects of her life at once:

"Most people need time to make a final break from a job they should have quit or a personal relationship gone bad. When the battered wife makes the break, she often loses both at once: her "career" as a married woman and the most intimate relationship of her life."⁴²

Still, I think, to make the decision to leave is the necessary precondition for everything else, because it is the starting point, necessary for the woman who must regain confidence in herself and her abilities. It is the point or one point or even one of the points at which a long-term battered woman leaves her own victimization, at least psychologically, and even if it is not yet final she does say 'no'. It does not seem to be crucial whether the "no" is audible to someone else or not, as long as she herself can hear it.

When I came across the first story in which a woman described her point of psychological break away, I was deeply fascinated with the strength of the experience as well as with the strength hidden in the woman. I became interested in finding out whether other women describe similar experiences. Finding quite a few gave me hope for battered women, and for myself, hope in our ability to eventually leave wrong situations and bad relationships. It gives me faith in women and their ability to change and to induce change.

What exactly this point is, how and why it works, I do not know. It seems another puzzling experience of women, deeply rooted in their antagonistic halves of strengths and weaknesses, the complexity of which is beyond explanation models of learned behavior or in-put and out-put.⁴³

I found three points especially fascinating in the women's descriptions of their experience with this breaking point. The first is its strength and its immediate effect on the women's consciousness. It seems like a flash of lightning, like an internal leap forward. After all the confusion and helplessness, something starts to become clearer as she regains the capacity to think. This experience might become stronger and clearer in looking back on it than it was at the time. But even if that is true, it seems more important to me that the women themselves see it as a turning point, are proud of their newly gained strength and experience it as a sudden change, a kind of metamorphosis, in their consciousness and in their attitude. The second point is that the women experience their new strength as a

surprise, not knowing where it came from all of a sudden. It was not a conscious part of hope in themselves but it was there in contrast to their own self-image. They had not lived all they were, but only a part of it -- a part that had been brought out by the tradition of marriage, their expectations within it, their own picture of a wife and the special structure of their relationship. Being a battered woman was a hurtful and dominating part of their existence but now other forms of life turned out to be within their psychological reach, even when the change caused a lot of social and psychic hardships. The third point is only mentioned by one woman explicitly, but others must also have felt it. This newly experienced strength was real, not an 'attempt at bravado'. It was not a light that could be extinguished easily, even if temporarily; maybe it had to go underground for further years of endurance of violence, but it did not cease to exist.

The significance of this turning point is a regaining of psychic strength, of feeling in charge of one's own life. When and how it comes differs from woman to woman. Some might regain their sense of self worth quite easily, others only at the point of death, when they do not care anymore whether they are alive or not. Whether many or all women experience this onset of regaining confidence and self-esteem so strongly and definitely I do not know, but to look into the ways by which women regain power over their lives seems very important. The breaking point is just a beginning; several starts might be necessary but it is the onset of a new move for battered women to try and dare it.

III. Women - Battered and Unbattered

Although my research experiences concentrated on battered women, I feel it necessary to include the situation of unbattered women in my interpretation of the data. My aim is to expand the consideration of battered women into an analysis of women's lives in general, in the course of which it is seen that the distinction between battered or unbattered women is minor compared to the existence of common structures of female life situations and identities. Battered women reveal, in their extreme form of suffering from women's subordination, a far more general structure that exists in all women's roles in relationships and in female images and self-images. I want to sum up my reflections on women - battered and unbattered - in four themes that are relevant in shaping women's lives and play a part in making violence against women possible.

1. All You Need Is Love; Love Is All You Need

All men - meaning all men and all women - want to be loved. Can they also love and let themselves be loved? Apart from this first abstract statement above love, everything else concerning the matter seems to be questions or differences if it is to include both women and men. Already, through turning the title the other way round, it does not seem to suit half of mankind in our society: all you need is to be able to give love - writing these words down, I associate two sorts of people with it: women and Jesus. It is their role and even their profession or calling. To say that about a man, we would feel was not enough; he would lack something. Men are supposed to be able to do more, and thus the capability of loving is degraded to a secondary question, suitable for the 'second' sex or reserved it for Jesus.

A man's role and expectation is to receive love - by women who specialize in giving it to him: first his mother, then his wife. These ultimate forms of femininity - mothers and wives - entwine the female role with a promise of total love -- a promise that cannot possibly be kept by women. The impossibility causes women to feel unworthy as females and gives men the supposed right to hate and mistreat women, who by their very existence as lovers or wives or mothers remind them of this broken promise of absolute and immortal love, a love without conditions. This promise is the essence of the fantasies around fulfilled femininity, opening up heaven and hell for women's lives: heaven by opening up feelings of omnipotence, all-embracing, all-changing motherhood; hell by making a woman vulnerable to limitless demands, because this form of love does not include a love for herself (a condition which would allow for relativity of expectations but also would take away the glory of the role, making it human). Women hold up half the sky, it is necessary for women to hold up half the earth too.

Why and how is the need of love and loving made impossible as a satisfactory experience in our society? The reason is that the patriarchal role division between men and women has given love a different meaning in women's and men's lives: women are made the representatives of everything concerning love and emotions, especially to make love work, whereas men have become mutilated in their feelings and emotions. Wishes of symbiosis and wishes of autonomy are socially divided between women and men, instead of being integrated as opposite needs balancing each other in one person. Women become the symbol for dependency and men become the symbol for autonomy, both representing only half of a mature individual's wishes and needs. The other half is subdued within each and consequently in the other person. Thereby, mutual love is made impossible, and different sorts of needs and dependencies are created which do not add up to

a unifying entity - one part has been denied empathy. Our society has set aside half of its population to be responsible for love. While the other half is determined to deal with and control 'real life' in society. Therefore men are important and women are nice (which in turn makes them important), men achieve something and women are there, left with the task of life while men shape actual history. Men live and love, women are love. If you are identified with love, then giving love means giving yourself, an assumption shared by society and by female identity. Women have only one choice: either to exist and be alone or to love and to lose themselves - a dichotomy men are spared. In the eyes of society and in her own eyes, a woman's very existence as a woman is endangered if she is not loved and in love. The result of these gender differences in love is a structural imbalance of needs: women want more love, men feel trapped by love; women feel they miss the central idea of life - a happy marriage and a happy family; men look for their central idea of life - a successful career - and want a happy marriage and a happy family as well.

Apart from societal hindrances part of the insecurity women feel in trying to liberate themselves from the limitations of the female role lies in the fact that leaving these limitations also means losing the old expertise and emotional security for which they have been socialized. Women have learned to feel in accordance with and not in opposition to societal values; they have to stay in their marriage and with their family in any circumstances, because it is a woman's fate and a woman's place.

"Whether or not a woman is free to leave a violent and stressful marriage will depend on: her emotional investment in the ideals of marriage and motherhood, contrasting with the alternative identities available to her as a lone mother or a worker; her social status in the circle of her friends and how this depends upon her marriage; her financial investment in marriage, that is, the standard of living and financial protection it brings compared with alternative resources or living alone; the possibilities and stigma of gaining alternative income from social security or legal processes; the availability of alternative accommodation; access to the law and willingness and ability to use it; and so on..... In our society such behavior may be further explicable as the desire not for this particular man and relationship, but for the security and status which a man, any man, tends to confer upon a marriage..... In other words, whether or not violence builds up and continues in a relationship is not purely a matter of personality but a complex balance of internalized social ideals and external constraints and

opportunities."¹

Women take on the responsibility of their marriage including the responsibility for the well-being of the husband; that in turn 'justifies' him in making her feel responsible for his beating her and to feel nonresponsible himself.

"On numerous medical records the victim [the battered woman, M.B.] appears to have been kicked repeatedly like a broken TV, a commodity in which a large emotional investment has been made which now symbolizes the world of 'false promises'."²

She is the captive of a promise of total female love and care, which she has never been asked about but believes in. Although nobody could even bear the fulfillment of the promise, this doesn't hinder any of us longing for it. Love is not all we need, and the love we need, we do not get - and cannot give. The separate functions of women and men in society deny them the right to explore their own other side and needs, thereby losing the base for understanding each other. They remain strangers through delegating part of their human maturity to the other. The purest expression of this alienation is the convention that makes women the representatives of love.

2. I Only Live For You - The Best and The Worst Of It

Being there for someone else is very honorable in our society. Its meaning and implications, though, differ widely, depending on whether we think about a woman or a man. For a woman it generally means living for your husband and your children, or extending this concept of individual care to a societal level: living for the sick, the poor, the children, implying involvement in direct helping. For a man, living for others is generally thought of as taking place outside his own family. A man is honored if he lives for others on a professional level, as a doctor, or for his country as a politician or a soldier. The differences between expectations for men and women in respect to this issue are greater than the similarities, if one looks at the honor involved, the amount of pay and the range of societal action and variety. The differences are also true on a personal level: living for someone as a man takes place through his actions, mainly his work; living for someone as a woman includes giving up yourself by living through, not only for, the other. It is the difference between doing and being. Since the other concerned is part of a woman's private life (or is expected to be her substitute for a private life), the other becomes her own life - leaving no room for an independent self with an identity of its own. The identity she is annexing is not hers, but someone else's.

The cultural conception that a woman is there for someone else - most often as a mother or a wife -- does comprise work, but work - contrary to the conception in relation to a man - does not have priority in the image of a woman's role. This emphasis on a woman's value consisting in the main in simply "being around" in case a loved one needs her shows itself in the societal evaluation of housework and childcare as non-paid labor, and permits husbands to ask their 'house working' wives what they do all day while the husbands rest from 'a day's work', letting their 'labor working' wives do the housework because this female work is seen as love. Even the reality that the majority of working class women work in the labor force does not necessarily change the prevalent image of women, neither for themselves nor for their husbands.³

The value placed on living for and through someone else, even if it is more of a societal or psychological perception than a fact, seems to be important in women's lives across class lines and across individual life situations.

- a battered woman who had considered leaving decides not to get a formal education for herself, after writing for years for her husband in his name, although it would keep her dependent on him: "All of the sudden I felt as though my self-worth was gone. I couldn't get a job in psychology. I didn't have the credentials. I couldn't do the work I was used to doing. He was my ticket into an exciting professional career. It didn't matter that my name wasn't on the work, until I really needed to get a job on my own; then I realized what a waste of time it had been all those years. No one would hire me. No one would give me the same respect that I got being his wife. It didn't matter that no one knew that I was doing the work..."⁴

- another battered woman explains why she stays: "When we were married twenty five years ago, we both came from extremely wealthy families. Both of our families were just delighted that we married (...). The first five years of our marriage I really loved him, and I thought I could help him. I was going to be his psychiatrist. After a while, though, the fear of being killed took over. (...) The best thing I can do is try and recognize when he's in that kind of mood and just get away from him for a while. I couldn't live any other way. I need his success to be my success. Without him, I'd just be nothing."⁵

- a married non-battered working-class woman would like to start an education, but her husband is

against it: "I keep talking to him, but I'm not getting anywhere yet. I'll keep trying, and maybe in a few years, he'll see it my way. Sometimes I understand how he feels, but sometimes I get mad because it doesn't seem fair that he can tell me no. I say to him, "It's my life; why can't I do what I want." And he says, "It's my life, too, and I say no." Then I get mixed up and I don't know what to say, so I just wait, and I'll try to talk to him again sometime when he's in a good mood."⁶

In the eyes of society and often her own a woman is what she is through a man, later on through her children, especially her sons. A man also achieves what he achieves more often than not through a woman. That makes them both dependent upon each other, each in her or his societal place and role, denying both of them a full individual personality development but making it especially hard for a woman to stay herself and to have a relationship with a man.

A woman's life in our society is organized in that way, that it is always easier to see what is being done to her than what she can or has done for herself. This perception and enforced reality of a passive female self becomes turned around completely - and as fanatically - over the question of a woman's responsibility in marriage and childbearing. These are the two sides of the same crazy division of labor between women and men and their psychic representations in the individuals: women are meant to perceive their lives in to separate sets, one in which they are totally responsible (family life) and one which denies them access to experiences felt to be completely out of reach (life outside the family). The assigned responsibility for women in the family does not mean that they are in charge of the important family decisions; it rather seems to be the other way around. The more patriarchal the family set-up, the more the wife is held responsible; but also the more she feels responsible, because she believes in the traditional values of a woman's place.

When we fight against woman's present place in society, we also fight the place in which women feel strong and capable - we make ourselves vulnerable. We have to confront ourselves with the anxiety this causes in the long periods of transition. The more endangered the patriarchal family seems - while at the same time few promising alternatives are open for the majority of the women in terms of education, jobs and earnings - the more women might fear that they will lose rather than gain something. This fear, however, often changes radically once a woman has dared to experiment with new life styles, for example, battered women who have left their husbands.⁷

3. Women - Trapped Between the Professional Woman and the Woman Professional

The career of the professional woman - in its honorable form as an unpaid wife or in its despised form as an outcast but paid whore - at least carries with it the guarantee of being seen and seeing oneself as a female woman. The woman professional, on the other hand, runs the risk of being denied and losing her female identity. Each of these kinds of woman has to struggle for her identity, in varying degrees and on different issues. The price for the femininity of a wife is high, but so is the societal reward. The wife is supposed to give up being a person in her own right by becoming the wife of...(till some years ago it was common in Germany to refer to the wife of a doctor, a professor, etc., as Mrs. doctor or Mrs. professor; in the U.S. a wife still loses her first and her last name; both customs are symbolic of the annexation of a woman by a man); but the wife also gains a lot in the hope of becoming something she might not have tried and was denied trying. The position of the wife is surrounded by the air of happiness, emotional and financial security and the fulfillment of a woman's destination, especially by becoming a mother.

A woman learns, and consequently feels, that her emotions and her intellect are two sides of herself. She has to learn to be careful about whether they interact favorably or unfavorably with each other in regard to her femininity. This is a problem a professional man never confronts, for his career cannot possibly endanger his male identity, rather, the opposite is the case. A woman professional is especially vulnerable on this issue; her female identity is at stake and she can only choose between wrong choices: deliberately giving up being perceived and perceiving herself and as a woman or restricting herself by opting for a 'female' profession on a low level in the hierarchy.

This female dilemma, being a professional or being a woman, leads to questioning both your femininity and your professionalism. It raises doubts about your value and capability as a professional as well as posing the question of whether the sacrifice women have to make for professionalism are worth it. Because of the constraints involved, a man coming into or going out of our lives may make not only a difference but the difference even when we take a strong interest in our work.

This problem can reach tragic dimensions in a woman's life. The societal walls surrounding women become part of ourselves and make us vulnerable in two dimensions: in our search for love and in our search for a professional identity.

- a battered 42 year old successful attorney says about herself in her relationship with a battering man: "Can you imagine what an unattractive, intelligent woman who thought herself asexual for so many years feels when a man finally pays attention to her? I know it sounds dumb now, but I didn't think of myself as a woman. I thought of myself as a lawyer... I found myself being the feminine sweet little thing that my own self image never said I was, and I have to tell you I loved it... it took me so long and so hard to get to where I am professionally, and I'd never give up my profession. I know that now but there was a little bit of time with Larry that I really thought I could."⁸

- The story of a 41 year old battered physician follows a similar pattern: "He was the greatest thing that had come into my life. I hadn't been with a man for so many years, I had forgotten what it was like, how much fun it was to be in love...Then: "the man throws her against a stove, which makes the removal of a kidney necessary; he also leaves her without getting help. After her anger is diverted by the man's renewed friendliness and especially his proposal of a holiday cruise, she says: "He couldn't have wanted to hurt me as badly as I was hurt. It really must have been an accident."⁹

- a woman tells about the two sides of her mother's life; the public and the private one: She was a distinguished university professor who had written a number of books and travelled on her own through Europe giving lectures, but she also was battered several times a month during her 20 year long marriage. Her husband drank, owned guns, often threatened to kill himself. After he tried to do so, he started therapy. He was a nurturing father. Her mother never did anything on her own or for herself outside her work and she never did anything about the battering. She never talked about the violence of her husband, neither inside nor outside the family.¹⁰

These women - and many more, maybe all - seem to live in two completely separate worlds: in one being the competent and confident professional, in the other being the passive, oppressed and even battered dependent wife or lover.

4. Love and Destruction

For a woman, the need for intimacy and the struggle to be autonomous are two juxtapositions inside herself that are the source of constant worry and sorrow. Falling in love involves not only the breaking down of part of her boundaries but seems to question her total personality by giving away part of her strength and ability, sometimes to the degree of total dissolution of herself. She has been given and has taken that side of the relationship that strengthens the other - at her cost. This dynamic, however, will finally become a loss for both of them; her diminishing of herself is just as unreal as his enlarging himself, because it is more part of the relationship than of their personalities, although en passagere they may feel it as belonging to their individuality. Therein may lie the reason for a common development of relationships on the verge of breaking up: on her part, the woman involved may feel horrified by the thought of ending the relationship, finding it unconceivable for herself to survive alone, not trusting her capabilities; on his part, the man involved may not be able to imagine how he actually feels about breaking up, may be already looking forward to the new possibilities it opens up. After the relationship has ended, the woman finds herself surprised that inspite of the tears, there is a life outside the life as a couple; she experiences new strengths. The man often finds himself surprised at the extent of the feelings of loss he has to go through, particularly since he never believed that she could leave him anyway - since she was the dependent one.

The distortion in a relationship of the woman and man involved and of the relationship itself is not a consequence inherent in love relationships but a consequence of the process of our training as we were growing up, a process that denied us the possibility of living through our fantasies of being loved and being separate, of being a part and being ourselves, that would have given us the chance to feel at home in both forms of existence - without the one being a threat for the other. Instead, we are one-sided individuals - the women denied self-development, the men denied empathy for the other. We are robbed of the respective other "in the service of patriarchy and capitalism" (Lazarre).

Battered women often express how puzzled they are about themselves, how they do not understand why they let themselves fall so deeply into dependency and why they stay in that situation.

- a medical technician who is being battered by her second husband: "I knew exactly what I was getting in for, and I'm still puzzled by the fact that I wanted to marry him..."
- "My husband was so violent, I can't understand

why I stayed with a man like that for ten years."¹²

However, there is one reason why they stay and remain passive. Often these women are afraid of losing control over themselves, of letting go all of the built-in hatred inside themselves - one of the reasons for their passivity.

"There was a pervasive sense of hopelessness and despair about themselves [battered women, M.B.] and their lives. They saw themselves as incompetent, unworthy and unlovable and were ridden with guilt and shame. They felt they deserved the abuse, had no vision that there was any other way to live, and were powerless to make changes... It is likely, however, that the constellation of passivity, panic, guilt, intense fear of the unexpected, and violent nightmares reflects not only fear of another assault, but also a constant struggle with the self to contain and control aggressive impulses. The violent encounter with another person's loss of control over aggression precipitates great anxiety about one's own controls."¹³

Disillusionment in a love relationship may become the measure of the underlying hate, covered up by passivity and submission. The less there is a chance to release it, the less a woman feels capable of managing her frightening emotions. And the more she tries to hide her emotions, the more difficult it becomes to let go of them.

"The immobilized victim neither acts in her own defense nor reacts emotionally to stimuli that an observer might consider quite painful. Therapists gain a practical appreciation of the straitjacketing effect when, during the course of therapy, extremely inhibited clients begin to experience the rage and pain they might have been expected to feel all along."¹⁴

If the dam broke, the force of hatred might become limitless, building up to a matter of life and death. The vague knowledge of this fragile system of controlling oneself prevents all action, leading to acting dead without that being a relief to the situation.

"Either they turn inward and attempt to build a protective shell around their emotions that will allow them to cope with the continuing violence or they consider that their only escape is suicide or murder."¹⁵

- "In all the time that we was married, this last

three years I'm talking about, in all the time that he hit me, bounced me from one wall to another wall, he could never make me cry. But as I sit here talking to you, I can cry... One day I bought a knife, I actually bought a knife, and I was going to stick it in him cos I wanted to see him dead. I did. I hated him. I began to hate him that much... But, he didn't know about this knife. I even had it underneath my pillow, just in case he come near me. But I was - I was going to kill him. I had it in my mind I was going to kill him."¹⁶

Women are not nice and women are not unaggressive. To know that about ourselves helps us to transform our suppressed feelings of anger, hate and aggression into livable expressions and parts of ourselves instead of harboring inside us an unknown stranger we have never learned to deal with. Suppressing this part of ourselves, feeling guilty about our own hidden aggression, we are doubly under pressure, because we have learned that these feelings do not belong to femininity. This concept of femininity makes us the silent and enduring object of male aggression.

In the last part I want to give an example of the deadliness of our concept of femininity, which polarizes women between the virgin Mary and Eve the seducer. The examples are extreme, but in their extremity lies a far more general truth about the meaning and consequences of femininity.

5. Living in a Fantasy - Women Between Mary and Eve

While gathering the material about women and their fantasies, needs, wishes and attitudes in dealing with relationships with men and the psychic and societal forces behind them, I was struck by a very simple idea. The common theme was that because of psychic and social reasons it is impossible for women both to love and to live. What I had described and analyzed was the struggle with this duality in women's lives:

"...the two basic human conflicts that women have been forced to feel as killing divisions of our being: that between physicality and mind, and that, between living for oneself and living for others."¹⁷

Once found, the theme seemed so simple, but the conflict is so deeply engulfed in women and myself, that it is hard to see and painful to find out about it. The struggle for survival of the self or of love, often of both, can take on very different forms, as will be shown in the stories of two

very different women struggling to live and to love.

The beginning of the awakening of women is in daring the journey through one's own life, as part of women's fate but also part of women's self made history. Two women dared this journey; the endings are deadly, not by choice but as a necessity. Their journeys are very different from each other, and they seem extreme, yet these are only the outer limits of "normal" women's selves and self-concepts, and their stories enlighten the essence of all women's lives by the frightening depths of their experiences. Both women were Americans, in their thirties during the seventies. Francine¹⁸ comes from a poor working class family and lives a poor working class person's life. She drops out of school in her teens after having been a bright kid with leadership qualities and marries at a very early age a man who not only batters but tortures and threatens to kill her. Her life becomes publically known, because the only way she finds to free herself from him is by killing him, by burning him in his sleep. Maryse¹⁹ is well educated, a professional metropolitan woman and a feminist. But to become free, which for her means indulging in lust and desire, she has to go to Mexico, the country of macho men. She self-destructively searches love and fulfillment in the forbidden world of the 'natural', potent Mexican men, only to find out that she is treated more and more like a worthless whore and not as a free woman. On one level of herself this does not surprise her; rather it nourishes her fantasy of being able to conquer this prejudice, or to sink in it. She carries through this destruction of her person until the final consequence, of being killed in a dark alley in Mexico City, presumably by her last lover.

For both women, the solution to their life situation seems inevitably to involve the death of the self or the other. Francine does not know it (though she might sense it); Maryse does know and goes ahead anyway. Their lives touch us because they could not solve their problems; rather, they lived them, making it possible to identify ourselves with their strengths and powerful convictions, whether destructive or self-destructive.

Francine symbolizes the woman who needs to live up to her own image of the perfect loving wife and mother, being good at all costs: first, by submitting to living in hell to the point of almost complete loss of self, passively letting herself be destroyed by her unsatiable, cruel and yet dependent husband; second, by destroying him to the point of literal extinction. She can leave the situation only after she has made it non-existent.

Francine was a bright child and a good student in her early years in school. She lost her interest in school gradually when she became a teenager, after a move to a new

school where she was not seen as exceptionally bright any more. This lack of recognition injured her greatly. The stigma of poverty combined with the small amount of gratification and possibilities of education in her surroundings then gave way to looking for a new form of identity, which seemed more reachable. There was another trait of her personality, that made her gain sympathy but also laid the roots for her later tormented life: empathy.

"My score on 'empathy' [measured as a grown-up, in prison, M.B.] was practically off the graph. Too much for my own emotional well-being. I remember in my childhood having very strong feeling for people."²⁰

This capability became her destiny; her goals switched from wanting to become a teacher or a stewardess to the goals aspired to by the women of her surroundings - getting married and having kids.

"I'd picture a home in the suburbs, children who were perfect students, a husband who was kind and loving, a life that was tidy with no big anxieties. In my heart I knew even this much wasn't reality, but it seemed more within reach than any other dreams I had."²¹

These dreams were not produced by the marriages she knew and which she found dreadful, but by the images of marriage as a woman's career that seemed available to her. She produced these fantasies of a perfect married life actively and pursued them with incredible strength and the powerful conviction that she, unlike the married women she knows, could achieve them. At 15 she met her future husband, who was then 18 years old.

"The way he carried himself struck me as more manly, more mature - the way he held his cigarette, the way he combed his hair."²²

He was very persistent in courting her, uncomfortably pressuring her into sexuality, convincing her to keep on dating him because he said he loves her.

"She found she loved being loved, but felt a deep uneasiness about what obligations might go with it. She found her feelings flickering and elusive."²³

The process of victimization which started then did not get under way because she loved him, but because he loved her and needed her. Feeling needed is what attracted her. Finding sense in life by being needed is a major part of the

role of mothering and seduces women into feeling obligated when someone approaches them. The strength of the image of living for others and thereby being a 'good' woman equals the strength of the obligating character towards this ideal. This begets a selflessness that enlarges the female self on a psychic and on a social level and then diminishes and destroys it.

"I began to feel this terrible responsibility of having somebody love me so much. I began to tell him I loved him because it seemed so cruel not to. Sometimes I felt it ²⁴was true, but I knew in my bones that it was not."

"I didn't know what I had done to make him love me so much, but since I had done it, I felt to blame. As a child I always wanted to be good. I couldn't bear feeling to blame for anything."²⁵

This constellation: in which he has the right to be demanding since he loves her and she feels obligated to meet his demands in order to keep up the ideal of being a perfect woman, together with her urge to feel needed, puts her at his mercy, making them mutually dependent but also putting him in the position of defining the nature of the relationship.

The point of no return comes for her when he finally managed to pressure her into sleeping with him. She let it happen, but felt used afterwards.

"When it was over, the first thing Mickey said was, 'now you don't have to marry me if you don't want to'."²⁶

Whereas she felt that now she had to marry him.

"I've given him my body. I've given him everything. I'm his."²⁷

Her high ideals of marriage and the prospect of being able to realize them made her forget her doubts and the ugly scenes. Maybe it was the price she felt she had to pay for being allowed to dwell in her fantasies of her coming wonderful marriage, thus making her blind to reality and not allowing her to choose a suitable husband. She started her marriage with a twofold problem: having to live up to her ideal of a perfect wife while succumbing to her guilt feelings because she did not really love him.

As a newly wedded wife she bought a new outfit to look attractive for her husband. When she wore it, he ripped it off her body, because it looked too good on her. She was bitter because she had only tried to be a good wife, but also felt guilty.

"Did he sense that she hadn't truly given him all her love? This was a secret Francine kept hidden. She was ashamed that she didn't love Mickey in the fullest sense, as a good wife should - and she wanted above all to be a good wife."²⁸

This pattern -- of accusations, often of beatings, out of jealousy because she looked at other men or for being pretty -- remained throughout the marriage. She tried to avoid situations and behaviors where he might become jealous, but thereby unconsciously acknowledged his right to behave that way. In the beginning of the marriage, he would still apologize and say it was all because he loved her. Her life became more and more like that of a prisoner but of a prisoner who in spite of everything feels obligated to love her guard, tied down by the powerful feelings aroused by being loved, even when it becomes tormenting.

In between are periods of fun and companionship, where they share the longing of building a nest of their own.

"She told herself that she must learn to be a wife - that a wife must bend to her husband's wishes and thus make a happy home."²⁹

Thereby she created the contradictory situation: he had the power to define their marriage but it was her job to make it work. Underneath, she must have had a strong sense of her own power, to believe in her possibility of succeeding. The roots of her power might have been his violent dependency on her.

"In times when things would be good between us I'd have great hope and be happy. I wanted so much to be a good wife and mother and have my marriage succeed. I was so proud of my baby. I just didn't dream of trying to do anything but go³⁰ on and make the best home for her that I could."

Under these circumstances she had to accept his beatings, his running around with other women, his financial irresponsibility and his growing demands on her. She had four children with him. The marriage deteriorated continuously, he came and left as he pleased. At the same time he became increasingly violent. She fled from him, moved several times, said no when he wanted to make up, divorced him on grounds of extreme cruelty, called the police against him, lived on welfare. But at the end, he is always back.

"Mickey saw that he could come in any time he wanted and that there was nothing I could do about it."³¹

For Francine their relationship became fate; more and more she lost the ability and the strength to fight it, although she resented it increasingly. After a car accident, Mickey became first physically and then emotionally totally dependent on Francine. He wanted to marry her again.

"Francine was trying to revive her love, but her feelings failed to respond. All she could feel was pity. Mickey was eager to resume their sex life. Though Francine complied, she found she had become strangely numb. In their better days - though less and less toward the end of their marriage - she had enjoyed sex. Now she rarely did. Mickey took it for granted that Francine loved him as before.³² Wishing it were so, she told him that she did."

But she did not marry him again.

"When he asked me to do that, something inside me just rebelled. I'd given up everything else, but I couldn't give up that last little shred of independence."³³

They stayed together, and he started beating her again, became even more demanding and vicious and started to drink heavily. His family clan decided that they should move into their neighborhood, since he still was convalescent and so it would be best for him. Francine again complied, but bitterly.

"I look back and I still don't understand why I did whatever they told me to.... Nobody said anything about what would be best for me. What I wanted didn't matter to anybody, and I would put my feelings aside as though they didn't deserve to be considered."³⁴

Francine did not allow herself to find her own feelings important: a truth so sad and yet so powerful; a truth that is the bitter consequence of the image of a good wife and mother. Demands for yourself destroy the self-image of sacrificing your life for others as the highest value available. (But self-demanding would also allow you to say no to both demands and others; it would take the sting out of mothering while diminishing the enormous power of the nourishing mother, holy in her selflessness; it would open up relationships for the struggle of give and take and the search for balance in loving and living).

The increasing violence of Francine's husband, including his threats that he would kill her if she tried to leave and would find her where she went, added to her image of him as being all-powerful and having complete control over her.

She knew he was serious in his threats to kill her and capable of it. She did not know anymore that his power was limited and limitable. She became more and more depressive and suicidal.

"Francine was able to endure another day, another week, another month with Mickey but she knew she was losing ground. Every time Mickey attacked her, verbally or physically, she felt herself as an old hag. "I was twenty-seven, but I looked fifty. I'd wonder 'How can I take it? How long can I go on living like this?' One day I thought, 'Fran, you can go on like this until you crack up, or you can do something about it. Which are you going to do?'"³⁵

She asked him for permission to go to an educational program offered by a welfare agency, which he granted unwillingly, only because he thought she was too dumb anyway. She sensed that this education is a matter of survival for her and threw herself into it, thereby regaining and reclaiming some of her strength for herself. Phases of ups and downs continued in their marriage: he started and left a vocational training program, started and left going to church and to an anti-alcohol program, she left and came back. But all this time she continued her school, got her high-school diploma and started a secretarial course. After yet another outbreak of violence, she thought:

"Last night was real. He almost killed me last night and it's going to happen again. I can't do anything about it. All I can do is go home and wait for it to happen. Go home and wait to be killed."³⁶

He tried to force her to quit school, but this time she would not give in, it was her last hope, her chance for a new life. He did everything he could think of: beating her, threatening to kill her, forcing her to burn her own books, throwing the dinner on the floor and pushing her face into it, repeating it after she had cleaned up the mess, convincing the police that everything was all right, finally raping her at the end of the day. She lost her last ground, but only for a time. She needed time to transform all the years of submission into the anger and hate behind them; she was going through a transformation in which she became alive again, just after he had taken her last straw of independence.

"There is no way to describe how I felt: a helpless, frozen fury; a volcano blocked just before it erupts."³⁷

The eruption that followed equaled in its power and limitless strength the strength of her ideal of being a good, rather a perfect wife. There was nothing between total love and total hate.

For Maryse there was nothing in between either. For her the path was not to bear it all to the very bottom but to take it all, with the same strength, vigor and longing. Both women lived self-destructively through their psychic depths to the bitter end, in Maryse's case her own end.

Maryse went alone to Mexico, a country which she envisioned as having produced the ultimate man and lover, dark skinned and macho. She searched for sensual lust and desire, for the dangerous thrill of it - dismissing the other side of her self as an intellectual and feminist woman. She had just lost her job teaching English at a college in New York, a loss that was bitter for her. In her first letter from Mexico, written to her woman friend, she already saw clearly the gap between her fantasies and her wish to be loved, and the reality she tried to achieve this in.

"I actually fucked him this afternoon and it was grubby and banal, as you always knew. It is incredibly shocking, their lack of any need but to plug one conquest after another, and that boring whining pleeeeee to get you to let them shtoop you. Yet I succumbed."³⁸

Not only did she succumb, she made it the essence of her life, diving into their world of desire with all the discontent, self-consciousness (she has a half-paralyzed face from a childhood illness), self-hatred and sense of her own brilliance that were the parts of her.

"It's not masochism but a will to desire."³⁹

The strength and the mercilessness of her will to desire mingled inside her self will and compulsion to desire, which more and more became predominantly a need to be desired. Being desired later became a source, the only source, of feeling alive and beautiful. Most of the time she was convinced of her own ugliness, a perception that became a martyrdom and an obsession. Just as ardently, though only rarely, this perception changed into feeling beautiful and desirable, especially when she was dancing. Her perception of herself and her numerous lovers is clear and hard, almost merciless. Yet this knowledge seems only to increase the inevitability of the need to move in the direction of self destruction.

"Love self so much because am diminishing (to be rewarded by real love one day) that wouldn't mind

being. My ego, therefore, would seem to be schizophrenically detached from my bod. When someone sees you totally as thing, though,⁴⁰ is freeing. Conduces to irony, i.e., self-love."

So much strength, power and vigorousness flows into that angry search for love, untamed and evil in its destructiveness.

"I obviously meant much less to him but my body's hunger bypasses pride so organically that my lust for him seems an abstract physiological thing I'm not the least responsible for. I understand how women tolerate, in love what the world sees as humiliation."⁴¹

Diving into this world of feelings by means of sexual experience with uneducated, very young Mexican men, sharing their mad desire for love as a means of self reassurance, she saw as both her downfall and her purification.

"Any confidence is shot. Bad experiences have drained my energy and instead of moving on sensibly am waiting a rite of purification in the place of my downfall.⁴² The place that has weakened me has to redeem me."

At the same time she was still aware of her other self.

"If, of course, I were legitimately writing an article, I would have all the confidence of my person as a writer and aggress left and right⁴³ Protected; as by sunglasses, from full contact."

In Mexico she wanted to live like the Mexican men, with the right to choose a lover and to be sexually free. But Mexico is a country that punishes her for not keeping to the rules, and the men despised her for making herself not only available but actively participating.

"...and I was finally being punished for having fucked Lucio, for desiring men, for dancing wildly, for seeking, like them, adventures in the night. How men hate the sexual in women. How incredibly oppressed women are, for surely they all want exactly what I want, and men want, and they are crucified for it."⁴⁴

She wanted badly to be loved and at the same time neither believed in love: "Do you know what love is? A pure grinning imp. The guttersnipe as achieved aristocrat"⁴⁵ nor made love possible: "I am exactly like Guilietta Massima in Nights of Cabriria, with the hopefulness of the eternal

reject".⁴⁶ She found stable relationships just as impossible as her longing for them. Love and everyday life seemed principally contradictory; life as a couple she described as a form of respectable boredom and domestic intimacy. Once love is defined as thrill, desire and eternal longing, it neither can be fulfilled for more than moments, nor can it have a continuity between persons. So she became a suffering female Don Juan and a vampire, both expressions she uses for herself. To ease her sufferings she started drinking regularly, smoked heavily and during increasing spells of depression ate enormous amounts of food, of sorts she did not like (e.g. 10 pieces of cake), and vomited it afterwards. Her hunger for indulgence was endless, yet it never really was given a chance to start because it immediately aroused a merciless and destructive "No". She wanted it all and got nothing, except the tragic lust of suffering.

Sometimes she thought about suicide and sometimes about becoming a whore. She saw only two ways of life as possible: "between boredom/dignity and excitement/abuse"⁴⁷ and she was determined to live the second one, no matter what it cost, even if it was death, because to her the first choice would mean a dead life without feelings.

After spending a year in New York, she returned to Mexico, both in spite of and because of her tormented life there. During her second stay she seemed to feel more integrated and more successful in her strivings for lovers, at least in the beginning. But this success was deadly, even before she actually died, because getting the lovers she dreamt of took her illusions and her fantasies away from her - leaving nothing.

"The only contact we ever make is through sexual desire. What else do we live for but to feel alive in this way? To fuck Mexicans,⁴⁸ that is to indulge in my need for their beauty."

She loved her image of Mexican men, not a special person. What she asks for is that each of them represent her ideal of a man.

"The nonspecificity of Mexicano love is matched only by my own.⁴⁹ I want them all and each one is insufficient."

This conception of love gives love, by necessity, a passing character, something that can be lived only for seconds in orgiastic timelessness, never leading to satisfaction, only leading to the longing for an insatiable more in an endless agony. The lust of this longing is limitless and deadly, yet so promising in its archaic greed.

"Miguel was my cavalry. My sign, my test from God: if I conquer my desire to pursue him, I will come out all right in the end, I will have proved myself macha. But the cost is respectable boredom. If I call him and he rejects me and there is pain and shame, I have an excuse to slut off into the night and replenish desire."⁵⁰

Being rejected is what heightens the longing, which is easy to deal with,⁵¹ whereas fulfillment of the desire makes it seem worthless.

"How rejection improves looks! Before, when I was winning, even his incredible face looked doggy and his wide hips, his unfortunate bones."⁵²
"If only winning weren't so boring, and being bored so terrifying."⁵³

In this terrible and yet so seductive concept of love, fulfilled desire could only be achieved, perhaps even more important, enjoyed, if it was the end of time, that is the end of life.

"I wanted to have been loved, to have loved, for once, in Mexico, site of my focused dark desire. This happened and I thought, before it did, that I'd be happy with the trophy. I couldn't have predicted that, quite simply, there'd be time afterwards. That part accomplishment couldn't fill the present forever, that I'd still be "young", still desiring life since after I was still living no?"⁵⁴

Towards the end of her letters, before she was murdered in Mexico City, her thoughts became more and more desperate, often concerned with death.

"...and I realized I was killing myself or I was dying, because I'd had Miguel. I had had a perfect beauty, a passionate reciprocated love..."⁵⁵
"With a Miguel, I can dispense with Miguels. Without, I can't. I need to be loved in order not to need to be loved. Oh Lord. I'm going."⁵⁶

Her perception of herself, of women and men is still poignantly clear.

"...the men drink and philosophize about pain. The women live it solo and culturelessly."⁵⁷

The tragedy is that her statement seems true, in spite of the fact that she herself as a writer gives a literate example of female despair and suffering. Her need to give herself up for the idea of love becomes stronger and stronger

in comparison to her need to live.

"...and I plunged myself into him, contoured my entire self onto him, unto him, into him."⁵⁸

Having gone that far, having lived her desires to the edge of life, there seemed nothing left. In her last letter she writes:

"And the ever further remoteness of Miguel, let alone proposals, love, even sex, hammer their cold steel nails into my coffin of a feeling, hopeful mind. Of a going, sexual woman who wants love. Who once, through what scheme of his or magic of mine, had it. I am really dead, - it was no illusion I wake up to. I am dead."⁵⁹

To give up desire, to her seems like death. The bitter irony is, that giving up the fierce and unbowed need for it would permit her to live. In a way she knew that, but the price for living is what she cannot and does not want to pay. Yet she knows the last part of her - and not only her - life tragedy, too: the price is to give up a dream, a fantasy, a longing to get something back that one has never had.⁶⁰ For Maryse, being loved by men is a necessity of life having this love is impossible to bear.

Both women, Francine and Maryse searched for love and paid bitterly for it. Who is to decide whether it was necessary or unnecessary? There is no easy answer, just a struggle, a struggle that receives its dignity, beyond right and wrong, by the women who fight for it most ardently, consciously and unconsciously, active and passive. In search of love, Francine wanted to be good and even perfect, not to be blamed for anything, nor to blame herself for anything. At the end she had to kill for her goal. In search of love, Maryse descended into the forbidden world of lust and danger, enjoying being a bad woman. At the end she 'creates her own murder'⁶¹ and is killed.

The 'good' woman, Francine, stayed a virgin in the sense of the purity of her thoughts, ideals and conduct, but thereby she became guilty, guilty of not leading her own life, which she finally could do only after becoming guilty, even guilty of killing. The 'bad' woman, Maryse, the dangerous goddess of female love, became pure in her desperate and uncompromising search for lust and desire, because of the powerfulness of her true search and the strength of her conviction.

Both ideals, Mary and Eve, are deadly in their consequences if striven for in totality by human women.⁶² We have to live with being neither and with being both of them.

Footnotes

Introduction:

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2. New ideas of a feminist methodology are discussed by women scholars such as: Barbara Du Bois, "Passionate Scholarship", Gloria Bowles (ed), Theories of Women's Studies, Women's Studies 110, University of California, Berkeley; Meredith Gould, "The New Sociology", Signs, Vol.5, No.3, (Spring 1980); Maria Westcott, "Feminist Criticism of the Social Sciences", Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 49, No. 4, (Nov. 1979).
3. Christa Wolf, Nachdenken ueber Christa T., (Darmstadt: Luchterhand Verlag, 1975), p. 222.
4. Alice Schwarzer, a known German feminist, cited in a TV critique by Margrit Gerste, Die Zeit, No. 22, May 29, 1981 (translated by M.B.).
5. R.E. Dobash and R. Dobash, Violence Against Wives, (New York: McMillan, 1979), p. 234.
6. Our psychic entanglement in patriarchal structures leads to anxiety when facing emancipation, a point very well made by: Marina Moeller-Gambaroff, "Emanzipation macht Angst", Kursbuch 47 (March 1977).
7. A position put forward by feminists working with battered women: Lenore Walker, The Battered Woman, (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) p. xiv; Maria Mies, "Methodische Postulate zur Frauenforschung", Beitraege zur Feministischen Theorie und Praxis, No. 1 (1978), p. 61.

Chapter II:

1. On the topic of nurturing and mothering see also a very interesting German article: Sozialarbeiterinnengruppe Frankfurt, "Gefuehlsarbeit", Sozialmagazin, Heft 9, (1978).
2. Del Martin, Battered Wives, (New York: Pocket Books, 1977), p. 265.

3. The hardships of leaving for battered women has been discussed in the literary review in Part One, II, 6; these empirical findings support our experiences.
4. This paragraph is partly based on a very profound article by Jessica Benjamin, "The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination", Feminist Studies, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Spring 1980).
5. For evidence on this point see the discussion on the development of violence over time in Part One, II, 3.
6. For statistical evidence see Part One, chapt. II, 2; for the dynamics involved see Part One, Chapt. I, 5 and II, 6 especially as described by Lenore Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit.
7. My personal experiences in a German shelter.
8. Story taken from: Ch. Benard and E. Schlaffer, Die ganz gewoehnliche Gewalt in der Ehe, (Reinbek: 1978), p. 98.
9. Story taken from Doris Lessing, The Golden Notebook, (London: Bantam Books, 1973)
10. In the literature this dual personality structure is often called "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" personality; cf Martin, Battered Wives, op. cit. p. 56.
11. My personal experience in a German Shelter.
12. L. Walker, op. cit., p. 83.
13. Ibid. p. 116.
14. Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit. p. 84.
15. Dennis Marsden, "Sociological Perspectives on Family Violence", J.P. Martin (ed), Violence and the Family, (Chichester: J. Wiley and Sons 1978), p. 116/117.
16. Lilian Rubin, Worlds of Pain, (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 96.
17. Dobash and Dobash, "Wife Beating: The Victim Speaks", Victimology, Vol. 2, No. 3-4, (1977/1978), p. 438.
18. For findings on battering husbands' displays of extreme and increasing jealousy and on methods used to keep their wives in isolation, see Part One, chapt. II, 4.

19. Terry Davidson, Conjugal Crime, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978) p. 64.
20. Dobash and Dobash, "Wife Beating: The Victims Speak", op. cit. p. 611.
21. Dobash and Dobash, "Love, Honor and Obey: Institutional Ideologies and the Struggle for Battered Women", Contemporary Crisis, No. 1, 1977, p. 413.
22. Martin, Battered Wives, op. cit. p. 4.
23. F. Melville, "Some Violent Families", J.P. Martin (ed), Violence and the Family, op. cit. p. 13.
24. Dobash and Dobash, "Wife Beating", op. cit. p. 617.
25. Jane Lazarre, "What Feminists and Freudians can learn from Each Other", U. West, (ed), Women in a Changing World, (New York 1975), p.214.
26. R. Gelles, The Violent Home, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976) p. 59.
27. Walker, The Battered Woman op. cit. p. 96.
28. T. Davidson, Conjugal Crime, op. cit. p. 55.
29. Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit. p. 119.
30. For this position in the literature see Part One, chapt. I, 2.
31. Position taken by Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit. chapt. 4.
32. Dorie Klein, "Dark Side of Marriage", N. Hahn Rafter and E. Stanko (eds), Judge, Lawyer, Victim, Thief, (Boston, 1982) p. 11 (manuscript forthcoming)
33. Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit. p. 9.
34. Personal report.
35. Oral report at a conference "Violence Behind Closed Doors", San Francisco, Oct. 23, 1980.
36. T. Davidson, Conjugal Crime, op. cit. p. 157/158.
37. Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit. p. 136.

38. Personal report at a conference "Marital Violence", March 26, 1981, Lafayette, California.
39. Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit. pp. 142/143.
40. Faith McNulty, "The Burning Bed," (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Janovich, 1980), p. 175.
41. For literature on leaving see the discussion in Part One, chapt. II, 6.
42. D. Martin, Battered Wives, op. cit. p. 238.
43. For my critical review of behavioristic models of explanation see Part One, chapt. I, 5.

Chapter III:

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2. E. Stark, Flitcraft and Frazier, "Medicine and Patriarchal Violence", International Journal of Health Services", Vol. 9, No. 3 (1979), p. 480.
3. Cf. L. Rubin, Worlds of Pain, op. cit., Chapt. 9.
4. L. Walker, The Battered Woman, op. cit., p. 138.
5. Ibid., p. 167-169.
6. Rubin, op. cit., p. 180.
7. Cf. Walker, op. cit., pp. 182/83.
8. Ibid., p. 114.
9. Ibid., pp. 91-93.
10. Oral report, given at a conference on "Marital Violence", Lafayette, Cal., March 26, 1981.
11. Walker, op. cit., p. 82.
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13. Elaine Hilberman and Kit Munson, "Sixty Battered Women", Victimology, Vol. 2, No. 3/4, (1977/78) p. 465.

14. Elizabeth Waites, "Female Masochism and the Enforced Restriction of Choice", Victimology, Vol. 2, No. 3/4, (1977/78) p. 59.
15. Dobash and Dobash, Violence Against Wives, op. cit., p. 141.
16. Ibid., pp. 141/42.
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38. M. Holder, Give Sorrow Words, op. cit., p. 3.
39. Ibid. p. 7.
40. Ibid. p. 18.
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42. Ibid. p. 30.
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44. Ibid. pp. 69,70.
45. Ibid. p. 79.
46. Ibid. p. 108.
47. Ibid. p. 174.
48. Ibid. p. 185.
49. Ibid. p. 234.
50. Ibid. p. 195.
51. Ibid. p. 201.
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54. Ibid. p. 257.
55. Ibid. p. 268.
56. Ibid. p. 274.
57. Ibid. p. 276.
58. Ibid. p. 299.
59. Ibid. p. 305.
60. For more details on this confusing psychic process of narcissistic hurt see: Alice Miller, Das Drama des begabten Kindes, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979).
61. M. Holder, Give Sorrow Words, op. cit., p. 309.
62. On the images of Mary and Eve as sexual paradigms see: Elizabeth Janeway, "Who is Sylvia? On the loss of sexual paradigms", Signs, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Summer 1980).