

from: -  
 Celani, D (1994)  
 "The Illusion of Love"

she is dominated by her way she can, though again ed selves *are not remotely* of her previously split off sical damage to her abuser, a weapon to kill him. This ie female victim that was ed in stage one to emerge.

### The Psychological Characteristics of the Abusive Male

Let us focus for a moment, before we get to the abuse incident itself, on the general psychological characteristics of the typical batterer. My analysis up to this point has focused on the male batterer's infantile dependency on his partner and his attempt to make up for his developmental deprivation by forcing her to provide him with nurturance that he never received in childhood. I have also described the lack of emotional controls in the batterer that make him volatile and aggressive toward others when he feels deprived. Walker supports these observations in the following quotation, however, she is not able to speculate on the origins of these strong needs in the abusive male. This is because a psychological investigation of his history would implicate the batterer's childhood as the source of his infantile needs. This quote again illustrates Walker's paradoxical ability to describe but not explain the battering scenario.

Another staple characteristic is the batterer's possessiveness, jealousy, and intrusiveness. In order for him to feel secure, he must become overinvolved in the woman's life. In some instances, he may take her to work, to lunch, and bring her home at the end of the working day. . . . Despite this constant surveillance of her every activity, the batterer is still suspicious of his woman's possible relationships with other men and women. (Walker 1979:38)

An object relations analysis of these unanalyzed observations regarding the batterer's extreme need for security is that the batterer is trying to force his new mother substitute to give him all the attention that he missed out on during his developmental history. The batterer acts like a primitive, violent, starving man who has stumbled into

a huge restaurant. His ability to control himself is minimal, and his desperation, uncontrolled needs, and enraged emptiness cause him to behave outside the boundaries of normalcy and law.

The paranoia that Walker and others have observed in the batterer is based on his history of abandonment by his parental objects during his childhood. Those barely remembered (or completely repressed) memories of rejection are so painful to him that the batterer does everything in his power to insure that he will not be abandoned again. He uses the independent style, which relies on action, activity, and vigilance, to combat his vulnerability. His paranoia is designed to protect him from the humiliation and potential ego collapse that will occur if his partner leaves him. That is, his paranoid speculations act like an early warning system designed to inform and protect him from the possibility of that abandonment.

Interestingly, many abused women report that the batterer's intense possessiveness was initially attractive to them. This is due to the effects of thousands of painful rejections from their own developmental histories. The future batterer's intense, passionate, and overwhelming interest is welcomed by the developmentally deprived woman, particularly during the initial stages of the relationship. Her self-esteem is buoyed by his intense interest, which feels like a compensation for the hundreds of rejections she experienced at the hands of her her original objects. Naturally, her hopeful self screens out all signs of danger regarding her exciting object's intense, suffocating possessiveness. Her initial feeling of being flattered often turns to horror later on as she realizes that her partner absolutely believes that she is having liaisons behind his back. Over time a victim of abuse recognizes that all her reassurances regarding absolute faithfulness does nothing to reduce the bizarre fears and fantasies in his inner world. This realization—that her partner has lost part of his grip on reality—often serves to *further* activate the victim's bond to her abuser, since she feels she is the only one who knows of his bizarre irrationality. Her misplaced loyalty and sense of responsibility bring her to protect him from being found out. This view of the abusive partner, as being both terrifying and pathetic, has historical precedents in childhood as well. Many abused and neglected children report that they felt enormous attachment to, and responsibility for, the pathetic aspects of their parent, despite the fact that they had been severely mistreated.