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A Potential Young Murderer

The genesis of crime is as complex as human nature itself. It has its past and present history. This author had an opportunity to study, examine, and treat a number of people who were involved in a series of crimes beginning in childhood and, with some of them, continuing into adulthood and eventuating in homicides. One common denominator in the lives of these people was exposure to hostility, brutality, and seductiveness in their early years of life. Today we hear so much more about the child-abuse phenomenon as psychopathology of the parents than we do about the impact such violent behavior has on the subsequent development of the child. Preemptive approach to this problem is that such direct experiences of violence have a disorganizing effect on future growth and development of the psychic apparatus of a child.

One of the purposes of my presentation is to attempt to demonstrate that such violent behavior on the part of parents becomes a serious impediment to the normal progression of ego and superego development in their children. However, many other factors and dynamic forces have to be considered when we approach as intricate a subject as violent human behavior. My main hypothesis relevant to this paper is that unresolved intrapsychic conflicts aggravated by excessive exposure to violence in childhood are not only responsible for some of the delinquent behavior of adolescence but also can lead to the commission of more serious crimes, such as homicide, in young adults. The line of demarcation between past and present as far as the unconscious fantasies and their acting out is concerned becomes obliterated when certain predisposed individuals undergo severe psychotic regressions. It is my contention that the early childhood traumata of being severely beaten, sexually abused, and emotionally abandoned leads to "homicidal proneness" and can, under the influence of "right circumstances," erupt into acts of violent behavior which can easily lead to death and destruction.

Methods

The author has had opportunity to study and follow six cases of men and women who either committed or attempted to commit murder. Due to limitation of time only two cases will be presented in detail, with allusions to the rest. These two particular cases were selected because both men were studied at great length immediately after the commission of crimes and followed thereafter for ten years. Anamnesis obtained from them is such that it is possible to see and follow the continuity of their inner conflicts from early childhood into adulthood where they tragically attempted to resolve the conflicts by homicidal behavior. The remainder of the sample consisted of two adolescents in their late teens who repeatedly attacked women with either con-

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scious or unconscious intent to kill them; also included were two young women, one of whom killed her rival and the other stabbed two men in fits of primitive rage.

The data from which I drew my conclusions were obtained in several ways. The standard interviewing techniques were employed, and the material thus obtained was viewed from the psychoanalytic point of view. Whenever possible, I encouraged the subjects to use free associations and to discuss fantasies and dreams in relation to the crucial events of their lives. The information obtained was integrated with the historical material made available from interviewing a number of other people who knew the defendants well. The transference reactions displayed by them were utilized to clarify their psychodynamics and to correlate their past and present behavior. I personally examined all available records, such as court documents, police reports, and hospital records. I also interviewed relatives when available, attorneys, police authorities, and custodial personnel. License is taken in describing the cases for the purpose of disguising the identity of the patients; however, the major events of their lives and acts of violence are presented as they occurred in real life.

Clinical Data

Case 1

One of the subjects of my study was a 34-year-old, stocky, slightly obese, fair-haired balding male. He was seen and examined by me on a number of occasions for the purposes of evaluating his mental status and his ability to stand trial and determining his sanity at the time he stabbed his mother to death. Initially, he was acutely psychotic which limited one's ability to obtain relevant clinical material from him. After two years at a hospital for the criminally insane, he became sufficiently lucid to allow me to question him at length about his past, including the events which led to the matricide.

My clinical data is limited by two factors: (1) he was not in ongoing psychotherapy, which ordinarily allows for ample recall and reconstruction of early childhood events, and (2) he continued to be in a delusional state of mind, which prevented him from recalling accurately some of the events of his earlier life. However, his recollection of the actual murder was accurate as to detail and was further corroborated by a number of people who witnessed the events described here.

On 1 Dec. 1965 Ronald was seen by a psychiatric social worker at a state outpatient mental health clinic. The worker noted,

Today there was a noticeable change in the patient's physical appearance, in that he had deteriorated. The patient has noticed a return of former symptomatology and expressed fear of hurting his mother. He was preoccupied with the troubles in the world today, and this would suggest . . . loss of control.

Ronald told me that preceding this visit to the clinic he was unable to sleep for two days and that after his visit he still was unable to sleep even though the doctor increased the dosage of trifluoperazine hydrochloride (Stelazine®) he had already been taking. Riding back to his mother's home in the taxicab, he thought of killing the cab driver. After another sleepless night, he told his mother that he was afraid that he was going to kill her. She dismissed this casually. (It is not uncommon to experience sleeplessness in a state of acute excitement associated with psychosis.)

Later that night, when she tucked him in, as she was in the habit of doing, she told him that she would keep from his stepfather his statement that he was afraid he would kill her. That night while trying to fall asleep he was flooded with repetitive incestuous fantasies alternating with the dreaded thought of his father returning from the dead.

The failure of his superego to institute controls over his sexual impulses created a delusion of his father returning from the dead. It is a frequent occurrence in the state of ego regression to experience such delusions as a matter of defense against strong incestuous wishes. On this night this defense failed him. He got out of bed at 6:00 a.m., shaved, and went down to eat breakfast which his mother prepared for him after his stepfather left for work. While he was eating, she read to him aloud from the Bible. He had forgotten the exact passage she read, but that particular passage prompted him to ask her if she had ever lied. She told him that she had never told a lie in her life. He felt himself become enraged. His fixed idea that he was an illegitimate child of hers came in conflict with her insistence that she never lied to him about anything, including his parentage. If she were lying about his parentage, he could continue to entertain incestuous fantasies about her with impunity, since no longer would she represent to him an idealized mother image. He claimed, as he was sitting at the kitchen table, God spoke to him through his brother's voice, commanding him, "Kill her Lord! Kill her." While looking at her, he reached back to the drawer and slowly pulled out a knife. She became frightened and started to run. The voice repeated, in stronger tones, "Kill her Lord! Kill her!" He got up and ran after her in a state of rage. Only a weak, impotent thought of "don't do it" occurred to him as he chased her. From that point on the sequence of events was not clear to him. He remembered stabbing her with the knife in the back, calling her "a dirty bitch," seeing her fall, and hearing her say, "Please, son" and "Somebody help me." He recalled next that a woman on a porch was screaming at him, "Stop or I'll shoot you." Then he remembered the police came as he stood motionless. He told them that he was sorry.

There were several people who witnessed the murder almost in its entirety. They were all questioned by the police who recorded their statements. Those statements provided us with the following composite of events as seen by them. He was seen running after his mother across the lawn stabbing her in the back; she fell turning toward him, struggling, begging him to stop, screaming for help as he continued yelling at her and stabbing her repeatedly while facing her. A young man screamed for him to stop; he hesitated for a moment.

The neighbor across the street yelled at him to stop and fired a warning shot in the air, which he seemed to hear but ignore, and he continued striking his mother for some moments to come. He stopped and started walking toward the woman who had the gun. She told him to stop or she'd shoot him. He took a couple more steps, stopped, dropped the knife and just stood there.

It is striking that he was so involved in the surge of primitive carnage he was unaware of many of the lethal blows he dealt his mother, unaware of the sequence of events, and unaware of the presence of the many onlookers who were screaming and pleading with him to stop. Even the warning shot had no bearing on his repeated stabbing of her until he had struck his last blow saying, "You bitch." It may be noted here that one of the tests for the doctrine of a person under the sway of an irresistible impulse is that the presence of onlookers has no effect on the actions of an impulse-driven individual.

Family History—Ronald's father was the eldest of four and born in Kentucky in 1906. He was a religious man who attended the Baptist Church on Wednesdays and Sundays. He occasionally had the pastor home for dinner. He worked in a steel mill as a blacksmith. He could do anything with his hands. He built their home. Although his son idolized him, he tended to ignore Ronald except when he disciplined Ronald by beating the child with a 2 by 2. In 1944, when he was 38 years old, he sustained a head injury caused by a falling piece of steel. The following week he became irrational and hostile. He alternately thought his wife to be the Virgin Mary or a bitch.

Finally he chased her around the kitchen table saying that he was going to kill her. His eldest son attempted to restrain him and he attempted to strangle the boy. Neighbors called the police who came in time and took the father to the State Hospital where he died two days later of an intracranial hemorrhage. As they were taking him away, Ronald heard his mother say that she would rather give up one of her sons than lose her husband.

Mother was born in Kentucky in 1907. She had two brothers; a sister had committed suicide at the age of 56. She met and married Ronald's father. They were a happy and contented couple even though she was said to be domineering and argumentative. She sided with Ronald and was overprotective of him. Whenever disciplinary action was necessary she threatened her sons with father's beatings upon his arrival home from work. After her husband's death, when Ronald was 15 years old, she married a widower with three teenage sons. Ronald considered his stepfather to be "alright," but had very little to do with the stepfather or his stepbrothers. In 1956 and 1958, mother became depressed and was hospitalized for a brief period on each occasion. Ronald interpreted these illnesses, as well as the remarriage, as abandonment by his mother. Ronald said that he had a good relationship with her and that even though he argued with her on numerous occasions he never got mad at her, except once in his childhood when she locked him up in a dark closet for a long time. At that time he was so mad at her that he wanted to kill her. Brother succeeded in pleading with mother to let Ronald out.

Brother was nine years Ronald's senior and was regarded in their early relationship as someone who could be counted on for care and guidance. There was a complete break in their relationship after Ronald murdered their mother. The only other significant relationship that Ronald had was with his Uncle Leon, whom he resembled. This was one of the reasons Ronald believed that Leon was his real father. This uncle had lived in their domicile for a while when Ronald was a small child, and Ronald broke into this uncle's house when he was 10 years old. At age 18, Ronald was told by his brother that before his birth their father had accused mother of having had incestuous relations with her brother. When he was 25 years old he had this reaffirmed in his mind through questioning his senile grandmother just before her death. From that time on he had a firm, fixed idea that he was a "bastard child" even though mother repeatedly told him that he was not.

Personal History—Ronald was born on 10 March 1931. Memories of childhood are sparse. He has no recollection of his mother taking physical care of him. Two significant early memories of his father are in opposition to each other: he had enjoyed "helping" his father build their house, and father had brutally beat him with a piece of lumber.

School was a burden to Ronald all his life. He "cheated" to complete the ninth grade. He knew his letters but "could not put them together" in order to read. During his pretrial hospitalization he tried for three years to learn to read but failed to remember whatever he could learn; he still is unable to read, write, or do more than simple arithmetic. His formal I.Q. is recorded as performance 79 and verbal 81 with the impression that his potential might be higher if it were not for the emotional conflicts of his childhood. He always felt "nervous" in school and began to refuse going to school at the age of 15—to the extent that he was put in a juvenile home for two weeks for truancy. He dropped out of school at the age of 16.

Ronald had a variety of jobs, each one requiring some mechanical skills. At 16 he was bumping and painting cars, at 18 to 20 he worked in a steel mill on a strip mill "pulling tails." At 20 he was a press operator, at 22 he helped his wife manage an apartment house, and at 25 he was back working at a press.

Information concerning Ronald's earliest psychosexual development is lacking. At

age 11 he had several homosexual experiences with his peers consisting of mutual fondling and fellatio. At age 14 he stated that he was given his "sexual orientation" by friends who told him about girls, intercourse, and babies. He began masturbating nightly at age 15 and had his first heterosexual experience with a prostitute at age 16. He continued with prostitutes until he met a girl who later became his wife. A daughter was born to them a year after their marriage and a son, six years later. He was a devoted, dependent husband who followed his wife's directions and who took care of the children whenever he was at home.

At this point a brief resume of Ronald's emotional difficulties which resulted in delinquent behavior is in order. Throughout his school years he was unable to learn how to read and write. Learning disabilities led to truancy and he finally dropped out of school in the ninth grade. His delinquent acts were in the form of breaking and entering homes to steal valuables. This first occurred at age 10 when he broke into his Uncle Leon's house. When he was 13 his father was so concerned about his breaking and entering that his father made him spend a night in jail. After his father's death and his mother's remarriage Ronald resumed breaking and entering. When he was 17 years old he was caught during the burglary of a drugstore and was placed in a juvenile home until he was 18 years of age. After his release from the juvenile detention home he violated no laws.

His serious mental illness first manifested itself in 1961 after learning of his wife's infidelities. He became anxious and depressed and began to express worries of "global destruction" and shortly thereafter became frankly psychotic. He was hospitalized for a brief time, and after his discharge from the hospital he left for California. In the meantime his wife divorced him, and when he returned he married his second wife. When that marriage failed he came home to his mother. During his stay with his mother he began to experience homicidal impulses and suffered from visual and auditory hallucinations. The latter took the form of voices from the dead, and he claimed he saw mounds of dirt in the house with rats running around them. On the morning of matricide he heard voices telling him that he should kill his "dirty mother."

After Ronald murdered his mother he became extremely suicidal and was hospitalized for four years in an institution for the criminally insane. At the end of that time he was adjudged competent to stand trial. He was found innocent of first degree murder by virtue of being insane at the time of commission of the crime. He has been hospitalized ever since.

The course of his improvement has been slow, and he has suffered from many relapses which were replete with homicidal and homosexual fantasies. As he began to emerge from a deep psychotic state his suicidal behavior disappeared. He continued in a delusional state until a year ago when all of his psychotic manifestations disappeared. He was last examined by me in December 1974, at which time he was docile and compliant and had reconciled himself to a long stay in a mental institution. He was very insistent that he was "crazy" when he killed his mother and that he lost in her "the best friend he ever had."

Case 2

Bill was a 38-year-old man who struck and killed his wife and five stepchildren in less than 10 minutes in the middle of the night by using a heavy, double-bladed axe. A sixth child was killed sometime later with a shotgun. Four days prior to the murders, Bill had lost his job and because of this his wife had thrown him out of the house. There was a long history of past quarrels between them over such matters as his not working, excessive periodic drinking, and neglect of the family. After he committed the murders he attempted to kill himself but failed.

Bill was born in 1934, an only child of parents who indulged themselves in sex, violence, and excessive use of alcohol. Bill's mother, although she cared for him, was inconsistent and contradictory in her relationship with Bill and, at times, blatantly rejected him. She was a mother who both babied him and made him dependent on her and beat him over the head and shoulders whenever she was angry at him. Bill clearly recalled one episode when his mother was striking him on the back of his head as he was running away from her. It was those beatings which left the indelible impression on his unconscious mind which ultimately led to the murder of his wife, Betty, at a time when she became his mother substitute. In addition, it is important to note that his mother on several occasions literally abandoned him, once in a bus depot and once in a train station because she was annoyed by his bad behavior in front of her relatives whom they had visited. On both of these occasions it was Bill's father who found him.

Bill's father was a passive man who suffered from chronic alcoholism and was unable to achieve a lasting success in his profession. He frequently displayed violent behavior toward his wife because of her frequent involvements with other men. Only on one occasion did he turn his violence upon Bill. When Bill was four years old his father beat him so severely that he almost died. Bill's father committed suicide by shooting himself in the head after finding out that his wife had left him permanently.

During the course of Bill's psychosexual development several episodes occurred which are particularly significant as far as the link between the violence and sexuality is concerned. Innumerable times he witnessed sexual intercourse among adults. Almost always, during such times, there was the holocaust of arguments and show of physical violence and brutality. Before he reached the age of puberty he was seduced into homosexual activities by older men. When Bill was 24 years old, his father, ten days prior to his death, made sexual advances to Bill. This led to a violent physical struggle between the father and the son. Another link between sex and violence existed in relation to his masturbatory activities for which he was often severely punished. For example, at the age of ten his mother caught him masturbating and beat him until she was exhausted, then gave him the "silent treatment" and refused to cook for him for about a week. She was primarily afraid that Bill's intellect would be damaged by his continued masturbation since she was told that her son was of superior intelligence. His I.Q. was 135. On at least one occasion he masturbated while watching his parents having coitus. His father caught him in the act, beat him mercilessly, and afterwards commented that he would have to wear boxing gloves in bed to keep his hands off his penis.

His first sexual intercourse took place when he was 14 years old and the girl was 16. He continued to see her for about two years to gratify his sexual appetite. Subsequently the girls he dated, and with whom he had sexual relations, were always older than him by as much as 10 years. As a matter of special note he married a divorcee 10 years his senior who had an already established family of five.

A brief resume of Bill's exposure to violence during adolescence and young adult years follows.

When he was 17 years old, while his parents were drinking in the kitchen, his father attacked his mother. Bill became enraged and pushed his father around; the father fell, hit his head on an end table, and bled. Bill grabbed his mother and ran out of the house.

An incident occurred while Bill was in the Navy, stationed in California. A woman came to visit him from Michigan; he thought she was divorced and he began cohabitating with her. Her husband discovered her whereabouts and complained to Bill's commanding officer, who ordered Bill to send her back home. He did so, but he

got drunk and went AWOL. He was caught and restricted to the base for a week. His anger became an impotent rage whereupon he got hold of some carbon tetrachloride and drank it with the intent to commit suicide.

After his marriage there were several minor incidents of violence, mostly directed toward his wife and his oldest stepdaughter. The most significant and bizarre occurred when he was out of work in 1961. He thought of providing money for his family by kidnapping his friend's wife in order to be put into prison so that Betty, his wife, could get social welfare aid. He went to his friend's house and attempted to abduct the wife. She screamed and slapped him, and in the ensuing struggle he cut her with a knife. This attempt was so bizarre that he was committed to the State Hospital for seven months where he was diagnosed as being a sociopath with alcoholic addiction.

The next major act of violence was the murder of his entire family. After his arrest he was confined to the county jail where he attempted suicide by cutting his wrists. He spent the next three years in a state institution for the criminally insane, and at the end of that period he was found to be competent to stand trial. He was tried and convicted of first degree murder of his stepdaughter, Julie. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and confined to the maximum security state penitentiary. Since his confinement to prison he has maintained fairly close contact with me by correspondence. Over a period of ten years he has given up delusions of reuniting with his murdered family and made a fairly realistic adjustment to the prison life. His main complaints have to do with poor quality food, inadequate medical care, and the loneliness of his existence. He maintains some paranoid ideation about prison personnel, both inmates and custodial staff alike. He is hopeful that he will be paroled in another ten years or so. The closing paragraph from his last letter written around Christmas 1974 states:

I'm still a rotund 240 pounder, what with no exercise and a bad case of apathy. It seems strange, but I have begun to develop a little empathy for fellowmen around me. I will close for now. Mind you, I was serious that if you know a little old lady who enjoys writing, I'd be glad to write her. My mother is dead and my relatives have disowned me so I have no one to write to except you.

Discussion

Psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and behavioral scientists have made significant contributions to the understanding of violent behavior in human beings. In quest of greater knowledge of violence one can turn to many and varied scientific disciplines. I chose to follow the psychoanalytic approach as far as methods and analysis of the data is concerned. This approach incorporates, as one of its cornerstones, recognition of the existence of dynamic unconscious forces. These forces are expressed through repressed fantasies and memories of the traumatic events of childhood. In approaching the specific topic, that of a young person who may be categorized as a potential murderer, I studied six people who behaved violently and during such acts of violence either committed murders or attempted to but failed. During my investigation I discovered that all of them were subjected to three types of experience in the course of their childhood development. First, they suffered repeatedly from physical abuse perpetrated by adults, usually parents; such abuse consisted mostly of severe beatings. Second, they saw their parents engaged in either extreme physical acts of violence or sexual intercourse with each other. Third, as a result of the above two, they as children were unable to resolve the crucial Oedipus complex. It is with these three considerations in mind that I want to explore and explain some of the consequences of their childhood experiences of violence and follow them through into their adulthood.

Bill's case is particularly instructive when considering the impact of physical abuse sustained in childhood and its influence on later life. Bill recalled being severely beaten

by his psychotic mother for a variety of minor problems that he created for her. He specifically recalled being beaten on the back of his head and shoulders as he was trying to get away from her. What he did not remember was the tremendous rage felt toward his mother which, in a displaced form, finally exploded in the act of murdering his wife by striking her on the back of her head. Here we see an example of operation of the principle of repetition compulsion in a violent attempt to master the severe traumata of being rejected, abandoned, and physically abused as a small child. His wife was a mother substitute to him and when abandoned by her, he unconsciously took out on her his infantile rage by means of murdering her.

Another case, that of a young female, sheds some further light on the problem of display of violence in later life as a result of the early childhood experience of being physically abused. This woman, as a small child, was severely beaten by her sadistic stepfather. When she was 10 years old he not only beat her but attempted to rape her. At the time of those violent outbursts on the part of her stepfather she felt helpless and was paralyzed with fear and unable to act. When she was 19 years of age, her sociopathic husband almost killed their two-month-old infant by pounding the child with his fists. This enraged my patient to the extent that she grabbed a butcher knife and repeatedly stabbed her husband in the abdomen. He nearly bled to death. This case dramatically illustrates how the early experience of being physically abused and beaten by a parent can in later life lead to the explosive acts of violence reaching murderous proportions. In this particular case she acted out her early childhood abuse by means of active repetition of the passively experienced set of traumatic episodes. On the unconscious level of her fantasy formation she was undoing and retaliating for the physical abuse she suffered from her stepfather.

Repetition compulsion and identification with the aggressor constitutes well-defined attempts on the part of an individual to overcome infantile traumata.

In addition to the physical abuse, the emotional abuse in the form of deprivation or withdrawal of love on the part of a parent, usually the mother, is an important finding.

One of the six cases studied in conjunction with this project was a 20-year-old man named Jerry. He was charged with assault on a woman with the intent to commit murder. His history is replete with episodes where his mother completely rejected him and was full of undisguised hatred directed at him and his older brother. In his turn Jerry hated her and turned away from all women until he reached puberty. In his adolescence he turned to prostitutes for sexual gratification but found himself impotent. Between the ages of 14 and 20, when he was arrested, he claimed that he physically attacked and brutally beat at least 20 elderly women.

The second point, that of actually seeing and witnessing parents engage in violent physical fights as well as verbal quarrels, can lead to and create special problems of identification with the aggressor as well as a need to come to the rescue of the victims. You may recall that Ronald, when he was 13 years of age, saw his father chase mother with a butcher knife around the kitchen table. He was terrified at the time and stood as if frozen to the ground. It was his older brother who came to their mother's rescue. During his psychotic frenzy he heard the voice of God commanding him to kill his mother, which he did in a manner reminiscent of his father's attempt.

Bill witnessed his drunken father beating his mother on numerous occasions. He came to her rescue for the first time at age 10. He ran into the house and found his father breaking his mother's toes one by one. He grabbed a croquet mallet and hit his father on the head, "splitting it wide open." At age 17 there was another similar incident when he attacked his father to rescue his mother. The impact of such visual perceptions of violence can jeopardize the resolution of the crucial conflicts of childhood. Incidentally, Bill as an adult came to the rescue of several women who were abused and mistreated by their husbands.

The third point of our discussion has to do with the effect of actual violence as perceived visual, tactile, and auditory modalities on childhood intrapsychic conflicts. Oedipus complex is a ubiquitous nuclear conflict, the product of the fantasy life of early childhood which could be epitomized as a triangular situation where one falls passionately in love with the parent of the opposite sex and hates the parent of the same sex whom one perceives as a rival.

Anamnestic material obtained in Bill's case amply demonstrates that his Oedipal conflict was not only fantasized but actually acted out in his sexual intimacies with his mother and in his physical fights with his father. His death wishes directed at his father became a reality when the latter committed suicide. Bill never progressed beyond the infantile sexual attachment to his mother. He was driven by the unconscious forces of the unresolved Oedipus complex to marry a woman who was a mother substitute to him with an already established family. When she threw him out of the house he became insanely enraged at her. This repetition of the infantile trauma of being abandoned by his mother led him into the throes of acute psychosis during which he killed his wife by hitting her on the back of the head. It is my opinion that the physical as well as emotional abuse he suffered at the hands of his mother was directly responsible for his potential to commit such a murder.

Longitudinal study of Ronald's case revealed how the Oedipus complex played the central role in his life. However, his *modus vivendi* during those crucial Oedipal years was different from Bill's. He was terrified by his powerful, castrating father and he did not dare to defy him openly. Instead he expressed his hostility as defiance of authority through his antisocial criminal behavior, such as breaking and entering and burglarizing people's homes. During his adolescent years to avoid any and all Oedipal rivalry with men he occasionally submitted to them homosexually. Although he was considered to be his mother's favorite he did not fare very well with her. She treated him in an ambivalent manner, alternately rejecting him and being seductive towards him. Due to his inherent inability to handle castration anxiety, he maintained a strong preoedipal tie with his mother. After his father's death, his mother left him for another man, his stepfather. When his wife, whom he idolized, left him for another man, he returned home to his mother. His wife's abandonment of him precipitated an acute state of psychosis and it was his mother's seductiveness and infantilization of him that set the stage for matricide.

The other two cases of this study are particularly illustrative of the continuity of the unresolved Oedipal conflicts which erupt into the acts of violence when an unsuccessful search for the infantile love objects ends in disaster.

A 17-year-old young man attacked, raped, and stabbed a middle-aged woman when she surprised him in the act of burglarizing her apartment. She inadvertently used the same words his mother used whenever he as a small child stole into his mother's bedroom to watch her have sexual relations with various men she entertained. The words were "get out of here, you dirty little son of a bitch."

The other case is that of a young woman who shot her paramour's wife when her lover abruptly decided to return to his wife. During her early childhood development her father divorced her mother and took my patient to live with him and then suddenly returned her to her mother. She recalled having a persistent fantasy of shooting her mother dead so that her father would take her back with him.

Summary and Conclusion

Longitudinal study of six people who committed homicides or exhibited a potential for homicidal behavior was undertaken over a period of ten years. The data were obtained through psychiatric interviews, psychological testing, and examination of all available records. The material thus obtained was analyzed from the psychoanalytic

point of view. Three specific points were identified as being common and applicable to a lesser or greater degree in all six cases studied. First, as children each of these six people suffered actual physical abuse perpetrated by their parents. Second, they actually saw during childhood violent and destructive behavior by their parents. Third, the sequelae of such exposure to violence interfered with the phase specific resolution of the basic conflicts of childhood, specifically Oedipus complex. These traumata of violence set up a predisposition for regression to the preoedipal levels of psychic organization and functioning. From the structural point of view, ego functions of impulse control were lacking due to profound states of regression whenever these patients experienced extreme anger, which in turn would precipitate homicidal behavior. None of the patients had childhood history of pyromania, enuresis, nor cruelty to animals.

On the basis of the foregoing material, one may conclude that in some instances it is possible to establish "homicidal proneness" as a clinical entity. Homicidal proneness can be anticipated in people who as children suffered from physical and emotional abuse, witnessed violence, and were sexually traumatized through incestuous experiences or their equivalents.

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