From Lizzie Borden to Lorena Bobbitt: Violent Women and Gendered Justice

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FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS – 4 AUGUST 1892
Lizzie Borden took an axe
And gave her mother forty whacks.
When she saw what she had done,
She gave her father forty-one.¹

On the morning of 4 August 1892, between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 11:00 A.M., Abby Durfee Borden and Andrew Jackson Borden were murdered with an axe in their home in Fall River, Massachusetts. Why did the case spark so much interest at the time? Why did throngs of people literally block the street gawking at the Borden residence? Why did the country’s leading newspaper devour and report the daily happenings in this small New England town? Why, a century later, are “whodunit?” novels, plays, and films still being made about this gruesome double murder?

MANASSAS, VIRGINIA – 23 JUNE 1993
Come and listen to my story 'bout a man named John
A poor ex-marine with a little fraction gone
It seems one night after getting’ with his wife
She lopped off his dong with the swipe of a knife.
Penis, that is.
Clean cut. Missed the nuts.²

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¹ Although the poem alleges that Lizzie’s stepmother received 40 blows and her father 41, the coroner’s report places the count at 19 and 10 respectively. In addition, despite the clear labeling of Lizzie as the perpetrator of the act, she was acquitted of the crime. The popular poem, however, sung to the tune of “Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-De Ay!,” has memorialized this false legend.

² This verse and the rest of the song are to be sung to the tune of The Beverly Hillbillies. For more Bobbitt lore, see Linda Pershing’s “‘His Wife Seized His Prize and Cut It to Size’: Folk and Popular Commentary on Lorena Bobbitt,” NWSA Journal, 8 (1996), 1–33.
Early in the morning of 23 June 1993, Lorena Bobbitt took a knife, cut off her husband’s penis, and shortly thereafter tossed it from her car window into an empty field near a daycare center in Manassas, Virginia. Why did the case attract national attention? What led masses of people to parade with posters and hawk T-shirts outside the Manassas courtroom? What led the country’s leading newspapers to cover the daily happenings of this northern Virginia town?

The attention given the Borden and Bobbitt women speaks to the continuing curiosity we have regarding the paradoxical violent woman. Woman is, after all, a nurturer, a gentle creature, a member of the weaker sex that needs male protection. That is what the stereotype asserts. She does not wield axes and Ginsu knives. She does not consciously hack and slash. She does not coldly and calculatingly plan acts of destruction. That is what the decisions in the Borden and Bobbitt cases prove.

The truth is, as individuals, Lizzie Borden and Lorena Bobbitt have clear and numerous differences. One was wealthy; one was poor. Despite her father’s insistence on frugal living (their house, for example, despite Andrew Borden’s wealth, had no indoor toilet facilities or gas lighting), Lizzie was by the standards of the late 1800s wealthy, privileged. Lorena Bobbitt, on the other hand, was an Ecuador-born manicurist, struggling to pay off debts incurred by her husband’s extravagant purchases and lifestyle. Nor should we forget that one held steadfast to her innocence, whereas the other admitted doing the dirty deed – emasculating her husband – even though she did not remember doing it.

Despite individual differences, however, Lizzie Borden and Lorena Bobbitt share a legacy. Both fit the stereotype of the woman, and both were acquitted as a result. Lizzie Borden was a lady, both through her family’s social and economic status and through her appearance and behavior. There was “nothing wicked, criminal, or hard in her features,” declared Julian Ralph of the New York Sun, so how could she be a murderer?3 Although initially composed and seeming unmoved by the deaths of her father and stepmother, Lizzie soon responded to the criticism this demeanor brought her. In an interview from jail she proclaimed: “There is one thing that hurts me very much. They say I don’t show any grief. Certainly I don’t in public. I never did reveal my feelings, and I cannot change my nature now. They say I don’t cry. They should see me when I am alone, or sometimes with my friends. It hurts me to think people say so about me.”4 Whether Lizzie Borden experienced

3 Julian Ralph, New York Sun, 6 June 1893, 1.
a real change or simply learned to act the part, her behavior soon became more ladylike. By weeping, calling for water, and fainting in court, she publicly proved her womanhood. Newspapers that had previously accused her of being a “disinterested party” (Daily Globe) or being “phlegmatic and undemonstrative” (New York Sun) now recorded, “Miss Borden’s womanhood was fully established when she burst into tears.’’5

Dressed in black and carrying flowers—“one day a little nosegay of pansies, another day a single white rose”6—Lizzie evinced “the indefinable quality which we call ladyhood.”7

Submissive and pretty, Lorena Bobbitt, too, was characteristically feminine. Wearing either a white silk blouse or plain dark dress, Lorena daily displayed a crucifix necklace, declaring herself “a good Catholic girl.”8 With broken English, trembling hands, and frequent tears, she described her suffering and “affirmed her purity.”9 Both women walked freely out of the courtroom because the jurors and society as well believed they fit the mold, believed they were weak, defenseless women, victims in need of protection.

Examining the Borden case, Ann Jones, in Women Who Kill, describes the trial of Lizzie Borden as “the ritual reenactment of a very old legend: the embarrassingly trite tale of the damsel in distress.”10 Even though Lizzie was thirty-two, a mature, grown woman, she was referred to by her defense attorney George Robinson as “a little girl” and often as “this poor defenseless girl” by both the defense and the prosecution. Why? She was an orphan. She had no parents to protect her. The fact that she was on trial for murdering her parents and orchestrating her own orphan state seems to have escaped her advocates and critics.

This victimization is further heightened through the creation of a villain—the Fall River police. Although the evidence in hindsight paints the police as inept bunglers, Lizzie’s defense attorneys worked hard to create the image of a police conspiracy. In his closing argument, Robinson described how the police shamelessly and ruthlessly interrogated Lizzie in her own bedroom on the day of the murders:

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5 Julian Ralph, New York Sun, 13 June 1893, 2.
7 Julian Ralph, New York Sun, 14 June 1893, 3.
9 Ibid.
10 Jones, 222.
And there he was [Assistant Marshal Fleet], up in this young woman’s room in the afternoon, attended with some other officers, plying her with all sorts of questions in a pretty direct and peremptory way. … Is that the way for an officer of the law to deal with a woman in her own house? What would you do with a man – I don’t care if he had blue on him – that got into your house and was talking to your wife or your daughter in that way? Recollect that this was after the tragedies; this was when the terrible pall was over that house and the neighborhood, and an officer should be pretty careful. Recollect that the air was full of policemen at that time: they were running in all over that house, putting her to every possible strain, asking her in her loneliness, her absence from any friend, her sister gone – following her up in this way, insinuating in that way and talking to her as if she were a liar.11

Following the announcement of the jury decision to acquit Miss Borden, the editor of the New York Times was moved to remind the public that Lizzie had been victimized and that the police were villains: “The acquittal of the most unfortunate and cruelly persecuted woman was, by this promptness, in effect, a condemnation of the police authorities of Fall River and the legal officers who secured the indictment and have conducted the trial.”12 He went on to describe the “anguish inflicted” upon Miss Borden by these villains, accusing the police of “a barbarous wrong to an innocent victim” and depicting them as beasts in a hunt for innocent prey. In the sensationalized conclusion, the editorial declared, “The Fall River police needed a victim … and the daughter was the nearest and most helpless. They pounced upon her.”13

Just in case the police conspiracy theory failed, the Borden defense also planted along the way the seeds of other potentially convincing lines of defense. Abby Durfee Borden, for example, was, according to defense attorney William Moody’s opening statement to the jury, a “short fat woman weighing … in the neighborhood of 200 pounds.”14 Although she had no known enemies, she was not a woman with a large circle of friends either. Even the prosecution failed to paint an endearing picture of the slain woman, declaring her “a faithful wife who [had] served [her husband] thirty years for her board and clothes, who [had] done his work, who [had] kept his house.”15 She may have cooked and cleaned for her husband and stepdaughters, but being a loving wife and mother was not an attribute ascribed to her.

13 Ibid., 230.
14 The Trial of Lizzie Borden, 105.
15 Ibid., 335.
Andrew Borden, by all accounts, was not a person likely to evoke public sympathy either. Strict, stubborn, and independent, he was an accumulator, not a giver. Indeed, his one rare moment of generosity, the purchase of a duplex for Abby’s sister-in-law, was viewed by his daughters—especially Lizzie—as an act of treachery. As Lizzie affirmed at the inquest, “What he did for her he ought to [have done] for us.”16 The prosecutors made much of Lizzie’s response to this gift of property, suggesting that Lizzie feared her father would leave his vast wealth to his wife, leaving her and her sister Emma dependent still. Lizzie, therefore, had a motive, the prosecution argued. She murdered her stepmother and her father for money, making certain that Abby Borden conveniently preceded Andrew Borden in death so that, without a will declaring otherwise, she and Emma would inherit the entire fortune. The jury, however, was not persuaded. The twelve grey-haired men, mostly friends of the Borden family, acquitted Lizzie, thus assuring that the Borden wealth would pass on to the ninth-generation of Bordens—Lizzie and Emma.

The most compelling defense, however, one that neatly dovetailed with the portrayal of Lizzie as a victim, was the frequently detailed brutality of the crime. The number of blows, the depths of the cuts, and the weight of the hatchet were “morally and physically impossible” for a woman. Such an act was “a contradiction of her physical capacity and certainty,” argued defense attorney Robinson.17 A mere two days following the murders, the Fall River Evening News voiced the dogma of society in the 1890s: “Poisoners and killers by firearms are frequently found among women; the butcherlike method of the murder of the Bordens is rare indeed, and made it possible to contend that such brutality seemed to have nothing feminine about it.”18 The female was not capable of such a horrendous act of violence; a woman was inherently different from a man.

In short, the country rallied around Lizzie. The church and women’s groups became her strongest advocates. Ultimately, the jury of twelve men deliberated only an hour and a half before declaring that it was not possible for a woman to so violently end two lives: “It was forthright, so downright masculine, that a carefully selected jury of nice old men could barely give serious thought to the possiblity that a well-brought-up lady could have been a murderer.”19

Lorena Bobbitt, too, fulfilled society’s expectations of the damsel in distress. Years of abuse, the cumulative effect of “beating, kicking,

16 Ibid., 427.  
17 Ibid., 286.  
18 Ibid., 41.  
punching, shoving, slapping, dragging, choking,"²⁰ caused her to suffer "posttraumatic stress disorder."²¹ Lorena never knew when John Wayne Bobbitt might abuse her again, the defense argued. She demonstrated perfectly the characteristics of "Battered Woman Syndrome." According to Lenore Walker, the battered woman is traumatized by a vicious cycle of violence characterized by a building of tension, serious incidents of battering, followed by a period of loving care. As the cycle repeats itself, the woman's fear of heightened aggression and flashbacks to previous abuse produce in her a state of "learned helplessness."²² Thus, in the wee hours of the morning on 23 June 1993, after supposedly being raped again, Lorena, in a dazed state, walked to the kitchen, returned to the bedroom with an eight-inch kitchen knife, and cut off "the instrument of her torture." In her own words, she wept, "I couldn't stop. Couldn't help myself. I had to do it, see. I had this ... I was overwhelmed by this ... this ... this irresistible impulse."²³ The defense continued to hammer home Lorena's sense of helplessness, her victimization at the hands of a brutish husband. The jury agreed with the defense's "Battered Woman Syndrome" argument, but worded its verdict as "not guilty by reason of temporary insanity."²⁴

Although "Battered Woman Syndrome" is grounded in sufficient medical research for the courts to acknowledge it as evidence, expert testimony, such as that offered by Dr. Susan Feister in the Bobbitt trial, continues to stereotype the woman as "passive, dependent, helpless, and irrational," reinforcing the old notion that women who kill are mentally ill.²⁵ Focusing on "incapacity and learned helplessness," the syndrome

²¹ Dr. Susan Feister, one of the psychiatrists who testified in the Bobbitt case, further noted that Lorena Bobbitt "suffered from an anxiety disorder" and "attacked the weapon which was the instrument of her torture" (qtd. in Mary Nemeth and William Lowther, "Judgment Day," Maclean's, 31 Jan. 1994, 43).
²⁴ In analyzing the two Bobbitt trials (John Wayne Bobbitt for rape and Lorena Bobbitt for the malicious wounding of her husband), Bette A. Speziale notes: "A man perpetrates many acts of violence with provocation and escapes deviant labeling. ... Although [John Wayne Bobbitt's] sexual proclivities are such that he enjoys making women writhe in pain, bleed, and scream for help, the court did not order that his mental status undergo a psychiatric evaluation. He was not considered a danger to society and so retained his freedom" ("Crime, Violence, and the Saga of Lorena Bobbitt," Affilia, 9 (1994), 312–13).
emphasizes a woman’s irrationality and passivity. It supports our cultural expectations of female behavior, labeling violent women as incapable of making logical choices. According to When Battered Women Kill, the syndrome "shifts the focus back toward proving pathology in the woman [that she has an impaired mental state], and away from her right to be free from harm inflicted by another," thrusting the woman into what Naomie Wolf calls "victim feminism." Furthermore, every time a jury gives an affirmative nod to an "impaired mental state of mind" defense, it also gives tacit social support to the stereotype. Likewise, every time a woman uses the "impaired mental state of mind" defense, tearfully proclaiming victim status behind pansies and crosses as was the case with Borden and Bobbitt, she solidifies the stereotype.

Another drawback to "Battered Woman Syndrome" defenses is that expert testimony characterizing the female as weak and helpless seems at odds with the act of violence itself. Such testimony, according to Anne Campbell in Men, Women, and Aggression, "aptly describes why the woman fails to escape from the home but not why she turns on her attacker and kills him." Jurors, therefore, are left to ask, "weren't 'real' battered women traditionalists? passive? unable to think about leaving?" and, according to Julie Blackman, might come to the conclusion that the defendant is not a "real" battered woman.

Furthermore, the notion of a "syndrome" suggests that there is one set of descriptors and that a battered woman must conform to a set standard.

29 Although defenses that perpetuate the stereotype may successfully release prosecuted women from legal punishment, they confine the defendants to the victim role for life. Stepping outside that role by both Borden and Bobbitt ensured immediate social rejection. Had Lizzie retired to a small home in Fall River and after an appropriate mourning period resumed her church activities, suspicion might not have followed her into this century. Instead, she changed her name to Lisbeth, began associating with a Boston actress, and purchased a "stately new home" with all the amenities (Marcia R. Carlisle, "What Made Lizzie Borden Kill?" American Heritage, July/Aug. 1992, 72). Bobbitt, who also assumed her maiden name of Gallo, was charged in 1997 for "punching her mother in the face," which led many to question her stability and previous innocence (Linda Kulman, "At Least She Had No Knife This Time," U.S. News and World Report, 22 Dec. 1997, 18).
31 Julie Blackman, "Emerging Images of Severely Battered Women and the Criminal Justice System," Behavioral Sciences and the Law, 8 (1990), 126.
The battered woman, therefore, who may have previously defended herself during an attack defies the "syndrome," challenging the descriptor of the battered woman as one who reacts with passivity. Also, the notion of a "syndrome" suggests that all women react similarly to the cycle of battering, denying the potential for a range of responses. Expert testimony should, therefore, according to Mary Ann Dutton, "incorporate the diverse range of traumatic reactions" and refer to "battered women's experiences," rather than to "battered woman syndrome."

Finally, the success of the "Battered Woman Syndrome" defense is largely determined by the degree to which the "victimized" woman demonstrates her femininity. A recent documentary Lorena Bobbitt: Women and Violence chronicles, in addition to the Bobbitt case, the trials of three other women who also defended their violent acts by claiming they had been abused. Lorena Bobbitt, Evelyn Smith, Betty Broderick, and Eileen Wournos all argued that they were themselves victims of violence. Two of these women were acquitted of the charges brought against them, and two were found guilty. Although all argued that they were battered women, this defense worked for only two. Why? An examination of the Lorena Bobbitt and Evelyn Smith cases shows clear evidence of society’s sexual stereotyping. Both women were attractive, young, and diminutive. Lorena weighed in at only 92 pounds. Evelyn Smith, also slight of build, stood 5' 4" to her 6' 5" ex-Marine husband. Size alone afforded these women victim status, a fact stressed by their attorneys. In addition, both women were able to produce evidence, such as, photographs of physical abuse and witnesses. Finally, the alleged abuse occurred in both cases in the home, the woman's sanctuary, the one place in which she is supposed to be safe. The Bobbitt jury took only seven hours to decide that Lorena could not possibly be guilty of maliciously wounding her husband, and the Smith jury took less than four hours to declare her not guilty of the shooting death of her husband.

The two other women chronicled in this documentary, however, did not receive the jury’s sympathy even though they, too, argued self-defense

32 In the case of the State v. Anaya, for example, the court questioned the defendant’s status as a battered woman because she had stabbed her boyfriend during a previous altercation.
and claimed to have been battered. Why? For one, neither of these women
looked like victims. Betty Broderick, accused of killing her ex-husband
and his new wife, was middle-aged and overweight. Eileen Wuornos, a
prostitute accused of killing six men in Florida, appeared hardened, wore
no makeup, and used profanities during her defense. Neither fit the
defenseless female mold. Although both claimed they were abused,
neither offered evidence other than their own testimony. Broderick
detailed stories of physical and psychological abuse, saying her husband
called her “old, fat, ugly, boring, and stupid,” but no one recounted
hearing such comments. She also alleged that Dan Broderick brainwashed
their four children into believing that she was “sick,” although she did
not explain why – if she were of sound mind and a good mother – the
court awarded her husband custody of the children when they were
divorced. Eileen Wuornos also recounted a history of sexual abuse as a
child and in her brief marriage. Her family denied the charges. The six
men she shot were, according to her testimony, “tricks gone bad,” men
who beat her, raped her, and then stole her money. Still, she was unable
to produce evidence of such treatment.

In addition, both women committed the murders outside of the home.
Betty Broderick sneaked into her ex-husband’s home, claiming that he
refused to see her and that this was the only way she could get him to
discuss the custody issue. The gun supposedly went off accidentally.
Eileen Wuornos’ victims were found in fields and at the sides of roads.
These women were not facing abuse in the sanctity of their own homes.
In short, Betty Broderick and Eileen Wuornos did not fit the socially
accepted stereotype of a victimized female. In the words of Wuornos’ own
attorney, “No one believed that a prostitute could be raped.” Broderick
was convicted of murder in the second-degree and received 32 years in
prison. Wuornos is on death now.

Even if the battered woman does fit the stereotype of the victimized
female, prosecutors in “Battered Woman Syndrome” cases work to vilify
the woman. Jenkins and Davidson’s analysis of trial transcripts in cases in
which battered women killed their husbands shows a prosecutorial
strategy that paints the battered women as a poor wife and mother,
suggesting that a wife who is verbally aggressive to her spouse, does not
keep a clean house, or does not monitor her children provokes the male.35
In a study by Follingstad, Brondino, and Kleinfelter, mock jurors were
given the same abuse scenario but with three different descriptions of the

35 P. Jenkins and B. Davidson, “Battered Women in the Criminal Justice System: An
Analysis of Gender Stereotypes,” Behavioral Science Law, 8 (1990), 161–70.
woman: “good wife/mother,” “bad wife/mother,” and “dysfunctional wife/mother.” The research found that negative characterizations of the wife’s behavior or reputation were “powerful predictors” of guilty verdicts.36

This is not to say that women are not traumatized by abusive relationships, that they do not suffer a form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), but by causally linking the violence perpetrated by the woman to “internal, dispositional traits rather than to situational factors,” “Battered Woman Syndrome” defenses ensure that the environmental factors that effect violence go unexamined. According to Schuller and Hastings, the trial evidence needs to “shift from a focus on learned helplessness and the woman’s psychological state to a greater emphasis on the defendant’s circumstances and alternatives.”37 Such factors as economic dependence, the lack of adequate community support, and the ineffective response of law enforcement to domestic violence need to be corrected. Until this happens, the woman will continue to remain economically bound to a marriage in which the batterer controls the money. If she is jobless and caring for young children, she is even less likely to be able to leave, to be able to support herself and her children, to be able to hire a lawyer to represent her. Even though evidence from a 1993 national study showed that the number of women killing spouses declined with an increase in shelters for abused women, the number and accessibility of shelters for battered women do not begin to meet the demand.38 In 1994, for example, while New York shelters housed 12,000 battered women, they turned away 25,000 because of space constraints.39 Ignoring the context of the battering, therefore, ensures the continuance of the systemic causes that leave the woman either enduring the violence or freeing herself from violence through violence.

Nevertheless, focusing solely on situational factors and arguing that the battered woman is “not guilty by reason of self-defense” (NGRSD) is also risky. Although testimony that shows the woman’s limited options or lack

of options, and her recognition of such, frames the violent response as an action rooted in logical reasoning, the defense in a nGRSD argument is burdened with establishing that danger to the woman was “imminent.” According to “Battered Women and the Law: ‘We Are All Responsible,’” this “imminence standard” is “unfair to women.” Labeling the law as one written by men for men, Michael Dowd, director of the Battered Women’s Justice Center, contends the following:

Generally, we say that a person is entitled to respond with force or violence when the threat of force or violence is imminent. “Imminent” almost universally means something that is happening or about to happen. But if a woman who has been subjected to violence over a period of time waits until the man has his hands on her throat, the chances of her successfully depending herself are slim to nil. To act successfully against the threat, the woman must do it when there is a lull or an opportunity for her to strike out in self-defense, perhaps when the man’s back is turned or when he is sitting or lying down.

Unfortunately, courts have frequently viewed such delayed attacks as evidence of planned revenge, influencing defense attorneys, such as Lorena Bobbitt’s, to decide not to use a nGRSD argument since a sleeping man is “no immediate threat.”

The nGRSD plea also asserts that the defendant must show that the force used to repel the violence is reasonable given the danger she faces. Asserting that the word “reasonable” needs to be carefully defined, Anne Campbell argues that what is reasonable for a woman is different from what is reasonable for a man, that size and strength should be considered. According to Campbell, “The law of self-defense is about reason, and particularly about masculine reason in the face of threat. ... Deadly force is to be used when the attacker threatens death, lesser force when the attacker is unarmed. These kinds of assessments come automatically to most men, trained as they are in the rules of fair fighting.” Campbell further notes that “in the face of an attacker who is stronger, heavier, and taller, [women] are particularly unlikely to fight back. More important, theirs are not one-shot encounters between equal adversaries governed by rules of fair fighting.” One solution would be to make civil litigation more viable for the battered woman. Michael Dowd notes, “I think we

Ibid., 68.  
41 Ibid.  
42 Linda Pershing notes that Bobbitt’s defense attorneys, responding to the prosecution’s argument that Lorena Bobbitt responded out of rage, portrayed her “not as angry but rather temporarily insane—so impaired by the abuse that she was completely unable to control or restrain her actions” (“‘His Wife Seized His Prize and Cut It to Size’: Folk and Popular Commentary on Lorena Bobbitt,” 21).  
44 Campbell, Men, Women, and Aggression, 149.  
need to do a lot of educating in the legal profession about the availability of civil litigation to aid the cause of battered women. ... It makes more sense to use this vehicle than to wait until the criminal justice system has to intervene after the violence has escalated to a much more serious level.”

In addition to either changing or clarifying the wording of our legal definition of self-defense, juries need to know or be informed enough to know the difference between a victimized woman and one who feigns to be so. If Stephanie Goldberg is correct, that juries become “educated about ‘learned helplessness’ – in part, by TV talk shows and movies of the week,” such things as jury bias are not likely to be altered by any new definition of self-defense.

Of course, there has never been any guarantee that juries would be impartial (despite language in the Sixth Amendment suggesting otherwise), but the mere fact that we have institutionalized a female defense, a defense not enjoyed by males, and given it a clinical name – the “Battered Woman Syndrome” – does point to a “gendered” justice system. Verdicts such as those in the Bobbitt case continue to send the message to both males and females that the justice system adheres to a “sexual double standard.” Denouncing the justice men receive in the American court of law, Warren Farrell, author of The Myth of Male Power, writes:

If a woman kills a man today, the automatic assumption is “O, darling, what did he do to you that made you kill him?” If a man kills a woman, nobody says, “O, poor guy, what did she do to you that made you kill her” So, we have a double standard of American justice.

In 1892, as the eyes of the country turned to Fall River, Massachusetts, people pondered whether it was possible for a young woman living a relatively comfortable, privileged life to viciously murder her father and stepmother. When Lizzie Borden stood trial at the turn of the century, the defense strengthened its case by appealing to the prevailing stereotype and through Lizzie’s own willingness to play the role of a “lady.” Has society’s perception of and response to the violent female changed in 100 years? Are we today any more able to accept that a female can have violent proclivities? A speculative study on the centennial anniversary of the Borden murders is telling in terms of how ingrained the socially accepted stereotype is. Marcia R. Carlisle’s “What Made Lizzie Borden Kill”

46 Dowd, 70.
49 Lorena Bobbitt: Women and Violence.
proposes that there was "an even darker side to the story" than the "bloody hatchet work," that Andrew Borden had an incestuous relationship with his younger daughter.\textsuperscript{50} Declaring that the Borden family met all the criteria for a family at risk, Marcia Carlisle suggests that Lizzie Borden suffered "battered-child syndrome," that memories of the incest surfaced years later driving Lizzie to parricide.\textsuperscript{51} She killed Abby Borden, according to Carlisle, because her stepmother had known about the incest and either been "unable to stop it, or worse had blamed Lizzie for it."\textsuperscript{52} Such analyses suggest, therefore, that we continue to question whether a woman is capable of planning and violently executing heinous acts. In short, 100 years after the Borden trial, society continues to declare that women are "inherently different from men and will kill [or maim] only in passion or madness."\textsuperscript{53}

\textbf{Works cited}


\textsuperscript{50} Marcia R. Carlisle, "What Made Lizzie Borden Kill?" 66–72.

\textsuperscript{51} Carlisle, drawing on psychological studies of incest victims, calls what Lizzie experienced "delayed discovery" (ibid., 71). \textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 72.

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