

The Dubious Charm of the Psychopath

When I was a very young doctor, my draft board assigned me to work in a clinic in a small town in the deep South. The year was 1969, and for some reason, there a surfeit of doctors to send to Viet Nam, so they decided I should go to the next worst place. So I spent three years in a place called Mound Bayou, Mississippi, where I treated innumerable cases of hypertension, diabetes and arthritis, and delivered a lot of babies. I also got to know the denizens of the late-night emergency room, not only young girls who were having babies, but also young men who liked to get drunk and shoot, knife or beat each other up, that is, when they weren't busy getting young girls pregnant. City boy that I was, it was my introduction to the lives and loves of the American redneck.

One Sunday morning, at about 5, I was called in to fix two young men who had carved each other up. It took several hours to sew up their wounds, as they slept in adjoining stalls, the sleep of innocent children. While I was working the sun rose and it was a beautiful morning. I was a bit intoxicated myself from lack of sleep, the beauty of the sunrise and the fragrance of a Mississippi morning in June. But it was the occasion for reflection, too. This, I said to Vanessa, the nurse who was with me, is their idea of fun.

I was young then and I didn't even know what neuropsychology was. Later, many years later, in fact, I began to understand the psychology of men who are disinhibited by only a small amount of alcohol, who don't experience pain quite like you and I do, and who never seem to learn their lesson even from the most unpleasant experience.

One of the men had tatoos on his fingers, LOVE on one hand and HATE on the other. The other, Vanessa told me, was called "Snake." He was, in fact, a distant cousin of hers. The other fellow may have been as well, she wasn't sure. They had both been to prison, she said. I told her I thought they were likely to go back before long. It doesn't matter, she said. Prison doesn't change them. They come out even worse and with a few more tatoos.

These two fun-loving fellows were sociopaths.

Several years later, after I had completed my service, I was at the University and studying neuropsychiatry. Every year, there was a new crop of residents who came to train in psychiatry. One year, there was a particularly bright fellow among the new residents, tall and good-looking and very well spoken. The residency director was especially proud of him because he had been to college at Dartmouth and to medical school at Harvard.

He didn't disappoint. He was the best resident of the lot. The patients loved him, the nurses and most of all the faculty. He was given special responsibilities. On a couple of occasions, he was delegated to testify in court around one of the patients or another. He was particularly cool under cross-examination.

The problem is that he had to have a medical license, and the medical board of our state could never get a transcript from the Harvard Medical School. Finally, someone at the school called to board and said there was no record of a student of that name ever having attended Harvard. Dartmouth, either for that matter.

He hadn't even been to college. He had worked for a couple of years as an orderly at a state hospital in Massachusetts. He was an imposter. When the chairman called him in to explain, he just disappeared.

Our erstwhile Harvard graduate was a psychopath. So was my friend Breuning.

One of my first research projects had to do with a particularly nasty drug side effect that was quite common years ago, tardive dyskinesia. TD is a movement disorder characterized by gross movements of the face and limbs, and sometimes then entire body, caused by a class of drugs known as "antipsychotics." The problem, during the 1980's, was that the side effect was especially common in mentally handicapped people who were treated with antipsychotic drugs to keep them calm. The reason they needed to be kept calm was that they lived in the most degraded circumstances, in large state institutions, and were treated in the most frightful ways. The problem was that the drugs only worked for a short period of time, and then the patient would start acting up again. So the dose was increased, or an additional antipsychotic drug was prescribed. Naturally, the occurrence of TD was extremely high in this population, and many patients were left with disfiguring abnormal movements in addition to all their other problems.

It was an outrageous state of affairs but one that elicited little attention at the time. My colleagues and I were able to publish a few scientific papers in obscure journals but the impact they had was small. Then I met Steve Breuning.

Steve was a psychologist at a prestigious Northeastern Medical School who had connections, he claimed, at several state hospitals. He was able to replicate the findings I had made, albeit with much larger samples of patients, and with much greater scientific rigor. I was delighted that my work was being confirmed, and Breuning's work attracted much more attention than mine ever did. I was also flattered by his interest in my work and we even published papers together. Breuning held forth at scientific meetings, medical schools and state hospitals all over the country.

Then, a colleague called me and told me that he suspected that Breuning had concocted all of his data. He was Robert Sprague from the University of Illinois, who had introduced me to Breuning, and who also had relied on Steve's work in his own research. Robert and I set a trap for Steve, and we caught him in an egregious lie. We investigated further and discovered that he had never done any of the research at all. He had just cooked it up.

Sprague and I contacted the relevant authorities, and Breuning quietly resigned his post at the University. But his papers remained in print, fraudulent as they were, and he continued to travel around the country giving lectures and workshops. We tried to have his papers retracted, but Breuning denied everything and the journals refused to get involved.

It took Robert and me two years to finally attract the attention of the relevant authorities, and Science magazine finally published the story of Breuning's fraud, but only after a Washington rag threatened to publish a story about the indifference of Science and the National Institute of Mental Health to the problem of scientific fraud.

After the story broke, Breuning was prosecuted and actually sent off to prison. I was pretty cynical about that. The real frauds, I thought, were the people at his University, the journals and at the National Institutes who tried just to cover it all up. Sprague and I weren't the good guys, either. We were just dupes.

So, if you've been a dupe yourself, cold-cocked by a psychopath, don't feel bad. It can happen to anybody. Just because you're a psychiatrist or a scientist doesn't mean you can't be made a fool of. This fool, your

humble author, will now hold forth on the psychopath in your life, and with the wisdom that comes of having been duped more than once. So, if you think your ex-husband is a psychopath...

I THINK MY EX-HUSBAND IS A SOCIOPATH¹

He probably isn't. It is more likely that the fellow just has sociopathic *traits*. Grounds for re-assurance, I'm sure.

Statistics indicate that no more than 3% (or possibly 4%) of males are sociopaths (and fewer than 1% of women).² So, just on statistical grounds, it is unlikely that he is a sociopath. If one chooses to mate with just any man at random, the odds that he is *not* a sociopath are 33 to 1 (or 25 to 1). The odds then are clearly in your favor. Think of it this way: the plane you are about to board has no less than a 3% chance of crashing into a mountain top. Just try to get a seat in the back.

Of course, we know that women don't choose their mates at random, at least most women don't. Indeed, most women, especially the well-educated ones who are likely to be reading this book, are likely to be turned off by a man who commits repetitive acts of petty theft or violent criminality. As it happens, there is a class of women who are turned on by guys like that, but we shall deal with them later.

The reason why you aren't likely to have married a sociopath – if you are reading this book – is that sociopaths tend to occupy the lowest rungs of the social ladder. As a group, they aren't particularly smart, they don't have much in the way of social skills and they spend a lot of time in jail. So, technically, what you may have been married to was a psychopath.³

What's the difference? Robert D Hare, a Canadian psychologist who worked the better part of his life with men in prison, decided early on that psychopaths were different from the rest of the prison population. Sociopaths, he felt, were men who were socialized into a life a crime; psychopaths are men from another planet. They share many characteristics in common, but there are important differences. Both types, sociopaths and psychopaths, are **antisocial**. That means they have little or no regard for social norms, rules or obligations. Thus, they are given to criminal activity and aggressive behavior; or, on a less overt level, deceitful and exploitative behavior. They are both cheaters who take advantage of other people.

Second, they work their evil ways without feelings of remorse. Neither sociopaths nor psychopaths have a **conscience**. They simply don't understand that it is wrong to break the law or to violate another person. Rules don't apply to *them*. If you catch one of them dead to rights and he can't lie his way out of it, he will rationalize what he did or blame someone else, like you.

¹ Google: 1,070,000 hits.

² Strauss & Lahey 1984, Davison and Neale 1994, Robins, Tipp & Przybeck 1991

³ Technically, I suppose, you weren't married to a psychopath, either, because both the American Psychiatric Association and the World Health Organization have banned the word. They say it is obsolete. The appropriate terms are antisocial (DSM-IV) or dissocial (ICD-10) personality disorder.³ The psychiatric associations decided to abjure the term "psychopath" (and even "sociopath") in favor of a more "behaviorally-based" definition, emphasizing the occurrence of remorseless criminal activity and de-emphasizing the interesting psychology that makes psychopaths different from common criminals. But "psychopath" has a perfectly respectable scientific pedigree, and is well described in the work of two accomplished men, the American psychiatrist Hervey Cleckley (*The Mask of Sanity*) and the Canadian psychologist Robert D Hare (*Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*). They make it very clear that there is a difference between sociopaths and psychopaths. Both types are antisocial and predatory. Sociopaths are people with a lifetime history of impulsive criminal behavior. Most have been socialized into an antisocial milieu. They have a conscience, but it is defined in terms of a criminal code. Gang-bangers and Mafiosi tend to be sociopaths. Psychopaths, one the other hand, have no conscience at all. They tend to be loners. They live their lives unencumbered by the restraints of social bonds, although their anti-social behavior is most likely to be expressed in interpersonal settings. Most of them are not behind bars and some have even achieved impressive material success, because they are charming and incite trust. But you don't want to trust one, if you can help it, and you really wouldn't want to be married to one.

However, sociopaths are different from psychopaths. Most of the men in prison are sociopaths. Only about 20% of them are *bona fide* psychopaths. Both types are predatory and remorseless, but sociopaths are psychologically less complex. They are men or women who have been socialized into an antisocial milieu. They have a conscience of sorts, but it is defined in terms of their criminal code. Most gangsters and Mafiosi are sociopaths. You aren't likely to have been married to a sociopath; they usually occupy the lowest rungs of the social ladder. Also, they have a lot of tattoos. As a group, they aren't particularly smart, they don't have much in the way of social skills, let alone charm, and they spend a lot of time in jail. So, technically, what you may have been married to was a psychopath.⁴

The two characteristics that make psychopaths unique and different from sociopaths have to do with their place in society and their opinions of themselves. First, psychopaths tend to be **loners**. Although their social skills are often well-developed (the "charm" of the psychopath), they have no use for the society of other people. Their relationships are shallow and they are incapable of deep or meaningful attachments.

Second, they tend to have an inflated or grandiose sense of their own importance. They are self-centered, **narcissistic**. The only thing that matters to a psychopath is his own gratification. Other people exist only to gratify their needs and desires.

The "Antisocial Checklist" may help you identify the psychopaths (and sociopaths) in your midst. Sociopaths and psychopaths have a lot in common, but they are not the same.

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ANTISOCIAL CHECKLIST	SOCIOPATH	PSYCHOPATH
Antisocial Behavior		
Juvenile delinquency	X	X
Early behavior problems	X	X
Criminal versatility	X	X
Disregard for social norms, rules, and obligations.	X	X
Lack of remorse or conscience	X	X
Interpersonal Behavior		
Glibness/superficial charm		X
Pathological lying	X	X
Promiscuous sexual behavior	X	X
Unable to maintain enduring relationships		X
Callous/lack of empathy	X	X
Incapacity for love		X
Personal Traits		
Grandiose sense of self-worth, egocentricity		X
Shallow affect (genuine emotion is short-lived and egocentric)		X
Need for stimulation/proneness to boredom	X	X
Parasitic lifestyle, failure to follow any life pattern	X	X
Poor behavioral control	X	X
Lack of realistic long-term goals	X	X
Impulsivity	X	X
Irresponsibility, unreliability	X	X
Low frustration tolerance, Irritability, aggressiveness	X	X
reckless disregard for safety of self or others	X	X
Poor judgment	X	X
Failure to learn from experience	X	X
Lack of insight, blames others, rationalizes his misbehavior	X	X
Suicide threats rarely carried out	X	X
Absence of nervousness or neurotic manifestations	X	X
Absence of delusions and other signs of irrational thinking	X	X

Psychopaths are said to be men who have no conscience. They do bad things but they feel little or any remorse. On the other hand, and this sets them apart from the common sociopath, they are said to be unusually “charming,” verbally facile and quick to win the attention and trust of the person they set upon. They are also daring risk-takers and they like to pursue bold, even dangerous adventures. Perhaps for these reasons, they tend to be attractive to women, at least women who are susceptible to that sort of thing.

Underlying their veneer of sociability and charm, psychopaths have a paucity of what are called the “social emotions”: love, shame, embarrassment, empathy, and guilt. They are very good at pretending to experience those emotions, and they can exude a sympathetic and understanding manner, but they are hopeless egotists, incapable of real empathy. Other people don’t really register as important to the psychopath, except as marks. They certainly aren’t capable of love, although they are very good at convincing a likely partner that they are. As a result, they have few if any long-term personal attachments. If they sire children, they are likely to be illegitimate, and they will abandon them without a look behind. They also move around a lot, so abandoning

the kids is just part of the job. You can imagine that they tend to wear out their welcome. When their deceitful ways are uncovered, they have to look for victims somewhere else. Anyway, they like to seek new adventures.⁵

Many of the men in prisons are psychopaths, but most psychopaths never find themselves behind bars. Some of them can actually achieve success in the world. A good many psychologists have noted psychopathic traits in entrepreneurs, financiers and stock traders.⁶ 'Corporate psychopaths' have been described as ruthless, manipulative, superficially charming and impulsive, and these traits apparently land them high-powered managerial roles.⁷ Christie (1970) proposed that their controlling and manipulative personalities lead them into professional careers, and they become lawyers, psychiatrists, or behavioral scientists. Jenner claimed that "subtle, cynical selfishness with a veneer of social skills is common among scientists."⁸ It is my opinion, though, these occupational stereotypes are overwrought. It is true that just because someone is a scientist, psychiatrist, lawyer or minister, it doesn't mean that he's *not* a psychopath. Alternatively, if someone is a successful currency trader, arbitrageur or entrepreneur, it doesn't mean he is. By the same token, just because someone has a few psychopathic traits – a good liar, for example, a philanderer, an egotist – doesn't mean that he is a psychopath.

This is the reason, by the way, why your ex-husband probably isn't a psychopath. Pure psychopaths are comparatively rare, although many men have some psychopathic traits. Anyway, pure psychopaths are not the marrying kind. Your ex- may have had some psychopathic traits. If you haven't done it already, you can see how he scores on the *Antisocial Checklist*.

THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THEIR BRAINS

The existence of psychopathic men or men with psychopathic traits has always been a bit of a mystery, perhaps not on the order of *Why does an omnipotent and providential God allow Evil to exist in the world* but in the same general category. After all, human beings are social animals and psychopaths are anti-social. So why are they here? And why are there so many of them?

Naturally, there are theories. The great Italian neuropsychiatrist, Cesare Lombroso, thought that congenital criminals were *atavistic throwbacks*, that is, violent cave-men come back to haunt us. They couldn't help it, they were born that way. Freudians, on the other hand, thought that anti-social behavior was the consequence of untoward childhood experience, like insecure parental attachment. Marxists thought criminal behavior was an appropriate reaction to poverty or oppression or the class struggle.

*What is robbing a bank compared with founding a bank?*⁹

So, the pendulum has swung between biological explanations – sociopaths have too much dopamine in their brains and not enough serotonin or norepinephrine – and psychosocial theories that look for "root causes" in various spots. Most seem to be in the "they can't help it" class, although they all, like St Augustine, pay lip service to Free Will and personal responsibility, so I was never impressed. I was more affected by the first law of natural psychology, *Some people are like that*, which was my grandmother's explanation for why some people are mean, nasty, stupid and *antipatica*. (One of her brothers, my grand-uncle, was always in trouble, for example, and was finally shot by a jealous husband. He wasn't missed.) It was many years before I was able to dilate upon my grandmother's principle. *Some people are that way because they have something wrong with their brains*.

I was working in a hospital for patients who had had traumatic brain injuries when I met my first patients with injuries to their orbitomedial frontal lobes, the lower part of the frontal lobes, just above the eyeballs and

⁵ (Cloninger, 1978; Goodwin & Guze, 1984)

⁶ Bartol 1984)(Mealey, 1995)(Person 1986).

⁷ Hare, Snakes in Suits

⁸ Richard Christie, 1970; Jenner, 1980, p128.

⁹ Bertolt Brecht, 1898 – 1956.

kind of on the inside. They were men who had lived perfectly ordinary lives, some of them on the right side of the Cross, but damage to this particular area of their brains made them impulsive, explosive and aggressive. They had no sense. They were constantly getting into trouble. If you kept them in the hospital, you would find them in bed with one of the female patients. If you let them go home, they would get drunk and beat somebody up. They were always trying to score cannabis or other drugs from the orderlies who worked in the hospital. One of my patients was so incorrigible he was sent off to a rehab facility in the middle of nowhere. Somehow, he contrived to have his “sister” visit, and she turned out to be a madam who came to the campus with two teen-aged whores. How he ever found a madam in that benighted section of deepest Arkansas I could never figure, let alone one who had an entourage of underage whores wearing miniskirts and net stocking. It was like One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, except, I promise, it wasn’t nearly so romantic. Once, he escaped and managed to hitchhike clear across Tennessee before the police found him. They had to send him back in an *ambulance*, and you can imagine how much that cost the insurance company. If you wonder why your premiums are so high it’s because we get corralled into paying for things like that.

Patients like this are like Phineas Gage, the famous fellow whose orbitomedial frontal cortex was obliterated by a tamping iron (in 1848), and who experienced a similar transformation. His story is invariably presented in the books you have read that try to establish that one’s brain is, in fact, the seat of one’s personality, behavior, etc. so I won’t belabor the point. This is the reason: if I had told my grandmother that I had amended her principle, and that *Some people are that way because they have something wrong with their brains*, she would just have shrugged. Neopolitans can say a lot with a simply gesture, and there are different kinds of Neopolitan shrugs. This one said, *And what difference could that possibly make?*

Which is a salient point. After all, if someone does something or if someone is some kind of way, chances are that their brain was participating in the event. That’s simply what brains do. Whether it’s the right side of one’s brain or the left side, the top or the bottom, dopamine or serotonin, well, that sort of thing is interesting to some types, but not necessarily to you. Still, knowing that something happens in one’s brain as well as in our experience does tend to put a gloss on things. The neuro- prefix is a nice veneer to one’s professional credentials and to the impressionable it represents a justification of sorts: *Yes, it happens in the brain, so it must really happen*. It is like the justification a little boy feels when he takes apart a clock and discovers that yes, inside there are wheels and gears and a spring. Like so many scientists, he is pursuing the *nice to know*. Natural psychology, as you have probably have already gleaned, is about what you *have to know*. What you *have to know* about the psychopath is that he is nasty, mean and has no sense, and, like the field mouse and the snake, you need to run like hell. It’s my job to convince you that some of the *nice to know* about the frontal lobes (or oxytocin or exaggerated positivity or reproductive fitness) will be good for your natural psychology. It’s not going to be an easy job.

Twenty years ago, wondering what (if anything) “neuro-psychiatry” was, I wrote:

Today, the neuro- prefix may or may not be economically advantageous; perhaps it is just a matter of prestige or perhaps, self-inflation. But its popularity is attested by the proliferation of brain-care specialists who have affixed neuro- to their professional titles. Already we have neuro-psychologists and neuro-psychiatrists. We shall soon have neuro-social workers, neuro-chiropractors and neuro-medical ethicists. “Whether this will be the sign of inflation that debases the currency or simply the adjustment required by a vigorous, expanding economy is still an open question. It depends, I suppose, on whether there is a corresponding increase in productivity...”¹⁰

¹⁰ Gualtieri CT. The Functional Neuroanatomy of Psychiatric Treatments. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 1991;14:113-124

Is it good for your natural psychology to know that psychopathy resides in one's brain, in fact, in the orbitomedial cortex of one's frontal lobes? Will it increase your reproductive fitness? Well, sure, because....well, just read on.

The frontal lobes of our brains (the frontal cortex) is, in fact, the seat of most of our most beneficent characteristics like conscience, judgment, self-control, learning from experience, behavioral and cognitive flexibility and empathy. These are attributes that the psychopath, of course, is sorely lacking. Thus, patients who have had injuries, strokes or tumors in the lower parts of their frontal lobes (specifically, the orbitomedial surface) have characteristics that resemble the traits of psychopaths. But psychopaths don't, as a rule, have lesions.¹¹ They have a peculiar kind of weakness in the psychological functions that reside in their frontal lobes. This weakness or deficiency is mostly inherited, so the psychopath is born with a proclivity to be aggressive, exploitative, self-centered and emotionally shallow. He is born without the capacity to experience pain, fear and anxiety as you and I do. How those proclivities unfold, in the course of a lifetime, is different for different individuals.

The defining traits of the psychopath are a virtual catalog of frontal lobe pathology. For example, they are **risk-takers**. They are bored by the mundane and the day-to-day and crave excitement. This is one of their more appealing characteristics, especially to young women who don't know better. It has a physiological basis. The psychopath has a nervous system that is said to be chronically "under-aroused."¹² This has been consistently demonstrated in psychophysiological studies, EEGs for example, or something called galvanic skin resistance. People with hypo-aroused brains include hyperactive children, addicts, stunt-men and other thrill junkies. They need external stimulation, often extreme stimulation, to achieve a state of normal equilibrium in their brains:

I go for his face right away with both fists. The only time I feel really calm is when I'm on a job (i.e., a heist) or in a fight.

It is a function of the frontal neocortex to maintain optimal levels of physiological **arousal** in the brain. Thus, patients with certain kinds of frontal lobe injuries are under-aroused and resort to impulsive, risky behavior as a consequence. They are just trying to rouse their sluggish brains. There are certain medications we can use for brain-injury patients that improve their basal level of brain arousal. When the drugs work, the patients become less impulsive, more thoughtful and considerate. Unfortunately, those medications are not especially helpful for psychopaths. They grind them up to get high.

Frontal lobe patients are also relatively **insensitive to pain**; they feel it but they don't necessarily experience it as unpleasant. In fact, patients with severe, intractable pain are sometimes treated by neurosurgeons who clip out some of the tissue in their frontal cortex. As a result, the patient remains aware that he has pain but it doesn't bother him as much. Psychopaths, by the same token, are relatively insensitive to pain. This confers a certain resilience and it also makes risk-taking a bit less risky.

Psychopaths, like frontal lobe patients, are not only inured to physical pain but also to **psychological pain**. They seldom experience anxiety or fear. Their nervous systems aren't programmed to respond in a normal way to the kinds of stimuli that most people deem unpleasant or aversive. As a result, their behavior cannot be modified

¹¹ A "lesion" is something wrong. In the brain, a lesion might be a stroke, a focal injury, a cancer, an abscess or some other pathological event. Some lesions grow, as cancers do; some lesions, like an old stroke, are "static." Some lesions are "irritative," and give rise to seizures. I am surprised that "lesion" has not found its way into common speech, in which event, it would doubtless have a derogatory connotation.

¹² The "Arousal Theory of Criminality" is associated with the English psychologist, Hans Eysenck (Eysenck & Gudjonsson 1989), who found that the common biological condition underlying a psychopathic disposition was the inheritance of a nervous system that was relatively insensitive to low levels of stimulation. Psychopaths, he argued, tend to be extraverted, impulsive, and sensation-seeking because under conditions of relatively low stimulation they find themselves at a suboptimal level of arousal; to increase their arousal, many will participate in high-risk activities such as crime (see also Farley 1986 and Gove & Wilmoth 1990). Ellis (1987) found that psychopathy was associated with a variety of indicators of "suboptimal arousal," including childhood hyperactivity, recreational drug use, risk taking, failure to persist on tasks, and preference for wide-ranging sexual activity.

by punishment or by the fear of punishment.¹³ This too contributes to their amazing resilience, but there is a negative side to it. After all, learning occurs in response to punishments as well as to rewards. Since neither punishment nor failure affects the psychopath in a negative way, he never really learns to modify behavior that is likely to get him punished. Unlike most people, he doesn't change. He keeps on doing the same thing; he just finds a different place to do it and different victims to do it to. In behavioral terms, his response to reinforcers is "sluggish." For this reason, psychopaths are incorrigible.

The frontal lobes of the brain are also the seat of the **executive functions** of the brain: planning, motivation and initiative, the ability to adjust one's behavior in response to feedback. Psychopaths also have deficits in their ability to plan. They rely on their spontaneity and their skills at improvising. Their experience of time is impaired, so when they do make plans, it is only within the near horizon. Delayed gratification is not in their behavioral repertoire, except as a tactic.

No, darling, I won't stay with you tonight. My feelings for you are too strong. Too much, too soon. I need a little time. (A little time to the psychopath is the next day, when he moves in with you.)

The psychopath is characterized by **egotism**, an inflated sense of his own importance and insensitivity to the thoughts and feelings of other people. He is, therefore, incapable of **empathy**. Like his experience of pain, he can appreciate what empathy is, but it has no impact on how he feels or behaves. He understands that other people are empathic. He thinks it is a weakness they have that is useful to manipulate.

It all happened so quickly. He seemed so vulnerable, he had been hurt so much. He was reluctant to commit at first. Then I guess he learned to trust me. He moved in, and for a while we were very close.

The only other person he was ever close to was his sister. She lived in Ohio. She needed an operation, but she didn't have insurance, so he sent her money. Well, I guess, I gave him the money to send her. He was between jobs. The operation was going to cost \$10,000. I put a lot of that on my credit cards. He wanted us to go see her after the operation, but I couldn't. I had to work. I lent him my car.

She never heard from him again. Her story is similar to a case described by John Fulton, who was a neurosurgeon at Yale who studied the consequences of frontal lobe ablation in Chimpanzees in the 1930's and 40's.

A lady from Nashville sent her son all the way to Connecticut to see Fulton. The young man had had a frontal lobe injury and was given to impulsive behavior. While he was staying in New Haven, his mother – Heaven knows why – suggested that he visit a young lady his age who was at school nearby. She was the daughter of one of her best friends. He did, and they even went out a couple of times. Then he borrowed her car.

Six months later, he called his mother from Mexico. He had taken the girl's car and all of the money his mother had given him for Dr Fulton, and drove to Mexico, of all places, where he sold the car and lived a life of dissolution. He called his mother for money to come back to Nashville.

Nor did he show any remorse when he got back home. **Lack of remorse** for past transgressions is one of the diagnostic clues that someone is a psychopath. Psychopaths don't have a functioning **conscience**. Social norms, in the sense of standards of ethical behavior, they regard in the same way they regard empathy. They are stupid things that other people have to worry about. People's obedience to social norms makes them predictable, and thus easy to take advantage of.

¹³ Denckla & Heilman, 1979

There is a form of dementia that selectively affects the frontal parts of the brain. The first signs of this condition are **disinhibited or inappropriate behavior**, an inability to control one's impulses.

An esteemed English professor from our University was invited to a college in a small southern town to give a lecture. As is customary on such occasions, his host invited the visiting professor to dinner, along with some colleagues. His host was a former student of his, prominent now in his own right, and, as it happened, with a handsome, plump wife.

There was wine at dinner and the esteemed professor drank a few glasses. As he drank, he grew increasingly disinhibited. He started to flirt with the wife in the most scandalous way. He drank a bit more after his host and the wife had left, and then he walked to his former student's house. (Those were the days before cell phones.) He thought he knew the window to their bedroom, and threw a rock at the window. Then a few more, until the glass broke. Then he started to yell her name, louder and louder, more and more impatient for her to come down and have sex with him. A neighbor called the police. The next day, his host bailed him out of jail and he gave his lecture, which was much better attended than anyone expected.

The esteemed professor had an early case of frontal-temporal dementia. In such patients, alcohol can have a particularly disinhibiting effect. Drinking alcohol usually has that effect on normal brains, too; it tends to de-activate the frontal lobes. That is why one is more extraverted when one drinks, less anxious or fearful, more aggressive sometimes, less sensitive to pain. One also has a distorted sense of time-in-passing; it's such a good party, but check your watch and, hey, I was supposed to be home an hour ago. The problem that our professor illustrated is that if you don't have very good frontal lobes to begin with, the effects of alcohol are amplified considerably.

The author had the privilege, during his youth, to serve as a general physician in a couple of rough, rural Southern communities. There he grew familiar with the Saturday-night denizen of the Emergency Room; the young man whose idea of a good time was a few beers at a roadhouse and then a good fight. It was not until many years later that the behavioral neurology of the American Redneck became apparent. Combine the impulsive, aggressive behavior of the frontal lobe patient with an elevated pain threshold (also the consequence of an orbitofrontal lesion), the disinhibiting influence of even a small amount of alcohol, and the inability to learn enduring lessons from unpleasant experience, and you have the familiars of a country ER.¹⁴

In our work with patients who have had frontal lobe injuries, we use the term "**cognitive inflexibility**." It describes the patient's inability adjust his thinking in order to solve new problems. The mind of the psychopath is comparatively inflexible. He keeps doing the same bad things over and over again. He is smart enough to try to avoid punishment, but he's not afraid of it. The behavior of such patients is said to be "perseverative" or "stereotyped." An extreme example of stereotyped behavior is the hand flapping that autistic people do. Patients with certain forms of dementia exhibit perseverative behavior, like cutting a light switch on and off, over and over. One of my uncles, who had brain damage from the great epidemic of von Economo's encephalitis in 1919, used to turn the water faucets on and off, on and off, repeatedly. His life comprised little more than familiar routines.

Psychopaths may be glib and quick on their feet, but their behavior is repetitive, if not perseverative. For example, they will play the same confidence-games over and over.

You know, I met his third wife. She was only with him for six months. She was smart, she got out quick. We actually got to be friends, and she asked me about the things he said about me. They were the same

¹⁴ Gualtieri, 2002.

things he had told me about his first wife. He told her that I was frigid, that I would never have sex with him, that when we did I made him feel guilty and inadequate because I never had an orgasm. He told her that he tried to be understanding, because I had been abused when I was a little girl, but after ten years, he just couldn't continue to be my therapist, he just wanted to be a husband. It was the same stupid story he had told me about his first wife. He couldn't even come up with a different story.

It is odd to think that someone who is intelligent, glib and fast on his feet might also suffer from a singular lack of imagination. But that is just one more paradox of the psychopath. There are always good examples in the news of powerful and successful men who keep committing the same stupid mistake until they are finally caught and dishonored.

Now, we can spin this yarn about the psychopath and his brain for a lot longer, but for natural psychologists like my grandmother and most of you, dear readers, the distinction between *Some men are like that* and *Some men have something wrong with their orbitomedial frontal cortex* is a distinction without much difference. Besides, most psychopaths don't have orbitomedial lesions or fronto-temporal dementia. Theoretically, those parts of his brain aren't working as well as they ought to. But have we really advanced our understanding beyond the *nice to know* stage? And we haven't come close to explaining the question, *Why does antisocial behavior occur in a social animal*.

So, we shall take a different tack. Psychopaths are predators. In the kingdom of the human animals, they are the ultimate predators. They are also eminent deceivers. And they are said to have great charm. And as it happens, psychopaths and men with psychopathic traits are most likely to exercise these qualities in their relations with women. Although empathy and love are foreign to them, they are skilled at taking advantage of the trust and empathy of other people, especially women. It is a woman's nature to be trusting and empathic, sometimes to a fault, and that makes her vulnerable to predatory men.

PREDATORY MEN

Predatory men, what an idea! Is there any other kind?

Yes, as a matter of fact, there are. There are parasitic men. Among the characters in this book, most are parasites. They suck one's vital nutrients little by little, at least until you find them out. That is why an anthelmintic book like this one is so valuable.¹⁵ Psychopaths, on the other hand, are predators.¹⁶ The difference is that a parasite prefers to keep his host alive as he sucks in nutrients while a predator, with no such qualms, simply kills his victims and eats them.

Not to say that a predatory man will necessarily *kill* you, although he might. To that effect, one could recount the ghastly stories of a man in Chicago who killed eight nurses or the one in Washington state who murdered 71 prostitutes. They are such disgusting men I can't bring myself to give their names. Besides, men of that ilk are a jumble of psychopathology: psychopaths, to be sure, but also stupid, obsessional, sadistic and often brain-injured or psychotic or both. Drug abuse and alcohol drive a lot of the murders that men commit on women. In 1979, there was a physician in our state who murdered his wife and two little girls in the most horrible way; he had been using amphetamines, a class of drugs that make violent people even more violent. All of these characters have had books written about them and with ample psychological explanations of their heinous behavior. They are pure sensationalism, a class of books I don't endorse. No psychiatric explanation is equal to the evil that some men purvey.

¹⁵ Cf, Emotional parasites.

¹⁶ All of us animals are either predators or parasites. All of us, that is, all but one. The sea slug *Elysia chlorotica*, can make energy directly from the sun¹⁶ but he we should consider him the exception that proves the rule. All of the rest of us are either parasites or predators because all of our energy comes from other organisms.

But, you may say, for someone who belabors sensationalism, you give us ex-husbands who certifiably sadistic and would-be murderers, and so I have. You would also be right to ask why, in any discussion of predatory men, data such as these have thus far gone unmentioned: Every day, in the US, 4 or 5 women are killed by men, and 93% of them are killed by men they know. Almost two-thirds of the victims were wives or girlfriends of the murderer.¹⁷

*Interpersonal violence against women is virtually endemic in our society (the USA). It is estimated, for example, that 14% to 20% of women will experience rape at some point in their lives, 25% to 28% will be physically abused in a sexual-romantic relationship, and 8% to 24% will be stalked by someone known or unknown to them. When added to the 25% to 35% likelihood that the average adult woman has been sexually abused as a child, the epidemiology of interpersonal violence against women is a pressing social issue.*¹⁸

A World Health Organization study in 2011 reported that between 15–71% of women in different countries reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner at some point in their lives. Among women aged 15 to 49 years:

- Between 15% of women in Japan and 70% of women in Ethiopia and Peru reported physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner;
- Between 0.3–11.5% of women reported experiencing sexual violence by a non-partner;
- The first sexual experience for many women was reported as forced – 24% in rural Peru, 28% in Tanzania, 30% in rural Bangladesh, and 40% in South Africa;
- Approximately 20% of women and 5–10% of men report being victims of sexual violence as children.

These data give special meaning to any discussion of predatory men, and should not go unmentioned. If you don't believe the statistics, numbers even one-tenth of the above would be intolerable. Besides, crimes of sexual violence are everywhere under-reported. In my Church, we had to raise money for a girls' dormitory at a mission church in Tanzania. We had already built a girl's school there. Why was the dormitory necessary? Because when the girls walked to school in the morning and home in the afternoons, they were raped. Their fathers could bring them on Sunday night and pick them up on Friday but they couldn't do that every day of the week. So, if the girls were to go at school at all, they would have to stay there. That is the life of a girl living in the country in Tanzania. It is hard for most of us to imagine.

There are topics that not even I am able to address with a light heart and a breezy manner. At such times, one can only turn to immortal Mozart, who was able to bring lightness and grace even to the world of predation. In the first Act of his most sublime creation, Don Giovanni manages to seduce Doña Anna and kill her elderly father in an unequal duel.

*Help! I am undone
The assassin's blade has pierced me
And from my throbbing breast
I feel my life ebb away.*

From Mozart we know that even the most serious topics are better dealt with grace, not solemnity. Before very long, his servant, Leporello, is consoling another victim:

¹⁷ Violence Policy Center. When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2009 Homicide Data. September, 2011.

¹⁸ John Briere, Carol E. Jordan. Violence Against Women: Outcome Complexity and Implications for Assessment and Treatment. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol. 19 No. 11, November 2004 1252-1276

*Well, console yourself;
For you neither are, nor were nor will be
The first or the last of them.*

And by way of consolation, he recites the eighteen hundred victims whom Don Giovanni has left behind in Italy, Germany, France and Spain.

*So as long as she wears a skirt
You know what his game is!*

Don Giovanni was not a murderous psychopath – he was reluctant to fight the *Commendatore* in the first place and he expressed a brief measure of remorse after he killed him. A very brief measure. He was a compulsive womanizer, to be sure, but his method was seduction, not rape. And that, thank goodness, is the kind of predatory male most of us will encounter.

So we picture our predatory male sitting on a barstool with gold chains and an open shirt, sipping a 7&7. There is something about his chiseled features and dark, greasy hair swept across a thinning spot that tells you, *He is on the make*. I knew a fellow like that once when I was an intern in Montreal. He was a plastic surgery resident at our hospital but his features were chiseled by nature, not the knife, and he was handsome to a fault, if you liked guys whose eyes were set a little too close and who wore gold chains. He even drove a Corvette! He was also resolved, it seemed, to sleep with every eligible nurse at the hospital, not to mention the nursing students. He was like our own Canadian representative from the Rat Pack, a particularly sordid bunch of celebrities at the time who liked to drink a lot and chase broads. I was too young at the time to admire the fellow or even to be envious, still wondering as I was when puberty would come my way. The car I drove was a Fiat and driving it was a hit-or-miss affair. Its doorlocks used to freeze up in the Canadian winter. I used to have to breathe on the locks to unfreeze them, cutting what must have been an utterly ridiculous figure to the student nurse I wanted to take for a ride. I'm sure our plastic surgeon, whose name was Steve, had no such trouble with locks or any other barrier to his self-indulgence for that matter. He has always been the paragon, to me, of the superficial charm of a sexual predator.

But at least he advertised his intentions. A woman wasn't attracted to Steve because he was sincere or because he seemed vulnerable. Deception wasn't his game. He was one to let it hang out, and one could only marvel at, as we do at Don Giovanni, his single-mindedness. In fact, we know from our extensive research among the animals that females take well to the elaborate reproductive displays favored by such men. For example, there is a small fish that lives in the Bahamas, the gambusia fish. The male gambusia fish may have either a large gonopodium or a small one. (A gonopodium is his "sperm transfer organ," a phrase that I'm sure you will have opportunity to use before very long.) As you might imagine, female gambusia fish prefer males with large gonopodia. Like our friend Steve, the males let it hang out, and at some disadvantage I might add. Large gonopodia, you see, are a distinct disadvantage to the male gambusia fish because they tend to slow him down, and make him much more vulnerable to predation.¹⁹ So male gambusia fish with small gonopodia live longer but those with large ones have more fun. It is an honest tradeoff. Steve's Corvette doubtless enhanced his appeal to student nurses, but it also rendered him more vulnerable to the attentions of the Highway Patrol.

THE EIGHTH GUIDELINE

Don Giovanni and my friend Steve may have been less than estimable characters, but they exercised a degree of honesty in their proclivities. Well, maybe honesty is a bit strong. One doesn't rely on a Corvette to

¹⁹ R. Brian Langerhans, Craig A. Layman and Thomas J. DeWitt. Male genital size reflects a tradeoff between attracting mates and avoiding predators in two live-bearing fish species. *PNAS* May 24, 2005 vol. 102 no. 21 7618-7623

effect a seduction. But, then, in the world of love and procreation, deception is always more the rule than the exception. That is the reason why we distinguish seduction from rape. We disapprove of both, but it is rape that we penalize (although not often enough). Neither the Don nor my friend Steve were rapists, they were seducers. They were predatory, in a sense, but they weren't psychopaths.

With respect to deception among our cousins the animals, writers invariably give us the same examples. For example, they tell us that even among the lovely flowers deception is rife. One species of orchid attracts pollinating insects by pretending to contain food when, in fact, they don't. Another orchid knows how to exude the odor of a female wasp, and thus is able to win the attention of a male wasp. This particular orchid has thick long hairs deep inside, which excites the wasp, since they resemble the thick long hairs that a female wasp has around her private parts. Thus enamored, he copulates with the flower, an act that biologists refer to as "pseudo-copulation," another word you should remember. Neither is the wasp disappointed at his futile labors, because he flies off to service other orchids, laden with pollen.

These are the kind of stories writers like to share in the way of proving that deception is, indeed, just part of the natural order. They tell us about the sylvan glade, where songbirds, ostensibly monogamous, build their little nests cheerfully together and get ready for a season of conjugal bliss. Then they proceed to engage in what biologists like to call "extra-pair copulations," i.e., adultery. They choose to build their nests with males who are good nest-builders, but, hey, a good provider is not necessarily a good lay. So they mate on the sly with songbirds who are better in other ways. All of this sleeping around doubtless contributes to the racket they make, early in the morning, when you are trying to sleep. Just because extra-pair copulation is in the order of things doesn't mean that it doesn't make some birds mad as hell. And then there are species of fish and lizards who find it convenient to retain their juvenile characteristics even after they have achieved sexual maturity, their purpose to sneak past older, stronger males and into the proximity of females. Some of them even maintain female characteristics, color or odor, just to hang out with the girls and maybe sneak in a quickie. Have you had enough?

So, it is natural for people to be deceptive sometimes, and one doesn't have to bring up orchids, birds and lizards to make the point. Professor Vrij, in fact, has discovered that "normal subjects" (i.e., college students) admit to telling lies most days in their lives. Others have confirmed his finding. For example, DePaulo and her colleagues discovered that college students lie during one in three social interactions. The rest of us lie in only about one in five. Most of us tell a lie a day, but college students manage two. Lies like:

I told him I didn't take out our garbage because I didn't know where to take it.

I told her the muffins were the best I had ever had.

I exaggerated how sorry I was to be late.

I told her this guy liked her when he really hated her guts.

I told my mother I didn't drink beer at college.

*He and I discussed sexual acts that I had performed, but he assumed that they had been performed with a woman.*²⁰

Vrij also avers:

*If someone asked you the following two questions "Are you good at lying?" and "Are you good at detecting lies?", what would you answer? You would probably answer that you are not such a good liar, but that you generally notice when someone is trying to dupe you. This book shows that the opposite is more likely to be true. Generally, people are rather good at lying, but not very good at detecting lies.*²¹

²⁰ DePaulo, B. M., Kashy, D. A., Kirkendol, S. E., Wyer, M. M., & Epstein, J. A. (1996). Lying in everyday life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 979-995.

²¹ Vrij, A. 2001 *Detecting lies and deceit: the psychology of lying and the implications for professional practice*. Chichester: Wiley.

A small increment of deceit – call it discretion – lubricates the gears of social intercourse. The opposite of discretion is a form of pathological honesty that is as self-indulgent as it is annoying. If all social interaction were guided by absolute frankness hardly any of it would happen at all. In fact, the only tribe of human beings who are known never to lie are people with autism .

To say that dissimulation is intrinsic to courtship and the mating game is simply to re-state the obvious. Never ones to shrink from re-stating the obvious, psychologists have made systematic investigations of what men and women tend to be deceitful about. When men are with other men, they tend to exaggerate their sexual promiscuity and their popularity. With women, they feign commitment, sincerity, and “resource acquisition ability.” Females more frequently engage in deception about appearance alteration with both men and women.²² When women insert ads in the personal column of the newspaper, they are most likely to conceal their age, especially if they are over 35. Even Nature gets into the act. Big breasts don’t necessarily contain more mammary tissue, and big butts don’t always indicate a pelvis that will accommodate robust babies. Big breasts and big butts are mostly fat, and fat deposition therein is said to be “a deceptive sexual signal, mimicking other signals of high reproductive potential.”²³

Although men and women lie at about the same rate, males use deceptive tactics more frequently than females do. However, in both genders “the dimensions of deception are congruent with their reproductive strategies and mate selection criteria.”²⁴ In other words, if a guy thinks you are attractive and he wants to take you to bed, he is more likely to adopt a deceptive tactic. The deception is not only about reproductive fitness (*I am sexually irresistible*) but also the likelihood of parental investment (M: *I want to be with you like this forever*; F: *I am young, fit and my reproductive potential is ample*).

All of this is known to biologists as “dishonest signalling,” as the little grouse does, pretending to have an injured wing as she leads a fox away from her nest or the dance fly who pretends not to be pregnant in order to collect more “nuptial gifts.” Deception, we are told, is natural, intrinsic, and something that all of us do every day, and that certainly puts a different light on it, don’t you think? Of course, where this leaves the eighth commandment, I don’t know. More to the point, where does this leave the predatory male, the psychopath? He is, after all, a very good liar, but according to Professor Vrij, so are all the rest of us. I suppose there is a difference between lies like *I told her the muffins were the best I had ever had* and this one: *Oh, you dear children, who has brought you here? Do come in, and stay with me. No harm shall happen to you.*²⁵ (I have no idea, though, what psychological impetus could possibly incline a person to discuss the sexual acts she had performed while allowing her boyfriend to assume that she had done them with a woman.)

The inexorable march of science has allowed us to move from *Thou shalt not bear false witness* to what is called “tactical deception,” and we may or may not be the better for it. The muffin lie, by the way, is straight from the paper by DePaulo, but I have to confess that I told my daughter, not too long ago, that *These are the best muffins I ever had*. She just game me a scowl. Appreciating her keen discernment at detecting a lie, I recruited her and my other two daughters to form a focus group of sorts, and told them this story, which I remembered from my High School Latin textbook:

THE RAPE OF THE SABINE WOMEN

²² William Tooke and Lori Camire

²³ Human hips, breasts and buttocks: Is fat deceptive? Bobbi S. Low, R. D. Alexander and K. M. Noonan

²⁴ Martie G. Haselton David M. Buss Viktor Oubaid Alois Angleitner. Sex, Lies, and Strategic Interference: The Psychology of Deception Between the Sexes. Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin, Vol. 31 No. 1, January 2005 3-23

²⁵ Brothers Grimm, Hansel and Gretel.

The Roman state had become strong enough to hold its own in war with all the peoples along its borders, but a shortage of women meant that its greatness was fated to last for a single generation, since there was no prospect of offspring at home nor any prospect of marriage with their neighbors. Then Romulus sent messengers to the neighboring peoples to ask the right of marriage for the new people. But nowhere were the emissaries given a fair hearing.

*The youth of Rome took this insult badly and began to think seriously about the use of force. Romulus, to gain time till he found the right occasion, hid his concern and prepared to celebrate the *Consualia*, the solemn games in honor of equestrian Neptune. He then ordered that the spectacle be announced to the neighboring peoples. He gave the event great publicity by the most lavish means possible in those days. The entire Sabine population came, wives and children included. When it was time for the show, and everybody was concentrating on this, a prearranged signal was given and all the Roman youths began to grab the women. Many just snatched the nearest woman to hand, but the most beautiful had already been reserved for the senators .*

The party was over, and the grieving parents of the girls ran away, accusing the Romans of having violated the laws of hospitality and invoking the god who was supposed to have been honored at that day's festival. Nor did the girls themselves hold much hope. But Romulus went among them in person to assure them that none of this would have happened if their fathers hadn't been so inflexible in not letting them marry their neighbors. But now they would have the status of wives with all the material rewards and civil rights of citizenship and they would have children, than which nothing is dearer. They should cool their anger and give their hearts to the men who had already taken their bodies. A good relationship often begins with an offence, he said. And their husbands would treat them with extra kindness in hope of making up for the parents and country they so missed. The men added their blandishments, saying that they'd been motivated by love and passion, entreaties which are very effective with women.²⁶

My three girls were not sympathetic at all to the plight of the Roman youth or impressed at what good husbands they promised to be. Nor could they be persuaded that, absent Sabine women, the whole course of Western history would have been different: the rule of law, aqueducts, the odes of Catullus, gladiator movies. No, they thought that the whole thing was wrong. But not because of the deception. That, they thought, was trivial. What they didn't approve was that the boys had made the girls do something they didn't want to do, and *by force*. In effect, they thought the Romans were rapists not seducers.

So, there are lies, damn lies and tactical deception. There are predatory men and there are psychopaths. Like everything else, it depends on who's doing it and what his intentions are. If the liar is a psychopath, chances are his intentions are less than honorable. The orchids, fish of various kind, chimpanzees and most of us take pains to bend the truth, or to conceal it, for an ulterior purpose. The purpose may not be a bad one, but just a way of being diplomatic. The psychopath bends the truth but in the service of a really untoward end.

Tactical deception, therefore, or dishonest signaling, doth not a psychopath make. But before we leave the subject, there is one more deceiver I have to mention who is not in the psychopathic realm: that is, the liar who has no purpose. For example, there must be flowers in the meadow with thick, long hairs inside who would be thoroughly scandalized if a wasp came by and tried to pseudo-copulate with them. They don't even realize they are lying because their lie serves no purpose. In this category we should put human beings who lie for no reason at all.

²⁶ Livy, History of Rome 1.9.

I need to ask you about this. This was a young woman who had brought her son in for an evaluation. You're a psychiatrist, maybe you can help me. It's my boyfriend. He just can't tell the truth. It's not that he's a bad guy. He's kind and sweet and gentle, I know he doesn't play around or drink or do drugs because my first husband used to do that. He has a job, I know that, because he gives me his paycheck. But he makes up the most incredible stories. And he does it all the time.

He tells me about work. There is a secretary there, he told me, with enormous boobs and she screws the boss and all of the drivers. The problem is, they get into fights over her. He told me that one of her boyfriends bit off another one's ear when they were fighting in the grease pit. They found the ear when they were cleaning out the grease pit the next day, it was covered in grease, but the grease had preserved it, so they were able to attach it back on. One day, her husband came to work with a gun, looking for her boss because he wanted to shoot him so he hid in one of the lockers while they told the husband he had left for the day. Then they couldn't get the locker open because the boss was so fat he was pressing against the door and jammed the latch. So they had to use a torch to cut open the locker and almost burned him to death.

Every day is like that. He comes back from the store and he tells me about a woman there who wanted to buy standing ribs for her Afghan hounds. She got in a fight with the meat-man. He never stops. His brother owns sixteen apartment houses in Los Angeles but his wife is evil and won't let him send any money to his parents or have any contact with anybody in the family. His first wife was so beautiful but she died in a horrible accident. None of it is ever true. The office girl at work is 60 years old. Nobody ever bit anybody's ear off.... He makes it all up.

There are compulsive liars in the world, people who simply can't tell the truth. An extreme form is called *pseudologica fantastica*. Some psychiatrists think it is a form of over-compensation, or an avoidance mechanism, and sometimes it is. Sometimes, though, compulsive lying occurs in men, and sometimes in women, who just like to fantasy, and they can't help but to share their fantasies with other people. It is an interesting trait, people who spin their lives around fantasies. The membrane that exists in one's mind in order to separate truth from fiction is too permeable in such characters, and they can't always tell the difference. It is usually a harmless trait, but you can probably think of many examples when it led to mischief.

Theoretically, psychopaths only lie when it is in their interest to do so, but most of them will tell lies just for the sake of it. Maybe they do it to stay in practice. Maybe they are superstitious about anybody knowing too much about them, so they lie all the time. As such, it may just be a form of camouflage.

CAMOUFLAGE

The psychopath has another type of camouflage, *charm*. That's right, like a snake, he charms his victims and then he has his way with them. A girl has to *watch out*. That charming fellow, the plastic surgeon with gold chains and a Corvette, he is really just a snake.

*It was supposed that serpents..had also a power of charming.*²⁷

When I worked in a hospital for patients with brain injuries, there was a young man who met every person on the ward with a cheerful smile and friendly hello, but he was unable to follow any of these encounters with a conversation. He had exquisite manners, holding the door for patients and staff to pass, he was always the last one off the elevator, and he said "God bless you" when anyone sneezed. His manners were "Chesterfieldian." But his social intercourse comprised nothing more than clichés. He was a shell of courtesy with nothing inside. He had nothing to say but he was able to say it very nicely. Such patients, met with not infrequently in the wards of a brain injury hospital, illustrate how charm can exist of the surface of one's persona, and there is nothing meaningful underneath.

This is why we refer to such manners as "Chesterfieldian":

*Then, at last, the young man may begin to practise the finest of the arts of pleasing — the art of flattery. For every man and every woman has some prevailing vanity. Watch, wait, pry, seek out their weakness, "and you will then know what to bait your hook with to catch them". For that is the secret of success in the world.*²⁸

Lord Chesterfield was a British peer in the 18th century who wrote letters advising his son on proper manners to advance his career at Court.²⁹ He is notable for advising, among other things, that a true gentleman should never laugh out loud. A gracious smile is the most emotion he should display. A Chesterfieldian manner is characterized by exquisite attentiveness to the superficialities of social intercourse. It is not, however, a reflection of an empathic nature and is relatively inflexible. The fellow from Nashville who stole his mother's girlfriend's daughter's car and took it to Mexico had Chesterfieldian good manners. Some frontal lobe patients, like psychopaths, are incapable of the formal cognitive operations that are necessary for real mutuality. But they are nevertheless exquisitely well-mannered. Their manners, the so-called "charm" of the psychopath, is the mask of empathy. Behind the mask one finds an individual who is at best indifferent, and at worst, predatory and remorseless.

*I was raised to be charming, not sincere.*³⁰

²⁷ Oliver Goldsmith, *Natural History* 1774. Also, from the *Literary Gazette* (1821): It is asserted by some that snakes occasionally exert their powers of fascination upon human beings, and I see no reason to doubt the truth of this. An old Dutchwoman, who lives at the Twelve Mile Creek in the Niagara district, sometimes gives a minute account of the manner in which she was charmed by a serpent; and a farmer told me that a similar circumstance once occurred to his daughter. It was on a warm summer day, that she was sent to spread wet clothes upon some shrubbery near the house. Her mother conceived that she remained longer than was necessary, and seeing her standing unoccupied at some distance-, she called to her several times, but no answer was returned. On approaching, she found her daughter pale, motionless, and fixed in an erect posture. The sweat rolled down her brow, and her hands were clenched convulsively. A large rattlesnake lay on a log opposite the girl, waving his head from side to side, and kept his eyes steadfastly fastened upon her. The mother instantly struck him with a stick, and the moment he made off, the girl recovered herself and burst into tears, but was for some time so weak and agitated, that she could not walk home.

²⁸ *The Common Reader, Second Series*, by Virginia Woolf *Lord Chesterfield's Letters to His Son*

²⁹ It was his illegitimate son, as it happened, and the boy's career was singularly unsuccessful. He married a charwoman, had six children and died young and unhappy. Lord Chesterfield then took on the education of his grandchildren, none of whom amounted to much, either.

³⁰ Stephen Sondheim

Writers have made much of the “charm” of sociopaths. Cleckley’s descriptions of psychopaths include such phrases as ‘shrewdness and agility of mind,’ ‘talks entertainingly,’ and ‘exceptional charm.’³¹ It is a paradox, though. Someone who is given to no more than shallow emotionality and who is incapable of real mutuality in a relationship can nevertheless insinuate himself into your trust and establish intimacy in the course of a single conversation. Someone whose Chesterfieldian manners are comparable to patients who have had severe brain injuries. Robert Hare describes how it happens:

As interaction with you proceeds, the psychopath carefully assesses your persona. Your persona gives the psychopath a picture of the traits and characteristics you value in yourself. Your persona may also reveal, to an astute observer, insecurities or weaknesses you wish to minimize or hide from view. As an ardent student of human behavior, the psychopath will then gently test the inner strengths and needs that are part of your private self and eventually build a personal relationship with you by communicating (through words and deeds) four important messages.³²

According to Hare the four messages that the psychopath communicates are 1) I like who you are; 2) I am just like you; 3) Your secrets are safe with me; and 4) I am the perfect friend for you.

..the persona of the psychopath--the "personality" the person is bonding with--does not really exist. It was built on lies, carefully woven together to entrap you. It is a mask, one of many, custom-made by the psychopath to fit your particular psychological needs and expectations. It does not reflect the true personality--the psychopathic personality--that lies beneath. It is a convenient fabrication. Second, these relationships are not based on informed choice. The psychopath chooses you and then moves in. Outsiders, without the benefit of intimate conversation, may see what is really going on, but we tend to discount these observations, and may spend energy convincing our friends that this person is special. Third, because it is faked, it won't last like genuine relationships... The psychopath will not invest more than minimal energy in maintaining the relationship unless you can offer something really special, which is not usually the case. Hence, when the relationship ends, you may be left wondering what just happened. Fourth, the relationship is one-sided because the psychopath has an ulterior--some would say "evil"--and, at the very least, selfish motive. The victimization goes far beyond trying to take advantage of someone on a date or during a simple business transaction. The victimization is predatory in nature; it often leads to severe financial, physical or emotional harm for the individual. Healthy, real relationships are built on mutual respect and trust; they are based on sharing honest thoughts and feelings. The mistaken belief that the psychopathic bond has any of these characteristics is the reason it is so successful.³³

The psychopath, therefore, like my brain-injured friend, has charm that is only superficial. It is another form of deception that serves his predatory ends. But why does one fall for it?

The “allure of the superficial” theory suggests that the psychopath is a shape-shifter with the uncanny ability to reflect your insecurities and vulnerabilities and thus insinuate himself into your trust. He may be, but what does that make you? It only means that you are a naïve, bereft of critical judgment, and woefully incapable of perceiving insincerity when it has its hand on your knee. I think that it is likely that people have overstated the charm and appeal of the psychopath. They endow him with uncanny powers because he duped them. If he did that, after all, he must have been clever, indeed. It is OK, I suppose, to have been duped by a man with Chesterfieldian good manners but no less than shameful to have been duped by a sleaze-ball. He must have been a real charmer if he pulled one over on *me!*

³¹ Hare, 1993, p. 27

³² (Paul Babiak & Robert D Hare: Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go to Work, Chapter 4

³³ (Paul Babiak & Robert D Hare: Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go to Work, Chapter 4

I think that the idea of a psychopath's charm is over-done. Of course, if a psychopath didn't possess skills to manipulate people, he wouldn't be a particularly successful psychopath, would he? His story wouldn't sell many books. Thus, a writer is well-advised to present psychopaths who happen to be charming. The ones who are not aren't worthy of notice. Un-charming psychopaths are not particularly notable, but there are plenty of them out there, and I venture to say they represent the majority. For example, I often have to deal with patients who are trying to play a psychopathic game. On a few occasions I have dealt with prisoners who tried to fake mental illness in order to escape punishment for a capital crime. More often they are men trying to malingering a brain injury or chronic pain to win a big award in a lawsuit or win a disability check. This kind of a scam is not likely to become a caper screenplay: *man feigns back injury for a \$274 SSDI check*.

Most such men are low level types, but they try to charm you nevertheless. It is a sorry experience to observe their clumsy methods. After you've seen even a few, their machinations are tiresomely repetitive. When a pseudo-patient says *I don't care about the money, all I want is my life back* or *On a scale of one to ten my pain is a 15*, you just want to roll your eyes. They even carry their wives with them, like Gun Molls there to support their alibi. *This is my fiancée, Theresa*. Of course, Theresa has been his fiancée for 23 years and they have three kids. Then they say, *You're the only doctor who's ever listened to me*, or, *You're the only doctor who seems to care*, you just want to tell them how many times you've heard that before, and never from a patient who had a real illness or injury. You ask them what they do all day, and instead of telling you they were getting ready for a dog-fight or whipping up a batch of Methamphetamine, guess what? They are playing with their dog or reading the Bible.

Granted, these are low-level types and not many of the high-level psychopaths who haunt board rooms and corner offices ever come to our Clinics. The point has been well-taken, however, that there is a certain banality to the self-serving and cloying behavior of a psychopath. Snakes, like them or not, have a certain dignity. This class of men has the charm of a parasite. So, I don't buy the superficial charm theory, either.

No, I prefer the "cold-cock" theory. That is, if someone wants to sneak up behind you and knock you upside the head with a cosh, well, that's what's going to happen. It doesn't matter if the fellow was charming or not, you've been cold-cocked. And it can happen to anybody. As we used to say around the barn:

*Never the bronco that couldn't be rode
Never the cowboy that couldn't be throwed.*

The advantage of the cold-cock theory is that it doesn't overvalue the so-called charm of the psychopath, but it addresses the more important question, why we fall for it. The answers:

1. Most of the time we don't;
2. We tend to take people at their word;
3. When we are young, we are willing to take a risk on a fling, because we don't know better;
4. When we are old, we don't have anything to lose. Except our life savings, perhaps.

Arithmetic works in the psychopath's favor, as in *You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time*.³⁴ No one is so smart that he or she can't be duped, at least once, and most of us more often than once. You can figure it out. If 90% of all crimes go unreported, and 90% of all the crimes that are reported go unsolved, those are pretty good odds for the petty thief. Change "crimes" to "episodes of exploitation," and the odds are even better. Why do you think you keep getting e-mails from Nigerian ex-bank presidents who have €500,000 they need to expatriate and time is of the essence? How many Nigerian ex-bank presidents could there possibly be and why in the world did this one pick you? The answer to the questions, of course, is irrelevant. The fellow who is spamming you isn't really an ex-bank president at all, but a man who has discovered how to send e-mails to 50,000,000 people. In that vast number, he knows there is someone, probably

³⁴ Attributed, accurately or not, to both Abraham Lincoln and PT Barnum.

an elderly person with early dementia, who still has control of the checkbook, and who will leap at the chance to deposit \$25,000 in a joint account in hopes of making €500,000. Nor is he likely to complain when the money disappears lest the kids find out and take the checkbook away.

A psychopath who isn't completely stupid knows a way to improve the odds in his favor. He knows that the way to be successful predator is to choose one's victims. It is always a better strategy to prey on the weak and vulnerable. This is true of wolves and hyenas and lions and con-men. Why eat the strong when the weak are just as nourishing? And so our banal and parasitic con-man exercised his formidable but entirely superficial charm on young people, especially well-brought up young people, whose gullibility is legendary; on lonely people who are starved for sympathy; to highly successful businesspeople and professionals whose lives are barren of friendship; to foolish old people; and, of course, to women, trusting and empathic by nature, and not always so cautious as their grandmothers would prefer them to be. But mainly he exercises his scam on lots of people, because almost all of us are vulnerable to flattery and attention, and he does it lots of times and in lots of different places.

Arithmetic, that's what it is. The psychopath isn't necessarily very smart, although he can be clever, and he can certainly count. Sooner or later someone is going to stumble by, not paying attention. For someone who is supposed to be impulsive and striving continually for immediate gratification, he can be remarkably patient. Failure and disappointment don't deter him. He doesn't learn from painful experience, but keeps on playing the same scam over and over. Sooner or later, someone will fall for it. It's just a matter of arithmetic.

A psychopath may happen to be charming, just as a sandwich-sign carrier or a mule-skinner may happen to be charming. The advantage of being a charming psychopath is that he can dupe a higher class of victim, the kind of people who are likely to write books about him.

And so we have considered many different aspects of the psychopath, and in the next chapter we shall touch upon a few more, like his narcissism and lack of empathy. But what we discover is that our model, based on experience with people who have had, captures essential elements of his character that are also to be found in people who are not really psychopaths. Deception, we all do it. Charm, a lot of us have that, too. Predatory instincts... well, the plastic surgeon, for one, Don Giovanni for another, probably a few people you have known. As in *She really had her claws out for him, the bitch* or *All he was interested in was her money*.

So, I doubt that your husband was a psychopath, although he may have had some psychopathic traits.

WHO IS THE PSYCHOPATH, THEN?

Just because your ex-husband is a very good liar doesn't mean he's a psychopath. Just because he has no remorse for the bad things he has done but protests his innocence in the face of unassailable evidence doesn't mean he's a psychopath. Just because you discover he's done his first two wives in exactly the same way he did you, just because he tried to seduce your sister, just because he's maxxed your credit cards and emptied your savings account; that doesn't mean he's a psychopath, either. He may just be a victim of circumstance. Or maybe he has a frontal lobe tumor, early Huntington's disease or fronto-temporal dementia. You wouldn't want to be so hard on him if he had a brain tumor, would you?

He's not that bad a guy. He comes from a broken home and his father used to beat him. He has been hurt so much he doesn't know how to trust and so he takes what he can. He tries so hard and then he slips up sometimes. You have to cut him a little slack. He has had so little in his life, it is up to you to give him what he needs. If you can't, then who will...

On the other hand, maybe he *is* a psychopath. He might just be a predator, like a snake who he can work his charms around your gullible self. If he has no conscience at all, but he knows you have, he probably knows that that makes you vulnerable. He may be the type of man who has no capacity for love or attachment, but because

you have, he can manipulate and exploit you. He does that just for the fun of it; he likes being manipulative and exploitative. He thinks that conscience is for dopes.

How is one to know?

Not so long ago, there was an Italian psychiatrist, Cesare Lombroso, who proposed that you could tell a psychopath from the way he looked. Lombroso wrote a famous book, *L'Uomo Delinquente* (1876), and it ran to 3,000 pages in its 5th edition, a worldwide sensation. He was probably the first man to systematically observe the psychopath in his lair. What he discovered was that antisocial men could be reliably identified by their physical



characteristics: a sloping forehead, ears of unusual size, asymmetry of the face, a large, protuberant jaw, excessively long arms, an asymmetrical head, and other physical stigmata. They looked that way because they were “atavistic throwbacks,” cave-men as it were, primitive savages come back to life in the modern world. They were “degenerates,” in the sense advanced by another psychiatrist of the time, Morel, as “retrogressive natural selection.” In other words, evolution running in reverse, which is an interesting idea in itself.³⁵

That you could tell a psychopath from the way he looked was demonstrated, scientifically, by Francis Galton, a contemporary of Lombroso, an English polymath who was no less than *Darwin's first cousin*, so he must have known. Galton invented a device that superimposed transparent images of faces, one atop another, until a composite picture emerged. Photography was a new thing in those days, so this was really high-tech stuff. One of his composite photographs of a prototypical criminal is reproduced here. I do that for the simple reason that it resembles one of my nephews, a dull-witted and sneaky little fellow, but not a psychopath by any means.³⁶ Which proves that Lombroso and Dalton were wrong, and you can't tell a psychopath from his looks.

The natural sciences of the 19th century were much taken by the idea of criminal “types,” people who were, by nature endowed with a proclivity to anti-social behavior. There are, in fact, such types, although the great thinkers of the 20th century tried very hard to discredit the idea, treating with antisocial behavior as if it were an aquired characteristic. They were in encouraged in that belief by the failure of Lombroso's model and Galton's. In fact, one can't tell a psychopath from the way he looks. Psychopaths don't necessarily have sloping foreheads or very long arms. The physical characteristics that they do have, like a surfeit of dopamine and not nearly enough serotonin, or a particular gene that predisposes to impulsive, ill-considered behavior, are too subtle to be detected during the course of one's everyday interactions.

³⁵ If you asked me if I believed in reverse Darwinism, I would tell you that I have seen it with my own eyes, usually towards the end of a long Saturday night in a singles bar. One doesn't hear the term “atavistic throwback” used so much in conversation any more but I think it is a useful imprecation to throw around now and then.

³⁶ Although Lombroso and Galton were well ahead of the time, their work was roundly criticized, most recently in a popular book by Gould. The critics have themselves been criticized, in the endless dialectic of science, but the truth of the matter lies somewhere short of Lombroso's and Galton's ambitious theories. Minor physical anomalies similar to the stigmata observed by Lombroso are, in fact, statistically associated with behavior problems in children and with severe mental illness in adults. The associations speak to genetic inclinations but are not sufficiently sensitive or specific to qualify as diagnostic tests. Galton's technique of composite portraiture is the basis for the neurophysiological study of what are called “evoked potentials,” in which neural activity generated by multiple successive stimuli are averaged and studied in the composite. Galton, by the way, discovered the individual uniqueness of fingerprints, a substantially more accurate test than composite portraiture.

So what has 20th century science given us to advance the early diagnosis of the psychopath? Wouldn't it be useful to identify the character before he was able to work his evil ways? If you were married to a psychopath, wouldn't you like to know if the next one was a psychopath, too. Or, taking the exercise out of the realm of love and marriage, suppose you had to choose someone to staff your bank's trading desk in Singapore. The trader would have little direct supervision and the responsibility to make trades in the millions. Wouldn't it be nice to know which of the several candidates for the job was a latent psychopath?

The problem is, there is no medical test to identify a psychopath. When a psychiatrist diagnoses someone with psychopathy or antisocial personality disorder, he or she almost always is aware of the patient's history; he is in jail and his police record is as long as your arm. That is a pretty good clue. But it is irrelevant to the problem of a high-level psychopath who has never run afoul of the law. Anyway, what a woman is more likely to encounter in the course of an unhappy marriage is a man with psychopathic traits rather than a pure psychopath.

What about his orbitofrontal cortex. You could order a CT scan of the fellow's frontal lobes. Aside from the logistical problems that might pose, it will only tell you how his frontal lobes look, not how they function. It would be like staring at a motor that won't start. There are more sophisticated variants of the CT scan that will tell you whether his orbitomedial cortex is spot on or a bit awry. By the same token, there are more sophisticated psychological tests than the Antisocial Checklist. But even if any of those tests had the obligate sensitivity and specificity, it might be awkward getting a likely subject to take it. *I'd love to see you, Sweetheart, but first I want you to do just one little thing... A test... Yes, that's right, just a little test. Your galvanic skin resistance under aversive conditions... Yes, that's right... No, not so bad. Just a rectal probe and a small electrical current. Nothing much really. Here's the address! Your insurance will cover it, I think.* What might work better would be to test all men at age 16. Then we could give them neck-bands like they wear at swimming pools: Red bands, psychopath, avoid! Orange bands, Caution, antisocial traits! White bands, safe, boring! The problem with the idea is getting the psychopath to wear his red band. Tattoos might be better.

So, we have learned that 3-4% of all men are antisocial predators. They account for most of the crimes that are committed not to mention a goodly number of unhappy marriages. Looking at this problem from a medical perspective, is it unreasonable to consider the psychopath to be a *public health problem*? Such an unworthy husband, then, we might think of as if he were a disease. A chronic disease, I suppose, and possibly a terminal disease. As in (per Bessie Smith), *That man! That man! He'll be the death of me.* Clearly a disease the sanitary engineers should exert every effort to control.

Now, how should they set about doing that? Public hygiene principle number one: educate the public. Well, we are doing that right here, aren't we? So, principle number two, then: early diagnosis. Identify the men who are carrying all those psychopathic genes and put them in quarantine. As it happens, we are doing that, too. Progressive countries like the USA have succeeded in consigning more than 2,200,000 men with antisocial behavior problems to jails and prisons.³⁷ The vast majority of these incarcerated men are fertile and happy to prove it, but at least they're out of circulation, aren't they? Our authorities therefore are successfully engaged in a eugenic experiment that is ongoing, shows no signs of attenuating and clearly leads the world. Is this a great country, or what?

They haven't captured them all, though, so there is ample cause for community action. The girls and young women of the nation have to be trained as well in the art of early identification. If they can discover the disease early enough, they can root it out and save themselves no little aggravation. You want to identify the carrier before you get so attached to him you lose your ability to resist. Of course, from the foregoing, you have learned that this is next to impossible.

³⁷ Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009-2010, www.ojp.usdoj.gov.

Psychopathy is an inherited condition, right? So, you can check his family history. That's something your Grandmother used to could help you with: *None of them Kallikaks was ever any good, they was all that way.* Unfortunately, that kind of information, common to stable, rural societies, is hardly ever available now, even from your grandmother. She is probably in Florida, spending all your late grandfather's money and hooking up with psychopaths herself. So you will have to rely on your own devices. It shouldn't be hard to get the data you need even during a casual, getting-to-know-you conversation. *Have any of your first-degree relatives been imprisoned or institutionalized for drug abuse or alcoholism?* You don't have to use those words of course. You might just say, *Hey, you know what really turns me on? Guys whose first-degree relatives been imprisoned or institutionalized for drug abuse or alcoholism.* An imaginative young woman will come up with a suitable script to loosen up a likely psychopath and get him talking.

These are all terrific ideas, in my opinion, but they fly in the face of a tough problem. Early identification is not going to work very well when it is the nature of the psychopath to deceive the victim concerning his real nature and his true intentions.

How about applying some of the hallowed principles; for example, *primary prevention*. That is, avoiding the risk factors that lead to a disease. An example of primary prevention is keeping your cholesterol down and not smoking so you won't get a heart attack. How to apply this principle to the problem of the untoward marital candidate? You can avoid the places where psychopaths congregate. Like where? Prisons? Biker bars? Corporate boardrooms?

Where did you meet your ex-husband? A bar? At an AA meeting? His probation officer introduced you? Your probation officer introduced you? He sold you crack? Not auspicious beginnings, I think. Try meeting men at the Literacy Council, at Habitat for Humanity or at Youth for Christ. What about the Internet? Web-based Internet dating services are getting so much more sophisticated these days. The facial recognition software on Facebook could apply Lombrosian technology to identify criminal types simply on the basis of facial physiognomy. Does he have low-set ears, multiple hair whorls, a curved fifth finger or a geographic tongue?

Finally, there is a tried-and-true method: vaccination. Get a shot, to form antibodies to men with short-armed aVRp (see Chapter X). When you are exposed to any of his bodily fluids, you will break out in horrible whelps. That should help. Of course, you have to expose yourself to his bodily fluids.

Well, maybe the principles of preventive medicine aren't going to be so helpful, after all. Secondary prevention: you have the risk factor, now try to control it...You are meeting a lot of guys in biker bars, so try to pick one who isn't quite so antisocial. Tertiary prevention, you have the disease, now try to prevent its complications: you are married to a psychopath, don't give him the password to your online banking.

Is this really a place where scientific medicine offers no hope at all? Has all we've done so far just given you a lot of *nice to know's*?

When science doesn't work, rely on instinct. There isn't a scientific test, yet, for psychopathy, but many, if not most, women have an instinct, a radar, for guys who are insincere, creepy, manipulative, potentially dangerous. This is not an idle speculation. If women weren't by nature suspicious, or, at least cautious, we wouldn't any of us be here talking about how imprudent and throw-care-to-the-winds some women are. There is a scientific principle behind that, at least, and maybe we'll get around to it.

The problem with the heuristics that govern a woman's natural psychology is that they can be contradictory: *Don't go with that guy, he's dangerous*, is set against: *Wow. That cool guy has a new Trans Am.* Or this one: *I know that you will always be there for me, Laurent* as against: *He is so boring I am going to scream.*

Womanly instinct has elements of risk-taking and imprudence, too. There is something about the psychopath that sets your radar off and then something else, or perhaps the same thing, that turns you on.

WHY WE FALL FOR HIM

How can you identify a psychopath early on in a relationship? Read this book! Memorize the Antisocial Checklist! But I'm afraid, however hard you study and whatever you do, you will always miss one.

Some women fall victim to men who are deceitful and predatory because they are vulnerable; they are young and stupid or old and foolish. Some women are drawn to psychopaths *because* they are deceitful and predatory (the men, not the women), and we shall deal with them in the next section. But almost everybody has been victimized at one time or another, and as per the cold-cock theory, it can happen to anyone. It may be because almost all of are vulnerable to flattery and solicitous attention. More likely, it is because, like the crack in the sidewalk, anyone can stumble, and nobody is on her guard all of the time.

There is a simple reason why anyone can fall for a deceitful man. We are simply in the habit of assuming that when someone says something, it is true. According to Professor Vrij, we are just not good at detecting lies. We don't have a built-in fact checker in our natural psychology. We know a snake when we see one because he looks like a snake. If we meet a man called Snake and he has LOVE tattooed on the fingers of one hand and HATE on the other, we are likely to be on our guard. But if a fellow just looks like an ordinary guy and he seems to be sincere, we assume that he is. The bioenergetic cost of thinking otherwise would be quite high.

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LADY PSYCHOPATHS

I keep promising to tell you about women who actually *like* psychopaths. There are such. A woman the psychopath dreams of, someone he can let his hair down with. A girl he doesn't have to charm. He can be honest for a change in his normal, deceitful way.

The iron law of monogamy, which we shall get to soon enough, is that for every man there is a woman and for every woman there is a man. Thus psychopathic men are drawn to psychopathic women, and, of course, vice versa. They find each other. This has been proven. But who are these psychopathic women, where do they live and what language do they speak? And if psychopathic men outnumber psychopathic women by a factor of four, the inevitable consequence is going to be either a large number of unhappy men or an equivalent number of very busy women. But consider this: if, as we believe, the genes for antisocial behavior are normally distributed in the population, why are there more male psychopaths, anyway? The genes for antisocial behavior are equally distributed between the sexes. What happens to women who have those genes? These, and other, related questions have been the foundation of an interesting theory.

It begins with the fact that it is possible for someone to have genes for a trait without expressing the trait. In fact, this happens all the time. Not everyone who has the genes that predispose to breast cancer or Alzheimer's disease or compulsive gambling develop the problem, or, in the lingo of geneticists, "express the phenotype." By

this token, it is possible to have a whole lot of genes for antisocial behavior without actually being a psychopath. With some notable exceptions, the genetic effect on behavior is probabilistic, in Rutter's words, not determinative.

The basis for the theory is that there is something called a "threshold of expression" for genes that governs whether or not the characteristics they govern are expressed or not. This threshold is sometimes different in men and women. Gene "expression" means that the gene is activated in some wise and generates the proteins that, in turn, generate the trait. The "threshold" is the point at which the gene is expressed. So, with respect to psychopathy, it is believed a man with only a few antisocial genes is more likely to express antisocial behavior than a woman would be, even if she has many more such genes. The theory is that females have a higher threshold for the expression of antisocial behavior. Their genetical antisocial tendencies run up against the inexorable niceness that simply comes of being a woman, or something like that.

There are some interesting examples of how this "threshold of expression" theory works, with respect to other human characteristics. For example, stature. A man can be tall if he has only a few genes for height, but for a woman to be tall, she has to have many more such height genes. This is why tall fathers tend to have shorter sons, the consequence of a statistical law known as "regression to the mean." If you want to have tall sons, you need to marry a tall wife. A Tall woman necessarily has to have a lot of height genes, and if she has sons, they will be real tall.

Gender not only influences the degree to which some genes are expressed, but also whether they are expressed at all. You can have an ample number of genes for a particular trait, but they might remain silent. For example, a man might have genes for large breast size. He inherited those genes from his mother, whose breasts were large. He won't express the trait, however, but he will pass those genes on to his daughters, and they will. If, however, he is ever treated with the female hormone estrogen, as is done sometimes for men who have prostate cancer, he will develop breasts the size of which are correlated with the size of his mother's. Conversely, a woman might carry genes for large penis size, but hopefully she won't express them; her sons will. So, it is possible to carry the genes for a trait but never express the trait. With respect to psychopathy, the theory holds that men have a lower threshold for expressing their antisocial genes and women have a higher threshold. This explains why antisocial behavior is more common in males. A son and a daughter might have equal numbers of antisocial genes, but the boy is likelier to have behavior problems.

There is another theory. That is that genes for antisocial behavior are expressed in both men and women, but they are expressed differently. In men, antisocial genes generate antisocial behavior. In women, they do something else. This is called "differential expression by sex." It notably occurs in genes that affect brain and behavior, but it also occurs in genes that affect other organs in the body. There are gender differences, for example, in the genetics, structure and functions of the parotid gland, one of the salivary glands. These differences account for the facts that elderly women are more prone than men to the bothersome condition of dry mouth (So, S. C. Chung, Kho, Kim, & J. W. Chung, 2010) and that men of all ages tend to drool more than women do (Inoue et al., 2006) (Srivastava, Wang, Zhou, Melvin, & Wong, 2008). A more pertinent example is intelligence. Although men and women are equally endowed with genes for intelligence and perform equally well on IQ tests, men are apt to express their intelligence genes in terms of broad conceptual world-views and deep philosophical insights, especially having to do with football, whilst women express them in terms of niggling little details, like the date of your wedding anniversary and that your favorite plaid tie doesn't really go with your new checked shirt.

Getting back to the subject at hand, there were a series of studies during the 1970's by the eminent psychiatrists Cadoret, Guze and Cloninger that showed a strong genetic relationship between antisocial personality in men and hysteria (histrionic personality disorder, somatization disorder) in women. Antisocial men had daughters who tended to have hysterical traits; women who were somatizers or histrionic tended to have antisocial sons. They also discovered that antisocial men had a preference for mating with histrionic women. This

suggested that antisocial behavior and hysteria were different sides of the same coin. The theory holds that the genes that turn men into psychopaths are the same genes that make women hysterics.

Hysteria, as we shall discuss in another chapter, occurs more frequently in women in just about the same proportion as antisocial behavior occurs more frequently in men. Hysterics come in many forms, but the two prominent types are somatization disorder and histrionic personality disorder. "Somatization" is the term psychiatrists use to describe the tendency of a person to express multiple medically unexplained physical (i.e., somatic) symptoms. It was first described by a French psychiatrist, Briquet, in the 19th century. Patients with this frustrating condition suffer with vague physical symptoms that have no identifiable medical cause. They visit numerous doctors and undergo endless tests before the psychological basis for their distress is identified. They use colorful language to describe their symptoms, describing burning sensations, pains that move from place to place, strange tastes on the tongue, tingling, or tremors. While many of their symptoms sound like those associated with genuine diseases, some of their symptoms are outlandish or physiologically impossible. It is not that they are fabricating their symptoms, although they have a tendency to embellish them or even invent new ones when they meet a new physician. It is a chronic condition, difficult for even the best psychiatrists to treat effectively, and the patients suffer mightily, not least from being told that their somatic symptoms are, in fact, imaginary. Nevertheless, they remain hopeful that one day a physician will be found who can identify the cause of their illness and provide relief.

The histrionic personality disorder is a second form of what used to be called hysteria in the 19th century. Patients with this condition have striking characteristics. From childhood, they have a strong need to win attention for themselves, with a dramatic flair to their appearance and behavior. They are highly emotional, charming, energetic, manipulative, seductive, impulsive, erratic, and demanding. Although they crave attention and approval, their relationships are shallow and almost always unsatisfying. They tend to manipulate, and although they are capable of impressive emotional displays, they are too self-centered to be genuinely empathic. They usually make a hash of their romantic relationships, falling in and out of love, especially with men of dubious quality, e.g., psychopaths. They may behave like sexy little things and mate promiscuously but they don't necessarily enjoy sex. Their emotions easily overwhelm their judgment, they crave novelty and excitement and they often put themselves in risky situations. They, too, are prone to excessive and unexplained physical ailments, which they may use to manipulate a situation or to gain attention.

The essence of this second theory is that the hysteric is the female equivalent of the psychopathic male. If the psychopath is a pathological stereotype of being male, an hysteric is a pathological stereotype of being a female. A psychopath is an exaggerated male and the hysteric is a parody of womanhood. If the male expresses deceit in aggressive, antisocial ways, the woman is deceitful in her expression of sexuality, helplessness or illness. They are both out to get something that they haven't earned and don't deserve, and they use deceit to get it. This theory has the advantage of symmetry, a quality that is as pleasing in the realm of medicine as it is in art and design.

The implications of the theory, however, can be taken too far. It seems to suggest that there is a tribe of perfidious men and women living among us, people who, like Canadians, look like us and talk like us, but who are continually hatching nefarious schemes and breeding a new generation of social parasites. This is an incorrect surmise. It may not be possible to be a little bit Canadian, so perhaps we ought to withdraw the simile, but it is possible, as we have pointed out, to be a little bit psychopathic or a little bit hysterical. When psychopaths and hysterics breed, they are, indeed, releasing into the next generation a particular concentration of psychopathic genes. It is, to be sure, a threat to the public health of the next generation, and the sanitary engineers ought to get right on it. On the other hand, this tribe of miscreants is unlikely to break into the gated communities in which we live or past the assiduous doormen of our high-rise condominiums. We are safe for now. We are not so safe,

however, from the men with psychopathic traits, men with a few, not many psychopathic genes and who don't have the full-blown syndrome defined in the psychiatric text-books. They actually live in our gated communities, moving about with impunity, especially on the golf-course. They are charming on the outside and they even have a bit of conscience, or they try to have, at least if it doesn't get in their way.

WHY DO WE HAVE ANTISOCIAL GENES AT ALL?

This is a good question, a bit like *Why is there evil in the world?* but more amenable to a good answer. Why should a social animal, like the human being, have antisocial genes at all? The reason why there are psychopathic and hysterical genes in the population of human beings is not because psychopaths and hysterics are breeding away and releasing an army of clones to bedevil us. It is because the much larger number of men with a few psychopathic genes and women with a few hysterical genes are breeding away. The reason they are doing that is the reason why there are psychopathic and hysterical genes at all.

Followers of the exalted Darwin are sometimes embarrassed when they are confronted with a trait, or a gene, that is manifestly maladaptive but ubiquitous and persistent nonetheless. Why, for example, are there equal numbers of people with schizophrenia in every society, and as far as we can tell, in every age, when the condition is clearly maladaptive and associated with low reproductive fitness? One particularly feeble response they make to this dilemma is that Natural Selection just hasn't got around to mopping it up yet. It is occupied with more important things, like prehensile thumbs and the virtual elimination of body hair, at least from all but the atavistic throwbacks among us. By this line of thought, the psychopath is a vestigial organ in the body of mankind, like the vermiform appendix, wisdom teeth and the little muscles that allow some people to wiggle their ears. If this were the case, then the psychopath would have to be a vestige of something or someone who was at some time in the past useful. For the life of me I can't imagine what or who that might have been.

A more cogent explanation occurs under the name of "heterozygote advantage," like mules, who are stronger than donkeys and have more endurance than horses. Physicians know this happens when a disease is determined by a single abnormal gene. If, on a particular gene location, an individual is a "homozygote," that is, with two copies of the abnormal gene, one from each parent, he or she will manifest the disease and die at an early age, leaving no issue. If neither of the sites carries the abnormal gene, he or she will be healthy, happy and free to reproduce *ad libidem*. What happens, though, in the case of an individual who has only one of the abnormal genes? If there is heterozygote advantage, the person who carries only one of the abnormal genes will enjoy a reproductive advantage not only over the person who has two, but also over the person who doesn't have any at all. This sounds odd, but there are many examples. The best-known is probably sickle-cell disease: homozygotes, individuals with a sickle cell gene from both parents, are given to a nasty, painful disease that shortens one's lifespan and minimizes one's likelihood of marrying and having children. Ordinarily, then, in the course of evolution, the gene should disappear, but it hasn't. The reason why is that heterozygotes -- "carriers," or people with only one sickle cell gene -- are protected from the severe complications of malaria. Sickle cell genes are found, therefore, in parts of the world where malaria is endemic. In regions where there is no malaria, the mutation that gave rise to the sickle-cell gene never had a reason to catch hold. In malarial parts of the world, though, the sickle-cell gene is lethal to a small number but beneficial to a much larger number. Although it compromises the reproductive fitness of a few it is a successful mutation because it enhances the fitness of the many.

Psychopathy is not a single-gene disorder, but the principle of heterozygote advantage can be expanded to include conditions that are caused by polygenes. The principle is that if one has a lot of such genes, one is at disadvantage. In spite of their proclivity to promiscuity and illegitimacy, neither psychopaths nor hysterics are typified by a high degree of reproductive fitness. Therefore, people with a few of the genes must have some kind

of reproductive advantage. They must have traits that make them appealing to the opposite gender, and it doesn't take much imagination to know what those traits might be: the glib, resourceful, spontaneous male, the alluring, seductive female. Psychopaths and hysterics are capable of using emotional display instrumentally; emotion is not an experience but rather a means to an end. This confers an advantage in circumstances where emotional display is the currency. They find the thrill of the chase to be exciting, so making new conquests is more appealing to them than staying at home with their spouse and 1.87 kids. The give-and-take of social intercourse, the "war of the sexes," is stimulating to them, and their animation is no less than contagious.

The array of strategies that psychopaths and hysterics employ are excessive and ultimately maladaptive, but it is easy to see how those same qualities, exercised in moderation, might be quite useful. It's wrong to lie, for example, but if you're going to lie, you had better be good at it. It's not a good idea to court risk with impunity, but if you take a risk, do it with *sang-froid*. It's not good to be impulsive, but impetuosity is an attractive trait, if you can carry it off. It's bad to be incorrigible but it's good to be resilient. Psychopaths and hysterics are incapable of deep and committed attachments. But who is more appealing – the man who sticks to you like a leech as soon as you've made his acquaintance, or the man who exercises a bit of restraint or even diffidence? These are some of the good reasons why the psychopath's genes persist among us.

But, you say, the lives of psychopaths, and of hysterics, are founded on deceit and that is a bad thing. Satan, we know, is no less than the prince of lies. Why should the gods of Natural Selection, preoccupied as they are with building the perfectly adapted organism, build a beast whose adaptive strategies are morally flawed and never more than transiently successful? The idea of heterozygote advantage is a believable explanation, but if we were to translate the whole idea into a more transcendent realm, what we are saying is that a good deal of Evil is bad but a little bit of Evil is not only a good thing but a better thing than none at all. This flies in the face of our Judaeo-Christian principles, which acknowledge that a little bit of Evil is indeed ubiquitous but it is never a good thing. It suggests a disconnect between an amoral world governed by Nature and a moral world that is the gift of beneficent Providence, and, as you may have gleaned, that is not a disconnect that I can abide. The world, after all, was contemplated by the Creator:

And God saw everything that he made, and, behold, it was very good. (Gen 1:31)

I suppose that if I allowed this discussion to venture into issues as trivial as the psychology of red-necks and jerks, we shouldn't shrink from contemplating how the genetical structure of the deceitful psychopath speaks to the problem of Evil. I am not going to inflict a learned disquisition on the reader, but the problem of Evil is implicit in our earlier lines:

My ex-husband is a sociopath.

He probably isn't.

The implication of the first line is that he is an evil man, the second and all that followed argues that he is no more than a bit evil, or occasionally evil, or that he just comes across that way but really he is just a childish jerk. My argument has also been that the genes for psychopathic deceit and histrionic excess are widely dispersed in the human population of human beings, as if, within almost all of us, there is the potential to think or feel or behave in a sinful way. The Christians acknowledge this weakness as a legacy of Original Sin, the act of pride committed by Adam and Eve. But, in fact, the book of Genesis is marked not by one original sin but by one horrible transgression after another: Cain and Abel, the behavior of Noah's sons, the Tower of Babel, Jacob's lies to his father. Jacob's sons convinced the Hivites to be circumcised, and when they were thus incapacitated, they killed them all. Joseph's brothers threw him into an empty well, a generous concession negotiated by Reuben, because the other brothers just wanted to kill him. It would appear that our foundational literature concedes a proclivity to deceit and bad behavior, even among men and women who were especially blessed by the presence

of the Lord. Meanwhile, on the other side of the Mediterranean sea, Socrates was persecuted for arguing that the Homeric gods behaved in scurrilous ways, but they, too, were no less than the characters in Genesis exemplars of human knavery. Our tradition disapproves of dissimulation and chicanery but it has always conceded that a base rate is simply in the nature of things.

So also in the world of love and procreation, deception is more the rule than the exception. Even among the lovely flowers, there is the deceptive orchid and in the sylvan glades, the cheereful songbirds pursue a career of "extra-pair copulations." To say that dissimulation is intrinsic to courtship and the mating game is simply to restate the obvious. A small increment of deceit – call it discretion – lubricates the gears of social intercourse.

The human beings are different from dance-flies and blue-gill fish because they think that dishonest signally is wrong. Nevertheless, we do it anyway. We have discovered Original Sin, a weakness that Nature has bequeathed us. It is arguable (cf Nietzsche) that our weakness is not our proclivity to deceit but the remorse we feel about it. It is an affliction that comes with a prominent brow, a robust and somewhat hyperactive frontal cortex. Evolution, it would seem, has given us the means to distinguish certain behaviors, built into our animal natures, as wrong, but not the means to always get it right. She is still working on it. It takes a while.