



Women Escaping Violence: Empowerment through Narrative

Elaine J. Lawless

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The statistics are alarming. Some say that once every nine minutes a woman in the United States is beaten by her spouse or partner. Others claim that once every four minutes a woman in the world is beaten by her spouse or partner. More women go to emergency rooms in the United States for injuries sustained at the hands of their spouses and partners than for all other injuries combined.

Shelters for battered women are filled beyond capacity every single day of the year. Despite the overwhelming evidence that violence in our homes is a daily reality, most of us are not willing to acknowledge this private violence or talk about it openly. *Women Escaping Violence* brings women's stories to the attention of the academy as well as the reading public. While we may be unwilling or unable to talk about the issue of battered women, many of us are ready to read what women have to say about their endangered lives.

Considerable scholarship is emerging in the area of domestic violence, including many self-help books about how to identify and escape abuse. *Women Escaping Violence* offers the unique view of battered women's stories told in their own words, as well as a feminist analysis of how these women use the power of narrative to transform their sense of self and regain a place within the larger society.

Lawless shares with the reader the heart-wrenching experiences of battered women who have escaped violence by fleeing to shelters with little more than a few items hastily shoved into a plastic bag, and often with small children in tow. The book includes women's stories as they are told and retold within the shelter, in the presence of other battered women and of caregivers. It analyzes the uses made of these narratives by those seeking to counsel battered women as well as by the women themselves.

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