

*Joining the Resistance: Psychology,
Politics, Girls, and Women*

CAROL GILLIGAN

THE TANNER LECTURES ON HUMAN VALUES

Delivered at

The University of Michigan

March 16, 1990

CAROL GILLIGAN holds a Ph.D. degree from Harvard University, where she is now a professor in human development and psychology at Harvard's Graduate School of Education. In addition to an A.B. from Swarthmore College and an M.A. from Radcliffe College, she also holds honorary degrees from Regis, Swarthmore and Haverford colleges. She has held a Mellon Fellowship from the Wellesley Center for Research on Women as well as the Blanche, Edith and Irving Laurie New Jersey Chair in Women's Studies at Rutgers University. In addition to numerous articles on adolescent development, sex differences, and moral development, she is the author of *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982), and co-editor of *Mapping the Moral Domain: A Contribution of Women's Thinking to Psychological Theory and Education* (1988), and *Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School* (1989).

IN THE MUSEUM

It is Tuesday. It is raining. And the Writing, Outing, and Theater Club is going to the museum. Eight eleven-year-old girls, members of the sixth grade at the Atrium School in Watertown, Massachusetts, and two women, psychologists interested in girls' development, climb into the school van and begin to make their way through the rain-washed streets into the city. It is June. School is over for the year. The sixth grade has graduated, and the girls from the class have returned for a week of outings, writing, and theater work, designed to strengthen healthy resistance and courage. They gather in the coatroom of the Fine Arts Museum, shedding backpacks and raincoats, retrieving notebooks; they are ready. Today, I explain, they are to be investigative reporters; their assignment is to find out how girls and women appear in this museum.

"Naked," Emma says, without hesitation. A current of recognition passes swiftly, silently, through the group. Like Dora, Freud's patient who remembers standing in the Dresden art gallery for two and a half hours in front of the Sistine Madonna, Emma will be

The research which underlies this lecture was encouraged and supported by Joan Lipsitz and the Lilly Endowment; Steven Minter and the Cleveland Foundation; Judith G. Simpson and the Gund Foundation; Lawrence Cremin, Marion Faldet, Linda Fitzgerald, and the Spencer Foundation; the American Association of University Women; Benjamin Barber and the Walt Whitman Center for Democracy at Rutgers University; Leah Rhys, Principal of the Laurel School in Cleveland, Ohio; Virginia Kahn, founder of the Atrium School in Watertown, Massachusetts; and Patricia Graham, Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. I am deeply grateful to the girls who participated in these projects; to the women who have accompanied me most closely on this journey, Lyn Mikel Brown and Annie Rogers, the two psychologists I refer to in the lecture; to Judy Dorney and Patricia Flanders-Hall, who took the lead in the project Women Teaching Girls; and to the teachers and psychologists who participated in the retreats. Normi Noel added theater to the Writing, Outing, and Theater Clubs; Kristin Linklater taught me about the embodiment of voice; and Tina Packer, artistic director of Shakespeare and Company, stimulated my thinking and made the connection between mothers in the fatherland and family violence.

transfixed by the images of women, by their nakedness in this cool, marble building. Later, when asked to write a conversation with one of the women, Emma chooses a headless, armless Greek statue, weaving into the conventions of polite childhood conversation her two burning questions: Are you cold? and Would you like some clothes?¹

But why am I telling you this story? I am interested in the relationship between political resistance and psychological resistance — both highly charged subjects in the twentieth century. And I have observed a moment of resistance which occurs in girls' lives at the edge of adolescence. Emma's playfully innocent, slightly irreverent conversation with the statue in the museum bespeaks her interest in the scenes which lie behind the paintings and sculpture she is seeing — an inquiry into relationships between artists and models: what each is doing and feeling and thinking; a curiosity about the psychological dimensions of this connection between men and women. The statue's response — "I have no money" — to the question about whether she wants some clothes reveals how readily this inquiry becomes political and sets up the dynamic I wish to follow: the tendency in girls' lives at adolescence for a resistance which is essentially political — an insistence on knowing what one knows and a willingness to be outspoken — to turn into a psychological resistance: a reluctance to know what one knows and a fear that such knowledge, if spoken, will endanger relationships and threaten survival.

¹The quotations from the eleven-year-old girls are taken from the girls' journals (permissions granted) and also from my journal. The Writing, Outing, and Theater Clubs are part of the project "Strengthening Healthy Resistance and Courage in Girls" being conducted by Annie Rogers and myself in public and private schools in the Boston area. Among the sixth-grade girls at the Atrium School, a private coeducational elementary school, there is some diversity in cultural background and family composition; cultures represented in this group of girls include North American Protestant, Jewish, and Latino. The women involved in the project, including Normi Noel, who does the theater work, are also somewhat culturally diverse. The absence of black girls and women in this group is a clear limitation and not characteristic of the public school Outing, Writing, and Theater Clubs or the Harvard University Project on the Psychology of Women and the Development of Girls.

Freud located this intersection between psychology and politics — between the child's desire for relationships and for knowledge and the cultural prohibitions on knowing and seeing — as a turning point in boys' early childhood and named it "the Oedipus complex," after Sophocles' tragedy about knowledge and blindness.² In studying girls' development, my colleagues and I have observed a comparable turning point in girls' lives at the time of adolescence.³ This is the time when girls' desire for relationships and for knowledge comes up against the wall of Western culture and a resistance breaks out which is, I will claim, potentially of great human value.

Let me return for a moment to the museum and record the doubling of voice and vision which characterizes girls' perception and conversation. Mame's eye for the disparity between outside and inside, between calm surface and explosive laughter, is evident as she describes the painting of Reverend John Atwood and his family. His two oldest daughters, she writes, sustaining the possessive, "have no expression. They're just staring straight ahead, but one of them looks like she is going to burst out laughing." His wife, she concludes on a more somber note, "looks very worn and tired." By paying close attention to the human world around them and following the changing weather of relationships and the undercurrents of thoughts and feelings, girls come to discern patterns, to notice repeating sequences and to hear familiar

² Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899/1900), vols. 4 and 5 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955). See also *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fleiss: 1887–1904*, trans. and ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1985).

³ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); Carol Gilligan, "Prologue" and "Teaching Shakespeare's Sister: Notes from the Underground of Female Adolescence," in *Making Connections*, ed. Carol Gilligan, Nona P. Lyons, and Trudy Hanmer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Carol Gilligan, Lyn Mikel Brown, and Annie Rogers, "Psyche Embedded: A Place for Body, Relationships, and Culture in Personality Theory," in *Studying Persons and Lives*, ed. A. I. Rabin, Robert Zucker, Robert Emmons, and Susan Frank (New York: Springer, 1990).

rhythms and thus find under the surface of the apparent disorder of everyday living an order which is the psychological equivalent of the Mandelbrot equations of the new chaos physics.

Yet girls' "unpaid-for-education" — Virginia Woolf's name for "that understanding of human beings and their motives which . . . might be called psychology" — leaves girls with knowledge that may well run counter to what they are told by those in authority.⁴ So they are often left, in effect, with two truths, two versions of a story, two voices revealing two points of view. Malka, perhaps reflecting this experience, writes not one but two conversations between herself and the Queen of Babylon. The first is the official version. Speaking in the voice of a reporter, Malka addresses the Queen in a manner befitting her station. "Hello Madam," she says to the woman in the painting who is brushing her hair while receiving news of the revolt, "what is it like ruling so great a land?" "Glorious," the Queen replies. "It is great fun, although," she adds with a yawn, "it does tax time and strength sometime." In the second conversation, Malka speaks in her own voice to this bored, haughty Queen, asking her simply: "Whatchya doing?" The Queen, in a sudden reversal of priorities, replies: "Brushing my hair. I was interrupted this morning by a revolt."

Whose agenda? What is important? What can be spoken and what is tacitly to be ignored — looking at but not seen, heard but not listened to? The play of girls' conversation, the questions and comments that dart in and out like minnows, followed by looks, scanning faces, and listening to what happens, seeing what follows, taking the pulse, the temperature of the human climate — is anyone upset? what is permitted, admitted (in both senses of the word)? Conflict erupts among girls like lightning — something has happened, someone has stepped over a line. Rejection — the thin dark line of rejection: not you; we — whoever "we" are — do not want to be with you.

⁴ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1938), p. 6

Girls' questions about who wants to be with whom are to them among the most important questions, and they take sharp notice throughout the day of the answers given to these questions, as revealed through nuance and gesture, voices and glances, seating arrangements, choices of partners, the responses of adult women and men, the attitudes of authorities in the world. Emma's voice in saying that the nudes are naked, Mame's voice in speaking about the irreverence of the daughter and the tiredness of the mother in Reverend John Atwood's family, Malka's voice in revealing by reversing the relationship between hair brushing and quelling revolts, are the same three voices which are suppressed in the first published version of Anne Frank's diary — the excised passages which reveal that Anne has looked at and seen her own naked body, that she has recorded disturbing thoughts and feelings about her mother, and that she knows from her reading whose activities people record and imbue with value and is disturbed by the disparate attention given to the courage and suffering of women and men. On June 15, 1944, in one of the deleted passages, she writes:

A question that has been raised more than once and that gives me no inner peace is why did so many nations in the past, and often still now, treat women as inferior to men? Everyone can agree how unjust this is, but that is not enough for me, I would also like to know the cause of the great injustice. . . . It is stupid enough of women to have borne it all in silence for such a long time, since the more centuries this arrangement lasts, the more deeply rooted it becomes. . . . Many people, particularly women, but also men, now realize for how long this state of affairs has been wrong, and modern women demand the right of complete independence! But that's not all, respect for woman, that's going to have to come as well! . . . Soldiers and war heroes are honored and celebrated, explorers acquire immortal fame, martyrs are revered, but how many will look upon woman as they would upon a soldier? . . . Women are much braver, much more courageous soldiers, struggling and enduring pain for the

continuance of mankind, than all the freedom-fighting heroes with their big mouths! ⁵

That girls' knowledge — of the body, of relationships, and of the world and its values — and girls' irreverence provide the grounds for resistance has been known since the time of *Lysistrata*.

IF ONLY WOMEN. . .

In 411 B.C.E., in the midst of the disastrous war between Athens and Sparta, Aristophanes plays out a plan for ending the war in the bawdy comedy *Lysistrata*. If only women who are able to see the absurdity of men's fighting, who are wise, moreover, in the ways of human bodies and psyches, and who can have an effect on men, would take the salvation of Greece into their hands, they could, he imagines, stop the violence. At the opening of the play, Lysistrata calls the women of Athens and Sparta together, preparing to explain her plan, and the voice and expressions of this classical rendition of a peace-making woman resonate strongly with the voices and gestures of eleven-year-old girls in the twentieth century.

"I am angry . . . I am very angry and upset," Sarah says, protesting with her whole face and body. Somberness gathers across her eyebrows, joining them together as she says directly: "I was treated by Ted like trash." Tension is in the air. Sarah and Emma walk back and forth across the room, heads down, arms around each other's shoulders. The social texture has suddenly become dark, opaque, like sudden shadows, hurt feelings easily moving to tears, then out, talking, contact, an opening, light and shadow, the play of relationships, the somberness which gathered across Sarah's face moves off, dissipates . . . the girls line up chairs, dragging them into a row, two chairs apiece, bottoms on one, feet on another. They open their journals and begin writing.

⁵ *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Critical Edition (New York: Doubleday, 1989), p. 678.

“What’s bothering you [Lysistrata] ?” Calonice says at the beginning of act 1 in Alan Somerstein’s 1973 Penguin Classics translation. “Don’t screw up your face like that. It really doesn’t suit you, you know, knitting your eyebrows up like a bow.” “Sorry, Calonice, but I’m furious. I’m disappointed in womankind.” Lysistrata is upset because the women of Athens and Sparta have not shown up for her meeting — and she knows they would do so at once for Bacchus. Calonice, taking on the task of speaking to someone who is too angry to listen, reminds Lysistrata that “it is not so easy for a wife to get out of the house.”⁶

The women come, and Lysistrata explains that if women will vow to give up sex until men vow to give up fighting, they should succeed in bringing about peace — in essence by substituting the mutual pleasures of sex for men’s single-minded pursuit of violence.

The strategy is as follows: the women will do everything in their power to arouse the desire of their husbands and lovers, and then they will run out of their houses and lock themselves up in the Acropolis. The plan succeeds brilliantly in the theater. The Peloponnesian War, however, continues.

More than two millennia later in Puritan New England, where the only war described is the unremitting war in the hearts of the Puritans, Hawthorne puts forward a similar vision: that a woman must bring the new truth that will establish relations between women and men “on a surer ground of mutual happiness.” And then, in a stunning exegesis, with the brilliant economy of a single letter, demonstrates why this vision is bound to eventuate in failure. The very knowledge and passion which enable a woman to escape from “the iron framework of [men’s] reasoning” also disable her by causing her to be labeled an impure woman: a woman who has been adulterated.⁷

⁶ Aristophanes, *Lysistrata / The Archarnians / The Clouds* (London: Penguin Books, 1973), pp. 180–81.

⁷ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850; New York: Modern Library, 1950), pp. 299, 184.

This double vision which at once enables and imprisons women is explicated in the chapter entitled “Another View of Hester,” after seven-year-old Pearl, in “The Minister’s Vigil,” trenchantly gives another view of the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale (“Thou wast not bold! . . . thou wast not true! . . . Thou wouldst not promise to take my hand, and mother’s hand tomorrow noon-tide!”).⁸ The scarlet letter, the narrator explains, revealing Hester’s passion and also her knowledge of relationships which the Puritan eye cannot discern, gives her “so much power to do and power to sympathize . . . with her fellow creatures” that many people said that the A meant Able rather than Adultery, “so strong was Hester Prynne with a woman’s strength.”⁹

Living at once inside and outside the framework, Hester is able to see the frame. The “lawless passion” which broke the bonds of convention and released her from the chain of the good, enabled her mind to run free — leading to silent speculation which, the narrator surmises, the Puritan forefathers “would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter,” a crime which threatened not simply her own position but the very foundation of the Puritan order.¹⁰

Like the hysterical women of the late nineteenth century — the women whose features Freud lists in describing his early patient, Fräulein Elisabeth von R., noting as characteristic “her giftedness, her ambition, her moral sensibility, her excessive demand for love which, to begin with, found satisfaction in her family, and the independence of her nature which went beyond the feminine ideal and found expression in a considerable amount of obstinacy, pugnacity and reserve” — Hester Prynne has the character of a resister: “a mind of native courage and ability,” a woman whom fate and fortune had set free: “The scarlet letter was her passport into

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 187–88.

regions where other women dared not tread. Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers — stern and wild ones — and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss.”¹¹

In the end, then, she must be corrected—and unlike Dora, Freud’s later patient who flees from what had become the iron framework of his treatment, leaving her analysis in midstream, Hester, in the dark conclusion to Hawthorne’s brooding novel, takes on the Puritan mantle. Assuring the women who come to her for counsel and comfort that a new truth will reveal a new order of living and that “the angel and apostle of the coming revelation must be a woman,” she explains that this woman — whom she once thought might be herself — must in contrast be “lofty [and] pure” as well as beautiful, and “wise not through dusky grief, but the ethereal medium of joy . . . and sacred love.”¹² Thus the very woman who is able to envision a new order of human relations is, by the same token, unable, since the experience which enables her also adulterates her in the eyes of the community. Released from goodness, she is imprisoned in badness, within the iron framework of a puritanical order.

This imprisonment of women becomes the subject of Claudia Koonz’s scathing jeremiad — her 1987 study of women in Nazi Germany, which she entitles *Mothers in the Fatherland*. Koonz asks on a political level the question which currently rivets psychotherapists: How could women, how could mothers especially, have stayed with and supported such fathers? Interviewing Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, the “Lady Führer über Alles” who was chief of the Women’s Bureau — the oxymoronic Nazi social service agency — and author of *Woman in the Third Reich*, Koonz is spellbound by her protestations of goodness, by a moral piety and smugness

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, “The Case of Fraulein Elisabeth von R.,” in Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* (1893–95), vol. 2 of *Standard Edition*, p. 161; see also Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985). Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, p. 227.

¹² Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*, p. 299.

which seemingly admit no pity. “Crimefeel” is the term she coins for this unrepentant woman’s insistence on describing herself as both a good mother and a good Nazi — the emotional analogue to the murderous “crimethink” which Orwell describes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. That women did not resist Hitler in any more significant numbers than did doctors, clergy, professors, and others is surprising only in that the main form which resistance could take under the relentless eye of the Nazi terror was, it would seem, characteristically female, falling into “what we think of as ‘women’s work’” — grounded less in the rhetoric of heroism than in a realistic sense of vulnerability, involving “manipulat[ion] [of] the situation, intelligence and the ability to assess the enemy’s personality.”¹³ Yet women as a group did not do this work but instead actively supported and voted into power the openly sexist and avowedly misogynistic Nazi party, with an idealization of mothers which provided only the thinnest of veils over the underlying rage and contempt. Soldiers and mothers — the imagery of Hitler’s Germany; what were they doing in one another’s company?

The relationship between soldiers and mothers surfaces in the very different context of Diana Russell’s 1989 study, *Lives of Courage: Women for a New South Africa*, creating a paradox which Russell highlights for her reader. Interviewing politically courageous women, Russell heard repeatedly about the importance of women in the resistance movement and the extraordinary strength and resilience of women not only in the face of daily adversity but also under the extreme conditions of political detention and torture. Many women in one way or another echoed Albertina Sisulu’s conviction that “women are the people who are going to relieve us from this oppression and depression.”¹⁴ Yet

¹³ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), pp. 310, 332.

¹⁴ Diana E. H. Russell, *Lives of Courage: Women for a New South Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), p. 24.

when asked why there are relatively few women leaders, these same women referred to “women’s internalized sense of inferiority, their poor education, their lack of assertiveness, and the strong beliefs in traditional gender roles that still prevail in African cultures.” I find it difficult, Russell tells her reader, “to reconcile these two perspectives. The fact that only 5 percent to 12 percent of the political detainees are women suggests that women are underrepresented not only in leadership positions but also in the rank-and-file of the movement.”¹⁵

Her discussion then turns to the crucial role women play in enabling men to be politically active and also to the fact that women are mothers and often faced with raising children single-handedly and providing for them on severely inadequate wages. Like Anne Frank, Russell laments the inattention given to mothers’ courage and bravery. And yet, this leaves unanswered the question which Virginia Woolf raises in *Three Guineas*: Is there a way in which women can help men prevent rather than wage what has historically been the male act of war — the violence which, whatever its causes, leaves in its wake a litter of dead bodies and ruined houses?

In her darkly cautious and brilliantly far-reaching address to this question, Woolf gently shifts the focus of attention away from mothers and to the “daughters of educated men,” for whom she lays out a three-step passage from the private house of their fathers into the public world where they will form a “Society of Outsiders.” The steps which Woolf sees as essential are university education and admission to the professions so that women can gain what is to be their only weapon: the power of independent opinion supported by independent income. Because women’s experiences in living and women’s relation to the tradition differ from men’s, women may succeed in “finding new words and creating new

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

methods,” and thus may help men to break what otherwise is a vicious cycle.¹⁶

The dangers inherent in this process are what Woolf calls “adultery of the brain” and “brain-selling,” or writing “what you do not want to write for the sake of money.” And the danger in these sins arises in part from the fact that these practices create and let loose upon the world “anaemic, vicious and diseased progeny,” which infect and corrupt other people, so women become complicit in perpetuating what women do not want by saying what women do not want to say.¹⁷

The deeply knotted dilemma, then, which lies at the center of women’s development is how can girls both enter and stay outside of, be educated in and then change, what has been for centuries a man’s world? And yet, if “the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected, . . . [if] the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other,” if we live in one world and cannot dissociate ourselves from one another, and if the psychology of fathers which has ruled the private house is writ large in legal codes and moral orders and supported by the ever-present threat of what is considered to be a legitimate use of force or violence, how can daughters be anywhere other than inside and outside of these structures ?¹⁸

Perhaps girls’ doubling of voice and vision offers an answer to this question, especially if girls resist the temptation to solve this doubling by simply correcting for male perspective. This is the central lesson girls learn in the move from primary to secondary education — how to make this seemingly simple algebraic or geometric correction which aligns girls’ vision with the Western tradition, so that girls can enter without changing what has been called “the human conversation.” Once this correction is made, the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

framework becomes invisible, and then, in the words of one wise twelve-year-old girl, “you don’t have to think.”

In an extraordinary film about South Africa, which has the slow-motion quality of recovering memory, Shawn Slovo returns to the year when she was thirteen — the year her mother was taken away to prison — to consider in the context of this difficult relationship between mother and daughter, “how to merge the politics with the personal without detracting from the importance of either.”¹⁹ Slovo is the daughter of Ruth First, the journalist who was one of the few whites centrally involved with the African National Congress, a woman whose militant opposition to apartheid led her to be arrested and detained twice by the South African government in 1963, the year of the film’s action, and then, in 1982, to be killed by a parcel bomb while working with the resistance in Mozambique.

Set at that edge of girls’ development, between childhood and adolescence, the film catches an angle of perception which is at odds with conventional ways of speaking about mothers and daughters, especially with conventional images of what constitutes good and bad mothering. And this shift in perspective is, inadvertently, a discovery of the film. Slovo, as she records in her introduction to the diary she kept in the course of her writing, set out to write in what are essentially conventional terms about “the relationship between a white woman, politically committed to the fight against Apartheid, and her thirteen-year-old daughter who must contend against politics for the love, care and time of her mother. Set against the backdrop of increasingly violent repression, [the film] chronicles the effects of the break-up of the family.”²⁰

¹⁹ Shawn Slovo, *A World Apart* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. x.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

And yet Slovo has written a very different film. Showing the breakup of the family, she chronicles the connection between mother and adolescent daughter, a connection instigated by the daughter's insistence on entering the emotional center of her mother's life. Thirteen-year-old Molly, in the critical scene, literally breaks her mother's silence, by opening her secret drawer and reading her diary. What she discovers is what she most feared. That her mother had "tried to leave us," that she had tried to kill herself in prison. "You don't care about us. You shouldn't have had us," the dialogue runs.²¹

Slovo discovers in writing out this accusation of bad mothering—the accusation readily made by Pauline Kael and other critics—that she hears her mother's voice as well as her own. The scene which she had resisted writing, "the conversation, the confrontation, my mother and I had never had" and which "in life . . . was what kept us apart," turns out to have been "there all the time, just waiting for the last moment."²²

The scene as written has the quality of remembering and also the ring of familiarity, resonating with other moments when daughters fight for relationship with their mothers and mothers let them in. Then the desire for human connection overrides the restraints on relationships between mothers and daughters imposed by cultural images of good and bad women, and leads, in the case of Shawn Slovo, to a reformulation of the basic question at a much deeper level: What does it mean to be a good mother to an adolescent daughter, coming of age in a violent and racist society? and What can women teach girls about resistance and courage and love in the face of indifference, cruelty, and violence?

The illusion, still blinding the critics but seen through in the film, is that mothers and daughters *can* live in a world apart. Slovo steadily directs the viewer's eye to the enclosure—the imprison-

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. xi, 18.

ment of conventionally good South African white mothers in elaborately fenced-in private houses. Her conclusion is that mothers cannot stay with their daughters without joining the resistance, at least once their daughters are able to see beyond their enclosure, *and* that daughters and mothers need to find ways to be with one another in this struggle.

RESISTANCE

Five psychological truths:

1. What is unvoiced or unspoken, because it is out of relationship, tends to get out of perspective and to dominate psychic life.
2. The hallmarks of loss are idealization and rage, and under the rage, immense sadness (“To want and want and not to have”).
3. What is dissociated or repressed — known and then not known — tends to return, and return, and return.
4. The logic of the psyche is an associative logic — the free-falling logic of dreams, poetry, and memory — as well as a formal logic of classification and control.
5. One learns the answers to one’s own questions.

Anna at twelve, tall, thin, her dark hair cut short, her green eyes looking steadily out of a quiet and somewhat wary face, raises the question: How can you tell if what people are saying is true? “if what they are saying about you, if they really meant it, or if they are just doing it to be mean, and it’s hard to tell, I mean, with a lot of people you can’t tell how they are.” What she is trying to understand is the difference between the surface banter of teasing, making fun, putting people down, which went on among her friends (although she does not know if they were really her friends) at the public school she went to, and being mean, “really

mean,” or cruel. At her new school — a girls’ school, Anna notices that everyone is “nice,” and she feels good about herself when she is “nice to people or . . . not being mean,” and bad about herself when she is mean or hurts people but “sometimes you just can’t help it.” Anna feels that people can tell how she feels, even when “inside I’m really sad about something but outside I’m trying to be happy,” because “if you’re feeling sad, you just can’t make yourself happy.”²³

Malika writes about the disparity between inside and outside after the outing club’s trip to Plum Island — a beach and bird sanctuary on Boston’s north shore: “A sand castle, life on a small scale. Kingdoms rise and fall, water ebbs in and out. Water rises, in and out. Channels, pools, castles, forests. The outside view. But on the inside — are babies being born? Are children playing? Are crafts being learned? Are people being married? Are battles being fought? Are people dying? Love, fun, smiling, and crying. Life. A sand castle.”

At the edge of adolescence, girls draw attention to the disparity between an insider’s view of life which they are privy to in childhood and an outside view, intimating that the insider’s knowledge is in danger of being washed out or giving way. The connection between inside and outside becomes explicitly a focus of attention when girls reach adolescence and become subjected to a kind of voice and ear training, designed to make it clear what voices people like to listen to in girls and what girls can say without being called, in today’s vernacular, “stupid,” or “rude.” On a daily basis, girls receive lessons on what they can let out and what they must keep in, if they do not want to be spoken about by others as mad or bad

²³ Anna’s quotations are taken from interviews conducted over the course of a five-year study of girls’ development at the Laurel School in Cleveland, Ohio, referred to as the Harvard-Laurel Project. Papers from the project, which involved girls and women who were diverse in racial as well as economic background, were presented at the Harvard-Laurel Conference on the Psychology of Women and the Education of Girls, held in Cleveland, April 1990.

or simply told they are wrong. Anna, dealing with this problem of containment, says that she would like to be “just a better person or have better ways of thinking” and explains:

Sometimes I will get really mad, and I can outburst or something, and I can't be like that . . . I have to learn how to work with people, *because sometimes I just get really mad at people who can't understand what I am saying*, and I get so exasperated. It is like, “Why can't you just . . . ? What's wrong with you? Why can't you see this my way?” And I have to really go for what I want though. I can't let this stuff take over me. And I have to, you kind of have to fight to get what you want [emphasis added].

In essence, Anna states the problem of resistance as a problem of relationship. She feels pressure to hold herself in, “not to be like that . . . [not to] get really mad,” or, even worse, “outburst.” At the same time, she realizes she must not let go of what she wants, that I can't let this stuff take over me.” One resistance is psychological and will lead Anna to take herself out of relationship, not to fight for the understanding she wants but to become “nice” and as she now views it, “successful.” The other resistance is political, and by staying in relationship, Anna will come into conflict with others.

Anna struggles between these two forms of resistance at the age of twelve. With her mother, she experiences the central dilemma of relationship: how to speak honestly and also stay in connection with others. When they go shopping for clothes, Anna explains, “She will pull something out and she'll say, ‘Well, what do you think of it?’ And then if I say I don't like it, then she'll get really mad, and she'll put it back. . . . And then, she'll forget about what happens when I really give her my opinion, and then she'll say, ‘Tell me what you really think about it.’ And then she gets mad when I tell her. . . . And I'll say, ‘Well, you don't really want it because you already screamed at me when I gave it.’”

Eleven-year-old Tessie articulates the importance of voicing conflicts in relationships, explaining why it is necessary to “tell someone about it” so that you are “telling it from both sides” and can “hear the [other] person’s point of view”: “When you are having an argument . . . and you just keep it inside you and don’t tell anyone, you never hear the person’s point of view. And if you are telling someone about it, you are telling it from both sides and so you hear what my mother said, or what my brother said. And the other person can say, well, you might be mad, but your mom was right, and you say, yeah, I know. So when you say it out loud, you have to listen.” Tessie also observes that fighting — by which she means verbal conflict or voicing disagreement — is good for relationships: “fighting is what makes relationships go on,” in the face of trouble, and “the more fights you get in and the more it goes on . . . the stronger it gets because the more you can talk with that person.” The subtlety of Tessie’s understanding of how people come to know one another and what kind of knowledge is necessary if friends are not to hurt one another’s feelings is evident as she explains that it is through fighting, rather than “just saying ‘I’m sorry’ to them,” that you learn “how that person feels,” and then you know how “not to hurt their feelings.” Yet fights also carry with them the danger of not speaking and “then you seem to grow apart.”²⁴

I emphasize this detailed, specific psychological knowledge based on careful listening and sustained observation and characterized by finely wrought distinctions — a naturalist’s rendering of the human world — because girls’ knowledge when brought into the public world is often dismissed as trivial or seen as transgressive, with the result that girls are told repeatedly not to speak, not to say anything, or at least not to talk in public about what they know.

²⁴ Tessie was one of ten eleven-year-old girls living in a suburb of Boston and interviewed by Sharry Langdale in 1981 as part of an ongoing series of studies on women’s development known as the Harvard Project on the Psychology of Women and the Development of Girls.

Asked at twelve whether she has changed as a learner, Anna explains that she has come to think about things which she never thought about before, meaning the origins of things which formerly she just took for granted because “you just kind of trusted the teacher,” like two plus two equals four, or the letters of the alphabet. “You don’t sit there and say, ‘A — what a dumb letter.’ You don’t think about it.”

Now, thinking about thinking and about different ways people “look at something,” Anna says you might think someone is “crazy” but, struggling with the problem of difference — the problem of relationship and of relativism, “that is their opinion . . . as long as it’s not going to hurt anybody.” As a scholarship student in a private school, she is acutely aware of difference and wonders about how she fits into this world where “it’s just friendly and everything is nice. It is really nice, I think,” and where to her delight she is encouraged to speak—for Anna, an irresistible invitation. “Most of the time,” Anna concludes at twelve, “I’m in a pretty good mood, and sometimes I’m not. Sometimes I am mad at the world.”

When Anna is interviewed at age thirteen, as an eighth grader, her interview is peppered with “I don’t know” (spoken now more than three times as often as the previous year, increasing from twenty-one times at age twelve to sixty-seven at age thirteen, with no corresponding increase in the length of the interview transcript). Anna is struggling explicitly with a reluctance to know what she knows and an inclination to suppress her knowledge and go along with the group. Asked about whether she has work that she loves, this child who loves learning and loves school says, “reading and singing . . . and I can just sort of get lost in them and not have to think about things.” Talking about herself as a knower, she observes that “you can interpret things differently” and describes the way thoughts and feelings cascade differently from different beginnings, so that depending on where you start from — for example in reading a poem — you arrive at different endpoints.

But now conformity has a hold on Anna as she begins to feel like a member of her new school, not only a top student but also a part of her class. She watches others to see which way to go and does not, she says, “massively disagree on anything.” With friends, if she disagreed, she would be “kind of mad at myself, have kind of a messed up feeling.” With adults, “they would overpower me most of the time.” Anna is learning to bring herself into line with the world around her, to bring herself into agreement with others so as not to mess up relationships with friends or experience the helplessness of being overpowered by adults. Paradoxically, for the sake of relationship and also for protection, she is disconnecting herself from others.

At fourteen, in ninth grade, Anna bursts out, becoming outspoken and drawing the interviewer’s attention to the change she hears in her voice: “I used to be really quiet and shy and everything, and now I am really loud.” The phrase “I don’t know” has doubled (from 67 to 135),²⁵ and alternates with the phrase “you know,” punctuating a tale of resistance which is clearly political: an insistence on knowing what she knows and writing the paper she wants to write, even though she knows it will make her English teacher angry. “I see things from a lot of points of view,” Anna explains, and calling her ability to see from different viewpoints “creative” now rather than “crazy,” she tells the following story.

The class was asked to write a hero legend, and Anna did not see the hero in the same way as her teacher: “There was a ladeedah hero who went and saved all humankind.” Anna explains, “If you see this hero from a different viewpoint, from a different standpoint, everyone could be a hero. So I wanted to write it from a Nazi standpoint, like Hitler as hero, and she really did not go for that at all. And I started to write, and she got really mad, and she was, like, I am afraid you are going to come out sounding like a

²⁵ This analysis was carried out by Lisa Marie Kulpinski, a graduate student in the Human Development and Psychology Program at Harvard University, and reported in her paper “Adolescence: Hitting a Fork in the Road,” 1990.

little Nazi.” Anna’s solution was to write two papers, two versions of the hero legend: “a ladeedah legend and the one I wanted to write.” She turned both papers into her teacher along with a letter explaining her reasons. “She gave me an A on the normal one. I gave her the other one because I just had to write it. It sort of made me mad.”

Anna wrote about Hitler “from the point of view of a little boy who was joining one of those groups that they had, and he was so proud to have a uniform and he went to try to salute. . . . It did not come out about Hitler as much as about the reasons for Hitler” — which interested Anna, who was part German and whose father had been unemployed. In addition, Anna has seen, by watching her father and her brothers easily resort to what she calls “brute force” in the face of frustration, how the need to appear strong or heroic can cover over vulnerability and lead to violence. To Anna, the hero legend is an understandable but dangerous legend.

In choosing to disagree openly with her teacher and, in Woolf’s terms, not to sell her writing or commit adultery of the brain, Anna said she was “just really mad” and that her teacher “was just narrow-minded” in her insistence that Hitler was an “anti-hero” rather than a hero.

“It was an urge,” Anna says. “I had to write that paper because I was so mad. . . . I had to write it to explain it to her, you know; I just had to. . . . I just had to make her understand.”

This urgent need to “make her understand,” the overwhelming desire for human connection— to bring one’s own inner world of thoughts and feelings into relationship with the thoughts and feelings of others — feels very pressing to girls who fight for authentic relationships and who resist being shut up, put down, turned away, ignored. Anna’s friend went to talk with the teacher on Anna’s behalf, and her mother encouraged her to write the paper but to do so in a way that would not antagonize the teacher. In the end, Anna concludes that her teacher “probably saw it as

more annoying than anything else.” What she learned from this experience, she said, “was not to antagonize people,” her mother’s caution. In fact, she was able both to speak and not antagonize people — in part, she suspects, because she had not been heard, because her teacher did not understand, but also because her teacher, however annoyed, was willing to listen and read both papers.

Anna at fourteen sees the framework of the worlds she lives in. Painfully, she has become aware of the inconsistencies in the school’s position on economic differences — where money is available and where it isn’t, the limits of the meritocracy which is espoused. And seeing inconsistencies, she becomes riveted by the disparity between the names of things and the realities and plays with the provocation of being literal in an effort to call things by their right names.

At fifteen, Anna begins to ask some literal questions about the order which is taken to be unquestionable in the world she lives in — questions about religion and violence. And she discovers that her questions are not welcomed by many of her classmates and her opinions are often met with silence; in the midst of an intensely controversial classroom conversation, she notices who is not speaking: “there were a bunch of people who just sat there like stones and listened.”

Anne Frank, in one of the suppressed diary entries, comments on the silences which surround the subject of sex. On March 18, 1944, at the age of fourteen, she writes:

Parents and people in general are very strange when it comes to [sexual matters]. Instead of telling their daughters as well as their sons everything when they are 12 years old, they send the children out of the room during such conversations and leave them to find things out for themselves. If the parents notice later on that the children have learned things anyway, then they assume that the children know either more or less than they actually do. . . . Grownups do come up against an

important obstacle, although I'm sure the obstacle is no more than a very small barrier, they believe that children will stop looking on marriage as something sacred and pure when it dawns on them that in most cases the purity is nothing more than eyewash.²⁶

What puzzles Anna is the reluctance of people to speak about cruelty and violence. Like Anne Frank, she notes the readiness of adults to cover over what they do not want children to look at — so that girls, especially as they reach adolescence, are encouraged, tacitly, not to know what they see or not to listen to what they hear, or to see everything as “nice.” And yet Anna is also bothered by her mother's refusal to wash over the realities of her life and confused by what she is taking in — in part because of the disparity between what women are saying in the two worlds that she lives in.

The acuity of Anna's perception is striking, and her description of life in her family is almost identical to Glen Elder and Avshalom Caspi's depiction of families living under economic hardship, where fathers are unemployed and emotionally volatile, and where mothers and daughters bond. Anna's family constellation (herself and younger brothers) matches the picture for maximal psychological risk in children, given the consistent finding that when families are under stress, the children who are most psychologically in danger are boys in early childhood and girls at adolescence.²⁷ Anna's relationship with her mother thus seems crucial to Anna's resilience. Her closeness with her mother and the openness of their conversation are sometimes painful. Anna feels her mother's feelings “gnawing at” her. And it is sometimes confusing for Anna to know how her mother thinks and feels. She realizes that her mother's is “only one viewpoint” and she does not

²⁶ Frank, *Diary*, p. 545.

²⁷ Glen Elder and Avshalom Caspi, “Studying Lives in a Changing Society: Sociological and Personological Explorations,” in Rabin et al., *Studying Persons and Lives*, pp. 226–28. See also Anne Peterson, “Adolescent Development,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 39 (1988): 583–607.

“know how much of it is dramatized.” And yet, she “can see that a lot of what my Mom says is true.”

“You can’t see someone like my Dad,” she says, as an eleventh grader in the fifth year of the study, returning to a question she introduced at the start, without realizing how easily people are taken in. At school, she has “gotten a glimpse” behind the scenes and seen women whom she saw as nice and compassionate “give away their color,” after which, she astutely observes, “all you can see is that part.” “It is awful,” she says, despairing at the capacity of people to cover over reality, the chameleonlike way her father changes his voice when, “in the midst of screaming and yelling and ranting and raving at everyone in our house, the phone rings: ‘Hello’ —like that. And it is really awful. Everyone thinks he is the strongest person, and when you see the other side you just get so annoyed when people do that.”

I could, Anna muses, “probably give *the* best senior speech in the world in terms of shocking people, but people just don’t, you know, it is so different, because there is just no one,” she says with adolescent fervor, “no one who has to deal with anywhere near the same thing [as I do].” The violent outbursts of her father toward her brothers have brought social service agencies to the house; a brother’s violence toward her mother has brought the police. Because of the social class difference, Anna may think that hers is the only family (in her school) where violence happens. And yet, she concludes, “Pollyanna” — that epitome of the nice girl — “would have problems. . . . Thinking that life is peaches and cream is not realistic. It’s not real. . . . It really grates on you when you have someone around you that is like Pollyanna . . . that is really scary, you know; you can’t deal with someone like that.” The niceness which governs and sustains the school which she goes to cannot admit the world which she knows from experience . . . and Anna knows it. They are, she says, “totally different outlooks on life.”

The real world, Anna begins, “I have a bunch of friends that I talk to and, you know, they understand and everything, but it is

not very many people. This school,” she concludes, “is not the real world.” Anna, who loves school, who wants to take everything that there is to take, to know everything she can know about the world — to know Chinese and Latin as well as French and English — does not know how to imagine her future: whether she will enter the world which the people in her school think of as “normal” — the world which is reflected in the norms — or whether she will join Woolf’s Outsiders’ Society and armed with an independent income to support her independent opinions “will be one of those people who go through college and get a Ph.D. and I’ll live at the bottom of a mountain in Montana. Just one of those weird people. Have a chicken farm. I don’t know. Then I will just write books or something,” remaining, as Woolf envisioned, “outside [and] experiment[ing] not with public means in public but with private means in private.”²⁸

PSYCHOLOGY AND POLITICS: PERFECT GIRLS
AND DISSIDENTS

“The anxious bird,” Jorie Graham writes in her poem, “The Age of Reason,”

in the wild

spring green
is *anting*, which means,
in my orchard
he has opened his wings
over a furious

anthill and will take up
into the delicate
ridges of quince-yellow
feathers
a number of tiny, angry
creatures

²⁸Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p. 113.

that will inhabit him, bewildered
 no doubt,
 traveling deep
 into the air
 on this feathery planet
 new life . . .

We don't know why
 they do it.
 At times they'll take on
 almost anything
 that burns, spreading
 their wings

over coals, over cigarette
 butts,
 even, mistakenly, on bits
 of broken glass.
 Meanwhile the light keeps
 stroking them

as if it were love.

The poem is an inquiry about love. Love mean opening; it means taking in. And Graham asks the question What, in the name of love, is taken in? The world of nature, with its ever-present reminder of death

the garden
 continues its work
 all round them, the gradual
 openings that stand
 for death.

And the world humans cultivate, the stories that grow in the hot-house of culture:

Under the plastic
 groundcover the human

garden grows: help-sticks
 and knots, row
 after row. Who wouldn't want
 to take
 into the self
 something that burns

 or cuts, or wanders
 lost
 over the body?

Who would, or wouldn't, in the name of love, take in films like
 Werner Herzog's *Woyzeck*, where

the hero whom
 we love
 who is mad has
 murdered

 the world, the young
 woman
 who *is* his wife,
 and loved her,
 and covered himself
 with blood,

 he grows frightened
 by how quickly
 she softens and takes on the shape
 of the soil.

The emphasized lines, the short lines of this poem, in their staccato insistence telling, flashing, a warning to women — like Emilia in the brothel scene of *Othello* desperately trying to tell Desdemona before it is too late what she needs to know about what Othello is thinking — and feeling, Graham's words capturing the essence of that warning, like nautical flags flying or newspaper headlines: *murdered/ woman/ and loved her/ with blood*. How often, how

far do we take this truth in? How do philosophers reason about this, what are reasonable answers to the poet's questions:

How far is true
 enough?
 How far into the earth
 can vision go and
 still be
 love?²⁹

When eleven-year-old Tessie is asked, at the end of November, what stays with her in looking back over the past year, she says, "the summer, things that we do in the summer . . . like the sailing that we do and all the fun that I had going swimming and doing different things." Asked how she would describe herself to herself, Tessie says simply, "I like myself." Pleasure runs through Tessie's life like water flowing, swirling around her friends in the summer, her fights with her brother, swimming, reading, writing stories, her closeness with her mother, her special relationship with her father who "always wanted a daughter," her confidence and pleasure — in taking care of children, in throwing sawdust on a classmate who has made her angry, in deciding it was worth it to get into trouble, in helping people with difficult things or problems, in meeting new people, "that's fun, you get to know more people as you go on."

But Tessie also has taken in, in the name of love, an image of perfection, exemplified by her grandmother, the person she admires:

She is *always* smiling and *always* laughing. She's *always* doing something helpful. I don't know. She goes to a nursing home, and she writes letters for people who can't write letters. . . . She *always* has things made and *always* has little things for little kids. . . . She makes big terrariums and everything that

²⁹Jorie Graham, *Erosion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 16–21.

she sells at the Church fair, and she enjoys what she is doing, she loves her grandchildren and her children, And she seems to be an *always* happy person and *always* willing to help you and everything [emphasis added].

The repeated word “always” catches the stillness at the center of this frozen image; Tessie’s free-flowing world has suddenly stopped.

Ellen, at eleven, asked whether there is someone whom she admires, describes a variant of this image—a perfect girl who seems an offshoot of the always good woman, and the repeated word “really” in her description suggests that Ellen may be questioning whether what she is seeing is real.

There is this girl in our class who is perfect. . . . She’s *really* tall, not *really* tall, she’s tall, and is pretty and she’s good at everything. You could say something, and she could do it perfectly. And she’s smart, and she is good at any sport, and she’s good at art, and she’s good at everything. She’s like a person I know, like my mother’s friend in college. She’s good at everything. There is not one thing she cannot do. She’s *really* nice and . . . she’s always being herself [emphasis added].

Claudia, the astute nine-year-old narrator of Toni Morrison’s novel *The Bluest Eye*, sums up “this disrupter of seasons”: the girl who enters the late elementary school classroom and “enchanted the entire school.”³⁰ The familiarity of this girl, her regular appearance at the edge of adolescence in girls’ lives and in women’s novels, signals a shift in the cultural framework which is key to the psychology and politics of girls’ adolescence. Suddenly girls feel the presence of a standard which does not come out of their experience and an image which, because embodied, calls into question the reality which they have lived in—the moving, changing world of thoughts and feelings, relationships and people. Feel-

³⁰ Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Pocket Books, 1970), p. 53.

ing the mesmerizing presence of the perfect girl, girls have entered the world of the hero legend and experience the imposition of a framework which seemingly comes out of nowhere — a worldview superimposed on girls but grounded in the psychology of men. With the arrival of the perfect girl, who exemplifies the incredible, girls are in danger of losing their world. But they are also in danger, in the world of the hero legend, if they continue to know what they know and especially if they say it in public. What once seemed ordinary to girls — speaking, difference, anger, conflict, fighting, bad as well as good thoughts and feelings — now seems treacherous: laced with danger, a sign of imperfection, a harbinger of being left out, not chosen.

Like the heroes or the superheroes of boys' early childhood, the perfect girl of girls' early adolescence is an emblem of loss—signifying an idealization which replaces relationship, covering over a rage which is unspeakable and a sadness which seems endless, and thus marking an inner division or psychic chasm: a taking of the self out of relationship in the name of love. This is the move enacted by the hand which censored Anne Frank's diary, removing her slightly from the reader (especially the puritanical American reader), imposing a kind of innocence or psychological virginity, so that she — who knew so much — would appear more perfect or more acceptable or more protected in the eyes of the world by seeming to know less than she knew. The evidence covered over reveals the extent of Anne's connection with her body, with desire, with her mother, and with the world she lived in — a world which contained both the story of Woyzeck and the Nazis. Living in the midst of real terror, she had not lost her world.

If girls' knowledge of reality is politically dangerous, it is both psychologically and politically dangerous for girls not to know what is going on — or to render themselves innocent by disconnecting themselves from their bodies, that repository of experience and desire, and thus, in essence, disassociating themselves from themselves, from relationships and from what they know about the

world. Because girls are encouraged to make this disconnection at the time of their adolescence, girls' dissent at this time becomes psychologically essential, and potentially healing for boys as well. And yet perhaps in part for this reason, girls' knowledge and girls' passion are bound to make trouble in the world girls are entering.

When Rosie is interviewed at age fourteen, her vitality is infectious. She speaks openly in the privacy of the interview setting about desire as sexual — in somewhat the same tentative yet resolute manner that Anne Frank describes in preparing to speak about her body (“When the subject [of what a naked girl looks like] comes up again,” she says to herself in her diary, “how in heaven’s name will you be able to explain what things are like [down there] without using examples? Shall I try it out here in the meantime? Well then get on with it !”)³¹ Rosie’s pleasure in her body and her exuberance at age fourteen are unmistakable. At the same time, she is in trouble at school for her outspokenness, her irreverence, and her refusal, despite her evident brightness, to be the perfect student.

At fifteen, Rosie and her boyfriend are caught in the park by a ranger who calls her mother to come and take Rosie home. Rosie was embarrassed and scared about what was going to happen to her, and she was also worried about disillusioning her mother, who “had this image of me . . . as close to the perfect child.” Asked to describe this perfect child, she says, without hesitation: “She gets straight As and has a social life, but still gets home exactly on the dot, on time, and does everything her parents say, and keeps her room neat.” I ask Rosie: “Are there girls like this?” She says, “Perhaps; saints.” “Do saints have sex?” I wonder aloud, thinking of Rosie. “I don’t know,” she begins, and then fills in her solution: “If they want, as long as they don’t get caught; as long as nobody knows.”

Once her mother knew, Rosie “hunted her down and . . . made her talk to me. And it wasn’t like a battle or anything. . . . I just wanted to talk to her and see what she had to say.” Like Anna

³¹ Frank, *Diary*, p. 557.

who wants to connect her own with her teacher's view of the hero, by "making her understand," Rosie wants to discover what connections are possible between herself and her mother, what her mother is willing to say.

Rosie's clarity, her playfulness, her irreverence in refusing to disembody saints, and her courage in staying in her own body co-exist with confusion about the world she lives in. Despite her efforts, she cannot find the emotional center — the place where desire or passion or pleasure live in her mother's busy life. From her mother, she takes in the caution that she must be more careful about her body, more attentive to the warning signals and the flags of danger. Perhaps the seemingly disembodied perfect girl who her mother and teachers envision she could be really exists and is admirable, exemplifying the way Rosie should live in order to take care of herself in a world where imperfection often means rejection and where, more darkly, sex can be fatal, love can mean murder, and fighting can mean violence.

At the end of *Oedipus Rex*, that psychological telling of the hero legend, after the truth about family relations has been uncovered (that Oedipus has unwittingly murdered his father and married his mother, and that it was his mother who [cannily, uncannily?] gave him away to the herdsman), Oedipus blinds himself, Jocasta strangles herself, their sons run off to become kings and war against one another, and their daughters are summoned to accompany their father in his blindness. A quick scanning of Sophocles' *tableau vivant* of life in the patriarchal family suggests that the wounds which fathers suffer in early childhood infect their daughters in adolescence. Yet in a play which is filled with riddles and questions — where the chorus asks about Jocasta's silence ("How could that queen whom Laios won, / . . . Be silent when that act was done?")³²— no one asks on behalf of the daughters, Why did Oedipus blind himself?

³² Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, trans. Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), p. 90. In the more literal Loeb Classics translation,

WOMEN TEACHING GIRLS

It is September, and the sky over New England is Fra Angelico blue. We, two women, psychologists at Harvard University, are flying to Cleveland to talk with the Laurel School teachers about our research with the girls they are teaching.³³ It is the beginning of the second year of the project, and the library fills as we enter, the faculty sitting in short rows crossing the room with a long aisle running down the center. School — the microcosm in children's lives of the public world, the public space which Hannah Arendt sees as the crucible of democracy, the place where the natality and plurality, the ever new and always different nature of the human condition can flourish.

The school is governed by an honor code, which is working well according to the school's recent evaluation, maintaining an order of living where people can bring themselves and leave their things in safety. In the privacy of the research interview, girls spoke about the honor code from a different angle, describing dilemmas of relationship which arose in the wake of honor code violations; how, they wondered, could they stay in connection with themselves and also be in connection with others? Since there seemed no way to speak about these problems of relationship in the public arena, many girls had publicly agreed to an honor code which they did not believe in.³⁴ And, taking matters of public governance into their own hands, girls took them into a private world of relationships and settled them in private places, drawing

this line reads "How could the soil thy father eared so long / Endure to bear in silence such a wrong" (Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, trans. F. Storr, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912), p. 113. For purposes of clarity, I have cited Fitts's and FitzGerald's freer translation.

³³ Lyn Mikel Brown, my companion on this journey, is the director of the Harvard-Laurel project.

³⁴ Dianne Argyris and Judy Dorney, graduate students in the Human Development and Psychology Program at Harvard University, compiled and analyzed the girls' thoughts and feelings about the Laurel School honor code, and this work was the basis for the presentation to the faculty.

on that psychological knowledge — that intricate physics of relationship which girls learned by keeping an eye on the human weather and following the constant play of relationships, thoughts, feelings, and actions as it moves across the sky of the day.

This girls' school, like a perfectly run household, was being governed as if effortlessly. In fact, it was being run by an underground society of girls whose knowledge and activities on behalf of the school were for the most part unseen and unnamed. To encourage girls' involvement in political matters, to educate girls who, it is hoped, as women will participate fully as citizens in a democratic state, it seemed necessary to bring girls' questions about public governance into the public arena — to name girls' activities and their knowledge that were contributing to the public welfare and also to encourage girls to deal publicly with their differences and their disagreement.

To my right, in front, a woman — small bones, white hair, intense face concentrating energy as her thoughts and feelings connect with sound and come out into the air of the room on her voice — said: "How can we help girls learn to deal with disagreement in public, when we" — she looked across the rows, quickly scanning the faces of her colleagues, women and men — "when we," meaning now women, "cannot deal with disagreement in public ourselves?"

Silence washed the room. The research was uncovering the underground. Girls' voices, recorded in private and amplified in the public space of the school, were resonating with women teachers, encouraging women to ask what they were teaching girls about relationships, about speaking, about conflict, about difference, about political and psychological resistance.

Two questions about relationships clarified a woman's position: Where am I in relation to the tradition which I am practicing and teaching? and Where am I in relation to girls, the next generation of women? Are women vessels through which the culture passes? Are women oracles of the disciplines, conveying, like the

oracle of Apollo — the priestess who voiced the wisdom of the Delphic oracles — the wisdom of male gods? Provocative questions, but it was the relationship between girls and women which proved to be transformative, and most specifically, the relationship of women to girls at the edge of adolescence.

Education is the time-honored, nonviolent means of social change, the alternative to revolution. And education at present in this country is largely in the hands of women, who, as mothers, teachers, and therapists, are directly in contact with people's desires for relationships and for knowledge, and also in touch with the resistance. Perhaps women are currently in a position to constitute an Outsiders' Society.

The old question stirs: What if women . . . irrepressible question! half the population in every generation. Could women, as Madeline Grumet envisions, turn the practice of teaching — a relational practice par excellence — from “women's work” into “the work of women,” and thus, instead of leading what Grumet calls “the great escape” from the daily rhythms of the maternal order to the clock time of the paternal state, institute a new order (using private means in private, as Woolf would have it) by teaching a different knowledge and creating a different practice of human relationships?³⁵

At the beginning of the second act of *Lysistrata*, Lysistrata despairs; the women are leaving the Acropolis and rushing home to their husbands. “I know you miss your husbands,” she says, “but don't you realize that they miss you as well? . . . Be strong sisters,” she enjoins the women. “There is an oracle that we will triumph if only we don't fall out among ourselves.”³⁶

³⁵ Madeline R. Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), pp. 58, 25. See also Jane Roland Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), and Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarde, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

³⁶ Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, p. 212.

Sara Ruddick heals what is perhaps the major division within and among women — the division between mother and resister — by defining a women’s politics of resistance, which is relationally rather than heroically conceived. This practice of resistance is rooted in the body (its vulnerability, its promise, its power) ; it is a practice of “preservative love.” Taking her cue from the Madres of Argentina and the women of Chile, Ruddick describes a strategy which takes its imperative from the singularity of human being and the irreplaceability of human relationships, rather than from claims to immortality or superhuman strength. If only women would make a shift within their existing practice as mothers, separating out those elements which support militarism (the worshiping of martyrs and heroes) from those which subvert it (women’s irreverent language of loyalty, love, and outrage), women could move, readily, she suspects, “from denial to truthfulness, from parochialism to solidarity, from inauthenticity to active responsibility.”³⁷ In short, women could move from psychological to political resistance.

Central to this journey is a recovery of anger as the political emotion par excellence — the bellwether of oppression, injustice, bad treatment; the clue that something is wrong in the relational surround (a fin on the horizon, a sudden darkening, a bad shadow). Teresa Bernardez, writing about women and anger from the two-culture vantage point of an Argentinean-born North American psychotherapist, reminds her readers that cultural injunctions against anger in women turn into psychological inhibitions which “prevent rebellious acts,” with the result that women come to feel complicit in their own misery. The process of psychotherapy, then, involves a kind of reverse alchemy whereby anger which has soured into bitterness and hatred becomes once again simply anger — “the conscious response to an awareness of injustices suffered or losses and grievances sustained . . . [the anger]

³⁷ Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp. 227–30.

which involves self-love and awareness of the responsibility of making choices” (like eleven-year-old Sarah’s anger which lives in the daylight of her relationships, or Tessie’s anger which sits comfortably side-by-side with self-love).³⁸ Bernardez notes that when people are living under conditions of political oppression or terror, they often come not to know what they know and “have forgotten what they have forgotten.” She also observes that anger silenced “contributes to the making of depression.” And depression in women tends to begin at adolescence.

Perhaps women have forgotten girls and have not remembered this disconnection at adolescence. So relationships between adolescent girls and women may hold a key to the psychology and the politics of women’s resistance.

When Anjali brought her paper on “To His Coy Mistress” to her English teacher, Mrs. Franklin, Nancy Franklin realized that she was hearing the poem in a way she had not heard it before — very differently from the way she had learned to listen in the course of her graduate training. Anjali had been asked to analyze the poem for tone; she was taking an advanced class taught simultaneously at several schools in the area. Nancy Franklin was one of the women pursuing the question What does it mean to be a woman teaching girls? and it is to this group of women, in the third year of their meeting, that she speaks about Anjali’s paper and her decision to join Anjali’s resistance.

Anjali in the midst of writing her analysis — listening to the tone of the poem in her house late at night — suddenly begins writing in the first person as she takes in what she is hearing: the voice of an older man bent on overcoming a young woman’s resistance (“Had we but world enough, and time, / This coyness,

³⁸ Teresa Bernardez, “Women and Anger: Cultural Prohibitions and the Feminine Ideal” (Stone Center Working Paper Series, 31, Wellesley College, 1988), p. 5. See also Jean Baker Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976) for a discussion of women and anger and the roots of anger in women’s political oppression.

Lady, were no crime”). And Nancy Franklin, taking in Anjli’s voice, feels the power of the poem anew and also the force of what Anjli is hearing. Anjli writes, her teacher recalls, “I am writing this paper and it is late at night, and I am terrified because this is such a morbid poem (‘Thy beauty shall no more be found,/Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound / My echoing song: then worms shall try / That long preserved virginity, / And your quaint honor turn to dust, / And into ashes all my lust’). This is such a frightening poem.”

Anjli’s paper was submitted to six teachers for cross-grading exercises, designed to ensure consistency of standards. One woman, Franklin recalls, “actually wrote on the paper: ‘She doesn’t understand *carpe diem*. Why doesn’t she know this term? This is not a college level paper.’” Another wrote, “She misreads Marvell’s playfulness.” And yet — Nancy Franklin says, caught momentarily by the standards of her colleagues and then resisting their disconnection from Anjli and their dismissal of her reading — “this paper was beautiful, and it made me see the poem in a new way.” Sustaining this connection, she draws out its implications for Anjli, for herself, and also for society:

This is a young girl; this is a seventeen-year-old, very innocent but very bright girl. Reading this, Lord knows, you go back and read that poem, at two o’clock in the morning. And she was terrified — the voice of an older man speaking to a young girl. And the comments she got on this paper. They all said: C-, you know, no good. “Doesn’t know stanzaic patterns, missed all this playfulness, and *carpe diem, carpe diem*.” Now there’s the educational system at work. What did it tell her? Go underground; to survive, go underground, at least until you get out of this system. Or worse.³⁹

³⁹ Quotations taken from the taped transcript of the Women Teaching Girls Project, Harvard-Laurel Retreat, February 1990. The retreats were initiated by women teachers and psychologists at the Laurel School in order to pursue questions raised for them by the research on girls’ development. Over a two-year period, three day-and-a-half retreats were held — attended by teachers, psychologists and administrators from the school and by Lyn Brown, Judy Dorney, and myself from Harvard.

Anjali read the graders' comments, discussed them with her teacher, remembered hearing about *carpe diem*, reread the poem, and, Nancy Franklin writes, "found that indeed she could see the poem that way but more importantly, she could see it both ways." She knows that "she could rewrite the paper now that she understands the way she was supposed to react saying what she is supposed to say. . . . 'If you were a guy,' she says, smiling, 'it might be really funny.'" But Anjali also still cringes at the poem's morbid images: "I don't think," she concludes, "a class full of girls could really laugh at this."⁴⁰ What is puzzling, then, given Anjali's perspective, and also potentially treacherous, is the position of the women graders; Anjali assumes that she will be understood by girls, but she cannot assume such understanding from women.

At the intersection between political resistance and psychological resistance, at the time of adolescence, girls' psychological development becomes indelibly political. If girls know what they know and bring themselves into relationships, they will be in conflict with prevailing authorities. If girls do not know what they know and take themselves out of relationship, they will be in trouble with themselves. The ability of girls to tell it from both sides and to see it both ways is not an illustration of relativism (the abandonment of an absolute truth) but rather a demonstration of girls' understanding of relationship raised to a cultural level and a provisional solution to a difficult problem of relationship: how to stay connected with themselves and with others, how to keep in touch with themselves and with the world. As eleven-year-old Tessie underscores the importance of voicing her argument with her mother, so Anjali voices the disparity between how

The retreat process was developed by Judy Dorney. See Dorney, "Women Teaching Girls: Relationships in the Practice of Teaching" (Working Paper, Harvard University Project on the Psychology of Women and the Development of Girls, 1990).

⁴⁰ Nancy S. Franklin, "Teachers' Tales of Empowerment: A Story from an English Teacher" (Paper presented at the Harvard-Laurel Conference on the Psychology of Women and the Education of Girls, Cleveland, Ohio, April 6, 1990).

she reacts and how she is supposed to react, what she says and what she is supposed to say, according to the authorities who correct and grade her. And Tessie's openness, at least in theory, to her friend's hearing her mother's voice differently from the way she does, corresponds to Anjali's generosity toward those who hear the poem differently: the guys and the graders. Women teaching girls, then, are faced with a series of intricate problems of relationship. Girls must learn the traditions which frame and structure the world they are entering and they also must hold on to their own ways of hearing and seeing. How can women stay with girls and also teach cultural traditions? How can girls stay with women and also with themselves? What can women teach girls about living in a world which is still governed by men?

"What happens to girls when they get to that age?" Sharon Miller asks. A teacher of twelve-year-olds and the mother of a twelve-year-old daughter, she returns to what has been the riddle of female development — to Freud's question and the question posed by women therapists across the century: "Why is it that girls, who seem "more intelligent and livelier than boys of the same age; [who] go out more to meet the external world and at the same time form stronger [connections with people]," seem to become less intelligent and less lively when they reach adolescence?⁴¹ Freud observes that "the constitution will not adapt itself to its function without a struggle," and then goes on to talk about the function of women. Our research on girls' development has focused on elucidating the struggle, which is readily observed in girls at the time of adolescence.

⁴¹ Freud, "Femininity," Lecture 33 of *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933 [1932]), vol. 22 of *Standard Edition*, p. 117, and Freud, "The Transformations of Puberty," in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), vol. 7 of *Standard Edition*. See also Karen Horney, "The Flight from Womanhood," *International Journal of psychoanalysis* 7 (1926): 324–39; Clara M. Thompson, "Adolescence" and other papers in *Interpersonal Psychoanalysis* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), and Jean Baker Miller, "The Development of Women's Sense of Self" (Stone Center Working Paper Series, 12, Wellesley College, 1984).

Like girls in novels and poems written by women,⁴² girls interviewed in contemporary school settings speak about taking themselves out of relationships as they approach adolescence: about “building a little shield,” about “getting afraid to say when you’re mad at somebody,” about “losing confidence in myself. I was losing track of myself, really, and losing the kind of person I was.”⁴³ Paradoxically, girls are taking themselves out of relationships for the sake of relationship and self-consciously letting go of themselves. This doubling of the psychological language augments the confusion girls experience at this time — the inability in a way to say what is happening because the very words *self* and *relationship* have doubled in meaning, as if one psychology has been superimposed on another, causing girls to lose track of their own experience as they move into the larger world.⁴⁴ Lyn Brown, analyzing girls’ narratives of relationships, notes that as girls approach adolescence they tend to withdraw authorization from their own experience and to replace realistic with inauthentic or idealized descriptions of relationships. Perhaps for this reason, girls who are developing well according to standard psychological measures and cultural yardsticks, are also “engaging in difficult and sometimes painful personal battles around issues of voice and authorization, unsure of the accuracy of their own perceptions, afraid that speak-

⁴² See, for example, Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*; Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970); Jamaica Kincaid, *Annie John* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985); Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), Margaret Atwood, *Cat’s Eye* (New York: Doubleday, 1988); Michelle Cliff, “Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise,” in *The Land of Look Behind* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1985), pp. 19–52; and Sharon Olds, “Time-Travel,” in *Satan Says* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), pp. 61–62.

⁴³ Lyn Mikel Brown, “A Problem of Vision: The Development of Relational Voice in Girls Ages 7 to 16” (Paper for Project on the Psychology of Women and the Development of Girls, Harvard University, 1990). See also Lyn Mikel Brown, “Narratives of Relationship: The Development of a Care Voice in Girls Ages 7 to 16” (Ed.D. diss., Harvard University, 1989).

⁴⁴ For a fuller discussion of this phenomenon, see Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* and “Teaching Shakespeare’s Sister,” and Lori Stern, “Disavowing the Self in Female Adolescence: A Case Study Analysis” (Ed.D. diss., Harvard University, 1990).

ing up will damage relationships or compromise their image in the eyes of others . . . showing signs of an impasse in their ability to act in the face of conflict.”⁴⁵

What happens to girls when they reach this age? “I think,” Sharon Miller says, “they have let go of themselves. I think it is the unusual middle school girl who can say . . . if you don’t like me the way I am, fine. Most girls can’t say that because there is no one there.” Why not? I ask her. I am thinking of the girls who are so resolute, so present at eleven. “Well, that’s the question, you know; what happens to girls when they get to that age? Well, because that is the age when girls start identifying with adult women.” And then, suddenly, seeing the circle closing, she says, hand rising, covering her mouth, “My God,” as tears begin flowing, “and there is nothing there.”⁴⁶

Like a film running backward, women teaching girls arrive at the moments of their own resistance and come up against their own solutions to the problems of relationships which girls face. Then women may encounter their own reluctance to know what they know and come to the realization that such knowledge is contained in their body; and may discover that they have succumbed to the temptation to model perfection by trying to be perfect role models for girls and thus have taken themselves out of relationship with girls — in part to hide their imperfection but also perhaps to keep girls from feeling their sadness and their anger. Women teaching girls, however, also may discover that they are harboring, within themselves, a girl who lives in her body, who is insistent on speaking, who intensely desires relationships and knowledge, and who, perhaps at the time of adolescence, went underground or was overwhelmed. It may be that adolescent girls

⁴⁵ Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan, “The Psychology of Women and the Development of Girls” (Paper presented at the Harvard-Laurel Conference on the Psychology of Women and the Education of Girls,” Cleveland, Ohio, April 5, 1990).

⁴⁶ Quotations taken from the taped transcript of the Women Teaching Girls Project, Harvard-Laurel Retreat, October 1989.

are looking for this girl in women and feel her absence or her hidden presence. And it may be that women, in the name of being good women, have been modeling for girls her repudiation — teaching girls the necessity of a loss or renunciation, which girls question.

Perhaps there is a new cycle that, once beginning, will break up an old impasse in women's development and affect men as well. If women and girls can stay with one another at the time when girls reach adolescence, girls' playfulness and irreverence may tap the wellsprings of women's resistance. And women in turn, taking in girls' embodiment, their outspokenness and their courage, may encourage girls' desire for relationships and for knowledge and teach girls that they can say what they know and not be left all alone.

CODA

“Dear Kitty,” Anne Frank writes on January 6, 1944, at the age of fourteen, in a passage from her diary which her father edited — in exactly the manner she predicts in the passage:

I have three things to confess to you today. . . . I *must* tell someone, and you are the best to tell, as I know that come what may you always keep a secret. . . . You know that I've grumbled a lot about Mummy, yet still tried to be nice to her again. Now it is suddenly clear to me what she lacks. Mummy herself has told us that she looked upon us more as her friends than her daughters; now that is all very fine of course, but still a friend can't take a mother's place. *I need my mother as an example which I can follow. I want to be able to respect her and though my mother is an example to me in most things she is precisely the kind of example that I do not want to follow.* I have the feeling that Margot thinks differently about these things and would never be able to understand what I've just told you. And Daddy avoids all arguments about Mummy [deleted passage is italicized].⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Frank, *Diary* p. 440.

“*One Conclusion*,” Emma writes, beginning a new page in her journal. “One of the conclusions I come to is that many/most of the paintings/statues/artwork of women I have seen are of women naked. A lot of the art of women that I saw was done by men. Maybe because the women posed. None of the girls I saw were naked. Maybe because artists like to have people pose naked, and they think women are better because they have more growth.”

“One question,” Malka writes at the end of her second conversation with the Queen of Babylon: “Did these people, places, painted, sculpted, did they live? Did they live in the heart of the painter, sculptor?”

“Wouldn’t there have been,” Anna says irreverently — she has just finished writing a paper about the church and Galileo— “Wouldn’t there have been a lot of animal stuff on Noah’s ark after forty days?”

“I think I am trying,” Rosie says, “to attach value to things. This is important. This is not important. Maybe order things more.” What do you order them to, I ask, wondering what key she is tuning to, what standard she has in mind. And Rosie, the embodied saint, the underground woman, suddenly turns philosophical: “I don’t know . . . but I guess I know that there should be an order, and I was trying to decide what that order was. Maybe that is part of what I am looking for . . . is an order to my life. This is getting deep, philosophical.”

I am listening to girls’ questions — following girls’ inquiry into relationships as it becomes more philosophical, more critical, and also more psychologically and politically dangerous. Emma’s curiosity is edging toward men’s feelings about women’s bodies; Malka begins to trace the channels connecting men’s hearts with cultural icons. If this inquiry continues, girls will find the line which connects the personal and the political, the line between the psychology of men and the cultural framework, and wonder how they fit in.

“I don’t know,” Rosie says, Socrates’ plaint. “I guess I know,” she follows, in rapid succession. She is observing how her mother

spends her life, her time, asking in effect the same question which Malka asks the Queen of Babylon: "What are you doing?" And seeing what her mother has to say—whether her mother might come up with the Queen's funny answer: "Brushing my hair. I was interrupted this morning by a revolt," the answer which captures the doubling of women's lives and also speaks to girls' questions about what gives women pleasure and what women value.

Rosie, the sharp-eyed adolescent, notices that her mother's "small study and bedroom are messy." She will have to create her own order of living, find some way to orchestrate her life. "I don't know . . . I know . . . you know . . . do you know? . . ." voices of the underground, speaking under the sign of repression, marking dissociations which are still tenuous, knowledge which is fragile, reaching out for connections which can sustain the promise that a secret underground one day will become a public resistance. Then a healthy resistance which is evident in girls at adolescence, rather than turning inward and becoming psychologically corrosive, can stay in the open air of relationships. And by remaining political, work to bring a new order of living into the world.