

CAROL GILLIGAN

DAVID A.J. RICHARDS

The
Deepening
Darkness

Patriarchy, Resistance,
& Democracy's Future

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*Patriarchy, Resistance, and
Democracy's Future*

Carol Gilligan

New York University

David A. J. Richards

New York University



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THE DEEPENING DARKNESS

A destructive patriarchal power still exists that is damaging to men and women alike. This book is the narrative of reoccurring resistance to this societal force from its origins in classical time to the present day.

Why is America again fighting an unjust and limitless war? In this era of rising economic inequality and diminished human rights and values, why is America's political discussion distorted by religious fundamentalism, the fear of gay marriage, and the specter of abortion outlawed? Such contradictions within democracies arise from a patriarchal psychology still alive in our personal and political lives, in tension with the equal voice that is the basis of democracy. *The Deepening Darkness* traces the roots of this tension by joining Carol Gilligan's renowned expertise in developmental psychology with David Richards's impassioned research into ethical resistance to injustice.

In a moving collective voice, they find a duality between repressive power and liberated emotional and erotic bonds, born in the Roman Republic and reproduced through the course of subsequent political arrangements. At the heart of this duality is the transformation of private desire into a crime against the state and a construction of gender that replicates the state's war against dissent and transgressive sexuality. In order to blind them to the violence, constraint, and emotional trauma radiating outward from those who control the levers of power, men are told that the only way to rescue their masculinity is to channel a portion of the state's anger upon a perceived enemy: unregulated women, religious and ethnic others, and men who challenge dominant norms. Borrowing Arundhati Roy's phrase "Love Laws" – the laws that lay down who should be loved and how and how much – Gilligan and Richards show that resistance to those laws is a resistance to the very logic of the patriarchal oppression that poisons our culture. Desire and attachment freely chosen among equals *are* quite literally the heart of the democracy we can and must nurture.

Carol Gilligan has been University Professor at New York University since 2002. She is also a visiting professor at the University of Cambridge affiliated with the Centre for Gender Studies and with Jesus College. She previously taught at Harvard University for more than 30 years and became Harvard's first gender studies professor in 1997. Her groundbreaking book *In a Different Voice* (1982) led to critical acclaim, after which she initiated the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development and co-authored or edited five books. She received a Senior Research Scholar Award from the Spencer Foundation, a Grawemeyer Award for her contributions to education, and a Heinz Award for her contributions to understanding the human condition, and she was named by *Time* magazine one of the twenty-five most influential Americans. Most recently, *The Birth of Pleasure* (2002) was described by the *Times Literary Supplement* as "a thrilling new paradigm." Her play *The Scarlet Letter* was part of the 2007 WomenCenterStage festival in New York City, and her monologue "My House Is Wallpapered with Lies" was performed as part of the June 2006 V-Day festival, "Until the Violence Stops: NYC." Her first novel, *Kyra*, was published in 2008.

David A. J. Richards is Edwin D. Webb Professor of Law at New York University School of Law, where he teaches constitutional law and criminal law. He is the author of sixteen books, most recently *Tragic Manhood and Democracy: Verdi's Voice and the Powers of Musical Art* (2004); *Disarming Manhood: The Roots of Ethical Resistance* (2005); *The Case for Gay Rights: From Bowers to Lawrence and Beyond* (2005); and *Patriarchal Religion, Sexuality, and Gender: A Critique of New Natural Law* (with Nicholas Bamforth; Cambridge University Press, 2008). Two of his books were named best academic books of their years, and he was Shikes lecturer in civil liberties at the Harvard Law School in 1998.

**For Jim Gilligan and Donald Levy, our lovers, and the
most loving of men**

When men ceased to be equal, egotism replaced fellow-feeling and decency succumbed to violence. The result was despotism.

Tacitus. *The Annals of Imperial Rome*

It is because [Vergil] discovered and revealed the perennial shape of what truly destroys us – not because he accurately reflects the grandeurs and miseries of a crucial and dynamic age (as he does), not because he croons us gentle lullabies of culture reborn (as he does not) – that we continue to trust him to guide us through the dim mazes of our arrogance and fear.

W. R. Johnson. *Darkness Visible: A Study of Vergil's Aeneid*

Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.

Ernest Hemingway. *A Farewell to Arms*

Acknowledgments

This collaborative work arose from co-teaching a seminar on gender and democracy over the past seven years at the New York University School of Law. When we began teaching together, Carol was working on the book that would be published as *The Birth of Pleasure* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2002) and has been working since then both on a play inspired by *The Scarlet Letter* (performed in different versions in New York City and at the North Carolina School of the Arts) and on a novel, *Kyra*, published last year (Random House, 2008). She has also written a series of papers inspired by questions that came out of our seminar, including “Knowing and Not Knowing: Reflections on Manhood” (*Psychotherapy and Politics*, 2004); “Recovering Psyche: Reflections on Life History and History” (*Annual of Psychoanalysis*, 2004); and “When the Mind Leaves the Body... and Returns” (*Daedalus*, 2006). As a direct consequence of ongoing conversations in the seminar, David wrote *Tragic Manhood and Democracy: Verdi’s Voice and the Powers of Musical Art* (Sussex Academic Press, 2004); *Disarming Manhood: Roots of Ethical Resistance* (Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 2005); *The Case for Gay Rights: From Bowers to Lawrence and Beyond* (Kansas University Press, 2005); and (with Nicholas Bamforth) *Patriarchal Religion, Sexuality, and Gender: A Critique of New Natural Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). Our collaborative work had been so creative for us singly that we naturally turned to writing a book together that would both clarify our method and show its fertility.

We had been discussing Roman literature and sources in our seminar for some time, but the inspiration for the current collaborative work arose from teaching a term in the fall of 2005 with Eva Cantarella, Professor of Roman Law, Milan University, who visited at the NYU School of Law as part of our Global Program. It was Eva who gave us the idea that Roman history might also support our argument, and, inspired by her insights, we undertook the research and writing that led to the current work. Eva also gave us invaluable bibliographical advice during the period of our

revision of the manuscript. We must thank not only Eva but Professor Joseph Weiler, who then headed our Global Program, for facilitating Eva's teaching with us. We are especially in the debt of Simon Goldhill, Eve D'Ambra, and Judith Hallett, the three remarkable readers of our manuscript for Cambridge University Press, who encouraged our project and gave us invaluable suggestions for how to improve it both in general and in detail. We thank as well John Berger, our editor at Cambridge, who supported our project enthusiastically throughout and secured for us the excellent reader's reports that guided our revision of the manuscript. We also wish to express our appreciation to Douglas Mitchell of University of Chicago Press for generously sharing with us a helpful reader's report and acknowledge as well our debt to Phyllis Berk, a brilliant editor, who gave us invaluable advice on matters both organizational and stylistic. David's assistant, Lavinia Barbu, rendered service above and beyond the call of duty in helping us prepare the bibliography, for which we are deeply grateful.

We both learned much from conversations with Normi Noel, Kristin Linklater, and Tina Packer and are in debt to Normi, in particular, for our understanding and use of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in this work. We thank the students and faculty who discussed our ideas and manuscript with us, as it developed in the seminar we taught in the fall term of 2006, to wit, Russell Ferri, Tiasha Palikovic, Dylan Yaeger, and Professor Cees Maris of Amsterdam University, who was visiting NYU as a Global Fellow; we thank as well the students who discussed the manuscript with us in the fall term of 2007, namely, Kristen Berg, Lauren Burke, Corey Callahan, Isaac Cheng, Edgar Cho, Matthew Dewitz, Rebecca Israel, Tamzin Kinnebrew, Justin Lee, Leah Lotto, Patricia Naftali, Beth Nash, and Yvette Russell. We are indebted to our colleagues Peggy Davis and Moshe Halbertal, to our friends Dana Jack and Wiktor Osiatinsky, and to our former students Maribel Morey and Zvi Triger for their illuminating comments on the manuscript. We are grateful as well for the helpful comments of members of the faculty of law at the National University of Singapore, in particular, Kumuralingam Amirthalingam, Simon Chesterman, and Arun Kumar Thiruvengadam. Finally, our thanks to John Sexton and Jerome Bruner for their wisdom in bringing us together.

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A work of this sort, so rooted in our personal lives, also arose in conversations with those closest to us, the two remarkable men, James Gilligan and Donald Levy, to whom we have dedicated this work.

Carol Gilligan and David A. J. Richards
March, 2008

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Introduction and Overview

At the end of *Hamlet*, on a stage littered with corpses, Fortinbras enters with drums and colors asking: "Where is this sight?" Horatio responds with a question: "What is it you would see?"

It is the question that inspired us to write this book, a question we asked one another and ourselves in the course of teaching a seminar on gender issues in the psychology and politics of democratic societies, a question that came into sharp focus as we became aware of a darkness, visible but repeatedly obscured. The image comes from Milton, from Book I of *Paradise Lost*: "No light, but rather darkness visible/ Serv'd only to discover sights of woe." It is also the title of W. R. Johnson's remarkable study of Vergil's *Aeneid*, where he traces Vergil's use of "blurred images" and profound uncertainties to reveal the underside of heroism and glory, and of William Styron's haunting memoir of his struggle with depression. In all these works, we find echoes of our theme. Our title conveys our impression that this darkness is now deepening, posing a threat to democracy's future, but we also were inspired by Freud, who writes in a letter to Lou Andreas Salome of his need to deepen the darkness so as to see what has faint light to it. We embarked on our study of loss and patriarchy in this spirit, with an eye to discerning the shoots of ethical resistance.

In the fall of 2005, when we were joined in our teaching by Eva Cantarella, Professor of Roman Law at Milan University, we gained new insights into the sources of the darkness by connecting two strands in the literature on ancient Rome: its public, political, military history and the more recent scholarship on the Roman family. Reflecting on the military history, we asked: What could have sustained the demands imposed on men and women by the imperialistic wars that continued almost without interruption throughout the 400 years of the Roman Republic? How did these demands come to be accepted as in the very nature of things? How did they become part of Augustus's rationalization for the end of

the republic and the creation of an autocratic empire, which was to last for another 400 years?

We were intrigued by the evidence that Roman matrons, given men's frequent absences in fighting Rome's continuing wars, played an important role in sustaining the demands of patriarchy. Yet we will argue that their influence as wives, mothers, and sisters – including their wealth and education – led as well to forms of resistance against the constraints imposed upon them, specifically on their intimate relationships and sexual lives. The focus of our Roman sources on sexuality – the severity of its suppression and also the association of sexual freedom or the claim to freedom in intimate life with movements for political liberation – riveted us. When Augustus passed a law criminalizing adultery – the *Lex Julia*, named after his daughter whom he exiled for the crime – he transformed what had previously been a private family matter into a crime against the state. Early Christian emperors extended to adultery the dreaded punishment by the sack (the victim enclosed in a sealed sack with a dog, a cock, a viper, and a monkey, and then thrown into a river), which previously had been reserved for parricide, thus equating adultery with the killing of a father, the ultimate crime within patriarchy (Cod. Theod. 11, 36, 4 [Imp. Constantius and Constans AA. Ad Catullinum]).

Our narrative thus starts in the Rome of Augustus, where we discover a gendered pattern that will deepen through time, bedeviling the subsequent history of constitutional democracies, along with a history of ethical resistance – both extending into the present. Our attention will focus on two writers, Vergil and Apuleius, with the *Aeneid* rendering a darkness visible as an understory shadowing Vergil's epic of patriarchal manhood and the *Metamorphoses* or *The Golden Ass*, Apuleius's second-century comic novel and conversion narrative, laying out a path of resistance and transformation. We will then turn to Augustine for a counternarrative, a conversion from sexuality to celibacy, from tolerance to intolerance within a Christianity now joined with empire, to explore specifically the roots of anti-Semitism, the attack on "carnal Israel" that will shadow the history of Christianity, compromising the legacy of the historical Jesus and erupting most virulently in the twentieth century.

In *The Confessions*, we see once again the darkness foreshadowed in the *Aeneid*, a heroic conception of patriarchal manhood associated with a personal history of loss, of sudden rupture in loving relationships with women, as in Aeneas's relationship with Dido. Thus, we begin to explore the connection between a psychology of trauma accompanied by a loss of voice and memory and a history of militarism and religious persecution that becomes associated with a particular construction of manhood. This will lead us to a consideration of the psychology and politics of ethical

resistance within the Christian tradition: the arguments for toleration by radical Protestants such as Bayle and Locke in the late 17th century that laid the foundations for modern liberal constitutionalism; the resistance of the abolitionist feminists in the 19th century, of Martin Luther King in the mid-20th century, and of the former Catholic priest, James Carroll, whose life story moves in the opposite direction from that of Augustine, from celibacy to sexual love, and where resistance against the injustice of the Vietnam War is followed by a questioning of Christian anti-Semitism.

Our interest in the role of sexuality within resistance movements takes us inevitably to Freud, who began by listening to the sexually traumatized voices of women and placed the assault on human sexuality as the *caput Nili*, the head of the Nile, the source of neurotic suffering. As Freud moves away from this position and breaks his alliance with his women patients to adopt a more patriarchal stance, we notice the profusion of quotes from the *Aeneid* in his writing, marking his turn away from women through an identification with Aeneas. With this identification, psychoanalysis, initially aligned with resistance to patriarchy, incorporates an Augustinian misogyny quite foreign to its initial inspiration and moves away from its potential as a method for human liberation.

We note how the conversion narrative of Apuleius and his vision of sexual love based on equality and leading to transformation have come down through the centuries, inspiring artists beginning with Shakespeare, for whom *The Golden Ass* was a prime source. We focus on Nathaniel Hawthorne, writing in the mid-19th century, and specifically his novel *The Scarlet Letter*, which exposes the contradictions between a patriarchal puritanism and the hopes and vision of a democratic society and ends with the prophecy of a time when "the whole relation between man and woman will be established on a surer ground of mutual happiness." We then consider six novels written in the aftermath of the World War I and taking on the image of heroic manhood that sustained its slaughter: Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, which we read as the anti-*Aeneid*; James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which turns Odysseus into Leopold Bloom and faithful Penelope into the sexual Molly; Edith Wharton's *Age of Innocence*; Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, along with *Three Guineas* where she exposes the roots of fascist violence in patriarchy and explores the possibilities for its resistance; and D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

In our final chapters, we turn to the present to consider the implications of our analysis for understanding and resisting the current resurgence of patriarchal demands on both men and women. We ask why gay marriage and abortion have become lightning-rod issues in contemporary American politics. Why these issues? Why now? In doing so, we

further explore our argument that patriarchy has remained the strongest force in sexual/social relations and that models of equality are actively countered by its ideology and institutions.

We are aware that our focus on patriarchy is controversial, both because the word itself has lost its root meaning, becoming something of a code word for men's oppression of women, and, we believe, because of a reluctance to confront the effects of patriarchal demands on men and the complicity of women in enforcing such demands on men, on one another, and on the next generation. We are struck by the fact that discussions of gender are often dismissed now as *passé* – that the darkness associated with gender, the patterns of loss, traumatic rupture of relationships, repression of an ethically resisting voice and also of what might be called sexual voice continue into the present, at times with increasing fervor, despite or perhaps because of the gains toward equality and liberation that women and men have made over the past decades. We address recent discoveries in developmental psychology and neurobiology that have called into question the splitting of reason from emotion, mind from body, and self from relationship, revealing these splits to be falsely gendered and to reflect not only a distortion of human nature but also a manifestation of physical or psychological trauma.

Above all, we have been riveted by the continuation across time and culture of a resistance to patriarchy and an impulse to democracy grounded not in ideology but in what might be called human nature: in our neurobiology and our psychology. The fact that we are inherently relational and responsive beings leads us to resist the gender binary and hierarchy that define patriarchal manhood and womanhood, where being a man means not being a woman and also being on top. While our commitment, at least on certain fronts, to gender equality and our recognition of amatory choice distinguish us sharply from our Roman ancestors, our analysis shows why we need to strengthen both that commitment and that recognition.

Our continuing questions have to do with how and why the repression of a free sexual voice plays such a central role in sustaining patriarchal modes of authority. And similarly, how and why the liberation of sexual voice from the patriarchal "Love Laws" (Arundhati Roy's term for the laws dictating "who should be loved. And how. And how much") is associated with a politics of ethical resistance. In locating the darkness we render visible in patriarchy, we elucidate the demands it makes on women and men, the ways in which it becomes rooted in the inner worlds of people through a psychology of loss and traumatic separation. This psychology plays a key part in sustaining not only patriarchy itself but also the associated ills of racism, anti-Semitism,

puritanism, homophobia, and a history littered, as Woolf reminds us in *Three Guineas*, with “dead bodies and ruined houses.” In retracing this history along with the evidence of a psychologically grounded ethical resistance, we ask you, the reader, Horatio’s question: “What is it you would see?”