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 [Impp. 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?"

Part One

Roman Patriarchy: Entering the Darkness

1 Why Rome? Why Now?

After the fall of the Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall, Fukuyama in a widely cited book claimed that history had come to an end, noting that the values of liberal constitutional democracy were widely embraced. This view now looks antique as we find ourselves, at home and abroad, confronted by violent forms of fundamentalism self-consciously at war with liberal norms and values. History never looked more appealing as a way to understand the challenges we face and why we face them. Among these challenges, which include economic inequality and global warming, two stand out as posing a puzzle that on the face of it strains credulity: the contentiousness over gay rights and abortion within U.S. politics and the focus on the state of Israel within international politics.

Starting from the normative position of political liberalism that requires respect for the basic liberties of conscience, speech, and association, we regard the right to an intimate, sexual life as a basic human right, now constitutionally protected in the United States and elsewhere. Yet in the United States, a reactionary coalition of religious fundamentalists has focused national elections on the sexually tinged issues of gay marriage and abortion. Why such fundamentalist rage at the constitutional recognition of basic rights and their reasonable elaboration?

Similarly, the state of Israel was founded as a consequence of European and American anti-Semitism. Why has anti-Semitism been such a lethal force in twentieth-century European politics? How can we understand its historical place within Christian civilization, and why does it today retain its deadliness in the form of fundamentalist acts of terror directed not only against Israel but also against its allies, including, prominently, Britain and the United States?

Following the terroristic acts of 9/11, the United States responded with a war in Iraq. What warped our judgment about the real threats of terror? How can we understand the readiness to compromise our republican

institutions as our leaders justify foreign policies in increasingly imperial terms?

A sense of urgency led us to the collaborative work that expresses itself in this book. What brought us together was our realization that the discipline of the other was necessary to understand our own work more deeply. The public world of constitutional law and development (the field of David Richards) required an understanding of issues in developmental psychology (the field of Carol Gilligan), and conversely, the findings of developmental psychology, in particular evidence of voices of resistance, could not be understood unless and until they were connected to the larger historical and normative world. In this sense, our collaborative and interdisciplinary work made possible insights that neither of us could have come to independently. Carol Gilligan's research in developmental psychology (leading to her book *The Birth of Pleasure*) identified the psychological roots of resistance in adolescent girls and young boys, a resistance grounded in the embodied psyche's immunity to disease and debilitating lies. David Richards had explored the American traditions of resistance to injustice and had come to see (in his book *Women, Gays, and the Constitution: The Grounds for Feminism and Gay Rights in Culture and Law*) the common roots in women and gay men of a resistance to the repression of basic rights for groups of persons, rationalized on the basis of unjust stereotypes they are never permitted fairly to contest. But until we met, discussed, and closely read one another's work, neither of us realized that the psychology Carol had observed might be the basis of the ethical and political resistance David had studied. It was, for us, nothing less than a stunning discovery to see the problem whole, as one of both psychology and politics or law.

This link is at the heart of what we believe we have discovered: the connection between a psychology rooted in the embodied psyche's resistance to disease or debilitating lies and a politics in which such resistance expresses itself in social movements that protest the lies and distortions on which is based the injustice we call moral slavery – the repression that underlies and sustains extreme intolerance.

In a pathbreaking book on relational psychology, *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, Jean Baker Miller observed that women "have been entwined with men in intimate and intense relationships, creating the milieu – the family – in which the human mind as we know it has been formed."[1] What brought us together in collaborative work was the further insight that what unites the crucible of the human mind in the family and public life is patriarchy, which enjoys the power it has had precisely because it has framed the human mind in a psychology at once personal and political. We have, as a woman and man, become creatively entwined, finding in our relationship a new way of understanding why egalitarian

relationships are, for women and men, so compelling and so valuable, thus enlarging our democratic vistas.

What is unusual, indeed radical, in our approach is the lens of gender through which we examine these issues. This lens enables us to transcend a feminism that limits its focus to women and to encompass, in one unifying perspective, the impact of patriarchy on men as well as women. Yet we make this argument in an environment quite unfavorable to any serious discussion of gender as it bears on the issues we discuss, an environment in which anything may be discussed but gender. We shall try to expose the defects of this common sense by showing the explanatory and normative power of a gender lens in bringing these issues into sharp focus. By our approach, we also aim to clarify the tensions within ourselves that give rise to all these questions, enabling us for this reason better to answer them responsibly. We argue very much in the critical historical spirit of recent studies of the changing nature of masculinity and war (Leo Braudy, 2003; Joshua Goldstein, 2001), but we focus on one tradition in particular, whose force has been notably important and persistent in the culture and transmission of patriarchy over time, namely, ancient Rome – its republic and empire.

Cullen Murphy has recently explored what he takes to be the contemporary American dilemma – between republic and empire – in a book whose title states its argument: *Are We Rome?: The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America* (2007). Although his earlier work shows an appreciation of feminist scholarship in biblical studies (Murphy, 1999), Murphy does not explore Roman historical experience or its impact in our terms of patriarchy. What is so alive for us today is less the fall of empire than the tension in Roman life between its republican and patriarchal features, together with the self-conscious strengthening of patriarchy in Augustus's ending of the republic and imposition of autocracy under the empire. We live, more than we think, in this Roman world. Americans inhabit a capital, Washington, D.C., whose columns and pediments are Roman. We live under a written constitution inspired, in part, by the Roman republic. Our loud parades celebrate our military greatness, as Roman parades did. With the fall of the Soviet Union we are the American empire, an imperial position that puts strains on our republican institutions. But we are also a democracy, much more so than the Roman republic ever was. And our convictions about universal human rights have led us to do something Rome never did, namely, to end slavery and to aspire to respect all religions and to treat people of color and women as democratic equals. We have come far but remain deeply flawed in our democracy, as basic rights of intimate life are in political peril, issues of racial and gender inequality persist, and economic inequality worsens.

We turn to Rome then as a way of uncovering the roots of our own tensions between democracy and patriarchy. It was patriarchy, we argue, that led to the collapse of the Roman republic. It was the structure of Roman patriarchy, which Augustine read into Christianity as the established church of the Roman empire, that influenced subsequent polities, many of which modeled their imperialism on Rome (both "czar" in Russian and "Kaiser" in German mean Caesar). When Mussolini and Hitler invented a political religion to sustain fascism, they drew self-consciously on the political psychology and religion of Rome, warring in its name on liberal democracy. The reemergence of this Roman precedent was catastrophic, leading to unprecedented genocide in the heart of civilized Europe and to violence on a scale beyond what even the Romans – the political masters of imperialistic war – could or would have imagined.

Even the otherwise enlightened founders of the American constitutional republic in 1787–88 modeled themselves rather uncritically on the Roman republic, blinding themselves to the degree to which their compromise with slavery and their treatment of women were inconsistent with the democratic values of universal human rights they also espoused. Their blindness also was catastrophic, as the constitutional compromise on slavery ended in civil war. Even today, Americans have interpreted the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in patriarchal terms – as an insult or humiliation to manhood and consequently one that called for violence to undo the shame. Thus the gender dynamic explicated by James Gilligan in *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic* (1997) and the gender mythology explored by Susan Faludi in *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America* (2007) can explain the irrationality of the invasion of Iraq.

In our view, democracy remains so much in tension with patriarchy because we lack a critical public understanding of this tension, in part because of the degree to which Roman patriarchy has been absorbed into our religion and political culture. Historical study enables us to unmask the dimensions of the problem, revealing both how our patriarchal assumptions blind us to its existence and how much these assumptions undermine and subvert the liberal democracy we claim to honor and uphold against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Strikingly, our historical interests in patriarchy were originally neither in Roman political history nor in Roman literature. Initially, we were riveted by the stark role of gender in the tragedies of ancient Greece, in particular, Aeschylus's trilogy, *The Oresteia*. *The Oresteia*, or story of Orestes, is a drama about justice, about civil justice replacing blood vengeance as the foundation for Athenian democracy and the birth of civilization. It witnesses the origin of the trial as a democratic means of resolving disputes. Yet underneath this civic story, a family story roils.