FLESH AND BLOOD: THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF PUBERTY FOR DAUGHTERS AND MOTHERS

by

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This dissertation is dedicated to the spirit of my father. Irv Winkler. who encouraged me. as his daughter. to identify with all the unruly power. humor. love of language. and passion for justice he felt in his heart. And to the memory of my elegant grandmother. Ruth Friedman Cooper. who always made me feel graceful and admired. even in my most awkward stages. I also dedicate this work.

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Now. let the feast begin!

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction
The Problem of Pubertal Embodiment, or How do I look?

I hear
as in a dream
the conversation of the old wives
speaking of womanhood.
I remember that I heard nothing myself.
I was alone.
I waited like a target.

from Anne Sexton (1966) "Little Girl, My Stringbean, My Lovely Woman"

Five photographs of girls are taped to the wall above my desk. I've assembled this private, makeshift, exhibit over the several years I've been writing my dissertation on early adolescent girls at puberty. Four of the photos are of pre-teens and teenagers--strangers, patients, and childhood friends; one is of my daughter, Sylvie, at a year-and-a-half. I often glance up at this gallery of girls as I write, hoping to discover the secrets of what Freud (1905) called the "transformations of puberty" for girls. The pictures work like touchstones, reminding me of what is at stake in this project of "think[ing] through the body" (as feminist poet Adrienne Rich (1976) and feminist literary critic Jane Gallop (1988) famously called it): girls grow into women in bodies that rarely seem to "fit" dominant and persistent cultural demands for femininity and heterosexuality, and the failure to fit emerges as exquisitely sensitive and troubling during puberty (post-modern, feminist, and queer valorizing of "multiplicity" and "resistance" notwithstanding). This anxious and persistent sense of failure—the inner conviction of being "less than"--functions, moreover, as a central mechanism of the psychological and social reproduction of women's subordination. Puberty is in many ways a unstable and contradictory time for girls-- the girl's body is at once subject and object, over-coded for femininity and

motherhood, sexualized and yet of uncertain sexual authority, "me" and "not-me" and hard to find oneself in—always out of place, never just right. This dissertation seeks to theorize the ways the physical changes of puberty are taken up by girls in their psychic lives, and to think about the ways the sexualization of the body, and the normative, heterosexualizing canalization of desire at puberty, function to confirm the girl as a girl—to ratify her gender and her sexuality. Such theoretical inquiry is necessary in order to help us answer this urgent practical question: how can we—clinicians, educators, scholars, mothers, girls once ourselves— help girls develop and sustain a sense of pleasure, agency and authority in their bodies that will carry them forward as healthy, confident, curious women?

The first photo above my desk is a full-page, black-and-white ad torn years ago from a magazine, featuring a very thin, young, (apparently) white woman posing in a clingy, shimmery, underwire bra-slip (maybe it's a size B-cup). Her body is angled away from the camera in a 3/4 view; her face is in shadow, her head down, gaze lowered (perhaps her eyes are closed). She might be sad, or maybe she's just daydreaming. Her back is swayed seductively, the sharp edge of her hip jutting forward, her arms wrapped behind her. In her hands, resting on her buttocks, she clasps a rolled-up copy of *Seventeen* magazine. Across the image, in a white box outlined in black, is the text: "Welcome to your fifteen-year-old body. Instructions to follow." *Instructions to follow*—a promise or a warning? *Seventeen* magazine is pitched to twelve and thirteen year old girls eager for instruction on how to make themselves into feminine, sexy teenagers and women like the ones they gaze at (with hope, excitement, anxiety, curiosity, shame) in the photos.

The next picture is a color Polaroid snapshot of a group of four twelve to seventeen-year-old African American and Latina girls in Central Park. I took this one several years ago, on an end-of-the-year outing for the "Girls to Women" club they were part of—a psychotherapeutic, sexual "risk-reduction" project I ran some years ago at a local mental health clinic. It was spring, I remember, and the girls had dressed up in nice outfits and shoes for brunch at a restaurant; afterward, we'd walked to the park and these four struck "fashion model" poses together, begging me to take their pictures. Looking at them now, fragments of their stories come into focus: E[1], the oldest at seventeen, was smart, poetic, obese; she told us proudly that her feet, like her mother's, were the sexiest part of her body. Her grandmother (who raised her) bought her two bras when she noticed her budding breasts, instructing her to wear each only once and then wash it out at night, so her undergarments would never appear soiled. N., voluptuous and flirty at twelve-and-a-half, spoke in a romantic, childlike voice of how beautiful she found her mother's long hair—though frustrated clinical observers saw a heroin-addicted, HIV-positive, woman with the disheveled and dirty hair of someone unable to care for self or children. N.'s first and favorite bra had pictures of Snoopy on it, she'd cheerfully reported. B., the youngest at almost twelve, darted warily down Broadway to group sessions at the clinic, fists gripped to her sides, wiry body wound tight, chin jutting forward as she noisily threatened to fight any boy who called her "Gumby" or "Pippi Longstockings." On Saturdays, she took ballet lessons with her sister and wrapped her dark, slender body into

[1] Names and initials of all individuals quoted and/or described in this dissertation have been changed.

a white leotard and pink tights. Fifteen-year-old P., observant, kind, funny, and obese, spent summers as a Fresh Air Fund kid with a family upstate. She never left their house without clean, pressed, clothes, while the suburban children went out careless of their sloppy appearance. The realization took her by surprise: *they* didn't have to worry about people thinking they were low-class Black girls.

Below this one I've taped a 5x8 photo of my bunk at sleepaway camp, a group of white, Jewish girls, taken when we were 12. We're a bunch of junior hippies-- long hair parted in the middle, slouchy, bell-bottom jeans, cut-off shorts, bandanas. You can identify the usual suspects among this gaggle of preteen girls: C., the "sexpot," with the biggest breasts and longest legs (and shortest shorts); L., all-smiles, the cutesy-girl; me, the serious modern dancer; A., the "spacy" one; T., awkward, and a little funny-looking; M., brazen and loud, flashing a peace sign; R, in a droopy hat, the artsy-photographer. Still a photographer and one of my closest friends more than thirty years later, R. discovered this print not long ago in an old box in her mother's attic. We remembered how a few of us had gathered in the attic bathroom of her house during the winter following camp, taking turns trying to figure out how to insert a tampon. Our mothers hadn't let us in on this female secret—we were on our own, the blind leading the blind (so to speak).

The fourth photo is a blurry, computer print of one of controversial photographer Sally Mann's portraits of her children, Jesse, "Age 11." It shows the girl from waist up, her torso naked and arms outstretched, the beginning of breast-buds showing under the skin of her nipples. Her body and face open to the camera, but her eyes gaze down and away, a trace of sadness in her expression; her thoughts seem somehow elsewhere.

Encircling her neck like a collar is what looks to be a mass of seaweed, and standing there before an out-of-focus background of water edged by a dark building, she suggests a pre-adolescent mermaid emerging from the town river. Mann has received excoriating criticism as a mother for allegedly eroticizing her kids in photos and inviting viewers to take perverse, voyeuristic pleasure in their young bodies. This was one of many photos on a Sally Mann website (http://www.sallymann.org) I searched to find an *Aperture* magazine interview (Harris, 2001) of Mann's daughter Jesse at eighteen, in which she looks back on the intimacy and intensity (and notoriety) of being photographic subject for the mother she experienced as unable to show loving, physical affection, except through the pictures taken.

The most recent addition to this gallery is a snapshot I took last year of my then 1-1/2 year old daughter in our living room. She's playing around with her round, orange, plastic make-believe spectacles, mugging for my disposable camera. She's looking directly at me with an expression of comical, knowing, delight, and her flowered "onesie" undershirt is unsnapped at the crotch and drooping almost to her knees. In her glasses, she looks for all the world like a cross between Harriet the Spy and Harry Potter, toddler-sized. *Oh, little girl,/my stringbean,/how do you grow?/You grow this way./ You are too many to eat* (Sexton,1981, p.146).

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The looking and being looked-at-ness that characterizes the scene of my writing serves as an organizing metaphor for my project: *how do I look?* Puberty, the subject of my dissertation, dramatically transforms the appearance of girls' bodies, and as it does, psyche and culture invest girls' changing bodies with a new set of sexualized, gendered

meanings. The pubertal girl wonders (often obsessively), "how do I look?" as she tries to take hold of her own image while becoming aware of being looked at differently (all the time, in fact). How do I (we) look at her, I wonder, and how does the gaze (the culture's, males', and, most significantly for this dissertation, her mother's) affect her sense of her body, her self-representation as a female? This dissertation locates puberty as a critical phase in "female becoming," and examines how girls come to consciously and unconsciously negotiate the (always already mediated) internal experience of physical and psychic change in relation to the public and private fantasies, practices, and expectations that cohere to produce femininity and heterosexuality as the normative outcome of puberty for girls.

On the cusp of adolescence, many of the identifications and desires that comprise gender and sexuality are unstable and in flux, and adult femininity and heterosexuality are still just out of reach. Mothers are primary spectators, instructors, and interpreters of their daughters' bodies at this time, and I focus on the mother-daughter relationship as a crucible for producing girls' embodied consciousness, as well as their unconscious fantasies of the body. I consider the shifts in the libidinal economy of the daughter-mother relationship, exploring how identification, loss, desire, renunciation, and recognition circulate between the two. I hope to turn our attention to something that has been neglected in the psychoanalytic literature: the erotic dimension of the daughter-mother relationship in pre- and early adolescence and at puberty, and the ways daughters and mothers reciprocally respond to the girl's developing body. By "erotic" I mean to describe the physical love and sensual attraction between daughter and mother, expressed through gaze, touch, and voice, and the multitude of feelings and fantasies that infuse

their embodied relationship. These feelings may be tender, romantic, passionate, sensual, arousing or playful, but they are also given form by aggression, sadism, destructiveness (cf. Wrye & Welles, 1994; and Oxenhandler, 2001).

I locate the mother's gaze as a crucial mediator and regulator of girls' experience of their bodies, and argue that psychoanalysis, with its traditional intrapsychic interpretation of the pubertal girl's regressive longing for her pre-Oedipal mother's physical care, has itself mis-recognized a significant intersubjective dynamic: the girl's bid for, and need for, her mother's erotic recognition and confirmation. Further, I propose that puberty may precipitate a homoerotic crisis between daughters and mothers that has not been adequately theorized within psychoanalysis, though it profoundly shapes girls' development. I suggest that puberty for girls is not simply a final repository for the girl's regressive, pre-oedipal wishes for symbiosis, or a way-station to pass through quickly along the final path of separation and autonomy, but a potential space for disrupting and reworking the norms of gender and sexuality via recognizing and revaluing the embodied relationship between daughter and mother. Within a society that organizes women's identity around compulsory heterosexuality, reproduction, and femininity, mothers are (consciously and unconsciously) compelled to police their daughters' identities and bodies at puberty. This dissertation proposes that recuperating in theory and clinical practice the pubertal daughter's tie to her mother's body and her need for her mother's erotic recognition, and representing the erotic valence of their attachment as a substrate of female subjectivity, calls for rethinking the role of maternal subjectivity in shaping girls' desire and agency, and listening (and reading) anew for embodied narratives of girls' development.

In making the argument that the girl's shifting experience of/with/in her body at puberty is a fulcrum of girls' and women's psychological development, I return to my roots in the U.S. feminist movement of the 1970's, when the Boston Women's Healthbook Collective authored Our Bodies, Ourselves (Boston Women's Healthbook Collective, 1971), announcing a slogan that crystalized the movement's effort to locate women's sexual authority, pleasure and power in the knowledge and control of their own bodies. Changing Bodies, Changing Lives (Bell, 1988), extended the lessons of that canonical text and guidebook to an audience of adolescents coming-of-age at the end of the 20th century, and formulated in popular terms the central question of my dissertation: how does the sexualization of girls' bodies at puberty change the shape of their psychic and social lives?

Working with adolescent girls and young women in the 1980's and 1990's, at first as a sexuality educator, and later as a nurse, psychotherapist, and college teacher, thinking about the body seemed unavoidable. I found that girls and women in the clinic, the consulting room and the college classroom, as well as in fiction, memoir, and film, tell rich stories of their growing bodies. They struggle in both wonder and pain to understand and express the ways breasts, periods, pubic hair, hips impact their relational worlds and sense of self. A 16 year old African American girl I worked with in group psychotherapy for depression recalls that during puberty, "I couldn't concentrate in class because I would sit and imagine I could actually *feel* my pubic hair growing!" A female Pakistani college student writes that puberty was "like growing taller, but different." Annie John, the eponymous heroine of Jamaica Kincaid's (1983) story of a West Indian girlhood, looked in the mirror at age twelve and "wondered about that strange girl" with

"small tufts of hair growing under [her] arms"; she links the strangeness of her unfamiliar body to her mother's abrupt and incomprehensible change from the tender mother of her childhood to a distant, stern, other. Girls speak of being tomboys, of crushes on other girls (even if they don't name them as such), of "tingly" feelings around boys, of being looked at differently and constantly. They talk about shame, guilt, and loss, as well as pleasure. They struggle with their likeness and unlikeness to their mothers. They find ways to use their bodies to protest or transgress, through obesity and anorexia, or dressing "like a boy," or even by talking their way out of class because of "being on the rag." The stories girls tell, and the stories told about them in the culture, are steeped in fantasies about what their bodies can do and be for themselves and for others. Importantly, these fantasies are constructed in relation to class and race. In the era of AIDS, girls bodies may also be imbued with fantasies that join sexuality with death and destruction.

This is a different story than that told in popular mythology where girls go "boy crazy" with a rush of hormones at puberty; it traces erotic desires as they are stirred up in the brew of culture, family, fantasy, and history, and saturated with meaning as pleasurable, dangerous, exciting, or shameful. From an intellectual and theoretical point of view, puberty presents a crucial though under-appreciated "moment" for examining the production and transformations of gender and sexuality. A developmental phase assumed to confirm and secure the "natural" cohesion and coherence of gender, sexuality, and object choice, puberty is, on closer inspection, anything but. Clinically, psychoanalysts have long recognized that puberty is a complex and difficult transition for girls (Breuer & Freud, 1895/1965; Deutsch, 1944 ; Kaplan, 1984). From a public health perspective, a few leading researchers have begun to ask how the experiences of puberty

lay the foundation for girls' sexual exploration and sexual relationships, and, in particular, their vulnerability to sexual risk-taking (see Brooks-Gunn and Furstenberg, 1990). If puberty, as Beauvoir (1949/1953) contended, is central to the production of femininity and the alienation of female subjectivity, and remains a time when so much goes wrong for girls, then feminists from diverse fields need to take up the interdisciplinary challenge of reading and listening for narratives of puberty, in order to re-theorize what Freud (1905/1962) called "the transformations of puberty." My dissertation proposes that we need to join together the intellectual project of "thinking through the body" about gender and sexuality, with the clinical and educational projects of authorizing girls to *speak* about their bodies, if we are to invent new ways to intervene in the classroom, clinic, community, and culture to help girls develop sexually and psychologically healthy selves.

How can clinicians and educators authorize adolescent girls to explore the feelings and meanings of their changing bodies? Can we imagine an embodied discourse that challenges prevailing systems of power that position girls as subordinate beings in a gender hierarchy? What are the lineaments of an erotic education for girls? Mary S. Calderone chose the term "education *for* sexuality" (emphasis added) to describe the project of learning to be a healthy sexual person (Calderone, 1982). Sharon Thompson, in her 1990 article boldly entitled "Putting a Big Thing In a Little Hole: Teenage Girls' Accounts of Sexual Initiation," proposed that girls need to learn to recognize themselves as desiring, sexual subjects through a curriculum that emphasizes storytelling and the psychological context of sexuality (Thompson, 1990). The gendered materiality and metaphors of puberty -- the construction of pubertal body image and desire, the meanings of a broad array of sexual feelings and relationships, and the ways feelings in the body

come to be recognized, symbolized, and mediated by culture -- must be explored if we are to develop effective strategies to promote girls' sexual authority and reduce unsafe sexual behaviors; developing such strategies also requires understanding the reproduction of compulsory, normative femininity and heterosexuality in the context of puberty.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Contemporary feminist developmental accounts of girls at early adolescence

This review takes as its starting point the observation, made by clinicians, researchers, educators and theorists throughout the twentieth century, that girls appear to lose confidence in early adolescence. In their landmark 1990 report, *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America*, the American Association of University Women found a staggering gender gap in self-esteem among adolescents, with girls suffering from a dramatic loss of confidence in themselves, their abilities, and their bodies as they pass from childhood to adolescence (cited in Orenstein, 1994). Anne Petersen, a leading researcher on adolescence, reported in 1988 on her review of empirical studies of adolescent girls that indicated girls are far more likely than boys to experience a range of psychological problems at adolescence, including depression, eating disorders, declines in feelings of self-worth, suicidal ideation and gestures, self-mutilation, and body image disturbances (Petersen, 1988). Carol Gilligan (1990) writes that "[a]dolescence seems to be a watershed in female development, a time when girls are in danger of drowning or disappearing" (p. 10). Mary Pipher, whose *Reviving Ophelia* (1994) remained on the New York Times Paperback Bestsellers List for a stunning 143 weeks, describes adolescence as a time of chaos and fragmentation, during which girls "crash and burn in a social and developmental Bermuda Triangle" (p.19). During the 1990's, such metaphors

resonated for many adult women and became practically axiomatic in popular psychological and educational discourse about adolescent girls' development. The accessible style and straightforward feminist insights of these authors helped mobilize a populist project of "fostering girls' healthy resistance" (Gilligan, 1991) to the damaging psychological effects of growing up female.

In a series of studies conducted primarily with white, middle class girls at private schools, Gilligan and her colleagues at the Harvard Project on the Psychology of Women and Girls' Development (hereafter refered to as the Harvard Project) set out to challenge the traditional story of psychological development which plots a normative move from dependency to separation and autonomy, insisting instead on a crisis of connection (starting at around age eleven or twelve) that finds adolescent girls choosing between relationship and self, between being "good" and being "selfish." The difficulty for girls, they argue, is not how to separate but how to stay connected. Girls' efforts to sustain relationships often result in silencing the "authentic" self to avoid conflict and rupture. A further study, *Between Voice and Silence* (Taylor et al., 1995), attempted to respond to criticisms of their previous work for class and race biases, and contended that for poor and working class African American girls, problems of connection and authenticity may be resolved not in silence but in favor of devastating psychological isolation. The researchers conclude that regardless of race or class, girls are faced with a devil's bargain: on either side -- self or relationship -- they lose authenticity and agency.

Why is it so difficult for girls to sustain "healthy" connections at this developmental moment? Why are white girls so willing to silence themselves, and black girls to abjure close relationships? Gilligan et al. attribute girls' relational crisis to an

encounter with patriarchal culture that confronts them with the rules, values and prescriptions for femininity and womanhood; they suggest that differences in voice and silence reflect different strategies girls adopt as they learn the social and cultural ideals and opportunities that define their role as as women. This model of social learning fails to articulate how cultural demands are internalized and sustained intrapsychically or intersubjectively, how culture becomes the stuff of psyche. What produces girls' different investments in "self" and "relationship"? What aspects of experience, knowledge, and voice must be split off? To maintain which sorts of relationships? Why does the girl do it? How does she mourn her losses? And what of the pleasures of separation-individuation, of the new kinds of mutuality made possible by awareness of the distinctness of self and other? Or the material and emotional imperatives of survival for girls living with race and class oppression? What defines "healthy" connection?

Gilligan's efforts to revalue connection in the face of developmental discourse that normalizes autonomy ("growing out of relationships") reverses ground and background without accounting for the unavoidable experience of difference (including what Eigen [1993], following Winnicott [1971], calls the "joyous shock of difference" [quoted in Gerhardt et al., 2000, p.12]) or the need for (or difficulty of) mutual recognition between subjects. This model subsumes differentiation, practicing, rapprochement — the entire developmental line of separation-individuation — under a rubric of growing out of relationship, and contrasts this alienating process to the desire for attachment (connection). While these are two somewhat distinct areas of psychoanalytic theory -- separation-individuation (Mahler, Pine, and Bergmann, 1975) and attachment (Bowlby, 1971) -- they are by no means mutually exclusive (Benjamin, 1988a). Moreover, Gilligan

treats caring for relationships as an attribute of girls, rather than a quality emergent in relationships. It must be recognized that the girl's development (like the infant's) does not just privilege all relatedness, but particular kinds and qualities of relationships with specific people (particularly mothers and fathers).

One of the most striking aspects of girls' experience as they enter adolescence is the physical transformation of puberty; the failure to articulate how this aspect of development affects self and relationship is a stunning absence in Gilligan's work. Girls' bodies remain absent, invisible, in these accounts. The failure to look at, to respond to, the girls' changing bodies suggests an ambivalent incorporation of the taboo that renders girls' embodied experiences invisible even as it invests their bodies with new sexual meanings.

Two members of Gilligan's Harvard Project, Deborah Tolman and Elizabeth Debold, have tried to address the absence in the group's previous writings of girl's embodied experience. Tolman (1994) interviews girls about sexual desire, choosing an older group and omitting the 11-14 year olds included in earlier studies. Tolman proposes that the 'discourse of desire' between girls and the culture reflects the dilemma of having a desiring body that is unspeakable because girls are "not supposed to feel this way" (p.251). She attempts to rescue girls from psychological discourses that interpret their desire as exclusively romantic or relational by documenting their descriptions of "physical longing." Tolman's work is an important corrective to previous studies, yet her presentation of desire as an unconstructed, transparent category of phenomenological experience, apparently unmediated by the interplay of complex cultural and unconscious, psychic meanings, limits the usefulness of her work. Where does girls' desire come from? And what/who is it that she desires? How do girls' physical sensations come to be

represented or representable? How does the girl cathect her sexualized body at puberty? Tolman's own categorization of puberty as a "de-sexualized aspect[s] of 'sexual' development" (Tolman, 1994, p.251) in her analysis of discourses in the developmental psychology literature undermines the project of representing girls' embodied experience by reproducing reductive notions of physical desire and sexuality.

Debold (1991), in her essay "The Body at Play," offers evocative personal narrative interwoven with critical analysis on the theme of adolescent girls' body conflicts. Discovering this essay late in my research, I did not have the benefit of reading Debold's insightful reflections prior to undertaking my own writing. However, it is striking that Debold briefly points to several questions and conclusions similar to those I've raised concerning the difficulties girls face as their bodies change, and the problem of the mother's response to the daughter's sexual development. Yet equally striking is the fact that her thoughts on the girl's pubertal body development, and its impact on the relations of mothers to daughters, has remained a seemingly isolated exception to the general rule of "missing bodies" in Gilligan's work, and has never become integrated into Gilligan's approach to girls. Unfortunately, Debold's writing also does not move beyond the impressionistic, and she does not question or explore the questions of girls' embodiment, or mother-daughter conflicts over the body, more deeply or theoretically.

In this dissertation, I will show how Gilligan and her colleagues in the Harvard Project have under-theorized the problems of gender and sexuality for adolescent girls. The lack of a clinical, psychoanalytic perspective from which to develop and analyze interviews has led to significant impasses in theorizing dynamic motivations for the shifts in psychological well-being, as well as the paradoxes of desire, noticed by these

developmental researchers. Mother-daughter erotic love and Oedipal triangles, gendered and cross-gendered identifications, homoerotic friendship and shifting desires, shame, envy and rage are elided within a discourse that privileges the conscious elements of mental life over the unconscious, the rational and moral dimensions of girls' relational conflicts over fantasy. Dilemmas of relationships and of symbolizing desire are intertwined with cultural and self-representations of girls' bodies as they grow from childhood through puberty and come to signify sexually (and be represented intrapsychically and intersubjectively), and are densely knotted with class and race. Excising psychoanalytic theories of separation-individuation (Mahler, Pine, Bergmann, 1975) and attachment (Bowlby, 1971), that place the early parent-child relationship as central to development throughout life, and occluding the psychoanalytic account of gender and sexuality, as well as persistently omitting references to feminist psychoanalysts who have worked to trace female development (Chodorow, 1978,1989; Benjamin, 1988, 1995; Goldner, 1991; Dimen, 1991; Harris, 1991; Dinnersteirn, 1976; Flax, 1985), the Harvard Project drastically limits the explanatory power of its feminist narrative.

Like the fairy tale, *The Little Mermaid* (cf. Warner, 1994), this story tells of the girl's giving up her voice in order to become a woman and sustain love. What the researchers *don't* tell is that the story turns on the Little Mermaid's excruciatingly painful acquisition of a woman's body. In Hans Christian Anderson's telling, the Sea Witch offers an evil bargain: to help the Little Mermaid take a human-woman's form and win the prince, she will cut out the mermaid's tongue and silence her lovely voice. Then the Little Mermaid's

"tail will part and shrink into what humans call nice legs but it will hurt just as if a sharp sword were passing through you...every step you take will be like treading on a knife sharp enough to cause your blood to flow" (quoted in Warner, 1994, p. 398).

Girls at puberty: psychoanalytic theory

I would like now to turn to psychoanalytic theory for an account of this same period that centers attention on the body. After a brief introduction to psychoanalytic views of pubertal development in general, I will outline those writings which describe the girl's development of femininity and (hetero) sexuality. These writings advance the propositions that: 1. the difficulties of girls entering adolescence may be traced to the transformations of puberty; 2. the physical changes of puberty reinvigorate the girl's pre-Oedipal longings for her mother's physical care, and require that these be renounced in order that her femininity can be confirmed via a heterosexual identification with her mother; 3. bisexuality and cross-gendered self-representations hold sway until puberty when object choice "normally" and optimally becomes heterosexual and gender for girls is "fixed" as feminine.

Puberty, in these psychoanalytic writings, is a sexual event *par excellence*, a pivotal organizer of psychic life and identity. Freud (1905/1962) saw puberty as a critical juncture where separate instincts and zones -- oral, anal, and genital eroticism, voyeurism, sadism, aggression -- decisively converge en route to adult heterosexuality. "With the arrival of puberty," he writes in Three Essays on Sexuality, "changes set in which are destined to give infantile sexual life its final, normal shape" (1905/1962, p.73). Ernest Jones (1922) asserted "that adolescence recapitulates infancy, and that the precise way in which a given person will pass through the necessary stages of development in

adolescence is to a very great extent determined by the form of his infantile development" (p.399). According to Anna Freud (1966), "Before the publication of the 'Three Essays,' adolescence had derived major significance from its role as the beginning of sex life in the individual; after the discovery of an infantile sex life, the status of adolescence was reduced to that of a period of final transformation, a transition or bridge between the diffuse infantile and the genitally-centered adult sexuality" (p.256).

Psychoanalysts have long noted the reinvigoration at puberty of childhood conflicts, excitements, and longings, invoking ideas of a regressive pull to the preoedipal (Klein,1932; Blos, 1962; Freud, 1966), a reawakening of Oedipal dilemmas (Laufer and Laufer, 1984), and a second period of separation-individuation (A. Freud,1966; Kaplan, 1984; Blos, 1962); these are all analyzed in the service of a theory of biphasic sexual development that sees in puberty analogues of infant and childhood development. Anna Freud (1966) considered adolescence to be a time when new psychic defenses were called into being by the upsurge of the biological drives which threatened the adolescent ego with archaic, primitive anxiety, as well as incestuous fantasies that must be warded off. Erikson (1950) refered to puberty as a "normative crisis" marked by discontinuity in development. In his view, the task of this period is the integration of body changes and feelings-- the sexed morphology of the body-- into a stable identity as part of the self. Laufer and Laufer (1984) propose that during adolescence, the individual must integrate his or her "pre-pubertal idealized body image" into a final sexual body image. "The inner perceptions of the physical changes at puberty are experienced by all adolescents as containing a potential threat to maintaining this idealized body image:" puberty may represent a loss and even a trauma (Laufer, 1991, p. 63-71). Winnicott (1986) writes that

"If, in the fantasy of early growth, there is contained death, then at adolescence there is contained murder...growing up means taking the parent's place. It really does. In the unconscious fantasy, growing up is inherently an aggressive act. And the child is now no longer child sized" (p.158). In exploring the libidinal and aggressive elements of development in early adolescence, as well shifts in ego function, these authors offer an embodied account of psychic development that begins to "flesh out" the problem of adolescence for girls.

"Girl trouble" and the transformations of puberty

Writing in the first half of the twentieth century, early psychoanalysts noted that girls entering adolescence exhibited particular difficulties. Breuer, co-author with Freud of *Studies on Hysteria*, (1895/1965) wrote that,

> Adolescents who are later to become hysterical are for the most part lively, gifted, and full of intellectual interests before they fall ill. Their energy of will is often remarkable. They include girls who get out of bed at night so as secretly to carry out some study that their parents have forbidden for fear of their overworking...it is rare to find in them simple, dull intellectual inertia or stupidity (p240).

Helene Deutsch actually begins her two-volume study of *The Psychology of Women: Girlhood* (1944) with girls of ten or eleven, writing that "[w]e all assume, as does Freud, that the young girl's development into womanhood is inaugurated by a sudden increase of passivity" (p5). Clara Thompson (1942) noted that for boys, adolescence was a period of opening up, whereas for girls it provoked a shutting down. In analyzing adult women, Karen Horney (1973) concluded that neurotic difficulties or

character disturbances could frequently be traced back to adolescence when the first signs of pathology were viewed as transient, natural troubles.

These early analysts clearly linked their theories of female psychological development to the "transformations of puberty" and unlike Gilligan and her colleagues, or most contemporary feminist psychoanalysts (as we shall see), they placed girls' pubertal bodies center-stage as they theorized femininity. We might go so far as to argue, in fact, that Freud's and Breuer's hysterical adolescent girls pointed the way to the discovery of the unconscious through their pubertal bodies.[2] The girls' repression of their awareness of sexuality, and its symbolic emergence in hysterical symptoms, became, of course, foundational in the development of psychoanalytic theory and method. Psychoanalysis supplies a theory of the unconscious that insists on a reading of "girl trouble" as founded on bodily experiences, identifications, desires, conflicts, and fantasies that are the very condition of mental life. Freud and Breuer's theory of hysteria contains the radical idea that the psychical conflicts these adolescent girls expressed symbolically in somatic symptoms could be interpreted as rooted in difficulties resolving the psychical and cultural dilemmas of femininity at puberty.

It is worth quoting Breuer (1895/1965) at length. Breuer found in the increased "excitements" of puberty the conditions for hysteria:

> We so often find adolescents who had previously been healthy, though excitable, falling ill of hysteria during pubertal development, that we must ask ourselves

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[2] The average age of menarche has decreased steadily over the twentieth century, from 18 to 20 years of age to 12 to 13 years. Potts, D. Malcolm, "Adolescence and Puberty: An Overview," in *Adolescence and Puberty* , ed. Bancroft, J. and Reinisch, J.M.R. (1990) New York: Oxford University Press, p. 269.

whether that process may not create the disposition to hysteria where it was not present innately. And in any case we must attribute more to it than a simple raising of the quantity of excitation. Sexual maturation impinges on the whole nervous system, increasing excitability and reducing resistances everywhere. We are taught this from adolescents who are not hysterical and we are thus justified in believing that sexual maturation also establishes the hysterical disposition in so far as it consists precisely in this characteristic of the nervous system. In saying this we are already recognizing sexuality as one of the major components of hysteria...the most numerous and important of the ideas that are fended off and converted have a sexual content. They are at the bottom of a great deal of the hysteria of puberty. Girls who are approaching maturity - and it is they who are chiefly concerned - behave very differently towards the sexual ideas and feelings which crowd in on them. Some girls meet them with complete unembarrassment, among whom a few ignore and overlook the whole subject. Others accept them like boys, and this is no doubt the rule with peasant and working class girls. Others again, with more or less perverse curiosity, run after anything they can get hold of in talk or books. And lastly there are natures of a refined organization who, though their sexual excitability is great, have an equally great moral purity and who feel that anything sexual is something incompatible with their ethical standards, something dirtying and smirching. They repress sexuality from their consciousness, and the affective ideas with a content of this kind which have caused the somatic phenomena are fended off and thus become unconscious... The girl senses in Eros the terrible power which governs and decides her destiny and

she is frightened by it. All the greater, then, is her inclination to look away and to repress from her consciousness the thing that frightens her (p.244-6).

The "thing that frightens her"-- her sexuality -- does so because of its power to determine her fate and future as a woman. The hysterical girl refuses what she fears. It is "the affective ideas" and social meanings of femininity associated with bodily feelings of sexual excitement that she construes as dangerous to her situation. It is important to note here that from these very first studies of hysteria, Breuer and Freud connected girls' interpretations of their bodies, sexuality and femininity to their class positions—an insight that has been lost in so much subsequent psychoanalytic theorizing.

The girl's body-self: from clitoris to vagina, active to passive, menarche to masochism

Freud understood the body ego as foundational in human experience. With his oft quoted line, "The ego is first and foremost a body-ego", Freud (1923/1960) demands that we consider how the organization of sensation, shape, touch, position, hunger, sucking, gaze --all the multitude of the newborn's sensory experiences-- structures the ego and establishes an incipient sense of self. The parents' erotic attention to the child's body provides the earliest link of self with other. According to Freud (1905/1962), the child's sexual feelings emerge in the interplay between internal instincts and drives, and the mother's physical care: "the person in charge of him, who, after all, is as a rule his mother, regards him with feelings that are derived from her own sexual life: she strokes him, kisses him, rocks him and quite clearly treats him as a substitute for a complete sexual object" (p.89). (While Freud uses the male pronoun here, he was generalizing this observation to both sexes). Schilder's influential work on body image (1950) derives from Freud's original insight: the body image is built up over time, in large part through

the interaction between self and other, inner experience and the external world. Fundamental to this body history is the interest others take in the body and its parts.

The relationship of body to self, of biological substrate to unconscious fantasy, and of the female anatomy to female psychology, have long occupied psychoanalytic writers and clinicians. How does the girl's new pubertal body become recognizable, intelligible, and representable for her? For the early psychoanalysts, much hinged on the idea of the undiscovered, unknowable vagina of childhood. Clitoral primacy was equated with phallic activity in little girls, which was repressed with the advent of vaginal sensation and receptivity, i.e. passivity, at puberty. This parallelism, which assumed penis envy as the inevitable outcome of the girl's comparing her tiny, inadequate clitoris with the boy's glorious, substantial organ, set up the theoretical move from activity (masculinity) to passivity (femininity). According to Freud (1905/1962), little boys and little girls are both "masculine" (read: active) prior to puberty, when the "normal" girl changes erotogenic zone from clitoris to vagina.

Freud famously wrote:

> If we are to understand how a little girl turns into a woman, we must follow the further vicissitudes of this excitability of the clitoris. Puberty, which brings about so great an accession of libido in boys, is marked in girls by a fresh wave of repression, in which it is precisely clitoridal sexuality that is affected. What is thus overtaken by repression is a piece of masculine sexuality...The fact that women change their leading erotogenic zone in this way, together with the wave of repression at puberty, which, as it were, puts aside their childish masculinity, are the chief determinants of the greater proneness of women to neurosis and

especially to hysteria. These determinants, therefore, are intimately related to the essence of femininity (1905/1962, p.86-87).

At puberty, it is the primacy of the genital zone and the child's bodily cathexis of the genitals that gives infantile sexuality its final, fixed, and bifurcated form. Girls repress their active sexuality as they exchange clitoris for vagina as the cathected body-part, installing both passivity and the resistance to it (via hysteria and neurosis) at the very center of femininity, according to Freud.

Menstruation, a signal event of female development, has received relatively little theoretical attention over the years from psychoanalytic writers (Lupton, 1993). Most who have addressed menstruation see it in one way or another as traumatic for the girl. In "Manifestations of the Female Castration Complex" (1920/1971), Karl Abraham contends that first menstruation "reanimates" the idea of the wound, and that each subsequent menstruation "reinforces the castration complex in women" (p.347).

Deutsch (1944) contends that menstruation, in concert with the female castration complex, contributes to women's "natural" masochism. According to Deutsch, menarche confirms for the girl the existence of her womb, and during puberty, "each menstruation signifies the promise and the loss of a child" (p. 459). She concludes that menarche is "usually experienced as a trauma" by the girl, and stimulates morbid interest in the interior of her own body (p. 157). "In the anxieties provoked by the sight or imagined presence of blood, the idea of being torn and dismembered internally plays an extremely important part" (p. 150). Melanie Klein echoes Deutsch's observations: "My own data fully bears out Helene Deutsch's view that the disappointments and shocks to her narcissism which the girl receives when she begins to menstruate are very great"

(quoted in Lupton, p.173). In *The Psycho-analysis of Children* (1932). Klein postulates that menstrual blood is linked in fantasy to feces and urine, loss of a wished-for child, and castration. Menstrual bleeding evokes a primitive sense of internal damage, inflicted as revenge for the girl's own sadistic impulses by the introjected pre-Oedipal mother of early infancy.

Karen Horney (1973) disputed Freud's idea that the vagina remained undiscovered until puberty and argued that the vagina and clitoris both play a part in infantile genital organization. She questioned the concept of a phallic phase that boys and girls alike pass through, and she rejected the idea of penis envy as primary in girls' development. The fact of not being able to visualize the vagina "plays a considerable part in feminine mental life and [that it] contributes to the peculiar inner uncertainty so often met with in women" (p. 66). Horney proposes that the vagina is discovered by the little girl, but then denied due to her anxiety about the insides of her body and her mother's body, and about intercourse with the father. With puberty and menarche, this denial is undone; bleeding arrives as undeniable proof of the existence of interior sexual organs.

Horney takes issue with Freud and Deutsch, among others, who contend that feminine masochism is one of the psychic consequences of anatomical sex differences. She allows, however, that biological events like menstruation may be recruited to masochism in the context of particular social organizations or "cultural complexes." The onset of menstruation, for example, may be taken by the girl as evidence of damage to her body, confirming her sense of guilt over masculine strivings, rivalry with her mother, and/or masturbatory fantasies.

Along with Horney, Clara M. Thompson (1942) insisted that the reality of social constraints on women's freedom be considered in theorizing their psycho-somatic development. Thompson recounts the clinical narratives of several female adolescent patients for whom menarche brought about a restriction of activity and aggression. For Thompson, these pubertal narratives demonstrate that cultural signification and real prohibition play a central role in girls' difficulties with menstruation. One girl "was filled with bitterness and envy of her brother and for several reasons centered her whole resentment on the fact of menstruation. This seemed to be the sign of her disgrace, the sign that she had no right to be a person" (p. 234-5). Another refused the sanitary napkins provided by her mother because she felt humiliated, "like a baby with a diaper" (p. 72). Menarche here may also be tied to earlier conflicts around control of the girl's body by the caregiving mother of childhood.

Judith Kestenberg (1964) has contended that menarche is a major organizer of female development and notes the occurence of "normal masochism" after menarche. She suggests that the predictability and periodicity of menstruation helps structure the girl's ego and lends sharpness to her thinking. Drawing on psychoanalytic case material, Moses Laufer (1968) postulates that for girls "menstruation brings about the collapse of identification with the phallic mother, and confirms the fact of being damaged" (p169). In Blos' account (1962), menarche comes to stand synechdochically for femininity, fixing the poles of masculine and feminine, and inaugurating both renunciation of maternal dependency and identification with the mother's reproductive capacity and role. If the mother's omnipotence underwrites the girl's sense of agency and power, what happens to

her sense of self with the "collapse of identification with the phallic mother," or with the prohibitions that bar her cross-gendered identification with her father?

The pubertal mother-daughter dyad

The significance of the mother-daughter dyad to female development has been primarily theorized for the preoedipal period (Klein, 1932; Fast, 1999; Benjamin, 1988; Flax, 1985; Elise, 2000). The relation of daughter to mother - both an external ("real") and internal ("phantasied") experience - during adolescence has occupied relatively limited psychoanalytic and psychological writing. I am proposing the term "the pubertal mother-daughter dyad" to begin to formulate the idea of the girl's mother at puberty: not "pre-Oedipal," not "phallic," but containing both these developmental moments and relationships, as well as pubertal identifications and conflicts.

Contemporary psychoanalyst K. Dahl (1995) suggests that at puberty, the "biologically-based upsurge in the drives creates an internal climate of excitement that mirrors the primitive excitement of the girl's relation to her mother during infancy and very early childhood" (p.191-2). Early anxieties and ambivalences may be reawakened at puberty, particularly those concerning the mother's omnimpotence, so evocatively articulated by Klein (1932) in her depiction of the child's fear, guilt, rivalry, and sadism toward her parents. In "Womanliness as a Masquerade," Joan Riviere (1929/1966) cites Melanie Klein's work on aggression in the early mother-infant relationship to underscore the destructive elements in the continuing fantasied interactions that structure the daughter's internal relationship to her mother. The mother "will execute the punishment that fits the crime - destroy the girl's body, her beauty, her children, her capacity for having children, mutilate her, devour her, torture her and kill her. In this appalling

predicament the girl's only safety lies in placating the mother and atoning for her crime. She must restore to the mother what she has stolen" (p. 217)

Surprisingly, the Kleinian analysis has not as yet been taken in the direction of the girl's pubertal relation to her mother. Specifically, given the centrality of "the breast" to Klein's theories of pre-Oedipal and Oedipal development, it is interesting to speculate on the impact of breast development during puberty in relation to the girl's guilt for her own symbolic aggression in "taking possession" of the breast, her persecutory anxiety and fear of retaliation by the mother, and her need to make reparation. Likewise, what of the mother's experience of the "incorporation" of her breasts by the daughter? Exploring the earliest, symbolic meanings of the female body, and how unconscious meanings circulate between mother and daughter during early adolescence, may be productive in our consideration of the dynamics at play in Gilligan's "good" girls who suppress "parts" of themselves to placate their mothers (and others).

Chodorow (1978) reviews early psychoanalytic texts by Deutsch and Balint on the relation between adolescent daughter and mother and concludes that ambivalence and guilt bind the two in much the same way that they were attached during the preoedipal period. Drawing on these authors, she writes that in prepuberty, "a daughter acts as if she is and feels herself unconsciously one with her mother " (p. 135). During puberty and early adolescence, she concludes, "a spiral of ambivalence leaves mother and daughter convinced that any separation between them will bring disaster to both" (p.135).

Although the pre-Oedipal erotic tie between mother and daughter has been theorized within both the psychoanalytic and feminist literature as a primary feature of women's development, few have examined the persistence and effects of this tie during

puberty. In fact, according to Elise (personal communication, 2003), the erotic valence of the tie in infancy and early childhood is most often subsumed within a notion of symbiosis. She contends that to the extent psychoanalytic thinkers discuss the girl's "regressive fantasies" about the mother during puberty, they are generally relying upon ideas about pre-Oedipal symbiotic merger rather than eroticism. The subject of the girl's erotic perception of her mother's body, and the mother's erotic perception of her daughter's body, might be said to have been largely repressed within psychoanalytic discourse. In her exploration of the mother's place in the daughter's representational world during adolescence, Dahl (1995) traces the ways pleasurable memories of bodily care by the mother may be transformed into homosexually charged threats of merger as well as retaliation. Blos (1962), too, focuses on the charged relation between daughter and mother prior to and during puberty, and concludes that for girls "the prolonged and painful severance from the mother constitutes the major task of this period (p.23)." What becomes of the girl's erotic investment in her mother? Does it remain unassimilable to heterosexuality? What is the fate of homosexual feelings that resist "normalizing"?

Cross-sexed identifications and bisexuality: femininity and heterosexuality as pubertal "resolution"

As early as Freud, psychoanalysts have struggled with the common observation of bisexual impulses and activities in their pubertal patients, which have been seen as derivitives of incestuous wishes. "At the same time as these plainly incestuous phantasies are overcome and repudiated," writes Freud (1905/1962), "one of the most significant, but also one of the most painful, psychical achievements of the pubertal period is detachment from parental authority" (p. 23). Laufer and Laufer (1984) write that "The

pre-pubertal wishes and fantasies were safe and acceptable before sexual maturity, but these same wishes and fantasies will from puberty onward carry a new incestuous meaning...The body, which until puberty was experienced as a passive carrier of needs and wishes, now becomes the active force in sexual and aggressive fantasy and behavior" (p.4).

According to the normative story, the "upsurge in the drives" at puberty that sends the girl tumbling back into the turbulent waters of the preoedipal maternal-child dyad precipitates a reorganization of gender and sexuality under the sway of the now-genitalized Oedipus complex. How is the girl's desire heterosexualized? Freud (1905/1962) remarked that "One of the tasks implicit in object choice is that it should find its way to the opposite sex. This, as we know, is not accomplished without a certain amount of fumbling. Often the first impulses after puberty go astray, though without any permanent harm resulting" (p.95). Freud goes on to declare that "not until the completion of development at the time of puberty does the polarity of sexuality coincide with male and female" (p.95).

Blos (1962) distinguishes puberty as the phase "when a sex-appropriate and ego syntonic identity is established" (p. 16) --after a struggle. Blos reminds us that the resolution of the Oedipus complex is never complete, never ideal, and that "there remain residues of positive and negative Oedipal strivings: that is to say, relics of feminine strivings in the boy, and the girl retains for a long time fantasies of a phallic nature" (p. 108) Blos emphasizes that the early adolescent bisexual position includes a bisexual body image, which he relates to narcissism (p. 162). It is only with puberty, he contends, that "the polarity of 'masculine' and 'feminine' receives its final and irreversible fixity" (p. 109) According to this view, femininity and heterosexuality become coextensive for girls at puberty.

Although Blos refers to "the biological events of puberty [that] push the problem of masculinity and femininity into a final position or compromise formation" (emphasis added) he doesn't really seem to think of this polarity as problematic. In fact, neither Blos nor other leading psychoanalytic theorists question the "ideal" resolution: post-genital polarity or complementarity with its rigid distinction between masculinity and femininity, sequestered in dichotomously-sexed bodies. These theorists present the task of accepting or acceding to femininity and heterosexuality as if the girl had no way out but the perverse. In these writings, puberty seems to be a time when the full "normalizing" force of culture and the family are brought to bear on the developing girl, amplifying internal pressures and reinvigorating childhood dilemmas. Yet if the psychic reorganization of puberty evokes earlier childhood conflicts, particularly around gender and sexuality (including the loss of omnipotence) then it also provides a moment where these may be reworked. Blos (1962) acknowledges that puberty offers the opportunity for new identifications and that these may cement gender problems or reorganize and unsettle them in a more adaptive direction. I will go further to suggest that puberty may trouble girls' heterosexual development and femininity itself, revealing the way both are constructed as "false-truths" (Goldner, 1991) that appear "natural," though they are not at first ego syntonic at all; their appearance of "real" coherence covers over a sense of split subjectivity, alienation and loss. Recognizing and reworking the conflicts made manifest at puberty offers the possibility of gender flexibility and sexual agency, rather than conformity to social and cultural demands for gender intensification, rigid polarities, and sexual objectification.

Recuperating puberty for the feminist critique of gender and sexuality

We may now restate our earlier psychoanalytic propositions in terms that gesture toward a feminist formulation of gender and sexuality for girls at puberty, which I will develop through the next four chapters: 1. puberty is a fulcrum in the development of normative femininity and heterosexuality, a phase in which cultural practices create an apparent cohesion between the body, gender, sex, and sexuality, and the girl's body becomes reduced to its gendered and sexual meanings; 2. the physical changes of puberty provoke a reorganization of the girl's embodied relation to her mother and a mutual repudiation of their homoerotic tie, and failure to recognize and represent this loss contributes to greater rigidity in the experiences of gender and sexuality; 3. cross-gendered identifications and homoeroticism, active dynamics for girls at puberty, may be sources of flexibility, creativity, and (healthy) resistance to oppressive norms, and contain the potential for undoing gender and sexual polarities.

In this dissertation, I will refer to the work of contemporary American feminist psychoanalysts (Benjamin, 1988; Elise, 2000 a, b ; Goldner, 1991; Bassin, 1997, 2000; Davies, 1994, 1998), and feminist and queer philosophers and social theorists (Beauvoir, 1952; Butler, 1990, 1993 ; Grosz, 1994; Young, 1990; Bordo, 1993) writing on gender, sexuality, and the body, and indicate how we may extend and apply their work on identification, object-love, recognition, homoeroticism, gender melancholy, and subjectivity, to the age of adolescence when the girl's body is dramatically (hetero) sexualized, the mother-daughter bond is significantly reinterpreted, and desire and identity are radically restructured. These writers throw into question aspects of both traditional, phallocentric notions of gender and contemporary American mainstream

psychoanalytic paradigms of gender identity that posit a unitary and coherent experience of gender as a mainstay of identity and a necessary developmental achievement, suggesting instead that gender is an ambiguous, shifting, complex, conflictual, and unstable category of experience. Although, with the exception of Beauvoir (whose *The Second Sex* (1949/1953) provides the framework for Chapter Two), most of these writers do not address girls' pubertal development, I suggest that their arguments can open up our thinking about what happens to girls as they approach adolescence, and that reading girls' pubertal bodies through the lenses these theories offer may deepen the feminist project of disrupting gender and sexual norms, and provide an essential guide for clinical practice with girls.

AN OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

I conceive of the chapters as critical essays -- exploratory, speculative, idiosyncratic -- and do not aim for the sort of comprehensive and systematic consideration of a delimited empirical problem represented by a circumscribed scientific study. Each chapter will draw broadly across texts and clinical data for representations and narratives of pubertal girls that raise questions and lift up critical issues for development. Reading across disciplines will suggest ways that current theoretical discussions concerning the categories of gender, sex, identity and the body can be applied to understand the sedimentation of these dimensions of lived experience and representation in the lives of pubertal girls. The stories of girls will likewise illuminate the tensions and absences of available theories. I will put theories and clinical data into movement with one another, as well as with novels, poems, memoirs, and popular films, to produce an account of the process of sexual embodiment for girls at puberty and to begin to generate what I call a

"poetics of puberty." In examining fictional narratives of novels and film, I will be particularly interested in the ways early experience, identifications and fantasies break through and interrupt the narrative in ways that suggest gaps and fissures in the coherent assumption of femininity and heterosexuality.

Chapter Two, "The Bloody Verdict: Simone de Beauvoir, Carol Gilligan, and the Pubertal Girl," offers a close reading of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949/1953) that brings to the fore Beauvoir's brilliantly visceral yet critically neglected analysis of "the crisis of puberty" in female development. Beauvoir details the contradictions between girls' lived experience of their pubertal body and the social, cultural, and psychological processes that alienate female subjectivity. Extending Beauvoir's arguments on alienation and female embodiment, I theorize that during puberty the reproduction of femininity (a feminine "Other") entails painful problems of self-recognition as the shadow-side of female pleasure and power in "being-looked-at-ness." My reading of the work of Carol Gilligan and her colleagues at The Harvard Project on the Psychology of Women and Girls' Development puts their notion of girls' "loss of voice" into tension with Beauvoir's insistent description and theorization of the embodied experience of pubertal transformation that is central to girls' loss of confidence and authenticity. I argue that the "crisis of connection" Gilligan et al. theorize must be understood as, in large measure, a relational crisis posed by the girl's pubertal body — a body-in-relation.

Chapter Three, "'A little bit queer': The Pubertal Daughter's Shifting Representation of Self and Mother," takes up the themes of female embodiment, alienation, and recognition within the context of the daughter-mother relationship.

I propose that the embodied relationship between daughters and mothers is transfigured and significantly reinterpreted as girls approach puberty, contributing to an unnamed, unrecognized, and unconscious sense of loss. Constructing and integrating the new and unfamiliar pubertal body image into one's self-representation, along with the capacity for self-recognition, relies (in significant measure) on the intersubjective communication of both unconscious and conscious fantasy and desire between daughter and mother. I read Jamaica Kincaid's short novel of a West Indian girlhood, *Annie John* (1983), as the Ur-text of the developing girl's erotic and ambivalent relation to her mother, describing a pubertal plot that traces a pre-adolescent daughter's homoerotic attachment and identification with her mother, through an increasing sense of alienation after puberty. I find in Annie's story evidence that a mother's response to her daughter's pubertal body profoundly effects the girl's experience of self and other, and her representation of her mother and their relationship. There is a paradox in the girl's sexual development: the more the daughter's body grows like her mother's, the more "other" the mother seems to become (Debold, 1991, makes a similar point.) I argue that the active, homoerotic, identificatory elements of mutual daughter-mother attachment have been covered-over within psychoanalytic accounts of girls' development which privilege intrapsychic over intersubjective dynamics, and valorize separation-individuation (from the mother) as a cultural-psychological imperative in the service of normative heterosexuality and femininity. On the cusp of adolescence, I observe, the girl is "a little bit queer"—her sense of her own gender and sexuality less rigid and fixed than it will soon become, her identifications and desires more over-inclusive and oscillating, and less neatly divided into same-sex/opposite-sex.

Turning to the neglected topic of maternal subjectivity during puberty, Chapter Four, "Maternal Subjectivity and the Pubertal Daughter's Body," considers what the daughter's pubertal body evokes in the mother. I argue that the mother's erotic regard for her daughter's body has generally remained invisible within psychoanalysis, and propose that a mother's capacity to tolerate the oscillating levels of her daughter's tie to her (the mother's) body will significantly impact the girl's own capacity for gender and sexual flexibility. In readings of poems by several women poets about their daughters' bodies, I offer evidence of maternal erotic feelings that break through the taboo that typically prohibits acknowledging and exploring these dynamics. Clinical and personal narratives further exemplify the mother's erotic sensitivity to her daughter's developing body, and her conflicts over their embodied relationship. I propose the idea of "the genital mother" to represent the mother's capacity, via her own embodied, sexual subjectivity, to provide a transitional, facilitating environment for her daughter's developing body, and her desire.

In the concluding chapter, "Daughters and Mothers, Dancing," I analyze (and applaud) the 1999 film *Tumbleweeds* (O'Connor, 1999) for its sensitive and remarkable depiction of mother-daughter embodiment, erotism, and mutual recognition, and discuss a literary anecdote that provides a generative, evocative illustration of a mother's attunement to her daughter's need for erotic recognition. Finally, I read a clinical presentation of an adult female patient's therapy session for what it can tell us about working with daughter-mother conflicts over pubertal and sexual embodiment, and erotic recognition, in the context of an intersubjective encounter between pychotherapist and patient. Further aspects of my ongoing study of girls at puberty are outlined.

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Coming to terms with the limitations of a dissertation is no easy task for the graduate student intent on realizing grand theory-making ambitions. It hardly bears mentioning that in focusing here on the role of girls' pubertal bodies in the production of normative femininity and heterosexuality, and the problems of desire, identification, alienation, and recognition between daughters and mothers, there has been much left out. My arguments are not based on a "representative" sample of "subjects" or even of texts, and though I have tried to draw out questions of race and class and indicate where "femininity" is anchored to race and class differences, these remain under-theorized. The clinical and personal anecdotes I discuss, and the texts I analyze, draw examples across race and class in an effort to de-center "the girl" who in so much psychoanalytic theory is assumed to be white and middle-class; however, this method cannot fully account for differences between groups or "kinds" of girls (or within them), and my evidence is not sufficient to draw general conclusions about the specific impact of race or class on the embodied relations of daughters and mothers at puberty. Rather, my work suggests some ways that girl's pubertal bodies may be "read" for dilemmas of race and class, as well as gender and sexuality, and I argue for the importance of such readings (which I intend to pursue elsewhere—see Chapter Five). In focusing on the production of normative femininity and heterosexuality, I have not delved into the particularities and differences of homosexual girls' development. Neither have I analyzed the differences that may distinguish relations of single-mothers with their daughters from their married, nuclear family counterparts. (Both of these questions are objects of my ongoing inquiry.) Although I have generally followed the psychoanalytic convention of talking about "the girl," "the daughter," and "the mother," I have tried to avoid a universalizing narrative; it

is essential to recognize that beyond or between the commonalities that are the basis for generating theories about psychological development, are differences that must themselves be examined and theorized. The patients I quote do not speak for "everyone," (in fact one of the struggles of the patient in psychoanalysis or psychotherapy is to find the way to speak for herself), and "texts" are not patients. I make no claim that the theoretical "story" I offer in this dissertation about girls' pubertal bodies, and their embodied relationships to their mothers, is the only story; my argument rests on the call to ask questions of girls and women, patients, and texts, that will generate multiple narratives of pubertal embodiment, and help us to re-theorize the "transformations of puberty" which are so central to gender and sexuality. Much work remains to be done, and I hope to contribute to it in an ongoing way.

CHAPTER TWO
"The Bloody Verdict"[1]: Simone de Beauvoir, Carol Gilligan, and the Pubertal Girl

Messy girls and bloody prom queens: the crisis of puberty

The images of two adolescent girls are indelibly inscribed in the cultural memory of many Americans old enough to have gone to the movies in the 1970's — Linda Blair as Regan in *The Exorcist* (Marshall, 1973), dressed in a prim nightdress, levitating her four-postered bed and vomiting foul green stuff all over a priest, and Sissy Spacek as Carrie in the movie of the same name (DePalma & Monash,1976), standing in the high school gymnasium in her white prom dress and dripping with blood from head to toe — the butt of a cruel prank that mocks her late menarche.

The Exorcist, (based on a 1971 novel by William Peter Blatty) the astonishingly successful horror film about a girl possessed by the Devil, experienced a millennial comeback in mainstream movie theaters around the U.S. in 2000. A new generation of adolescent (and adult) moviegoers encountered twelve-year-old Regan as a seemingly normal girl whose body begins to excrete, leak, erupt, bleed, belch, and emit strange noises in ways a twelve-year-old girl is just not supposed to. The film asks us to witness the bizarre spectacle of the pubescent anti-heroine's physical transformations—Regan un-self-consciously urinates on the floor in front of party guests, she projectile vomits, she is possessed of super-human strength, and --- here the boundary between the child's

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[1] "...she becomes aware of herself in the red flow from between her thighs. If she has already accepted her condition, she greets the event with joy—'Now you are a woman.' If she has always refused to accept her condition, the bloody verdict stuns her...'So that is what is meant by the words "to be a woman"!' The set fate that up to now weighed upon her indistinctly and from without is crouching in her belly: there is no escape: she feels she is caught" (Beauvoir, 1949/1953/1974, p. 354).

messy, unmodulated body and the adult's sexually demanding body becomes aggressively, disturbingly blurred --- she plunges a crucifix into her vagina until she bleeds, to the inhuman roar emitted from the girl's own mouth: "Let Jesus fuck you!" (quoted in Paul, 1994, p. 305).

In *Carrie* (based on the 1974 novel by Stephen King, and also reintroduced as a television remake in 2002), we find a sixteen year old just beginning to menstruate -- her strangeness resides in her delayed development and her stupid innocence of the meaning of the first blood, as much as in her powers of telekinesis (by which she ultimately annihilates her classmates in a pique of humiliation and rage). The horror of her not-knowing is part of what makes her the object of derision and punishment: she carries the projected shame of her classmates who already know the bloody secret of the woman's body.

These films are as much scary girl-stories as scary-girl stories. Regan and Carrie are monstrous, but it is their pubertal bodies that are the real horror. *The Exorcist* and *Carrie* stage puberty as spectacle and parable: the female body is as gross, malignant, and dangerous as it is fascinating and powerful. The girls of both films occupy a transmutable, undecidable place between passive (the girl can't help herself---she's been invaded, she's a victim) and active (the body rages—Regan covers a priest in vomit, and telekinetic Carrie burns down the school). We might say the girls of these horror films possess hysterical bodies—out of control, in excess, symptomatic. But symptomatic of what?

Beginning with Freud's (1905/1963) Dora, psychoanalysis has accorded hysteria a foundational place in its theories of femininity: the hysteric's way of "speaking" about what is unacceptable to her consciousness -- chiefly (homo)sexual thoughts and feelings-- is through her body. Although the idea of hysteria has been remarkably productive for

feminism, centering as it does on the marginalized female body, the specificity of the girl's pubertal body has been generally ignored by feminists.

Simone de Beauvoir (1949/1953/1974)[2] is an exception:

> The body of a woman—particularly that of a young girl—is a "hysterical" body....Because her [pubertal] body seems suspect to her, and because she views it with alarm, it seems to her to be sick: it is sick...It is in great part the anxiety of being a woman that devastates the feminine body. (p. 372)

Likewise, it is the fear of being a body (a thing) that devastates the girl. In this chapter, I will argue that Beauvoir's formulation of "the crisis of puberty" (p. 304) is absolutely crucial to her theory of women's oppression, and that her understanding of female embodiment provides a necessary corrective to Carol Gilligan's work on girls' "relational crisis" at adolescence (Gilligan, Rogers, & Tolman, 1991). In an original and thoroughly under-recognized section of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir suggests that the material, social, and psychological practices of patriarchy cohere at puberty to secure submission as a defining operation of femininity, etching the coordinates of power and surrender into girls' experience of their bodies and selves. Beauvoir's point, made with great acuity, wit and passion, is that the contradiction between the materiality of girls' bodies and the cultural fairy tale of femininity requires drastic social and psychological measures to convince the girl she *wants* to squish her foot into one of those tiny glass slippers. Like the slipper, femininity can never be fit into by "real" girls: it's make-believe.

At the center—almost literally—of *The Second Sex*, in a chapter called

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[2] All chapter references to Beauvoir will be to *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir, 1949/1953/1974) unless otherwise noted.

"Childhood," stands Beauvoir's most famous quote: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (p. 301). So begins her effort to articulate a *developmental* theory of femininity that traces the process of becoming "Other" from early childhood through adulthood. If not born a woman, how does the biologically female child grow up to live her body as one? How do girls get "girled" (Butler, 1993, p.7) to start with, and then made into women who submit to the constraints of femininity? It's a magnificent, powerful narrative of how alienation, according to Beauvoir the central feature of women's situation under the oppressive conditions of patriarchy, is psychically and socially produced in the lives of girls and women, how femininity comes to be held in place by female bodies. Perhaps surprisingly for a symbolic matriarch of modern feminism (an ironic symbol, given Beauvoir's own refusal of women's reproductive "destiny"), Beauvoir endorses rather than disputes the Freudian finding that a triumvirate of qualities rule girls' and women's psyches---passivity, masochism, and narcissism. For Beauvoir, of course, these are descriptive, rather than normative, terms. Insofar as she sets these up as fundaments of feminine consciousness, she quickly knocks them down as in any way "natural." Not arising from inborn sources, she argues, they come to characterize femininity via the process of alienation that produces the female subject as object—Other—under patriarchal domination. This chapter shall follow the channels of Beauvoir's detailed analysis of the way girls enact these traits in relation to their bodies. Beauvoir elaborates the identifications, investments in the body, and in femininity itself, that absorb the girl as she grows up, and locates puberty as the place and moment that brings into sharpest relief the painful, persistent contradictions of living oneself as "Other."

Stunningly, this crucial part of her project in *The Second Sex* has been all but ignored by feminists, psychologists, and Beauvoir scholars. Although *The Second Sex* is one of the canonical works of feminism, Beauvoir's writings on girls' psychosexual development, which assume center stage in the actual text, have simply been erased as referent by the contemporary books proliferating on girls (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Lyons, Hanmer, 1990; Orenstein, 1994; Pipher, 1994; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995; Tolman, 1994): Beauvoir's psychological narrative of gender development in childhood and adolescence is almost equally absent from feminist theories of gender, the body, and sexual difference. Why has no one paid attention to this amazing section of her text? Philosopher Elizabeth Grosz (1994) notes that "feminists have tended to remain wary of any attempts to link women's subjectivities and social positions to the specificities of their bodies" (p.x). Could it be that girls' pubertal bodies are just too *provocative*, too inescapably *specific*, even for grown-up feminists? (Better not to look?) Or that for women, thinking about puberty, the time when so much "gender trouble" (Butler, 1990) is set in motion, is painfully like debriding an only partly-healed wound?

I will return to these questions later: for now, I want to attend to Beauvoir's remarkable, rich, chapter on "Childhood," with an excursion into the chapter that follows, "The Young Girl." My reading situates *The Second Sex* as a key text for understanding girls' investments in gender, and their bodies, at puberty. Beauvoir's analysis of the girl's development proceeds along two axes: the first details the phenomenological experience of the pubertal body; the second is concerned with the body as site of the social gaze and cultural inscription that alienates the girl from herself, marking her as object, *Other*. The idea that these two axes—the one representing the lived experience of the biologically

sexed body, and the other representing the gendered construction of that body-- are co-dependent is one of Beauvoir's signal contributions to feminism. This chapter will continue along these axes, observing the ways psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, and feminist philosophy have theorized the relations of self to body, gender to sex, for girls at puberty. At the heart of the chapter is a close reading of Beauvoir's remarkably insightful writings on the pubertal girl, a reading I hope may recuperate *The Second Sex* for its theory of girls' embodied, psychological, development. I propose that we read *The Second Sex* to retrieve the significance of Beauvoir's 1950's work for 1970's feminists who are now the mothers, teachers, waitresses, bus drivers, physicians, and psychotherapists of girls coming of age in the millennium.

Before proceeding, I'd like to note that some of what makes Beauvoir's effort so grand is the astonishing scope of it, and its rhetorical extravagance. Not only does she assimilate a breadth and substantial depth of psychoanalytic theory (as well as sexological texts, memoirs, fiction and personal anecdote) to her understanding of alienation, but she applies it not just to adulthood, or to infancy, or early childhood, or adolescence, but to all of these stages. Other feminists, within and outside of psychoanalysis, have theorized aspects of gender development in the specific epochs of early childhood, or youth, or adulthood, but rarely as one arcing whole. Her effort is really quite audacious, and she pulls it off (naturally--she's Beauvoir!). Not without a hitch, of course. After all, Beauvoir is not a psychoanalyst or developmental psychologist by training, and there are many gaps in her developmental narrative. Certain stages are detailed, others not, with little explanation as to whether these are passed over because not much in particular is happening then relative to gender. In many sections, Beauvoir

writes without mentioning ages for particular developments, and the reader is left to try to place these herself. Still, the rewards to the tolerant reader-student are enormous, and this chapter will not make too much of Beauvoir's lack of precision concerning girls' ages. I'll focus instead on the lavish sweep of her story, and the vivid insights she provides to illuminate girls' royal road to "Othering", which also -- most importantly – may light their way out.

Sleeping Beauty, dreaming femininity

At times Beauvoir's account seems equivocal on the issue of just how gendered the girl is prior to puberty, and just how much feminizing 'work' remains unfinished until that time. In any event, as we shall see, the "crisis of puberty" introduces a different set of meanings to all the gendering that's come before. It will be useful to review the girl's childhood development and training in femininity to better understand how she encounters the transformations of her body at puberty. Beauvoir begins from the idea that for both boys and girls the body in infancy "is first of all the radiation of a subjectivity, the instrument that makes possible the comprehension of the world: it is through the eyes, the hands, that children apprehend the universe, and not through the sexual parts" (p. 301). Life unfolds similarly for the newborn of both sexes, with similar pleasures, impulses, and frustrations; they experience the same loves and jealousies; aggression and coquetry are acted out by both. Almost immediately, Beauvoir raises the significance of the pubertal changes to come in separating the girls from the boys. Her strategy at first seems to be to insist on the equality of girls' and boys' capacities up until that moment of sexual transformation, however she quickly points out that if things are not so equal as they should be before then, it's because of social factors:

> [U]p to the age of twelve the little girl is as strong as her brothers, and she shows the same mental powers: there is no field where she is debarred from engaging in rivalry with them. If, well before puberty and sometimes even from early infancy, she seems to us to be already sexually determined, this is not because mysterious instincts directly doom her to passivity, coquetry, maternity; it is because the influence of others upon the child is a factor almost from the start, and thus she is indoctrinated with her vocation from her earliest years. (p. 302)

Not at all a vocation that comes naturally, her femininity takes lots of practice.

In fact, despite demurring in the passage quoted above, Beauvoir is clearly convinced that as a rule almost all little girls are primed to accede to femininity well before puberty. Beauvoir understands the girl's earliest childhood situation as already directing her toward a double alienation: that is, she experiences the ontolological alienation that all children endure as a consequence of the first separation of self from (m)other, but as well she is alienated by the object-status forced upon her by patriarchy.

Early on in this account, Beauvoir dispenses with the matter of penis envy. Mobilizing Saussure and Piaget to argue that the girl is at first "not disturbed by contradiction" (p. 311), Beauvoir explains that the "[T]he psychoanalysts who, following Freud, suppose that the mere discovery of the penis by the little girl would be enough to cause a trauma profoundly misunderstand the mentality of the child..."(p. 311). Many girls show little interest in boys' penises, or even think they are odd, misplaced bits of flesh: in any event, the little girl's inclusive concept of her body takes in both presence and absence of the penis, according to Beauvoir's reading of cognitive development. She can have and be everything. (And Beauvoir herself definitely thinks that the penis is an

entertaining thing to have.). Beauvoir enjoins us to pursue Deutsch's observation that "[T]he sight of the male organ can have a traumatic effect...but only provided that a long chain of earlier experiences calculated to produce this effect has preceded it" (quoted in Beauvoir, p. 312). It is the prohibition on masturbation, exhibition, and autoeroticism, and the sense of being less admired than the boys, that the girl may project onto the penis which only then becomes a focus for envy. The mother's and father's gaze (as well as the more abstracted social gaze) regulates, stimulates, and organizes the child's earliest bodily experience, and as psychoanalyst Adrienne Harris points out, "this gaze is never ideologically neutral" (1998, p.54).

In Beauvoir's view, the girl's sense of her inferiority is built up by way of her social interactions in the world: it's not a natural consequence of her biological sex, but of how her sex is responded to. Yet the particularities of her body are available, even lend themselves, to recruitment to a psychological registration of (socially-constructed) femininity. In some respects, Beauvoir's view is consonant with contemporary theories of "primary femininity" that posit a psychic registration and elaboration of a physically experienced, or phenomenological, sense of femaleness (cf. Fast, 1999; Kestenberg, 1964, 1968; Mayer, 1985, 1996; Stoller, 1976; Tyson, 1989). According to Beauvoir, the girl experiences

> a diffuse apprehension...in regard to her "insides," an apprehension that will often be retained for life. She is extremely concerned about everything that happens inside of her, she is from the start much more opaque to her own eyes, more profoundly immersed in the obscure mystery of life, than is the male. (p. 313)

Diane Elise (2000) has recently suggested that females may be unconsciously motivated to "secrete" their genitals, *making* of them a mystery, in order to defend

against the "castration" of her desire (for the mother; this point will be taken up in Chapter Four) under the cultural strictures of male dominance and heterosexual normativity. Building from her hallmark article "Everybody Must Be Just Like Me" (1985), Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer (1991) makes a similar but distinct point:

> primary femininity proceeds from the girl's early awareness of what she actually has, not what she imagines she lacks based on her perception of genital differences...The concept of primary femininity rests on the hypothesis that a significant contribution to the experience of femaleness is, from the start, an experience of *something*, not of *nothing*. (p. 482)

Amusing personal anecdotes abound that illustrate just such points. While sitting on the toilet to "pee," the three year-old daughter of two psychologists engages her mother in a discussion of vaginas, laughing delightedly: "Mommy, the boys at school are missing their vaginas!" The belief in their vaginas' primacy evidenced by the little girls in such anecdotes (perhaps enhanced by their parents' conscientious naming, and admiration, of their genital) is linked by Mayer to an attendant "castration" fear in girls that what they have might be lost or closed up, like it is fantasied to be in boys. Mayer (1996) writes that she offered this theoretical counterpoint (based in clinical observation and analysis) to phallic monism---the idea of males' castration anxiety and girls' penis envy---to explain how little girls come to represent and value themselves as female.

Beauvoir's own writing on the relation between anatomical difference and sources of alienation is a bit confusing, and sometimes seems to imply that the biological body is just as important as its social status in producing advantages for the boy. I take her to say that the boy finds in his penis a "cool" thing to *have*, a thing that *does* wonderful things,

and serves as an *alter ego* at once him and not-him; it also interests his parents. *Having* a penis, he is allowed to *be* himself. The girl, on the other hand, takes her whole body as the thing she *is*. Her genital is neither outside enough to regard as a plaything, nor sufficiently valued by her parents; they do not direct their admiring gaze or attention to it. The doll play encouraged by her parents leads the girl to identify herself with this inert object that represents her whole body; she herself becomes an object for others to *have*, lacking subjective being for herself. It is this production of lack, not the lack of a penis, that is crucial for Beauvior, as it is for the feminist psychoanalytic theorists of primary femininity. She acknowledges that boys, of course, may also play with a teddy bear or puppet, and identify himself with it. However, "it is within the totality of their lives that each factor—penis or doll—takes on its importance" (p. 315).

Passivity is seeded early in girls, via their relation to their body, but it grows in fits and spurts, with plenty of contradiction. Throughout childhood, the girl experiences

> a conflict between her autonomous existence and her objective self, her "being-the-other"; she is taught that to please she must try to please, she must take herself as object; she should therefore renounce her autonomy. She is treated like a live doll and is refused liberty" (p. 316).

At first, during what Beauvoir calls "a second weaning" (p. 304), the girl appears favored by continuing physical contact with her mother, and the boy is the one ejected from the protective cocoon of maternal intimacy. His coquetry is now prohibited, and comes to be designated as a feminine attribute. Soon, however, he's compensated for his losses by the sense (conferred by his socially-mandated identification with his father) that masculinity--his birthright, his prerogative--is superior after all. Following this path, as

Chodorow and others point out, involves a defensive repudiation of femininity on the psychic and the cultural level, with dire consequences for women and for men (cf. Chodorow, 1978; see also Benjamin, 1988a; Dinnerstein, 1976).

Meanwhile, the girl soon discovers she doesn't have it so good. Her identification with her mother seemed initially to hold much promise: mother appeared to rule the roost at home, and besides, "[t]o make a baby emerge from one's body: that is as fine as any feat of legerdemain" (Beauvoir, p. 320). But unfortunately for the girl, the mother's own oppression is visited upon the daughter as she herself inducts the daughter to the restrictive practices of femininity:

> she is dressed in inconvenient and frilly clothes of which she has to be careful, her hair is done up in fancy style, she is given rules of deportment: "Stand up straight, don't walk like a duck": to develop grace she must repress her spontaneous movements; she is told not to act like a would-be boy, she is forbidden violent exercises, she is not allowed to fight ...Today, thanks to the conquests of feminism, it is becoming more and more normal to encourage the young girl to get an education, to devote herself to sports; but lack of success in these areas is more readily pardoned in her than in a boy...at any rate she must be *also* a woman, she must not *lose* her femininity. (pp. 317-318)

The girl who runs fast, climbs jungle gym bars, kicks a ball hard, must also learn how to comport herself "like a girl": her body must be "bilingual". In other words, if her body "speaks" freely as an athlete, for example, she must never forget (others will never *let* her forget) that its primary "language" is supposed to be femininity. For how many girls does this feel like a peculiar reversal of what feels right and "natural"?

As the little girl grows older and has more and more contact with the broader social world, she begins to perceive the startling scope of masculine privilege. "Very often," observes Beauvoir, "identification with the mother no longer seems to be a satisfying solution: if the little girl at first accepts her feminine vocation, it is not because she intends to abdicate; it is, on the contrary, in order to rule..." (p. 323). Turning toward her father (whose masculinity, she slowly realizes, secures him the "real" seat of power and adventure in the world), the little girl finds herself barred from identifying with him in the way she has identified with her omnipotent mother:

> from her father she can but passively await an expression of approval...[W]hat Freud calls the Electra complex is not, as he supposes, a sexual desire: it is a full abdication of the subject, consenting to become object in submission and admiration. (pp. 323-324)

Prohibited from *being* him, what is left to the girl is the possibility of feeling his power by *having* him (or rather, letting *him* have *her*). As Jessica Benjamin points out (1988a), the girl turns to ideal love because she is excluded from the "identificatory love" of her father. To have him, she must concentrate her activity on attracting him.

The girl's admiring love of her father appears reflected, and is inculcated, by the worshipful, adoring attitude she notices women offering men in storybooks, religion, and other areas of cultural and social life. If the actual father plays a marginal or even ludicrous role at home, or is absent, the symbolic place of the father's masculinity is nevertheless asserted everywhere the girl turns. As to the influential place of fairy tales in producing the girl's fantasy life, Beauvoir is marvelously eloquent:

> everything invites her to abandon herself in daydreams to men's arms in order to be transported into a heaven of glory. She learns that to be happy she must be loved: to be loved she must await love's coming. Woman is the Sleeping Beauty. Cinderella. Snow-White. she who receives and submits. In song and story the young man is seen departing adventurously in search of woman: he slays the dragon. he battles giants: she is locked in a tower. a palace. a garden. a cave. she is chained to a rock. a captive. sound asleep: she waits. (p. 328)

Through such stories. Beauvoir argues. the girl learns not only to wait passively: she learns to submit masochistically:[3]

> Frequently the beautiful young creatures. with a glorious future in store. are seen at first as victims: the stories of Genevieve of Brabant. of Griselda. are not so simple as they seem: love and suffering are disquietingly mingled in them: woman assures her most delicious triumphs by first falling into depths of abjection: whether God or man is concerned. the little girl learns that she will become all powerful through deepest resignation: she takes delight in masochism that promises supreme conquests...a whole flock of delicate heroines bruised.

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[3] Some of the new Walt Disney films appear to have been influenced by feminist criticism of gender stereotyping—Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* (Ashman. 1991) has been given a feistier personality. as has Arielle in *The Little Mermaid* (Ashman & Muskar. 1988) for example. *Mulan* (Coats. 1998) is about an Asian girl who goes to war disguised as a boy: however. a six year old American-Israeli girl. when asked by her feminist mother (a news photographer who lugs the heavy weight of cameras around with her all day) how she liked the cool warrior girl who saved the boy. insisted that the brave hero on horseback doing all the saving was really the boy. not the girl! This is testimony. among other things. to the powerful role of the unconscious fantasies and identifications. and the power of collective. social. fantasy. in defeating even the best "role models."

> passive, wounded, kneeling, humiliated, demonstrate to their young sister the ascinating prestige of martyred, deserted, resigned beauty. (p. 329)

At this stage of her development, according to Beauvoir, the girl is still playing at being and doing femininity (p. 318). She elaborates it imaginatively, and acts it out; it is an activity that holds variable interest for her. In a sense, she's experimenting, pretending, trying it on for size, with little awareness of consequence or permanence. With puberty, however, she will discover that femininity is not supposed to be make-pretend; she's expected to produce it for "real", and there's no apparent way out. For now, "[m]ore or less precociously the little girl dreams that she is old enough for love; at nine or ten she amuses herself by making up her face, she pads her bodice, disguises herself as a grown-up lady" (p. 329). Through repetition of these arguably harmless fantasy activities, the girl fatefully builds up her sense of inferiority bit by bit, for in making herself up and strutting around her home like a "lady" she enacts with her body the position of "other" to the man who (she learns to imagine) will someday choose her. As play, bodily mimesis engenders femininity as a pleasurable activity, one that is generally supported and praised by parents, neighbors, teachers, who smile knowingly at the little girl mincing around in her mother's high heels, or dancing sexily like Britney Spears or Shakira.

Narcissism, like masochism an insidious trait bred in girls by their confined and demeaned situation, is according to Beauvoir one of the other primary touchstones of femininity. Girls sense that they're missing something they wish was theirs (freedom *qua* masculinity), and reach for what (false) compensations they may:

> At ten or twelve years of age most little girls are truly "*garçons manqués*" –

> that is to say, children who lack something of being boys. Not only do they feel it as a deprivation and an injustice, but they find that the regime to which they are condemned is unwholesome. In girls the exuberance of life is restrained, their idle vigor turns into nervousness; their too prissy occupations do not use up their superabundant energy; they become bored, and through boredom and to compensate for their position of inferiority, they give themselves up to gloomy and romantic daydreams...they seek consolation in narcissistic fancies; they view themselves as romantic heroines of fiction, with self-admiration and self-pity. Quite naturally they become coquettish and stagy, these defects becoming more conspicuous at puberty...they enjoy crying...at once a protest against their hard lot and a way to make themselves more appealing [as victims]. Little girls sometimes watch themselves crying in a mirror, to double the pleasure. (p. 344)

Yet the girl is still a child, and Beauvoir reminds us that she is not yet fully alienated (that will happen at puberty); agency, authenticity, vigorous play are still felt as "natural" expressions of herself. A lot of the time, when she's not occupied with "being a girl," she goes about things just like her brothers. Perhaps not yet fully confined to homologous compartments (i.e. girl-ness may still seem able to encompass strength and activity—later it will not), her experiences of self are nevertheless becoming split:

> It is a strange experience for an individual who feels himself (sic) to be an autonomous and transcendent subject, and absolute, to discover inferiority in himself as a fixed and preordained essence: it is a strange experience for whoever regards himself as the One to be revealed to himself as otherness, alterity. (p. 335)

Beauvoir seems to be arguing that subjectivity is in some sense an in-born, natural, quality or tendency that insistently organizes experience during the girl's childhood despite the cultural restrictions imposed upon her in the form of femininity. In this view, subjectivity is lost to her through a process of "othering" –objectifying-- that accelerates as she approaches puberty. This would appear to be supported by Carol Gilligan's research on girls' loss of "voice" and confidence at age 11 or 12 (Brown & Gilligan, 1992); yet as we will see, Gilligan's explanation diverges dramatically from Beauvoir's analysis.

Beauty pricks a finger: becoming flesh and blood

With the coming of puberty and the new strangeness of her body, the girl finds confirmation that the strangeness of her situation was situated in her body all along, just as she had (unconsciously) feared. Fascinated by the mysteries of sexuality, she also dreads the maternal destiny to which these condemn her: "she feels dread of encountering herself—changed, astray—in the distant future" (p. 342). It is as if up to now, her body has been incubating adult femininity. At puberty "the future not only approaches: it takes residence in her body; it assumes the most concrete reality" (p. 367).

I will move slowly through Beauvoir's articulation of pubertal development, savoring the sort of resonant descriptions of body and psyche more often found in fiction or memoir than in theory. It turns out that the rendering of girls' pubertal experience in language is a good deal harder than it looks. In *Going All the Way* (1995), writer Sharon Thompson describes the difficulty she encountered when she set out to interview pre-adolescents for a book on puberty (p. 3). Pubescents were too reticent to speak of it at all, and when she resorted to asking older teenage girls for their recollections of puberty,

what spilled out were stories of sex and romance. She decided to write instead about first sexual experiences, which were somehow easier for girls to talk about than what happened to their bodies at puberty. In college classes on adolescence, my students have shared their recollections through anonymous in-class writings, and in discussion. Yet perhaps because of the temporal distance, or because of taboos, or better, because so much of the pubertal experience was not only unspoken at the time but excluded from language—it remains largely unsymbolized, unmetabolized experience (cf. Cardinale, 1984).

Some of the extraordinary power of Beauvoir's prose derives from her understanding that particular words and images carry "secret" meaning for girls at puberty, as they work out the (public) secrets of their bodies. The feminine body is a code that must be cracked. I confess to being startled with self-recognition (and an eleven year old's impulse to cringe) each time I read Beauvoir's insightful comment that:

> From infancy to puberty the girl has grown, of course, but she has never been conscious of her growth: day after day her body was always a present fact, definite, complete; but now she is "developing". The very word seems horrifying...(p. 345)

Spoken by my mother, noticed by my father, commented on by girls and boys at school, even teachers, the words "now you are '*developing*'" carried such discomfort and embarrassment, if also a measure of pride, to the ears of (white, middle class) American girls like myself in the 1960's just as in Beauvoir's France of the 1940's. It was confusing. In the 1990's, in a class on adolescence I taught at a New York City public university, women students likewise puzzled over the inchoate consciousness of their body that sneaked up on them at puberty, or alternately hit them like a ton of bricks.

Reaching for the right words to describe her experience, a young Pakistani woman hesitated: "Puberty was like growing taller (pause), but different."

Beauvoir writes that:

> This body which the girl has identified with herself she now apprehends as flesh...the young girl feels that her body is getting away from her, it is no longer the straightforward expression of her individuality; it becomes foreign to her, and at the same time she becomes for others a thing: on the street men follow her with their eyes and comment on her anatomy. She would like to be invisible; it frightens her to become flesh and to show her flesh. (p. 346)

Beauvoir presents a virtual catalogue of the girl's developing body, alternately matter-of-fact, poignant, and melodramatic, sometimes with the flavor of the old-fashioned Modess and Kotex pamphlets that were distributed in "hygiene" classes during the 1950's and 60's to explain the "facts-of-life" to pre-adolescent schoolgirls [e.g. "Getting to Know Yourself" -Pursetts tampons (Museum of Menstruation, 1962, *Menarche Education Booklets)*; "You're a Young Lady Now" -Kotex (Museum of Menstruation, 1952, *Menstral Education Booklets)*. From readings of fiction like Carson McCuller's *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), Beauvoir draws many of her more sensitive observations, for example that at first the girl notices that something is changing subtly in her relations with the world and with her own body:

> she is aware of contacts, tastes, odors, that were formerly indifferent to her; strange pictures pass through her mind; she hardly recognizes herself in mirrors; she feels "funny", things seem "funny". (p. 343)

Just a bit further on, she recounts that:

> When the breasts and the body hair are developing, a sentiment is born which sometimes becomes pride but which is originally shame: all of a sudden the child becomes modest, she will not expose herself naked even to her sisters or her mother, she inspects herself with mingled astonishment and horror, and she views with anguish the enlargement of this firm and slightly painful core, appearing under each nipple, hitherto as inoffensive as the navel.[4] She is disturbed to feel that she has a vulnerable spot: this sore spot is surely a slight matter in comparison with pain or a burn or a toothache: but whether from injuries or sickness, pains were always something abnormal...(p. 345)

As to the growth of axillary and pubic hair, the girl is likewise discomfitted: "she is accustomed to a head of hair quietly rippling like a silken skein: but this new growth in her armpits and at her middle transforms her into a kind of animal or alga" (p. 345). Reporting her own disorienting, Alice- in-Wonderland-like sense of her rapidly changing body, a 17-year-old African American psychotherapy patient of mine remembered "I used to sit in class and actually think I could *feel* my pubic hair growing." Beauvoir contrasts the feeling of boys on the subject of hair, comparing its significance as a metonym for feminine sexual subjection (it must be got rid of, hidden) versus masculine sexual subjectivity (he should display it, it brings prestige):

> It is true enough that at the moment of puberty boys also feel their bodies as an embarrassment, but being proud of their manhood from an early age, they proudly project toward manhood the moment of their development: with pride they show

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[4] The navel is not always so uncharged, associated as it is with the umbilical cord that once connected child to mother.

> one another the hair growing on their legs, a manly attribute: their sex organ is more than ever an object of comparison and challenge...The boy sees with wonder in his growing hairiness vague promises of things to come...(p. 354)

Beauvoir's concern here is to establish how the body accrues meaning for the girl within her social and cultural context. Her strategy is to highlight the actual bodily changes, and tell us how these are abjected : hair, breasts, menstruation. Echoing Beauvoir, contemporary philosopher Elizabeth Grosz (1994) suggests that:

> Women's bodies do not develop their adult forms with reference to their newly awakened sexual capacities, for these are dramatically overcoded with the resonances of motherhood. Puberty for girls marks the development of the breasts and the beginning of menstruation as an entry into the reproductive reality that is presumed to be women's prime domain. Puberty is not figured as the coming of a self-chosen sexual maturity but as the signal of immanent reproductive capacities. The first issuing forth of sperm, the onset of nocturnal emissions, signals coming manhood for the boy, the sexual pleasures and encounters fantasized and yet to come; but the onset of menstruation is not an indication at all for the girl of her developing sexuality, only her coming womanhood. (p. 205)[5]

On the subject of menstruation Beauvoir is positively volcanic. Moi (1994)

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[5] Boys' first ejaculation (referred to as semenarche, or spermarche) as a "wet dream" or "nocturnal emission" may elicit feelings of incontinence, bedwetting, a sense of out-of-control-ness or even dissolution (see J. Sayers *Boy Crazy. Remembering adolescence. therapies. and dreams.* 1998). Still, male fear and confusion, as well as the typical embarrassment of spontaneous erections, may be covered over by a culturally-promoted male sexual *braggodoccio* about the body's functions which, while painfully burdensome for many boys and men, nevertheless offers potential compensation unavailable to menstruating girls.

contends that Beauvoir regarded her own female body with a large measure of revulsion, citing Beauvoir's description: "'Feminine sex desire is the soft throbbing of a mollusk' (p. 431)" (quoted in Moi, p. 168) as evidence. I actually rather like the mollusk description, and don't find it distasteful. (Perhaps this comes from my own positive associations to the seashore. Herein lies the difficulty of trying to interpret a writer's writing as evidence of her personal psychology. One can find oneself in a hall of mirrors, with endless iterations, for what of the interpreting-writer's personal psychology?, and so on. A rose is not necessarily a rose to all; at any rate, some find their sweet smell objectionable.) Beauvoir quotes a good deal of fascinating material from memoirs and case studies that expresses girls' fear and loathing (and occasional excitement) at starting their periods. Nevertheless, replete with so many idiosyncratic images and associations, it is hard to escape the sense that this is particularly charged material for Beauvoir herself.

Consider the following description of the girl's disappointment and sense of betrayal upon discovering what becoming a "big girl" *really* means:

> The only novelty is the untidy event that is repeated each month; there are children who weep for hours when they realize that they are condemned to this fate. And what strengthens their revolt further is the knowledge that this shameful blemish is also known to men; they would prefer at least that their humiliating feminine condition might remain shrouded in mystery for males...Here disgust at her too fleshly body arises or is exacerbated in the girl. And though the first surprise is over, the monthly annoyance is not similarly effaced; at each

> recurrence the girl feels again the same disgust at this flat and stagnant odor emanating from her—an odor of the swamp, or wilted violets—disgust at this blood, less red, more dubious, than that which flowed from her childish abrasions. (p. 351)

No practical, material aspect of the "untidy event" escapes Beauvoir's analysis. She details each "repugnant" inconvenience, only to insist they'd not feel so repugnant, or even inconvenient, if they weren't markers of her abject social status:

> Day and night she must think of making her changes, must keep watch of her underwear, her sheets, must solve a thousand little practical and repugnant problems. In economical families the sanitary napkins are washed each month and put back with the clean handkerchiefs: she must put these excreta from herself in the hands of whoever does the washing—laundress, maid, mother, or older sister. The pads sold by druggists under fancy names like "Modess" or "Edelweiss" are thrown away after use; but on trips, visits, or excursions it is not so easy to get rid of them, especially when disposal in the toilet is expressly forbidden. The young girl, when at her period, may feel horrified at the sanitary napkin and refuse to undress except in the dark, even before her sister.[6] This annoying and cumbersome object may be displaced during violent exercise, and it is worse humiliation than losing her panties on the street (emphasis added!)...young girls are often not yet regulated: they run the risk of being surprised while out for a walk, on the street, visiting friends; they run the risk...of spotting their clothes or whatever they are seated on; some girls are kept in constant apprehension by such a possibility. (p. 351)

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[6] Beauvoir herself had a younger sister who is written of extensively in *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (1958/1959).

What I find so striking here is not so much the descriptions themselves, though these are sharply observed, but Beauvoir's view that documenting girls' lived, material relation to their body, (a phenomenal experience always saturated with culture), is crucial to theorizing embodiment. (This would seem to be an obvious point, but one that too many feminist theorists see fit to ignore.) Insofar as her writing makes private, intimate menstrual practices public, she disrupts taboo and violates the etiquette of concealment. By attending to the girl's response to carrying out all the mundane operations of bodily care during menses, and refusing to look away from those messy, abjected physical and psychological experiences, Beauvoir allows for a representation of sexual difference and female pubertal (and by extension, adult) embodiment that remains close to the material body — the body that menstruates. It is writing that requires women to think through our own self-construction in relation to feelings associated with having a monthly period.

Despite her strongly-worded enumeration of all the fetid, messy, cumbersome aspects of menstruation which might leave the still-menstruating female reader praying for menopause, Beauvoir remains adamant in her insistence that it is not the girl's body that burdens her and compromises her freedom, but her body's abject status as "Other." If men and women alike menstruated, no woman would feel so humiliated and self-conscious of her body's functioning; at any rate, it would not be her *femaleness* that shamed her. It is because her bleeding body is proof of being "second" that the girl (woman) loses pride in it. Her fate is "crouching in her belly; there is no escape; she feels she is caught" (p. 354). Beauvoir acknowledges that if a girl has already accepted the "condition" of her femininity, she may react to menstruation with joy: "now you are a

woman" will be a happy proclamation. Along these lines, a 16-year-old African American group psychotherapy patient reassured a nervous 12-year-old who had just experienced menarche: "I like getting my period. It reminds me I'm a woman." Beauvoir's analysis attempts to sustain a dialectic tension between acknowledging the lived, biological reality of the woman's body and recognizing that the body's functions never escape cultural signification. The body is fundamentally social, and embodied feelings, capacities, and sensations are "toned" by the practices and social responses that invest them with meaning and value (these include the gaze of others, e.g.). That it may be traces of Beauvoir's own disgust for her body we notice seeping through her text does not undermine her argument, but rather gives it legs: even this heroine of modern feminism has internalized as psychic force the social force that makes of her body an abject-thing. The personal, embodied voice that leaks into the writing gives it a productive immediacy: what might otherwise be read as an account of a universal 'she-girl' sounds more specifically felt—shadowed by Beauvoir's own girlhood "me"-- and, if it doesn't fit all girls, surely represents the specificity of the female body in ways that make it more accessible to analysis.

Grosz, who is virtually alone among feminist and queer theorists in her attention to puberty, seems to echo Beauvoir's insights in her disquisition on women's "volatile bodies" (the title of her 1994 text):

> for the girl, menstruation, associated as it is with blood, with injury and the wound, with a mess that does not dry invisibly, that leaks, uncontrollable, not in sleep, in dreams [in contrast to the boy's "wet dreams"] but whenever it occurs, indicates the beginning of an out-of-control status that she was led to believe ends

> with childhood. The idea of soiling oneself, of dirt, of the very dirt produced by the body itself, staining the subject, is a "normal" condition of infancy, but in the case of the maturing woman it is a mark or stain of her future status, the impulsion into a future of a past that she thought she had left behind. This necessarily marks womanhood, whatever else it may mean for particular women, as outside itself, outside its time (the time of self-contained adulthood) and place (the place definitively within its own skin, as a self-identical being), and thus a paradoxical entity, on the very border between infancy and adulthood, nature and culture, subject and object, rational being and irrational animal. (p. 205)

Concordant with Beauvoir, and with reference to Freud (1905) and to psychoanalytic theorist of body image, Schilder (1950), Grosz contends that "the child's body, particularly as an already sexually designated body onto which a culture's fantasies of sexual difference are etched, is like a screen onto which the mother's –and culture's—desires, wishes, fears, and hopes are projected and internalized" (p. 75). Schilder himself, drawing on Freud's writings on narcissism, describes the body image as a representation cathected with libidinal intensity. A sense of one's body is built up slowly, according to Schilder, and "[e]ach psychosexual stage and drive involves an investment and thus participates in the production and differentiation of the body image" (p. 74).

Through the looking glass: The problem of self-recognition

According to Beauvoir, at puberty the girl comes up against this central dilemma: how to reconcile the materiality of her bodily processes and sensations with the cultural demand for femininity *qua* fairy tale princess-goodness. "It is not easy to play the idol, the fairy, the faraway princess, when one feels a bloody cloth between one's legs; and,

more generally, when one is conscious of the primitive misery of being a body" (p. 400). (I offer as evidence of my resistance to acknowledging Beauvoir's bodily self-loathing the following: I have re-read and recounted this quote as a favorite many times over the past few years, and yet only now as I formally type it into my text have I realized that it is not the primitive *mystery* of being a body, but the *misery* of it, that Beauvoir remarks!)[7] This theme—the compelling irony of the contradiction between an authentic, embodied recognition of self and the hypocrisy and dissembling nature of feminine performance—is one Beauvoir returns to again and again as she explores the girl's development. Puberty is at once the moment when social forces (family, popular culture, psychological establishment, etc.) work hardest to induct girls into normative femininity, (ushering them along the home-stretch to their presumed heterosexual, reproductive destiny) and a time that reveals most starkly the constructedness of the feminine ideal as well as the impossibility of ever fitting into it entirely.

For girls at puberty, the dissonance between the sense of self and body that remains outside of, or apart from, or stands alongside of sex-gender, and the sense that self and body are now reduced to sex-gender, poses a problem of self-recognition. What I am calling self-recognition refers to the sense of authentically knowing one's self from the "inside" as the source of the activities (and thoughts and feelings) that constitute the effects perceived from the "outside" —that the body you and others see, hear speaking, touch and smell, is "me." On Beauvoir's account such self-recognition specifies an

[7] As Nancy K. Miller points out (personal communication, 2003), for Beauvoir, the misery of the body is its inevitable human aging and decline, its ordinary mortality.

authentic subject who experiences her actions as originating within, and whose subjectivity is founded, in part, on the sense of ownership and authority in her body. According to Jessica Benjamin (1988a), the capacity for self-recognition depends upon having internalized the confirming response of a recognizing other.[8] Further, meaningful recognition requires that the recognizing other be a subject in her own right (Benjamin,1988a). If the culture fails to recognize the girl as a subject, requires her moreover to live her body as an object, and to normatively identify with her mother who also lacks subject-status (and therefore is a less-satisfying 'recognizer'— or, as Kaja Silverman (1988) writes, "a less pleasurable 'mirror' within which to find one's identity" (p. 159)), then how shall she recognize herself? She is alienated, doubled, split, and even as she grows she feels herself shrinking, like "Alice" after eating her cookie, to fit down some patriarchal rabbit-hole into the confinements of femininity. She feels herself and her body to be "me" and "not-me" all at once.

Toward the end of her "Childhood" chapter, and throughout "The Formative Years: the Young Girl," Beauvoir works through crucial ideas about the fracturing of self-recognition during puberty and adolescence. Following Lacan, Beauvoir explains that all children take hold of their alienated existence in mirrors, and in their parents' gaze. In this way, the child begins to "solidify" its existence: I see myself, and they see

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[8] Philosopher Diana Tietjens Meyers (1994), uses the term "self-recognition" in her discussion of moral identity and moral subjectivity to mean "the self-directed care that consolidates independent subjectivity" (pp. 127-128). By reversing terms, Meyers emphasizes the dialectic between self-recognition and mutual recognition, holding that the first is necessary for what Benjamin refers to as "mutual recognition," and adding that the development of independent moral subjectivity undergirds mutual recognition. Meyers also cites Jill Johnson (1993), who writes that "plebian autobiography" involves constituting one's self through narrative in a "political act of *self-recognition*" (emphasis added in Meyers, p. 181).

me, and so that is who I am. For the girl, Beauvoir seems to say, femininity entails a "mirror stage" gone haywire—she identifies herself too closely with the gaze of the other, and therefore can only 'see' herself as the object that is looked at. Beauvoir quotes Rosamond Lehmann's 1932 *Invitation to the Waltz*, in which "we see Olivia discover in the mirror an unknown figure: it is she-as-object suddenly confronting herself. This gives rise to a transitory but bewildering emotion:

> "Nowadays a peculiar emotion accompanied the moment of looking into the mirror: fitfully, rarely a stranger might emerge: a new self. It had happened two or three times already...She looked in the glass and saw herself...Well, what was it?... But this was something else. This was a mysterious face: both dark and glowing: hair tumbling down, pushed back and upwards, as if in currents of fierce energy. Was it the frock that did it? Her body seemed to assemble itself harmoniously within it, to become centralised, to expand, both static and fluid: alive. It was the portrait of a young girl in pink. All the room's reflected objects seemed to frame, to present her, whispering: Here are You...". (elipses in Beauvoir, p. 378)

In *Clueless*, the 1995 Hollywood movie (Lawrence & Rudin) that stages Jane Austen's *Emma* for contemporary girls, the rich, popular, and motherless girl Cher takes a Polaroid photo of herself each morning so she can see what she *really* looks like in the day's outfit—her mirror just doesn't tell the whole story. Cher has to alienate her image one step further—freeze it on film—so she can become an 'object' (literally) and see herself as others would, reassuring herself that she's successfully *put herself together*. In

this aspect, the mirror doesn't work properly as a Lacanian instrument that unifies her body-self: for that she needs the camera.

In a posthumously published volume of essays, edited by Judith Butler, philosopher Linda Singer (1993) reads Beauvoir to say that: "[a]dolescence is the phase in which the confluence of pleasure and power with the state of being looked at will take hold in the female consciousness" (p. 138). (It should be noted that Singer is one of the only writers I have found to address herself to Beauvoir's writing on adolescence. Toril Moi (1994), a leading Beauvoir scholar, does so briefly, as well.) Reaching puberty, the girl ever more definitively associates her power with the power to attract, her pleasure with pleasing others who gaze at her appearance. "[H]er passivity serves an enterprise, and she makes her weakness the instrumentality of her power; since she is not allowed to attack openly, she must depend on strategem and calculation" (p. 400), writes Beauvoir. Ultimately, as Singer points out, "the pleasure others take in looking at her will become inseparable and indistinguishable from her own pleasure" (p. 138). Her compliance wins her the 'booby-prize' of a sometimes gratifying, but inherently unstable, narcissism.

Beauvoir maintains that in an important sense, the girl is always looking at others looking at her, and looking at herself looking. This quality of "looked-at-ness" is a double consciousness that comes to pervade her existence. According to cultural critic John Berger:

> A woman must continually watch herself... From earliest childhood she must have been taught to survey herself continually. And so she comes to consider the surveyed and the surveyer within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman. (cited in Ussher, 1989, p.13)

Although this constant reflexivity soon becomes "second nature," the slippage

between the two moments or positions of consciousness is unnerving, and takes some getting used to. As Beauvoir describes it:

> For the young girl, erotic transcendence consists in becoming prey in order to gain her ends. She becomes an object, and she sees herself as an object; she discovers this new aspect of her being with surprise: it seems to her that she has been doubled; instead of coinciding exactly with herself, she now begins to exist *outside*. (p. 378)

Feminine insincerity and hypocrisy make of the girl a performer who risks losing herself in her character:

> the lie to which the adolescent girl is condemned is that she must pretend to be an object, and a fascinating one, when she senses herself as an uncertain, dissociated being, well aware of her blemishes. Make-up, false hair, girdles, and "reinforced" brassieres are all lies. The very face itself becomes a mask: spontaneous expressions are artfully induced, a wondering passivity is mimicked; nothing is more astonishing than to discover suddenly a young girl's physiognomy, well known in its ordinary aspect, when it assumes its feminine function...the body is no longer alive, it waits; every gesture and smile becomes an appeal. Disarmed, disposable, the young girl is now only an offered flower, a fruit to be picked. (p. 400)

A fundamental confusion is instituted at the heart of femininity that results in a hesitation, an out-of-synch-ness about self-recognition---like a movie in which the sound has not been properly dubbed and a slight, almost imperceptible delay occurs between the movement of lips and the sound of words. Voice and image are never quite seamless and synchronous, production values are never one hundred percent, and the hand of the

technician is always apparent. Yet it is in her image—a fractured image—that the girl becomes invested. As Judith Butler has argued (1990), the incoherence, or discontinuity, between the gender ideal and what is possible to approximate in performance (or what is felt internally) marks a moment of pain, as well as a potential place for resistance to a gender identity that reveals itself as impossible to ever authentically embody.

Beauvoir recognizes the psychic stress the girl undergoes as she survives on the edge of profound contradictions, and stakes her self-worth on her value as an object in the marketplace. "[i]t is understandable that she can hardly regain her equilibrium. Her unstable temperament, her tears, her nervous crises, are less the consequence of physiological frailty than the evidence of her profound maladjustment" (p. 402). Girls and women suffer with feelings of worthlessness or low self-esteem because they are worth less, and esteemed little; their image of themselves reflects good reality-testing, not neurosis. Beauvoir illustrates this point with the story of a girl who complained to her psychoanalyst about birds attacking her as she strolled in the countryside. After months of treatment aiming to cure her "obsession" (sic), the analyst learns that birds really *do* attack her!! "She feels inferior because, in fact, the requirements of femininity do belittle her" (p. 456). Although her situation thwarts her will and independence, Beauvoir allows that the girl also gains psychological depth and complexity from the conflicts she experiences: her inner life is richer than that of boys who have more active outlets in the world. She becomes more perceptive and insightful, more attuned to the subtlety of feelings, as these are hers to explore freely.

Turning her attention to the girl's erotic life and bodily feelings, Beauvoir mines the profound contradiction — the "hypocrisy" — at the center of the girl's experience of

sexuality: recognizing herself in her own sexuality is hardly possible. If she feels aroused during masturbation, or while dancing, or playing, she now "feels herself shot through with confused emotions in which she does not recognize herself" (p. 357). Whether through the advances of others, or through her own curiosity,

> through reading conversation, sights seen and words overheard, the young girl attaches meaning to the disturbances of her flesh; she becomes all appeal, desire. In and through her excitements, thrills, moistenings, vague discomforts, her body takes on a new and disquieting dimension. The young man openly welcomes his erotic tendencies because he joyfully assumes his virile estate... in [his sexual desire] he sees affirmation of his subjectivity... the urge that drives him toward the female is of the same kind as that which throws him against the world, and he recognizes himself in both... The sexual life of the little girl, on the contrary, has always been secret... She does not dream of taking, shaping, violating: her part is to await, to want; she feels dependent; she scents danger in her alienated flesh. (pp. 359-360)

The pubertal boy recognizes himself in his sexual feelings, and experiences these as coextensive with his masculinity; even if the new feelings in his body confuse him at first, he knows he is bound to be proud of his sexuality—the whole world tells him so. (Beauvoir does not address herself to the shame a boy, too, may feel if he doesn't feel masculine enough, or feels homosexual desire.) The girl, on the other hand, is pretty sure she's not supposed to feel this way, and so rather than strengthening her sense of authority and freedom in her body (and self), she experiences her sexual feelings and desires as discontinuous with her femininity. Adults are ambivalent about her body, that

much is certain, and she "find[s] that [her] sexual maturity is a concern rather than a joy to [her] parents. Girls are told to protect themselves, never to walk at night alone, always to call..." (Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979, p. 239).

To the extent the girl feels erotic stirrings and desire, Beauvoir contends that these further undermine her sense of herself, as these seem to oppose the ideals of female "goodness" and "innocence" to which she has been recruited. Her sexuality becomes infused with doubt, shame and guilt:

> Now, there is not a "good little girl" who does not indulge in "abominable" thoughts and desires. She strives to conceal them even from her closest friend, even from herself; she wants to live and to think only according to rules; her distrust of herself gives her a sly, unhappy, sickly air; and later on, nothing will be more difficult for her than to overcome these inhibitions. And, despite all her repressions, she feels crushed under the weight of unspeakable transgressions. She undergoes her metamorphosis into a woman not only in shame but in remorse. (pp. 361-362)

Yet shame, guilt, and doubt are only one side of the erotic coin for the adolescent girl: the auto-erotic, romantic pleasure of taking herself as object, of identifying with the male gaze, is the other. Beauvoir writes that:

> the young girl loves also in its carnal actuality this body which enchants her like that of another. She gives herself caresses, she kisses her rounded shoulder, the bend of her arm, she gazes at her chest, her legs; solitary pleasure becomes the pretext for daydreaming, in it she seeks an affectionate possession of herself. (p. 378)

Narcissism, the "cult of the self" (p. 380), is expressed not only through the worshipful relation to her own body (an effort to compensate for its objectified, debased status) but as well through diaries and daydreams that exalt the self by making of it an object of fascinated, impassioned, study and fantasy-- "she is intoxicated with her isolation, she feels herself different, superior, exceptional" (p. 381). Guilty, ashamed, and alienated from her own sexual feelings, she is lonely; alone, she attempts to recover herself as the wounded, cherished, sensuous heroine, object of her own daydreams.

The body-in-relation

Beauvoir's neglected ideas about girls' problems of self-recognition and subjectivity at puberty dovetail with important aspects of what has become Carol Gilligan and colleagues' (Gilligan et al., 1988; Gilligan et al., 1990; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Taylor et al., 1995) canonical work on girls' "loss of voice" and "dissociation" from authentic experience at around eleven years of age. Both Beauvoir and Gilligan find that girls often lose confidence on the edge of adolescence, and each regards femininity[9] as the culprit that makes off with this most precious psychic possession. Yet they differ significantly on the nature of their losses, the particular demands of femininity, and how to understand the changes in the girl's experience and representation of self and relationship in the wake of adolescent femininity. Reading Gilligan by way of Beauvoir's visceral writing on girls at puberty locates a profound absence at the center of Gilligan's work: there are no (bra-wearing, sanitary pad-needing, leg-shaving, hair-combing, giggling, wriggling, flirting) bodies there.

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[9] Although Gilligan herself does not use this term, I argue that her view of girls silencing themselves to be "nice" is the version of femininity her analysis relies upon.

As we have seen, Beauvoir's account turns on girls' difficulties with embodiment — the pubertal body brings the girl into alienated relation to her self and to others via a masculine gaze that objectifies her and introduces a quality of "looked-at-ness" to her self-representation. Her "body-in-relation" becomes circumscribed by expectations of femininity and heterosexuality, and her loss of confidence represents at base the loss of confidence in her body's integrity as an authentic agency of her subjectivity: "Not to have confidence in one's body is to lose confidence in oneself" (p. 371). Contemporary philosopher Iris M. Young, in her important essay "Throwing Like a Girl," joins Beauvoir when she expresses her "intuition that the general lack of confidence that [women and girls] frequently have about our cognitive and leadership abilities is traceable in part to an original doubt of our body's capacity" (1990, p.156). Young recalls her own pubertal self:

> The more a girl assumes her status as feminine, the more she takes herself to be fragile and immobile and the more she enacts her own body inhibition. When I was about thirteen, I spent hours practicing a "feminine" walk, which was stiff and closed, and rotated from side to side. (p. 154)

For Beauvoir, the fundamental paradoxes of the girl's post-pubertal existence under conditions of (Western) male supremacy are these: How is it possible to reconcile the metaphors of femininity with the materiality of a female body which asserts itself with odors, bulges, vaginal blood and sensation, and hairiness? How does one who naturally felt herself to be a subject, and her body as a "radiation" of that subjectivity, come to internalize, and take pleasure in, the sense of herself/her body as an object? By what means can a girl sustain so much loss and yet resist feeling like a loser?

For Brown and Gilligan, "the central paradox...[is] the giving up of relationship for the sake of 'Relationships'" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 7). In trying to become an all-nice, all-virtuous girl so that she will be acceptable to others, the girl loses the possibility of an authentic relationship between self and other. This analysis suggests that girls lose confidence in themselves as they learn to submerge the true self (what she aligns with "voice") in favor of the false. Brown and Gilligan write that:

> ...at this developmental juncture, we observe girls struggling over speaking and not speaking, knowing and not knowing, feeling and not feeling, and we see the makings of an inner division as girls come to a place where they feel they cannot say or feel or know what they have experienced — what they have felt and known. (p.4)

Girls search for a way to resolve what the authors term a "relational impasse" by either making or resisting a series of disconnections that includes the dissociation of psyche and body, and voice and desire, along with that most prominent , consistent subject of interest for Gilligan: self and relationship (p. 7).

What sort of interlocutor would Beauvoir make for Gilligan? I imagine she'd be rather impatient, of course (like me). "Niceness? For the sake of relationships?" I hear her say. "*Alors!*, that's all well and good. But you underestimate the confusion the girls must become accustomed to, with their bodies. You write of the psyche becoming disconnected from the body, and the voice from desire? But these are just words: what do you know of girls' bodies? Have you asked them how they care for their period? Do they become ashamed? Are they pleased to develop breasts and hair? Are these "nice"? Do they like to display themselves? May they play roughly with the boys? Does 'Mother' permit it? And 'Father'? Is she told to sit with her knees together, legs crossed? To hide what is between

her legs?! What shame and guilt does she feel when her body violates the rules of "niceness" by warming with erotic feeling? I think perhaps these are the experiences girls cannot speak of to you, Madame Gilligan! *Et bien*, you do not understand the paradox of *les jeunnes filles*' desire for power, I'm afraid. They cannot have it for themselves, only be close to it by being close to *les hommes*. And for this they must submit to being object, not subject. Of course they sometimes become quiet, appear timid, hesitate, as they learn the methods of femininity! But they also play the coquettes! Do they desire "connection"? *Oui. Bien sur*. But it is *le corps de la femme* that surprises the young girl and changes her relations, disturbing her ease of connection. When because of her body others no longer recognize her as the one she feels she has been all along, how is she to recognize herself? How is she to regard her own body, then? Even her mother expects her to be feminine, an object for the boys, as she herself has been. How is the girl to act? She must follow the script provided for her, and gaze at her reflection in the mirror as they gaze at her. But her body tells another story. This is the truth she must hide in the masquerade of femininity."

If this act of wishful ventriloquism ("throwing my voice") is a transparent attempt to authorize my own dissent from Gilligan's discourse , it is also, I hope, a rudimentary interpretive device for looking at the use Gilligan makes (or doesn't) of the body in her writings on girls. My contention is that despite numerous romanticized references to the body in general, girls' actual bodies don't seem to matter much at all to Gilligan. And yet one doesn't have to spend much time with pre-teen and teenage girls to know that their bodies do matter to them — a lot. A sixth grade elementary school teacher in an urban public school reports that at the beginning of the school year, girls are concerned with

stickers and notebooks; by the end of the year, she's confiscating lipsticks, mirrors, and hairbrushes from their hiding places in girls' desks. Studies indicate that 50% of 9-year-old girls and 80% of 10-year-old girls have already dieted (2000 Council. 2000, *Kid's Body Image Project*, para. 2). Popular magazines devoured by girls (YM, Seventeen, Cosmo Girl) marshal considerable commercial and ideological force to exploit girls' developmental preoccupation about their changing bodies, and devote the majority of their pages to beauty, fashion, and physical self-improvement, along with ads for make-up and menstrual products. As social theorist Sandra Bartky (1990) and historian Joan Jacobs Blumberg (1997) each point out, adolescence is a time girls, enslaved by an economy of bodily shame in which they are always necessarily lacking, pledge allegiance to a marketplace that promises them more and better ways to become feminine.

Beauvoir takes such observations and uses them to build a theory of just how and why the body comes to matter to girls at puberty, which she extends to understand the crucial -- one might say "essential" -- role of female embodiment in the oppression of women and girls. Gilligan, on the other hand, offers up "a missing discourse" of bodies (cf. Fine, 1988): she simply provides no narratives of the bodily experiences of girls (with the exception of Tolman's [1994] own research on desire, and Debold's [1991] self-reflective essay). While not necessarily mutually exclusive, Gilligan's focus on *listening* for expressions of psychological conflict over self and relationship in girls' verbal accounts seems to have oddly occluded *looking* at the girls themselves (in other words, making the body an object of inquiry) and thereby renders girls' bodies nearly invisible—descriptively and theoretically (at the same time paying lip-service to the body's importance).

One might suppose that Gilligan's avoidance of girls' bodies in favor of "voice" is a reaction, in part, to girls and women being looked at, not listened to. From her early, landmark book, *In a Different Voice* (1978), Gilligan has relied on the metaphor of "voice" to carry her argument that women and girls speak of the world in a "relational" way, guided by a relational logic that differs significantly from developmental and moral models that substitute masculine norms for universal psychological experience. (Ironically, Gilligan relied on her study of college-aged women's abortion decisions---involving choices about their bodies---to frame her discussion of women's moral development.) Nevertheless, valorizing "voice" while negating the material body may itself become a form of "silencing."

The elision of the body requires a corresponding covering-over of the multiple areas of conflict in relationships between daughters and mothers that play out precisely around the body—clothes, shopping, hygiene, make-up, hairstyles, and, more recently, piercing and tattooing. Food, dieting, weight are not only areas of argument between daughters and mother, but may be carried to extremes in eating disorders which have been theorized to be exemplary of the girl's virulent internal psychic conflict about her relation to her mother, as well as to femininity more generally (cf. Bloom, Gitter, Gutwill, Kogel, & Zaphiropoulas, 1994). Bodies are likewise the "coin of the realm" among girls, and their relationships with each other frequently engage body issues. They compare notes and compare bodies, gorge themselves on food together, begin to diet together, learn to put on make-up together, discuss pop stars and trade popular magazines, and shop together.

Some of the most compelling evidence of the way girls may experience the body-in-relation has been suggested to me by my students. Each semester in a college course I taught in the 1990's on the psychology of adolescence, students wrote anonymously of their most vivid memories of puberty. A diverse group of students from different racial and ethnic groups, with many countries of origin, the majority of women wrote about the silence and/or embarrassment they experienced with their mothers when they began menstruating. This was not a throw-back to puberty in the 1950's or 60's, but a consistent, if anecdotal, finding among women who'd reached puberty in the 1980's that indicates the conflict girls (and their mothers) continue to feel over bringing the pubertal body into relationship, into conversation. Typical among her women classmates, one student wrote:

> When I got my menstruation no one had told me anything beforehand to prepare me...I thought I had cut myself with the toilet paper. I went to my mother crying telling her what had happened and she comforted me and told me that I had just turned into a young lady... I felt special and strange at the same time. The way people went about concealing the truth is unreal. I would never put my daughter in that position.

I want to propose that Beauvoir's reading of the girl's situation at puberty offers a more satisfying, focused lens through which to view the hesitating, faltering, lost "voice" Gilligan et al. heard in their subjects' narratives (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Lyons, et al., 1990). This slippage between metaphors—"lens," "view," "voice," "heard"— is not accidental, but a function of the radically different axes on which Beauvoir and Gilligan extend their arguments.

Gilligan's "Listener's Guide" and the Metaphor of "Voice"

For Gilligan, "voice" signifies true self. "Voice, because it is embodied, connects rather than separates psyche and body..." (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 20). However, the Harvard Project's approach to organizing material according to girls' speech patterns—the hesitations, words that mark uncertainty like "um" and "maybe," and the psychological grammar of "I think" and "you know" that punctuate her subjects' interview responses—brings into focus verbal language and the interruption of words, but oddly evacuates these of sound and rhythm. "Voice" is split from girls' bodies and reified as a conveyance of speech patterns.

Analysis of girls' ways of talking seems to come at the expense of interpreting the physicality of the interview; listening to girls, the researchers fail to look at them and register their "body language"; they also neglect to attend to their own (the interviewers') bodily responses (eg relaxation, nervousness, drawing closer, erotic appreciation, pulling away). We can note shifts in the fluidity and type of speech over the course of the longitudinal studies-- and Gilligan makes a strong case that such shifts in ways of talking indicate loss of confidence—but we cannot begin to correlate shifts in a girl's speech with her *actual* voice (its pitch or volume, quavering or clarity, for example), and certainly not with her body (size, shape, posture, gestures, dress, makeup, hair). Were any of these girls fat, I want to know? Did "Sonia" chew on her fingernails? Did "Madeline" avert her eyes? Did "Erin" wear tight fitting tops or loose, had she started to wear a bra? The girl's body, the adult woman interviewer's body, and the bodily encounter are blocked from view.

What do Gilligan and colleagues actually say about the body? The "Listener's Guide" instructs the investigator to ask herself "(1) Who is speaking? (2) In what body?" (Brown and Gilligan, 1992, p. 21). Yet we never learn what the authors have in mind about bodies since they never describe the body of anyone who is speaking. Reading and re-reading Gilligan's many works, poring through them for any mention of an actual body, I feel oddly like a feminist academic version of the actor Cuba Gooding, Jr.'s football-playing character in the 1996 Hollywood film, *Jerry McGuire* (Brooks, Crowe, Mark, & Sakai) hollering over and over: "Show me the BODY!! Show me the BODY!!" (Gooding's character famously yelled: "Show me the MONEY!! Show me the MONEY!!" in what became, for a time, a popular rant.) For the authors to talk of "the body" with no regard for girls' bodies, is akin to the eponymous football-agent hero Jerry McGuire (played by Tom Cruise) seducing his client with the ideal of a big-money contract, without having any means (he's lost his job and credibility) to access real money: how are we to take them seriously?

Chapter 5, "Rivers Into the Sea: Three Guides to Adolescence," in Brown and Gilligan's *Meeting at the Crossroads* (1992), begins its second paragraph promisingly enough (I will quote at length, since this is striking for being the only comment I have found addressing girls' looks that exceeds a line or two anywhere in Gilligan's entire corpus):

> This is a time of visual change. Two thirds of the girls this age will have begun menstruating. There is no physical prototype: some girls appear childlike, tall and gangly; others look like young women, their bodies less angular, more rounded and full—bodies stirring, desiring, knowing, yet caught in the reality of the immediate, uncomfortable and shy in the gaze of others. Elizabeth Debold, a

> member of our research team, wishing to see a seventh grade dance class, was told by the instructor that the girls were too embarrassed, too uncomfortable in their leotards to be seen by a stranger. This led Elizabeth to recall her junior high dances, herself and other girls standing in nervous, furtive groups, whispering among themselves in low voices. "Twelve year olds," she says, "cluster together like gangly trees in a dense patch of woods. Often when they speak, they put their hands over their mouths." She remembers the stance: "pinched posture, shoulders pushed awkwardly forward, slightly bent. Between the lithe, jazz movements of the ten-year-old girls and the cultured grace of the seventeen-year-olds is the discomfort of twelve and thirteen.". (p. 163)

This nicely observed bit of writing (which, it should be noted, is infused with the lively childhood recollections of one individual researcher, Elizabeth Debold, rather than contemporary observation of study participants), made me hopeful that the investigators would indeed finally "show me the bodies," and say something thoughtful about the links between girls' bodies and their speech, their bodies and their relationships. Unfortunately, the trail ends here. Apparently the researchers never did ask girls about the bodily discomfort Debold remembers from her own pre-teen years, even when alerted by the girls' dance teacher (who herself clearly listened to and respected what the girls were telling her/showing her about their bodily embarrassment). There is no notation of girls speaking with "their hands over their mouths" at particular points in the interviews, nor looking down with shoulders hunched, despite the claim to a research method that includes analyzing "who is speaking, in what body".

> In the paragraph that follows the one quoted above, Brown and Gilligan note that: These changes in girls' bodies disconnect them from the world of childhood and identify them in the eyes of others with women, and thus with images of women and standards of beauty and goodness—physical and moral perfection. Girls become looked at, objects of beauty, talked about and judged against standards of perfection and ideals of relationship. And girls learn to look at their "looks" and to listen to what people say about them. Seeing themselves seen through the gaze of others, hearing themselves talked about in ways that imply that they can be perfect, and that relationships can be free of conflict and bad feeling, they struggle between knowing what they know through experience and knowing what others want them to know and to feel and think. (p. 164)

Notice how the paragraph slips from registering an insight about the girl's body-in-relation into Gilligan's usual discourse of the relational impasse in which "conflict and bad feeling" must be excluded from relationships but where none of these conflicts, feelings, or relationships seem to have anything at all to do with the body. The remainder of the chapter, in fact, details "relational conflicts" with little mention of looks, gazes, or physical discomfort or embarrassment. What are the relations between "standards of beauty" and "goodness," between "physical and moral perfection"? Beauvoir shows how, in fairy-tales and legends, "homeliness is cruelly associated with wickedness, and one is in doubt, when misfortunes shower the ugly, whether their crimes or their ill-favored looks are being punished" (p. 328). She writes that "[i]t is understandable that the care of her physical appearance should become for the young girl a real obsession: be they princesses or shepherdesses, they must always be pretty in order to obtain love and

happiness" (p. 328). Yet for Gilligan, the girl's struggle with equations of beauty, goodness, moral perfection is assimilated to her argument about the ideal of conflict-free relationships and the "beauty" part of the problem simply drops-out; it is not asked about, not specified, not "unpacked." It is, in fact, seldom mentioned again.

One exception to the general rule of bodily disappearance in Gilligan's research is the discussion of "Liza: Cover Girl," in *Meeting at the Crossroads* (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). "Liza," a participant in the Laurel School study, seems to be the only girl to have caught the attention of the researchers with her body. When interviewed at twelve, "[h]er looks and the degree of her involvement with boys have already placed her on the periphery of her seventh grade class, where she must be ever vigilant of how the other girls see her" (p. 205). What it is about her looks? The writers decline to tell us. They do, however, note that when asked her "main problem," Liza answers "that I don't have blonde hair" (p. 206). Shifting to discussion of difficulties in relationships with both girls and boys, the authors distance themselves, and the reader, from Liza's body, although in the quotes above they have implicated her body in the troubles she recounts. In a subsequent interview when Liza is fourteen and in ninth grade, she speaks again of her body, and the researchers take note; by this time, Liza has dyed her hair blonde, and has become anorexic. Only when confronted by the extreme bodily evidence of breakdown in one girl's capacity to negotiate the psychic demands of femininity, sexuality, and relationships, do Brown and Gilligan seem to look, and listen, to what is being shown and said about the body. In the face of this example, the absence of such observation and analysis elsewhere in Gilligan's research seems all the more deliberate, and disappointing. It is simply hard to believe that other girls didn't also have stories to tell

about their bodies, didn't similarly describe problems, jealousies, and conflicts that connected their bodies to their relational worlds.

In *Between Voice and Silence* (1995), a study designed to correct for the white, upper-middle class sample-bias of previous studies by interviewing Black, Hispanic, and working class girls, Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan claim that "[w]ith their women interviewers, girls spoke about changes in their physical appearance, their interest in boys and going out, and how their mothers' responses had changed as they moved toward sexual maturity" (p. 93). Yet there is remarkably little material presented in the text to demonstrate girls' experiences of physical changes, and the responses of boys and mothers to their bodies, in any other terms than decisions about dating and sexual relationships (among older girls). Interestingly, the authors report that their "interpretive community" (which they realized the need to racially diversify, in the third year of study) helped them discern traces of a girl's consciousness of racial difference between herself and interviewer that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. While this is a laudable change in method, I continue to find that evidence of the girls' experiences of bodily difference is not analyzed. For example, "Anita," an African American girl who is described as dressed (this is a rare description of dress and gesture) in "a dark, baggy sweatshirt and black jeans that emphasize her small frame, [she] twists her hair and speaks animatedly," comments that the white interviewer possibly didn't "get" what she was saying about "boys and stuff...Because, like, you'll see us, like, on the streets if you were black, especially if you lived in [the city] or something, you'll understand how we dress" (p. 35). What does Anita imagine her interviewer might make of her style of dress as a black girl? What does she represent about herself by dressing as she does? Why

might she like to cover her "small frame" with baggy clothing? It strikes me as significant and interesting that Anita directs our attention to the way the white interviewer may *look at* black girls like herself, and yet her articulation of the problem of the gaze that marks dress (= body) as a site of difference is not appreciated by the researchers.

"Ruby," another African American girls, speaks of how she retaliates for unfairness in school by "walking by 'with my head up in the air and it makes them even madder,' or 'walk down the hall and shake my booty, you know, and then they get all upset about it'" (p. 53). An Hispanic girl, "Oliva,"

> tells her interviewer that she looks different from other members of her family who are darker skinned, a fact that, when she was younger, caused her to imagine that she had been adopted, especially when her punishments seemed less severe than her sister's. (p. 83)

We read that "Bettina," a Portuguese girl, "who like many girls in her school has what is called 'big hair' (by whom?—KW)," noted that her mother became increasingly concerned about her daughter's "appearance and reputation" during the three years of the study (p. 83). Again, none of these girls' comments on their experience of their body-in-relationship seems to have been questioned further in the interview, or deconstructed.

In yet another indication of the authors' selective inattention to girls' feelings about their bodies, "Carla's" comment that "how she looks is a problem for her at the moment" (p. 103), is taken up only in the context of the authors' speculations about whether overweight may be a protective strategy against dating and sexual relationships. While my clinical work with adolescent girls definitely supports this conclusion, I wonder about what other meanings Carla makes of her body when she says,

> I feel clumsy about myself sometimes... I think I'm fat. I feel like I'm overweight. And it's like, um, I don't think people would like me because I'm overweight or something. That's like, I think, my parents think I'm fat. But it's like on a scale of, like, it doesn't seem like I'm fat, but the way I look in the mirror and stuff and see myself, I do. (p. 104)

These failed opportunities to question and analyze girls' talk about the body may be heard as symptomatic silences, following Gilligan's trope of voice, or viewed as blindspots. The aporia that marks the place of the girl's body in the interview signifies as well the body's absence in Gilligan's theory of psychological development. The "crisis of connection" that Brown & Gilligan (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 7) proposes as the central dynamic of female (early) adolescent experience involves a series of choices that take the girl's authentic self out of relationship in order to preserve relationships: if she stays "real" she'll lose connections that depend on her "niceness," her falseness, her femininity. What parts of self must be given up for the sake of relationships? Gilligan et al.'s unwillingness, or inability, to look at girls' bodies and listen for girls' bodily experience hobbles her ability to answer this question. I propose that it is only by asking another series of questions (and this is only a partial list) that we will deepen our understanding of, and theorization of, the hesitations, silences, and the loss of confidence that Gilligan found in her interviews over time: How does the girl apprehend her developing body? How does the girl's pubertal body signify within her familial and social relationships, and what images and bodily practices does she encounter in her culture? How is she to put her unfamiliar body into words? What relationships are

possible between bodies? What difference does the body make to the story that is told, or the way it is told?

These questions don't show up on Gilligan's relational radar: there are no breasts, hair, hips, periods to be assimilated in her participants' lives, or in her psychological theory (and consequently the "Listener's Guide" [described in Brown & Gilligan, 1992]) can only ever be of very partial use to the clinical listener, i.e. the psychotherapist. Contrast this with Beauvoir's detailed analysis of the girl's experience of her bodily changes in the context of cultural demands for femininity. She bleeds, she must hide her blood. Her breasts develop, she must either conceal them, or enhance them. Others look at her differently, she looks at herself in the mirror differently. Hair grows, it must be shaved. Her shape begins to change, she must learn to walk in a new way, sit with her legs closed or crossed, wear stockings. The demands for idealized "niceness" noted by Gilligan may come into conflict with expectations of coquetry in certain social contexts, and with cultural representations of idealized (hetero)sexiness. Femininity often demands a finely-tuned, physical performance of allurement oscillating with innocent reticence, which the girl learns she must try to perfect quickly if she wants approval from parents, peers, and the culture at large. She must discern the performative rules of different contexts, when to act girlish, modest, sexy, friendly, bold, retiring. (Nineteenth century novels offer explicit instruction—see Susan Fraiman, 1993).

Frigga Haug, editor (for the German Marxist-feminist group that collectively produced the text) of *Female Sexualization* (1987), a memoir-driven theoretical work, writing of the relation between identity and the body at adolescence describes how "the body becomes the decisive pivot around which the true self is defined" (p. 172).

Similarly, Zachry (quoted in Faust, pp. 113-114), claims that at puberty, the body becomes the "symbol of the self". Jacobs-Brumberg (1997), finds that for contemporary girls and young women, nineteenth century concerns for building character through "good works" have been replaced by the determination to improve the self and achieve a personal identity by working on the body. In sidestepping girls' concerns about the body, Gilligan and colleagues (with few exceptions, cf. Tolman, 1991, 1994, and Debold, 1991) circumnavigate a dynamic at the center of self and identity, as well as relationship.

Borrowing an insight from Freud's and Breuer's work on hysterical girls, Gilligan writes of voice becoming split from body. Yet the original psychoanalytic insight specifies that the unacceptable sexual body, kept out of the language of bourgeois social relations, could only find expression via the language of the unconscious, expressed by hysterical girls in their bodily symptoms. On this view, the uncertainty, hesitancy, and fracturing of speech noted by Gilligan and her team may be, in part, symptomatic of the girl's uncertainty and doubt about her body and her difficulty symbolizing aspects of bodily experience in the face of cultural injunctions not to talk about them. If the pubertal girl *qua* hysteric speaks through her body of an experience she cannot otherwise put into language (sexuality), and feels is unacceptable, then we must wonder if Gilligan, in failing to "listen" to her participants when their bodies "speak," is herself colluding in the very process that silences girls and renders them speechless.

In her 1988 essay, "Exit-Voice Dilemmas in Adolescent Development," (Gilligan, et al., 1991) Gilligan points to the "discontinuity of puberty"— physical growth and sexual maturation that mark a rupture not only with the childhood body but with childhood's dependent relationships — as requiring and spurring the renegotiation of

social connections, and one's place within them, at the start of adolescence. Gesturing toward a psychoanalytic explanation of unconscious motivation, Gilligan goes so far as to suggest that if adolescence (puberty) revives the Oedipal triangular conflict (as classical psychoanalytic theory maintains), then girls' dilemmas over whether the authentic self must be excluded from relationship in order for the girl to be accepted in relationships (with her parents) may be understood (in part) as an Oedipal dilemma, a struggle with her wish to be included in the parental couple's relationship. The recognition that the girl's pubertal body may be what threatens her connectedness to others, that the demand for "goodness," "niceness," "the perfect girl," may emanate from parents' (and culture's) representation of the pubertal daughter as a sexual threat that must be contained, and also from a projection of the girl's own unconscious Oedipal wishes (whether Oedipal or pre-oedipal, for mother or father, will be explored in the next chapter), might have opened up Gilligan's work in remarkably productive ways for feminism and psychology.

Regrettably, Gilligan never pursued this early insight in subsequent developmental studies and her theorizing about adolescent girls' experience of loss lacks depth as a result. Her occasional references to psychoanalytic concepts serve more as literate "asides" than theoretical guideposts; her conceptual framework does not respond to psychoanalytic questions of unconscious motivation, or internal psychic conflicts. Gilligan dismisses as misplaced psychoanalysis' traditional emphasis on adolescent conflicts over sex and aggression; for girls, "connection" (and the suffering over disconnection) is paramount. These needn't be mutually exclusive. I suggest that it is precisely conflicts over sexuality and aggression that riddle the struggle for connection. Gilligan herself (along with her co-authors) in *Between Voice and Silence* (Taylor et al.,

1995), seems to acknowledge that Black and working class girls certainly seem more aggressive, and explicitly sexual in their concerns. Yet this observation is not well-integrated into a general theory of girls' struggle for connection. Additionally, girls' relations to their "internal objects"(their psychical representations of significant people and relationships)—a concern of psychoanalytic theory and practice — may be profoundly preoccupied with conflicts over sexuality and aggression that prevail unconsciously. Why does the girl of 11 or 12 suddenly feel compelled to quell her "true" voice (and lose herself to silence) or lose relationships? Gilligan's own lost insight is that the girl's adolescent voice is resonant of her pubertal body, and carries an unacceptable incestuous desire that must be silenced.

Once we begin to ask and notice how girls position their bodies in relation to self and other, other imaginative possibilities open up. We can entertain thoughts of how concerns for "niceness" (read: femininity) among Gilligan's girls might represent also a defense against unacceptable aggressive and sexual Oedipal fantasies that, seeking fulfillment in dangerous incestuous "connections" and rivalries, might disrupt secure attachments. We can consider that for the African American girls Gilligan's team studied (Taylor et al., 1995), aggressive and sexually forthright behavior might represent not only a choice to express "true" voice no matter the relational cost, but also a defense against erotically-toned maternal dependency needs that may be unacceptable, even dangerous, in a hostile, racist environment that does not support emotional attachment. Acting tough and sexual may also reflect a struggle with how to represent oneself (psychically and socially) in a cultural and political context that refuses to recognize and validate as "feminine" African American girls and women (particularly if poor or working class).

What relations between bodies are possible? In jettisoning the psychoanalytic exploration of unconscious motivations and dynamic processes of connection, separation, attachment, dissociation, and *embodiment*, Gilligan forecloses the sort of theoretical work that would give her observations of girls' struggles with voice and silence the muscle to carry them forward (read: the observations, the girls) more powerfully.

Spinning out the thread of Gilligan's suggestive remarks about the girl's Oedipal conflicts and relational impasses may lead in directions Gilligan herself has never ventured. Although Beauvoir's rich and provocative work on girls' alienation in their bodies and problems of self-recognition provides much necessary ballast to the study of girls' psychic lives, she herself does not map the erotic and libidinal paths of the girl's embodied relations to her first love object (her mother) as these shift at puberty. In the next chapters, I will look at what happens to the relation of daughter and mother at puberty, and extend my discussion of the girl's embodiment to consider the conflicted homoeroticism of the daughter-mother bond.

CHAPTER THREE

"A Little Queer"[1]: The Pubertal Daughter's Shifting Representation of Self and Mother

"That earliest enwrapment of one female body with another can sooner or later be denied or rejected, felt as choking possessiveness, as rejection, trap, or taboo: but it is, in the beginning, the whole world." Adrienne Rich, in *Of Woman Born* (1976, p. 219)

"Mothers are the *best* lovers in the world: but I don't mind whispering to Marmee that I'd like to try all kinds." Jo, in *Little Women* (Alcott, 1868/1947, p. 572)

Several years ago, while teaching *Annie John* (1983), Jamaica Kincaid's short novel of a West Indian girlhood, to the thirty-five or so students enrolled in my undergraduate course on adolescent development, I asked the class what they thought of the relationship between 12-year-old Annie and her mother, Annie. An unusually charged debate ensued. Of course, the subject of adolescence seems to regularly and revealingly turn up psychic heat in many situations, and this was a lively group of engaged students: still, this mother-teen daughter discussion turned out to be particularly dicey. My students, mainly Caribbean, Latina and African American working class women in their twenties and early thirties, an equal number with children and without, rushed to take "sides" as if there were only two possible locations from which to speak to the question: for or against the daughter. The first to speak accused Annie of being a "spoiled" child, and disrespectful, requiring her mother's harshness to reign in all that naughtiness; a majority lined up behind this view. A few leapt in to defend the daughter (fiercely) against what they saw as a sudden, unfair, and incomprehensible meanness on

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[1] Says Alice in Wonderland to the Caterpillar, "'when you have to turn into a chrysalis—you will some day, you know – and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little queer, won't you?'" (Carroll, 1865/1993, p.28).

the part of her mother as Annie was becoming an adolescent. (Looking back after class, I could not detect--the conversation moved quickly, perhaps there were divisions that I didn't note--a clear correlation of students' cultural origins or parental status with their chosen side.) As a middle class white woman in my late thirties at the time (and not yet a mother myself), who numbered years of angry adolescent *sturm und drang* with my own mother, I was surprised to realize that I'd assumed my students would (naturally) identify as I did, with the angry daughter. (I too had chosen sides.)

Provoked by the passionate response of my students, I decided to stir things up more by proposing an idea that had only lately begun to form itself in my mind, and was quite different from my usual thinking about adolescent girls' conflicts with their mothers over their bodies and their sexuality. This thought was the germ for this chapter. What if Annie's mother, I speculated, found herself confused or embarrassed by her own intimate physical relationship with her daughter as Annie began to look more like a woman? What if Annie's sexual development made the mother queasy there was even something incestuous, taboo, and vaguely "lesbian", about the pleasure she'd taken in her young daughter's body? Could <u>that</u> have made her push Annie away? (Silence.) To my surprise, a young African American woman who'd never spoken in class raised her hand. "I think that's what happened to me with my mother, too," she ventured thoughtfully. "I remember how we used to be all hugs and kisses everywhere we went. But then one day when I was around 12 we were at the mall and I went to hold her hand but she pulled it away and said, 'you're too grown for that. People will think we're "funny" [i.e. lesbian, KW]. I felt real bad, because I didn't understand what was different."

Curious that my student's unexpected confession seemed to confirm my hunch about Annie and her mother's discomfort, I began to look and listen (and read) for the ways and moments homoerotic spaces between daughters and their mothers collapsed, or filled with trouble, at puberty. The psychoanalytic literature (e.g. Blos, 1962; Deutsch, 1944; Kaplan, 1984) traditionally holds that the pubertal daughter fears the homosexually charged "regressive pull" of her (internal) preoedipal attachment to her mother which intensifies as her body changes, and defensively, appropriately, *necessarily*, untangles herself from the maternal knot. A normative move out of the mother-daughter dyad (couple) is thus presumed to be generated by the daughter's discomfort with her own (erotically-toned) infantile wishes for maternal care, as well as her Oedipal desire for all the father offers. In this story the girl, compelled to separate from her mother by the uncomfortable heat of her own unconscious incestuous fantasy, becomes (happily and) heterosexually feminine as a result (though she retains the residue of her earliest love). Nowhere in the psychoanalytic or psychological literature did I find mention of the mother's erotic response to her daughter's body, or to how the girl might register that maternal response. Yet in daughters' narratives in fiction, memoir, personal accounts, and my own clinical encounters, what stood out was the sense that it was her mother, not the pubertal girl herself, who broke the spell of their mutual gaze, leaving the daughter disoriented, uncertain, lost, confused, and not a little angry.

All young girls do not, of course, enjoy a sense of easy eroticism with their mother that is interrupted at puberty, and I recognize that my reading of *Annie John* risks a romantic nostalgia for an idealized pre-pubertal daughter-mother bond. Certainly, many girls have felt their bodies or themselves never loved, or rejected earlier (cf. Elise, 2000),

with outright abuse or neglect; many experience emotional and/or physical distance made chronic by demands of material hardship their mother must negotiate (cf. Wade-Gayle, 1984). Maternal ambivalence about mothering children, or daughters in particular, often limits direct physical care or affection: cultural expectations and meanings of physical expressions of love vary tremendously and are shaped by class as well as race, ethnicity, nationality. Nevertheless, I would argue that *across* class, race, ethnicity, and nationality, whether daughter and mother shared erotic, physical closeness or watched each other from a distance, girls at puberty typically experience a shift in the way their mother looks (and thinks and feels) about them, which profoundly alters their sense of self and body.[2] These issues will be explored in the next chapter on maternal subjectivity. My reading of *Annie John* is not intended to universalize Annie's experience (although I nevertheless believe it does represent many common girlhood experiences), but to question the psychoanalytic narrative that reads psychic and physical distancing of pubertal daughter from mother as a normative, desirable product of the daughter's intrapsychic, developmental conflicts over her homo-erotic, maternal bond, but omits the intersubjective mind-body "dialogues" that take place between mothers and daughters.

Carol Gilligan also noticed Annie John's developmental trajectory, and has pressed the novel into service for her argument that girls suffer a "relational crisis" at

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[2] Carolyn Steedman, a British cultural historian who studies working class girlhood, writes of her bodily relation to her own working class mother: "Part of the desire to reproduce oneself as a body, as an entity in the real world [by becoming a mother], lies in conscious memory of someone approving that body...my conscious memory of much later years is of rarely meeting with this kind of physical confirmation and approval" (1992, p. 95). Lacking an internal sense of her mother gazing admiringly at her body, Steedman feels unable to reproduce. She finds in other working class autobiographies confirming stories of maternal coldness or unavailability, and she questions how girls interpret their mother's refusals and exclusions in terms of the social conditions of their lives.

adolescence in which they are forced to silence their "true" selves for the sake of relationships. Gilligan opens her introductory chapter "Women's Psychological Development: Implications for Psychotherapy," in *Women, Girls and Psychotherapy* (Gilligan, Rogers, et al., 1991), with an example from Kincaid's novel. Looking back on her life at age 16, Annie, writes Gilligan,

> tells the canonical story of human development...chronicling a seemingly inexorable process of physical growth and psychological separation. But she tells it as a story of hypocrisy and betrayal: " The bitter thing about it is that they have stayed the same and it is I who have changed, so that all the things I used to be and all the things I used to feel are as false as the teeth in my father's head...So now I, too, have hypocrisy, and breasts (small ones), and hair growing in the appropriate places, and sharp eyes, and I have made a vow never to be fooled again" (p. 133). (p. 6)

Gilligan suggests that many real-life girls of Annie's age, revise the story of their childhood naming "the relational life they have lived, often most intensely with their mothers, as 'false', or 'illogical', or 'stupid'" (1991, p. 7). Keen to enlist *Annie John* to demonstrate that separation-individuation is a cultural imperative that is resisted by girls, and betrays their experience of connection, Gilligan fails to recognize what Annie plainly sees-- that the betrayal, the hypocrisy, the *separation*, turns on her *body*.[3]

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[3] Kincaid's text is ripe for this interpretation of the problem of embodiment between pubertal daughter and mother: in Debold's (1991) reading of Annie John, which I came across only recently, she similarly points to Annie's body as the source of mother-daughter rupture. Gilligan seems to have determinedly avoided the signposts to such a reading.

I'd like to suggest a reading of *Annie John* that focuses on its erotics of development, its psychosexual narrative. Looking at *Annie John* as a pubertal *bildungsroman*, I will consider two inter-related points. The first is that pre-adolescent Annie's gaze at her mother's body is filled with homoeroticism and the desire for like(ness); the second takes in pubertal Annie's uneasy sense that her own changing body has changed the way her mother sees and feels about her. In fact, the more like her mother's body Annie's becomes, the more "Other" her mother seems to become, and the less recognizable Annie feels herself to be. Once loved for being like, Annie now feels different. Searching for what the daughter's and mother's gaze produce in the text, I find that the misrecognitions and maternal prohibitions of puberty alienate the erotic bond of likeness between daughter and mother even as the mother attempts to secure their mutual (feminine, heterosexual, reproductive) identification within the prevailing terms of the culture.

This reading of erotic disavowal as marking the site of Annie's pubertal loss and alienation calls to mind, perhaps sentimentally, Adrienne Rich's fine feminist observation in *Of Woman Born* (1976) that: "The loss of the daughter to the mother, the mother to the daughter, is the essential female tragedy" (p. 240). I read *Annie John* against the grain of much psychoanalytic theorizing about what motivates the pubertal girl's turn from her (internally regressive, pre-Oedipal) mother to heterosexuality, proposing a relation of the mother's gaze to the daughter's psycho-sexual dilemma. My reading also diverges from Carol Gilligan's recruitment of the novel to her arguments about loss of voice and connection, shifting to Annie's body the fulcrum of loss.

Psychoanalytic theory typically elaborates puberty as a psychosexual drama—the second phase of Freud's genital stage (1905/1962)—and reads it as a story of sexual

development in which the girl's "achievement" of normative femininity and heterosexuality is served by the psychic imperatives of separation and individuation that break-up the daughter-mother couple for good. The erotic valence of the girl's attachment to her mother is variously construed within psychoanalysis, (and designated by some as pre-Oedipal, others as negative Oedipal—designations which are often quite slippery, particularly in their "later editions" at puberty) but almost always recognized as primary in the girl's intrapsychic development. I want to make use of this theory, and to critique it from the standpoint of contemporary feminist discussions of gender and sexual development and subjectivity, attempting to bring together feminist psychoanalytic views of early childhood and psychoanalytic views of puberty. I'll sustain two theoretical arguments: the first concerns the need to theorize the intersubjective, erotic, encounter of the pubertal daughter and her mother: in particular, what the mother's subjectivity produces in the girl's psychic life—how desire and identification circulate between the two. The second addresses the girl's need to have her homoerotic desire, and her body, recognized and ratified by her mother. Both arguments converge in a call for more flexible and inclusive representations—psychoanalytic and more broadly cultural—of daughter-mother attachment and eroticism, as well as a mourning for the normative loss of that erotic tie. The more I've thought about it, the more I've become convinced that the capacity to tolerate the shifts, ambiguities and paradoxes of homoerotic desire between pubertal daughter and mother may be critical to producing girls who sustain more flexible and inclusive—*healthier*-- gender and sexual self-representations and experiences.

Rapture, rupture, and repudiation

Let me say from the outset that I consider the fictional *Annie John* as good a primer of female pubertal development as one can find, and over the years have recommended it to anyone who will listen—clinicians, parents, teenage daughters, friends, teachers. In this short, lush, compelling coming-of-age story of an observant girl keenly aware of her own mind and body (in the quirky tradition of female adolescent narrators), we find all the contradictions and paradoxes of this liminal developmental moment. Told in the first person, *Annie John* is unquestionably the daughter's story. Annie begins her story when she is 10 years old (like Jane Eyre, the eponymous heroine-narrator of Annie's favorite novel), and charts her development until she leaves home seven years later to travel to England. The narrative is marked by a series of misrecognitions and disavowals that plot a shift from the seemingly blissful dyadic unity of mother and pre-pubertal daughter to the increasingly alienated separateness of the pair in Annie's adolescence. The text moves from Annie's pre-pubertal gaze that erotically takes in her mother's beauty and power, and identifies with it; to her surprised registration of her mother's look away from her at puberty, and her resentment of and resignation to a gaze of maternal disapproval; and finally, to a sense of alienation that makes it difficult for her to listen to, let alone look at, her mother at all.

Annie John is powered at first by the daughter's erotic relation to her mother's body. In writing thick with cultural detail, Kincaid represents Annie's passion for her mother through the daughter's pleasurable memory of everyday ritual, and rapt attentiveness to her mother's every movement. Fragrant baths infused with herbs and oils (prescribed by a wise woman to protect mother and daughter from vengeful spirits sent

by Annie's father's former lovers) are the setting for luxurious intimacy and suggest the mimetic relation of daughter to mother (and the exclusivity of their bond): "As we sat in this bath, my mother would bathe different parts of my body; then she would do the same to herself" (p. 14). The mother's handling of different parts of her daughter's body, then her own, establishes a call and response from adult-body to child-body, a rhythm that establishes likeness, and offers satisfaction—*pleasure*--in likeness.

Annie's life as we read it at this moment is a catalogue of her mother's beauty. She is filled with rapture when describing her mother:

> When my eyes rested on my father, I didn't think much of the way he looked. But when my eyes rested on my mother, I found her beautiful. Her head looked as though it should be on a sixpence. What a beautiful long neck, and long plaited hair... Her nose was the shape of a flower on the brink of opening. Her mouth, moving up and down as she ate and talked at the same time, was such a beautiful mouth I could have looked at it forever if I had to and not mind...(pp. 18-19)

Poet and essayist Adrienne Rich, in her chapter "Motherhood and Daughterhood" in her now classic feminist text, *Of Woman Born* (1976), evokes a strikingly similar sense of the daughter's intimate relation to her mother's body (in contrast to her father's) when she writes:

> Hers was the first female body I ever looked at, to know what women were, what I was to be. I remember taking baths with her in the hot summers of early childhood, playing with her in the cool water. As a young child I thought how beautiful she was: a print of Botticelli's Venus on the wall, half smiling, hair

> flowing, associated itself in my mind with her...My father's tense, narrow body did not seize my imagination...(p.219)

The sensual perception of her mother's beloved body is the leitmotif of Annie's story—of her life—up until puberty. Annie John describes observing her mother as if in a dream state:

> ...I sometimes sat at her side, leaning against her, or I would crouch on my knees behind her back and lean over her shoulder. As I did this, I would occasionally sniff at her neck, or behind her ears, or at her hair. She smelled sometimes of lemons, sometimes of sage, sometimes of roses, sometimes of bayleaf. At times I would no longer hear what she was saying; I just liked to look at her mouth as it opened and closed over words, or as she laughed. (p. 22)

In an earlier (unpublished) analysis of this text, I wrote that "Annie is attached to her mother's body as if by an umbilical cord," and that "their attachment saturates the text like leaky breast milk." However, I think these metaphors miss something of the romantic, desiring valence of Annie's gaze, beyond the quality of reverie her mother's smell evokes as they move through the garden together. Annie is drawn to the strength and movement of her mother's body—her activity—not just her beauty, or her nurturing work.

> As my mother went around preparing our supper, picking up clothes from off the clothes-line, I would sit in a corner of our yard and watch her. She never stood still. Her powerful legs carried her from one part of the yard to the other, and in and out of the house...sometimes when I gave her the herbs, she might stoop down and kiss me on my lips and then on my neck. It was in such a paradise that I lived. (p. 25)

I am suggesting that it is not some "innocent" garden of symbiotic, pre-Oedipal delight Kincaid refers to when she writes of Annie's gazing at her mother's every move, every task around house, garden, and neighborhood. The mother's "phallic," active, presence, and her sensuality, intermingle in the daughter's imagination. Perhaps it is our too-narrow (and hetero-normative) view of eroticism that typically refuses to understand this connection between mother and daughter as imbued with an erotic desire for like(ness), not only infantile sensuality (cf. Elise, 2000; Wrye & Welles, 1994).

The sense is echoed in French author Annie Ernaux's memoir of her mother, *A Woman's Story* (1988/1991). "Until I was twenty-five, I could have devoured the whole sea, and all the fish with it!" (p. 16). Ernaux recalls her vigorous, voracious, mother exclaiming to the admiring, pre-adolescent daughter the writer used to be. Ernaux's recollection of her mother's toilette provides a double-image: we watch the mother through the daughter's eyes, and we watch the daughter watching her, gazing in rapt attention as,

> [s]he powdered her face with a puff in a mirror above the sink and dabbed perfume behind her ear. When she put on lipstick, she always started with the heart-shaped bit in the middle. She turned to face the wall when she fastened her corset. Her flesh bulged through the crisscross of laces, joined together at the waist by a knot and a small rosette. I knew every detail of her body. I thought that I would grow up to become her. (p. 34)

Remembering the sight of her mother riding ahead of them on a bicycle, viewed from Annie's position seated on the crossbar of her father's bicycle, Ernaux concludes: "I believe we were both in love with my mother" (p. 34).

The pre-pubertal daughter's idealization and identification with her mother as free-spirited heroine of her own story is often joyfully and proudly encouraged by the mother herself. Annie John rehearses the story of her mother running away from her father's house in Dominica after a quarrel, and arriving in Antigua after a fierce storm at sea with her painted trunk intact. She knows by heart all the items in this trunk in which her mother—as if containing her daughter's story within her own---has stored mementos of her daughter Annie's infancy and childhood: her first chemise, her diapers, birthday dresses, and school tablets. With these objects, the mother, Annie, told ritualized stories about young Annie's growing up. Mother would recount with particular pleasure Annie's independent and unruly spirit, even as she kicked in utero: "You see, even then you were hard to manage" (p. 22). Such stories told by mother to daughter form a particular mode of narrative in daughter's stories, announcing the mother's adventure as the condition of possibility of the daughter's life.[4] Here, in the intimate setting of storytelling, Annie's mother encourages her daughter's pleasure and pride in their mutual identification with each other's passion and independence. The daughter uses her mother's difference to help constitute her own.

The daughter's love of her mother may, however, also be haunted by anxiety about of the mother's independent subjectivity, for surely a mother with her own needs

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[4] In *Jane Eyre* (1847/1987), it is mother's rebelliousness--marrying against her parents—that enables Jane's own rebelliousness. In *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (Marshall, 1959), the daughter, Selina Boyce, tells her mother: "...I'm truly your child. Remember how you used to talk about how you left home and came here alone as a girl of eighteen and was your own woman? I used to love hearing that" (quoted in Olsen, 1984, p. 75). The mother's story may also function as a point of comparison, and judgement, for the daughter—a signal of the mother's pride, or competitiveness. In William's *The Glass Menagerie* (1945/2000), the mother mourns her own glorious past in the damaged body of her daughter.

and desires may leave (cf. Benjamin, 1995, and Chodorow, 1989, for discussions of the fantasy of the mother's omnipotence or perfection). Turning 12 and entering a new, more grown-up school, Annie expresses the tension between contradictory aspects of her experience of the mother's subjectivity in an autobiographical essay she writes telling of a childhood experience with her mother, and the repeated dreams of it that followed in the summer past. Annie writes that when she was a small child, her mother often took her swimming in the sea, to strengthen her health. Her mother was a masterful swimmer, and mother and daughter would swim naked, the child's arms wrapped around her mother's neck as she rode on her back, like sea mammals:

> I would place my ear against her neck, and it was as if I were listening to a giant shell, for all the sounds around me—the sea, the wind, the birds screeching—would seem as if they came from inside her, the way the sounds of the sea are in a seashell. (p. 43)

It is not only the "oceanic" feeling the daughter found nestled against her mother's body, but a sense of maternal agency; the mother is both the source of goodness and life, and the way to enter into the world in safety.

One day, Annie remembers, as she sat on shore watching her mother swim and dive she became distracted, and her mother disappeared from sight. Annie thought herself all alone and her mother lost, and "a huge black space then opened up in front of me and I fell inside it" (p. 43). Finally, she spies her mother sunbathing on a rock having swum some distance out to sea, apparently lost in her own enjoyment, and unaware of her young daughter's distress. The elemental pleasure of creature-ly companionship and protection mother offers offspring, even at a distance, is replaced by panic as Annie

realizes her mother's out-of-reach-ness signifies their separateness, and the mother's capacity to please herself -- and to leave.

In the childhood edition of this event, the mother returns and comforts Annie, reassuring her that she will never leave. But when 12-year-old Annie tells her mother of the recurring nightmares of the incident (in the dreams her mother remains forever drawing circles on the sea-rock, often joined by Annie's father, both laughing), her mother turns her back and coolly advises that Annie must keep away from unripe fruit at bedtime. Narrator Annie confides that she changed the last part of the story when she wrote it for class, as she felt ashamed for being in her mother's disfavor. Rejected as she seeks familiar reassurance, Annie is flooded with the sense that her mother might be capable of leaving her after all.

In fact, Annie's nightmares condense the sense of losing her mother to her freedom at sea, and her recent witnessing of a "primal scene" between her parents that, along with changes in her own body, seems to change everything. Afterward, her mother's power seems to shrink; "she looked small and funny" (p. 31). Having accidentally spied her mother's hand tracing circles on her father's back in bed, "I was sure I could never let those hands touch me again; I was sure I could never let her kiss me again. All that was finished" (p. 32).

Paradise Lost

For Annie at twelve, paradise is lost. (cf. Elise [2000, p. 132] for a similar use of the idea of "paradise lost" to describe the young girl's loss of her primary maternal-erotic relationship during early childhood.) Kincaid draws a sequence in which the mother responds to Annie's pubertal body by initiating new education in acting "ladylike," and

by withdrawing a large measure of affection. In turn, Annie feels hurt and confused; she does not recognize her mother's behavior, and has trouble recognizing herself.

> Behind a closed door, I stood naked in front of a mirror and looked at myself from head to toe... I was so long and bony that I more than filled up the mirror, and my small ribs pressed out against my skin. I tried to push my unruly hair down against my head so that it would lie flat, but as soon as I let it go it bounced up again. I could see small tufts of hair under my arms. And then I got a good look at my nose...if I didn't know I was me standing there I would have wondered about that strange girl—and to think that only so recently my nose had been a small thing, the size of a rosebud. But what could I do? I thought of begging my mother to ask my father if he could build for me a set of clamps into which I could screw myself at night before going to sleep and which would surely cut back on my growing. I was about to ask her about this when I remembered that a few days earlier I had asked in my most pleasing, winning way for a look through the trunk. A person I did not recognize answered in a voice I did not recognize, "Absolutely not! You and I don't have time for that anymore". (p. 27)

No sooner does Annie notice changes in her own body than her mother changes the terms of their relationship. They are no longer to dress alike, or enjoy the pleasures of twinship. Kincaid observes the insidious way the new hairs under Annie's arms seem to irritate the shared skin of the mother-daughter dyad, promising like loose threads to unravel the alike-ness Annie's mother had shaped with the matching dresses she'd sewn them from the same cloth.

When 12-year-old Annie happily picks out beautiful new fabric for matching dresses on their yearly trip to the store for the occasion of her mother's birthday, her mother announces abruptly: "Oh, no. You are getting too old for that. It's time you had your own clothes. You just cannot go around the rest of your life looking like a little me" (p. 26). Annie is devastated:

> To say that I felt the earth swept away from under me would not be going too far. It wasn't just what she said, but the way she said it. No accompanying little laugh. No bending over and kissing my wet little forehead...(p. 26)

Here it is the mother who inaugurates a rupture that embitters and confuses the daughter who looks to her for an affectionate embrace and recognition of their similarities: "...I was never able to wear my own dress or see my mother in hers without feeling bitterness and hatred, directed not so much at my mother as toward, I suppose, life in general" (p. 26). It is her mother who introduces Annie to the psychological and cultural requirements of the "real" world of grown-up femininity—separateness, difference, alienation.

Contrary to the traditional psychoanalytic story that holds that the daughter turns away from her mother at puberty in defense against her own regressive desire to be cared for by the pleasure-giving mother of babyhood, Kincaid gives us a mother who turns away first from her pubertal daughter, forbidding desire and insisting upon identification under new terms. The gaze marks a place of loss between mother and daughter. It may well be that this is part Annie's projection, her fantasy. That this narrative is told from the daughter's point of view emphasizes the girl's reactions and fantasies regarding her mother's behavior; it does not, of course, tell us the "truth" about the (fictional) mother's

responses, nor answer the question of whether the girl projects her own anxieties and pubertal concerns onto the mother (who she then experiences as aggressive, as Annie does). But I'd argue that we have as much to learn by understanding it as a representation that takes in, responds to, aspects of the mother's behavior. Annie's mother invites physical intimacy, evokes desire and seems to mirror it, and then turns it away as Annie's body begins to change. The daughter's longing for her mother can no longer be contained or satisfied between them.

Annie can't avoid reading in her mother's responses that this new set of "young lady" rules has something to do with her changing body: "She didn't say exactly just what it was that make me on the verge of becoming a young lady, and I was glad of that, because I didn't want to know" (p. 26). I am reminded of Beauvoir's *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (1958/1959), in which she writes that as she approached puberty, she concluded from her mother's (and other adults') determined avoidance of sexual subjects " [it] must be that the body was by reason of its own nature a dangerous object when every allusion to its existence, whether serious or frivolous, seemed fraught with peril" (p. 88).

In her memoir, Annie Ernaux (1988/1991) recalls a feeling much like Annie John's of being uneasily rejected by her mother, and likewise associates the unease with reaching puberty. As noted earlier in this chapter, her romance with her mother had been a pleasurable feature of childhood; yet during adolescence, everything changed: "She didn't like to see me grow up. When she saw me undressed, my body seemed to repel her" (p. 48).

Writing of a traumatically different time and place, Toni Morrison produces a remarkably similar moment of mother-daughter rupture in her novel of slavery and

Reconstruction, *Beloved* (1987). For many years, the girl, Denver, and her mother, Sethe, had lived as a twosome set apart from the outside world (their insular dyad extended well-beyond the age of 12), with only the intrusions of the baby ghost Beloved to disrupt their shared solitude. But when Paul D, Sethe's friend during their years of enslavement arrives at their door, the adolescent daughter suddenly becomes lonely in the presence of the mother. And she locates the disruption, the loss, in the field of the maternal gaze (and in the mother's turn from daughter to man):

> The one who never looked away, who when a man got stomped to death by a mare right in front of Sawyer's restaurant did not look away; and when a sow began eating her own litter did not look away then either...Now here was this woman with the presence of mind to repair a dog gone savage with pain rocking her crossed ankles and looking away from her own daughter's body. As though the size of it was more than vision could bear. (pp. 14-15)

Here, it is the intrusion of a man as Oedipal rival that breaks into the girl's coupling with her mother, and makes the mother look away, suddenly uncomfortable with her daughter's body.

These writers express the complicated sense of need, disappointment, exclusion, and jealousy that saturate the daughter's experience of her mother during adolescence, all of which appear to the girl as linked in some rather inchoate way to her body. Estrangement from the mother seems to follow on the sense of strangeness and newness of the girl's pubertal body. Whatever the internal, intrapsychic dynamics at work here, there are also intersubjective filaments along which affects, fantasies, wishes and ideas about the body are communicated and shaped between daughter and mother, and tidal

flows of thoughts and feelings that circulate (conscious and unconscious) meanings about the girl's changing body between the two.

Kincaid gives us a fictional daughter who, like many real-life girls, responds to the sense of dislocation in her relation to her mother/herself by moving away from the unsettling maternal bond toward homosocial romances with other girls. These friendships occupy a central place in Annie's narrative. As traditional psychoanalytic theory would have it, girl-girl love, or the girl's infatuation with an older idealized woman (a teacher, for example) functions to distance the daughter in her external relations from the frighteningly regressive longings for merger with her mother that characterize her internal world, and serves the normative course of separation-individuation (cf. Sullivan, 1965; Blos, 1962; Deutsch, 1944). In Annie's case, we see how romantic relationships with other girls compensate for the withdrawal of her mother's approval as well. In other words, at puberty Annie loses her mother's idealizing admiration of her as a little girl (who is "just like me"), and loses her mother as idealized figure of identification. Annie feels so highly regarded by her best friend, with whom she is "in love," that she never tells her about her "changed feeling" for her mother: "I couldn't bear for her to see the great thing I had had once and then lost without an explanation" (p. 48). It is important to note that Annie's body—getting breasts, beginning her period—becomes a way to connect with other girls and sustain what in toddlerhood would be called "practicing grandiosity" (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975) in the face of the deflating experiences of loss. With other girls, Annie finds a space for mutually recognizing a shared inner experience of bodily change and feeling — a space from which she feels excluded by her mother.

Annie goes on to tell of her mischievous resistance to learning the ways of young-ladies: she makes farting sounds in manners lesson and uninvited, eats her piano teacher's plums. As a consequence of Annie's persistent naughtiness, (and her flaunting of bourgeois female behavior) her mother withholds recognition:

> When the piano teacher told her of my misdeed, she turned and walked away from me, and I wasn't sure that if she had been asked who I was she wouldn't have said, "I don't know", right then and there. What a new thing this was for me: my mother's back turned on me in disgust...before this young-lady business I could sit and think of my mother, see her doing one thing or another, and always her face bore a smile for me. Now I often saw her with the corners of her mouth turned down in disapproval of me. (p.28)

As literary critic Mary Jacobus (1995) writes, "a daughter is the privileged object of the mother's narcissistic gaze" (p. 272): yet puberty destabilizes the daughter's reassuring representation of maternal approval. The shift in her mother's gaze alters the internal representation of her mother psychically available to Annie to keep her company, and to identify with.

Like the unnamed mother of Kincaid's (hard-to-categorize) short prose-piece "Girl," who sharply recites all the lessons of domestic femininity for her daughter: "this is how to sew on a button...this is how you sweep a corner...this is how you smile to someone you don't like too much...this is how you set a table for tea..." (all of these accompanied by injunctions about "the slut I know you are so bent on becoming") (1978, p. 4). Annie's mother believes it is her job to teach her daughter how to be a woman: both their successes depend on it. It is a feminist chestnut that mother is simultaneously

victim and enforcer of patriarchal relations. To her is assigned the primary role in inculcating feminine subordination in her daughter. The mother, in her intimate, private relation to her daughter, reads the public expectations of patriarchy onto her daughter's body. As Adrienne Rich observes,

> A mother's victimization does not merely humiliate her, it mutilates the daughter who watches her for clues as to what it means to be a woman. Like the traditional foot-bound Chinese woman, she passes on her own affliction. The mother's self-hatred and low expectations are the binding rags of the daughter's psyche. (1976, pp. 246-247)[5]

The tension here is that the mother passes on not only self-hatred, but the sense of pride in successfully embodying and enacting femininity.

It is also important to note that it is via an apprenticeship in femininity that Annie's mother intends to inculcate middle-class behaviors and aspirations in her daughter. In other words, femininity is made to carry, and do the work of, class. (Chapter 4, on the mother's subjectivity, will address this issue at greater length.) When she bars tomboy pursuits, like marbles, and thwarts Annie's play with the transgressive, messy and dirty "Red-Girl", Annie's mother means to exclude lower-class activities from her

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[5] Some feminist critics (cf. Lawler, 2000; Apter, 1990) have pointed out the risk in others' feminist critiques of blaming mothers themselves for the reproduction of gender and heterosexuality; yet a frank scrutiny of the mother's place in the daughter's psyche mustn't be obscured by misplaced worry over protecting the mother from the burden of being "good enough" to undo gender—it isn't feminism that burdens the mother, but the whole apparatus of social, economic, cultural, political and psychic relations of power that positions the mother in her intimate relation to the daughter's mind and body, and demand that she apprentice her daughter in domestic femininity. On the other hand, plenty of psychological writing has saddled the mother with unmanageable guilt for her role in producing and reproducing all manner of problems in her children, and it is necessary, I think, to guard against producing yet another bind for the mother.

daughter's repertoire, and lower-class girls (presumably the ones who like marbles and play in the dirt like boys) from her circle of friends. The mother, whose class status has been determined first by her father, then her husband, believes she can secure class privilege and access mobility for her daughter only insofar as she can teach her to embody the rules of bourgeois femininity—to accumulate what might be called "feminine capital"— a demand that becomes pressing as her daughter matures physically. In childhood, it was Annie's mother who first introduced her to the wonders of marbles (marveling at the beauty of the small sphere of amber glass she gives her as a gift); several years later, with the onset of puberty, she reverses herself and forbids Annie to play with them.

Kincaid stages a scene of adolescent hysteria immediately following on the mother's misrecognition of Annie's interaction with neighborhood boys who have been teasing her. Embarrassed and confused by the boys' laughter, Annie walks home quickly, for she "began to feel alternately too big and too small" (p. 101)—like Alice in Wonderland. Rather than offering sympathy to Annie and coming to her defense as she did in an earlier childhood edition of this event, her mother instead accuses her of eliciting attention from the boys by behaving in an unlady-like manner – like a "slut." To which Annie responds, "[a]s if to save myself": "like mother like daughter" inverting the affection and pride of identification in the expression "like father, like son" (p. 102).

The pain of this misrecognition is so acute and deep that a great "black thing" (cf. Cardinal, 1984) grows within each of them, and between them. As with the incident recollected in Annie's school essay, when her mother disappeared from sight while swimming and a "huge black space" opened up inside her, Annie feels swallowed up by

the dense emptiness of loss lodged within a "thimble" in her chest. She falls into a somnambulant illness from which she can't be stirred (like her heroine Jane Eyre who, after a similarly harsh scolding by her aunt, has a "fit" in the "Red-room" [Bronte, 1847/1987] and falls ill). When she awakens, the novel shifts to the scene of her departure from home at age 17. Impelled by the final, unbearable rupture with her mother, Annie prepares to leave for England.

What has happened between the ages of 10 and 17 that has curdled the relationship of daughter and mother like spoiled milk? Where did these successive versions of her mother come from? By the end of Annie's narrative, the idyllic pleasures of pre-adolescent daughter-mother romance have been eclipsed by the misrecognitions of puberty and the alienation of adolescence, and mother has been lost to daughter (and daughter to mother) in a fundamental way. The loss, however, is well-concealed: Annie can't wait to get away from her home, from her mother: "I never wanted to lie in my bed and hear her get dressed, washing her face, brushing her teeth, and gargling. I especially never wanted to lie in my bed and hear my mother gargling again" (p. 131). With this line Kincaid captures the intense revulsion and disdain for their (our) mothers' body-habits that many grown women recall with embarrassing acuity from their (our) own adolescence. It is the proximity to her mother's body Annie cannot abide: the fantasy of limitless sensual possibility and beauty has been obliterated, along with a contented erotic identification: her body is gross. (What a contrast to the quality of reverie with which Annie once gazed at her mother's mouth: "Her mouth, moving up and down as she ate and talked at the same time, was such a beautiful mouth I could have looked at it forever

if I had to and not mind..."(p. 18). As Beauvoir, in *A Very Easy Death* (1964/1965), writes of her dying mother:

> No body existed less for me: none existed more. As a child I loved it dearly; as an adolescent it had filled me with an uneasy repulsion: all this was perfectly in the ordinary course of things and it seemed reasonable to me that her body should retain it's dual nature, that it should be both repugnant and holy—a taboo. (pp. 19-20)

Annie's relation to her mother's body shifts between mimesis and differentiation, identification and repudiation, desire and repugnance. She struggles with a daughter's questions: What does my mother see and feel when she looks at me? How does she feel about my body, and I about hers? Whose body is this, anyway, hers or mine? Do I have to I submit to her (and to the feminine constraints she endorses) for her to want me? Can I have my self, my own body, my own desire, and still have her?

Kincaid ultimately plots a separation-individuation trajectory in which the daughter's only escape from the maternal is to get as far away as possible. Yet she ironizes the aggrieved daughter's complaint, returning us to the place of reversals and projections of mother and daughter, the ambivalent inheritance of her mother's body, and the embodied story of disappointment, separation and loss as Annie mentally sums up her life while she lays in bed on her last morning in her parents' home:

> Why, I wonder, didn't I see the hypocrite in my mother when, over the years, she said that she loved me and could hardly live without me, while at the same time proposing and arranging separation after separation, including this one, which, unbeknownst to her *I* have arranged to be permanent? So now I, too, have

> hypocrisy, and breasts (small ones), and hair growing in the appropriate places, and sharp eyes, and I have made a vow never to be fooled again. (p. 133)

Annie turns passive to active, humiliation and disillusionment to rage and revenge against the mother who let her imagine they were a couple, while knowing the bitter truth all along. She defiantly claims her body, the separation from her mother, and the "hypocrisy" of it all, as sources of both pain and power. The power she will use to see clearly, and to reject the mother and her story of married domesticity. But the painful story of losing her mother as fantasied lover—what will become of that? *Annie John* reverberates with eroticism, loss, aggression, and ambivalence, and pushes forward feminist and psychoanalytic questions of female subjectivity and embodiment. I'll now turn to psychoanalytic theory for a rethinking of the story of Annie and her mother at puberty, and a further consideration of the psychodynamics of the daughter-mother relation.

Homoeroticism and the "dangers" of puberty: psychoanalytic stories (part one)

In many respects, Annie John's story reads like a case study out of Helene Deutsch's *Psychology of Women*, Volume I (1944) (with a twist). Annie, a girl of 12 or 13, is stirred by her erotically-tinged, pre-Oedipally flavored love of her mother and also identified with her phallic mother's activity and power. At puberty, she turns away from her mother with no small measure of aggression. First, according to Deutsch, a girl turns toward intense crushes on other girls--which Annie does, and then toward boys--which Annie does not (the twist). Although Deutsch registers the ambivalence of the daughter-mother bond as deriving from both girl and woman, she doesn't read the mother's own erotic feelings and fears into the psychic equation that combines and divides them as the

girl grows. Deutsch would say that Annie is impelled by the developmental imperatives of growing up and breaking from incestuous love objects, and her fears that puberty will sweep her back into childish dependency and need. The path from eroticized love of mother to passive heterosexuality may necessitate quite a scramble, according to Deutsch, but barring the dangers of too much "phallic" activity, most "normal" girls will arrive. Is Annie "normal"?

Gilligan, as we have seen, reads Annie as a resister who recognizes the hypocrisy and loss in separation even as she pretends to comply with the cultural injunctions her mother enforces. The loss of Annie's *erotic* attachment to her mother, however, and all it represents, is not one that Gilligan's reading takes in. Annie, like "real life" girls, silences her "true" voice (she takes it "underground"), and relinquishes authentic relationships—including the one with her mother-- in order to preserve connection: neither the girl's embodied desire, nor her mother's, figures into this feminine equation of connection and silence.

Peter Blos, author of one of the most influential psychoanalytic texts on adolescent development, entitled *On Adolescence* (1962), tells the drama of the girl's sexual development at puberty as a story about the mother. Blos writes that "the prolonged and painful severance from the mother constitutes the major task" of puberty for the girl (p. 66). For Blos, the girl's prepubertal, pubertal, and later adolescent development--- the whole through-line of it—evolves under the aegis of her relationship to her mother. It is the immense energy of the earliest tie that in fact powers her transition to feminine heterosexuality, according to Blos. (Further references in this chapter are to Blos, 1962)

The girl faces certain spectacular difficulties which boys sidestep. In Blos' view, boys have only to renounce passivity; girls must relinquish their first love object—mother—a much more conflictual and painful task. That the boy "continues to elaborate his psychosexual progression in relation to the same person, namely, the mother, relieves him from this massive repression of pre-genitality." (1962, p. 31) For the girl, the embrace of passive receptivity, the goal of "normal" feminine development, must come at the expense of her ongoing tie to her mother, which comprises a fundamental piece of her sexuality:

> The progression by which the girl ascends [emphasis added] from her primitive passive oral dependency to passive genital receptivity requires a massive repression of infantile genital sexuality which is historically bound up with the primary mother-child relationship. (p. 31)

Heterosexuality, that is, is purchased with the girl's homoerotic relationship with her mother; her hetero-desire is constituted as an effect of the barring of the mother as an object of desire. (Here, Blos seems in line with arguments by Butler 1990; 1993, 1995; see also Elise, 2000). Further, in giving up her mother according to the psychological (and cultural) imperatives of the Oedipal complex, the girl must do violence against aspects of her sexual-self (cf. Goldner, 1991), including those impulses and responses deriving from her mother's bodily care. Why does she comply?

The classical idea here is, of course, that the girl turns to the Oedipal father in disappointed narcissism after realizing her mother is deficient (castrated). With the inauguration of the girl's positive (passive) Oedipal complex, desire for the mother and identification with her activity drop out of the negative Oedipal equation. What remains is a feminized, heterosexualized girl in love with her father and identified with her

mother's passivity. (Feminists may well question the term "positive" to designate this turn of events.) Pre-puberty and puberty are presumed to recapitulate the girl's pre-Oedipal and negative Oedipal situation, and require a positive Oedipal "solution" to rescue the girl from her regressed state.

Blos suggests that the "thrust to activity" which precedes an increasing passivity at puberty observed in girls by Deutsch (1944), may be best accounted for as:

> an attempt to master actively what she has experienced passively while in the care of the nurturing mother: instead of taking the preoedipal mother as love object, the girl identifies temporarily with her active phallic image. The girl's transient phallic illusion gives this period an exalted vital tenor, which does not lack a danger of fixation. (p. 70)

Only with puberty does the girl capitulate to passivity: the pre-pubertal girl is all-activity, initiative, curiosity. In this view, the activity of the pre-pubertal girl is rooted in her identification with the activity of the phallic mother, used defensively to beat back the passive longing for the pre-oedipal mother's care. In other words, the identification with her mother's phallic activity countervales against the girl's longing and fear of submission: in this version of the equation, identification opposes a regressed, undifferentiated, overwhelming, dependent sort of desire. Hard, then, for the girl to give up "her newly-won preadolescent identity as the amazon, often masquerading as the vamp, which for a time has safeguarded her against the regression to the preoedipal mother" (p. 75). But give it up she must, according to both Blos and Deutsch: "That this activity contains certain dangers for the future sexual development of the girl, i.e. for her future passivity, cannot be denied" (Deutsch, p. 5).

I'd like to suggest that we find in the pre-pubertal girl's activity in relation to her mother a parallel to what Benjamin (1988a) has called the young boy's "identificatory love of the father" who represents the boy's "love affair with the world." Benjamin uses this term to designate love of the father as outside, suggesting that the child's relation to the mother of early childhood is too "sticky" and not outside enough. In a sense, we might also think of this as "dis-identificatory love," in that the boy is able to use both the identification and loving, erotic bond with his father to bring him out of the mother's exclusive orbit and into the exciting world "outside." What I am suggesting is that the pre-and early pubertal girl may experience and use the (phallic) mother as both admired, identificatory figure of activity, and as love object. This is not an identification with the phallic mother that provisionally replaces desire for her, but simultaneously a love for her as active and powerful as well as containing and care-giving, and an identification with her that sustains activity and power in the girl. This is activity and identification that is loaded with pleasure and desire, not merely fear and defense against loss (castration). It is a homoerotic, identificatory love. From a feminist point of view, it is easy to see how identification with the active, "phallic" mother, and desire for her, might well be preferable to identification with the passive, feminine, desexualized-heterosexual mother. Further, we might imagine that the mother initially allows and is narcissistically gratified and even thrilled by this identification with her as phallic, and experiences the pleasures of mutual homoerotic appreciation. However, as the girl's pubertal body sets in vigorous motion all the heterosexual-reproductive-feminine imperatives of the culture-- most especially taboos against homosexuality and incest-- her mother turns away her erotic love, attempts to reverse the terms of their mutual identification, and insists on her

daughter's positive Oedipal stance (much as Elise [2000] argues she does in the first edition of this conflict in early childhood).

A girl's turn toward premature heterosexuality, or what Blos calls pseudoheterosexuality, is a defensive move that attempts to push back against the regressive pull of preoedipality. Pointing to delinquency and sexual "acting-out" among girls as an extreme expression of normal drive organization and developmental conflict, Blos directs us that "careful scrutiny reveals that the girl's turn to heterosexual acting out, which appears to represent a recrudescence of oedipal wishes, proves really to be related to earlier fixation points lying in the pre-genital phases of psychosexual development" (p. 67). In other words, we once again find heterosexuality figured as a defense against "the strong regressive pull to the preoedipal mother and the panic which this surrender evokes" (p. 67), i.e. homosexual panic. In fact, it is not so clear what distinguishes pseudoheterosexuality from "authentic" heterosexuality in Blos's view, and both might be said to acquire the appearance of the "real" through reiterative practice (cf. Butler, 1990).

Interestingly, Blos remarks that "the phallic quality of her sexuality [i.e. its aggressive, seductive content — KW] is prominent at this stage and affords her for a brief period an unusual sense of adequacy and completeness" (p. 67). Remarkably, Blos himself seems to accept the briefness of the girl's sense of "adequacy and completeness," as within the "natural" course of development, and seems unconcerned with her loss. Yet it is certainly not clear that the girl trades up in fleeing her homo-love; paradoxically, in her effort to refuse passivity and submission to the omnipotent mother of fantasy and to assert her own power, she winds up passive (feminine and heterosexual) after all, and induced to like it.

Blos reminds us of Freud's (1931) view that "the oedipal conflict in the girl is not brought to such an abrupt and fateful termination as is the boys. The girl remains in the oedipal situation for an indefinite period: she only abandons it late in life, and then incompletely" (p. 66). Reading Freud's (1905) analysis of Dora, Blos finds evidence for his claim that the Oedipal conflicts of adolescence often serve to screen a deeper, more unconscious, pre-Oedipal longing. Blos argues along with Freud that

> behind Dora's supervalent train of thought, which was concerned with her father's relation to Frau K., there lay a feeling of jealousy which had that lady as its *object*--- a feeling, that is, which could only be based upon an affection on Dora's part for one of her own sex. (Freud quoted in Blos, p. 69). Blos offers a clarifying paraphrase, leaving no room for ambiguity as to the origins of this jealousy: it was a feeling "which could only be based upon an affection on the girl's part for her mother" (p. 69).

Quoting Freud on the Oedipal situation to draw a parallel to the girl's pubertal situation, Blos writes:

> Whenever an unduly strong attachment to the father marks the girl's oedipal situation, unquestionably the precursor of this emotion is always an unduly deep and persistent attachment to the mother of the preoedipal years. That is, a strong father attachment follows a strong mother attachment. "The great dependence on the father in women merely takes over the heritage of an equally great attachment to the mother" (Freud, 1931). (Blos, 1962, p. 28)

Citing Greenacre's 1948 observation that Oedipus notwithstanding, mother always remains "the food giver and body warmer" (p. 30), Blos contends that the "active and passive oedipus complex of the girl intermingle and persist with changing emphasis" (p. 30).

If, as Blos writes, "the girl has to abandon her first love object if her femininity is to develop normally" (p. 24), and yet she *never* abandons it completely (p. 66), then "normal" femininity must be an impossible position to occupy, an oxymoron,or, as Freud wrote, a "theoretical construction[s] of uncertain content" (Freud, 1925 cited in Benjamin, 1998, p. 35). Attempting to embody femininity is an elusive but persistent (even obsessive) psychological and cultural project—each girl and woman necessarily doomed to failure. This, of course, is the conclusion drawn by a slew of post-modern, post-structualist feminist thinkers, both within psychoanalysis and outside (cf. Benjamin, 1991; Bordo, 1993; Butler, 1990; Goldner, 1991; Dimen, 1991; Harris, 1991; Silverman, 1988).

Blos hardly seems a likely ally in the move to elaborate critical gender and sexual theory. Yet despite his insistently normative conclusions about the developmental "achievement" of femininity and heterosexuality (and the ways his work is typically used in the clinical context to support normative gendered and heterosexual assumptions about development), I propose that Blos' theoretical observations actually support a radical view of the pubertal girl as "normally queer." If, as Blos contends, the girl remains not-yet-fully-gendered, and not- yet-heterosexualized—bisexual, in Blos' lexicon—then what is she if not "a little queer"? The concept of "normally queer" represents, of course, a paradox. "Queer" has historically referred to what is *outside* of normal (sometimes sexual, sometimes not) -- marginal, abject, eccentric, unmanageable. In its contemporary usage, as in "queer studies" and "Queer Nation", "queer" functions to reappropriate and

resignify the word as it has been uttered to degrade and shame homosexuals, proudly claiming sexual marginality and alterity as subversive (cf. Butler, 1993). Here, I use "queer" to signify love objects and gender identifications that are typically thought to be outside of, marginal to, and abjected from conventional expectations and performances of normative heterosexuality and femininity. I do not mean to apply the term to specify homosexuality/ties. In suggesting that for girls, puberty is "normally queer," I aim to call attention to (pre/early) puberty as a psycho-sexual phase, or "location," embodied on the margin of childhood and adulthood, in which over-inclusive, shifting, non-specific, oscillating and undecidable gender and sexual (bisexual) identities, identifications, aims, and desires are, in fact, "normal." Viewed this way, puberty confounds the naturalization of normative heterosexuality and femininity by revealing the persistence (or re-awakening) of homoerotic, maternal attachments and gender-discrepant identifications that have not been fully excluded and disavowed from girls' identity (despite the presumed "resolution" of the Oedipus complex in early childhood in a social and psychic process that installs the binary of masculine/feminine, and the opposition of being/having). The oscillation that characterizes the daughter's "queer" relation to her mother's body — both intrapsychically and intersubjectively — will be explored in the next section.

Keeping mother's body in mind: psychoanalytic stories, part two

In an article " Daughters and Mothers: Aspects of the Representational World in Adolescence" (1995),contemporary psychoanalyst K. Dahl takes up the idea that the girl oscillates between pre-Oedipal and Oedipal, "the desired and feared archaic, omnipotent mother, the Oedipal father, and the homosexually desired Oedipal mother" (p. 194) in her attempt to creatively elaborate representations to manage the dilemmas of pubertal

development. I intend to lean heavily on Dahl's interesting attempt to revalue as a source of creativity the girl's internal relation to oscillating representations of her tie to her mother, pointing out the implications for a feminist theory of development.

Dahl begins from the premise that the adolescent girl's fantasies rework the earliest infantile experiences with the mother in increasingly complex ways—not simply in order to psychically differentiate self from mother, but to imaginatively represent the tie to the mother as part of the self (p. 202). She proposes that the girl's representation of her tie to her mother is deeply implicated in fantasies that seek to solve inner conflicts that come into psychic play with physical-sexual maturation, the "upsurge of the drives," and the incestuous longings and superego restraints these summon up. Dahl insists that the daughter's representation of her maternal attachment "carries" representations of "body, the drives, the desired object's body, and specific fears of retaliation and punishment" (p. 201). Like a palimpset, this representation condenses many layers of images, fantasies, and wishes, particularly about the body, from different epochs of psychic and social life.

Dahl (1995) instructs clinicians to attend to the multiple functions of the girl's adolescent fantasies, particularly the shifting uses she makes of the representation of maternal attachment. She differentiates the claims of psychoanalytic clinical theory that many girls suffer intensely with the task of transforming their *internal* relation to the mother from much of the normative sociological and epidemiological data that observe that most girls experience relatively little conflict in reworking their (external) interpersonal attachment to their mother during adolescence (p. 190). This is useful advice, but it seems to me that here Dahl missteps. That is, Dahl's commitment to

analyzing conflict within the inner world of object relations leads her to present the adolescent girl's psychic development as if it were moved by internal, intrapsychic dynamics (fantasies, wishes and defenses primarily derivative of an "upsurge of the drives" and increased internal excitment) alone. Is the mother of her title only a figure of wish and fantasy? In the following discussion of Dahl's work, I hope to show the ways a theory of girl's development which emphasizes the intrapsychic elements of the girl's developmental dilemmas works to both reveal and obscure the dynamics of daughter's relationship to her mother.

In an earlier paper entitled "Daughters and Mothers: Oedipal Aspects of the Witch-Mother" (1989), Dahl argues against the idea that the adolescent girl's difficulties with her tie to her mother lie along the lines of separation-individuation, that her problem is one of giving up her attachment to the archaic, pre-oedipal mother. Dahl finds that "the fantasy of the fascinating and terrifying 'witch-mother' that is most frequently associated with the daughter's tenacious, hostile attachment to her mother" (p. 267) is better understood as an Oedipal fantasy configuration than as a pre-Oedipal fantasy of an archaic, omnipotent mother. What is at stake in this argument?

> Dahl's clinical material from female patients describes fantasies she believes reflect: rapid oscillations between representations of the body, experiences of pleasure, and images of the mother. The latent fantasy configuration seems to be of a jealously possessive, envious, and malignantly destructive witch-mother whom the daughter cannot let go and who will not let go of the daughter. This fascinating and terrifying witch-mother is seen by the daughter as the regulator of

> the daughter's body and her pleasure. How can we understand the sources that power this fantasy? (1989, p. 278)

Dahl begins to answer this question by citing Laufer and Laufer (1984) and Ritvo (1988), who see in the physical maturation of the girl's body and its growing likeness to her mother's body a stimulus to pre-Oedipal merger fantasies that threaten to overwhelm the daughter with intimate feeling. Further, Dahl argues along with Ritvo that "relinquishing this infantile tie to the mother may be experienced by the daughter either as necessitating a renunciation of future bodily pleasure or as a dangerous and destructive surpassing of the mother" (Dahl, 1989, p. 278). Dahl proposes that through her patients we may understand the daughter's attempted "solution" to the problem of her pre-Oedipal relationship to her mother: she reconfigures it as an Oedipal drama in which her

> earlier experience of bodily pleasure through maternal care, her envy of the mother's capacity to provide gratification through her active ministrations, and the daughter's wish to provide such satisfactions to the mother spur her to take her mother as erotic object. (p.278)

Here Dahl posits as the hallmark of the Oedipal drama the taking of an erotic object of desire, beyond the dual-unity of the pre-Oedipal in which mother is never more than an engulfing, care-giving presence. In a sense, this is the girl's attempt to turn passive into active. The image of the witch-mother (in Annie John's experience, mother as wily "crocodile" [Kincaid, 1983]) concludes the transformative pathway of the daughter's fantasy of her mother, from omnipotent figure of merger and dependence, to lover who the daughter can never satisfy, to malignant, envious, possessive sorceress who--

recognizing the daughter as a rival for the father's love--"fascinates and imprisons" her (Dahl, 1989, p. 279).

Unfortunately, Dahl provides a rather reductive answer to the question of sourcing the daughter's fantasy: that it is the girl's secret erotic longing for her father that drives the circuit of fantasy. Here, Dahl seems to reverse herself, and sacrifices her more complex view of the tensions and contradictions inherent in the girl's erotic investment in her tie to her mother, concluding that the apparent pre-Oedipal valence of the daughter's desire for the mother to regulate her body is merely a "camouflage" to protect her hetero-secret from jealous destruction at the hands of the internalized mother (p. 279).

Feminists, of course, must ask whether the desires of female patients are best served by a clinical theory that in the final analysis (so to speak) must reduce all (adolescent) homoerotic love of the mother to a camouflage, a subterfuge, for heteroerotic love of the father. Fortunately, in her later paper on "Daughters and Mothers" (1995), Dahl offers a more nuanced perspective on the girl's oscillation between pre-Oedipal and Oedipal, mother and father, to solve the developmental dilemmas of puberty.

Remaining focused on the intrapsychic aspects of the girl's development, Dahl (1995) presents valuable clinical data from her analytic treatment of women indicating that for the early adolescent girl, "the affect regulating aspect of the remembered-in-fantasy mother of early childhood is simultaneously longed for, feared, and resented" (p. 192). She outlines a sequence in which "the daughter is caught between her longing to surrender to her mother for gratification and her fear that she will be forced to submit, thereby losing her hard-won activity and sense of bodily integrity" (p. 192). These

unconscious fantasies may drive the girl toward a pre-Oedipal sort of sadism which is projected onto the mother who is now experienced as rageful. Employing a masochistic strategy to relieve herself of consciously experienced aggression by her mother may in turn heighten her fear of submission to the internalized mother. To deal with the painful inner conflicts arising when this complex series of *unconscious* checks and balances doesn't work to bind anxiety, the daughter may put into motion a series of simultaneous, external, relational actions—organizing her "real"relationship to her mother as if she were all-good and always present (doesn't work: too homosexual in the context of her maturing body); flight to her father (doesn't work: leaves her too "bereft of active maternal care" [p. 193]; clinging to her mother (doesn't work: too, well, *clingy*). In the end, as Anna Freud (1949) noted, the girl may escape some of her inner torment by fights with her mother that serve to regulate intrapsychic *qua* interpersonal distance. "The daughter keeps her mother close and involved but is able to defend against her fears of being engulfed" (p. 193).

What we have in Dahl's accounts amounts to a closed circuit of filial fantasy in which the girl's relationship to her mother—"inside" and "outside"-- is entirely generated by the daughter's own unconscious relation to the changes in her body (new excitements, drive intensification, and so on) and the regressive, incestuous terrors these stimulate. I'd like to argue that our psychoanalytic theory of girl's development must take into account the intersubjective valence of the girl's relation to her mother; that is, what the mother's own subjectivity, her conscious and unconscious wishes, fantasies, and history produce in her daughter. Here we come up against the limits of the pre-oedipal and oedipal phases (or positions) as interpretive devices for understanding puberty: the experiences and

needs the daughter must assimilate come not only from an internal object world derived from her earliest childhood relationships, but from "real," contemporary others whose subjectivities impact and respond to her own.

The body and its representations, the wishes and fantasies associated with it, accumulate meaning within a set of familial relationships and interactions with loved and forbidden objects, and within a cultural framework that mark erotic feelings toward the parents (and siblings) as incestuous, and call for redirecting desire (object finding) outside the family. The adolescent girl is actively engaged with her mother (and/or significant others) in an ongoing way in puberty -- not only with internal representations of the pre-Oedipal or Oedipal mother -- and fantasies and meanings continue to be produced in these present-day encounters. The mother is a crucial organizer of the girl's body and desire, now as then. Taking an exclusively intrapsychic view of the girl's attachment to her mother closes off to our theory the intersubjective dimension of the girl's gender and sexual development, and oddly erases her mother's own subjectivity and meaning-making from the mix. I do not propose the idea of intersubjectivity of mother and pubertal daughter as *counter*-narrative to the traditional psychoanalytic focus on the intrapsychic determinants of the daughter's turn away from the mother during puberty: these intrapsychic conflicts are powerful and insistent. Rather, I am arguing that intersubjectivity is crucial axis to hold in mind together (in tension) with the intrapsychic (following Benjamin's recommendation [1988a]), as we theorize girls' pubertal development, do clinical work with girls, and read gender and sexuality in their psychic lives.

Despite what I have suggested are the limitations of Dahl's focus on the intrapsychic constituents of the pubertal girl's psychological development to the

exclusion of the intersubjective dynamics, her papers contribute considerably to our understanding of the critical place of puberty in female development. Most significant for a feminist theory of gender and sexuality, I think, is Dahl's conclusion that by the close of adolescence the girl must be able to tolerate

> oscillating levels of the tie to the mother in which she integrates as aspects of herself a continuing intrapsychic dialogue with her mother. Premature closure to this process brought about by the daughter's need to strip her self representations of their resonance with the tie to the mother presents an obstacle to further development, including a brittle shallowness in which aspects of the self are treated as if lost. (1995, p. 199)

I'd like to take this argument one step further. It seems to me that the tolerance for oscillating, reverberating levels of the daughter's tie to her mother is an intersubjective achievement that is restricted by the cultural and psychic imperatives of normative femininity and heterosexuality: both daughter and mother are made more brittle by the foreclosing of the capacity to represent the homoerotic valence of their tie to one another. That key aspects of the self are *typically* lost in the course of "normal" female, heterosexual development is one of the insights of feminist theory (of diverse perspectives). Butler (1990; 1993; 1995), elaborates most fully a theory of loss as constitutive of gender--what she calls "melancholic identification." Butler theorizes that the disavowal of homosexual attachment in childhood, in accord with compulsory heterosexuality, institutes a deep and ungrievable (because disavowed) loss of gender-inconsistent traits and same-sex love at the heart of the assumption of gender. "Being" excludes "loving," and rigid gender identification is in fact instituted by that exclusion,

according to Butler. She proposes, however, that the disavowed, abjected, ungrieved, homosexual attachment haunts and destabilizes the very gender identity it aims to secure. In her philosophical analysis of melancholic or "phantasmatic" gender identification, which I propose to apply to a developmental psychology of puberty, Butler (1993) recommends that:

> there remains the task of thinking through the potential cruelties that follow from an intensification of identification that cannot afford to acknowledge the exclusions on which it is dependent, exclusions that must be refused, identifications that must remain as refuse, as abjected, in order for that intensified identification to exist. This is an order of refusal which not only culminates in the rigid occupation of exclusionary identities, but which tends to enforce that exclusionary principle on whomever is seen to deviate from those positions as well (1993, p. 116)

As I conclude this chapter, I want to try to bring this work to bear on a theory of female puberty.

Re-visioning puberty: the disruptive possibilities of the post-Oedipal

"'...being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.'" (Alice to the Caterpillar, in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865/1993, p. 28)

The fast-forward changes that happen to girls' bodies at puberty (even if those changes are slow getting started) can feel like falling down the rabbit-hole: disorienting and a bit frightening, but also exciting. Tolerating all the different levels of her tie to her mother and integrating these into her self-representation is no easy psychic feat for the daughter who, like Annie John studying her naked, unfamiliar body in the mirror, observes "if I didn't know it was me standing there I would have wondered about that

strange girl..." (Kincaid, 1983, p. 27). Recall that in this *mise-en-scène* of Annie's "me" viewing her pubertal *doppelganger* (her "not-me"), her thought is to ask her mother for help with the dilemma of growing; she stops herself, however, when she remembers that her mother's responses had recently become unrecognizable, too.

I would like to reframe the idea of the daughter's capacity (and her mother's) to tolerate the oscillation of different valences (and internal representations) of their tie by considering the potential impact of representing the daughter's post-Oedipal return, in pre- and early puberty, to the overinclusiveness of pre-Oedipal development as a resource of gender and sexual flexibility and creativity rather than regression. In thinking through this idea of the girl's post-Oedipal, (pre)pubertal recovery of earlier capacities for diverse intermingling of identifications and desires (what I have called her pre-pubertal "queerness"), I want to pose the question of how gender and sexuality might be reworked in the context of the daughter's developing body, and in her relations with her mother.

As we have seen, classical psychoanalytic theory holds that puberty stimulates the girl's regressive longing for the care-giving mother of early childhood to help her modulate her body, and the attendant fear of being consumed or dominated. For these reasons, the theory goes, the synergistic developmental drives toward separation-individuation and Oedipalized gender complementarity lead the girl to struggle in puberty to finally pull away (internally) from her mother in order to become an adult and identify with her as a heterosexualized woman. Beginning with Freud, it has been observed that in this process the woman's internal tie to her mother always retains the cast of the ambivalent, conflict-laden, early relation, and that this maternal adhesiveness is a challenge and vulnerability for female (heterosexual) development. Dahl (1989; 1995)

offers a more positive spin on this dynamic, identifying the girl's capacity to tolerate the ambivalence, and the internally shifting, reversible positions of self and mother that go along with it, as key to healthy development.

Bassin (1997; 2000) proposes the idea of a "post-Oedipal phase" to describe the adolescent's (both genders') developmental capacity to move beyond the phallic-phase logic of "have/have not" --- a logic organized by repudiation and splitting --- to a more flexible and inclusive "true genital phase" in which false gender polarities are transcended and rigid gender identities are deconstructed via the transcendent power of symbol formation. Likewise, Benjamin (1995) looks to adolescence as a phase in which conventional thinking (in Kohlberg's terms) gives way to post-conventional thinking, and the concrete and projective tendencies of the Oedipal can resolve in the ability to return to the over-inclusive, "flexible identificatory capacities of preoedipal life" (p. 75). Such a return does not erase the knowledge of difference, she insists, but allows for a bridging of difference that frees identity and desire from fixed adhesion to the singly-sexed body, and sustains "the tension between limit and transgression" (p. 78).

Although this is an appealing and optimistic application of Kohlberg's notion of adolescent cognitive development, I'd argue that cognitive capacity for post-conventional thinking does not, in fact, seem to extend easily to gender and sexuality. Social psychologists have observed that traditional gender-role behavior tends to increase during and after puberty, especially among girls, and hypothesize that increasing gender-based expectations and demands from family and peers cause shifts in self-esteem, self-concept, and self-consciousness (among other dimensions of self-experience), and that girls lose ground in all these areas as they go through puberty [reviewed by Hill and Lynch, 1983,

pp. 201-228]. This work suggests that not only do gender-based conceptions of social role become more rigid with puberty, but that the [early and middle] adolescent often relies on these conventional gender definitions in the face of anxiety and uncertainty about her identity and role (and, I would add, her body). These observations of increasingly gender-differentiated behavior around puberty do not support the idea that the adolescent's capacity for "post-conventional thinking" opens up the path to deconstructing Oedipalized gender polarities.

Recall that Blos (1962) points to the relatively "brief period" during which the pre-adolescent girl experiences "an unusual sense of adequacy and completeness" (p. 67), and remarks on how difficult it is for her to relinquish "her newly-won preadolescent identity as the amazon, often masquerading as the vamp, which for a time has safeguarded her against the regression to the preoedipal mother" (p. 75). The girl may be "normally queer" for a brief and transient "post-Oedipal" phase in pre- and early puberty, but the foreclosure of gender and sexual flexibility, and production of what Butler (1993) calls the "hyperbolic identifications by which mundane heterosexual masculinity and femininity confirm themselves" (p. 236), is the order of the day. The point of "normativizing" gender and sexuality is, after all, to exclude and repudiate socially and culturally unacceptable desires and identities.

In the traditional psychoanalytic account of development, the unfolding of the infant's pre-Oedipal life (which includes all manner of intensely paranoid, sadistic, incorporative interior preoccupations and phases, *vis a vis* Melanie Klein [1975], or developing capacities for representing self-in-relation, *a la* Daniel Stern [1985]) normally leads to her defining position within the Oedipal drama – a culturally-instituted and

mandated (though somehow universal) psychic "complex" which she is expected to "resolve" as a normative achievement in the course of becoming gendered and heterosexualized. The Freudian second "genital phase" of puberty (1905/1962) is theorized to replay pre-Oedipal elements and cement Oedipal dynamics in the context of the child's now sexually-mature body, accompanied by the drive toward further autonomy. It seems to me that the idea of a post-Oedipal phase functions in a different theoretical register. When we as feminists speak of a post-Oedipal "beyond" what we are talking about is the radical, psychic *possibility* for post-Oedipal, *pubertal* development to offer a resistant counter-narrative, an antidote, to culturally-articulated and prescribed gender and heterosexual norms, that can be *sustained* in adolescence and adulthood.

If not "natural" or normative, what are the necessary conditions for such post-Oedipal transformations to take shape and be sustained in daughters? What makes it possible to move beyond Oedipal complementarity to a "true genital phase" in which differences can be bridged rather than split? I am arguing that although the post-Oedipal phase as envisioned by Bassin (1997; 2000) and Benjamin (1995) may occur as part of pre- and early puberty, it is a psychic "ideal" that is not supported culturally during and after puberty; it can only be "achieved" (or approximated) and maintained via alternative social and cultural forms and representations (see, for example, my discussion of the 1999 film *Tumbleweeds* in Chapter Five). Most crucially for the arguments of this dissertation, post-Oedipal development in the girl leans on the capacity to symbolize – psychically and culturally-- the erotic maternal bond, and its loss at puberty. (Post-Oedipal development also leans on the girl's capacity to sustain gender-discrepant identifications as part of her identity-- Cf. Benjamin (195) on the daughter's

identificatory love of the father, and the father's fostering, or discouraging, of such identification.) Among those alternative representations and forms necessary to revalue and support girls' post-Oedipal development, must be our psychoanalytic theories and clinical approaches—re-thought beyond the pre-Oedipal/Oedipal divide to include a more expansive re-valuing of the pre-Oedipal substrate of over-inclusivity that is reworked at puberty.

The cultural and psychological imperatives of normative gendering and hetero-sexing require a lot of work at puberty. Freud's "transformations of puberty" (1962) are not simply "natural" physical and developmental processes, but require the powerful application of cultural, social, and, increasingly, economic (market) pressure to accomplish. Divesting maternal erotic energy from the daughter's body and re-cathecting her body solely as a feminine, adult heterosexual "project" significantly refigures the relation of mother to daughter. (It should be noted that my argument that girls' homoerotic attachments to their mothers, and their capacities for cross-sexed or cross-gendered identifications, persist in some form and are reinvigorated just prior to puberty is in some tension with Butler's (1990; 1993) argument, and that of Elise (2000b), both of whom suggest that these desires and identifications are proscribed in early childhood.)

We have seen how Annie John's pubertal body signaled to her mother the need to repudiate their homoerotic tie by working to change the daughter into a woman like herself. I have argued that Annie's increasing alienation, her melancholy lassitude and fall into hysterical illness, and her final separation from her mother, are in part responses to feeling misrecognized, and rejected. "Can the patient [the girl, the woman] be cured [of melancholia]?" asks film theorist Kaja Silverman about female gendering. "If so, it will most certainly be through a revival or reconstruction of the negative Oedipal

complex" (1988, p. 159). Similarly, I am asking whether it is possible for a girl to sustain aspects of what I have referred to (in an extension of Benjamin, 1988) as her "identificatory love of her mother" as she moves through puberty, while also acknowledging and mourning the losses of maternal erotic attachment that growing up entails, and to engage pubertal development without defensive recourse to the rigid gender and sexual polarities of the Oedipal phase. Under what conditions can the daughter's identification with her mother's agency and desire (even though culturally limited and circumscribed, and particularly where it breaks through or exceeds social bounds) be integrated into the self and lead to mutual recognition of mother and daughter as subjects? And under what conditions can the oscillation of different aspects of the girl's desire for her mother — her homoerotic attraction to and identification with her mother's body, along with her pre-Oedipal wish for her mother's physical care and attention — be recognized and tolerated between them?

There is a dialectical relationship between the pre-pubertal capacity for gender and sexual flexibility and the cultural forces mandating gender intensification at puberty. The (pre)pubertal daughter-mother erotic bond resists insertion into normative post-pubertal hetero-femininity, and yet (or therefore) the practices and ideology that maintain those norms and secure the repudiation of that homo-erotic bond are extremely difficult (if not impossible) to resist (and there is not only the demand, but the *wish*, to 'fit' into a tidy, definitive position that might clear up the messily undecidable body-state and put distance between the body and the girl's longing for mother's care).

On the intrapsychic level, we can see gender intensification as a compromise formation – an attempted solution (or defense) to the problem of the daughter's pubertal

body (cf. Goldner, 2003, on conceptions of gender as problem or solution). With puberty, the body undergoes as rapid and dramatic changes as in infancy and toddlerhood, and these now come to be linked explicitly, in the girl's own mind as in the minds of those around her (and in the culture), to her gender and her sexuality.[6] Breasts, menstruation, pubic and axillary hair; new odors, wetness, discharges, sensations and states of arousal; curviness where there was none before (or new-found slimness carved out of "baby fat"): it is a formidable challenge to make meaning of all these transformations, to integrate them into one's body-image and self-representation, as well as into one's relationships, and to learn how to care for-- and regulate-- the body in conformity with the rules of the culture.

As in infancy and early childhood, when the girl came to know her body in large part through her mother's response, she now looks to her mother to help her sustain a sense of continuity, and to help her master all the physical and psychic changes. At the same time, the diffuseness and indeterminacy of new body-feelings at puberty may evoke the psychic states of infancy and early childhood (when growth and new sensation were similarly so primary) and may be accompanied by an increased sense of permeability and vulnerability in the girl. In infancy, it is (primarily, and typically) the mother's holding, containing, recognizing, care-giving activity that helps the child organize and manage her own experience of body-self. The capacity for bodily regulation—the processing and integration of stimuli, tensions and affects, sensations of pain and pleasure,

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[6] The changing feelings in the body, and the difficulty locating and naming them, or integrating them into a new, more explicitly sexual way of being, is quirkily illustrated in a brief scene in the 1986 film, *The Mosquito Coast* (Hellman, 1986). When Emily Spellgood (played by Martha Plimpton), the young teenage daughter of a missionary in Central America, tries to flirt assuredly with Charlie Fox (River Phoenix), a new boy in their isolated, underdeveloped village, she says seductively, "I think about you when I'm going to the bathroom," and walks away.

proprioceptive and kinesthetic information, and growth, is part of "the early two-body experience [that] is seen as crucial to the way that representation emerges intersubjectively" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 27). The mother of infancy is a self-regulating other (Stern, 1985).

During puberty, the girl's effort to construct a more bounded sense of her body-self makes her as (or even more) sensitive to her mother's gaze as to her touch, both so often felt as invasive or intrusive (recalling the Kleinian infant's fantasy of a malignant mother), rather than benignly helpful. In her study, *Altered Lives: Mothers and Daughters in Adolescence* , (1990) British researcher Terri Apter provides several characteristic quotes from daughters describing their responses to their mothers' gazes:

"Just the way she looks at me is enough to make me hate her."

"She stares at me, and it's as though she's wiggling right inside me."

"Her eyes seem like peelers—they're stripping me down." (pp. 199-120)

The daughter is absorbed in concentration on her own body and sensations, she is exquisitely sensitive to her mother's gaze: Apter holds that she wishes (unreasonably) for perfect attunement and amplification by the admiring mother of childhood. While there are certainly elements of regressive fantasy and demand that flavor the girl's wish, I suggest that the girl also wishes for a sense of confirmation and appreciation of her body-self that the mother can only confer as a distinct, desiring, embodied subject. Instead, her mother's gaze is often felt by her daughter as an intolerable source of "noise" -- like fingernails on a blackboard, or pieces of silverware scraping against one another -- that heightens her sense of discomfort in her own skin.

Mothers describe feeling correspondingly attacked by the daughter's critical gaze (see Chapter Four). The reversals between them, in which both daughter and mother both feel misrecognized and negated by the other's gaze, is an example of what Benjamin (1997) calls a breakdown of recognition. Neither can feel truly "seen" by the other, both feel dominated and called upon to submit to the other's view or projection, and mutuality and reciprocity between subjects is foreclosed. The possibility of daughter and mother "being with and yet distinct" has devolved into what Benjamin terms the complementary structure of domination and submission (1988a; 1995).

Like the rapprochement child, the pubertal girl wants to regulate, or control—master—the distance between herself and mother as part of mastering her own body (in puberty the distance is often marked by the gaze). She struggles with the tension between wanting recognition and asserting her will. How to accomplish authentic mastery, outside the structures of complementarity? Following Benjamin's analysis of these dynamics during rapprochement, a mother must feel herself to be enough of a subject in her own right to be able to tolerate her pubertal daughter's efforts at mastery -- even as they contain aggression and destructiveness, or affect distancing--without either folding or retaliating, or their positions will simply be reversed in an endless alternation of "doer" and "done to." Extreme breakdowns of recognition that exceed the mother-daughter capacity for reparation, when these conflicts between daughter and mother around mastery and control of the body cannot be resolved within their relationship, may be a dynamic in girls' turning to more self-destructive efforts at self-regulation and mastery of the body, like self-mutilation, anorexia and bulimia, and substance abuse.

The pubertal girl comes up against confusing and painful contradictions similar to those of the rapprochement child: she experiences intense need to depend upon her mother to help her regulate the body she wants so desperately to master herself; she looks to an other who she has loved as *like* (her mother) to be different (outside) enough to recognize and authorize her body and desire—*her* sexual difference. It seems to me that the daughter needs and wants her mother's recognition of her body and desire. Part of being a self-regulating (m)other in puberty entails helping the daughter recognize her body and feelings as authentically her own. As Benjamin writes of early childhood development, "recognition begins with the other's confirming response" (1995, p. 33). However, according to Benjamin "[t]he recognition a child seeks is something the mother is able to give only by virtue of her independent identity... a mother who stifles her own longings, ambitions, and frustrations cannot tune in empathically to her child's joys and frustrations" (1988, p. 24). The mother whose own sexual subjectivity has been undermined within the culture and the family (and who is not only unable to symbolize the erotic element of the mother-daughter dyad, but homophobically repelled by it) cannot appreciate her daughter's bid for erotic recognition from the person to whom she has likely been most erotically tied. Applying the title of Benjamin's text, *Like Subjects, Love Objects* (1995), I'd suggest that the daughter wants to sustain her pre-pubertal identification with mother as a "like subject," however mothers unavoidably participate to varying degrees in cultural and psychic attempts to secure the shift in that mutual identification from "we are like subjects" to "we are both objects."

The mother's capacity to recognize her daughter's body and sexuality, and help name and recognize the losses of erotic closeness entailed in growing up, helps the

daughter regulate, contain and know her own feelings; in this way, she may again experience her embodied relationship with her mother and the spaces between them as (borrowing from Winnicott, 1965) a facilitating environment, and her own body as a potential space for play.

CHAPTER FOUR
Maternal Subjectivity and the Pubertal Daughter's Body

When I mention my dissertation to mothers of girls aged 9 to 14 or so, I find myself transfixed by looks of penetrating intensity, and a passionate desire to engage me. Running into my friend Laura, a 48-year-old married, Jewish, journalist who I hadn't seen in some months, and her leggy, light brown-skinned, pig-tailed 10-year-old daughter Elena on a chilly street corner last winter, I responded in what was becoming my typically avoidant manner to her question about how I was doing on my dissertation. "OK, I guess. Slow." As Elena went skipping off down the block toward their apartment building, she turned to holler at Laura: "Hurry up, Marmee! Don't take too long!" (referring of course to the matriarch of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, 1868/1947).

"And you're still thinking you're Jo, aren't you?" I said, laughing. Peering directly into my eyes, Laura remained focused on the question she'd asked. "What you're writing about is so important!" She began breathlessly telling stories of Elena's new breast-buds, their shopping trip to satisfy her demand for a stretchy sports-bra (the contemporary alternative to the training bras of my youth?) to contain or hide –or better, to *acknowledge* --her not-yet-existent breasts, and her crush on her 19-year-old babysitter. Laura recounted Elena's recent phase of wanting to "practically make-out with me all the time!" and how while Laura enjoyed the intimacy of all their kissing and cuddling, she wondered if she was supposed to, and also whether she was supposed to limit that sort of erotic physical contact. "And now David's begun covering up whenever he's around her, and seems uncomfortable walking around the apartment without a shirt,

let alone in his underwear," referring to Elena's very involved, Puerto Rican dad. "It's weird. Her body's just beginning to change and it's like we don't know how to act. It's confusing."

Now nearly summer, and still working on this chapter on mothers and daughters, I've taken my dog Ruby to play in our neighborhood park. She's gotten into a romp with a puppy, so I find myself in a chat with the pup's owner-- a slim, pretty, athletic-looking white woman of 47 years with a friendly grin, a freelance photographer who introduces herself as Justine. She's wearing torn jeans and a hooded sweatshirt, and has very short-cropped, stylishly messy blond hair (she'd covered the gray, she later confessed). When the conversation turns to our livelihoods as these early morning meetings of dog owners tend to do (after the first requisite sleepy comments on breeds and their temperaments, and the canine compliments have been traded back and forth), I tell her, briefly, about my dissertation. "It's about girls at puberty," I say. "Their bodies." She immediately perks up. "I've got an 11-year-old daughter, and she's getting 'nips'!" she exclaims. "I've really gotta watch what I say to her, because I hated puberty. I still hate my period." She ends with a sardonic chortle and sort of pained expression on her face. As she walks toward the park exit, she turns back grinning and calls over her shoulder that she has to hurry home to "put on a dress and look like a girl!" for a photo shoot at a fancy midtown hotel. Running into Justine a couple of months later outside a neighborhood pharmacy, she tells me her daughter started menstruating that very morning and she's out buying her sanitary pads. "It's weird," she says with wonderment and perplexity, "but all I keep thinking is that I produced a daughter whose body works right."

Then there is Jane, the 50-year-old, white, radical, professional, divorced mother of a 13-year-old daughter, Louise, who I have know since birth. Louise is young for her

grade, and while her suburban classmates have developed the look of young women with breasts and waists and clothes that show these off, along with the more self-conscious movements that signal their experimentation with the being-looked-at-ness of female adolescence (a shake of the head to display long hair, a leggy stride in stylishly clunky sandals with heels), Louise still looks like a little girl. Her mother took her to the mall recently and returned home disconcerted. It seems that Louise happily selected a flowered sundress with shirring that came down low across her chest, and spaghetti straps that tied above the shoulders. "She looked adorable," said Jane, "but she's getting to the age where she has to understand that it's too revealing for a girl to dress like that. She doesn't really have breasts, but I think maybe I should get her a bra so she's more covered up." I find myself guilty of this impulse to protect — or to discipline?—too. Last week I drove Louise to a friend's house where girls were gathering before going to their early evening 8th grade graduation assembly, to be followed by a teens-only party at school. I watched from the car as she bounded up the stairs to her girlfriend's front porch in her clingy midnight blue dress with a short, swingy skirt dotted with silver stars, bare legs and pointy silver shoes. As she excitedly skipped along the short skirt bounced up and down, showing her little girl's white cotton underpants. I couldn't bear the thought of her being embarrassed in front of lots of people, so I followed her up the stairs and whispered that she might want to walk a little slower, so her underpants wouldn't show. She seemed confused, but grateful. I felt like the underpants police.

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The daughter's pubertal body, becoming newly-shaped with breasts, hips, curves, and hair, emanating new smells, and bleeding or soon-to-bleed with menstrual periods,

mobilizes her mother's conscious and unconscious fantasies, anxieties, wishes, memories, and erotic feelings. The mother may be stirred by all of these and more: envy, excitement, regret, shame, wonder, loss, disappointment, fear, pride, disgust, bitter recollection, and longing, in shifting combinations and proportions . The anecdotes I have recounted suggest that whatever the admixture, she will be stirred. How could she not?

The girl's mother (or maternal surrogate, for example her grandmother or aunt) has likely been intimately involved in caring for her daughter's body since infancy—touching, rocking, feeding, gazing, diapering, smelling, toilet-training, disciplining, combing, braiding, grooming, and dressing her. There is a dialectic involved in these maternal ministrations, in that the mother's activity both expresses and calls into being within her different psychic states and affects. Likewise, mother and child create and communicate states and emotions between them (cf. Beebe & Sloate, 1982; Stern, 1985). For Freud, the child's mother is her first seducer:

> A child's intercourse with anyone responsible for his (sic) care affords him an unending source of sexual excitation and satisfaction from his erotogenic zones. This is especially so since the person in charge of him, who, after all, is as a rule his mother, herself regards him with feelings that are derived from her own sexual life: she strokes him, kisses him, rocks him and quite clearly treats him as a substitute for a complete sexual object. (Freud, 1962, p. 89)[1]

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[1] Although Freud's use of the male pronoun to designate the child of either sex often represents not only a linguistic convention but an erasure of the particular experiences of females, in this case his meaning *does* to apply to the mother's relation to her infant girl as well as to a male child. It is not necessarily that mothers treat boys and girls as identical sorts of "complete sexual object[s]," but that a mother's sexual life is stirred in her intimate physical contact with her baby's body, whether male or female.

Although different mothers maintain different degrees and qualities of physical contact with their daughters throughout childhood, collective and personal interpretations of pubertal development as the beginning of the girl's sexual and reproductive capacities seem to surge through the mother's experience with her daughter's body like a small electrical charge, or a surprising (even if expected) ripple of turbulence. It is the mother who typically takes charge of teaching the girl new, intimate, methods of bodily care: she decides when to buy the first bra, instructs how to care for a menstrual period using sanitary pads or (rarely) tampons, demonstrates shaving or waxing unwanted hair, recommends deodorizing and generally sets new standards of hygiene and physical comportment. The girl's changing body highlights the doubleness that always shadows the mother's experience: she is at once her daughter's mother, watching her child's body evolve, and her own mother's daughter, remembering her own body's change and her mother's response to it. (Maternal subjectivity is always inhabited by a daughter.) Moreover, she is a woman living in a culture of male, heterosexist (and, in the U.S., white) domination that focuses an objectifying gaze at women and girls, and she can't avoid reading that culture onto her daughter's body, consciously or unconsciously, as her own body has been read.

In making the argument that the daughter's pubertal development is commonly held by mothers to be meaningful and stirs up psychic conflict within them, I am aware of the dangers of featuring commonalities at the expense of understanding differences—in particular, differences of race and class---in shaping maternal subjectivity. For years, Black feminist scholars have offered extensive criticism of white feminists for developing theories that universalize relations between women and men,

mothers and daughters, and erase cultural differences in the ways girls are inducted into womanhood (cf. Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982). I will attempt to remark throughout on the ways that girls' pubertal body development may signify differently for mothers (consciously and unconsciously) according to their positioning within hierarchies of race and class power, and their disparate social and psychic histories of race and class exploitation or privilege; however, the argument of the chapter is a general one: that the mother's erotic regard for her daughter's body should be analyzed, not that there is any one way to analyze or interpret it.

If, as psychoanalyst Adrienne Harris suggests (1998), the child's body is both found and made, we must wonder about the mother's contribution to the "making" of the girl's body, and her sexuality. This chapter turns to the confusion in the mother's erotic experience of her daughter at puberty, and proposes that the mother's gaze at the girl's body during this developmental phase engages conscious and unconscious psychic dynamics likely to affect her daughter as intensely and perhaps as formatively as during infancy. I anchor my arguments in readings of clinical and personal narratives, poems and non-fiction by mothers, and recent psychoanalytic discussions of post-Oedipal dynamics and maternal erotics.

What does a mother see when she looks at her pubertal daughter? How does she look (with all the varied readings that question enables)? What sort of pleasure (or horror) might a mother take in the girl's body, and what does her daughter's bodily pleasure evoke? What bodily sensations, anxieties, memories or traumas are aroused in any particular mother by her daughter's physical/sexual development and what meanings does she make of these? In the context of arguments about the girl's subjectivity

presented thus far in previous chapters, what is at stake in these questions is understanding how the mother's investments in her daughter's body, sexuality, and gender (influenced as these investments are by culture and class) helps produce and organize the girl's investments in her own body, sexuality, and gender. Also at stake is whether (and how) the mother can sustain a gaze that mirrors the girl's developing sexuality --- neither hurrying it nor forbidding it or presumptively tying it to heterosexual activity, nor rigidly regulating it, but welcoming it as it unfolds. In Winnicott's (1965) terms, can the mother help provide a "holding environment," a "transitional" or "potential space," that allows and safely contains the daughter's play and experimentation with her body? (And what happens when a mother's capacity to provide such metaphoric "holding" and "transitional" space is undermined by external conditions, such as a violent, threatening environment?) Can the mother, by tolerating all that is stirred in herself (and between them) by her daughter's pubertal development, and by the oscillation within the daughter's internal representational world of her tie to her mother's body (see Chapter Three), recognize the girl as a subject and authorize her desire?

When I began my research, I was stunned to find that what seemed to me such rich and provocative questions had, in the main, been unasked within psychoanalytic theory, even by feminists. Within (predominantly white) feminist scholarship, an incipient turn toward addressing maternal subjectivity had not taken in the mother's erotic regard for her daughter's body. Likewise, Black (feminist) scholars writing about mother-daughter relations within the Black community seldom explored the mother's response to her daughter's body and sexual maturation, beyond a discourse concerning early pregnancy. The mothers of recent popular psychological literature researched and

imagined by authors like Apter (1991), Brown & Gilligan (1992), Gilligan, Lyons, et al. (1990), Pipher (1994), and Taylor et al. (1995) role-model, silence and confine, pass along cultural values, and sometimes function as anchors, or foils, for the adolescent's emergent self. They seldom envy or aggress; they do not respond too deeply to their daughters' changing bodies; they never seduce their girls. And they don't have very many sexual concerns and desires of their own. Theorists, clinicians, and researchers seemed not only to look away from the pubertal girl's body, as noted earlier (see Chapter Two), they also frequently looked away from the mother looking; thus they neither noticed, nor deeply questioned, the complex ways and reasons many mothers (like Annie John's) averted their gaze, and turned away from certain sorts of emotional and physical contact with their daughters. Theoretical absence seemed to keep in place a taboo, as if conceding that *some* unconscious maternal fantasies and conflicts really *were* just too charged after all.

Yet psychoanalysis represents our best attempt to theorize the charged world of the unconscious, the meeting places of body and mind, and the transformations and paradoxes of sexuality—including that of the child. It is a theory that allows us to unravel and investigate even what we hold to be taboo. So what are we to make of this absence (and anxiety) of psychoanalytic theory? Perhaps (in part) because the moments of contact between the child's sexuality and the adult's are shadowed by possibilities of abuse and the dangerous transgression of boundaries, the contemporary effort to recognize and guard against pathological and traumatic contact (and to undo Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory [cf. Bernheimer & Kahane, 1985]) has helped to sustain an ongoing repression of our knowledge of the erotic responses of parents to their children's bodies. Consequently, there has been a failure to investigate and theorize parents' relations to

their children's sexuality, and to understand the necessary and unavoidable seductions of family life that is, beyond an Oedipal narrative that anchors its explanatory power in the child's early intrapsychic experience, rather than in the interplay of parent's and child's mind and body-- their erotic attunement (or misattunement)-- throughout development . (See Davies, 1994 for a similar argument in the context of her discussion of transference-countertransference in the psychoanalytic relationship. For more on attunement, see Oxenhandler, 2001; Benjamin, 1988a).

But there is yet another taboo that our failure to think (clinically and theoretically) about the mother's response to her daughter's body holds in place: the taboo against homosexuality. Judith Butler (1990) argues that the taboo against homosexuality is historically and psychically prior to that against incest. What is disavowed as never loved (not like *that*, in any event) is regarded as never lost, and the consequent failure of mourning embeds the lost object in the self through a "melancholic identification" that secures and rigidifies gender. Butler's discussion seems to posit the loss of the earliest love for the same-sex parent as that which defensively freezes gender. Although Blos (1962) extends the timeline for gender fixity to puberty, during which bisexuality (a term in Blos' lexicon that encompasses gender inclusiveness and love of same) is eclipsed by heterosexuality and gender is finally accepted as stable and exclusive, gender theorists have not taken up this provocative line of thought.

The relevance of Butler's argument (1990) to my own discussion of daughter-mother eroticism and puberty is this: that clinically and theoretically articulating and revaluing homoerotic love between mother and daughter enables a recognition of its loss at puberty (for both mother and daughter), and likewise authorizes grief and mourning; it

also makes possible a recuperation of the homoerotic attachment as a valued, generative part of the self. (It should be noted that in referring to the disavowal of homoerotic attachment, I do not mean to imply that all attachment between mother and daughter is repudiated; attachment operates along many psychic axes, with other affective resonances.) In this view, the disavowed and repudiated love of same, articulated by Butler as a source of gender polarity and rigidity, may perhaps be owned and experienced instead as a source of flexibility, inclusiveness, and creativity (cf. Benjamin, 1988a; Bassin, 1997). What influences the mother's capacity to recognize and authorize the daughter's "'passionate desire' and 'erotic investment in the mother' as the mainstay of female subjectivity" (deLauretis on Silverman, 1994, p. 174). What has become of her own homoerotic love of same? Does she worry (consciously or unconsciously) that continued physical attachment between them will make her daughter *queer*—something of a lesbian, but also less of a girl? Or that there is something queer about her own feelings for her daughter?

In the previous chapters I argued that girls' apparent losses at age 11 or 12 --- of confidence, of "voice," or of authentic engagement in relationships-- were evidence of conflicts (intrapsychic, intersubjective, and cultural) over the pubertal body. The girl's difficulties at puberty, I concluded, signaled not only dilemmas about whether she can speak in an authentic voice and still remain connected in relationships, or responses to a "regressive pull" to her pre-Oedipal mother, or a recrudescence of Oedipal issues (although all these dynamics may operate), but problems of recognition and self-representation that are mediated by the response of others to her body, and cultural expectations and fantasies about her gender and sexuality.

The interplay of mother's and daughter's bodily experience and subjectivity creates the experience of self with other—a *between* bodies and selves, as well as a *within*. The ongoing, dynamic, physical aspects of relational experience have been until recently less recognized, and theorized, within psychoanalysis. (cf. Aron and Anderson, 1998; Davies 1994; See also Oxenhandler, 2001 for a discussion of these issues written for a general, non-psychoanalytic audience) apart from infancy research that has tracked the physicality (face-to-face interaction , vocalization, rhythm of movements, proximity, and so on) of infant-mother attunement and attachment (analyzed through the audio-visual medium of videotape). (e.g. Beebe & Sloate, 1982; Stern, 1985). What are the maternal dynamics that correspond to and interact with the child's psychological and physical development? Just who *is* the pre-Oedipal mother, the positive or negative Oedipal mother, or the mother I propose to call the "genital mother"? What are the bodily states and representations jointly produced and enacted within these relationships? Harris (1998) argues that "[s]tates of distress and anxiety within the dyad are regulated, understood or ignored, named or silenced, in some way lived in the social matrix and then assigned to and absorbed by the child" (p. 47). Davies cautions that in the corresponding configuration of the analytic dyad, failure to acknowledge the analyst/parent's sexual subjectivity leaves "[t]he patient, not unlike the overstimulated oedipal child, [to] bear[s] the guilty weight of his own erotic longings, as well as the burden of maintaining in denial an awareness of the parent's reciprocal interest and involvement" (1994, p. 162). Without more narratives of the conscious and unconscious dimensions of the mother's representations of her daughter's body (and herself in relation to it), we are left theorizing within the closed circuit of filial fantasy and projection,

unable to account for the ways the mother's erotic attention and desire (as well as her anxiety) helps "make" her pubertal daughters' body, gender, and desire, and leaving the girl to bear the weight of inarticulable loss.

"Mirror, mirror, on the wall"

Dominant cultural representations of mothers' relationships with their pubertal and adolescent daughters are rife with envy, jealousy, self-centeredness, and bitterness. Think of Lolita's mother (Nabokov, 1955; film versions 1962 and 1999), or the mother in the Mona Simpson's novel *Anywhere But Here* (1986; film version 1999) who tries to trade on her 10-year-old daughter's pre-pubertal body by persuading her to parade naked when she bids good-night to adult male guests, intending that the rewards of this choreographed titillation will accrue to her (the mother) (pp. 73-74). These mothers are contemporary, sexualized versions of the cruel step-mothers of fairy tales; they are vain, devouring, and deviant. Rather than seamlessly and with self-sacrifice performing the maternal role of gently guiding their girls along the path to reproductive womanhood, they view the daughter's maturing body with proprietary interest, or as threat or burden. (Perhaps not surprisingly, neither of these characters was written by a mother.) In Dahl's (1989) psychoanalytic interpretation of what she calls "the witch mother" (see Chapter Three), this figure of maternal malignancy is rooted in a projection that functions, in part, as a psychic lever to help prize the girl apart from her powerful, regressive, desire for the care-giving mother of infancy.

Cultural critic and sociologist Suzanna Danuta Walters, author of a study of mother-daughter relationships in popular film and television, *Lives Together, Worlds Apart* (1992), insists that representations of mother-daughter strife and conflicts about

separation are better understood as social constructions than reflections of psychological truth. Walters argues persuasively that negative images of mothers' relations to their daughters serve various ideological purposes under particular historical conditions. For example, Walters cites the "shift from a sacrificial model of mothering a daughter to a model of malevolence and psychopathology" (p. 24) in elements of 1940's popular culture as signaling an "increasing anxiety toward the end of the war [WWII] around women, sexuality, and the nature and status of 'mothering' in a postwar society" (p. 25), and representing a hefty ideological backlash against mothers working outside of the home. The film *Mildred Pierce* (Warner, 1945) serves to illustrate Walter's contention that, in representing mother-daughter attachment in terms of the over-involved *working* mother's pathological threat to her daughter's psychological well-being and social behavior, late- and post-war films joined a broad ideological assault on "bad" mothers whose work outside the home renders them destructive to their daughters. Mothers here are caught in a double-bind: work outside the home figures them as narcissistic, self-involved, and neglectful, and yet maternal attachment and devotion to daughters is now equated with psychological smothering that damages the daughter. Either maternal route drives the daughter away from her mother. In Walter's view, the dual narratives, or paradigms, of maternal sacrifice and maternal neglect participate in producing mother-blame as a historical, ideological imperative that (impossibly) requires mothers' perfect attunement to the needs of children as a condition for domestic happiness and the patriotic project. (In these narratives mothers must always fail, of course, and daughters must always be driven away.)

Exceptions to the narratives of mother-blame and daughterly flight are found by Walters (1992) in films such as *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (Lighton, 1945; from the novel by Betty Smith [1943]) (and, I would add, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* [Freeman, 1968; from the novel by Carson McCullers 1946/1987]) whose working class mothers have become stern and rigid carrying the burden of household and family survival under economic duress; their daughters turn to romanticized fathers for affection and indulgence, but ultimately come to understand their mother's position. Walters praises these films for their depiction of the material conditions of maternal struggle; she also champions fiction written by women of color such as Alice Walker (*Everyday Use*, 1973; *Meridian*, 1976), Toni Morrison (*Beloved*, 1987) and Amy Tan (*The Joy Luck Club*, 1989) for a more complex vision of enduring mother-daughter attachment and struggle that comes closer to the "truth" that ordinarily prevails in the lives of women.

Similarly, in *The Beast and the Blonde* (1994), a socio-historical exegesis of fairy tales and their tellers, historian Marina Warner rejects the psychoanalytic approach to fairy tales popularized by Bruno Bettelheim in his landmark child development book, the *Uses of Enchantment* (1975), in which he suggests that fairy tales provide imaginative compromises that help children resolve psychic dilemmas. In Bettelheim's view, the evil step-mother serves as a repository of the child's projected aggression and hatred for the mother, allowing the "real" mother to remain all-good in fantasy. Warner contends that Bettelheim's argument and its widespread acceptance

> have effaced from memory the historical reasons for women's cruelty within the home and have made such behavior seem natural, even intrinsic to the mother-

> child relationship. It has even helped to ratify the expectation of strife as healthy and the resulting hatred as therapeutic. (Warner, p. 213)

Rather, Warner contends, the absent mothers and wicked step-mothers of fairy tales are not figures of fantasy and projection, but representations—often imagined by women who told the tales as part of oral tradition--- of women's social position and subjectivity under harsh economic and historical conditions. High rates of maternal mortality in childbirth, enforced abandonment of children on widowhood, customs requiring new wives to move into the home of her husband's mother, and the antipathy of step-mothers toward children of her husband's prior unions (who may be in competition with her own children for often scarce resources within the family), economic dependence, and rivalry for men's love, are all cited by Warner as historical ingredients in fairy tales and their tellers. "The experiences these stories recount," writes Warner,

> are remembered, lived experiences of women, not fairytale concoctions from the depths of the psyche; they are rooted in the social, legal and economic history of marriage and the family, and they have all the stark actuality of the real and the power real life has to bite into the psyche and etch its design...(p. 238)

In contemporary U.S. popular culture, with its ever-present images of young, thin, white women, the emphasis on everlasting femininity and youthful beauty threatens to render the mother superfluous as a woman when her daughter reaches adolescence. For African American and Latina mothers this effect may be less, or different, than for white women, since culture organized around racist ideology accords them the status of the "other Other" (i.e. in relation to white women, and in relation to men) and bars them all along from consideration as "feminine," as it does their daughters. That this is part of the

historical and ideological context in which mothers raise girls surely impacts the psychical and physical relationship between them, on both conscious and unconscious levels (including their fantasies of self and other). Both Warner (1994) and Walters (1992) are admirably concerned with understanding the real-life conditions of women that underlie the cultural representations they each analyze, yet we need not jettison psychoanalytic interpretations that posit a psychic basis for mother-daughter conflicts over attachment, separation, and sexuality in favor of historicizing representations of mothers' (or step-mothers') relations to their (pre)adolescent daughters. Dominant cultural narratives construct a limited range of imaginative possibilities for the relation of the mother to her daughter's body. The historical (economic/ social/ political) context in which these cultural representations and fantasies are produced is the context in which psychic life and family relations unfold, and bodies accrue gender and sexual meanings. It is the context in which children's bodies take form in their parents' imaginations, and mothers regard their pubertal daughters.

Adrienne Harris (1998) suggests that "the body is always a body in social space (and in time, both micro and macro)" (p. 53). We might go even further and say that the body is social space, containing symbolic and material communications, habits of living, actions, interactions, and providing both figure and ground in an ongoing process of social activity and cultural inscription. The mother's gaze interpellates the daughter within systems of meanings (personal, cultural, historical) that become encoded in/on the girl's pubertal body and psyche as elements of her relation to, and experience of, gender and sexuality. Harris enlists "Bion's (1961) concept of maternal reverie: the gazing preoccupation of the parent (and later the analyst) organizing, making coherent the

shapes and patterns of material and social life." to support this notion. "This gaze is not ideologically neutral; it must always see certain coherences at the expense of others and inevitably at the expense of some qualities of sensuous life" (p. 54). The mother's feeling for her own body, its adequacy and its lack, directs and regulates her gazing attention to her daughter's body, and shapes other material practices of maternal care (like speech). Her own body-history --- the care and admiration it has received, as well as the abuse or scorn — and her (conscious and unconscious) interpretations of that history, will surely affect her response to her child's body. The extent to (and means by) which mothers themselves experience safety, comfort, power and pleasure in their own bodies and in the world (and felt these during puberty) is bound to be shaped by their experience of race and class as well as gender and sexual orientation. Their ways of perceiving, imagining, and acknowledging their daughter's body will be organized in relation to, and will in turn transmit to a significant degree, these internalized dynamics of power and ideology. Between mother and daughter (as elsewhere) gender and sexuality will often travel along the filaments of class and race, and vice versa.

A mother's feeling for her own body may be communicated directly or indirectly. Demi Moore (who appeared very pregnant and nearly naked on the May 1993 cover of *Esquire* magazine, and later acted the role of a gorgeous mother who stripped to support her kids in the film *Striptease* (Hartwick, 1996) notwithstanding, many mothers tell their daughters that childbirth and breast-feeding ruined them, pointing to flattened breasts, sagging skin, stretch marks, soft belly. "You used up my body": the complaint or accusation containing as well a caution (a bitter warning?) about what awaits them. Listening in a clinical session to my just-turned-12-year old patient, Nina, I found myself

wondering what and how her physically striking, 33-year-old mother Jacki had communicated to her about their bodies. They look startlingly alike: full shapes, straightened, dark honey colored hair reaching midway down their backs, smooth walnut-brown skin, bright eyes and easy, broad smiles with even, white teeth. Between them they share Dominican, Puerto Rican, Jewish, and American Indian ancestry. Over the 8 months I've seen Nina as a patient, she's gotten slimmer, has more of a woman's shape. When she recently came in to her psychotherapy session dressed for summer in a t-shirt and light-weight pants that were not nearly so baggy as usual, I sensed that she'd noticed the change, too, and I decided to mention it. She proudly announced that the security guard told her on her way in that her figure was growing to look like an hourglass-- like her mother's. "When I lookeded (sic) at myself in the mirror I said 'wow, I do kinda look like that, like an hourglass where my waist goes in and then my hips go out.' I only wish I could get rid of this," pointing to the flesh on the top of her thighs. I asked her thoughts about her mother's body. "My mother says she had a beautiful figure until she had me and my brother. Now she's all big and flabby in the middle." (She makes a disgusted face.) Nina's pleasure in her physical shape is already weighed down by her mother's disappointment in her own thickened belly. On the level of embodiment, the mother's complaint creeps into the girl's body image like a ominous grey cloud that worries the blue sky of a picnic: don't enjoy yourself too much now, you are becoming a woman like me and your body cannot be counted on-- it's sure to be ruined or threatened in time. Or, alternately, as the 28-year-old daughter of a white working-class hairdresser remembers: "My mother always said, 'I hope for your sake you don't wind up with a body like mine.'"

The sense of envy or loss felt by some mothers, aware of their own aging bodies in relation to their daughters' pubertal bodies, is represented through cautionary tales in *Transformations* (1971), a dark and ironic collection of poetry by Anne Sexton based on fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, and dedicated to her own then pubertal daughter, Linda.[2] In "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", Sexton (1981) figures Snow White's (step)mother as a woman whose regret for her lost "ideal" beauty chokes her with envy as her (step)daughter approaches adolescence: "Once there was a lovely virgin/ called Snow White./ Say she was thirteen./ Her stepmother,/ a beauty in her own right, though eaten, of course, by age,/ would hear of no beauty surpassing her own" (p. 225). Hearing (and seeing) the truth from her trusty mirror (that serves up a reflection of her own split consciousness as a woman) confirms her worst fears of being replaced by the growing girl, and so the step-mother dreams up all manner of murder plots to do in the teenager: "Suddenly one day the mirror replied./ Queen, you are full fair, 'tis true./ but Snow White is fairer than you./ ...now the queen saw brown spots on her hand/ and four whiskers over her lip/ so she condemned Snow White to be hacked to death" (p. 225). After surviving hunters, wolves, scorpions, and poison apples, Sexton's revivified Snow White becomes a prince's bride. She tortures the evil step-mother to death at the wedding: "Meanwhile Snow White held court,/ rolling her china-blue eyes open and shut/ and sometimes referring to her mirror/ as women do" (p. 229). The wages of femininity pass

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2 An ironic note: As I read Sexton's dark fairy tale poems, I assumed she'd sourced a chapter from Bettelheim's famous psychoanalytic text, *The Uses of Enchanchment* (1975). It took me by surprise when I went back to Bettelheim to find that he cites her, crediting Sexton with a poet's insight into the unconscious meanings and strategies of the fairy tales. Sexton's *Transformations* was published in 1971, and Bettelheim's book, which contains a chapter called "Transformations: Wicked Stepmothers," did not appear until 1975.

from the hands of the mother to the daughter, the defeat of one forever binds the other to the mirror for confirmation of her victory: the princess is all dolled-up with no place to go.

Sexton's poem, "Little Girl, My Lovely Stringbean, My Lovely Woman" (1981, pp.145-148), offers a wistful and poignant counterpoint to the aggressive maternal figuration of her Snow White poem. It begins: "My daughter, at eleven/(almost twelve), is like a garden." The remainder of the poem is written in direct address to her daughter, Linda, whose changing body moves Sexton to render in tender language the sense of witnessing this liminal moment in her child's life. Throughout the poem, one feels a mother's wish—swelling in her as her daughter's body swells-- to provide the words that might help the girl to love this new body and time: "What I want to say, Linda,/ is that there is nothing in your body that lies./ All that is new is telling the truth./ I'm here, that somebody else,/ an old tree in the background./ Darling, stand still at your door,/ sure of yourself, a white stone, a good stone--/ as exceptional as laughter/ you will strike fire,/ that new thing!"

As she gazes at her daughter, "where your face sits in my hand/ so full of distance,/ so full of its immediate fever./ The summer has seized you," Sexton shifts between images of sweet, playful times shared with her delicious little girl, and the "high noon" of the woman she watches her becoming. Her maternal gaze ushers in a memory of her own pubertal girlhood:

Oh, little girl,
My stringbean,
How do you grow?
You grow this way.
You are too many to eat.

I hear
as in a dream

the conversation of the old wives
speaking of *womanhood.*
I remember that I heard nothing myself.
I was alone.
I waited like a target.

Sexton wants her daughter to welcome the woman's body that begins to take form in her ("oh, darling, let your body in "), but to remember (as Sexton herself wants to remember) that it was she, the mother, whose body was the child's first home; that whatever men come to the girl/woman, her mother loved her first ("...before their strange hands/there was always this hand that formed"). She gazes with wonder at her child's second ripening, her second birth: "What I want to say, Linda,/ is that women are born twice./ If I could have watched you grow/ as a magical mother might,/if I could have seen through my magical transparent belly,/ there would have been such ripening within:/...the becoming--/while it becomes!/as it does now,/a world of its own,/ a delicate place."

This tenderly-made poem seems quite a contrast to "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." But that is indeed part of the point: that maternal subjectivity—infused with all a mother's conscious and unconscious fantasies—may encompass love and envy, aggression and desire, which is perhaps not so comfortable a thought (though many a mother is relieved to know she is not the only one who has felt murderous rage toward her child, or jealousy, or disquieting erotic feelings—that contained, these do not make her the monster she may fear herself to be). Psychoanalysts Wrye and Welles (1994), in their work on what they term the "maternal erotic transference" and the "maternal erotic countertransference" in the analytic dyad, point out that the erotic contains not only libidinal elements but aggressive, destructive, and masochistic ones as well. This is to be

expected as part of the "normal" erotic atmosphere of the analytic situation, as with mother and child, and need not be played out in a perverse scenario.

Sexton's interpretation of "Rapunzel" (1981) plays with another set of disturbing and complicated images of the mother's relation to her daughter, returning us to the perverse in a rewriting of that fairy tale bondage as a story of woman-girl love. This time it is a maiden aunt as surrogate mother who jealously locks the 12-year-old girl in a tower where only she will ever see or touch her.

A woman
who loves a woman
is forever young.
The mentor and the student
feed off each other.
Many a girl had an old aunt
who locked her in the study
to keep the boys away.
They would play rummy
or lie on the couch
and touch and touch.
Old breast against young breast...

...
The yellow rose will turn to cinder
and New York City will fall in
before we are done so hold me,
my young dear, hold me.
Put your pale arms around my neck.
Let me hold your heart like a flower
Lest it blossom and collapse...

We are two clouds
glistening in the bottle glass.
We are two birds
washing in the same mirror.
We were fair game
but we have kept out of the cesspool.
We are strong.
We are the good ones.
Do not discover us

for we lie together all in green
like pond weeds.
Hold me, my young dear, hold me. (pp. 244-246)

Sexton figures the fairy tale's witch as an older, single, woman erotically attached to her surrogate daughter, narcissistically justifying the girl's imprisonment with the notion that locking her up, possessing her, is a form of protection—a mutual bond against the dangers of men. Sexton's play with the taboo of (female) incest strikes a disturbing chord for reasons beyond the unconscious: her daughter, Linda Sexton-Gray, reports that Anne would come into her bed during the night and masturbate, while Linda pretended to be asleep (Middlebrook, 1991, pp. 223-224/ 324-325). Yet we might consider whether Sexton's inability to control her own transgression in the face of chronic mental illness (and her own history of childhood incest) unmasks the incestuous feeling that shadows the intimate relation of parent to child's body, and calls into being the taboo. While representations of the father-daughter sexual couple are not uncommon (often displaced to stepfathers, most famously in *Lolita* (Nabokov, 1955), or long-lost fathers who return unrecognized and unrecognizing, and in a reversal of Oedipus seduce or are seduced by their daughters---(e.g. *Voyager* [Junkersdorf, 1992] and *An Awfully Big Adventure* [Heath & Hinchcliffe, 1994]), and films like *Murmur of the Heart* (Malle & Nedjar, 1971) provide a glimpse at the taboo of mother-son attraction (as does *Oedipus*!), the mother's erotic feeling for the daughter is almost never represented. In "Rapunzel," Sexton herself represents maternal desire by displacing it to the more typically-thought lecherous lesbian spinster-aunt.

Sexton's bald retelling of the mother's attempt to lock the girl in erotic bondage to her contains as well a more poignant story, that of an old-young coupling that can shut

out the ugly demands of the outside world and protect the girl from danger, and the older woman from age and hardening of the spirit. Sexton repeats frankly lesbian images of the two playing "mother-me-do" all day. "A woman/who loves a woman/is forever young" sets out the mothers motivation to hold her daughter back, to bind her in complicity with the mother's needs—not cruelly, but narcisistically. A prince necessarily breaks apart the homosexual dyad, and he and Rapunzel "... lived happily as you might expect/proving that mother-me-do/can be outgrown./just as the fish on Friday./just as a tricycle./The world, some say/is made up of couples./A rose must have a stem." Meanwhile, "As for Mother Gothel./her heart shrank to the size of a pin/never to say: Hold me, my young dear./hold me./..." (p. 249) Sexton offers a picture of the "natural" order of things where men take daughters from the bosom of their mothers, who, thus abandoned and alone, must resign themselves to loss and decay. (Interestingly, Bettelheim (1975) points out that in Rapunzel the girl's body is her source of contact with others -- first the mother, then the prince (male). Rapunzel's hair (her body) ultimately offers her the means of escape from the exclusive relation to the mother to the arms of her prince.)

Turning again from the malignant to the benign, we find other contemporary women poets who have, like Sexton, thematized the physical intimacy and homoerotic bond of mother-daughter love (in terms less likely to unsettle and provoke), and given accounts of their own subjective experiences as mothers that are not only evocative poems but invaluable observations of psychic dynamics often obscured or neglected in clinical writings. Ellen Bass (quoted in Olsen, 1984), describes the un-self-conscious sensuality of a mother-daughter couple in early childhood: "...you/enter this pleasure, the quiet book, your daughter in your/ lap./ an articulate person now, able to converse, yet

still/ her cry is for you, her comfort in you./ it is your breast she lays her head upon./ you are lovers, asking nothing but this bodily presence..." (pp. 87-88). Sharon Olds opens a section of poems entitled "The Children" in her collection , *The Dead and the Living* (1975), with a poem called "Exclusive," which bears the dedication "(for my daughter)." In it Olds, like Bass, writes of mother and daughter as primary couple. Through her relationship to her daughter's body, the poet imagines other loves might have sprung, growing from what she has learned of recognition, rather than possession:

> I have loved you instead of anyone else,
> Loved you as a way of loving no one else,
> Every separate grain of your body
> Building the god, as I built you within me,
> A sealed world. What if from your lips
> I had learned the love of other lips,
> From your starred, gummed, lashes the love of
> Other lashes, from your shut, quivering
> Eyes the love of other eyes,
> From your body the bodies,
> From your life the lives?
> Today I see it is there to be learned from you:
> To love what I do not own. (p. 61)

In another of this series of poems to her children, "Pre-Adolescent in Spring" (1975, p. 69), Olds pictures her daughter "...sucking ice, a cup of cubes/ beside her, sparkling and loosening./ The sun glints in her hair dark as the/packed floor of the pine forest,/ its hot resin smell rising like a/ smell of sex. She leaps off the porch and/ runs on the grass, her buttocks like an unripe apricot..." The mother here conveys her erotic perception of the daughter's body by linking it to smells and shapes of the natural world; in the child she watches and holds she recognizes the future of ripening and shape-changing transformation that is soon to begin: "Above us the buds are opening. I hold/

tight to this child beside me, and she / leans her body against me, heavy,/ its layers still folded, its fragrance only/ half unlocked, but the ice now rapidly/ melting in her mouth."

In "35/10" (1975, p. 75), Olds writes of another aspect of the mother's experience of her daughter's body-- the corresponding awareness of her own body's fading as the girl's blooms: "As my skin shows/its dry pitting, she opens like a small/ pale flower on the tip of a cactus/as my last chances to bear a child/ are falling through my body, the duds among them,/ her purse full of eggs, round and/firm as hard-boiled yolks, is about/ to snap its clasp..." In an intimate ritual of caring for her pre-pubertal daughter's body, Olds becomes aware of herself as a woman of a certain age: "Brushing out my daughter's dark/ silken hair before the mirror/ I see the grey gleaming on my head,/ the silver-haired servant behind her..." Like Sexton's "old tree in the background," Olds finds her place behind the girl, gazing at a double image of her aging self and her youthful daughter. The mirror subtly alienates the image of the mother from herself, however, as first person shifts to third in her self-description as "the silver-haired servant behind her." Unlike Snow White's step-mother, who rages against the story of replacement and will do anything to prevent it—sacrifice the child if necessary—this mother naturalizes the moment of acquiescence: "It's an old story—the oldest we have on our planet—the story of replacement."

Maxine Kumin also turns to the maternal consciousness of puberty for her poem, "for jane at thirteen" (quoted in Olsen, 1984, pp. 8-9), acknowledging that identification with her daughter's body and desire cannot fully bridge the separation between them, or eliminate the vulnerability of letting go to venture forward:

...
You lean as bland as sunshine on the rails.
Whatever's next—
The old oncoming uses
Of your new troughs and swells—
Is coin for trading among girls
In gym suits and geometry classes.

How can you know I traveled here,
Stunned, like you, by my reflection
In forest pools;
Hunted among the laurel
And whispered to by swans
In accents of my own invention?

It is a dangerous time.
The water rocks away the timber
And here is your visa stamped in red.
You lean down your confident head.
We exchange kisses; I call your name
And wave you off as the bridge goes under.

The danger of the time is pressing to the mother who knows of it from her own experience -- but perhaps it is unavoidable. Like Demeter, whose adolescent daughter Persephone was abducted and raped when she ventured out alone to pick flowers, the mother of Kumin's poem cannot protect her daughter from the all perils she faces as her changing body brings her into new kinds of contact with the world ("your visa stamped in red"), she can only help "lock [her] luggage" for the journey. The mother calls out the girl's name, futilely, trying to warn her daughter off the bridge that leads from mother to parts unknown. The distance between them, between their bodies, expands even as the daughter's difference from her mother's body diminishes; they kiss, and the bridge collapses.

Perhaps Gilligan would read the danger in the leaving-taking itself, the separation, not in the feeling of unbridgeable distance, or perhaps rather (or simultaneously) the

collapse of distance, between mother's and daughter's body at puberty. But I would argue that Kumin's poem takes in, in a way Carol Gilligan's theoretical work on girls' "struggle for connection" does not (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Lyons, et al., 1990; Taylor et al., 1995), that separation-individuation does not oppose attachment, and that at puberty mother and daughter are both engaged in negotiating closeness and distance, sameness and difference : "of course you do not belong to me/ nor I to you/ and everything is only true in mirrors." (Kumin quoted in Olsen, 1984, p. 8).

These poems by women writers represent the mother's erotic perception of, identification with, and relation to her daughter's body as a central element of maternal experience. Preoccupation with questions of likeness and separation, boundaries and bonds, is a pivot around which the mother's experience as a female circles gyroscopically, tracing oscillating patterns of identity -- as daughter to her mother and mother to her daughter. As well, desire loops through these circles, cutting across multiple planes and drawing in or expanding out in dizzying rings that seem to spill off the page. The intimate bodily contact of childhood (whether tender or rough), both remembered from her own girlhood and practiced now with her child, may begin to feel confusing or disturbing as the girl reaches puberty. The girl's pubertal embodiment poses certain dilemmas for her mother's sexuality (whether hetero-, homo-, or bisexual).

The daughter's own response to the erotic conflict presents a different sort of problem for the mother. Oxenhandler (2001) writes that mothers are frequently surprised and hurt by the way adolescent daughters recoil in disgust from their (the mothers') bodies. She explains that in psychoanalytic terms, the adolescent girl's revulsion is a way of distancing from the regressive pull of puberty and her longing for the mother's body,

and that mothers would do well to tolerate it as part of growing up. One mother (white, middle-class, intellectual) recalls: "My daughter began scrutinizing and criticizing everything about the way I looked and dressed. She was repelled by my body. I remember once she told me contemptuously that if I was going to wear lipstick, I should really be wearing lip-liner with it. And another time she asked if I was really planning to go out wearing the shirt I had on, which was cut pretty modestly and not too low on my chest. She said it was disgusting!" It may also be that the daughter is devaluing her mother as a way of punishing her for signs of sexuality from which she (the daughter) is excluded. Alternately, to the extent that the mother's sexual relationship to men is seen as submissively feminine, it may deflate her in her daughter's eyes, and mark her for raging disappointment.

What sort of relations to the pubertal daughter's body are imaginable or possible? What sort of pair does mother and daughter make as the girl's body develops? These questions come into view in the following personal and clinical encounters with mothers. An Iranian mother remembers walking down the street on the Upper West Side of New York City arm in arm with her 13-year-old daughter. She confesses that she found herself wondering what people would think of them: "Would they think we were lesbians? After all, she's getting to be as big as I am and she looks like a woman. I didn't want it to make a difference, but I did feel a bit self-conscious once I had the thought." A Dominican-Puerto Rican mother tells a story about a passionate argument she had with her 12_-year-old daughter. They made up with an embrace that startled her: "When I went to hug her I suddenly felt like I was holding a woman in my arms! It made me feel weird!" The feel of her daughter's breasts against her own breasts came as a surprise. She found it

unsettling. The Jewish-American woman described in the introduction to this chapter says of her 10-year-old daughter who is beginning to develop breast buds, "It's sort of nice to still be physically close to her now, but it feels strange, and I don't know if I'm supposed to stop her." In the previous chapter, I wrote of an African American college student who recalled that when she reached puberty, her mother suddenly rejected public shows of affection between them, warning: "people will think we're funny" (i.e. lesbian). Similarly, a mother quoted in British sociologist Steph Lawler's qualitative study of mothers and daughters, *Mothering the Self* (2000), recalls:

> When she [daughter] was little, it was very physical, always biting and cuddling her. They always came into bed a lot. Erm [sic], and then -- maybe because she's started growing breasts. I mean it's a lot more difficult at this stage to know where you can grab people...And also she's so much bigger now... Sometimes she'll say, "You don't cuddle me as much as you used to." But it's not because I don't want to, it's because I feel that she's growing up and you can't keep pinching bottoms when they're that big (laughs). It's not that I don't want to. (pp. 96-97)

In my discussion of Kincaid's 1983 novel *Annie John* (Chapter 3), I suggested that these sorts of anxieties cause the mother to turn away from her previous relation to the daughter's maturing body, even before-- or simultaneously as-- the girl begins to transform her inner, psychic representation of her own body to integrate her pubertal (genital) development. Homo-anxiety (or panic) that is stirred up by seeing and feeling (or anticipating) a womanly body emerging from the child's shape is an unexamined dynamic that often contributes to the mother's distancing from what may appear to have been a less conflicted, more comfortable, loving relation to the younger child's body.

However, Diane Elise (2000), citing a variety of theorists, including Kernberg (1991), Chodorow (1978) and Olivier (1989) points out that many mothers first turn away –subtly, and unconsciously--from their daughter's bodies during earliest childhood, ending what she terms the "primary maternal" Oedipal situation (p. 134) (rather than the "negative Oedipal complex") and thrusting girls into the "secondary-paternal" or positive Oedipal situation:

> A mother's heterosexuality, if it does not incorporate a healthy integration of homoerotic desire (psychic bisexuality) that can be comfortably acknowledged and expressed in relating to a daughter, can lead to a primal rejection of the girl, her genitals and her sexual power to attract the one she desires (deLauretis, 1994; Elise, 1998a). (Elise 2000, p.130)

I wonder if the distancing and alienation from the daughter's body (including her genitals) is not often more acute and closer to the "surface" at puberty, less subtle and unconscious, than in that earlier stage of childhood that Elise specifies as the critical juncture when the girl begins to experience her object choice (mother) and her body as "wrong" in relation to her mother's desire (if that desire is heterosexually directed towards father/men). (We will return to this point later.)

Another part of the reason a mother rejects (consciously or unconsciously, harshly or subtly) physical closeness or withholds admiration from her daughter may be rooted in hatred of her own womanly body (in part, an intergenerational legacy of the loss—and its consequences-- of her own primary-maternal oedipal object). Debold, Wilson and Malave, authors of *Mother-Daughter Revolution* (1993), (an insightful non-academic text directed at the mothers of girls, that had the misfortune of being published at the same

time as, and overshadowed by, the well-promoted and immensely popular *Reviving Ophelia* (Pipher, 1994) make the crucial point that a mother's shame about her body is unintentionally visited upon the daughter in very destructive ways: insofar as a mother criticizes her own body, which the daughter identifies with, the daughter must imagine that it is her body, too, that is inadequate, flawed, and unlovable by her mother. Further, the daughter may internalize the mother's model of self-criticism.

Nancy K. Miller's readings of daughters' memoirs of their mothers in her thought- and memory-provoking text, *Bequest and Betrayal* (1996), "show how a daughter's deepest ideas about a mother's body are inseparable from her ideas about herself" (p. 59). I believe that the converse is equally true, that a mother's deepest ideas about her daughter's body are inseparable from her ideas about *her*self. Rich (1976) writes that the "earliest enwrapment of one female body with another can sooner or later be denied or rejected, felt as choking possessiveness, as rejection, trap, or taboo; but it is, at the beginning, the whole world" (p. 218). Remembering her early adolescence, Rich describes how she "still glanced slyly at my mother's body, vaguely imagining: I too shall have breasts, full hips, hair between my thighs—whatever that meant to me then, and with all the ambivalence of such a thought" (p. 219). The mother, too, gazes at her daughter's body, also (perhaps less vaguely) imagining: "she too will have breasts, full hips, hair between her thighs"—with all the ambivalence of such a thought. Perhaps this unavoidable imagining by the mother of her daughter, this "possessing" of the daughter through a mother's identification with her, contributes to the feelings of entrapment, or "stickiness" many daughters work so hard to fight free of. Miller refers to Adrienne Rich's analysis of "matrophobia," what Miller calls the "anxiety of resemblance" (p. 58).

suggesting that the daughter's narrative is preoccupied with the question: "How am I like? Am I in fact – my mother? For daughters," she contends, "separation from the mother emerges from the founding confusion of boundaries" (p. 41), and struggle around the "irreducible ties of likeness" (p. 94) is unavoidable. Likewise for mothers: as Justine, one of the mothers quoted in the chapter introduction, puts it, "Sometimes I feel like her body is my body. Only I love hers and I've always hated mine."

Is it possible that through her loving attachment to and identification with her daughter's body, a mother can come to love a part of herself, and recuperate or discover a sense of her own body as admired and lovable? Yes, I think so. However, a mother's erotic cathexis of her daughter's body as an idealized version of her own, or what she wished hers could be, may be either enhanced or disrupted by the dramatic physical changes of puberty. A couple of years ago in a local supermarket, I encountered an acquaintance who I hadn't seen in some time, a "plain" woman who had always struck me as self-conscious about her appearance, and rather asexual. When I asked about her family, she smiled mischievously and reached into her purse, drawing out a snapshot of her 12-year-old daughter at the beach, wearing a bikini. Four years or so had passed since I'd seen the girl, and I was startled to see her looking so grown-up, and striking the pose of a sexy teenager. But more striking was her mother's obvious pride in her child's sexily-clad body, and her eagerness to display it; this was the sexy daughter as "a credit to her mother" (Kuhn, 1995, p.40) (and an interesting twist on the baby pictures many parents carry in their wallets).

On the other hand, Apter (1991) describes an interview with a weight-obsessed girl's mother who recalls:

> It was such a surprise...to see my tiny little girl get so big. She had such a tremendous growth spurt between 11 and 12 which knocked the wind out of us all. At 9 you would have thought she was going to be a lithe beauty. By 12 she was chubby...I never hear the end of how I was the first one to tell her she was overweight. (p. 49).

In her discussion. Apter contends that it is the typical self-doubt and insecurity of adolescence that causes the daughter's intense sensitivity to any vague disapproval from her mother. and provokes regression to the impossible infantile fantasy of an all-admiring mother—not a failing on the mother's part. However. appropriately concerned to avoid mother-blame (and to point out the impossible demand for a perfectly-attuned mother). Apter misses the narcissistic injury to the mother who. gratified by and/or lovingly identified with her daughter's childishly thin body. must tolerate its growth into soft. more womanly 'fleshliness'. In addition. the mother's nostalgic response hints at the sense that she erotically preferred the androgyny of her daughter's pre-pubertal body. Perhaps for the mother as for the child. the pubertal body is less available to over-inclusive. expansive fantasies of gender and sexuality. and more delimiting of the possibilities of what one can grow up to be and have.

To the extent that a daughter's pre-pubertal mastery and activity buoy a mother's self-esteem and confidence in her own body: these will be deflated as the girl switches gears to accommodate the claims of (passive)heterosexual femininity. Many mothers revel in their daughters' tomboyishness prior to puberty. In fact. it is the mother's "masculinity." (the residue of her own childhood identifications) not just the father's. that is available for the daughter to identify with. and the mother may enjoyably find split-off

and forgotten aspects of herself in this identification. However, Western social reproduction which aims toward conventional, normative, gendering and compulsory heterosexualization of children, directs the girl's mother to allow, even promote, a shift in her daughter's identification with her, from active (phallic) woman to passive (castrated) representative of femininity. Elise (2000) cites deLauretis in arguing that "under male-dominant, patriarchal heterosexuality," the earlier childhood version of this shift—the Oedipal "resolution"-- "a girl is castrated of the erotic tie to the mother, and at the same time the mother is castrated of her previously perceived power" (p.132). Whether or not the mother "believes" in inculcating more passive femininity or resists the identification of woman with passivity, and whether or not she provides a counter-image in the form of her self-reliance and hard-work (as do multitudes of women, especially working class mothers and mothers of color), it is almost certain that (especially if the mother is heterosexual) her daughter will observe that she participates to some extent in the imperative to trade on femininity, at least in sexual/romantic relations with men, and in the feminine model of self-sacrifice.

In my clinical and teaching experience, I have observed that across class, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, many mothers seem to actively discourage or forbid "tomboy" activity and identity in their daughters at puberty. This restriction is often ostensibly due to "masculine" activities being considered unseemly once a girl begins to develop physically. According to the terms of gender normativity, at puberty femininity and heterosexuality are presumed to cohere, with each contingent upon the other, and so the pubertal tomboy is not intelligible as a "normal" female— her display/performance of masculinity throws her heterosexuality into question, whatever the direction of her actual

desires or object choices. The mother must fear their mutual "failure" to fit, perceiving that the success of her own performance of femininity (always precarious, as Judith Butler (1990) demonstrates), as well as her maternal success, will be measured by her pubertal daughter's feminine and heterosexual "accomplishment." In addition, both overt sexuality on the one hand and masculinity on the other are often seen as a signs of "low-class" in a girl, and a mother's class anxiety combined with gender and sexual anxiety will add up to a triple anxiety. For working class mothers, cultivating the "good girl" version of femininity in their daughters may be viewed as necessary to reduce the likelihood of being locked into the working class: normative femininity (including in its contemporary U.S. version an emphasis on thinness) may be perceived as the ticket to upward mobility via acquiring middle-class "value". Ironically, maternal restriction of tomboyishness frequently turns on a contradiction: mothers fear that more than imbuing strength and delaying feminine flirtation, daughters' participation in physical, "masculine," play with boys could get them into "trouble" i.e. pregnant—a true double-bind for both mother and daughter, resulting in the odd and contradictory gender injunction: don't act like a boy because you could get pregnant.

Sadly, the mother is bound to be triply-diminished via her own identity as "castrated" female and then (castrated) mother of a (castrated) female, with whom she also identifies. In her memoir, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (1986), Carolyn Steedman observes that

> it is women who socialize little girls into acceptance of a restricted future, women who used to bind the feet, women who hold down the daughter for cliterodectomy, and who, in more familiar and genteel ways, fit their daughters for self-abasement. (p. 87)

Why do they do it? Beauvoir (1952), in her inimitable style, writes:

> [T]he mother is at once overweeningly affectionate and hostile toward her daughter; she saddles her child with her own destiny: a way of proudly laying claim to her own femininity and also a way of revenging herself for it. The same process is to be found in pederasts, gamblers, drug addicts, in all who at once take pride in belonging to a certain confraternity and feel humiliated by the association...when a child comes under their care, women apply themselves to changing her into a woman like themselves, manifesting a zeal in which arrogance and resentment are mingled; and even a generous mother, who sincerely seeks her child's welfare, will as a rule think that it is wiser to make a "true woman" of her, since society will more readily accept her if this is done. (p. 317)

Steedman and Beauvoir indicate that mothers exercise the power of the powerless as they become dominant, active, participants in fitting their daughters for submission. Adrienne Rich's (1976) interpretation (cited earlier) of the way submission passes from mother-to-daughter points as well to the canalization of the feminine along the path of what Harris (2000) suggests is traumatic gendering, inasmuch as it compels mothers to reproduce femininity in girls by transmitting their own "traumas" of girlhood and womanhood (all the "normal," everyday stresses and indignities as well as the painful losses and injuries that comprise the production, or acquisition, of a gendered body-self) through conscious and unconscious communications and practices. The argument for traumatic gendering posits that gendering requires what Goldner (1991) calls "acts of 'internal violence on the self'" (p. 268) along with other invidious forms of oppression and exploitation that have psychically traumatic effects.

Following Beauvoir's example of exploring the incentives to maternal complicity in a daughter's subjugation, cultural critic Annette Kuhn (1995) discusses how mothers' "feminization" of daughters (e.g. through dressing them up in girlish fashion) may be experienced as "productive" work that holds certain creative satisfactions and rewards, relative to other demands and frustrations. Whether "overweeningly affectionate" or "hostile," "proudly laying claim" or "revenging herself," a mothers' labor in the service of gendering daughters' bodies is work engaged in (and resisted) to varying degrees according to interdependent psychological, ideological, cultural, socio-political, and economic imperatives organized within systems of hierarchical power. As a family therapist quoted in *Mother-Daughter Revolution* (Debold et al., 1993) notes: "The better you've done your job as prescribed for you as a mother, the more you've trained your daughter to fit into patriarchy" (p. 20).

Typically, maternal conflicts and anxieties about molding a properly gendered and heterosexually-oriented "true woman" from her daughter intensify with puberty, and a mother's "body lessons" (hygiene, comportment, dress, make-up, hair) and attention to her daughter's appearance interact with the girl's own anxieties and self-consciousness about her changing body . For many women, the persistent sense of jeopardy in being judged a bad or incompetent mother becomes localized, during her daughter's pubertal development, in the girl's body. Inasmuch as the daughter's body comes to represent success or failure in femininity and (hetero)sexuality for both mother and daughter, their joint "body project" takes on a particular urgency: the teaching and acceptance of social

norms and standards becomes crucial to avoiding of maternal shame.[3] Mother and daughter can then be seen collaborating (or colluding) in the production of a "false body-self." (Orbach, 1994) or locked into relentless battle over the girl's body and comportment as between them they take up the familiar sexual power coordinates of domination and submission. In either scenario, the girl's bond to her mother appears dependent on bodily compliance: "'Don't stick your tummy out', 'pull your tummy in', 'stand up straight'," are maternal dictates remembered by adult European women in a chapter of *Female Sexualization* (Haug, 1987, p. 127) entitled, "The Body Project". Similarly, the authors of *Mother-Daughter Revolution* (Debold et al. 1993) list some of the "body lessons" offered by American mothers to daughters: "Pull in your stomach. Fix your hair. Get your hair out of your face. Are you going out looking like that? Put a little lipstick on. Take your hands away from your face. Stop picking at your face. Stop biting your nails... Smile" (p. 207). The West Indian mother of Jamaica Kincaid's short fiction "Girl" gives instruction on all things a girl must know to do, exhorting her daughter to:

> always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming; don't sing benna in Sunday school; you mustn't speak to wharf-rat boys, not even to give directions;...this is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a button-hole for the button you have just sewed on; this is how to hem a dress when you

[3] For a compelling historical exploration of girls' recruitment of the body to "self-improvement" efforts, see *The Body Project*, by historian Joan Jacob-Brumberg, 1997.

> see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking
>
> likethe slut I know you are so bent on becoming... (1978, pp. 3-4)

Here, as the mother teaches the feminine role to her daughter, we find her passing on complex lessons in female power—power in managing the house, doing the shopping, and so forth, but also in resisting and subverting male domination by regulating childbearing ("this is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child") and managing men.

Girls, of course, receive body-lessons from other-than mother, and mothers these days will find their daughters' fantasy image stoked by contemporary pop culture and merchandisers that push ever-younger girls toward explicitly sexy "dress-up" and body display. In an article on the front page of the Sunday *New York Times* "Style" section (1999), "Daughters of American Evolution", writer-mother Michele Willens laments the contemporary shopping dilemmas faced by mothers of "tweens"—a term coined by marketers for children (girls) between around 9 years old and 12—outgrowing childhood but not yet teenagers: "we are torn between pride at how our little girls are blossoming and migraines over how to teach them about the messages they may be sending." She wonders how to decide if it's "OK" for a flat-chested girl to wear a tight dress and sheer top, but not her early-developing peer. Willens expresses concern for safety and sexual threat ("When is she too young for Mace?"), and sexual objectification by men's gaze, but she simultaneously identifies with that gaze as she seeks to shield her daughter from it. "They are charmingly oblivious to the sex appeal they may be exuding ... Does someone who just turned 11 really need to know why nubile little bodies are the wrong kind of turn-on?" she asks. Willen's ambivalence is aroused, in part because the

daughter's sexual displays arouse (the mother) ambivalently, in part because of her (possibly conflicting) identifications, as well because of her desire to resist the making of her daughter into a sexual object.

Willen's desire to protect her pubertal daughter assumes the girl is "oblivious" and innocent of her power to attract, and must be *taught* that men will find her a "turn-on": this view is not easily reconciled with the girl's experimental desire—her desire to play with "being looked-at-ness" or to identify with ambivalent or even alternative images of sexual power, like Madonna, Destiny's Child, or Britney Spears. I recall a mother of a 12-year-old girl whispering to me at a social gathering that her daughter, clad in a cropped top with loose-fitting sweatpants that fell low on her hips revealing plenty of midriff, "doesn't have any idea how incredibly sexy she is!" It seemed to me that it was my *friend* who was oblivious: her daughter was clearly flirting playfully-- and self-consciously using her bare hips and navel in the effort-- with a teenage boy at the gathering. Confused? Maybe. Oblivious? Definitely not.

On the other hand, many mothers "recognize" their daughters' hetero-desire at the moment they discover her body changing—that is, they believe they perceive it because it is anticipated, projected, or feared (uncontrollable, "raging hormones" that are linked in the popular imagination with puberty, and "need" to be restrained). The mother's expectant, confirming, and often admiring gaze at her girl during puberty, as in childhood ("she's Daddy's little girl" as a declaration of maternal pride) helps to construct the very hetero-desire it seeks to respond to. If the girl has not yet consciously experienced or registered desire in her own body, and is not interested in boys or her own sexuality, or is

aroused by girls, her mother's misrecognition or misattunement can be a source of stress and confusion, as it was for the character Annie John (see Chapter Three), for example.

The girl's play with images of sexiness may carry much more danger than pleasure for her mother for complex reasons. The sense of shame –and shaming— often so pervasive during early adolescence will also interpenetrate the mother's experience of her own and her daughter's gender, sexuality, class and race or ethnicity. This dynamic comes into focus in the comments of a patient of mine, Margaret. Margaret is a 55-year-old southern, African American foster grandmother of a 12-year-old girl, April, whose drug addicted mother had abandoned her to the care of Margaret and her husband, Anthony, the child's biological grandfather. Margaret had been raped when she was 12, by a young man hired by her father to accompany her on a long bus journey to visit the mother she hadn't seen since early childhood, when she had deserted Margaret. Margaret's traumatic memories of the rape, which she had never spoken of, were stirred up by 12-year-old April's pubertal development. The girl's pride in her developing breasts and her desire to show them off in tight-fitting sweaters flooded Margaret with a torrent of emotions that blocked her usual capacity for empathy or her ability to take pleasure in April's growing up; she unleashed a charged mix of intense vulnerability, rage, fear, and deep humiliation in heated, painful, confrontations with April that were corrosive to the child's sense of self and body, as well as to their formerly tender and close relationship. Her fear of the sexual danger that could come to April now that her body was maturing, and the racist scorn she could face as a young Black woman, often seemed to be edged out of consciousness by the eruption of unconscious meanings bound to her own traumatic history. "I won't have her dressing like that and strutting all around

as if she's a 'ho'. People will talk and say I'm an unfit mother and no kind of woman to be bringing up a child."

We came to understand that this refrain, repeated many times during psychotherapy treatment that spanned April's early adolescence, condensed the shame, self-hatred, and powerlessness that followed the rape and the humiliation and fundamental self-doubt of growing up as a poor, motherless, Southern Black girl, believing (unconsciously) that her mother abandoned her because she was unworthy of love (a feeling of unworthiness confirmed by the racist culture around her). Further, what emerged in the transference to me as a white female therapist was Margaret's shameful conviction, the internalized representation of a white racist gaze, that promiscuous, "loose" behavior was a quality of Black girls and women. She also expressed the corresponding belief that my perceived sympathy for April, as well as my compassion for Margaret's younger self, was only possible because as a white person I did not understand the need for harsh punishment, because white children are not so dangerously, shamefully, sexual. (This seemed much more dominant for Margaret than the concern many parents of color express that white "helping professionals" [psychotherapists, teachers, doctors, social workers] fail to understand that parental strictness is necessary because children of color will be subject to racist threats to their physical and psychological integrity.) At puberty, her (grand)daughter's body became a repository for reviled parts of Margaret's body and sexuality, of her "unfit" self and her "unfit mother."

Another mother—this one the Latina single mother of a 12-year-old patient of mine — watches her daughter flirting on the schoolyard. "I wanted to check-out how she was handling herself, whether she was sneaking around kissing boys." Sarita announces

unapologetically during a parent consultation, and shakes her head with a small chuckle. "I hid behind a bush so I could see her. No way a daughter of mine's gonna be kissing boys at her age." Sarita's concerns for her daughter's safety were mixed together (and mixed-up) with a concern for propriety, or the proper way for a "young lady" to behave. Sarita's experience and fantasies of her daughter's behavior are influenced by cultural expectations about femininity from within the Latino community, and may be shadowed by a consciousness that a dark-skinned, "loud-mouthed" girl from a poor, urban community will be regarded automatically as less feminine, and assumed to be more sexually active than her white, middle class counterparts by the dominant white culture they move through. Here again, gender and sexual self-feeling and representation are produced in an external environment of racial, ethnic, and class domination, where the girl's body carries complex meanings about power and submission, and where pubertal development occurs within an internal environment (intrapsychic and intersubjective, for mother and daughter) organized (in part) in relation to powerlessness and shame. When we consider the possibility of voyeuristic curiosity and excitement, as well as jealousy or envy added to the mix, it all becomes rather sticky and confusing for the mother to experience, and by extension for the daughter to perceive; it is indeed complicated for the clinician to unpack.

In another example of popular press attention to the problem of bringing up girls, a recent *Vogue* magazine article, "Daughter Dearest" (1999), describes a similar scene outside a neighborhood schoolyard, but this time the neighborhood is wealthy, privileged, and white. The author, Hollywood screenwriter-director-mother Lyndall Hobbs, a single

mother of a 12-year-old daughter, recalls sitting parked in her car outside the school-yard waiting to pick-up her child, wondering :

> who is that stunning young vamp in the low-rider, navel-revealing jeans, the baby-pink tank top pulled taut over stunningly high little breasts, the wrap-around black shades, and the amateurishly dyed pink hair? Just who the hell is that little Lolita, leaning against a lampost, rocking back and forth seductively in three-inch black mules as she chats to a lanky, baggy-trousered guy? I donned prescription glasses for a better look. That's no teenage tart, I realized, that's my Lolita, my very own little Lo, the heaven sent bundle of joy I'd squatted on the bedroom floor and given birth to twelve and a half years ago. My Lola Rose. (p. 628)

(We might wonder at the possible overdetermination of this particular daughter growing up with such a culturally resonant name, and her mother's investments in her sexuality.) Hobbs admires the sexy "nymphet" from a distance, closely observing the details of the girl's seductive ways but barely recognizing her as her own daughter (or affecting non-recognition for the sake of a more dramatic retelling of the scene). As if by a magician's trick of misdirection, the mother's gazing attentions is so completely distracted by the appearance of her daughter's newly-sexualized body, dress and demeanor that she does not even recognize her as her own grown-up baby. Yet the girl's body is forever linked by association to her mother's birthing body: the persistent mark of the originary connection—the daughter's navel—is uncovered by the sexy, low-rider jeans she wears.

When Hobbs claims ironically that she did not at first recognize the flirty girl in the schoolyard as the daughter she knew as hers, it is the evidence of Lola's desire that feels so unfamiliar— her body, her clothes, her seductive lean and rock, all add up to a

performance of sexual allure aimed at grabbing the attention of that boy in those baggy trousers, while paying no attention at all to her mother who waits in the car.

What does it mean to recognize the daughter's desire, her desiring body? For Sarita and Hobbs, imagining or seeing their daughter playing with sexual desire (no longer "double-dutch" jumpropes or games of jacks) on the playground mobilizes a multi-layered response. On the look-out for signs of sexuality, the mother is nonetheless surprised by their lack of congruence with the her experience of her daughter as a little girl: she is the same daughter as before, but different. Recognizing and authorizing the girl's desire involves acknowledging that it is no longer desire for the mother, but for another (or will soon be). Sarita is the same mother quoted earlier in this chapter, who remarked on the confusion she felt when noticing her daughter's breasts press against her own in a hug. For both mothers, the imminent loss of an intimate relation to the daughter's body and desire is implicated in pubertal development. As well, the girl's experimentation with her new power to allure signals to the mother that her own allure for the daughter, and the power of their erotic tie (even if never named as such and experienced only unconsciously), will soon wane.

Recognition and the representation of embodied desire: the "genital mother"

In considering these embodied dynamics of recognition, desire, and loss, I want to make use of Jody Messler Davies' (1998) work on the subjectivity of the "post-Oedipal parent" who confirms the adolescent's sexuality, and Diane Elise's (2000) work on the role of the mother in shaping the fate of the girl's desire (for her—the mother-- in the "primary-maternal" Oedipal situation) in early childhood. I will put forward a conceptualization of the girl's "genital mother" meant to capture the sense of her as a

desiring, sexual, *embodied* subject, capable of (and crucial to) offering recognition and confirmation of the daughter's body and desire during puberty and after.

Davies (1998) reports an interaction between her husband and 12-year-old daughter that prompted her to meditate on the role of the parent in facilitating the adolescent's emerging sexuality, and to draw a parallel to the erotic transference-countertransference dynamic she experienced with an adult male patient. She describes a scene in which the daughter parades before her parents sexily costumed in slinky clothes from her little sister's dress-up box, and draws an inadvertent and quite audible gasp from her father. In a developmentally-sensitive denouement (worthy of a psychoanalyst's family stories), the father follows the girl (who had run out of the room in tears), explaining to her (he recounts to Davies) "that I had never seen her looking so beautiful before...in such a grown-up way...that it had taken my breath away...that I liked it...but that it was something I was going to have to get used to (elipses in original)." Davies asks if their daughter said anything in response. "No," her husband answers, "but she smiled the most beautiful smile" (p. 760).

In Davies' account, it is the other-sexed Oedipal parent that figures most prominently in affirming and facilitating the adolescent's sexuality, and the other-sexed analytic dyad to which she applies this insight. She observes that mothers and fathers coax into being and support those aspects of masculinity or femininity (in sons and daughters respectively) they find most desirable in their own hetero-sexual partner. In this way,

> this most passionate of love affairs will begin to burn with a particular form of narcissistic love---the oedipal child as the perfectly fantasized blend of who the

> parent would most desire and who the parent would most want to become in an imagined gender complementarity. (p. 755)

Davies remarks on the parent's difficulty relinquishing "the distinctively intoxicating pleasures bestowed on the parental object of oedipal desire" (p. 757) and wonders if:

> it is not the child in whom the Oedipus complex is resolved, not the child who mourns the unavailable oedipal parent, but the parent who mourns and relinquishes his or her exclusive hold on the oedipal child. Perhaps it is only in our role as parents or, in this case, as analysts, that we finally come to terms with what we can and cannot have—the haunting residues of our own oedipal longing that we nourish in our children and then set free for someone else, some more appropriate lover, to enjoy. This is a bittersweet moment, but, however hard-won, it allows our children, too young to mourn, to know the joys of safe play, to revel in the pleasures of the purely fanciful, to sustain desire for that which is impossible (because it truly is impossible) without the burden of undue shame and mortification. (p. 764)

These insights lead Davies to propose the idea of "the 'post oedipal parent' ...a parent whose object functions and self-experiences are more grounded in the mutual recognition of experienced sexuality and intimate exchange and who must first nourish and then set free the child's emergent sexuality" (p. 753).

Inasmuch as Davies' (1998) idea of the "post-oedipal parent" contains the parent as both a figure in the child's interior post-Oedipal landscape, and as well a person who has--finally, in parenthood-- mourned her own Oedipal losses (vis a vis her child and her own

childhood), her theorization is a great leap forward in terms of designating the parent's subjectivity, and closely aligns with my own conceptualization of what I call the "genital mother." The "genital mother" exists as both a fantasied figure for the daughter, and as a part of the real mother's subjectivity, and helps the girl integrate a sense of emergent sexuality into her changing body-self-representation at puberty (the beginning of Freud's second "genital" stage of adult sexuality). As Davies notes, theorists of adolescence (like Blos 1962; Laufer & Laufer, 1984; Erikson, 1950) concur that one of the chief tasks of adolescence is integrating the sexually mature body into the self-representation. However, Davies' notion of the "post-oedipal parent" refers too narrowly to the "positive oedipal complex," and neglects the crucial role of the same-sex parent (and the "negative oedipal" configuration of desire and identification) in helping the daughter accomplish this task.

Elise (2000) argues that inasmuchas the girl's desire, in the context of infantile sexual development, is at first desire for her mother (as is the boy's), she needs the mother to recognize and authorize that desire if she is to develop a healthy sense of her own body, and to experience a sense of her desire as originating within (cf. Benjamin, 1988). "However," writes Elise,

> unlike the boy's situation, where this desire is *acknowledged* and then forbidden, a girl's desire for her mother is typically erased, negated, made invisible, nonexistent. That a girl wants her mother is generally not seen or registered by the mother; it remains *unrecognized* desire. Benjamin (1988) writes of the importance of mutual recognition and of the need to see the mother as a sexual subject. Both are essential to a girl's sexuality, but can the mother *see the*

daughter as a sexual subject; can mother-daughter homoerotic desire be experienced and validated *by the mother*? (p. 129)

Elise asks these questions in terms of the girl's early childhood relationship to her mother, wondering "what is it *internally* that motivates women to eclipse themselves, to accept the 'silencing of the female first person sexual voice?'"(Wolf, quoted in Elise, 2000); I argue that a great deal hinges on these very same questions at puberty.

Reflecting upon Freud's 1931 insights, Elise argues that he indeed understood most of the answer to his own question. "'What does a woman want?' (Freud, 1925)" (Elise, 2000, p. 125), but did not (or could not) recognize the implications of his own observation that the girl "relinquishes (not without a struggle) her sexuality, her desire, her activity, and her mother...with the turn from mother to father as primary, sexual love object" (Elise, 2000, p. 130). That the unrecognized, unacknowledged (and therefore ungrievable—cf. Butler, 1995) loss of the desired mother leaves the girl with a wounded sexuality that forecloses a more full and flexible experience (and representation) of desire is a crucial point, itself consequently lost or repressed. Elise argues, in theory that valorizes the establishment of "heterosexual complementarity" (Benjamin, 1988; 1995) in the *secondary*-paternal Oedipal situation, and 'forgets' what came before (p. 135).

In the phase of pre- and early puberty, as I have shown, the mother-daughter bond may again resonate with the pleasurable, sensuous, erotic attachment characteristic of what Elise terms the primary-maternal Oedipal situation, and classical theory characterizes variably (and with frequent, elusive slippages) as dynamics of the negative Oedipal, or the pre-Oedipal phase. I agree with Blos (1962) that puberty, with its shifting states of body and mind, provides an opportunity for a re-working of what was settled

unfavorably or rigidly in previous development. and yet it seems to me that here is where things generally go wrong for the girl and her mother-- again. If we accept. following Bassin (1997) and Benjamin (1995). that the adolescent must return to the wellspring of pre-Oedipal life to recuperate the over-inclusivity and flexibility of gender identification and desire she needs to draw on to mend the splits of the Oedipal phase and to symbolically elaborate a richer. less polarized (in terms of gender and sexuality) post-Oedipal life. what will she do if the figurative path to the well is barred? The heterosexual mother. to affirm her own heterosexual choice and shape her daughter's in accord with hetero-normative assumption and practice. must once more repudiate their reciprocal homoerotic tie at puberty. The mother's recognition of her daughter's emerging genitality (her sexually developing. desiring. body) will not also admit of mother-daughter erotics: thus the recognition of the girl's desire for her mother ("what came before"). and a registration of loss and necessary mourning. must be further excluded from maternal consciousness to maintain the orthogonal configuration of desire (for) and identification (with).

> According to Elise. the mother in a young child's eyes is initially perceived as sexual. agentic. active. This is the mother a girl originally desires. relates to intensely. and then loses as a romantic/love object. Under male-dominant. patriarchal heterosexuality a girl is castrated of the erotic tie to the mother. and at the same time the mother is castrated of her previously perceived power (deLauretis, 1994). (in Elise. 2000. p. 132)

Similarly, Benjamin (1988b) writes that:

> The problem [of women's desire] begins with the fact that the mother is not articulated as a sexual subject: she is the woman without desire. The identification with her thus seems an ill-fated beginning for the developing sense of sexual agency. (pp. 455-456)

The girl needs recognition from a mother who is a (sexual) subject in her own right: to the extent that the mother is "castrated" of subjectivity she is rendered for her daughter a less worthy "recognizer," less capable of confirming the girl's own authority and power, body and subjectivity.

Feminist film theorist Teresa de Lauretis (1994), paraphrasing Kaja Silverman, asks us to imagine an active "Oedipal mother who can authorize the daughter's 'passionate desire' and 'erotic investment in the mother' as a mainstay of female subjectivity" (p. 174). I contend that this is in fact the mother the daughter seeks at puberty: variously termed the mother of the "primary-maternal oedipal situation", of the "negative oedipal phase," or the "phallic mother" of pre-Oedipal life, it is the mother as a figure of power *in her sensual/sexual (erotic) body* that the girl wants to return to (as fantasied object of desire *and* identification), even as she may dread her as a figure of merger and engulfment, or envy her. This is the mother I propose to call "the genital mother."

The concept of "the genital mother" attempts to capture the sense that she is not just a figure in the child's internal world, but a sexual subject in her own right—<u>with a body and a genital.</u> The term positions the mother within what is called the (second) "genital stage" in Freudian terms (puberty): it also expresses the need for the mother to integrate the child's maturing genitals (and secondary sex characteristics) into her own

image of the child's body-self and sexuality, just as the adolescent must integrate these (cf. Laufer & Laufer, 1984). Of course, the term "genital mother" contains certain problems. First, there is the risk of collapsing all sexual desire into genitality (and inadvertently supporting an emphasis on a genitally-oriented sexuality that has been criticized by many feminists as a limited, male construction), and second of representing the mother as a part-object, a metonym-- genital succeeding "the Breast." Still, to my mind the term has the strength of designating the embodied relation between the mother's sexuality and the child's (in our discussion, the daughter's).

But perhaps the term "genital mother" hedges my bet somewhat, in that it refuses to name the mother's difference, or what she "really" has—a vagina, a clitoris— and instead consigns the mother's body to the more indeterminate registers of the imaginary and symbolic. The adolescent daughter needs to recognize, and be recognized by, her post-Oedipal, *vaginal – clitoral* mother. If the post-Oedipal phase (and the post-Oedipal parent) allows the girl to play symbolically with what she has and is, she needs a real vagina and clitoris, like her mother's, to play with.

CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion
Daughters and Mothers, Dancing

Searching for antidotes to the cultural and psychic over-determinants I've described that engage mothers and adolescent daughters along the way to normative femininity and heterosexuality---sticky, ambivalent, pre-oedipalized (regressive) mother-daughter couplings, poisoned apples of jealous oedipal witch-mothers, frantic maternal pushes (or filial leaps) over homoerotic precipices into (pseudo) heterosexuality, and deep, ungrievable losses, I arrived at an unlikely prescription for erotic health for pubertal girls and their mothers: the 1999 film, *Tumbleweeds* (by director and screenwriter, Gavin O'Connor, from an original autobiographical screenplay by Angela Shelton).

To be honest, I'd planned to write about this film long before I ever screened it, and thought I'd use it to draw-out certain critical conclusions: "The only mothers who are represented in film as having a sexual subjectivity that their teenage daughters might identify with are simultaneously represented as immature, narcissistic, and damaging." Something like that. I was unprepared to be so engaged with the mother-daughter couple at the heart of the movie, and so sympathetic to the mom. So, while I find that my 'pre-fabbed' conclusion about representations of the sexual mother's irresponsibility actually holds true for *Tumbleweeds*, (as for *Anywhere But Here* [Mark, 1999] another mother-daughter road movie of sorts – based on the Mona Simpson [1986/1992] novel of the same name—released almost simultaneously) I intend to make the case that "Tumbleweeds" <u>also</u> holds the promise of transcending the potential damage to the daughter of self-destructive maternal heterosexuality through the enormous power of the mother-daughter erotic bond.

Tumbleweeds provides a portrait of the flamboyant, working class, Southern, four times married, single-mom, Mary Jo Walsh, who sustains an uneasy tension between her adoration of her chubby 12 year old daughter, Ava, and her love of sex and romance with the charming but rotten (and violent) men she is serially involved with. Janet McTeer's Mary Jo is smart, bawdy, impulsive, vulnerable, and lusty. She makes friends easily with women and men co-workers, tells off her sexually-harassing "weenie" of a boss with an extravagant flourish, and joyfully kisses her daughter full on the lips for winning the part of Romeo in a school play, never blinking an eye at such gender-bending. Mary Jo is full of bald contradictions and weaknesses, to be sure, and her observant daughter is aware of these and not shy about complaining. ("You wanna marry every cute, sexy guy we come across... You know what I think of men, Mama?" Ava asks rhetorically, then farts after a dramatic pause.) But her confidence in and bond with her girl is unwavering, and is accompanied by a most wonderful, clear, and comfortable erotic attachment, undiminished alongside her own impulsive, needy, self-destructive sexual relationships with men.

Propelled as much by the compulsive energy of need as by desire, Mary Jo skids from one bad-choice man to the next like an out-of-control Buick (a pink one, a convertible, with the top down). It's as if Mary Jo has closed her eyes and taken her hands off the wheel with reckless, almost manic, abandon, holding her breath to see what will happen—always hoping for the best, never meaning to crash. We never learn what drives her to such self-destructive choices in men; we do see that she drags her resisting daughter along with her for the ride, never allowing her to settle down anywhere for long. When she realizes (always almost too late) the trouble she's gotten them both into, she

shoves her kid back into the car and takes off for parts unknown, trying her best to protect them both, desperate to get away and try again.

I recognize, of course, that this may sound like a chronicle of a mother neglectful if not abusive of her daughter's needs; from all I'd heard I certainly imagined this would be my critique of it--- another "sexy mother equals bad mother" film, following the usual formula. But I want to consider it from another angle. Perhaps, like the daughter herself, it's that I want to forgive Mary Jo for all her stupid, irresponsible, self-destructive relationships with men because she is just so fiercely, tenderly, and unconditionally attached to her daughter, with such pride. It seems to me that she is, in fact, what Winnicott (1965/1988) calls a "good enough mother"—far from perfect, but perfectly capable of providing her daughter with her own particular brand of love that's been good enough to help her grow into the strong, resilient, smart, feisty, independent-minded, funny kid that she is. Most remarkable for the purposes of my argument, she is a mother who recognizes and appreciates—*mirrors*--- her daughter's developing sexuality, without being jealous of it, without suppressing it, channeling it, restricting it or rejecting her for it. Like the mother of separation-individuation theory (Mahler et al., 1975) enjoying her practicing toddler's love affair with the world, she's got an admiring twinkle in her eye for Ava whenever she comes back to home-base for refueling after venturing out on her own. As a psychotherapist who screened the film at my request reported: "I wanted her as *my* mother!"

Mary Jo gazes with pleasure at Ava's body (childishly round belly protruding in too-big woman's thrift store swimsuit in her first trip to the beach), discusses growing 'tatas' (breasts) with her, kisses her full and often on the lips in delight and affection, and

teaches her how to kiss a boy when she asks to know how. For her part, Ava (played deliciously by Kimberly Brown) is a twelve-year-old girl who keeps pet mice, maintains a watchful and disapproving eye on her mother's doomed and foolish choices in men (she wants her mother all to herself, but this has a protective, as well as a jealous, edge), seems entirely comfortable in her own girl-body (with its sway-backed stoutness, on the verge of changing shape), is stubborn, smart and curious, and is enraptured of her passionate and raucous mother. When a boy at school pursues her (his spiky hairdo signifying that he is a boy who could be attracted to an unconventional girl who plays Romeo), Ava goes out on a movie-date with him; when he kisses her in the dark she has an asthma attack from trying to hold her breath. Returning home, she joins her mother at the kitchen table and asks how you're supposed to breathe when you kiss.

"Here, lemme show ya."

The mother reaches for an apple and begins kissing it.

"Then you kinda peck a little like this, just t' get things going...mmm...mmm ...mmm... now you try it."

Ava closes her eyes and begins kissing an apple, with "mmm's" of pleasure, like her mother's sounds.

"Didja start using your tongue?"

Ava nods.

"Oh my God, are ya doin' that already? Hmm, OK, well..."

Mary Jo's mobile face registers some surprise and interest, but she takes it in stride and proceeds with the kissing lesson, both of them audibly enjoying themselves.

In the film's unusual and non-climactic denouement, Mary Jo leads her daughter in a spontaneous, uproarious, infectiously hysterical, coming-of-age celebration when she learns of Ava's first period—"Aunt Rosey's here!" In what in all its freshness could only have been an improvised scene, middle-aged mother and preteen daughter dance with abandon around the living room of their first very own house (no man this time, Mary Jo's own lease) doing silly things with sanitary pads—holding them up as earrings, stuffing them down their shirts, talking into them like microphones, wearing them like blindfolds. "But what happens if you get a wedgie?" laughs Ava, indicating a pad stuck in the crevice of her buttocks. "Grab on by and just yank if off!" cries her mother, demonstrating with a mock flourish, and collapsing with tears of laughter which she wipes away with—what else?—a sanitary pad. Never has a girl getting her first period been shown on film as such an occasion for playful, loving, mordant mother-daughter hilarity and female irony. The scene powerfully portrays a mother welcoming her daughter into the fold by embracing the comically inconvenient side of the female body, thankfully avoiding the "now you can make a baby" mother-daughter talk that many women recall from menarche, or the serious and often romanticizing menstruation "celebrations" that have become popular in recent years as feminist-flavored rites of passage. Witnessed from a porch window by the lone good man of the film, Dan, a friend to Ava and a hopeful, gentle suitor for Mary Jo, the scene confirms that the intimacy of this female dyad, their mutual recognition, is primary.

It seems to me that this is a mother and daughter smitten with each other. The two are in love. This is not a regressed, pre-Oedipal dyad but an active, post-Oedipal, homoerotic couple that <u>also</u> admits of genital-erotic love for men and boys. That they are

identified with each other in their unconventional and independent ways, and are identified both with each other's homoeroticism *and* heteroeroticism, makes them all the more complicated and hopeful as "post-Oedipal" representations that move us beyond Oedipal complementarity to the place of mutual (erotic) recognition. As Mary Jo's sense of autonomy and agency deepens along with (and through) Ava's developing sexual subjectivity, we see her embodying "the genital mother" I theorized in Chapter Four. Despite abundant evidence of a hidden story of maternal damage that the filmmakers never trace, Mary Jo does not ultimately succumb to masochism, or the variant Benjamin (1988) refers to as "ideal love" nor does her daughter identify with her masochistically (cf. Benjamin, 1988, for discussion of women's "submission to a powerful other who seemingly embodies the agency and desire one lacks in oneself" [quoted in Gerhardt et al., 27]). In the final instance, a free-spirited strength animates both mother and daughter, and attaches them securely and admiringly to one another, allowing them to be connected, and distinct. To recognize each other as subjects—sexual subjects.

In her exploration of the erotic connections between parents and children, *The Eros of Parenthood* (Oxenhandler, 2001), Nicole Oxenhandler recounts her own experience of dancing with her daughter, providing another beautifully modulated illustration of what I have described as the pre-adolescent daughter's bid for her mother's erotic confirmation, and a mother's capacity to recognize her daughter erotically. Like Mary Jo dancing with Ava in *Tumbleweeds*, Oxenhandler provides a "transitional space" (cf. Winnicott, 1971) that facilitates her daughter's comfort in her body and sexuality, although in this is case the seductive and sexy elements are more palpable, and the daughter takes the lead (with this self-reflexive mother noting the fine shadings of her

own responses with the consciousness of a writer-researcher). Oxenhandler describes herself delivering a basket of clean laundry to her pre-teen daughter's room one evening before supper, and entering (upon invitation) into an erotic scene of the girl's own creation—her room filled with music, candlelight and incense, clothes and jewelry strewn with abandon. The girl is dancing, and commands her mother, "'Look at me!'" as she undulates her hips and tosses her hair, all the while gazing at herself in the mirror. Oxenhandler writes that watching her daughter dance like this gives her an awkward sensation, "as though I don't quite know who I'm with" (p. 248). The daughter not only invites her mother to witness her sexuality, her sexual self-production, but to leave behind her dull domesticity to share in it: "'Dance with me!'" she says, grabbing my hand. I feel a sudden anxiety. My undulating, preteen daughter has grabbed my hand and asked me to dance. This is one of those moments for which I have no map" (p. 248).

Oxenhandler recognizes in herself the impulse to flee the intensity of her daughter's joyous seduction and retreat to the laundry, but chooses instead to stay and dance, letting herself be drawn into the girl's "*pas-de-trois*: a dance for 'Girl, Mother, Mirror.' In fact, she's using me as another mirror. *Look at me, look at me* her body says without words. *I'm turning into a woman before your eyes*" (p. 248). The moment evokes in the mother the memory of their first intimate touch of skin to skin in infancy, when "[t]here, already, was the play of surface and depth" (p. 248). Oxenhandler at first writes that she realizes herself to be a "stand-in par excellence" in her daughter's dance. But she revises this idea, recognizing that "the heat I feel from her is real—which is why it made me slightly anxious when she grabbed my hand and told me to 'Dance!'...She was using the sparks from our connection to send heat in a different, if now mostly

imagined, direction, away from me" (p. 249). The capacity to acknowledge and contain her own anxiety in the presence of the girl's erotic desire, and to recognize that it is, on a certain level, desire for her—the mother—even as she knows that it will someday be for another (and may be so now, in the girl's fantasy), allows Oxenhandler to truly let herself be "used" erotically by her child. That is, the mother is available to the daughter's fantasy, but also remains an outside, "real" other, with whom the daughter can feel recognized, admired, and safe (cf. "The Use of an Object," in Winnicott, 1971, pp. 86-94) And she is able to feel in her daughter's resonant response the deep, confirming pleasure "that whatever this moment is for which I had no map, I'm doing it right (p. 249)."

Although she feels the pull to let loose her own embodied fantasies and memories of girlhood in identification with her daughter, and to dance with abandon, Oxenhandler is concerned that doing so would risk subsuming her daughter's need and desire within her own; instead, she holds back and lets the girl's body and imagination lead. I wonder if here Oxenhandler's reining in of her sexual expressiveness also reflects an anxiety about her own contribution to the homoerotic charge *between* them. And maybe there is ambivalence about letting herself be genuinely sexy as a mother together with her daughter--about really putting the laundry (that part of the maternal) aside. (In contrast, the mother in *Tumbleweeds* is all for tossing aside laundry in the service of feeling wild and unencumbered. In an early scene, we see her throwing her favorite hat out the car window shrieking "wooooooowoooo!! It's a brand new day," urging her daughter to likewise throw something away. They drive down the highway with their clothes flying out the window behind them.) In Oxenhandler's story, we can see a dialectic between a mother responding to her pubertal daughter's desire to lead and seduce, and the

importance of recognizing that in her seduction the girl wants also to be able to identify with her mother's sexual subjectivity and agency.

A psychotherapeutic case presentation, offered by Gerhardt et al. (2000) in their discussion of Benjamin's work on recognition, provides a final, clinical, illustration of the dynamic of homoerotic desire and recognition between daughter and mother, as it emerges within a creative, intersubjective, therapeutic moment that fosters an adult patient's sexual subjectivity. The authors use "Gerson's (1996a) query: 'How can the analyst best embrace the project of reconstituting a patient's unlived and unloved sensibilities about his or her sexuality and body?'" (quoted in Gerhardt et al., 2000, p. 36) to frame the clinical vignette they offer as an application of Benjamin's work on intersubjectivity and mutuality. A session in the treatment of a 37-year-old woman patient (married, a mother) by a woman therapist (one of the authors) who is some ten years her senior is recounted, in which the patient comes to her appointment dressed –for the first time-- in black. The therapist, who wears a lot of black to sessions, comments on the patient's attire, and together they explore what is signaled by the patient wearing black. The authors tell us that in this session, as in the past, the therapeutic narrative takes in the ways the patient (P) tends to feel herself "either the cowering, fearful, compliant little girl or the screaming, abandoned woman" (like her mother) (Gerhardt et al., p. 35). But now the therapist (T) notes something new:

...

T: Well, what's here in the room that isn't being commented on—that maybe would make us both too anxious to even notice—or especially comment on?

P: You mean—oh yeah, we're both wearing black.

T: Two women not screaming, not cowering—both wearing black.

P: Yeah, it's kind of sexy, isn't it? [P tells a story about a female colleague at work. She says that she knew the woman was having an affair with a male colleague because the woman began wearing a lot of black...(ellipses added)]

T: So you're wearing black, and I'm wearing black. What does that say about US?

P: I don't know...(ellipses added) I just bought the sweater last week and the tight pants, and as I said, I thought of you. You wear black a lot.

T: So, when you bought that outfit, you were thinking of me.

...

T: Maybe it would be hard for you to tell me if you were [trying to look sexy]. After all, I'm older, so maybe you'd worry that I'd begin to feel as the screaming, abandoned mother bested by her daughter.

P: The thought of trying to look sexier than my mother in front of my mother is awesome.

T: So it makes it easier for you that I wear black? The mother looking sexy in front of the daughter?

P: Yes, totally.

Gerhardt et al. (2000) offer this vignette to demonstrate what Benjamin's (1988a) concept of "mutual recognition" might look like in the clinical space, when the therapist attempts to "bring into the room" a sense of "a newly emerging joint consciousness—two women as sexual subjects both delighting in their feelings of sexiness around the other" (p. 37). As I have attempted to do in my discussion of the ways a mother's conscious and unconscious history interacts with and contributes to a pubertal daughter's subjectivity,

the authors emphasize that intersubjectivity involves "unconscious reciprocal identificatory processes" (p. 39) that co-construct and respond to intrapsychic life, and make possible mutual recognition between two subjects.

The therapist in this vignette, they point out, is "trying to work in two arenas simultaneously: (a) the transitional arena of erotic transference-countertransference without having it cast or experienced solely in terms of the preoedipal longings and needs that are clearly represented (Wrye and Welles, 1994) and (b) the intersubjective arena of mutual recognition and reciprocal identification of two women, both sexual beings, both desiring sexual subjects" (p. 36). Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that theorizing these two "arenas" or relational axes between pubertal daughter and mother is critical to understanding girls' adolescent development: I find in Gerhardt et al.'s technical formulation a compelling clinical application of both these elements. Presented in terms of their discussion of Benjamin's work on intersubjectivity, however, they emphasize recognition over homoeroticism, whereas I see these as intimately linked for girls at puberty. In fact, it seems likely that this therapeutic interaction, or enactment, is derivative of conflicts that first emerged, or were intensified, during patient's puberty and adolescence (though without more clinical data from the authors this is impossible to confirm).

The authors note that the therapist attempts to highlight the homoerotic valence of the exchange ("What does that say about US?" and "When you bought that outfit, you were thinking about me") in order to open "a space for possible homoerotic play/tension between them": but the patient's anxiety leads her to drop this line of interpretation. In a footnote, they explain that the therapist's intention was to "find a way of allowing for what Benjamin (1988) refers to as 'homoerotic love,' which characterizes the father-son

relation during rapprochement" (p. 38). As I argued in Chapter Three, homoerotic, identificatory love often characterizes the daughter's relation to her mother in pre-adolescence. Although the mother is culturally and psychically constrained in her sexual subjectivity, and limited in her full experience and expression of desire and agency (as feminists have amply demonstrated [cf. Beauvoir, 1949/1953; Dinnerstein, 1976; Benjamin, 1988a]), she cannot be said to be entirely without subjectivity, without desire, or without a sense of agency available for her daughter to identify with, and to love. I have tried to "complicate" feminist thinking about girls' development and women's subordination by showing that the mother's desire and agency is rarely fully effaced, and pre-adolescence may be a time when the mother's appreciation of her daughter's body, and her capacity to support and identify with her daughter's "love affair with the world," along with the daughter's admiration of her mother's body and activity, helps sustain the charge of their connection—the sense of being alike and loving each other as like, of being subjects together.

In Gerhardt et al.'s clinical narrative, the therapist is trying to respond to the (female) patient's need to use the (female) therapist as Benjamin (1988a) argues that a son uses his father during rapprochement, when "'the little boy's 'love affair with the world' (of the earlier practicing stage) turns into a homoerotic love affair with the father, who *represents* the world" (quoted in Gerhardt et al., p. 38). But what if we were to re-cast this patient's need in terms of the pubertal daughter-mother dyad, without relying exclusively on the terms of father-son identificatory love of early childhood? The patient *qua* pubertal daughter wants and needs what I have called her "genital mother's" confirmation and admiration of the desirability of her sexual body; she wants her

mother's permission to have a sexy body of her own (see also Davies, 1994, p. 753, on the "post-oedipal parent"). The therapist senses the patient's wish to be a subject of desire—like the sexy (older woman) therapist she (the patient) imagines and perceives—and lets their mutual identification infuse the intersubjective, therapeutic space (implicitly, though not explicitly), as if to say: "you are like me and I am like you—we are both sexy, agentic, desiring subjects, who enjoy feeling sexy together." Such a clinical intervention offers not only a "corrective emotional experience," but an opening for associating to the losses, longings, and absences that the patient's gendered and sexual embodiment at puberty may have entailed, and the possibility of both grieving and recuperating lost "overinclusive" self-representations and desires.

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This dissertation is part of a much larger, ongoing project of feminist and psychoanalytic theoretical inquiry into girls at puberty that I am developing, moving from my exploration of girls' embodied relations with their mothers to take up as well other psychic dynamics central to gender and sexuality. Cross-sexed or gender-discrepant identifications and self-representations that often thrive just prior to puberty typically become more conflictual during puberty, and my ongoing work examines girls' uses of masculinity (the positions of tomboy and coquette, of "being" and "having"), and their relations with fathers, applying Benjamin's (1995) views on identificatory love of the father and gender heterodoxy, and Elise's (1999) and Harris' (2000) writings on tomboys, to the shifting experience of gender identity and desire for girls at puberty. I continue my readings of fiction and film to explore girl-girl relationships at puberty, considering the liminal figure of the preadolescent "little sister" watchfully observing her older sister's

developing heterosexuality with distrust, dismay, and curiosity, and resisting femininity herself. A review of psychoanalytic and feminist discussions of pubertal girls' crushes on other girls, and on idealized adult women, further contributes to my re-theorization of pre- and early puberty for girls as a developmental phase that is "normally queer"—characterized by erotic and identificatory flexibility and inclusiveness; mindful of Butler's (1990) and de Lauretis' (1994) discussions of feminist and psychoanalytic difficulties theorizing bisexuality and homosexual desire. I will take up the potentially different implications of this for girls who are or will become heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual. Louise Kaplan's original and thought-provoking writing on girls' "perverse strategies" for dealing with problems of the sexualized, feminized body, e.g eating disorders and delicate self-cutting (Kaplan, 1984), lays the groundwork for my own thinking about anorexia and obesity, self-mutilation and popular contemporary forms of scarification (tattooing and piercing), and drug use. Finally, I analyze the discourses of the popular literature directed at mothers about raising "confident girls," and at girls about their bodies at puberty. Throughout this project, in each of these areas of ongoing work, I am interrogating the ways race and class infuse the meanings made of girls' pubertal bodies, and shape girls' embodied self-representations.

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