

The Sex and Gender of Violence

*The feminists are at war with Mother Nature, and she is still winning.*¹

Phyllis Schlafly, “The High Costs of Marriage Absence”

*Mom, that girl was such a bitch, and there was nothing I could do about it. That’s the trouble with tennis: It’s such a polite sport. If this were soccer, I could’ve just knocked her over and that would be that.*²

Melissa, quoted in James Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*

The scripts determining cultural understandings of women and violence have been limited but are beginning to proliferate. Biological determinism and cultural essentialism have both been used to prescribe or explain gendered behavior. But the search for determining sameness or difference between the sexes is usually ideologically laden, guiding both methodologies and interpretations of results. Brain differences, for instance, have been discovered, but they are not consistent across studies for significant disparities.³ Some looking at sex-specific hormones have focused on the impact of testosterone. But it turns out to have a “permissive effect” more than a singularly discernible outcome. In other words, it facilitates aggression already present but does not produce aggression on its own. In fact, the reverse process seems to be in effect: aggression produces testosterone. Winning a contest as a result of one’s own efforts (versus winning the lottery) also produces testosterone and so is perhaps correlated with feelings of dominance; but pre-contest levels of testosterone are not indicators of

victory.⁴ Some researchers suggest that it appears to prepare men and also women (though less so) for struggles determining dominance.⁵ Choices to enact aggression, however, seem to be more highly correlated with social environment and previous life experience.⁶ While testosterone may play a limited role in aggressive behavior, given that females also produce testosterone in similar ways, it is unlikely to be responsible for any marked differences in men's and women's actions.⁷ In fact, a recent study compared women who had been given testosterone with those who merely believed they had been administered the hormone but had received a placebo instead. While playing a game wherein fair behavior was likely to result in achieving a goal or gaining access to resources and unfair behavior was likely to result in rejection, women who had been administered testosterone behaved the most fairly, while those who had been given a placebo behaved the least fairly.⁸ Hence, cultural beliefs in the effects of testosterone apparently have a more significant impact on aggression than the hormone itself.

Although some still claim innate biological differences between the sexes, most scholars see gender as largely culturally determined. Cultural ideologies and practices influence behavior in a variety of ways. For instance, men may rely on rationality because the principles governing society were created to support their needs, and those in control often advocate discipline and adherence to rules. Women's focus on relationships has developed in response to their relative disenfranchisement, because promoting relatedness and mercy are ways they can exert influence. Tendencies assumed to be gender-linked may have instead evolved through social processes driven by the gendered and hierarchical distribution of power.⁹ Earlier influential scientists and theorists were not so aware of the origins of gender norms. Talcott Parsons's (1902–1979) traditional sex-role theories (1955) constructed men as rational and *instrumental*, while women were supposedly oriented toward feelings and relationships, and therefore more *expressive* (read “emotional and ineffective”). This became a scientific legitimation for the tradition of keeping women in the home to care for their families while promoting men in the public sphere.¹⁰

Erving Goffman was the first sociologist to theorize social roles in a clearly theatrical way in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). While the majority of this work is not based on gender, at one point he provides an amusing and ironic commentary:

American college girls did, and no doubt do, play down their intelligence, skills, and determinativeness when in the presence of datable boys, thereby

manifesting a profound psychic discipline in spite of their international reputation for flightiness. These performers are reported to allow their boy-friends to explain things to them tediously that they already know; they conceal proficiency in mathematics from their less able consorts; they lose ping-pong games just before the ending. ... Through all of this the natural superiority of the male is demonstrated, and the weaker role of the female affirmed.¹¹

Fortunately, not all men today need women to be less intelligent and competent than they in order to find them attractive. These women consciously exploited, or suffered under, depending on the point of view, men's erroneous constructions of their gender—a construction, like most, that served men. But most of those college women still would have probably agreed that there were some innate differences between the sexes.

Judith Butler is one of the most prominent scholars at the opposite end of the spectrum from those arguing for biological essentialism, claiming that neither sex nor gender produces a stable identity. Rather, identity is always in process through time and constituted through a series of stylized and repetitive acts. We may have a limited kind of agency in choosing the parts of our repertoire, but those available possibilities are constrained by historical and cultural conventions. Gender in this way is not “expressive” of something innate, but rather “performative,” unable to be measured against any “true” standard. She would not even allow gender to be called a role, because it is not chosen by a constant and stable self. Instead, abiding by cultural norms is culturally policed in order to contain aberrant choices. Society clearly punishes those who stray from their prescribed path: “As a corporal field of cultural play, gender is basically an innovative affair, although it is quite clear that there are strict punishments for contesting the script by performing out of turn or through unwarranted improvisations.”¹² Given the way gender differences have often been used as a basis for discrimination, the desire to eliminate them entirely, or at least reveal their “socially compelled” rather than “ontologically necessitated”¹³ basis, is certainly understandable.

As opposed to earlier arguments that sex was a “natural,” unalterable classification but gender was culturally determined, most now recognize that biological essentialism is not only false, but our understanding of sex is also socially constructed. Where sex once preceded gender, some go so far as to argue that gender actually precedes sex, a process designed to allow easy recognition of and demarcation between the dominant and the

dominated.¹⁴ The body is visibly marked by many physical traits, including those related to reproduction, and yet one's most fundamental classification is based on whether or not one has an anatomical phallus. Because our society is hierarchical, this difference is used to legitimate inequality.¹⁵ Butler collapsed the sex/gender distinction entirely in *Gender Trouble*.¹⁶ In *Undoing Gender*, she argues that gender is partially produced through the normative assumption that femininity belongs to bodies marked as female.¹⁷ While assigning femininity to femaleness is a common cultural practice, seeing no difference between the two or positing gender as prior to sex introduces an ideological bind.

Samuel Chambers insightfully points out that this configuration merely reverses the concept of causality, and instead of gender voluntarism, we are left with gender determinism.¹⁸ We need a theory of sex and gender that brings to bear the many different ways they are constituted. Certainly we are born with *genetically* constructed predispositions,¹⁹ which may or may not fit within our *socially* constructed gender roles—which is part of why transsexuals have their bodies altered to fit whom they feel themselves to be. Yet in many ways biological and social/cultural processes are impossible to isolate, and various experiences change not only how the brain *functions* but also how it is *composed*.²⁰ Still, if environment is a critical shaper of identity, our first and only lifelong environment is our bodies. Even if our abilities to understand them are discursively and historically constrained,²¹ surely male and female experiences of life are necessarily different because of the material physicality of existence, which constantly mediates experience. French sociologist Christine Mennesson, who has studied female boxers, agrees: “Genders are partially created and regulated both in and by the body and can be analyzed in terms of *dispositions*.” She has examined “the plurality of feminine models which [female boxers] refer to, create, reproduce, and question.”²² Particularly in regard to an intersectional view of gender identity, there are multiple masculinities and femininities.²³

One of the most productive things we can say is that greater differences exist *within* genders than *between* them. In some ways, polarizing the potential options for how to see men and women is itself the problem. Equality law actually rests on the basis of difference. It presumes that two people who are obviously different in certain ways should, for good reasons in certain contexts, be treated equally. More common understandings of equality and difference often falsely posit them at opposite ends of a spectrum. Equality assumes the absence of difference, so once difference is conceded, then equality seems an impossible achievement. Yet sexual

difference and equality do not need to be mutually exclusive once we recognize their dichotomous construction as a mirage.²⁴ Our clearest path is not to choose exclusively between the models of equality and difference with their implications of sameness or necessary discrimination. If we are going to examine women's agency in a society that is still molded by patriarchal values and institutions, we need to allow for a complex constellation and interaction of forces: individual temperament/genetics; social settings and expectations; systemic as well as transient situational stimuli; social constructions of sexed and gendered identities; and accumulated personal experiences.²⁵

Janelle Reinelt argues for the necessity of working on two fronts. The first is to subvert the bipolar and hegemonic construction of gender through proliferation—Michel Foucault's idea for resisting hegemonic power relations. In this way, the historical construction of male and female can be challenged.²⁶ Gender is actually a continuum, and Michael Kimmel argues appealingly for "gender proteanism—a temperamental and psychological flexibility, the ability to adapt to one's environment with a full range of emotions and abilities."²⁷ Butler also argues for a loosening of the regulations that stipulate normalization while recognizing the difficulties this may incur: "I may feel that without some recognizability I cannot live. But I may also feel that the terms by which I am recognized make life unlivable. This is the juncture from which critique emerges, where critique is understood as an interrogation of the terms by which life is constrained in order to open up the possibility of different modes of living; in other words, not to celebrate difference as such but to establish more inclusive conditions for sheltering and maintaining life that resists models of assimilation."²⁸ But as the pages that follow will reveal, we are very far from any kind of universal acceptance of such freedom and inclusivity. Reinelt's second front involves not only imagining new possibilities for gender but also combating the gender norms that still restrict us today, "to practice disruptive or law-expanding behaviors."²⁹ These are goals we can pursue through both discursive and creative writing and production. Violent female characters are gender outlaws³⁰ who, in Paula Vogel's words, "change the character recipe."³¹ Josephine Hendin has written powerfully about violent women in life and art:

Violence by women is a communication sent like a letter bomb to repudiate ideologies of the left or right, to disavow the either/or of liberationist or traditionalist views. Its explosive methods use appropriation and revision to

script a woman's life in innovative ways. The literature of violent women provides no simple polemic but rather expresses a gathering of energies and arguments that, taken together, seize control of the subject of female aggression. ... It insists on telling female stories in singular ways. ... [V]iolence serves to explode stereotypes, rewriting conventional female scripts from the dark side.³²

Theatre representing violent female protagonists creates a space where the authors and their co-creators can prompt reflection concerning the world both as it is and as audiences wish it to be.

THE SEX AND GENDER OF VIOLENCE

All of the above issues concerning gender surface when examining the issue of women and violence. As a general rule, Americans at least give lip service to providing equal opportunities to all. This sounds like a laudable goal—until it gets applied to violence. Of all the debates concerning differences and similarities between men and women, one of the fiercest with the most wide-ranging opinions concerns their relationship to aggression. Violence is regarded by many as the most crucial distinction between men and women. Even Kimmel, who argues persuasively that our understanding of gender is dependent on social construction, takes great pains to prove that this is the one area where critical differences *do* exist. While acknowledging that different cultures connect violence to gender in different ways, he believes that in our culture, boys become aggressive and reject everything feminine as a means of rejecting their former identification with their mothers on their way to manhood. Ideally, they should grow beyond this phase, but some do not ever make it past their arrested development. They are the most violent demographic in the industrialized world.³³ And while we may ostensibly disapprove of violence, certainly American young men recognize it as a resource for demonstrating their masculinity within certain contexts.³⁴ By contrast, our cultural script for femininity has difficulty even conceiving of women using force. A man beating his partner when he suspects her of flirting is accomplishing his gender, whereas a woman who resists her batterer “risks defaulting on her gender performance.”³⁵ The judgments in these situations depend entirely upon the sex of the perpetrator.

Despite societal lip service to nonviolence, men engaging in violence is at least expected and thereby normalized, whereas women engaging in the same behaviors are viewed as aberrant. The fundamental core of aggression

—the determination to pursue an objective, sometimes regardless of the cost—is assumed to be absent from the female psyche.³⁶ Of course, many women express this drive in nonviolent ways: in their careers, in caring for their families, in contributing to causes they care deeply about. But when it takes a *physically* aggressive form, it is typically either dismissed as anomalous or considered unacceptable. Even criminologists can explain violence committed by women only through resort to explanations of involuntary action, mental illness, or abuse, “as if half the population of the globe consisted of saintly Stoics who never succumbed to fury, frustration, or greed.”³⁷ Violence perpetrated by both men and women is significantly impacted by socioeconomic status and the income gap between rich and poor, those at the bottom more likely to aggress.³⁸ Yet the most common responses to women’s violence are so focused on gender that all other potential variables, including systemic violence, are virtually ignored. Reporter Patricia Pearson thinks part of our gendered conceptions of violence is connected to our gendered beliefs about men’s and women’s bodies. Men are the conquerors with strong, rippling muscles fired by testosterone. Women’s bodies’ very penetrability promotes an image of softness men are loath to give up, for it evokes not only the erotic but also the maternal and the divine.³⁹ No wonder there is such resistance to accepting women’s equality when it comes to violence.

This tendency is evident politically/institutionally as well. Some conservatives claim that if women ever got political power, especially if they could use it destructively, they would be even worse than men. They point to stories about SS women acting with even more brutality than the SS men as proof. However, it is more likely that the women were judged more harshly because they had stepped outside of their expected role, and the flagrant violation of gendered norms meant their actions were *perceived* as more brutal.⁴⁰ They were horrific deviants. Anxious to avoid such a bias, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC claimed that its exhibits and accompanying historical descriptions would represent the sexes equitably in their participation in the Holocaust. However, a careful historical analysis reveals a bias in the *opposite* direction. The role of women as brutal SS officers is minimized, while their role as resistance fighters against the Nazis is exaggerated.⁴¹ Hence, they are primarily heroines. Up until the 1980s, even within the scientific community, mothers using aggression to defend their offspring—a behavior prompting study mostly among subhuman species—was the only “acceptable” form of female violence. This perspective in all likelihood has

created significant bias within aggression research. More contemporary research on children, the primary demographic studied for sex-related differences in aggression, has suggested that sex accounts for less and less disparity between boys and girls.⁴²

The field of feminism itself is sharply divided over women's use of violence. While women would never want to rival men on the homicide rate—where their enormous *inequality* is a very positive thing—at the same time, unilaterally eschewing violence may not always be the best policy either in our very imperfect world. We commonly think of violence as a monolithic entity, when in actuality, it is not only enormously complex but also quite various in its expressions as well as purposes, and it is important to consider these distinctions before making ethical judgments of either life or art. In his book *Violence in the Arts*, John Fraser addresses the multiplicity of violence: “The functions of violence are ... numerous—violence as release, violence as communication, violence as play, violence as self-affirmation, or self-defense, or self-discovery, or self-destruction, violence as a flight from reality, violence as the truest sanity in a particular situation, and so on.”⁴³ Obviously, not all of these would necessarily be considered negative, their value depending in large measure on both intention and outcome. We fear violence for many reasons, partly because it has been associated with the abuse of power. But our failure to insufficiently distinguish between violence and power and among various forms of violence suggests “a politics in which the exercise of power is eschewed for fear of being oppressive or for fear that being a ‘villain’ is worse than being a ‘victim’ of power.”⁴⁴ In certain contexts, moving from victim to agent or protector may require the use of violence, a practice commonly accepted from men but still often condemned in women.

Not surprisingly, most studies of aggression focus exclusively on its negative forms, defined as “a *motivational state* of having the intention to hurt, harm, or cause pain.”⁴⁵ But even then, there are many factors to consider when evaluating violence, which make any claim about one sex's greater aggression very problematic. A partial list includes the following:

1. Should we measure the number of aggressive acts?
2. How do we compare male-male aggressive acts with female-female aggression?
3. Should we consider only female-male encounters? If so, should we consider who starts the attack, who wins, or the pain induced?
4. How do we measure the intensity of pain?

5. Which is worse, physical or psychological pain?
6. Is the motivation to hurt as important an indicator as the act itself?
7. Is direct aggression worse than indirect aggression?
8. Is attack worse than defense? Attack and defense against what?⁴⁶

While not exhaustive, this list certainly points to the difficulties of evaluating sex-based differences in aggression. Given that our cultural ideas about violence and gender are so strong, examining research on the topic provides a curious counterpoint to commonly held conceptions.

RESEARCH ON MALE AND FEMALE AGGRESSION

Until approximately age three, girls and boys are almost equally aggressive, but then we tend to start socializing girls into abandoning physical aggression, which we allow boys to continue. Girls learn to develop other more socially acceptable weapons in their arsenal to get what they want.⁴⁷ In an elementary school study in the late 1980s, boys approved of aggression more highly than girls, and in another, boys expected less disapproval for their aggressive acts than girls.⁴⁸ Although in a study of Finnish girls⁴⁹ from 1978 to 1988, girls identified themselves as much more aggressive at the end of the decade—a behavior that had become popular—they were still less aggressive than boys, and in frustrating situations, tended to solve problems much more constructively, especially in the 9–12-year-old group.⁵⁰ Girls have tended to engage in indirect verbal or psychological aggression (by manipulating social situations, for instance, through rumors and gossip, strategies that do not allow their agency to be detected), because they were less likely to get into trouble. These tactics can be even more damaging to their victims than physical violence. Girls may also have chosen them because such tactics are especially effective since they tend to socialize more closely in pairs or smaller groups, whereas boys' physical aggression better correlates with their looser relationships in larger groups.⁵¹ Additionally, the patriarchal nature of society means that women's security has historically been based on forging and managing their relationships with men, who are more powerful, and with their children, who represent them in the world.⁵² Developing a wide array of verbal strategies would therefore be more advantageous to their success, since they recognize that in the physical arena, most men's greater strength puts women at a disadvantage. These strategies have also received greater cultural sanction.

Not only does aggression itself tend to be viewed as masculine, but we also associate its expression with dramatic, public acts, such as bar fights, duels, mobster wars, and military battles. It is the spectacle of a direct and physical attack against specifically targeted victims.⁵³ This style of violence, partaking of both predation and dominance, is gendered as male and largely valorized. However, laboratory studies of adults have shown that women's aggressive behavior equaled men's when they knew they would not be recognized and so felt safe from retaliation.⁵⁴ So women's intentions are at least sometimes similar to men's, but their aggression often gets expressed differently because of gendered expectations and consequences for violating them.

Looking at other societies, we see even more clearly that how women express aggression is largely culturally determined. On Margarita Island off the coast of Venezuela, the women are much more aggressive than the men, who are generally accepting of the physical chastisement they receive from women and do not return it in kind. Sometimes men even express pride that their wives can control the disrespectful behavior of other men. Margariteño women's authority to express aggression both verbally and physically is unquestioned and not dependent on specific contexts. Their physical prowess is a fundamental source of identity and self-esteem.⁵⁵ Different gender norms produce different behaviors.

More recent research in the United States is revealing a growing and somewhat disconcerting trend. A 2003 study of 11,000 12-year-olds showed girls had *higher* levels of aggressive fantasies than boys, but they did not act them out as much.⁵⁶ Psychologist Dr. James Garbarino believes that we are approaching a tipping point, "the beginning of a dramatic shift in the forms and extent of physical aggression in American girls."⁵⁷ In the wake of second-wave feminism, assertiveness became a positive female value. Over time, aggression started to become somewhat more culturally accepted and normative for women, creating a more expansive range of appropriate behaviors.⁵⁸ Females began to make more inroads into traditionally male arenas. Recognizing that boys still set the standard and that they would need to behave similarly in order to be accepted in masculine territory, such as athletics and gangs, some women have exhibited aggression as a way of increasing their status.⁵⁹ Garbarino reports that a female basketball player pushed herself "to be as physically aggressive as possible" on the court. And she was recognized as such and praised by her peers (even the males, who were surprised by both her confidence and aggression) and coaches alike, who gave her "The Most Aggressive Player Award."⁶⁰ Fifty years ago both

vying for and receiving praise for such behavior would not have even been imagined, let alone enacted.

The number of girls involved in athletics is now almost as high as the number of boys. In many ways, this has been extremely positive, allowing girls to feel their strength, their confidence, their skill, and to be physically assertive and powerful without having to be sexual. But with boys as their model, sometimes girls' experimentation with their newfound power is not always constructive, resulting in more physical violence against themselves and others.⁶¹ Garbarino tells another story of a mother who was proud of her daughter, who was active in multiple sports. After a match when the other team had insulted her daughter's team, her daughter complained to her with the words of the second quotation at the head of this chapter. Her mother did not really know what to say. While one has to admire Melissa's "pluck," the attitude that a physical assault would have solved the problem is somewhat troubling. Garbarino recognizes that aggression has both positive and negative outcomes, and it is virtually impossible to limit its consequences to only those that are socially favorable. Adopting a traditionally masculine attitude toward aggression may also promote negative patterns of thinking, feeling, and action.⁶²

Another unhappy way in which girls are using both verbal and physical aggression is in bullying. It has become more widespread, with threats of physical violence escalating the cruelty and intimidation of verbal assault. The two kinds of violence feed on one another, because the verbal degradation of the victim creates a breeding ground for physical assault: "Dehumanizing and depersonalizing the other are one way to lower the psychological and emotional standard for hitting."⁶³ The dominating violence here does not to serve the need of scaring other predators away; rather, it is a perverse expression of power for its own sake. On the other hand, girls are learning that they can use their physical power to combat bullying in ways that are prosocial rather than destructive. While perhaps we might prefer girls to resolve their conflicts in other ways, standing up to a bully is more positive than passive acceptance of victimization.⁶⁴

THE RISING TREND OF GIRLS' VIOLENCE⁶⁵

In searching for causes prompting girls' increasing use of physical force, another place to look is the media. Parents may send the message that girls who aggress are "weird," "unnatural," or "unfeminine," but virtually every other element of popular culture proclaims the opposite. In some

subcultures, assertiveness in girls is no longer viewed as “unladylike,” but rather as desirable. In addition, now we have a slew of strong women characters particularly in action films who “kick ass.”⁶⁶ Unfortunately, many of them are also highly sexualized and so regarded as “babes.” When female characters first gained power, they were always evil villains. Now they are heroines as well, but despite their apparent equality with male heroes, their costuming never allows us to forget they are women, marking them as different in a way that distracts us from their agency or lack thereof. Their instrumentality for the box office is privileged above their instrumentality in the narrative: their highest value is for their sexual consumption, primarily by male audience members. Their sexualization essentially contains their power. Although males are sexualized as well, their greater agency takes center stage, and their sexualization tends to function more strongly as self-aggrandizement than objectification. This is partly because our society is still fundamentally patriarchal, and a majority of positions of power are occupied by men.

The female action heroines in films do have a historical foundation, however. They are based on the figure of the woman warrior, an icon with a centuries-old and culturally diverse history. Burial mounds excavated in southern Russia revealed women dressed for battle just as men were and buried with swords, daggers, arrowheads, and saddles. They comprised nearly 20% of Scythian-Sarmatian “warrior graves.” They may have been the source of the Greek legends of the Amazons.⁶⁷ We also find women warriors in Iran, China, South Asia, the Indian subcontinent, defending Islam with Mohammed, in Celtic Ireland revolting against the Roman Empire, as gladiatrix in the Roman gladiator games, in West Africa, and among Native Americans, to name a few.⁶⁸ The film *King Arthur* (2004) was criticized for Guenevere’s revealing costume, and yet historically, both Celtic men and women were reported to battle naked, and the women were even commanders of men. Film critic Robin Rowland writes, “Keira Knightley’s leather-clad warrior is probably closer to the truth than the fragile damsel in distress expected and beloved by the critics,” a helpless figure created by fourteenth-century troubadours and shaped by the new ideal of romantic love.⁶⁹ Women warriors are not merely the stuff of legends and fantasy. Many cultures have granted them the legitimate power of physical force as citizens serving their country.

But currently, she primarily inhabits fantasy. In the United States, the warrior woman arrived through the medium of comic books. Yet even in this fantasy world where anything could happen, the female superheroes were

initially always “girls,” whereas the leading heroes were always “men,” and the highly sexualized girls had powers that were always inferior to heroes.⁷⁰ Although the exclusive link between strength and villainy was broken, the strongest women were still evil. More recently, there seems to be a greater “democratization of violence,” but to what effect?⁷¹ “Butt-kicking babes” who exhibit both physical and mental strength can be enormously appealing. And yet some would argue that they merely contribute to the glorification of violence and signify a fall to the level of their male counterparts.⁷² But certainly they are a step up from the typical shrinking violet, completely dependent upon a male rescuer for survival.

Beyond the problem of the strongest women being evil and the good ones often being lesser than the real (male) heroes, in more recent years, many characters do not even fall into the clearly divisible camps of good and evil. MTV, in particular, added another level of toxicity by frequently linking sexuality, aggression, and material wealth. Fairytales may be graphic and violent, but they do not have the same impact as visual images, an element exacerbated even further in violent video games, where the very structure of the game rewards players’ use of violence, requiring it for success. Much of the violence on TV is also portrayed as justified and socially acceptable, normalized because the “good guys” are using it. In addition, the consequences actually attendant on violence are often absent: no immediate pain or even visible harm occurs in over half the instances, and nearly 90% of the violence produces no long-term suffering or emotional distress. TV teaches young viewers that aggression works. Physical aggression typically succeeds better than verbal aggression, and because girls use their words about twice as often as physical force, they are typically less effective than the boys. Their natural desire for efficacy then propels them toward physically aggressive choices. While three decades ago, the good and the bad guys could be differentiated on the basis of their level of physical aggression, that is no longer true. Sometimes the heroes are even more violent than the villains. Despite this unrealistic treatment, the young people watching believe that violent shows “tell it like it is,” which then becomes a partial predictor of violent choices they make as adults.⁷³ Fantasy has been taken for reality. Garbarino sums up the changes in girls’ aggression at least partially attributable to the media:

Pop culture celebrates aggression. Girls are immersed in pop culture. It appears from the research of the last 50 years that girls were once somewhat immune to the influences of this immersion. Traditional femininity with all its

restrictions, limitations, and powerful messages buffered the effects of media violence on girls, just as traditional masculinity amplified those effects for boys. All that is changing. Girls are falling under the contaminating influence of TV as once only boys did, and their aggressive behavior is increasing. Images and behavior work together in a self-reinforcing system, escalating as time passes. As a result, the traditional differences between boys and girls in terms of aggressive behavior are diminishing.⁷⁴

Although there have been studies that do not show causation when considering the impact of violent entertainment on violent behavior, the American Psychological Association (APA) published findings in 2003 on a 15-year longitudinal study of 329 youth demonstrating that viewing violent media as children led to aggressive behavior as young adults. The most “effective” violence for producing this impact involved three things: perpetrators with whom children identified, perpetrators who were rewarded for their aggression, and a situation perceived to be realistic. Other potentially mitigating factors, such as the children’s intelligence, prior levels of aggression, social status, parental role models, or parenting style, proved surprisingly impotent.⁷⁵ In 2005, the APA’s discovery that violent video games increased aggressive thoughts, behaviors, angry feelings, and reduced helpfulness led it to develop a resolution calling for the reduction of violence in mass media.⁷⁶ Given that over 40% of the video game market is female, and males and females do not differ when responding to violent content, young women drawn to violent games may soon be performing more violence around us.⁷⁷ Of course, violence in the media does not impact everyone and certainly not uniformly. The APA’s 2001 report showed that 10–15% of variations in children’s aggressive behavior were the result of exposure to violent TV.⁷⁸ This represents a limited but significant influence. At the very least, it may normalize a culture of violence and encourage its acceptance.⁷⁹ From a practical standpoint, spending hours in front of the screen, which seems to be almost a national addiction, instead of engaging in more physically active play also contains children’s energy, which may then be stimulated into a violent release.

The field of cultural studies asserts that a society’s beliefs and values can be gauged by how popular they are. Given how many hours youths spend in the company of violent media, whether it is merely reflecting or perpetuating and escalating a hunger already there, surely their gravitation toward these representations is indicative of widespread endorsement.⁸⁰ Roles that girls identify with allow them to form “cognitive scripts” for how they might

adopt the behavior they want to emulate. Psychologists Kaj Björkqvist and Pirkko Niemelä write about how the interplay of observed role models, socialization, the context of the situation, and individual temperaments all coalesce in girls and women who aggress: “Roles are learned, then, when an individual imitates cognitive scripts displayed by models with whom he or she identifies. Many of these scripts are expressions of social norms, varying from time to time and culture to culture. Others are individual scripts, specific only to the model in question. ... Female aggressive behavior may accordingly be described as resulting from a complex combination of cultural, situational, and individual-specific factors. The cognition of frustration, as well as its emotional experience, function as triggers of aggression, while learned scripts determine the mode, or pattern, of behavior.”⁸¹ Repeated exposure to violent media may lead to chronic accessibility of such scripts, which “represent rehearsed violent knowledge structures in the mind.”⁸² Such accessibility may increase the likelihood of development of long-term aggressive behavioral tendencies.⁸³ And the more permission they feel, the more they are likely to enact those tendencies. One study showed that both men and women playing a video game as a male avatar, a more stereotypically aggressive character, engaged in more aggressive behavior after play than those represented by a female avatar, even though the characters themselves were equally aggressive.⁸⁴ Identification with characters who are expected to be aggressive and, in certain contexts, are rewarded for it can lead to adoption of that behavior. As David Mason writes, “Seeing, the neurologists tell us, is doing. Doing may, in fact, be being.”⁸⁵ The combination of the Mirror Neuron System, violent cognitive scripts, and a permissive environment has the potential to be explosive.

While the majority of the adult population may cling to the ideal of the peaceful woman, the generation now entering adulthood has many other models from which to choose, some of them distortions of calls for equality and assertiveness. It is difficult to be selective and control precisely how those qualities are embodied. In the context of examining women convicted of violent crime, Pearson argues that it is inconsistent to assert women’s power and competence in traditionally male spheres while denying any culpability regarding the more negative consequences of wielding that strength. How can we maintain that women’s intentions are always harmless or innocent? Will not this foray into dominating arenas sometimes lead to less desirous, antisocial, or even criminal action?⁸⁶ In Jody Miller’s study of girls in gangs, she writes that many scholars fall into the extremes of either underemphasizing gender by ignoring it in a manner

resonant with liberal feminism, or on the other end, overemphasizing it, much as the cultural feminists do. It is important to recognize that many of the factors that motivate men to engage in criminal violence—frustration, alienation, and anger rooted particularly in the systemic violence of racial and class oppression—are more often the trigger than gender, which forms a significant variable but is not always the key to understanding young women’s choices. Overemphasizing gender differences will lead us toward essentialization and make us blind to the complexities involved in females using force. In failing to acknowledge their agency when they use violence in negative ways, we deny them their full humanity and limit the full documentation of women’s lives. To acknowledge this does not mean sacrificing feminism.⁸⁷ Pearson ends her book:

The consequences of our refusal to concede female contributions to violence are manifold. It affects our capacity to promote ourselves as autonomous and responsible beings. It affects our ability to develop a literature of ourselves that encompasses the full array of human emotion and experience. It demeans the right our victims have to be valued. It radically impedes our ability to recognize dimensions of power that have nothing to do with formal structures of patriarchy. Perhaps above all, the denial of women’s aggression profoundly undermines our attempt as a culture to understand violence, to trace its causes and quell them.⁸⁸

Women’s nonviolence is not biological or essential, but rather largely a result of psychosocialization, the parameters of which are beginning to change. Many influences are now compelling women beyond the traditional strictures of well-established cultural gender scripts.

WOMEN’S ETHICAL USE OF VIOLENCE?

Once we accept that women are violent, what can we say about what women’s relationship to violence *should* be? Jean-Marie Muller, who has written extensively about nonviolence, composed *Non-Violence in Education* for UNESCO. She makes an interesting distinction between the words aggression and violence: aggression is a “life-force” but violence a “death-force.”⁸⁹ Aggressiveness gives us the strength to resist domination and to overcome the paralyzing fear we experience when faced with an adversary who is refusing to recognize and respect our rights. Expressing aggression in a nonviolent way requires boldness and courage, but can

happen only when fear has been acknowledged and mastered. Then it becomes fundamental to egalitarian relationships.⁹⁰ However, once aggression becomes physical, it enters the realm of violence and can never be qualified as “good,” even in the service of self-defense or protection of others. At this point, it loses its power to establish justice, for “every act of violence is an outrage perpetrated against the humanity of the object,” and “violence always seeks the death, the annihilation, of its object.” Muller fears that once any possibility is granted for “righteous” violence, it will always devolve into justifying the destructive pursuit of the perpetrators’ own needs and desires, which they often refuse to limit—the very source of violence.⁹¹

While this is certainly a safe position from the vantage point of preventing unjust violence, outside the institutional protection of a school with enlightened teachers, such rejection could be dangerous. And certainly violence arises from other sources as well. D.A. Clarke wrote a provocative article, “A Woman with a Sword: Some Thoughts on Women, Feminism, and Violence,” which looks at this question. Considering historical issues of gender, class, and culture concerning the mere possession of a sword—how it was a weapon and phallic symbol reserved for male aristocrats, signifying chivalry, courage, and honor—she appreciates the symbolic significance of the image invoked by her title. This is a woman owned by no one and dependent on no one to right her wrongs, a woman unafraid to appropriate male weaponry for her own uses. Carrying a weapon associated with honor and vengeance asserts her dignity and worth, and it acts as a warning to anyone who would offend her. As opposed to the masochistic woman of much pornography, anyone who attacks this woman does so at his or her own peril.⁹²

Brutality is abhorrent both on a personal and even state-sanctioned level when it evidences particularly men’s culturally scripted fascination with domination and death. So when is the use of force justifiable? Most would agree with our legal system that everyone has the right to use violence in the course of self-defense. But that means training to be prepared for assaults.⁹³ Nonviolence then becomes a choice that can be adopted or rejected when necessary, because one has gained the competence and will, the physical and emotional skills that women are often denied through their socialization, to meet force with force. Clarke looks at the changes that have happened in fictional depictions of women, how powerful women can now be heroes rather than relegated to merely villains, and wonders if it signals a precursor to greater acceptance of women using force in life. Perhaps this recognized ability to use violence is a necessary

precursor to equality in much the same way that maintaining an army is an unfortunate evil necessary for nationhood in our current world. Of course, education is the place to start, for both sexes, but it will not be enough.⁹⁴

Part of this reeducation Clarke sees happening through media images in popular culture. Distressed at how our legal system is apparently controlled by men who give token sentences for rape and femicide, thereby implicitly valuing other men's freedom and lives more than their women victims' happiness and lives,⁹⁵ she sees the potential power of women in literature and film taking violent vengeance on such men. Beyond the value of asserting personal honor, the shock of seeing a vigilante woman will start making visible how violence is gendered and expose its double standard in ways that may help to reduce all violence. But then she takes one more step. Battered and sexually assaulted women are angry, yet both cultural expectations and their lack of physical strength and skill mean that they take out their rage on the wrong targets: other women, their children, and themselves. If given the choice between hurting the actual perpetrator, who has escaped the justice he should have received as a result of our patriarchal legal system and culture, and the innocent, she believes encouraging punishment where it is deserved is a better choice, even though it might not necessarily heal the victim. While critical of the attraction to flashy violence, alpha-male bravado, and vigilantism, she recognizes violence's power to command the kind of attention and respect necessary for an effective solution.⁹⁶ She ends with this caution:

Violence definitely solves some things. A dead rapist will not commit any more rapes; he's been solved. Violence is a seductive solution because it seems easy and quick; violence is a glamorous commercial property in our time; violence is a tool, an addiction, a sin, a desperate resort, or a hobby, depending on where you look and whom you ask. ... Violence may be a tool and a tactic that feminists should use; certainly we ought to be putting some serious thought into it. If we refuse it, it should not be because it offends against our romantic notion of Morally Superior Womanhood, but for some better and more thoughtful reason. If we accept it, we had better figure out how to avoid becoming corrupted by it.⁹⁷

Wise words in answer to questions feminists have often avoided asking. Butler also looks at the need for using violence as well as avoiding its potential to corrupt. While supporting the potential resistance of nonviolence, she also defends at least the possibility of engaging in ethical violence in order to protect someone else from death. At the same time, one must

take responsibility for one's aggression and subordinate it to "the claim of love that seeks to honor and protect the precarious life of the other."⁹⁸ She argues finally for an "experimental responsibility... an ethic that seeks to cleanse itself of all violence and one that works experimentally within the scene of violence to redirect its course."⁹⁹ This is one step beyond Muller but does not go as far as Clarke and is certainly still within the realm of just violence. I advocate a similar stance.

There are no definitive solutions or universal prescriptions—too many variables exist concerning the use of violence. Each instance needs to be analyzed individually. Each woman needs to be able to make her own decision—a sentence that should end with "within the confines of the law." My hesitation is perhaps the result of my own conditioning from viewing so many of our, usually male, heroes in films who are rebels. They fulfill our cultural thirst for justice. Prison psychiatrist James Gilligan believes it is our demand for *justice* rather than *understanding* that is significantly responsible for the perpetuation of violence. Our demonization of criminals keeps us from seeing and addressing violence's true causes.¹⁰⁰ Law and justice have a more complicated relationship than meets the eye. The moral question of the personal vendetta is one that Shakespeare asks repeatedly through his plays: if power is corrupt and injustice prevails, is it ever right to take matters into one's own hands? Throughout the United States's history, especially those in the South and West have not wanted to make the government the sole legitimator of violence, intentionally setting up weak governmental systems at the state level so that individuals retained that prerogative.¹⁰¹

VIOLENCE AND THE THEATRE

Then where does it end? The beginnings of traditional Western theatre in some ways set out to address this dilemma, recognizing the futility of the cycle of vengeance. Sophocles's trilogy of plays, *The Oresteia*, establishes the foundations of a legal system handling wrongs through trials decided by citizens (of course, all male) and the judge (ironically, a female goddess, Athena, who identifies more with her father than mother and so casts the deciding vote of a hung jury in favor of the male). Aside from the specific content of these plays, is there something within the institution of theatre itself that is connected to violence? The Cambridge school critics certainly thought so. Prior to the Athenian City Dionysus festival, where a trilogy of tragedies and a satyr play were performed and which virtually all the

citizens of the city attended, a goat was sacrificed as part of the worship to Dionysus. René Girard rejects the Judeo-Christian notion of expiation achieved through the scapegoat often used to explain this practice. Rather, he believes that the Greeks were, though perhaps not consciously aware of their actions, trying to contain the violence within the culture by venting it on a sacrificial victim, diverting it from the community. Trying to break the chain of reprisal, they often abandoned human victims to die rather than killing them. Later, they used animals and so killed them outright. The sacrifice was designed to protect their civilization, the ritualistic spilling of blood supposedly purifying violence so it would not spend itself among them. Girard believes that the theatre arose at a point of sacrificial crisis, when people started recognizing the lack of efficacy in the ritual. Theatre then became a substitute for dealing with violence in the community. It symbolically represented the process of a reconciling sacrifice, and when the actors committed violence, they created a cathartic release in the audience members, who identified with them.¹⁰² Purged of their own violent impulses, they could then go back to their lives as productive citizens. Sarah Sage Heinzelman has written persuasively on this issue and its current application when considering violent women: “[T]he relationship between the moral and political, or between individual conscience and communal action, is analogous in Western culture to the relationship between the audience of a Greek tragedy and its actors, who together figuratively embody the sickness of the state that needs purgation. The audience, both as individuals and as a community, must feel in their bodies the dis-ease that weakens the state, cathartically purify (and thus cure) themselves through pity and fear, and thereby restore the state to health. *This relationship between representation and response enables both compassion and judgment.*”¹⁰³ Heinzelman argues that ultimately the Greek theatre provides a model that encourages reintegration of the transgressor into the community. She must be held accountable but also recognized for her, perhaps failed, humanity rather than banished as a monster. Likewise, James Gilligan finds tragedy a more useful lens through which to study violence than the restrictive moral categories of legal discourse. It brings us closer to the complex psychological reality of the perpetrator, and only understanding can move us toward prevention.¹⁰⁴ The Greek convention of offstage violence made it a better site of communal reflection than contemporary digital media, for unlike video games, the audience did not see a heroic role model commit an act it might imitate, but instead saw

characters driven to the brink of violence and then heard about the results. The focus was more on the context and consequences of the act.

Although violence is not intrinsic to theatre, certainly they have a long-standing historical connection.¹⁰⁵ In terms of the contemporary theatre, Lucy Nevitt persuasively argues that “[s]ince fictional framing and the relative safety of the non-real enables theatre-makers to push their ideas to the extremes of cultural imagination, it is inevitable that theatre will be concerned with violence.”¹⁰⁶ Because violence is also frequently performative, enacted in order to produce an impact on its audience, it is no wonder that theatre and violence make “convivial bedfellows.”¹⁰⁷ For some audience members, perhaps seeing violence in a represented world is purgative. For others, it provides models for action once they leave the theatre. Whether these models prompt imitation or rejection depends to a large extent on the creative artists’ purpose. Some want merely to entertain. Others want to educate. Many want to provoke thought or feeling, often through revealing something the audience may not have known about or considered in quite this way before. If that is the case, examining women who use force is fertile ground, particularly if a prosocial model inspires imitation. Good political theatre is “a cultural practice that self-consciously operates at the level of interrogation, critique, and intervention,”¹⁰⁸ and certainly women’s violence needs rethinking in these ways by playwrights and audiences alike.

Before playwrights even reach the threshold of depicting violent women, many of them probably shy away from the subject, however, because either they either lack accurate knowledge of it, or it is so controversial that both in terms of critical and audience reception, it seems an unwise career move. The demands of the theatre, where it is difficult to give women convincing physical prowess, also largely limit their work to more mundane settings and narratives. Even realistic violence is challenging, though also potentially more compelling because of that visceral quality of humans in the same space that is absent in any other media. But perhaps that is what is most important to explore, because that is “telling it like it is,” and the way these women are portrayed can create either models or anti-models for the audience to adopt or reject. How we see ourselves—reflection that theatre encourages—impacts how we choose to live.¹⁰⁹ Looking at how these women are represented illuminates the dialectical relationship between violent women living/performing on contemporary stages in the world and in the theatre. They stage resistance in a variety of ways: sometimes rebelling against conventional expectations often founded

on misinformation and outmoded ways of thinking, and sometimes violating others to the point of criminality. If creative artists who see theatre as a vehicle for social change do not address this issue, it will be left to those in the mass media who are not so responsible, who often care more about commercial success than truth.

NOTES

1. Phyllis Schlafly discussing women's preference for staying at home with their children rather than working in "The High Costs of Marriage Absence," *Schlafly Report*. Coming from a different place but still making somewhat essentialist claims based on studying centuries of human behavior through the lens of cognitive science and social/evolutionary psychology, Steven Pinker argues in *The Better Angels of Our Nature* that if more women were in power, the world would probably be a more peaceful place, for they have typically been a pacifying force—and he predicts this role for them in the future as well (526–28; see also 684–89).
2. High school female tennis player complaining about a trash talker on her opponent's team. See Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 11.
3. Kimmel, *Gendered Society*, 34–35. For an overview of biological, evolutionary, and social learning theories related to sex differences, see Côté, "Sex Differences," 191–93. But none of these theories account for why differences between the sexes change at different developmental stages. She also misrepresents social learning theories by positing that impacts are assumed to be cumulative, when in fact, most social learning theorists believe that behavior changes when the environment and its influences change (Dodge, "The Nature-Nurture Debate," 418–27.)
4. Kimmel, *Gendered Society*, 44–45; Hines, *Brain Gender*, 134–37.
5. Pinker, *Better Angels of Our Nature*, 518–19.
6. Benton, "Hormones and Human Aggression," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 41–45; Hines, *Brain Gender*, 140.
7. Benton, "Hormones and Human Aggression," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 45–46.
8. Eisenegger et al., "Prejudice and Truth," 356–59. Hines notes a similar study wherein men who were given a placebo but believed they got testosterone were observed to demonstrate more "anger, irritation, impulsivity, and frustration" than they did prior to the study. Another study showed no difference in behavior in men when they were given testosterone (*Brain Gender*, 136). She, too, concludes that expectations surrounding behavior are much more powerful than hormones (227–28).
9. Hare-Mustin and Marecek, "Gender and the Meaning of Difference," in Herrmann and Stewart, *Theorizing Feminism*, 90.

10. Hare-Mustin and Marecek, "Gender and the Meaning of Difference," in Herrmann and Stewart, *Theorizing Feminism*, 85. The primary source is Parsons and Bales, *Family Socialization and Interaction Process*. This distinction, though qualified at points, is fundamental to their theories.
11. Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 39.
12. Butler, "Performative Acts," in Bial, *Performance Studies Reader*, 197.
13. Butler, "Performative Acts," in Bial, *Performance Studies Reader*, 195.
14. Delphy, "Rethinking Sex and Gender," in McCann and Kim, *Feminist Theory Reader*, 63.
15. Delphy, "Rethinking Sex and Gender," in McCann and Kim, *Feminist Theory Reader*, 62–64. See also Kimmel, *Gendered Society*, 4; and Lykke, *Feminist Studies*, 24.
16. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 11.
17. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 10.
18. Chambers, "'Sex' and the Problem of the Body," 55–58.
19. Some recent research suggests biology does contribute to gender identity. See McDermott and Hatemi, "Distinguishing Sex and Gender," 91.
20. Hines, *Brain Gender*, 213–15; Dodge, "The Nature-Nurture Debate," 5.
21. Butler, "Performative Acts," in Bial, *Performance Studies Reader*, 189.
22. Mennesson, "'Hard' Women and 'Soft' Women," 22–23.
23. Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity," in McCann and Kim, *Feminist Theory Reader*, 236.
24. Scott, "Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference," in Herrmann and Stewart, *Theorizing Feminism*, 263–64.
25. Dodge, Coie, and Lynam, "Aggression and Antisocial Behavior in Youth," 771.
26. Reinelt, "Feminist Theory and the Problem of Performance," 51.
27. Kimmel, *Gendered Society*, 413.
28. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 4. Her argument about resisting normalization appears on pages 40–41.
29. Reinelt, "Feminist Theory and the Problem of Performance," 52.
30. Black, "The Thrust for Freedom," in Muñoz, Romero, and Martinez, *Violence in American Drama*, 55.
31. Vogel, "Domesticating (and Ignoring) Violence," quoted in Black, "The Thrust for Freedom," in Muñoz, Romero, and Martinez, *Violence in American Drama*, 55.
32. Hendin, *HeartBreakers*, 2.
33. Kimmel, *Gendered Society*, 382–90. He is also somewhat critical of this Freudian interpretation, but says it has been extremely influential in contemporary American understandings of male aggression.
34. Miller, *One of the Guys*, 7–8.
35. Merry, *Gender Violence*, 11.
36. Pearson, *When She Was Bad*, 23.

37. Pearson, *When She Was Bad*, 7.
38. See, for example, Cunradi, Caetano, and Schafer, "Socioeconomic Predictors of Intimate Partner Violence," 377–89; Parker and Pruitt, "Poverty, Poverty Concentration, and Homicide," 555–70; Ousey, "Homicide, Structural Factors, and the Racial Invariance Assumption," 405–26; and Gilligan, *Violence*, 201. Gilligan links shame to socioeconomic status, claiming this fundamental emotion is the real source of particularly male-on-male violence. Less than poverty itself, it is the relative deprivation in comparison to others that damages self-respect.
39. Pearson, *When She Was Bad*, 8.
40. Clarke, "Woman with a Sword," in Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, *Transforming a Rape Culture*, 315.
41. Tobin, "Notes on How We See the Holocaust."
42. Björkqvist and Niemelä, "Female Aggression," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 5, 7. Some studies suggest divergences beginning as early as a year old, ballooning in middle childhood, and closing again by around age 22. See Côté, "Sex Differences," 185–88.
43. Fraser, *Violence in the Arts*, 9.
44. Hollway, "Gender and Power in Organizations," in Fawcett et al., *Violence and Gender Relations*, 72.
45. Björkqvist and Niemelä, "Female Aggression," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 4, emphasis in the original.
46. Björkqvist and Niemelä, "Female Aggression," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 9. "Indirect aggression" is used differently by different researchers but typically refers to verbal manipulation of social situations to inflict pain. "Attack" usually refers to unjustified violence, whereas "defense" usually means justified self-defense.
47. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 7.
48. Huesmann et al., "Differing Normative Beliefs," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 81–84; Eron, "Gender Differences in Violence," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 93.
49. Although a number of these studies on aggression were done in Finland and so cannot be generalized wholesale to the United States, Finland is a westernized nation, and many of the results compare favorably to research done in the United States and other countries in the Anglosphere.
50. Viemerö, "Changes in Patterns of Aggressiveness," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 102–4.
51. Björkqvist, Österman, and Kaukiainen, "Development of Direct and Indirect Aggressive Strategies," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 55, 60; and Frączek, "Patterns of Aggressive-Hostile Behavior or Orientation among Adolescent Boys and Girls," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 108.

52. Pearson, *When She Was Bad*, 20.
53. Pearson, *When She Was Bad*, 11.
54. Björkqvist and Niemelä, "Female Aggression," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 14.
55. Cook, "Matrifocality and Female Aggression," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 156.
56. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 22–23.
57. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 16.
58. Eron, "Gender Differences in Violence," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 95.
59. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 17, 136.
60. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 17.
61. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 17, 9.
62. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 30.
63. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 130.
64. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 23–25.
65. Some feminist researchers claim that rising arrest rates are merely the result of changes in policy and not indicative of women actually becoming more violent (e.g., Zahn et al., *Violence by Teenage Girls*.) However, it is likely that part of this rise is due to changing social mores that have a permissive effect on girls' and women's choices. Later chapters address this in more detail.
66. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 39–40, 72.
67. Davis-Kimball, *Warrior Women*, 53–55; Anthony, *The Horse, the Wheel, and Language*, 327.
68. See Salmonson, *Encyclopedia of Amazons*.
69. Rowland, "King Arthur on Screen."
70. Madrid, *Super Girls*, v–vi.
71. Ness, *Why Girls Fight*, xi.
72. Spicuzza, "Butt-Kicking Babes."
73. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 91–109.
74. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 111–12.
75. Huesmann, "Childhood Exposure to Media Violence."
76. American Psychological Association, "APA Calls for Reduction of Violence"; American Psychological Association, "Violence in Mass Media."
77. Eastin, "Video Game Violence and the Female Game Player," 351.
78. Garbarino, *See Jane Hit*, 102.
79. Trend, *Myth of Media Violence*, 28. Trend claims that many of these studies were later debunked and some of the research had been fabricated (28). He sees emulation of media violence as playing a supporting rather than determining role in some individuals' choices to aggress, which are more strongly connected to cultural context and identity markers such as gender and age (34, 36).

80. Beth Capo, 16 February 2012, email to author. This e-mail contained her introductory lecture notes for her course on violence in contemporary American literature. I am grateful to Beth for also pointing me to some resources she used to develop her course.
81. Björkqvist and Niemelä, "Female Aggression," in Björkqvist and Niemelä, *Of Mice and Women*, 15.
82. Eastin, "Video Game Violence and the Female Game Player," 353.
83. Yang, Huesmann, and Bushman, "Effects of Playing a Violent Video Game," 540.
84. Yang, Huesmann, and Bushman, "Effects of Playing a Violent Video Game," 537.
85. Mason, "Video Games, Theater, and the Paradox of Fiction," 1118.
86. Pearson, *When She Was Bad*, 32.
87. Miller, *One of the Guys*, 10–11, 14–15, 199–200.
88. Pearson, *When She Was Bad*, 243.
89. Muller, *Non-Violence in Education*. UNESCO stands for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
90. Muller, *Non-Violence in Education*, 18–19.
91. Muller, *Non-Violence in Education*, quotations on pages 22–23, paraphrases on 22 and 30.
92. Clarke, "Woman with a Sword," in Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, *Transforming a Rape Culture*, 313.
93. My colleague Adam Porter reports that in his work with our conflict-avoidant, Midwestern female student population in Rape Assault Defense classes, some women cannot even yell loudly for an exercise in class.
94. Clarke, "Woman with a Sword," in Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, *Transforming a Rape Culture*, 315–17.
95. This is certainly open for debate, and Clarke cites no sources for this assertion, though it is more accurate for rape than murder. Bureau of Justice statistics for 1992 (her essay was originally published in this collection's first edition in 1995) show the average length of prison sentence for rape is 9.75 years, though most prisoners, as is often the case, served only 56% of that time (Greenfeld, "Prison Sentences and Time Served for Violence"). However, nearly one-third of convicted rapists in 1992 never received a prison sentence (Greenfeld, "Sex Offenses and Offenders"). The *Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network* website currently claims that 98% of rapists will never serve a day of prison, but Michelle Ye Hee Lee called out The Enliven Project for a similar distortion ("The Truth about a Viral Graphic"). The US Department of Justice's Bureau of Statistics report for 2006 cites a 62% conviction rate for reported rapists, 67% of whom served time in jail or prison (Cohen and Kyckelhahn, "Felony Defendants in Large Urban Counties"). The Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 was designed to eliminate

- discrimination or preferential treatment in sentencing based on race, gender, ethnicity, or income level. But judges were still given discretion based on the background, character, and conduct of the defendant, as well as history of compliance with family responsibilities. Some studies suggest that even when controlling for differences in criminal history, men receive longer sentences for homicide than women, particularly if they kill a White woman who is not a prostitute. See Mustard, "Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Disparities in Sentencing," 285–314; Glaeser and Sacerdote, "Sentencing in Homicide Cases," 363–82.
96. Clarke, "Woman with a Sword," in Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, *Transforming a Rape Culture*, 318–21.
 97. Clarke, "Woman with a Sword," in Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, *Transforming a Rape Culture*, 322.
 98. Butler, "Reply from Judith Butler," 190.
 99. Butler, "Reply from Judith Butler," 193.
 100. Gilligan, *Violence*, especially 20–25. His explanations, as noted above, primarily address men's violence. But the cultural tendency to punish rather than understand aberrant behavior is still relevant.
 101. Pinker, *Better Angels of Our Nature*, 99.
 102. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*; Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual*, 209, 213. Also see Pizzato, *Theatres of Human Sacrifice*.
 103. Heinzelman, "Going Somewhere," in Heald, *Literature and Legal Problem Solving*, 75, emphasis in original.
 104. Gilligan, *Violence*, 7–9.
 105. Enders, *Medieval Theatre of Cruelty*, 6–8.
 106. Nevitt, *Theatre and Violence*, 6.
 107. Muñoz, Romero, and Martinez, preface to Muñoz, Romero, and Martinez, *Violence in American Drama*, 1.
 108. Colleran and Spencer, introduction to Colleran and Spencer, *Staging Resistance*, 1.
 109. Hall, "Racist Ideologies and the Media," 272.

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