



Genders and sexualities in individuation: theoretical and clinical explorations

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Abstract: Gender assignment, as a key aspect of identity and cultural position, has existed throughout recorded time and across all cultures. An individual's biological sex and particular cultural milieu has a profound effect on their sense of themselves as a gendered being. Sexuality is a more recent marker in identity formation. In the last few decades there has emerged a great deal of interest in the psychology of gender formation, in the interplay of biological sex, culture, brain development, and attachment experiences in the formation of gender identities. Queer theory in its post-modern deconstructionist thinking has suggested that gender is a socially 'constructed' concept having no biological or psychological precursors or realities. Contemporary developmental psychoanalysis is bridging the gap between concepts of gender as purely biological and gender as non-existent. In this paper I explore the emergence of same-sex desire at mid-life, presenting two case histories with extensive dream material. The impact of sexual desire on gender identities is examined through the lenses of culture, dynamic systems theory, neuroscience, and depth psychology. The use of dream analysis as a window into the body/mind movement of gender emergence reflects my sense of gender as a fluidly shifting reality of mind, neither hardwired nor fictional.

Keywords: developmental psychoanalysis, dream analysis, emergent mind, gender, homosexuality, identity, post-Jungian, transgender sexuality

Introduction

[...]Everyone else seemed to know they were boys or girls or men or women. That's something I've never known; not then, not today. I never got to say to the grownups, 'Hold on there – just what is it about me that makes you think I'm a little boy?' [...] I was always acting out something that everyone assumed I was. I wonder what it would have been like if someone had come along and in a quite friendly manner had asked, 'Well, young one, what do you think you are: a boy or a girl?'

(Bornstein 1994, p. 8)

In this paper I explore the role of sexuality in an individual's gender development. I understand the development of gender consciousness from the phenomenological perspective of a mind that emerges from brain/body interactions and a self situated in the world (Brooke 2009; Colman 2008). Contemporary brain science is supportive of this perspective:

we must not lose sight of one set of facts: the brain is embodied and the body is embedded... (the body is) situated in a particular environment, influencing it and being influenced by it.

(Edelman 2006, p. 24)

The development within the self of gendered identity positions embedded in the context of sexuality, specifically homosexuality, is the focus of this paper.

The interpersonal dynamics of our partner attractions occur after we have acquired a fairly clear sense of a gendered self from our early brain/body development (McKenzie 2006). Aspects of our gendered self that do not fit the cultural assumptions of male/masculinity and female/femininity, transgendered feelings, are often hidden from society and denied full expression. Transgender is the umbrella term for the feeling that one's interior, mind/body experience of gender does not readily conform to the cultural assumptions assigned to their biological sex. Transsexuality is at the extreme end of transgendered experience. A transsexual person feels their sexed body to be an unbearable contradiction to their gendered feelings and seeks hormonal and surgical remedies to bring their biological body into better alignment with their gendered feelings. Initial adult attachment choices may be partly made both to protect and to hide the feared transgendered aspects. The later adult attachment choices, as one comes out of the gender/sexuality closet, offer a glimpse into the potential interactions between sexuality and gender development. I will be referring to gender as an internal awareness of the embodied feelings of masculinity and femininity and sexuality as an external attraction to another person.

As I explore the role of sexuality in the formation of gender identities, I am asking the question 'what does sexuality have to do with the experience of oneself as a gendered being?' I am also asking if sexuality is being experienced as a means of gender consolidation and/or is sexuality facilitating gender development and expansion. As we follow rather than lead in the dance between genders and sexualities, even deeper questions emerge. What is the dance between body, mind, and culture as gendered feelings and sexual attractions draw us into life?

Is it a boy or a girl? This is the primal question asked at the moment of a child's birth. With the declaration of a child's sex comes a preprinted operations manual describing the outer gender performance of the model and assumptions about its inner workings as well. An intersex baby, a child born with some combination of male and female sex organs, generates extreme anxiety for all concerned. This is also the case for children and adults who are transgendered, whose biological sex does not match the gender presentation or gendered feelings as outlined in the manual. There is no pre-printed gender manual labelled 'other' in our Western monotheistic cultures. This has not been the case across all cultures and throughout all times. Aboriginal cultures recognized sex and gender that were outside the margins of male/masculinity and female/femininity. For example, the Navajo recognized four categories of

gender. The third gender, manly woman, and fourth gender, womanly man, were received into the tribe as human representatives of the bi-gendered, bisexual creation gods and as such they often took the role of the tribal shaman (Roscoe 1998; Williams 1988).

The 'other' category of gender and sexuality did not fare so well in Western monotheistic cultures. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in part for her refusal to renounce the male clothing that her 'voices' had instructed her to wear (Sackville-West 1991, p. 282). Sexuality in early Christian times allowed only two categories of experience, either penetrating or receiving; males penetrate, and females receive. A man, therefore, could have sex with another man and be considered normal as long as he was the penetrating male. A woman, however, assumed to be taking an active and somehow penetrating role in having sex with another woman, was therefore considered pathological. A woman who had a large clitoris was considered to possess 'the physical means by which to penetrate another person (and) is unacceptable in a culture that conceives of the sexually active role as properly restricted to males' (Brooten 1996, p. 163). The fifteenth century medical treatment for this disorder was the surgical removal of the offending organ (Brooten 1996, pp.164–65). Homosexuality did not become a category of individual identity until the late 19th century (Foucault 1978, p. 101).

Mary Douglas (1966), in her anthropological work on the meaning of taboo sheds light on the difference between aboriginal and western approaches to gender diversity. She suggests that for the aboriginal response to diversity:

The danger that is risked by boundary transgression (taboo) is power. Those vulnerable margins and those attacking forces that threaten to destroy good order represent the powers inhering in the cosmos (nature). Ritual which can harness these for good is harnessing power indeed.

(p. 161)

Aboriginal cultures like the Navajo assigned spiritual power to their transgendered individuals (Roscoe 1998). They were harnessing the powers of creation for tribal use. Western monotheisms imposed purity laws in an attempt to control the power of nature's creations (Douglas 1966, p. 161). Same-sex desire confounds the gender boundaries of male and female and blurs the bi-polar gender categories. Polarity and complementarity are lost when man desires man and woman desires woman. It is not sexuality that is impure; it is the blurring of the distinction between male and female gender categories that is the cause of the impurity. Douglas suggests that the biblical purity laws 'set up the great inclusive categories in which the whole universe is hierarchized and structured (and that) [...] this system of clear and distinct categories invited people to meditate on God's oneness, completeness, and purity' (p. 57). The image of the transgendered and homosexual individual is a threat to the orthodox Judeo/Christian monotheistic myth. The Judeo/Christian allegiance is with the image of a purified sky God and not with the diversity of nature's creations. An

historical and cross-cultural look at gender can leave little doubt as to the psychologically ubiquitous power it holds on the human mind (McKenzie 2006).

Identity and power are linked in all cultures. In the 50s and 60s the civil rights' movement, the women's movement, and the gay rights' movement brought to our attention identity struggles and experiences that had previously been held in the dark by the dominant white male culture. These were social movements referred to as 'identity politics'; they revealed 'a multiplicity of identities and interests, but they tended to operate within an essentialist paradigm' (Layton 1998, p. 2). Feminism assumed there existed an identity that would be shared by all women and gays and lesbians pressed for rights by claiming homosexuality as a categorical identity (Layton, p. 2). Both were arguing for political and social rights based on their category of identity. The 70s, 80s, and 90's saw a shift in thinking that began to challenge identity politics (Hooks 1990). By the 90s academic feminist and queer theorists had turned their attention to the way that all identity movements tended to silence diversity within their own groups thus replicating the structure of dominance they were trying to remedy (Butler 1990; Chodorow 1994). Feminist psychoanalysts, drawing on the work of Derrida, Foucault and Lacan have led the way in the postmodern deconstruction of identity (Flax 1990; Benjamin 1995). The focus is now upon the idea that 'identities are multiple, contradictory, fluid, constructed in relation to other identities, and constantly changing' (Layton 1998, p. 3).

Gender and psychoanalysis entering the 21st Century

Psychoanalysis, both Freudian and Jungian, has struggled with sexuality and gender (Glassgold & Iasenza 2004). The postmodern psychoanalytic feminist Freudians have had to work through and against an elaborate theoretical background. Historical Freudian sexuality imagines a core sexuality springing from infantile origins that is both essential and fundamental to the truth of the human psyche (Goldner 2003). The feminist Freudians have spent several decades challenging the phallogentric and essentialist nature of their theoretical forefathers (Benjamin 1988; Gilligan 1982; Dimen 1995). More recently, feminist queer theorists have shifted the focus and the challenge to question the existence of gender as a real aspect of personhood; and further, to wonder how sexuality might be construed within a new paradigm of gender (Butler 1990). Virginia Goldner, in concluding her paper, 'Ironic gender/authentic sex', makes a bold statement that relativizes the foundational theories that place gender as biological, developmental, and primarily phallic centred. She states that 'gender is a form of the symbolic elaboration that confers meaning to bodies, sex, and relationships... the question becomes the extent to which the subject experiences herself as personally investing gender with meaning, or whether gender is a 'meaning happening to her' (Goldner 2003, p. 135). Consciousness of the symbolic nature of gender and the capacity to invest in one's own 'gender symbolic' is the developmental potential I understand is being suggested by Goldner.

Analytical psychology, fortunately, has historically had less to say about gender and sexuality than our Freudian relatives. We have less to deconstruct. We do, however, need to reconsider our understanding and use of the terms anima/animus (A/A) in our gender thinking. My earlier paper, 'Queering gender: anima/animus and the paradigm of emergence', was focused on that task.

Jung's anima/animus (A/A) thinking leads us into a trap of linear orderliness, fixed identities, androgynous symmetries, and archetypes that are differentially inherited, based on sexual anatomy, a breach in the universality of the collective unconscious. His gender theory does however allow for both genders to reside in an individual but posits a slow and sex-appropriate emergence of the contra-sexual from the unconscious. Jung's A/A cannot account for the transgendered experience with its reversal of starting points and fluidity of sexual attractions. Jung's A/A is a terrible fit for our time. We live in an era of emergent, not fixed realities, and are beginning to value the overt display of masculinity and femininity in both sexes.

(McKenzie 2006, p. 7)

A further Jungian advantage is that the notion of the symbolic is at the roots of analytical psychology in the exploration of mind. *Same-Sex Love and the Path to Wholeness* (Hopke, Carrington & Wirth 1993) is a comprehensive and depth oriented collection of papers concerning homosexuality from a Jungian perspective. Sixteen years have brought a lot of new concepts concerning the interplay between body, brain, mind, and culture. We are in need of a contemporary update in our thinking about gender and sexuality and in our understanding of their inherent symbolic nature in order to keep maturing in these very important realms of human experience.

Emergent gender: finding one's location on the map

'Since the map is the territory, the goal cannot be to wipe our world clean of gender meanings' (Goldner 2006, p. 135). The language of gender, masculinity and femininity is appropriately expressive of our embodied gendered feelings as long as it is understood as a symbolic language, in contrast to the often encountered foundational assumptions of what male and female bodies should experience. In order for anyone to explore the territory of gender they must first find their starting position on the map, their initial gendered position using the co-ordinates of masculinity and femininity (A/A, agency/communion).

In my earlier paper, 'Queering gender: anima/animus and the paradigm of emergence' (McKenzie 2006), my focus on transsexual and transgender experiences of gender identity development was intended as a means to deconstruct our deeply held assumptions about the relationships between gendered feelings and inherited biological sex. In exploring the possible influences on the emergence of gendered feeling in an individual, I focused on the biological, cultural, relational, neuropsychological, and developmental (specifically attachment theory) aspects contributing to the formation of an individual's interior sense of gender. I proposed that gender is an emergent category of mind involving the coming together of all of the above factors. I

also suggested that this coming together and its resultant gendered feelings are a lifelong process of development. As in the initial experience of one's gendered self this lifelong expansion would also be an emergent process relating to the coming together of multiple influences.

Finding one's initial place on the gender map is not too difficult for those males and females whose interior sense of gender is a good enough fit to their culture's gender myth. They tend to colonize within their territory, digging moats and raising barricades to keep out the misfits. Those of us who are not comfortable, whose gender feelings do not fit the gender myth and assigned gender location, are scouts in the borderlands of gender, sending messages back to those in the comfortable interior. Lately it seems that the messages are better received. Perhaps those in the interior are not too happy themselves with the limited size of their holdings. It is one thing to find a comfortable gender position but it is something else to be told you cannot move. Gender myth and gender assignment affect everyone.

The interweaving of gender and sexuality in individuation is the focus of this paper. Lesbian love that is first lived out in a woman's midlife after years of heterosexual identity is the particular clinical material that I will be exploring. I will begin by sharing the writings of two poets from antiquity whose words will help to bring us to the embodied imagination of same-sex female desire. The first is a sampling of the poems of Sappho, a woman born on the Greek island of Lesbos around 612 B.C.E. These are the earliest recorded words expressing a woman's experience of love in general and in particular the feeling experience of love between women. The poetry below is found in Christine Downing's *Myths and Mysteries of Same-Sex Love* (1991, pp. 227–33).

Without warning,
As a whirlwind
Swoops on an oak
Love shakes my heart (227).

Afraid of losing you
I ran fluttering
Like a little girl
After her mother (230)

The gods bless you
May you sleep then
on some tender
girl friend's breast (233).

Sappho's images invoke the feelings of tender love between gentle feminine women. Even more ancient than the poetry of Sappho and specific to the experience of the mid-life pull to the feminine 'other' is the myth of 'Inanna's Descent to the Underworld' (3500 B.C.) depicting Inanna, the Sumerian queen of heaven and earth, in her journey into the underworld in search of her lost older sister Ereshkigal, the dark queen of that region. In contrast to Sappho's

imagery of gentle love between women, we encounter in Inanna's descent to her sister a brutal stripping of feminine privilege in service to the wisdom to be found in the encounter with the dark aspects of the underground world and the banished aspects of the self. Inanna is a well-established Goddess. She rules heaven and earth, is married and the mother of two sons. Ereshkigal resides in a, 'dry and dark realm . . . she eats clay and drinks dirty water . . . (her) sexuality is compulsive, insatiable, and without relationship or offspring' (Wolkstein & Kramer 1983, pp. 157–58). What compels Inanna to abandon her feminine comfort zone in order to meet with the dangerous raw nature of her underground sister? Diane Wolkstein, a soryteller and folklorist, has this to say about the meaning of Inanna's need to descend:

In many ways, Ereshkigal is the other, neglected side of Inanna. Therefore, when she hears of the appearance at her gates of the 'all-white' fertile, bedecked Goddess of Love, she is enraged, for Inanna's light, glory, and perpetual movement have, to some extent, been achieved at her expense.

(p. 158)

In my therapy practice and in the lesbian community I have encountered a number of women who, at midlife, have left their husbands and sometimes even their children in order to be with a female lover. They are irresistibly drawn to the gentle love of the feminine touch described by Sappho and simultaneously they encounter Inanna's dark journey. The abrupt stripping of conventional feminine privilege and the loss of the ease of feminine identity inherent in marriage is often experienced as a sudden death, a head on collision that shatters one's culturally 'safe' gender position. Those who have made this trip know something about Inanna's need to descend and her willingness to face death in order to open up to lost parts of herself. Diane Wolkstein makes an interesting analogy between Lilith and Ereshkigal. She sees Lilith and Ereshkigal as similarly dark feminine figures. She imagines Lilith as the self-destructive adolescent form of Ereshkigal. Lilith is the one who is sent away in order for Inanna to develop her upper world abilities as goddess, wife, and mother (p. 160). Some of us couldn't manifest our youthful encounter with Lilith, our adolescent homosexual and transgendered feelings; we needed time and convention to develop sufficient ego strength to face the cultural and familial attacks that our pull to homosexuality and transgendered embodiment might encounter. Wolkstein says this about the timing of Inanna's descent:

But now that Inanna has become queen of her city, wife to her beloved, mother to her children, she is more able to face what she has neglected and feared: the instinctual, wounded, frightened parts of herself. She now hears, and is capable of responding to the labor call of Ereshkigal in the Great Below . . . A passageway has been created from the Great Above, the conscious mind, to the Great Below, the unconscious, and it must be kept open. Inanna must not forget her neglected, abandoned older 'sister'-that part of herself that is Ereshkigal.

(pp. 160–61)

Powerful imagery reflecting contemporary mid-life lesbian experience can be found in Judy Grahn's 1987 play, *Queen of Swords*, a modern lesbian version of the ancient myth of Inanna. I offer a few passages of the poetry from the play entitled, *Descent to the Butch of the Realm*. Grahn has Helen, a conventional wife and mother, stumble into an underground lesbian bar and encounter Ereshkigal, the transgendered 'butch' (masculine identified lesbian) proprietress of the bar. The 'butch' bartender, Ereshkigal, challenges the accidental nature of Helen's entry into this dark realm:

Strange to everyone but me that
 you would leave the great green rangy
 heaven of the american dream,
 your husband and your beloved children,
 the convenient machines,
 the lucky lawn and the possible
 picture window-to come down here below.
 You left your ladyhood, your queenship, risking
 everything, even a custody suit,
 even your sanity, even your life. It is
 This that tells me you have a warrior
 living inside you. It is for this
 I could adore you (48).

Oh descend
 Oh lower yourself to love
 in the underground, the union
 of a woman to one other
 woman, not self to self
 but self to other
 self.

Slap your feet flat on the earth now,
 heel first preferably, thrust
 your pelvis forward.
 You see I am about to change
 your centre of gravity.
 (quoted in Betty Meador's *Uncursing the Dark*, 1992, pp. 48-49)

Same-sex love in consolidation and expansion of gender territory

I know that many women experience their pull to women as having always been primary or even as the only form of sexual attraction they have experienced-but I would venture that the pull to women may have a specific soul meaning when it happens later, at midlife.

(Downing 1993, p. 32)

The first experience of same-sex attraction could be compared to the vampire's bite; one is drawn to the power found in the eternal depths of love but must pay for such a treasure with the loss of one's mortal life, one's cultural and social identity. This loss is quite evident in those who change gender or sexuality at

mid-life. The price is high, but, becoming fully alive to one's internal sense of gender and external feelings of sexual attraction is essential to living an authentic life via the union of body and mind. It should be no surprise that genders and sexualities that do not conform to cultural and religious rules persist in coming out to the world despite the sometimes deadly risks involved.

I propose that sexual attraction is a particular form of self/other engagement that serves to both consolidate our initial gender position as well as to expand our potential gender capacity. Gender roles are well defined in heterosexuality and serve well to consolidate a man's masculinity and a woman's femininity. Gender expansion, a woman's desire to expand into her masculinity and a man's desire to explore his femininity, are problematic in heterosexual pairings in most cultures where gender is assumed to be natural and opposite throughout a lifetime. Transgender embodiment and homosexual love transcend cultural limits and open a complex weaving of genders and sexualities. This opening is a creative potential for the expansion of gender consciousness for individuals as well as for cultures.

The stories in this paper explore homosexual desire that emerges as a powerful force in the mid-life of two women. Dreams and fantasies coupled with brief developmental backgrounds provide a way of understanding the self-driven imperative toward the culturally difficult and personally de-stabilizing homosexual love at mid-life. I will explore the links and loops between gender emergence (throughout a lifetime) and sexuality. I choose this culturally 'outsider' form of relationship in order to get the clearest look at the interplay between gender and desire, gender and desire that struggles with outer cultural expectation but is nevertheless driven by the self need to make manifest the body's feelings.

Gail: lesbian love and gender expansion

Gail, a lesbian in her mid-fifties, told the story of coming out in her thirties. She had been married for eighteen years to a 'nice guy' and had two young children. I find that lesbians who have been previously married often have selected 'nice' and not overly masculine men to marry. She fell in love with Marti, a woman ten years younger than herself. Marti was a blend of seductive femininity and adolescent male adventurer; both were territories Gail had never dared to enter. Gail had once before felt the power of love's insistent 'pull to ordain' but she had been only 19 then and the suicidality she felt in trying to claim her first homosexual love drove her to deny her desire. At 37, Gail's banished adolescent Lilith had returned with the full-blown power of Ereshkigal; this love could not be denied at any cost. Gail was fortunate in not having to fight for her children; her 'nice guy' remained nice. She did, however, have to face the condemnation of her parents and many of her friends, especially concerning her audacity at placing her own needs before their perception of her duty as a mother to remain heterosexual for the benefit of her children.

Gail's anxiety that her sexuality might make her children suffer was a stripping of her former confidence in her motherhood. She was disrobed of her good daughter status by her parents' condemnation of her. Her loss of heterosexual privilege was brought home to her when she began to notice how differently two women were treated in a restaurant, a bank, and a car dealership, to name a few early encounters, compared to the service she had come to expect as a married woman.

Gail remembered a short but vivid dream she had as she was struggling with leaving her long-term marriage to be with her female lover.

I'm swimming in a pool filled with alligators. I look up on the edge of the pool where my husband is standing and beg him to help me. He nonchalantly tells me that I can handle it and walks away. I'm terrified.

Gail had encountered the stripping and devouring primordial animals in her psyche and her ego was powerless and terrified. She was swimming in these waters alone and could not get out of the pool. She would be stripped and her life as she knew it would be killed. Gail was enraged by her inability to reconcile the love she must have with the life she wanted to keep. The alligator force in her also turned on the others in her life who made this so difficult: a society that forbade her love, parents who could not accept her feelings, and her husband who failed to provide this deep love that she so desperately needed.

Gail had always been a tomboy and had acquired many strong masculine attributes in her lifetime. Her father enjoyed his tomboy daughter and lovingly brought her into the masculine world of self agency, until her marriage, when he told her that her job was now to serve a husband and children. Her mother was perplexed by her masculinity but didn't criticize or interfere. Gail's masculine side remained well developed even in her heterosexual marriage and, after entering a lesbian relationship she was able to further consolidate her masculine leaning gender position.

I have worked with several women like Gail with strong masculine gender characteristics who married men with strong feminine gender leanings. I speculate that the choice of a soft male partner is partly to experience the opposite gender in the marriage, i.e., since Gail is more masculine in her gender identity she was drawn to a more feminine male partner as a compromise feminine 'other'. A less obvious and I believe more powerful reason for marriage to soft masculinity is the need to protect her strong masculinity from competition with a strong outer male. To choose a strongly masculine male as a partner would be to deny any life to her own closeted masculine gender position—her embodied feeling of her gendered self. Gail was stuck with a masculinity that could not be fully lived and with femininity residing in a male partner who could not fully manifest his feminine gender position either. With neither partner able to move freely from their own embodied gender feelings, eros remained in the closet as well. The transgendered are

often stalled in a defensive stance protecting their hidden initial gender position. Same-sex partnering with its affirmation of non-traditional gender roles unlocks the defended gender identity and opens the way for further development.

Lesbian relationship released Gail to live fully her strong masculine side; to overtly express a gendered aspect that she had felt her entire life. She was now an embodied self hotly seeking connection to an 'other' whose embodied feminine seductiveness was the irresistible pull. Eros was out of the closet bringing Gail together with her necessary 'other'. Erotic energy was bringing Gail to the depths of herself in her love for the feminine 'other' and allowing her to begin the integration of her own feminine potential.

Gail left her marriage and established a life with Marti. One year into her lesbian relationship she had the following dream:

I'm driving my red BMW up the hill. There's lots of traffic and I'm passing everyone. At the top of the hill I'm stopped by a wise old religious man. He knows me and we talk for a while about an upcoming celebration, some sort of holy holiday. I am aware that traffic is backing up because of our talking. I go to a room that is waiting for me in a retreat at the top of the hill. I have been here before, a very long time ago. I know that I have changed and I want to change this room. In the closet is a large doll and doll rocker. I had put them in there long ago thinking it inappropriate to have a doll in a room. I bring them out into the room. Through the window I see a lovely fenced pasture with a pretty mare grazing at the far right corner of the pasture. There's a house at the far side of the pasture owned by a suburban woman who owns the mare but has neglected her. I know this horse likes me and will spend most of its time on my side of the pasture. The suburban lady isn't as conscious of the reality of the mare as I am—that horse and I can connect.

Gail's heroic strength, her red BMW, got her up the hill to the holy place. Her aggressive masculine energy is stopped by the wise old man. She leaves her BMW and enters her room at the retreat. This is a room from her psyche's earliest encounter with her communal femininity, her early feminine feelings. She remembers putting a doll and a doll rocker in the closet thinking them inappropriate. Gail's mother suffered major depression throughout Gail's childhood and, as a result, was emotionally unavailable. As early as age three Gail remembers relinquishing her vulnerable needs for those of her mother. She became her mother's heroic caretaker. In the dream she is bringing that vulnerability, her hungry relational self, out of the closet and into her recovered psychic room. The pretty mare, symbolic of Gail's embodied self, has been neglected. Gail recognizes that the suburban woman, a reference to her married life, could not take care of the horse. Gail has arrived at the holy place where she recognizes the reality of the mare and can begin to attend to the instinctual energy of her need for a deep and vulnerable relationship to an 'other'. Gender expansion allowing greater access to her feminine relational aspect was an outcome of Gail's mid-life lesbian love.

Beth: lesbian love and gender consolidation

In another story of a woman's mid-life move into same-sex love we find a different configuration of gender integration taking place. Beth entered a lesbian relationship in mid-life after a 20-year heterosexual marriage. Beth's memories of her early years were dominated by the strictures of her family's fundamentalist Christian beliefs and by the demands of her narcissistic mother. Beth was taught to be 'good', to obey God's rules, attend to her mother's needs, and later to focus on her husband's wishes. Her early life did, however, have one balancing feature. Outside of her home Beth lived a lusty tomboy existence. She was the best athlete among her many male cousins and playmates and the heroic defender of her little brother. In a session with her I had occasion to refer to the 'little girl' of her interior psychic world. Beth stopped me and said, 'Oh no, it's a little boy and his name is "Jim"'. She was very clear that her early and secret experiences of her gendered self were as a boy. Her ability to physically enact that world ended as she approached puberty. She had to put away the embodied experience of her tomboy world and begin the job of performing the feminine role.

Despite her awareness of her attraction to women, she married and had three children. Motherhood was satisfying and 'Jim' was well buried as Beth enacted her role of a supportive wife to a husband who was a miserably inadequate provider both physically and emotionally. At age 38 Beth's attraction to women began to resurface along with her weariness of continuing to act the part of the good wife to a failed husband and a failed marriage. She fell in love with a woman who was an excellent provider both physically and emotionally. Her partner had a well developed masculine gender position. She possessed a quiet strength that Beth desperately needed. Beth easily assumed the more feminine position in the relationship, a role she knew very well. She was financially and emotionally dependent on her partner's strength and steadiness in times of stress—of which there were many. She had transferred her buried masculine potential from a weak husband to a strong lesbian partner. Beth's masculine development remained stalled in the pre-adolescent Jim who resided in a reactive complex unavailable for growth. However, her strongly masculine female partner was potentially a good mirror/self object to help bring Beth's masculine identity out of the closet. In loving a woman with overt strong masculinity she could catch a glimpse of her own masculine potential self.

Beth entered analysis with me as she was beginning the difficult work of coming out, re-establishing her career, and going through a divorce. After three years of struggle she was out in most areas of her life, was successful in her work, and her children were thriving in their lesbian household. Beth had even done the daunting task of confronting her fundamentalist mother and brother with the reality of her world. She used her reactive 'Jim' aspect to counter their religious and personal attacks. She was outwardly thriving despite the hurt of

feeling outcast by her fundamentalist family. In reality it was mostly her reactive 'Jim' anger that created the family split.

Beth was doing so well that I became increasingly curious about her seeming inability to temper her angry reactivity to homophobia. Her 'Jim' seemed bent on taking on all offenders. During the Civil Union debate in her home state of Vermont there were many letters to the editor in the local paper representing both sides of the issue. Beth was fixated on the negative letters from the religious right, bringing me endless copies of their vitriolic attacks on homosexuality. Her rage at their condemnation was the focus of many sessions. I was uneasy with her angry affect and continually tried to redirect her to the positive editorials. This had no effect on her continued reactivity. In retrospect, I believe that my countertransference to her warring anger hindered her psychic development. I had forgotten about her buried 'Jim' and was instead focused on the positive, her growing self-validation of her lesbianism and her solid participation in an accepting environment. It had been almost two years since Vermont had passed the Civil Union bill and she had a supportive community, both heterosexual and homosexual, but Beth was still possessed by a powerful rage.

Beth had been working for several years in a small office run by a man with some radical political views. In our sessions she would almost always have some new work place indignity to report which she would deliver with 'Jim's' powerful anger. Recently, however, her boss raised the stakes on what she had to endure. He announced that he no longer intended to pay federal taxes to a government that he didn't support and that Beth would have to somehow arrange to meet her own payroll deduction obligations or join him in his radical protest. He also began carrying a gun at work.

I had on several occasions asked Beth why she remained in such an antagonistic environment when she could have easily found another job. She usually dismissed my concern by pointing out the advantages of staying. On this occasion I was dismayed that given the new circumstances she still intended to remain. I asked, again, whether she considered leaving the situation. Her reply was illuminating. She said that she felt compelled to stay in order to witness his defeat. She had fantasies of witnessing a full federal assault on her employer; a small scale 'Ruby Ridge' scene. She felt compelled to 'be there' to see the government arrest her radical and reactive employer, a mirror to her own reactive core in need of arrest. She was fully engaged in 'Jim's' heroic thrall as she reported her fantasy. I asked her what would be lost if she chose to leave this dangerous situation? She replied simply, 'Jim'. It was her need to consciously experience the powerful young 'Jim' of her childhood that was resistant to change. She needed to bring 'Jim' to consciousness before she could begin integrating a more mature masculinity.

We had spent many sessions validating her homosexual experience but little time validating her 'Jim' identity. My urgings toward a tempered masculinity were taken as assaults on her heroic masculine position, as a replacement for 'Jim' rather than as an addition to her gender household. She had not yet had

enough positive reflection of her early gender feelings to feel in full possession of them. Her inner homophobic and gender phobic religious fundamentalist was still active; 'Jim' still felt vulnerable to being buried.

Her fantasy suggested that she was still awaiting the arrival of a central authority (the federal assault), a strong enough core-self voice, that would both validate her reactive 'Jim' and begin to bring it under control by expanding her masculine gender position. She needed to keep reasserting 'Jim's' heroic stance until it was fully accepted. To relinquish or mediate her internal 'Jim' feelings before she fully owned them was more threatening to her than the dangers in her environment. Beth was stalled in a defensive gender position.

Beth had spent decades hiding her 'Jim' aspect in order to fit with societal and family expectations. Part of Beth's reward for claiming her homosexuality was the freedom to live more openly in a gendered position that felt authentic to her. Despite her new cultural gender freedom, Beth needed help in allowing the inner 'Jim' to emerge.

In the three sessions following our shared experience of the deep meaning and value of 'Jim', Beth brought the following dreams:

I'm in a bedroom with a complacent, soft, non-aggressive male lying on his back in a bed. He has an obvious erection and I know we're going to have sex. I want to put a condom on him first. He warns me that he will come prematurely if I touch him. I try to put the condom on anyway and he ejaculates all over the bed. I clean him up with a hand towel and feel sexually frustrated. He gets up, dresses and leaves. A little later he returns to the room. I take down his pants and take his flaccid penis in my mouth to try to arouse him. I still want sex with him. He again ejaculates prematurely and I feel my sexual disappointment and the bad taste of semen in my mouth.

I am in a room with a short, balding man. He and I are supposed to leave together. We both trip and stumble to the floor. He lands face down on the floor. I land on top of him, also face down. He immediately says, 'Hump me, please hump me'. I slowly start to thrust my pelvis back and forth against him, repetitively. He asks, 'What are you doing?', both surprised and delighted. I get off of him. He immediately stands up, takes out his very small penis and instantly ejaculates. The ejaculate flies in my direction, landing on my clothes. I yell, 'This is disgusting, absolutely disgusting'. I leave in search of a change of clothing.

In these first two dreams Beth encounters her masculine shadow; the weakness inherent in reactive aggression, the arrested development of her pre-adolescent Jim. In the first dream she fails to connect because of her need to protect herself from full exposure to him, her need for the condom. Beth's dream ego both desires connection and feels disgusted when tainted by the semen from the weak masculinity. The prematurely ejaculating penises are connected to soft passive masculinity, a combined image of her soft, passive feminine ego position and her reactive pre-adolescent masculinity. In the second dream she attempts to make sexual contact with the short, balding man without actually facing him. The semen from his small penis disgusts Beth. She cannot present herself to the

world in clothing, i.e., a persona which bears the evidence of weak, small-penis masculinity.

On the surface this could be seen as a naturally feminine woman's process of connecting to her immature masculinity. My approach to these images, given the clinical information I have about her early 'Jim' identification and her forced femininity, suggests that Beth's assertive masculinity is her initial, but developmentally arrested gender position. From this perspective, the dreams would depict her resistance to consciously facing the shadow aspects of her underdeveloped masculinity.

In dreamwork with transgendered individuals it is helpful to focus more on the type of energy portrayed by the 'other' in the dream than by the sex of that figure. The common assumptions that male figures represent masculinity, strength and aggression, and female figures represent femininity, receptivity and vulnerability can mask the gendered movement being offered by the image. Beth's next dream more vividly illustrates the value of unhooking biological sex from gender assumptions.

I am in a college student lounge talking with several other students. I look and feel femme. I am very attracted to one guy in particular. He is sitting at a desk with homework and books spread out before him. He says, 'Will you look at something for me?' I bend over close to him and start commenting on whatever it is I am reading. He moves closer to me and I can feel the heat of his face radiating onto my face. We begin a long, slow and tender kiss. In the next scene we are sitting next to each other on a couch, very close, sort of 'nesting'. He asks what book I am reading. I show him a book on transgendered people and tell him it is a textbook for a class that is for credit. He seems surprised and wants to take it next semester. I realize now that he is gay, but I am still very attracted to him. He whispers, 'Don't tell anyone yet, but I have found someone', He shows me a wedding ring on his third finger, right hand. I am devastated but act happy for him, realizing that we can only be friends, nothing more. He now appears much more effeminate than earlier in the dream. His partner enters the room and immediately tends to the fire in the fireplace. He is very masculine and feels like competition; threatening to my relationship to the man I love. My rage stops abruptly and my thought shifts to the hope that I will like this man, the partner, as a friend as well.

Beth begins this dream feeling 'femme'. Femme is a term used in lesbian culture to denote a lesbian woman's expression of femininity. In the context of relationship it is femininity offered to another woman. For Beth this would be a safe place for her feminine feelings. As a 'femme' she desires and is receptive to the attractive man. She feels the warmth of her face to face encounter with him. Their connection has strong feminine relational undertones. It is both receptive, and holding: 'We are very close, kind of nesting'. After Beth shows him the transgendered book, a book that will get her some credit (psychic energy), the dream begins a shape-shifting of gender and sexuality. The attractive man reveals his homosexuality and appears more feminine to her. His strong male partner appears, stirs the fire, and Beth feels the stirrings of her competitive masculine fire. Beth resists the well-known polarizing adolescent fire in her

and begins to wonder if she can befriend both men. Her ability to imagine a simultaneous relationship with both male figures will allow her to more easily access her own 'gay male', a more vulnerable, and receptive masculinity, without feeling that she is banishing her fiery, protective 'Jim' masculinity.

In the dream Beth shifts from her 'femme' body experience to her more masculine competitive 'Jim' embodiment. The attractive man who desires her 'femme' shifts to an effeminate gay man married to a strong male partner. The pairing of masculine gender opposites is recognized simultaneously with the fluid movement of individual gender positions. As Beth consolidates her masculine position, bringing together both poles of masculinity, she also accesses feminine energy, the femme, in herself.

In a recent session Beth mused that Jim's cowboy nature had always felt like a Clint Eastwood character, reactively angry and often outside of the law. She remarked that the new masculine feeling emerging in her is more like the quieter strength of Sheriff Matt Dillon in the old television series, 'Gunsmoke'. Beth reckoned that there was room enough for both men in her expanding gender household but was reluctant to speculate on the appearance of her femme self in the dream; this was very new territory. Gender consolidation was on the move and gender expansion was now a tentative potential.

Gender as embodied imagination

As the language of our flesh experience with otherness, I place gender experience and gender expression at the core of identity formation. I understand identity as a fluid and emergent mind/body awareness; the process that Jung called individuation. Gendering could be understood to be a symbolic expression of shifting body states, from the individual agency trajectory of masculinity to the relational focus of communal femininity.

With gender defined as the embodied feeling of oneself in relation to 'otherness' (both people and things); sexuality might be partly understood as an unconscious, i.e., self driven, selective attraction to an 'other' that both expands and solidifies our gender potential. Androgyny, a fluid access to both polarities of gender, would represent a more individuated identity state than a predominantly feminine or a predominantly masculine identity.

In Beth's dreams we can observe this shifting of body gender states. Her dream embodiments allow her to simultaneously experience both her 'femme' and her adolescent 'Jim masculinity' in the presence of the emerging consciousness of her more mature 'receptive masculinity'. I understand this fluid shifting of gender in dreams as a form of embodied imagination, borrowing the term 'embodied imagination' from the work of Jungian analyst Robert Bosnak (2007), an internationally recognized practitioner of embodied dream work. Embodied imagination is a subtle dance between body and imagination according to Bosnak that belongs to 'a primal world between body and mind – less physical than matter, more embodied than mind'. It is an experiential world that

‘annihilates the mind/body conundrum by adding a third an in between . . . [and] wherever there’s an in-between, soul animates, enlivens, quickens’ (p. 76). Beth’s dream ego initially experiences loss and rage as the masculine feelings shift and change. With the simultaneous recognition and integration of all three gender positions there emerges the awareness of the in-between and the ego shifts into a hopeful feeling, a more relaxed, soulful experiential state. Embodied imagination resonates with the fluidity of both body and identity states found in queer theory. I suggest that an authentic and fully lived experience of our gender feelings and sexual attractions is an important component to experiencing the in-between, a creative and ensouled life. For some, homosexuality brings the necessary ‘other’ to this creative process.

I propose that the gendered feelings we experience in our bodies that our culture calls masculinity and femininity are in the realm of embodied imagination. They are an in-between experience between the physical and the imaginary, driven by the actions of the mind embedded in the body and the body embedded in the cultures of family, society, place, and time. Let me offer a personal example; as a five-year old I was fascinated by the cowboy television character Hopalong Cassidy. He was a Western hero who wore black clothing and rode a black horse. He was gentle and strong and always on the side of justice. In my imagination I could be Hopalong Cassidy in my strong and gentle girl body. Sexual anatomy was not a factor in my young mind. It was the gendered feelings of heroic agency that resonated within. My parents got me the black holster and guns but I couldn’t talk them into the rest of the outfit. Perhaps it would have been too much of a gender crossing for me to have the whole costume. Donning the holster and guns I was drawn deeper into my feelings of heroic agency, the subtle body interplay between imagination and flesh. Children are experts in embodied imagination. Their imaginary play if not disrupted by adult projections is an accurate representation of their embodied experience interacting with relevant cultural symbols. My strong and gentle five-year old girl body felt a correspondence with the hero Hopalong Cassidy and my imagination brought us together. It also didn’t hurt that he had a horse.

Individuation and the gender symbolic

Mythologized and ritualized masculinity and femininity have varied from culture to culture and from ancient times to present time. All such myths and rituals have sought to express something elemental in our understanding of ourselves as conscious beings and the internal process that engages in the emergence of mind. Assigning roles in myth and ritual according to sexual anatomy is ubiquitous. It isn’t how these symbols are played out that is important to individuation; however that might be to women, the transgendered, and the homosexuals in recent history. What matters to the growth of human consciousness is that we are aware of the fluidly embodied nature of our gender and sexuality. We must differentiate the individual’s

personal experiences with their gender and sexuality from a culture's need to find symbolic expression and containment of such powerful aspects of human experience (see Douglas above, p. 99). Just as mind is not in us, we are in mind; gender is not in us, we are in gender. We are investing gender with meaning.

TRANSLATIONS OF ABSTRACT

L'attribution d'un genre comme dimension clé de l'identité et de la position culturelle traverse les époques et les cultures. Le sexe biologique d'un individu ainsi que son milieu culturel spécifique produisent un effet profond sur son sentiment d'identité en tant qu'être sexué. La sexualité quant à elle est un marqueur plus récent de la constitution d'identité. Au cours des dernières décennies, un intérêt grandissant pour la psychologie de la formation de l'identité sexuée a vu le jour; il en va de même pour le rôle de l'interaction du sexe biologique, de la culture, du développement du cerveau et des expériences d'attachement dans la formation de l'identité sexuée. La « queer theory » (théorie homosexuelle), dans sa pensée déconstructiviste post-moderne, postule que le genre est un concept socialement « construit » sans précurseurs ni réalité biologique ou psychologique. La psychanalyse contemporaine jette des ponts entre les concepts du genre comme étant purement biologique et du genre comme étant totalement inexistant. Dans cet article, j'aborde la question de l'émergence du désir pour une personne de même sexe au milieu de la vie, à travers deux cas cliniques riches d'un important matériau onirique. L'impact du désir sexuel sur l'identité sexuée est examiné à travers les prismes de la culture, de la théorie dynamique des systèmes, des neurosciences et de la psychologie des profondeurs. L'analyse des rêves comme fenêtre ouverte sur la dynamique psychique et somatique de l'émergence du genre traduit ma vision de l'identité sexuée comme une réalité de l'esprit fluide et mouvante, ni prédéterminée ni fictive.

Geschlechtszuweisung, als Schlüsselaspekt von Identität und kultureller Position, hat es zu allen geschichtlichen Zeiten und in allen Kulturen gegeben. Das biologische Geschlecht eines Individuums und sein bestimmtes kulturelles Milieu haben einen tiefgreifenden Einfluß auf sein Selbstgefühl als eines geschlechtlichen Wesens. Sexualität ist ein jüngerer Kennzeichen in der Identitätsbildung. Während der letzten Jahrzehnte ist das Interesse an der Psychologie der Bildung von Geschlechtsidentität stark gewachsen; im Zusammenspiel von biologischer Sexualität, Kultur, Hirnentwicklung und Beziehungserprobungen in der Bildung von Geschlechtsidentität. Theorien zur Homosexualität in ihrer postmodernen dekonstruktivistischen Ausprägung haben behauptet, daß Geschlecht ein sozial 'konstruiertes' Konzept sei, welches ohne biologische oder psychologische Vorstufen oder Realitäten wäre. Die gegenwärtige Psychoanalyse der Persönlichkeitsentwicklung schließt die Lücke zwischen Konzepten des Geschlechtes als rein biologischem und solchen des Geschlechtes als Nichtexistentem. In diesem Beitrag untersuche ich das Auftauchen des Begehrens nach Gleichgeschlechtlichkeit im mittleren Lebensabschnitt durch die Vorstellung zweier Fallgeschichten mit umfangreichem Traummaterial. Der Einfluß von sexuellem Verlangen auf die Geschlechtsidentität wird durch die Linsen der Kultur, der dynamischen Systemtheorie, der Neurowissenschaften und der Tiefenpsychologie betrachtet. Der Gebrauch der Traumanalyse als Fenster zur Körper – Geist Beziehung in den geschlechtlichen Erscheinungen reflektiert meine

Auffassung vom Geschlecht als einer flüssig beweglichen Realität des Geistes, weder fest verdrahtet noch fiktional.

L'assegnazione di genere in quanto aspetto chiave dell'identità e della posizione culturale esiste da tempi immemorabili e in tutte le culture. Il senso biologico di un individuo e un particolare milieu culturale ha un effetto profondo sul senso di se stessi come esseri che appartengono a un genere. La sessualità è un marker più recente nella formazione dell'identità. Negli ultimi decenni è molto cresciuto l'interesse per la psicologia della formazione del genere e per l'interazione del sesso biologico, della cultura, degli sviluppi del cervello e delle esperienze di attaccamento nella costruzione delle identità di genere. Nel suo pensiero decostruzionista postmoderno la teoria di Queer sostiene che il genere è un concetto "costruito" sociologicamente, che non ha precursori o realtà biologiche o psicologiche. La psicoanalisi evolutiva contemporanea sta colmando un gap tra concezioni del genere come puramente biologico e del genere come non-esistente. In questo lavoro analizzo l'emergere nella mezza età di un desiderio dello stesso sesso, presentando due casi con abbondante materiale onirico. L'impatto del desiderio sessuale sull'identità di genere viene analizzato attraverso le lenti della cultura, della teoria dei sistemi dinamici, delle neuroscienze e della psicologia del profondo. L'uso dell'analisi dei sogni come finestra aperta sull'emergere del genere nel movimento corpo/mente riflette la mia concezione del genere come di una realtà della mente che cambia fluidamente, mai troppo rigida o finta.

Половая принадлежность как ключевой аспект идентичности и культурной позиции существовала с незапамятных времен и во всех культурах. Биологический пол человека и особая культурная среда оказывают глубокое воздействие на наше чувство себя как существа, наделенного полом. Сексуальность – более поздний маркер формирования идентичности. За последние несколько десятилетий наблюдается всплеск интереса к психологии формирования пола; интерес вызывает взаимодействие биологических полов, культуры, развития мозга и опыта привязанности в формировании половой идентичности. Некая сомнительная своим постмодернистским деконструктивистским мышлением теория высказала предположение о том, что пол – это социально «сконструированная» концепция вне каких бы то ни было биологических или психологических предшественников или реалий. Современное развитие психоанализа сужает разрыв между чисто биологической концепцией пола и концепцией пола как несуществующего понятия. В этой статье автор исследует возникновение желания к однополую сексу в середине жизни на материале двух случаев с избытком сновидений. Воздействие сексуального желания на половую идентичность исследуется сквозь призму культуры, теории динамических систем, нейробиологии и неврологии и глубинной психологии. Использование анализа снов как окошка в телесно/психическое развитие гендерного пробуждения отражает авторское ощущение пола как текуче переменной психической реальности – и не жестко смонтированной, и не вымышленной

Las asignaciones del género como un aspecto clave de la identidad y posición cultural, ha existido a través del tiempo y a través de todas culturas. El sexo biológico del individuo y su particular medio cultural tienen un efecto profundo en el sentido de sí mismo como ser con un género. La sexualidad determina más recientemente la formación de la identidad. En las últimas décadas ha surgido mucho interés en la psicología de formación de género; la interacción de sexo biológico, de la cultura, del desarrollo de cerebro, y de experiencias de fijación en la formación de identidades de género. La extraña teoría en su pensamiento poste-moderno deconstruccionista ha sugerido que el género es un concepto socialmente “construido” que no tiene precursores ni realidades biológicas o psicológicas. El psicoanálisis de desarrollo contemporáneo trata de salvar el vacío entre los conceptos de género como puramente biológico y el género como inexistente. En este trabajo exploro la salida de deseo por mismo-sexo en la edad media la vida presentando dos historiales clínicos con extenso material onírico. Se examina el impacto del deseo sexual en identidades de género con los lentes de la cultura, de la teoría dinámica, de la de sistemas, de la neurociencia, y de la psicología profunda. El uso del análisis de sueños como una ventana para explorar dentro del movimiento emergente cuerpo/mente del género refleja mi sentido del género como una realidad fluida y cambiante de la mente, no integrado ni ficticio.

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