

Accessing the multitude within:

A psychoanalytic perspective on the transformation of masculinity at mid-life¹

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This paper reflects upon the essential components of male identity that commonly are reworked in middle age. The author argues that healthy masculine gender identity involves an ongoing, plastic process of destabilization and reconstruction at various pivotal developmental stages, particularly during middle adulthood. In essence, a man's mature transformation of his sense of masculinity results when finite concepts of gender identity are superseded by an awareness of the complexity of one's multiple, early and diverse gender identifications. A clinical case provides insight into how psychoanalytic treatment can contribute to a new experience of masculinity. The case illustrates how a maturing man, meeting an altered sense of identity in mid-life, relies less on gender splitting and more on reuniting previously antithetical intrapsychic elements. Why this more pluralistic, polythreaded masculinity frequently must wait until mid-life is further clarified. Specific importance is attached to the early development of male gender identity as it is founded on the boy's unique struggles in separating from his mother. The foundation for male gender identity formation is reconsidered as the author questions the 'dis-identification' model while explicating how the boy's striving for narcissistic completion shapes the gendered masculine ego ideal. Classically termed 'phallicism' is understood both to facilitate and obstruct a man's adult development, while the concept of 'genitality' is augmented by the postclassical notion of 'interiority'. At mid-life, 'phallic' ego ideals (resting on omnipotence, desires for narcissistic completion and gender splitting) are transformed into more realistic, 'genital' ego ideals (synthesizing autonomy and connection). The achievement of a mature, less sharply gendered 'masculine' ego ideal (revitalizing the foreclosed dimensions of both the early maternal and paternal imagos) occurs as the balance of forces shifts in the direction of true genitality rather than defensive phallicism.

Keywords: masculinity, mid-life, male gender identity formation, gendered masculine ego ideal, pre-oedipal gender identifications, mature adult masculine gender identity, interiorized masculinity, phallicism and genitality

Do I contradict myself?

Very well then ... I contradict myself;

I am large. I contain multitudes

(Whitman, 1855 [1986], 'Song of myself', p. 85, [51], 1314–6).

In this excerpt from his 'Song of myself', Walt Whitman boldly conveys the nature of a mature interior world. Whitman's insight, moreover, aptly sets our course along the

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uncertain corridor of masculinity. The issue of gender has been fittingly regarded as an 'essential contradiction' (Harris, 1991), and my paper addresses this conundrum as it manifests among men at mid-life. In essence, I argue that certain transformations of identity that transpire for many men at mid-life may help to reconcile their masculine gender enigmas by bringing together the 'contradictions', albeit in a more fluid and complex sense. In particular, mid-life offers unique possibilities for such transformations for those men who have relied on more defensively phallic, less pluralistic constructions of their internal, subjective sense of masculinity.

I advocate that gender identity development, consistent with an epigenetic, life-cycle developmental perspective, is *not* a fully linear, continuous trajectory. Rather, it is recursive and tidal-like in its oscillating advances and retreats. There is an interplay of centrality and marginality in any given life, and development is understood as a theory of process and position rather than state and stage (Corbett, 2001). From this standpoint, I propose that what classical psychoanalysis describes in terms of the *phallic* and *genital features* of a man's internal experience are best understood as coexisting positions (in varying, discontinuous balances) rather than phases that simply supersede one another (though, in maturation, the balances shift). Moreover, a man's experience of the ambiguities of his gender is continually being reworked across differing developmental junctions and pivotal life experiences (see Blos, 1962; Gabbard and Wilkinson, 1996). This pervasive reworking of a man's gender identity entails distinct opportunities and challenges at varying periods of life. I contend that mid-life offers a unique and, oftentimes, final opportunity for a man's more successful (and mature) resolution of his gender ambiguity.

In contrast to focusing my efforts on simply deconstructing gender dichotomies, I hope, instead, to sustain the paradox incorporating the necessary tension between dichotomous and synthetic-integrative thinking in understanding gender. I believe, along with many other analysts writing in this area, ranging from Benjamin and Bromberg to Gabbard and Ogden, that sophisticated psychoanalytic theory must be able to sustain the necessary dialectical tension between traditional essentialist and postmodern, constructionist perspectives. As Sweetnam elegantly opined, 'gender theory must be able to explain how the tension between fixed and fluid aspects ... can be held on to rather than foreclosed' (1996, p. 449). I consequently strive to maintain a dialectical tension between the dichotomous (or fixed) aspects of gender experience and the more integrated experience of gender, between gender rigidity and fluidity, between essentialist and constructionist viewpoints, and between (core) gender identity and the gender multiplicity of the multigendered self. Hopefully then, I shall contradict myself.

In focusing on men at mid-life, I emphasize the critical developmental transitions and tasks of middle adulthood that provide opportunities for reshaping the 'masculine' ego ideal. Especially important as the pivotal organizer of a maturing masculine identity are mid-life issues stimulated by aging. While men experiencing the crucial separations of early adulthood (see Colarusso, 2000) do indeed increasingly recognize their gendered complexity as well as their intersubjectivity, I contend that, owing to the ultimate bodily basis of the experience of gender, a middle-aged man's sense of his changing masculinity can often serve to weight the perpetual male struggle along 'genital' lines, both in the more traditionally represented exterior sense and in the less

examined interior manner (see Kestenberg, 1968; Stein, 1988; Friedman, 1996; Fogel, 1998; Elise, 2001). A transformed masculinity subsequently becomes evident in a man's increasing capacity for a more fluid, yet complexly gendered experience.

My thesis should *not* be misconstrued as simply an argument for a 'kinder and gentler masculinity' (though psychoanalysis has never quite reconciled the 'less' active facets of masculinity within its more 'phallogentric' perspective on masculine development). Rather, I wish to think about masculinity in a way that better sustains the paradoxical interior realities of a man's experience. The man's task, then, particularly in middle adulthood, is to integrate the various phallic and genital aspects of his inner world in order to achieve what might be termed the 'mature' or 'true' genital position.

Masculinity through a developmental lens

I draw on recent insights from work on gender along with contemporary developmental perspectives to expand on the critical developmental and intrapsychic issues underlying a male's sense of his manhood. My work evolves from contemporary life-cycle developmentalists influenced by Erik Erikson (1963)—particularly Colarusso (Colarusso and Nemiroff, 1981; Colarusso, 1999, 2000), Levinson (D. Levinson et al., 1978), as well as Greenspan and Pollock (1980; Pollock and Greenspan, 1998), each of whom examined the progression of men's identity.

The ongoing, life-cycle processes of self-development entail regularly occurring periods of personality change marked by ego regression and reorganization. Middle adulthood typically occurs between the ages of 40 and 60. The changes arising during the mid-life transition (often between ages 40 and 45) are generally viewed psychoanalytically in terms of developmental delays in post-oedipal outcomes. In contrast, an actual 'crisis' during the mid-life transition involves blocked or arrested adult development usually ushered in by narcissistic injury or trauma in conjunction with the individual's unique psychodynamics.

The male mid-life transition

There are multiple biological and psychological (along with social) determinants of the mid-life transition. It is at mid-life that one first deals with loss of youth, tries to match the percept of an aging self with the memory of a younger self, begins to perceive the passage of time differently, and relates more personally to death with an accompanying realization of a finite amount of time left.

For most men, by the age of 45, the biological decline is unmistakable and death is no longer an abstract possibility but more a constant companion conveying one's inescapable fate. A sense of time urgency, a leveling off in the work place, and role reversal with respect to aging parents typically comes to mark middle age. The adaptive, 'pressured manhood' (Gilmore, 1990), ensuing from the young man's efforts to prove his manliness, begins to attenuate. Moreover, the normative grandiosity of early adulthood lessens and the individual must confront his shortcomings and destructiveness, along with his own personal death (Jacques, 1965).

There is often a disengagement from the emotional impact of the environment during middle age (Auchincloss and Michels, 1989; Axelrod, 1997b). For men, there frequently

is a growth of 'interiority' (Pruyser, 1987), greater receptivity to affiliative and nurturing urges (Neugarten, 1968), and an effort to integrate the internal feminine and thus more consciously mediate between polarities (Jung, 1954, 1959; Levinson et al., 1978). Thus, the mature man in mid-life is given an opportunity to transform his gender identity by developing his capacity to contain the tension that is inherent between his core sense of who he is and the fundamentally fluid, shifting nature of his multifaceted self (cf. Bromberg, 1998). The internal world of such a maturing man will need to contain the *multitudes* and *contradictions* of which Whitman relates.

In order more vividly to explicate my thesis and developmental ideas, I will next discuss clinical material that illustrates one male patient's unique mid-life struggles with his sense of masculinity.

Case illustration: Mr A's concealed search for 'the lost father of interiority'

Mr A, a 43-year-old married father of two young boys, began treatment describing his unhappiness because of his wife's 'volatility and moodiness'. He asked if I could help him figure out what he might do so that 'she' wouldn't be so irritable, depressed and angry. About to undergo major knee surgery, Mr A was distressed about his body 'starting to fail'.

Like many men at mid-life, Mr A felt that he had 'climbed the mountain of success' and was no longer so anxiously driven about work. Mr A's considerable career and financial successes were expedited by his well-developed, phallic masculinity. In addition to enabling him adaptively to penetrate the outer world, it also served as a fulcrum for an obsessive, hypomanic exterior orientation that warded off depressive anxieties. At the onset of treatment, however, the situation with his wife began to occupy center-stage. Beyond Mr A's 'scaled mountain' lay a darker, more ominous 'valley of the unknown', which threatened to engulf him.

Mr A's depressive anxieties gradually became analyzable as he spoke of being fearful of getting lost in a disturbing world of feelings about his life circumstances. He feared being once again left alone prematurely with no one to help him traverse what he termed 'the wide unknown' (i.e. the more spatial, less contoured and ambiguous realms of his emotionally dominated interior world). Mr A was partially drawn to an analysis where I represented a Poseidon-like father personifying power in the realm of instinct and emotion. At the same time, however, his efforts at affect modulation seemed doomed as he feared that his analyst (myself as his Poseidon-father) would leave him long before he could successively contain (rather than cut off) and creatively express his potentially disruptive emotions.

Mr A was filled with anxiety and shame about being drawn into his internal world. For him, the ambiguous internal world of feelings, contours and spatiality was problematic precisely because it lacked sharp, distinct borders and certitude. As I will explicate, his use of externalizing, 'phallic' masculine defenses in the form of manic activity and obsessive (non-)thinking is understood in terms of his reliance on a rigid, constricted form of masculine gender identity, characterized by an insufficiently internalized 'genital' father.

Mr A was the only child of an aloof yet quite distinguished, scholarly professor and his much younger, immigrant wife. Mr A's already elderly father died when he was 8 years old following a sudden, debilitating three-year illness that resulted in a severe,

premature dementia. Although Mr A would often become tearful when discussing his father's death, he regularly would add that he 'took after' his father while remaining very close to his mother despite her 'flakiness'. Like his father, Mr A was a highly educated man who prided himself on his intellect and physical prowess. He was an expert mountain climber and a highly successful intellectual himself.

Shortly into treatment, Mr A expressed considerable confusion as to what he was 'supposed to do and what was supposed to happen'. Dismayed and perplexed, he contrasted the analysis with his recent knee surgery. He wished our work were more like 'surgery where I can just trust my doctor to put me to sleep and correct whatever damage may be in my body'. In distinction to the powerful surgeon (father) who could render him unconscious and repair the damage, I initially represented a more powerless (mother-like) figure that stood for such nebulous things as 'relationship' and 'emotions' rather than the more highly valued, paternal qualities of 'discovery' and 'knowledge'.

Mr A was ashamed of his close ties with his mother, and his wife, apparently threatened by their closeness, would angrily accuse him of 'an unnatural relationship'. Our discussions of such insinuations were met by his highly charged, angry denials and he fiercely let me know that 'those psychoanalytic oedipal theories about mothers and sons are far-fetched'. Mr A's masculine gender identity was indeed held in a delicate narcissistic balance and I had to tread carefully but straightforwardly in exploring this mother-son theme, lest he experience me as similarly fearful of facing these shameful issues.

The first several years of the treatment process were marked by a pointed sense of our making contact and then having it broken rather abruptly. This is illustrated during our tenth month when Mr A became especially upset with the treatment, following a particularly emotional session in recalling his father's three-year decline and subsequent death. He had been ruminating about his unhappy marriage and couldn't see 'where what we've been discussing had any value nor was related to the "real" problem'. He explained that he had come to therapy in order to find a way to alter his wife's behavior toward him or, at the least, find a better way 'to live with her'. 'What's the point of all this emotion and how will it improve my marriage?' he implored repeatedly. Indeed, I too began to wonder what 'the point' might be while feeling impelled to console him by providing *the* 'answer'. I struggled with containing my impulses to reduce his/my anxieties of a frightening chaos seemingly silenced only through authoritative cognition. I had to use my experience in this projective identification to recover my ability to verbalize an understanding of his fears of being left alone in the seemingly illogical terrain of feelings.

As I worked to contain his 'terror' of becoming enticed by and lost in my affective chaos, he depicted himself as a man dying of thirst while his wife (and analyst) seemed to be like a dry, empty well cutting him off from vital liquid supply (milk). I reflected on how upsetting our last session had been for him and how hard he seemed to struggle to find a way to contain 'the well spring' inside him. He became very quiet before sharing how this made him think of the deeply affecting film *Field of dreams*. He commented on how he had found himself crying when the protagonist's deceased father returned to play catch with his grown-up son. Mr A longingly recalled how his own father played ball with him on those rare moments when he was home and still healthy, and, just as Mr A began to make this meaningful contact with himself, he quickly crushed it by accessing what we came to call his 'technological focus'.

His thoughts again turned toward his marriage and his wife's 'problems' as he compulsively sought a solution. I felt left in the cold, and on this occasion, partly as a result of recognizing my own feelings of abandonment in our contact with one another, I was able to help him address his defensive needs to preserve his tenuous sense of masculinity underlying the consuming focus on his wife. I explained that he abruptly disappeared from his 'feeling' self in a way that was similar to how he might have experienced his father's sudden demise. I proposed that he didn't want to show me how 'thirsty' he was for his father because to do so would revive both his feelings of *fatherly loss* and his deep needs for his *mother's comfort*. He indicated that he recognized how often he felt ashamed to expose these basic feelings because he 'might be seen as defective'.

Mr A eventually acknowledged how much he wanted to be recognized for simply 'being a guy' among other males. For example, in reflecting on the pain he often felt on the playground, he declared, 'I just wanted to be "a guy guy" and belong'. His wife's idealizing admiration earlier in their relationship for his 'special' manliness that included his sensitivity and kindness had only temporarily attenuated Mr A's core anxieties about his masculinity. As his marital difficulties mounted and his wife consistently devalued him as 'just another typically selfish man', Mr A began to re-experience the wounds associated with the lack of a genital paternal imago capable of validating his complex and multifaceted masculinity—a masculinity that could include the recognition and acceptance of his maternal identifications. Unable to optimally experience his own de-idealization, Mr A began to relive the childhood humiliation when he 'couldn't make it with the "guy" guys'.

Two distinct transference constellations became central well into our work. In one, I was the *'flaky', maternal object* representing a journey into the unbounded and messy, interior realm where contact might emerge from within the imprecisely shaped, less concrete contours and spatiality of the inner world of affect and imaginings. For instance, Mr A would often question the value of discussing anything beyond the problems in his marriage. He assumed a position similar to that which he had come to believe that his father might have taken. He took on the role of a 'skeptic', who would tease and oppose his mother's (and analyst's) 'unscientific' forays into the less material, 'touchy feely' realms.

An understanding of this transference (and my accompanying countertransference) helped in appreciating Mr A's need to define himself as masculine by dint of a bifurcated, staunch opposition to a feared entrance into the 'flaky' and 'unscientific' feminine world. As we analyzed this, he began to realize the enormous psychic effort that he exerted in an attempt to create sharp, distinctive borders, typically involving robust and sure cognition. He hoped this would protect him from being drawn into the more chaotic, less bounded interior world associated with his wife and mother.

In the second configuration, I became the needed *dyadic, paternal object* of 'genital interiority', a self-object that represents maleness both desiring of him and affirming of his masculinity (in the context of his being in relationship with his inner world and the interior realms equated with his mother). Meaningful work emerged from this transference, which helped Mr A reaccess his lost internal father. In its homoerotic transference and countertransference dimensions, he began to experience loving feelings toward me while sensing the mutuality of my feelings toward him. He eventually experienced me as capable of containing his internal world and remaining

with him while he mourned both the loss of his actual father and the foreclosure of so much of himself in an effort to erect a stable, albeit rigid and distinctly shaped structure for his masculinity. Immense sadness and grief arose as Mr A began to reinternalize a paternal object who could desire his messy, unbounded self so like his mother, while affirming his essential maleness via a reciprocal identification.

A paternal imago was gradually established that was differentiated from the maternal world, while still recognizing his need for connection. Mr A came to understand how he had to create a 'phallic' stance toward his interior life to conceal what he regarded as his inferior qualities linked to 'femininity'. His feared femininity actually reflected his intense longing to feel desired by a male presence that responded to his needs for masculine affirmation. He was ashamed of these needs and sought to obscure them in a rigid version of masculinity that subsumed the more phallic, 'knight in shining armor' qualities resembling the idealized father of his, and most likely, his mother's, constructions. Mr A clung tenaciously to his 'brilliant, witty, skeptical and renowned' father, an academic knight to be sure, in order to prevent his descent into what he had incorrectly concluded to be *solely* the province of the feminine.

Summary of case of Mr A

Mr A's anxious, shame-dominated 'mid-life crisis' revealed the magnitude of his previous psychic restriction whereby his masculine identity was consolidated largely through mastery of external activity. As a result, the normative male mid-life transition involving the creation of an alternative, middle-age version of masculinity became instead a developmental crisis. Its mark was the break-up of the sharp, penetrating facets of his 'phallic' exteriority along with an increasingly disturbing access to his repressed, interior world. The ensuing disruption was initially met by a 'defensive phallicity' that served to ward off the chaotic dangers that he associated with the less bounded, more spatial inner world of affect, impulse and imagination. Mr A desperately needed both to reclaim the lost parts of his self and come to terms with his limitations. His accompanying depressive and fragmentation anxieties led him into an analytic treatment that would help him achieve a more developed 'genitality', relying less on gender splitting while paradoxically further incorporating the interior realms of the masculine.

As the treatment progressed, Mr A became more aware of his pivotal gender identity anxieties about 'being a guy'. He increasingly was able to internalize a pre-oedipal, genital paternal imago that incorporated the inward, more open and receptive dimensions of space and ambiguity, which served to implement deeper contact with both himself and an 'other'. He no longer needed to repudiate his interior world of affect, need and intense longing to feel desired by a male presence. By recognizing the need for 'genital' fathering, Mr A's relationship to his now latency-age boys began to change. He developed an ability to 'hold' his younger son's lack of athleticism yet support his artistic interests, all the while continuing to mentor both boys in the realm of their masterly pursuits. Mr A could finally better understand and accept his limitations while becoming content with something less than an idealized, narcissistic wholeness. The balance of forces was shifting wherein a complex and fluid, yet more stable and mature man could more comfortably feel a sense of (hu)manhood no longer so unconsciously gendered.

Keeping the case of Mr A in mind, I will elaborate my essential thesis by considering key issues in the development of male gender identity, the significance of both phallicism and genitality, and the mid-life transformation of the interiorized genital ego ideal.

Male gender identity development

An in-depth understanding of our male patients' experiences of masculinity ultimately rests on an articulation of our developmental concepts. Consequently, by challenging the notion that boys must 'dis-identify' from the mother in order to establish a secure sense of gender identity and expounding upon the formation of the gendered masculine ego ideal, I shall examine the actual shaping and maturation of male gender identity.

Beyond 'dis-identification': A reconsideration of male gender identity development

I contend that the rather indiscriminately accepted psychoanalytic idea that boys normatively 'dis-identify' from their mothers in order to establish a stable gender identity must be critically scrutinized. Stoller (1964, 1965, 1985) and Chodorow (1978) initially used Greenson's (1968) term 'dis-identification' to elaborate on the pre-oedipal determinants of cohesive gender identity as tied primarily to issues of separation. In challenging the usefulness of this model, I have elsewhere explained how dis-identification is a misnomer (Diamond, 2004). Instead, denial and disavowal are the prevailing defensive operations that attempt to repudiate or dismiss early identifications that are typically grounded in more pathological, triangular systems.

Many other writers have commented on the theoretically and clinically problematic nature of the violent splitting propounded by Greenson that he termed 'dis-identification from the mother' and 'counter-identification with the father' (see, for example, Fast, 1984, 2001; Benjamin, 1988, 1991; Pollack, 1995, 1998; Christiansen, 1996; Axelrod, 1997a; Wilkinson, 2001). I wish to add to this dialogue by emphasizing that neither the desirability nor the unavoidability of the boy's identifications with both parents seem to be sufficiently recognized when the 'dis-identificatory' construct is used to explain the development of male gender identity. Moreover, contemporary analysts generally understand identification as also depicting a process of internalizing relationships in order to build psychic structure (see Loewald, 1970). Thus, in identifying with his mother, a little boy also 'identifies with' the sense of his mother's *relating to him as a male person* of the opposite sex (Diamond, 2001, 2004). I maintain, therefore, that these early maternal identifications remain significant in male psychic structure and, typically, come to play a more active, and hopefully more conscious, role as a man matures.

In any event, in treating male patients such as Mr A, we are continuously faced with their conflicted, fragile and frequently damaged images of masculinity which psychoanalysis has understood largely in terms of the symptomatic expressions of 'too little' and 'too much' masculinity (Axelrod, 1997a). Axelrod, in concert with Fast's (1984) ideas, offered an interesting reconstruction of these clinical manifestations. He argued that an arrested or fixated sense of masculinity tends to be grounded in a pathological form of early triangulation set in motion by mothers severely misattuned to their young sons' individuation needs, fathers who are either weak, unavailable or misogynist themselves, and by the child's

temperament and drive endowment. Under these circumstances, a boy's early gender identity development takes on the quality of a conflict or struggle wherein identification with the father is problematic in its essential *opposition to*, or *identification against*, the mother. These little boys tend to persist in contemptuous, devaluing attitudes toward women.

In extending these ideas, I contend that, when this excessive, more defensively based dis-identification (and counteridentification) does occur, pathological rigidity invariably results. This rigidity is evident both in terms of the severity of the male superego and with respect to the overall cohesiveness and fluidity of the boy's sense of maleness—a kind of 'zero sum game' where masculinity requires that femininity be relinquished. However, in the less pathological forms of early gender identity development, progressive differentiation rather than opposition predominates and masculine gender identity is founded more upon a reciprocal identification with an available father (Diamond, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2004). A 'watchful, protective' father, typically in conjunction with a sufficiently 'attuned' mother able to recognize her son's masculinity, helps to mitigate the severity of what might be potentially traumatizing for the boy engaged in the separation-individuation process (Diamond, 1995, 1997). Such a father tends to be aligned with a mother who maintains a 'consistent affective relational presence' and who therefore needs neither to be repudiated nor renounced (Fast, 1984, 2001; Bassin, 1996; Elise, 1998).

In addition then to providing a conventional focus for masculine identification, an available, pre-oedipal father tempers his little boy's more acute defensive tendencies to dis-identify from his mother in order to organize his gender identity. Instead of an oppositional or counteridentification with the more symbolic father against the mother, the boy who is able to achieve a reciprocal identification with an available father is provided with the foundation for a more secure and often more varied gendered expression of the self (see Benjamin, 1988, 1991; Diamond, 1998, 2004).

It is striking that the nurturing, holding and protective aspects of this earliest father provision contradict the more universal, 'phallic' gender stereotype of men as active, penetrating and potent (Diamond, 1997). These fundamental 'genital' qualities of fathering reflect a more flexible sense of masculinity and thus can facilitate the integration of the boy's maternal-feminine identifications through the internalization of a relationship with an admired man who interacts in ways other than a 'phallic' manner. I propound, moreover, that such a 'genital' paternal imago is equally important for a developing gay boy's relationship to his masculine gender identity. Though it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the unique yet overlapping developmental trajectories of homosexual and heterosexual boys, it is notable that the more complicated pathways for the homosexual child beginning to experience homoerotic attraction similarly requires a father's (or male surrogate's) affirmation of his son's masculine identity as an 'outsider' (Frommer, 1994; see also Lewes, 1988; Isay, 1989).

So the question must be posed: how are we to understand the shaping of the male's sense of gender identity if the individuating boy need *not* fiercely 'dis-identify' from his mother?

The mother–son dyad: Early loss and the striving for narcissistic completion

I advocate that the most fertile psychoanalytic conceptualizations of masculinity that address both the conflictual, so-called 'dis-identificatory' aspects, as well as the less

oppositional (albeit non-pathological) forms of mother–son internal relationship, stem from an appreciation of male *striving for narcissistic completion*. Consequently, the pre-oedipal identifications and attachments in the mother–infant dyad as well as in the early father–child dyad are crucial and often eclipse the oedipal, triangular dynamics that Freud (1925) posited to account for the male’s sense of masculinity. From this pre-oedipal perspective, the boy’s ego ideal helps him to heal what he arguably must experience as an abrupt, traumatic loss of omnipotence that results from his early separation from his mother. I suggest that the boy *inevitably* experiences a ‘traumatic’ sense of loss during this phase of early separation-individuation regardless of the intensity and severity of his struggle to separate from his mother (Diamond, 1997, 2004; see also Fast, 1984; Benjamin, 1988, 1991; Ogden, 1989; Pollack, 1995, 1998; Lax, 1997; Hansell, 1998).

This pre-oedipal ‘trauma’ might be cast in *relational terms* (see, for example, Benjamin, 1988, 1991; Pollack, 1995, 1998), stressing a relational rupture that results from the premature loss and/or repudiation of the small boy’s sense of connection with his mother (in what are termed ‘desiring and identificatory attachments’). Alternatively, the trauma could be cast along more *traditional, metapsychological lines* emphasizing the loss of an ideal state of primary narcissism and unity with the maternal object. In either case, the issue essentially concerns the important ‘wound’ to which the boy child must adapt.

The ‘gendered’ nature of the masculine ego ideal is hence founded on the particular struggles that boys experience during the initial stages of gender differentiation (see Fast, 1984, 1994, for a clear, empirically based discussion of boys’ unique conflicts around differentiation).

In comparison with girls, boys are relatively more cognitively and emotionally immature at the time of their initial gender crisis. There is typically a developmental asymmetry in that the pressure to renounce gender-inconsistent traits is greater for boys (Hansell, 1998). This painful process within western cultures is marked by the fact that very young boys are typically shamed into withdrawing from their mothers more than they naturally desire (Pollack, 1998). Thus, the boy not only loses a large part of his primary dyadic connection with his mother, but also simultaneously is forced to repudiate, renounce or deny what he has lost. The young boy feels pressured *to deny* his need for his mother in order to maintain narcissistic cohesion, while feeling shame regarding this unmet, yet intense need. This is evident in the reconstructive work with Mr A.

Devoid of sufficient recognition of this aspect of male experience, a boy may feel emotionally abandoned without being aware of it (see Pollack, 1998), while simultaneously being culturally prohibited from knowing or valuing this loss. Consequently, what might be termed the ‘ubiquitous masculine striving’ reflects the male’s efforts to repair this narcissistic wounding by seeking to recapture the lost ‘holding’ connection and/or ideal state of being that is both disrupted and subsequently disavowed.

The gendered, masculine ego ideal: The phallus and the recognition of maleness

The boy’s abrupt loss of omnipotence and the premature loss of his unique dyadic connection with his mother often lead him to seek something different to hold on to. One prevailing theoretical perspective argues that the boy’s traumatic loss of the symbiotic paradise of the early unity with his mother disposes him to create a phallic image of himself in relation to the world in order to regain control of the object now

separate from his ego (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1984, 1985; Manninen, 1992, 1993). The phallus partially represents the lost breast as something different to hold on to. The little boy omnipotently forms the adaptive *and* defensive illusion of ‘the supremacy of his own masculine equipment’ (Manninen, 1992, p. 25) in order to overcome the painful, ‘gaping wound’ created by the separation between his ego (i.e. self) and ego ideal (i.e. the internalized, ideal mother). The phallus thus represents reunion while ‘phallic power’ promises then to transform the boy’s traumatic separateness from his mother into an increasing influence over her.

There is consensus among psychoanalytic gender theorists that the *gendered nature of the masculine ego ideal* is founded on the boy’s distinctive struggles during these initial stages of gender differentiation (Chodorow, 1978; Fast, 1984; Butler, 1995; Hansell, 1998). In my exegesis of the male phallic position, I stress the symbolic use of the phallus as a defense against the dangers of an all-too-separate but still needed (maternal) object (see Diamond, 2004). The extent to which this process becomes ‘shattering’ (i.e. the size of the boy’s ‘narcissistic wound’) is based significantly on two factors: first, whether his identification with his mother is founded on her ability to recognize and support both her son’s maleness and his father’s presence (Fast, 2001; Wilkinson, 2001); and, second, whether there is an available father (or surrogate) providing a reciprocal identification while supporting his son’s connection to mother (Diamond, 1997, 1998, 2004). The growing boy with this foundation of attachment and intersubjective recognition need neither rigidly repress nor disavow feminine identifications (cf. Dinnerstein, 1976; Chodorow, 1978).

Phallic masculinity: The dominance of the phallic ego ideal and phallic urgency

For the most part, without an opportunity for a maturing ego ideal that *integrates* the phallic ego ideal with the genital ego ideal, phallicism becomes psychically *urgent* for the adult male’s achievement of the missing psychic cohesion. This reliance on a more exclusively phallic ego ideal underlies the stereotypical ‘male obsession’ whereby ‘only by conquering the world can one conquer the mother’ (Manninen, 1992, p. 7). As with Mr A, this ‘hypermasculine’, phallic image of masculinity, additionally, often conceals the unavailability of the pre-oedipal, ‘genital’ father (Ross, 1986). With respect to the ‘little man’ of childhood, the extent of the boy’s phallicism in search of narcissistic completeness greatly influences his ability to accept the oedipal reality. In the end, oedipal mastery requires a boy’s realization of his own limitations and becoming content with something less than an idealized, narcissistic wholeness.

Paradoxically, the masculine, phallic ego ideal *unconsciously* denies gender (and other forms of differentiation) in the service of the wish for the unlimited possibility inherent in the omnipotent, idealized union with the maternal object. True differentiation is denied while, at the manifest level, the phallocentric male defensively operates as if his phallus *is all that he has* to make him masculine. In reconstructing phallicism, I emphasize its pre-oedipal, narcissistic foundations both from a dyadic and triadic perspective. Such an early substructure for phallicism is evident throughout the life cycle both in the fragmentation anxieties and the sense of shame that are evoked whenever a stable masculine identity cannot be maintained. My emphasis thus contrasts with the traditional

Freudian view of phallicism with its primary focus on the exclusively triangular, oedipal dynamics based largely on the interplay between the sexual and aggressive drives in a competitive context generating castration anxieties. Although both the pre-oedipal and oedipal basis of the sense of masculinity remain important throughout a man's life, I stress that a mature masculinity (i.e. true genitality) requires that the pre-oedipal, narcissistic facets of phallicism be reworked and integrated.

Phallogenic gender ossification results from the dominance of the phallic ego ideal when there is a failure to integrate both the earlier maternal (feminine) and the pre-oedipal, paternal (masculine) identifications. This 'phallic' form of repudiating early maternal identifications creates an *unconscious gender ossification* which often becomes manifest later as gender confusion or rigid, defensive certainty. The resulting male gender identifications are thus more fragile than flexible, partly because they are formed out of the conflicted, unconscious wishes to embrace and embody one's repudiated feminine identifications in the 'wish to be complete' (Schou, 1995; see also Elise, 2001). This is clear in Mr A's anxieties about being 'a guy guy'.

Healthy adult masculine gender identity: From rigid phallicism to fluid genitality

A male's lifelong psychic work becomes developing the ability to tolerate the limits on the satisfactions that can be attained. In Freudian psychosexual terms, the perpetual struggle is between the seductive, grandiose power of phallicism, promising transcendence of limitations, and the more relative, longer-term achievement of adult genitality that is anchored in reality. The reality-based genitality involves adaptive assertion, aggression and modulated phallicism, whereby phallic urges are transformed into more aim-inhibited and object-recognizing forms in the relational context of mourning, acceptance, submission and uniting with others. There is a tendency to forget that, in its essence, genitality implies a synthesis between autonomy and connection whereby antithetical intrapsychic elements can be reunited.

A maturing gender identity develops from integrating early, pre-oedipal identifications with each parent and inevitably demands a psychic achievement in the integrative-synthetic sphere. The establishment of gender identity begins with the child's 'capacity to identify with both mother and father at the same time' (Christiansen, 1996, p. 113) while its eventual transformation requires 'the creation of a dialectical interplay between masculine and feminine identities' (Ogden, 1989, p. 138). A healthy, cohesive sense of manhood develops when core gender identity is not split off from a flexibly masculine gender role identity. In attaining this more differentiated, 'genital' ego ideal, issues pertaining both to the acceptance of the limitations of one's gender and to its contrasting elements no longer have to be denied in the service of primary narcissism. Such a man does not have to have or be 'all' in order to experience his manhood (see Fast, 1994) and previously renounced, early overinclusive, other-sex identifications that were deemed gender inappropriate are reclaimable as antagonistic, contrasexual elements can be reunited (Bassin, 1996; Young-Eisendrath, 1997; Elise, 1998). This maturational accomplishment is founded on the capacity for 'post-conventional thought' whereby gendered opposites, rather than remaining bifurcated, are instead 'held' and symbolically bridged (Benjamin, 1996).

The limitations of the more phallic form of experiencing one's masculinity become evident in the faulty gender attributions and absence of this dialectical interplay. Thus, as Benjamin (1996) contends, the meanings of the terms *masculine* and *feminine* can be understood to derive from a socio-cultural process of gender splitting, wherein each individual internalizes a culturally shaped gender polarity (of gender-linked distinctions) to develop qualities attributed to his or her own sex and, in some measure, to suppress qualities of the other sex. Within western societies, despite efforts to reduce this gender splitting, the underlying cultural images for masculinity, as Mr A upholds, continue to mean being rational, protective, aggressive and dominating; femininity means being emotional, nurturing, receptive and submissive. It becomes each individual's burden to keep the other gender's characteristics undeveloped within, while paradoxically, for many men such as Mr A, completing a mid-life individuation task to better integrate them. Notions of what is masculine or feminine can thereby more comfortably destabilize as finite categorization of gender identity is superseded by the complexity of one's multiple, differently gendered identifications. This concurs with Benjamin's contention that the 'lived ambiguities of gender' (1996, p. 36) are made tolerable only when this higher level of (post-oedipal) differentiation is achieved by means of sustaining the tension between contrasting elements that remain *available* rather than *forbidden*.

Interiorized masculinity and the genital 'masculine essence'

From this more dialectical perspective, an essentialist understanding of both masculinity and femininity free of intrinsic gender linkages can be appreciated. I propose, therefore, that the genital 'masculine essence' contains, in addition to the penetrating, more boundaried, differentiating and exterior qualities associated with healthy phallicism, far more of what conventionally is considered feminine in the form of the open, receptive, spatial, connecting and interior aspects of psychic experience (Diamond, 1997, 1998; see also Kestenberg, 1968; Neugarten, 1968; Stein, 1988; Friedman, 1996; Fogel, 1998; Elise, 2001).

The culturally specific minimization of this more *interiorized* dimension of masculinity undoubtedly has something to do with penetration anxieties. Elise (2001) advocates that the masculine sense of self, at least in adult, heterosexual males, is dependent upon an impermeable psychic boundary that is *not* to be penetrated (since being penetrated becomes equivalent to femininity). Elise terms this male stance as 'the citadel complex' in masculine personality and argues that adult male development requires working through the male's 'fear of *having* a "womb"—an inner productive space, an internal space that can be penetrated and known—where something about the private self can be discovered and revealed' (p. 501).

Friedman (1996) reasoned similarly that post-phallic-stage males deny their inner body and testicles. He emphasized the need to include more of the male's anxieties pertaining to repudiated 'inner space', partially represented by the testicles, which in turn tends to be projected on to women. This male denial of the inside, 'dark continent' of his inner body, produces a defensive focus on the external body and on mastery of the external world in an exaggerated 'phallic identity'. Again, as is discernible with Mr A, this is often manifest in a heightened reliance on the thinking apparatus while possessing

less access to the deeper, more bodily based realms of feeling and specific anxieties about what is 'hanging out' there. Thus, the more traditional representation of male sexuality as *purely* phallic, with interiority (e.g. embodied by the testicles) ignored, can be viewed as a defensive distortion (Friedman, 1996; Fogel, 1998; Elise, 2001).

This reliance on defensive phallicism in adulthood is characterized as a 'hardening of the heart' that protects men from the 'dangers of exposing softer and more tender inner organs and psychical sensibilities' (Fogel, 1998, p. 679). Mr A convincingly illustrates how adult males often rely on this phallic ego ideal, frequently marked by overvaluing cognition, to defend against repressed maternal identifications in order to manage their gender identity anxieties.

Conclusion: The impact of aging and mid-life on masculinity

A young man's tendency toward phallic insistence often broadens as he reaches middle age. Such a maturing man redeems his early identification with nurturing, relational and feeling qualities derived from his pre-oedipal experiences, most typically associated with his mother (or women). While the sense of masculinity develops throughout the life cycle, I argue that it presents particular features during its mid-life reorganization that differ substantially from those male gender identity issues arising during childhood, adolescence and early adulthood (Blos, 1962; Colarusso, 2000).

In early adulthood, men attempt to live up to idealized notions of what it is to be a man, notions that are reminiscent of the phallic little boy's view of his father. The young adult male is frequently dominated by the phallic ego ideal. It is commonly represented by the predominance of 'manic defenses' that facilitate initiative, assertiveness and focus (e.g. Jacques, 1965), and is likely to be characterized by a 'heroic illusion' (Axelrod, 1997b; see also Jung, 1954; Levinson et al., 1978; Hollis, 1993).

The mid-life transition, signaled by the confrontation with one's personal death and its attendant anxieties, optimally leads to further transformations of the male ego, especially in the decline of phallic masculinity. There is a new set of tasks pertaining less to establishing one's *sense of identity* in the world and more to the *need for meaning*. Parts of the psyche that were necessarily renounced or repudiated previously in order to establish a stable sense of identity are awakened during life's second half. Priority is given to insight, connection and nurturance unless there is a more pathological upsurge of defensive phallicity that further strengthens gender polarity and becomes a powerful obstacle to mid-life development.

There is considerable intrapsychic turmoil associated with the renunciation of illusions and the acceptance of one's limitations intrinsic to this period (see Jacques, 1965; Oldham and Liebert, 1989; Satinover and Bentz, 1992; Hollis, 1993). The man at mid-life often experiences a sense of *ennui* and a 'depressive crisis' that reflects the pain inherent in having had to restrict oneself psychically in order to achieve sufficient mastery in the arena of external activity. This *constriction of the self* produces a developmental need both to reclaim the lost parts of the self and to come to terms with one's limitations. Such a psychological task then requires each individual to shift from his more *action-oriented* modes to a more *inward, integrative* perspective, embracing the lost parts of the self. Moreover, working through of the infantile depressive position

wherein hate and destructiveness can be creatively linked under the dominance of love and constructiveness is essential (cf. Jacques, 1965). Manic defenses that serve to avoid the fear of death by cutting off awareness of inner psychic reality can attenuate as the humbling, depressive crossroads of mid-life enables the necessary mourning to ensue, along with the re-establishment of the renounced, lost childhood objects.

The mid-life transformation of the male ego ideal

In terms of the sense of masculinity, this mid-life task entails renewing an acquaintance with previously rejected *gendered dimensions* of the self. The aging man, like Hermes guiding souls to the underworld, is called upon to accept the need for going downward or inward to bring to light those parts of himself previously disowned largely out of fear of being deprived of his masculine gender identity. This 'regression in the service of ego development' furthers his integrating the *darker, more obscure and mysterious* as well as the *softer, yielding sides* of himself, rendering his own later-life quest less discordant as a more balanced, yet fluid masculinity is achieved. In Labouvie-Vief's words, men need to 'upgrade modes of knowing and ... being that [were] previously experienced as "feminine"' (1994, p. 18).

In essence, the ego ideal typically becomes less sharply gendered at mid-life as the middle-aged man seeks to recover those early internal objects that had to be foreclosed in his adaptive, more manic efforts to achieve a stable sense of self and gender identity. For most westernized men such as Mr A, the search involves rediscovering the 'feminine', contrasexual objects representing the mysterious 'darkness' (i.e. in Jungian terms, 'shadow') of his interiority. For many men in the artistic, educational, mental health and healing professions, however, it is not uncommon to observe that the mid-life descent often involves reaccessing what may be more traditionally considered 'masculine' representations that had been radically sublimated, foreclosed or disavowed. I am referring here specifically to components of competitiveness, phallic aggression and masculine forms of destructiveness. In consequence, the mid-life reworking of the depressive position often strengthens the aging man's capacity to accept and tolerate conflict, ambivalence and destructiveness. Thus, ideals previously associated with becoming a man give way to those associated with becoming a person and 'the normal unisex of later life' emerges (Gutmann, 1964).

In the successful mid-life process, the balance of forces shifts in the direction of *resignation* rather than *defeat* (Jacques, 1965), *generativity* rather than *stagnation* (Erikson, 1963), *postconventional thought and creativity* rather than *bifurcation and dogmatism* (Pruyser, 1987; Benjamin, 1996), and, as I contend for men, *true genality* rather than *defensive phallicism*. The mid-life male is truly faced with 'the necessity of growing small' in order to become 'whole'.

Closing thoughts

The achievement of a fuller awareness of the qualities of his own masculinity (and the revitalization of the foreclosed dimensions of both the early maternal and paternal imagos) may arise through new experience. This occurs both in the transference

during the psychoanalytic treatment of male patients, and in adult life more generally, particularly in the realm of a man's work life, adult intimacy and fathering. Each of these latter domains of adult activity can serve as an organizer for new masculine (ego) ideals and help men become more secure in their male gender identity (see Diamond, 1997; also Axelrod, 1997b).

As illustrated in the case of Mr A, a new experience of masculinity is often achieved via the psychoanalytic treatment process itself. This results in an integration and synthesis of the more concrete, polarized images of maleness and femaleness that serve to transcend and transform a male patient's more ossified gender designations. Such a therapeutic transformation of gender identity unfolds from the male patient's experience of his (either male or female) therapist's holding and interpreting, receptivity and activity, subjectivity and objectivity, as well as spontaneity and reflective awareness.

In the end, the fully becoming man who has attained access to both the gendered and non-gendered multitude within has largely transcended the need for a clearly defined, well-bounded masculine gender identity. The maturing man, in consolidating his masculinity, is freed from his reliance on the bifurcated, 'phallicized' gender identity of manhood that played an important and frequently beneficial role in his childhood, youthful and younger adult adaptations. The middle-aged man, having to weather struggles around work, intimacy, parenting (actual or surrogate) and aging, can once again be heard in Walt Whitman's timeless ode to the fluid interiority of a more fully realized manhood. I wish to conclude then with a few more lines also from his *Leaves of grass*:

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise,
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,
Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man
(1855 [1986], 'Song of myself', p. 40, [16], 326–8).

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Translations of summary

Zugang zur inneren Vielheit: eine psychoanalytische Perspektive auf die Transformationen der Maskulinität im mittleren Lebensalter. Der Beitrag untersucht die wesentlichen Elemente der männlichen Identität, die gewöhnlich im mittleren Alter erneut bearbeitet werden. Der Autor vertritt die Ansicht, daß eine gesunde männliche Geschlechtsidentität einen fortlaufenden, plastischen Prozess der Destabilisierung und Rekonstruktion in verschiedenen wichtigen Entwicklungsphasen, insbesondere im mittleren Erwachsenenalter, voraussetzt. Die reife Transformation des Männlichkeitsbewusstseins stellt sich ein, wenn begrenzte Konzepte der Geschlechtsidentität einem Bewußtsein für die Komplexität der eigenen multiplen, frühen und unterschiedlichen Geschlechtsidentifizierungen weichen. Ein Fallbeispiel illustriert, wie die psychoanalytische Behandlung eine neue Wahrnehmung der Maskulinität fördern kann. Deutlich wird, wie ein männlicher Patient, der im mittleren Alter eine Veränderung seines Identitätsgefühls wahrnahm, seine zuvor gespaltene Geschlechtsidentität zu integrieren und antithetische intrapsychische Elemente zusammenzuführen begann. Der Beitrag untersucht, weshalb diese stärker pluralistische, vielsträngige Maskulinität häufig erst in der Mitte des Lebens entwickelt werden kann. Besondere Wichtigkeit wird der frühen Entwicklung der männlichen Geschlechtsidentität beigemessen, die in dem charakteristischen Streben des Jungen nach Separation von der Mutter wurzelt. Die Grundlage der männlichen Geschlechtsidentität wird einer Neubetrachtung unterzogen, indem der Autor das „Entidentifizierungsmodell“ in Frage stellt und erklärt, wie das Streben des Jungen nach narzißtischer Vervollkommnung das geschlechtsspezifische maskuline Ich-Ideal prägt. Die erwachsene Entwicklung des Mannes wird durch den „Phallizismus“ im

klassischen Sinn gefördert und zugleich erschwert, während die „Genitalität“ durch die Dimension des „Inneren“ erweitert wird. Im mittleren Lebensalter werden „phallische“ Ich-Ideale (die auf Omnipotenz, Wünschen nach narzißtischer Vollkommenheit und Geschlechtsspaltung beruhen) in realistischere „genitale“ Ich-Ideale transformiert (Synthese von *Autonomie* und *Verbundenheit*). Der Erwerb eines reifen und weniger geschlechtsspezifizierten „maskulinen“ Ich-Ideals (das die Dimensionen der zuvor ausgeschlossenen frühen mütterlichen und väterlichen Imago wiederbelebt) stellt sich ein, wenn sich das Gleichgewicht der Kräfte vom *defensiven Phallizismus* auf eine *Genitalität im eigentlichen Sinn* verlagert.

Acceder a la multitud interior: Una perspectiva psicoanalítica sobre la transformación de la masculinidad en la fase media de la vida. El autor reflexiona sobre los componentes esenciales de la identidad masculina que suelen ser reelaborados a mitad de la vida. El autor sostiene que la identidad sexual masculina saludable implica un proceso plástico progresivo de desestabilización y reconstrucción en diversas etapas fundamentales del desarrollo, en particular hacia la mitad de la vida adulta. Esencialmente, la maduración del sentido de lo masculino en el hombre es la consecuencia de la sustitución de una concepción inamovible de la identidad sexual por una toma de conciencia de la complejidad de las múltiples, tempranas y diversas identificaciones sexuales que caracterizan a todo ser humano. El autor presenta un caso clínico que permite percibir la manera a través de la cual el tratamiento psicoanalítico puede contribuir a una nueva experiencia de la masculinidad. El caso muestra cómo el acceso a la madurez de un hombre que vive una alteración del sentido de la identidad hacia la mitad de su vida, depende menos de las disociaciones relacionadas con la identidad sexual que del proceso de integración de los diferentes elementos intrapsíquicos previamente antitéticos. A continuación el autor aclara por qué esta masculinidad más pluralista y polimorfa debe esperar a menudo hasta la fase media de la vida, para poderse producir. Confiere una atención especial al desarrollo precoz de la identidad sexual masculina que se apoya en la lucha particular del niño para separarse de su madre en cuanto ésta se funda en los esfuerzos singulares del niño por separarse de su madre. Se reconsideran los fundamentos de la formación de la identidad sexual masculina y el autor cuestiona el modelo de la “desidentificación” al tiempo que expone cómo el ideal del yo masculino queda determinado por el esfuerzo del niño de conseguir una completud narcisista. La “falicidad”, como se la denomina clásicamente, es entendida como facilitadora y obstructora del desarrollo adulto del hombre, mientras el concepto de “genitalidad” es enriquecido por el término más moderno de “interioridad”. Hacia la mitad de la vida, los ideales del yo “fálicos” (que descansan en la omnipotencia, los deseos de completud narcisista, y la escisión de la identidad sexual) se transforman en ideales del yo más realistas y “genitales” (sintetizados en *autonomía* y *conexión*). El logro de un ideal del yo maduro menos nítidamente “masculino” (al revitalizar las dimensiones excluidas de las tempranas imagos, materna y paterna) aparecen a medida que el equilibrio de fuerzas se pone más del lado de la *genitalidad verdadera* que de una *falicidad defensiva*.

Accéder à la multitude à interne : une perspective psychanalytique des transformations de la masculinité vers le milieu de la vie. Le texte se propose de réfléchir sur certaines composantes essentielles de l'identité masculine qui d'habitude sont retravaillées vers le milieu de la vie. L'auteur soutient que l'identité sexuée masculine de bonne santé implique un processus continu et souple de déstabilisation et de reconstruction, à l'occasion de certaines étapes développementales centrales, et en particulier vers le milieu de la vie. La transformation mature du sens du masculin chez l'homme résulte essentiellement du remplacement de sa conception définitive de l'identité sexuée par une conscience de la complexité des multiples, précoces et diverses identifications sexuées qui caractérisent tout être humain. Un cas clinique permet de percevoir la façon dont le traitement psychanalytique peut contribuer à une nouvelle expérience de la masculinité. Ce cas montre comment l'arrivée à maturité d'un homme qui vit une altération du sens de l'identité vers le milieu de sa vie dépend moins des clivages relatifs à l'identité sexuée et davantage du processus de réunification d'éléments psychiques auparavant antinomiques. La question de savoir pourquoi cette masculinité pluraliste et polymorphe doit attendre le milieu de la vie est discutée. Une attention spécifique est accordée au développement précoce de l'identité sexuée masculine, qui se fonde sur la lutte particulière du garçon pour se séparer de sa mère. Les fondements de la formation de l'identité sexuée masculine sont re-examinés, et l'auteur questionne le modèle de la « désidentification » en même temps qu'il expose la façon dont l'idéal du moi sexué masculin est façonné par l'effort du garçon pour atteindre sa complétude narcissique. Ce que recouvre le terme classique de « phallisme » est compris comme une formation qui à la fois facilite et entrave le développement adulte de l'homme, alors que le concept de « génitalité » est enrichi du terme post-classique de « interiorité ». Au milieu de la vie, les idéaux du moi « phallique » (position d'omnipotence, désirs de complétude narcissique, clivage des identités sexuées) sont transformés en des idéaux plus réalistes et « génitaux » (qui font la synthèse entre *autonomie* et *liaison*). L'aboutissement à un idéal du moi mature, moins tranchant dans son identité sexuée masculine (qui redonne vie aux dimensions

forcluses des toutes premières imagos maternelle et paternelle) survient alors que l'équilibre des forces se déplace du côté de la *vraie genéitalité* plutôt que du *phallisme défensif*.

Accedere alla moltitudine interna: una prospettiva psiconalitica sulla trasformazione della mascolinità nella mezza età. Quest'articolo prende in considerazione le componenti essenziali dell'identità maschile che normalmente sono rielaborate nel corso della mezza età. L'autore sostiene che una sana identità maschile di genere comporta un continuo processo plastico di destabilizzazione e ricostruzione in varie fasi fondamentali dello sviluppo, in particolare a metà dell'età adulta. In sintesi, nell'uomo la trasformazione in età matura del suo senso di mascolinità avviene quando le sue concezioni d'identità di genere più limitate sono rimpiazzate dalla consapevolezza della complessità delle proprie molteplici, precoci e diverse identificazioni di genere. Un caso clinico fa intuire come il trattamento psicoanalitico possa contribuire alla nuova esperienza della mascolinità. Il caso presentato chiarisce come un uomo maturo, trovandosi di fronte, nella mezza età, a un senso d'identità alterato, faccia meno affidamento sulla scissione di genere che non sulla riunione degli elementi intrapsichici precedentemente antitetici. Viene discussa la questione del perché questa mascolinità più pluralistica e a più trame debba spesso attendere fino alla mezza età per manifestarsi. Un'importanza specifica viene data al primo sviluppo dell'identità maschile di genere dal momento che questa si fonda sugli straordinari sforzi del bambino nel processo di separazione dalla madre. L'autore riprende in considerazione il fondamento della costruzione dell'identità di genere maschile mettendo in forse il modello di "disidentificazione", e spiegando come la lotta del ragazzo per la completezza narcisistica dia forma all'ideale dell'Io di genere maschile, classicamente definito "fallicismo". Questo processo è destinato sia a facilitare sia a ostacolare lo sviluppo adulto dell'uomo, mentre la concezione di "genitalità" è rafforzata dalla nozione postclassica di "interiorità". Nella mezza età gli ideali fallici dell'Io (fondati sull'onnipotenza, sui desideri di completamento narcisistico e di scissione di genere) si trasformano in ideali più realistici, "genitali" dell'Io (che sintetizzano *autonomia e connessione*). La realizzazione di un ideale dell'Io maturo, di genere meno nettamente "maschile" (che ridà vita alle dimensioni forcluse di entrambe le immagini originarie, l'*imago* materna e quella paterna) avviene quando l'equilibrio delle forze si sposta in direzione della *vera genéitalità* anziché in quella del *fallicismo difensivo*.

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